

Extremism And The Sanctification Of Individuals In Light Of The Qur'an And Sunnah: A Sharia-Based Analysis Of Its Impact On Environmental And Social Quality Of Life

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Abstract

This study provides a Sharia-based analysis of the phenomenon of extremism (*ghulūw*) in and the sanctification of individuals, grounded in the Qur'an and the Prophetic Sunnah. It focuses on identifying the root causes of this phenomenon and its multidimensional negative impacts on both environmental and social quality of life. The research begins by defining *ghulūw* linguistically and terminologically according to Islamic law, and it highlights historical and doctrinal examples of extremism across ages, from pre-Islamic nations (such as Jews and Christians) to sects affiliated with Islam (such as the Saba'iyya, certain Sufi groups, and the Twelver Shia). The study extensively examines the stances of the Holy Qur'an and the Prophetic Sunnah on this phenomenon, showcasing their methods of warning against its consequences. The research analyzes the primary causes of *ghulūw*, including religious ignorance, unregulated religious fervor, adherence to ambiguous texts, and blind imitation. In a pivotal section, the study discusses the profound negative effects of extremism on the social quality of life—including the degradation of human dignity, the excommunication of Muslims (*takfīr*), rebellion against rulers leading to instability, the stagnation of the intellect, the spread of ignorance and injustice, civilizational decline, and the fragmentation of the Muslim community through sectarianism and partisanship. It analytically links these outcomes to their broader impact on the quality and sustainability of the environment. The study concludes that the Islamic principles of moderation (*wasatīyyah*) and balance are the ultimate recourse for addressing this affliction, offering an integrated vision for achieving secure, stable, and prospering societies, both environmentally and socially.

Keywords: *Ghulūw* (Extremism), Sanctification of Individuals, Environmental Quality of Life, Social Quality of Life, The Holy Qur'an, The Prophetic Sunnah, *Wasatīyyah* (Moderation), Radicalism.

1. INTRODUCTION

Islam is fundamentally a religion of moderation (*wasatīyyah*) and balance, a principle underscored in its primary texts. Allah the Almighty states: "And thus We have made you a justly balanced community that you will be witnesses over the people and the Messenger will be a witness over you" (Qur'an 2:143). This verse establishes the concept of equilibrium as a core tenet of the Islamic nation (al-Qurṭubī, 1384 H). Accordingly, Islam has explicitly and unequivocally forbidden extremism (*ghulūw*) in religion. Allah states: "Say, 'O People of the Scripture, do not exceed the limits in your religion beyond the truth and do not follow the inclinations of a people who had gone astray before and misled many and have strayed from the soundness of the way'" (Qur'an 5:77).

Ghulūw, in its essence, signifies transgressing the limits in all matters and is a grave affliction as ancient as humanity itself. Historically, this phenomenon has appeared since the era of the Prophet Noah (peace be upon him), through Greek civilization, and within the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic nations, and it continues to exist in our contemporary world in various forms. Extremism in the sanctification of individuals, in particular, constitutes a severe deviation from the moderate path prescribed by Islam. It remains one of the most significant challenges facing societies in every time and place, especially with the rise of radical ideologies in the modern era. The sanctification of individuals has perilous consequences that extend beyond the doctrinal sphere to encompass social, economic, and intellectual dimensions, negatively impacting human

development and the sustainability of the quality of life. This research focuses on the "environmental" impact of *ghulūw*, a term that herein refers not only to the natural environment but also to the intellectual, social, and psychological environment of a society. These environments are foundational components of a comprehensive quality of life. The intellectual and doctrinal disruptions caused by *ghulūw* undermine the psychological well-being of individuals, weaken the social fabric, and impede intellectual and cultural development, thereby adversely affecting the sustainability of societal welfare. This study aims to shed light on the contemporary manifestations of extremism and how they obstruct the sustainability of environmental quality of life, presenting an applied analytical study within the modern Islamic context.

2. Problem Statement

The core problem of this research is that the phenomenon of extremism in and the sanctification of individuals continues to manifest forcefully within the contemporary Islamic context, despite clear religious warnings and its incongruity with scientific progress. This persistence forms a major obstacle to the sustainability of a comprehensive "environmental" quality of life. In the current age of information openness and the proliferation of celebrity culture, *ghulūw* has taken on new forms. These include the blind imitation of public figures (whether in religious or secular spheres), the deification of charismatic symbols, and blind allegiance to specific groups and movements. This reprehensible sanctification leads to the suspension of critical reason, encourages blind imitation, and fosters absolute submission to the words and actions of these individuals, even when they contradict definitive religious texts or sound logic.

