

UNRAVELING THE ESOTERIC TAPESTRY: A HERMENEUTICAL ANALYSIS OF SUFI SYMBOLISM IN SHAIKH NASIRU KABARA'S THE PRAYER OF Gnostics

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ABSTRACT

This study delves into the intricate layers of Sufi symbolism embedded in Shaikh Nasiru Kabara's poem The Prayer of Gnostics, employing content analysis to illuminate the esoteric dimensions of Islamic mysticism. Anchored in a robust theoretical framework encompassing concepts such as Tajalli, Fana, Baqaa, Dhikr, Fayd, Ma'rifa, Qurb, and Wahdaniyya, the research critically examines the mystical language and symbolism used to articulate profound spiritual experiences. By synthesizing insights from existing scholarship on Sufi literature and Islamic mysticism, the study identifies key symbolic motifs and deciphers their significance within the broader metaphysical and spiritual discourse. The findings underscore the pivotal role of mystical language in conveying transcendental experiences, while also highlighting its implications for understanding the philosophical underpinnings of Sufism. Ultimately, this research enriches scholarly engagement with Sufi literature and lays a foundation for future inquiries into the intersections of symbolism, spirituality, and linguistic expression in Islamic mystical traditions.

KEYWORDS :Tajalli, Fana, Baqaa, Dhikr, Fayd, Ma'rifa, Qurb, Sufi symbolism, Nasiru's Kabara.

INTRODUCTION.

Sufism, or Tasawwuf, represents the mystical dimension of Islam, emphasizing the pursuit of spiritual growth, self-purification, and the ultimate goal of unity with Allah. It prioritizes the inner dimensions of faith over external rituals, urging adherents to cultivate love, devotion, and intimacy with the Divine. Sufi practitioners believe that the purpose of human existence lies in transcending the material world and attaining proximity to God through the refinement of the heart and soul.

Historically, Sufism emerged in the early centuries of Islam as a response to the growing formalism in religious practices. Early Sufis sought to internalize the teachings of Islam by embodying the prophetic ideals of simplicity, humility, and God-consciousness. Over time, Sufism evolved into a rich spiritual tradition, spawning numerous orders (turuq) such as the Qadiriyya, Naqshbandiyya, and Chishtiyya, each characterized by its unique practices, doctrines, and methods of spiritual training. These Sufi orders spread across the Islamic world, contributing significantly to the cultural and spiritual landscapes of Muslim societies through literature, art, and community engagement.



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Shaikh Nasiru Kabara: A Luminary of Nigerian Sufism

Shaikh Nasiru Kabara (1912 – 1996) was a renowned Sufi scholar, poet, and spiritual

leader who profoundly influenced the Islamic intellectual and mystical traditions in West Africa. A distinguished figure in the Qadiriyya Sufi order, founded by Abdul Qadir Gilani in the 12th century, Shaikh Nasiru Kabara upheld and revitalized the teachings of Sufism in Nigeria. Known for his deep spiritual insight and intellectual prowess, he articulated complex mystical concepts in ways accessible to both scholars and laypeople.

Through his prolific writings, lectures, and poetry, Shaikh Nasiru Kabara became a beacon of spirituality, promoting the values of devotion, humility, and love for the Divine. Among his many works, *The Prayer of Gnostics* stands out as a masterpiece of mystical expression, blending profound theological insights with poetic elegance. His literary and spiritual contributions extended beyond Nigeria, earning him recognition among scholars and spiritual seekers worldwide.

THE INTERSECTION OF SUFISM AND SHAIKH NASIRU KABARA'S LEGACY

Shaikh Nasiru Kabara's teachings and writings are deeply entrenched in the principles and ethos of Sufism. His poetry, particularly *The Prayer of Gnostics*, exemplifies the Sufi tradition's use of rich symbolism, allegory, and metaphor to convey profound spiritual truths. This approach aligns with classical Sufi literature, which often employs these devices to express the ineffable nature of divine realities and spiritual experiences.

