

The Stance Of The Imams Of Islam On Religious Extremism And The Sanctification Of Individuals: A Critical Analysis In Light Of The Protection Of The Intellect And Environmental Quality Of Life

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Abstract

This study addresses the stance of the Imams of Islam on the phenomenon of religious extremism (Ghulūw) and the sanctification of individuals, presenting an in-depth critical analysis of this phenomenon's impact on the protection of the intellect and the quality of the comprehensive "environmental" life (intellectual, social, and psychological). The research reviews the definition of Ghulūw and reprehensible sanctification and highlights the nature of the phenomenon of Ghulūw since its emergence in early Islam. The research focuses on the positions of the Four Imams (Abū Ḥanīfah, Mālik, al-Shāfiʿī, and Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal), the Imams of Ahl al-Bayt (ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, al-Bāqir, and al-Ṣādiq), and major scholars such as Ibn Taymiyyah and Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, in confronting this phenomenon. The analysis shows how their warnings and disavowals of extremists were not merely creedal reactions but represented a protection of the human intellect from stagnation and blind imitation, and a preservation of the societal quality of life from chaos, takfīr (excommunication), division, and backwardness. The study confirms that the stance of these Imams embodies the principles of Islam in moderation and temperance and provides a model for dealing with intellectual extremism that threatens the stability of the intellectual, psychological, and social environment, which is necessary for the prosperity of societies and the sustainability of their well-being.

Keywords: Ghulūw, Sanctification of Individuals, Imams of Islam, Protection of the Intellect, Environmental Quality of Life, Moderation, Critical Analysis.

1. INTRODUCTION

Islam is the religion of moderation and temperance, a principle confirmed by its foundational texts, as in the Almighty's saying: {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} [Al-Baqarah: 143]. This noble verse establishes the principle of balance and moderation as a fundamental characteristic of the Islamic nation (al-Qurṭubī, 1384 H). Islam has explicitly and clearly forbidden religious extremism (Ghulūw), as Allah the Almighty says: {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"} [Al-Mā'idah: 77].

Ghulūw, in its essence, is the transgression of limits in matters, and it is a dangerous and ancient scourge, as old as humanity. Historically, this phenomenon appeared since the time of Noah (peace be upon him), passing through Greek civilization, and the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic nations; it continues to exist in our present time in various forms. Extremism in the sanctification of individuals, in particular, represents a grave deviation from the moderate path to which Islam calls and is one of the foremost challenges facing societies in all times and places, especially amidst the growth of extremist ideologies in the modern era.

The Imams of Islam, from the noble Companions to the Four Imams and the scholars of Ahl al-Bayt, confronted this phenomenon with great firmness, recognizing its danger to the creed and society. Their stance was not merely a theological reaction but was aimed at protecting the human intellect from stagnation and blind imitation, and preserving the quality of life in its various dimensions. In this context, the "environment" refers to the intellectual, social, and psychological environment of the community, which are essential components of a comprehensive quality of life. The intellectual and creedal disturbances caused by Ghulūw disrupt the psychological well-being of individuals, weaken the social fabric, and impede intellectual and cultural development,

thus negatively impacting the sustainability of societal welfare. This paper highlights the critical positions of these Imams and how they contributed to preserving this vital “environment” for the Muslim community.

2. Problem Statement

The research problem lies in that the phenomenon of religious extremism towards individuals and their sanctification continues to represent a major intellectual and social challenge in contemporary societies, despite Islam's call for moderation and temperance. In this era, which is supposed to be an age of awareness and scientific progress, groups and individuals still go to extremes in venerating certain people, elevating them above their human status to a degree that can be compared to divinity in some aspects. This reprehensible sanctification leads to the *تعطيل* (stagnation) of critical thinking, encourages blind imitation, and promotes absolute submission to the words and actions of these individuals, even if they contradict clear religious texts or sound logic.

The gravity of this phenomenon is not limited to creedal deviation but extends to directly threaten the “environmental” quality of life of societies. Intellectually, *Ghulūw* impedes the development of thought and innovation and leads to cognitive stagnation that harms a society's ability to adapt and renew (al-Blaihi, n.d.). Socially, *Ghulūw* contributes to *takfīr* (excommunication), division, and conflict, which fragments the social fabric, destabilizes society, and negatively impacts cooperation and solidarity (Lassloom, attached file). Psychologically, fanaticism and *Ghulūw* breed hatred and enmity, and disrupt the psychological peace of individuals and groups. These negative effects hinder any efforts towards sustainable development and comprehensive well-being. Consequently, understanding the stance of the Imams of Islam on this phenomenon and analyzing the dimensions of this stance is necessary to uncover ways to protect the intellectual, social, and psychological environment of contemporary societies.

3. Research Objectives

This research seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- To clarify the stance of the Imams of Islam (from the Companions to the Four Imams and the scholars of Ahl al-Bayt) on the phenomenon of *Ghulūw* in and the sanctification of individuals.
- To analyze the creedal and intellectual roots of the phenomenon of *Ghulūw* and how it was addressed from the perspective of these Imams.
- To uncover the negative effects of *Ghulūw* and the sanctification of individuals on the protection of the human intellect.
- To highlight the impact of *Ghulūw* and the sanctification of individuals on the environmental quality of life (intellectual, social, and psychological) of societies.
- To provide an integrated vision for confronting *Ghulūw* based on the methodology of the Imams in preserving the creed and protecting the community.