The danger of this phenomenon is not limited to credal deviation; it directly threatens the environmental quality of life in its comprehensive sense. Intellectually, *ghulūw* stifles the development of thought and innovation, leading to a cognitive stagnation that harms a society's capacity for adaptation and renewal (al-Blaihi, n.d.). Socially, it contributes to excommunication (*takfīr*), division, and conflict, which fragment the social fabric, destabilize communities, and negatively affect cooperation and solidarity. Psychologically, fanaticism and extremism breed hatred and animosity, disrupting the mental peace of individuals and groups. These negative effects impede any efforts toward sustainable development and holistic well-being, weakening the ability of communities to manage their resources effectively. Therefore, an analysis of the contemporary manifestations of extremism and its applied repercussions on the sustainability of environmental quality of life is essential for understanding the challenges of our reality and proposing sustainable solutions.

3. Research Objectives

This research seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- To call people to the correct creed derived from the Qur'an and the authentic Sunnah.
- To renounce extremism in and the sanctification of individuals.
- To safeguard the sanctity of monotheism (*tawhīd*) from anything that compromises it, including polytheism (*shirk*) and its means.
- To maintain the sustainability of social and environmental quality of life.
- To preserve the human dignity that Allah has bestowed.
- To combat extremist and terrorist ideologies that originate from *ghulūw* and use it as a means to achieve their goals.

4. Research Questions

This research attempts to answer the following pivotal questions:

- What is the meaning of *ghulūw* linguistically and in Islamic legal terminology?
- What is the meaning of sanctification (*taqdīs*) linguistically and terminologically? What constitutes reprehensible sanctification?
- What is the position of the Holy Qur'an on the phenomenon of extremism in and sanctification of individuals?
- What is the position of the purified Prophetic Sunnah on the phenomenon of extremism and sanctification of individuals?

- What are the most prominent underlying causes for the emergence of extremism in individuals?
- What are the negative effects of *ghulūw* on environmental and social quality of life?

5. LITERATURE REVIEW

The phenomenon of extremism in individuals is a significant topic that has garnered the attention of researchers in Islamic and creedal studies. Numerous studies have addressed various aspects of this phenomenon, whether at the level of pre-Islamic nations or among sects affiliated with Islam.

5.1. Studies on the Concept and Types of *Ghulūw*

- A master's thesis titled "*The Sanctification of Persons in Esoteric Thought: A Doctrinal Study of the Ismā'īlī, Nuṣayrī, and Druze Sects—A Presentation and Critique in Light of the Qur'an and Sunnah*," by Dina bint Muhyi al-Din ibn Abd al-Hamid at King Abdulaziz University. This study concentrated on a specific aspect of *ghulūw*—the esoteric dimension—and how individuals are sanctified within these sects. The thesis was structured in four chapters: the first on the emergence of esotericism in the Islamic world, the second on the doctrine of sanctifying persons among esoteric groups, the third refuting their sanctification of individuals, and the fourth on the position of Ahl al-Sunnah regarding the sanctification of persons.

- "*The Sanctification of Persons in Sufi Thought: A Presentation and Analysis in Light of the Qur'an and Sunnah*," by Muhammad Ahmad Lūh. This research highlights manifestations of *ghulūw* in the veneration of saints (*awliyā'*) within certain Sufi currents.

- "*Manifestations of the Sanctification of Persons Among the Twelver Shia: A Presentation and Critique*," by Awad bin Aydah al-Zahrani. This study addressed the dimensions of *ghulūw* in the veneration of Imams among the Twelver Shia.

- "*The Historical Roots of the Reality of Extremism, Radicalism, Terrorism, and Violence*," prepared by Dr. Ali bin Abd al-Aziz bin Ali al-Shibl. This study offers a historical background on *ghulūw* and radicalism, indicating its different types and its development through the ages, with a focus on doctrinal and political aspects. It discussed *ghulūw* among the people of Noah and its effects, then extremism and radicalism among the Greeks and their effects, and extremism and radicalism among the People of the Book and their effects. It also addressed the origins of radicalism and *ghulūw* in religion among Muslims, their influence by previous nations, the extremism of the Khawārij and its main manifestations, the impact of the extremism of the Rāfiḍa, the Jewish influence therein, and the radicalism of the Mu'tazila.

These valuable studies provide a deep understanding of the types of *ghulūw* and its roots in different contexts, and they highlight its repercussions on doctrine and society. However, they often focus on describing the phenomenon or critiquing it from a direct doctrinal perspective, or they address it within the context of historical sects.

5.2. Studies on the Stances of the Imams Regarding Doctrinal Deviations

- The book "*Iqtidā' al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm li-mukhālafat aṣḥāb al-jahīm* [The Requirement of the Straight Path in Opposition to the Companions of Hell]" by Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah (1419 H). This work is considered a foundational reference in critiquing innovations and deviations, and it demonstrates the methodology of the Salaf (pious predecessors) in dealing with them.

- "*Minhāj al-Sunnah al-Nabawīyah fī naqḍ kalām al-Shī'ah al-Qadariyyah* [The Methodology of the Prophetic Sunnah in Refuting the Words of the Shia Qadariyyah]" by Ibn Taymiyyah (1406 H). This book is also one of the most important references in responding to opposing sects and clarifies the positions of scholars regarding their beliefs.

- The works of Imam Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, such as "*Kitāb al-Tawḥīd* [The Book of Monotheism]" (n.d.), which focus on explaining pure monotheism, rejecting polytheism and its means, and offering a sharp critique of the sanctification of individuals.

- The book "Aṣl ṣifat ṣalāt al-Nabī ṣallā Allāh ‘alayhi wa-sallam [The Original Description of the Prophet’s Prayer]" by al-Albānī (n.d.), which cites the sayings of the Four Imams on the obligation of following the Sunnah and abandoning blind imitation.

What distinguishes the present research from previous studies is that it does not merely present the types of *ghulūw*, its roots, or the positions of scholars. Instead, it offers an in-depth critical analysis of the stance of the Imams of Islam on the phenomenon of *ghulūw* and the sanctification of individuals, directly linking this position to the protection of the human intellect and its effects on the "environmental" quality of life in its comprehensive sense (intellectual, social, and psychological). This new perspective adds value to the scientific literature, especially in the context of the growing interest in concepts of comprehensive sustainability that extend beyond the physical dimension of the environment to include human and societal dimensions. The goal is to highlight how the methodology of these Imams in confronting *ghulūw* was aimed at preserving these vital "environments" for the Muslim community.

6. Methodology

This research adopts a dual methodology to ensure comprehensiveness and precision in its analysis and conclusions:

6.1. Inductive Approach

- All Sharia texts related to the topic of *ghulūw* and the sanctification of individuals will be inductively surveyed from the Holy Qur’an and the purified Prophetic Sunnah.
- This includes tracking the Qur’anic verses that forbid *ghulūw* and polytheism (*shirk*), the prophetic hadiths that warn against excessive praise, deep inquiry (*ta’ammūq*), and religious formalism (*tanaṭṭu*), and that clarify the means of blocking the paths to polytheism (such as the prohibition of building on graves).
- The sayings of prominent Imams of Islam (the Companions, the Four Imams, the Imams of Ahl al-Bayt, and major scholars like Ibn Taymiyyah and Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab) will also be inductively surveyed from their original and authoritative sources to collect their positions, fatwas, sayings, and writings that addressed the phenomenon of *ghulūw* and the sanctification of individuals.

6.2. Analytical-Critical Approach

- After gathering the data through the inductive method, these texts and information will be critically analyzed.
- This includes interpreting the Sharia texts, clarifying their significations, and deriving rulings from them related to the warning against *ghulūw*.
- The sayings of the Imams and the positions they took in confronting extremists will be analyzed, deconstructing the intellectual and doctrinal basis of their responses.
- The critical analysis will focus on highlighting the effect of *ghulūw* in disabling and stagnating the intellect, and how the positions of the Imams were aimed at liberating the mind from blind subservience.
- The research will also discuss how these intellectual and behavioral effects of *ghulūw* contribute to the deterioration of the environmental quality of life (intellectual, social, and psychological) of the community. It will provide a critical analysis of how *ghulūw* affects stability, development, and communal unity.