4. Research Questions

This research attempts to answer a set of pivotal questions:

- What is the Sharia-based concept of *Ghulūw* in individuals and reprehensible sanctification?
- How were the stances of the Imams of Islam (the Companions, the Four Imams, and the Imams of Ahl al-Bayt) on the phenomenon of *Ghulūw* and the sanctification of individuals manifested?
- What are the effects of *Ghulūw* in individuals on the protection of the human intellect?
- How does *Ghulūw* in individuals affect the environmental quality of life (intellectual, social, and psychological) of the community?
- What are the recommendations derived from the methodology of the Imams in addressing *Ghulūw* to protect the intellect and enhance the environmental and social quality of life?

5. LITERATURE REVIEW

Numerous studies have addressed the phenomenon of *Ghulūw* in Islam, although the focus on the stance of the Imams on this phenomenon and its impact on the aspects of the intellectual, social, and psychological “environment” still requires further deepening. These studies form an important launching point for this research:

5.1. Studies on the concept and types of *Ghulūw*

- A master's thesis titled: "*Taqdīs al-Ashkhāṣ fī al-Fikr al-Bāṭinī: Dirāsah ‘Aqadīyah li-Firaq al-Ismā‘īliyyah al-Nuṣayriyyah al-Durūz ‘Arḍ wa-Naqd fī Ḍaw’ al-Kitāb wal-Sunnah*" [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] (Dina bint Muhyi al-Din ibn Abd al-Hamid, n.d.). This study focused on a specific aspect of *Ghulūw*, which is the esoteric aspect and how individuals are sanctified within these sects.
- "*Taqdīs al-Ashkhāṣ fī al-Fikr al-Ṣūfī: ‘Arḍ wa-Taḥlīl ‘alā Ḍaw’ al-Kitāb wal-Sunnah*" [The Sanctification of Persons in Sufi Thought: A Presentation and Analysis in Light of the Qur'an and Sunnah] (Lūh, n.d.). This research highlights the manifestations of *Ghulūw* in the veneration of saints (*awliyā*) within some Sufi currents.
- "*Mazāhir Taqdīs al-Ashkhāṣ ‘inda al-Shī‘ah al-Ithnay ‘Ashariyyah: ‘Arḍ wa-Naqd*" [Manifestations of the Sanctification of Persons Among the Twelver Shia: A Presentation and Critique] (al-Zahrānī, n.d.). This study dealt with the dimensions of *Ghulūw* in the veneration of the Imams among the Twelver Shia.
- "*Al-Judhūr al-Tārīkhīyah li-Ḥaqīqat al-Ghulū wal-Taṭarruf wal-Irhāb wal-‘Unf*" [The Historical Roots of the Reality of Extremism, Radicalism, Terrorism, and Violence] (al-Shibl, n.d.). This study provides a historical background for *Ghulūw* and radicalism, pointing to its different types and its evolution over the ages, with a focus on doctrinal and political aspects.

These valuable studies offer a deep understanding of the types of *Ghulūw* and its roots in different contexts and highlight its repercussions on doctrine and society. However, they often focus on describing the phenomenon or criticizing it from a direct doctrinal perspective, or they deal with it in the context of historical sects.

5.2. Studies on the stances of the Imams regarding creedal 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 primary reference in the critique of innovations and deviations and shows the methodology of the Salaf (predecessors) in dealing with them.
- "*Minḥāj al-Sunnah al-Nabawīyah fī naqd 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 writings of Imam Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, such as "*Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*" [The Book of Monotheism] (n.d.), which focus on clarifying pure monotheism, rejecting polytheism (*shirk*) and its means, and providing 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 this research from previous studies is that it does not stop at presenting the types of *Ghulūw* or the positions of the Imams separately. Instead, it provides 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 angle adds value to scientific research, especially in the context of the growing interest in concepts of comprehensive sustainability that go beyond the material 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 community.

6. METHODOLOGY

This research is based on a dual methodology to ensure comprehensiveness and accuracy in the analysis and inference:

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'ammuq*), and religious formalism (*tanattu'*), 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" (Ibn Taymiyyah, 1412 H, Vol. 35, p. 106). 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, p. 136). 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

Linguistically, *Taqdīs* means purification, cleansing, and blessing (Ibn Manẓūr, 1414 H). 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-Aẓharī (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 *yaḥtamīlu* (is open to) error, and the opinion of others is erroneous but *yaḥtamīlu* (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 Manṣūriyya, 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 (Lassloom, n.d.).

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 applied studies that address the phenomenon of extremism from various angles, including studying its roots in the contemporary context, analyzing its mechanisms, and assessing its impact on the comprehensive quality of life, including sustainable development in all its dimensions (Lassloom, n.d.).
- **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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