This dual methodology aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of *ghulūw*, to reveal the methodology of the Imams in confronting it, and to highlight the intellectual, social, and psychological dimensions of this phenomenon and its impact on the quality of life.

7. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

7.1. The Sharia-Based Concept of *Ghulūw* in Individuals and Reprehensible Sanctification

Understanding the two primary terms, *ghulūw* and *taqdīs* (sanctification), is a cornerstone of this study, especially when they are connected to individuals.

7.1.1. *Ghulūw* Linguistically and Terminologically:

Linguistically, *ghulūw* refers to elevation in something and exceeding its proper limit. It expresses exaggeration and transgression beyond what is customary or acceptable. In the book "*Jamharat al-Lughah*" by Abū Bakr al-Azdī (d. 321 H), *ghulūw* is defined as "elevation in something and exceeding its limit, from which is the saying of the Almighty, 'Do not commit excess in your religion' [Qur'an 4:171], meaning do not transgress the measure." The term is also used for the furthest reach of an arrow shot. The word *ghālī* (expensive) is derived from it, meaning something that has risen above the usual price limits (al-Azdī, 1987). Ibn Manẓūr (d. 711 H) in "*Lisān al-'Arab*" confirms that the root of *ghalā*' (expensiveness) is elevation and exceeding the measure in everything, and that "*ghalā* in religion and in a matter means he exceeded its limit." Thus, the linguistic meaning of *ghulūw* revolves around the idea of transgressing the limit, whatever the nature of that transgression.

Terminologically, *ghulūw* is defined as transgressing the Sharia-based limits that Allah has set for His servants. Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728 H) defined it as "transgressing the limit, such as by increasing the praise or condemnation of something beyond what it deserves, and the like." This definition includes excessive admiration or exaggerated criticism. Some scholars define it as "transgressing the limits of what Allah has prescribed for His servants, whether in belief or worship." Another researcher holds that *ghulūw* in the Sharia refers to "transgressing the limits of the Sharia in action or belief." Dr. Ḍumayrīyah (d. 1424 H) added a definition clarifying that *ghulūw* is "transgressing the prescribed limit and being excessively strict in religion" (Ḍumayrīyah, 1996). These terminological definitions are consistent with the linguistic meaning that *ghulūw* is the transgression of limits and exaggeration in a matter.

7.1.2. Sanctification (*Taqdīs*) Linguistically and Terminologically, and Reprehensible Sanctification:

Taqdīs is a term that is synonymous with *ghulūw* in the context of this study. It is the verbal noun of the verb *qaddasa*. In "*Lisān al-'Arab*" by Ibn Manẓūr (d. 711 H), *taqdīs* is defined as "the glorification of Allah, the Almighty. And in *Tahdhīb: al-Quds* is the glorification of Allah, and He is the Glorified, the Holy, the Sanctified." The term *al-Quddūs* is a name of Allah, meaning the Pure, the One who is free from defects and imperfections, as confirmed by al-Azharī (d. 370 H). It is mentioned in the Qur'an, "while we declare Your praise and sanctify You" (2:30), which al-Zajjāj interpreted as "we purify ourselves for You." From this meaning comes "*Bayt al-Maqdis*" (Jerusalem), meaning the purified house, the place where one is purified from sins. *Al-Quddūs* is Allah Almighty, *al-quds* is blessing, and the Holy Land is the Levant.

Reprehensible Sanctification as a Synonym for *Ghulūw* in Individuals: Despite the positive connotations of sanctification, reprehensible sanctification in this context means "transgressing the limit in the sanctification of individuals." This transgression is manifested in:

- **Attributing attributes of Allah the Almighty to some human beings:** such as believing in the absolute perfection of a human, or their ability to manage and control the universe.
- **Directing any of Allah's exclusive rights to them:** such as worship, supplication, fear, hope, and seeking help from them besides or along with Allah.
- **Directing any of the rights of Messengers and Prophets to them:** such as believing in their absolute obedience (even in falsehood), their absolute infallibility (even in matters other than conveying the message from Allah), that everything they say is truth and correct, the obligation of obeying them, and believing that whoever obeys them will enter Paradise and whoever disobeys them will enter Hell.

This is the meaning around which our study of "*Ghulūw* in Individuals and Their Sanctification" revolves.

7.2. The Stances of the Imams of Islam on *Ghulūw* and the Sanctification of Individuals

The position of the Imams of Islam, whether the Companions or those who came after them, was characterized by firmness and resolve in confronting the phenomenon of *ghulūw* and the sanctification of individuals, out of their awareness of its danger to the Muslim community.

7.2.1. The Stance of the Noble Companions:

The Companions, led by the Rightly Guided Caliphs, were the most zealous in applying the Prophet's methodology in combating *ghulūw*. 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (may Allah be pleased with him) warned against excessive praise, citing the hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him): "Do not praise me extravagantly as the Christians praised the son of Mary. I am but His slave, so say: the slave of Allah and His Messenger" (al-Bukhārī, 1422 H). This direct warning from the second Caliph shows the early awareness of the danger of *ghulūw*.

When 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās (may Allah be pleased with them both) saw some of the Successors using the sayings of Abū Bakr and 'Umar as evidence against the texts of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), he told them: "Stones are about to rain down on you from the sky! I say to you, 'The Messenger of Allah said,' and you say, 'Abū Bakr and 'Umar said?'" (Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb, n.d., p. 24). This eloquent statement from Ibn 'Abbās is an explicit condemnation of prioritizing the words of humans over the words of the Prophet (peace be upon him), and it affirms the necessity of returning to the two primary sources of creed (the Qur'an and the Sunnah).

7.2.2. The Stance of the Four Imams:

The Four Imams (Abū Ḥanīfah, Mālik, al-Shāfi'ī, and Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal) established methodological principles that combat *ghulūw* in and the sanctification of individuals by emphasizing the obligation of following the Sunnah and abandoning blind imitation of their own sayings.

- **Imam Abū Ḥanīfah (d. 150 H):** His students transmitted explicit statements from him on the necessity of adopting the hadith and abandoning his opinion if it contradicted it. Among his sayings are: "If the hadith is authentic, then that is my *madhhab* (school of thought)," "It is not permissible for anyone to adopt our saying unless he knows from where we took it," and "If I say something that contradicts the Book of Allah the Almighty and the report of the Messenger (peace be upon him), then abandon my saying" (al-Albānī, n.d.).
- **Imam Mālik ibn Anas (d. 179 H):** The Imam of the Abode of Migration was one of the most zealous people in following the Sunnah. He said: "I am only a human being; I err and I am correct. So, examine my opinion. Whatever agrees with the Book and the Sunnah, take it, and whatever does not agree with the Book and the Sunnah, leave it" (al-Albānī, n.d.). His most famous saying is: "There is no one among us except that his views may be refuted or he may refute others, except for the occupant of this grave," and he pointed to the grave of the Prophet (peace be upon him) (al-Albānī, n.d.).
- **Imam al-Shāfi'ī (d. 204 H):** He established a great principle in this regard with his saying: "My opinion is correct but *يحتمل* (is open to) error, and the opinion of others is erroneous but *يحتمل* (is open to) being correct." He also said: "The Muslims have unanimously agreed that whoever has a Sunnah from the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) made clear to him, it is not permissible for him to leave it for the saying of anyone" (al-Albānī, n.d.).
- **Imam Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241 H):** The Imam of Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jamā'ah was one of the Imams who collected the most Sunnah and adhered to it most strictly. He said: "Do not imitate me, nor imitate Mālik, nor al-Shāfi'ī, nor al-Awzā'ī, nor al-Thawrī, but take from where they took" (al-Albānī, n.d.). Imam Aḥmad commented on someone who left an authentic hadith for the opinion of Sufyān (al-Thawrī): "I am amazed at someone who knows the chain of narration and its authenticity and yet follows the opinion of Sufyān" (Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb, n.d., p. 24). These sayings clearly show that the Four Imams warned against blind imitation and connected people to the Book and the Sunnah, rejecting any sanctification of their persons that would be prioritized over the religious texts.

7.2.3. The Stance of the Imams of Ahl al-Bayt:

The Imams of Ahl al-Bayt, beginning with 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (may Allah be pleased with him), through his sons and grandsons such as Imam al-Bāqir (Muḥammad ibn 'Alī) and Imam al-Ṣādiq (Ja'far ibn Muḥammad), were afflicted by extremists who claimed to love them and be their

followers, but they went to extremes with them to the point of elevating them above their human status and claiming their divinity.

- **Imam ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (may Allah be pleased with him):** He confronted extremism regarding his person with great firmness. When ‘Abdullāh ibn Saba’ claimed his divinity, ‘Alī intended to kill him and exiled him to al-Madā’in, and he burned some extremists with fire when they persisted in their misguidance (al-Baghdādī, n.d.). ‘Alī (may Allah be pleased with him) warned against extremism regarding him by saying: "Two will be destroyed concerning me, and I have no sin in it: an excessive lover and an excessive hater" (al-Majlisī, 1403 H).

- **Imam al-Bāqir (d. 114 H) and Imam al-Ṣādiq (d. 148 H):** They confronted extremist sects such as the Bayāniyya, the Mughīriyya, the Mansūriyya, and the Khaṭṭābiyya, which deified the Imams or claimed divine characteristics for them. Their position was to disavow them, curse them, expel them, and publicly denounce them (al-Shahristānī, n.d.). Imam al-Bāqir said: "Beware of the extremists for your youth, lest they corrupt them. For the extremists are the worst of Allah’s creation; they diminish the greatness of Allah and claim lordship for the servants of Allah" (al-Majlisī, 1403 H). Imam al-Ṣādiq said: "The extremists are disbelievers, and the *Mufawwiḍa* are polytheists. Whoever sits with them, mingles with them, eats with them, or drinks with them is as if he has eaten the flesh of swine" (al-Majlisī, 1403 H). Imam al-Riḍā (d. 203 H) disavowed those who claimed for them what was not their right, stating that they were created servants who possessed neither benefit nor harm, and he cursed the Christians and those who emulated their sayings (al-Majlisī, 1403 H).

7.2.4. The Stance of Major Scholars After the Four Imams:

The scholars of the Ummah continued on the path of the Imams in warning against *ghulūw*.

- **Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728 H):** He said: "It is not for anyone to set up for the Ummah a person to call to his way, and to ally with and be hostile to others besides the Prophet (peace be upon him) and what the Ummah has agreed upon. Rather, this is the action of the people of innovation who set up for themselves a person or a statement by which they divide the Ummah, allying based on that statement or that affiliation and showing hostility" (Ibn Taymiyyah, 1412 H, Vol. 20, p. 164). He also affirmed that whoever makes a person other than the Messenger the standard for truth and falsehood is one of the people of innovation and misguidance (Ibn Taymiyyah, 1412 H, Vol. 35, p. 414).

- **Shaykh Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb (d. 1206 H):** In his book *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, he included a chapter titled: "Whoever Obeys the Scholars and Rulers in Forbidding What Allah Has Permitted or Permitting What Allah Has Forbidden Has Taken Them as Lords Besides Allah" (Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, n.d., p. 24). He cited the hadith of ‘Adī ibn Ḥātim in explaining the verse, "They have taken their scholars and monks as lords besides Allah," clarifying that worship is obedience in legislation (Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, n.d., p. 24).

7.3. The Effects of *Ghulūw* in Individuals on the Protection of the Intellect and the Quality of Environmental and Social Life

Ghulūw in individuals is not merely a doctrinal deviation; it has serious negative repercussions on the integrity of the human intellect and threatens the quality of life in its broad sense, which includes the intellectual, social, and psychological environments.

7.3.1. The Stagnation of the Intellect and the Rigidity of the Intellectual Environment:

Extremism in and the sanctification of individuals inevitably leads to blind imitation in beliefs, ideas, and actions, which constitutes a stagnation of the role of the intellect with which Allah has honored humanity and made it the basis of accountability. When the "Shaykh," the "Imam," or the "leader" becomes above criticism and review, the spirit of competition, excellence, merit, and creativity dies in society. Dr. Ibrāhīm al-Blaihi noted that "if stagnation occurs at a certain stage of creativity, or if one of the innovators receives such veneration that people reject any creativity that comes after him, this means the cessation of building and the beginning of civilizational decay, the deterioration of society, and the entanglement of culture" (al-Blaihi, n.d.). This intellectual stagnation creates a stagnant intellectual environment that hinders critical dialogue

and stifles innovation, which harms the ability of society to adapt to changes and solve contemporary problems.

7.3.2. The Degradation of Human Dignity and the Distortion of the Psychological Environment:

Allah has honored the children of Adam and favored them over much of His creation, and He has subjected to them the universe and what is in it. Allah says: "And We have certainly honored the children of Adam and carried them on the land and sea and provided for them of the good things and preferred them over much of what We have created, with [definite] preference" (Qur'an 17:70). This honoring requires that man be free in his servitude to Allah alone, and that he rejects any form of humiliation or submission to other than the Creator. *Ghulūw* in individuals, by attributing divine qualities to them or directing worship to them, is a blatant violation of this human dignity. When an individual sanctifies a human like himself, he loses part of his intellectual and psychological freedom and feels inferiority and humiliation before other than Allah. This submissiveness instills weakness and dependency in the soul and prevents man from exercising his role as a vicegerent on earth—exploring, innovating, and managing his resources well. An individual who confines his mind with a false human sanctity becomes incapable of innovating solutions to problems, including environmental issues, or even recognizing their magnitude. The psychological environment of an individual who sanctifies other than Allah is characterized by fear and apprehension of the created being, which makes him unable to make independent decisions or defend his values and principles, and undermines his sense of autonomy and dignity.

7.3.3. Ignorance, Injustice, and Backwardness in the Social Environment:

Since *ghulūw* and the sanctification of individuals result in blind imitation and the stagnation of the intellect, the inevitable result is the spread of ignorance in societies. The Qur'an itself linked *ghulūw* with ignorance of Allah's right and greatness, as in the words of Moses: "They said, 'O Moses, make for us a god as they have gods.' He said, 'Indeed, you are a people behaving ignorantly'" (Qur'an 7:138). When ignorance prevails, injustice and oppression spread throughout societies. This trinity (ignorance, injustice, and backwardness) suffocates the mind of society, eliminates human individuality, halts the movement of history, and obstructs the march of civilization. Dr. Ibrāhīm al-Blaihi affirms that "the sanctification of persons stops the growth of knowledge, hinders the prosperity of societies, and obstructs the march of civilization. The triumphant human experiences have proven that liberation from the sanctification of persons is at the forefront of the basic conditions for growth and progress in all fields." Al-Blaihi adds that "between ignorance, injustice, and backwardness there is an organic correlation; it is an interconnected trinity that suffocates the mind of society, eliminates human individuality, halts the movement of history, and obstructs the march of civilization" (al-Blaihi, n.d.). This backwardness directly affects the social environment, as it loses the ability for future planning, the quality of services declines, and social problems spread.

7.3.4. Division, Partisanship, and the Disintegration of the Social Environment:

The phenomenon of *ghulūw* and the sanctification of individuals is a primary cause of division and the emergence of heretical sects and parties. The people of innovation either affiliate themselves with an innovation they have introduced, such as the Qadariyyah, the Khawārij, and the Murji'ah, or they affiliate themselves with a person, such as the Jahmiyyah, the Ash'ariyyah, and the Kullābiyyah. These sects are the result of the sanctification of individuals and prioritizing the sayings of their imams over the religious texts. This tears the unity of the nation, weakens it, and hinders any collective effort for progress. From a social perspective, societal divisions and factionalism hinder the ability to formulate and implement coherent and effective policies in all areas, including the preservation of the natural environment. Issues that require national cooperation need a unified society capable of joint action, which is negatively affected by the lack of unity and partisanship resulting from *ghulūw*.

7.3.5. Rebellion Against the Muslim Ruler and the Destabilization of Security and Stability in the Social Environment:

One of the most dangerous consequences of doctrinal *ghulūw*, especially among extremist groups, is the excommunication of Muslim rulers and rebelling against them with the sword, which leads to bloodshed, the destabilization of security, and the spread of chaos among the people. The creed of Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jamā'ah obligates hearing and obeying the rulers in what is right, to preserve the unity and stability of the nation (Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Endowments, Da'wah, and Guidance, 1421 H). When the ideology of *ghulūw* spreads, violence and sabotage are justified, and societies turn into arenas of conflict. This security and social turmoil has devastating effects on the quality of life, as life cannot be sustained with fear, killing, looting of property, and violation of honor.

7.3.6. Excommunication of Muslims and the Deterioration of the Social and Psychological Environment:

Among the characteristics of extremists is apostasy from religion and accusing Muslims of disbelief for major sins, or excommunicating those who do not agree with their opinion, without seeking excuses. This behavior leads to the fragmentation of the societal fabric, the spread of hatred and animosity, and the severing of kinship ties. When a part of society excommunicates the rest of its members, the principle of Islamic brotherhood collapses, and suspicion and accusations spread. This limits mutual cooperation among members of society, which is necessary to face major challenges. On a psychological level, atmospheres of excommunication and hostility cause a state of anxiety, apprehension, and insecurity, which negatively affects the mental health and emotional stability of individuals.

7.3.7. Equating the Created with the Creator and its Impact on the Relationship with the Environment:

The sanctification of individuals and *ghulūw* in them lead to exceeding the limit in veneration, even raising them to the status of a god and attributing some divine characteristics to them. This act is considered equating the created with the Creator and is a diminishment of the greatness and glorification of Allah, the Almighty. This serious doctrinal deviation corrupts the sound human nature (*fiṭra*), distances man from a correct understanding of Allah's essence and attributes, which reduces his true fear of Allah, and lessens his sense of responsibility towards creation, including the environment, which is Allah's creation and a trust in his care. A society that distorts the concept of divinity becomes less aware of its vicegerency responsibility on earth, and consequently, its initiatives towards preserving and caring for the environment diminish.

8. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study confirms that the phenomenon of *ghulūw* in and the sanctification of individuals is not merely an individual or intellectual deviation, but a deep-rooted societal affliction with devastating effects that touch the core of human life and its sustainability. The analysis has proven that *ghulūw* transcends mere doctrinal error to become an impeding factor for comprehensive development and a threat to societal stability. By stagnating the intellect, spreading ignorance, fueling conflicts, and devaluing human dignity, *ghulūw* prevents societies from achieving their goals of prosperity and progress and diminishes their ability to deal effectively with contemporary challenges, including environmental challenges in their comprehensive sense. The Qur'anic and Prophetic directives that call for moderation and balance, and warn against *ghulūw*, represent the theoretical and practical framework for confronting this phenomenon.

Sheikh 'Aṭīyya Muḥammad Sālim said in his introduction to the book by Sheikh 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn Bāz about Sheikh Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb: "While some people glorify men of thought regardless of their orientations and exaggerate in commemorating them, perhaps even erecting statues for them, we Muslims do not sanctify personalities, nor are we swayed by currents. Rather, we have standards against which men and their works are measured, and according to the weight of their scale, they are granted esteem and status in our souls. These are the standards of da'wa (call to Islam), guidance, and the fields of reform under the umbrella of Islam" (Bāz,

1411 H). In this era where affliction has become widespread, social media is prevalent, the door to fame has opened, celebrities have multiplied, and extremism in and imitation of them has increased, there is a dire need to return to the Holy Qur'ān and the purified Prophetic Sunnah, for it is the balm for every wound, the cure for every disease, and the effective remedy for all forms and shapes of extremism.

Recommendations: Based on the findings of the study, the following are recommended:

- **Promoting Moderate Religious Education:** Educational and religious institutions must focus on curricula that entrench the concept of moderation and balance in Islam, highlight the dangers of extremism in individuals, and emphasize the role of reason and critical thinking in understanding religious texts.
- **Activating the Role of Preachers and Mosque Orators:** Preachers and orators should focus their sermons and lessons on warning against extremism and the sanctification of individuals, reminding people of the importance of correctly following the Qur'ān and Sunnah, and rejecting innovation and exaggeration in praising any person.
- **Utilizing Media and Social Networking:** In an age of information proliferation, digital platforms must be used to produce meaningful content that refutes extremist ideas, promotes the values of moderation and coexistence, and highlights the negative effects of extremism on the individual, society, and the intellectual, social, and psychological environments.
- **Supporting Specialized Studies and Research:** Encouraging and funding more scientific studies that address the phenomenon of extremism from various angles, including studying its historical roots, analyzing its contemporary mechanisms, and assessing its impact on the comprehensive quality of life, including sustainable development.
- **Affirming the Relationship Between Moderation and Comprehensive Sustainability:** It is necessary to highlight how the intellectual, social, and psychological stability achieved through moderation and the rejection of extremism is an indispensable foundation for achieving sustainable development and preserving environmental resources in all their dimensions for future generations.

We ask Allah the Almighty to show us the truth as truth and grant us the ability to follow it, and to show us falsehood as falsehood and grant us the ability to avoid it, and to protect us from trials, both apparent and hidden.

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