In *The Prayer of Gnostics*, Shaikh Nasiru Kabara incorporates core Sufi concepts such as Tajalli (Manifestation), Fana (Annihilation), Baqaa (Subsistence), Dhikr (Remembrance), Fayd (Effusion), Ma'rifa (Gnosis), Qurb (Proximity), and Wahdaniyya (Unity). Each of these terms encapsulates a facet of the Sufi spiritual journey, illustrating the seeker's path from self-annihilation to abiding in the Divine Presence. Additionally, his work reflects lesser-explored mystical dimensions like Takhalli (Emptying), the purification of the self; Sirr (Secret), the innermost spiritual connection with Allah; and Djanabul Haqq (Divine Proximity), the culminating state of nearness to the Divine Essence.

By embedding these concepts into his poetry, Shaikh Nasiru Kabara provides a vivid and experiential account of the Sufi path. His writings not only serve as a guide for spiritual seekers but also offer scholars a nuanced understanding of Islamic mysticism as practiced in West Africa. His ability to adapt universal Sufi themes to the cultural and social context of his region highlights the dynamic and inclusive nature of Sufism.



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In essence, Shaikh Nasiru Kabara's work bridges the historical and contemporary realms of Sufism, illuminating its relevance and transformative power in modern times. Through his teachings, the rich spiritual tapestry of Sufism finds renewed expression, inviting readers to embark on a journey of self-discovery, divine love, and ultimate unity with Allah. Methods Employed by Shaikh Nasiru Kabara in Utilizing Sufi Terms in The Prayer of Gnostics

1. **Symbolic Representation:** Shaikh Nasiru Kabara skillfully employs Sufi symbols and metaphors to express intricate spiritual realities. For instance, "Tajalli" (Manifestation) is depicted as the radiance of divine light illuminating the heart of a gnostic, symbolizing the transformative power of spiritual enlightenment. This symbolic approach invites readers to engage deeply with the spiritual essence of the poem.
2. **Allusive Language:** The poem utilizes an allusive style, referencing Sufi concepts and terminologies in a subtle, indirect manner. This technique assumes a certain level of familiarity with Sufi doctrine on the part of the reader, creating an intellectual and spiritual challenge that deepens their engagement with the text. Concepts such as "Fana" (Annihilation) and "Wahdaniyya" (Unity) are embedded within the lines, leaving readers to unravel their meanings through contemplation.
3. **Multi-Layered Meanings:** The use of Sufi terms in the poem is characterized by their rich, layered meanings. For example, "Fana" can signify the annihilation of the ego in one interpretation, or the complete dissolution of individuality in the presence of the Divine in another. This multiplicity of meanings allows the poem to resonate differently with each reader, depending on their spiritual understanding and experiences.
4. **Intertextual References:** Kabara integrates references to classical Sufi texts, teachings, and traditions, weaving a dense tapestry of intertextual connections. The term "Wahdaniyya" (Unity), a cornerstone of Sufi theology, is presented within the context of earlier mystical discourses, grounding the poem in the broader framework of Islamic mysticism.
5. **Vivid Poetic Imagery:** Through evocative imagery, Kabara captures the emotional and spiritual nuances of Sufi concepts. The state of "Qurb" (Proximity), for instance, is poetically rendered as being "close to the Divine Presence, like a drop merging into the vast ocean," illustrating the intimate yet infinite nature of divine closeness.
6. **Rhetorical Flourishes:** The poet employs an array of rhetorical devices, such as metaphor, allegory, and personification, to communicate the depth of Sufi ideas. "Dhikr" (Remembrance), for example, is likened to a "garden of roses," encapsulating the beauty and serenity of a heart immersed in the remembrance of God.

7. Esoteric Interpretations: Kabara delves into the hidden, mystical dimensions of Sufi concepts. His interpretation of "Fayd" (Effusion), for example, goes beyond its surface meaning to describe the divine overflow of blessings and mercy, enriching the reader's understanding of spiritual abundance.

8. Integration of Arabic Terminology: By embedding Arabic phrases and terms, Kabara maintains the authenticity and spiritual resonance of Sufi language. This linguistic choice not only preserves the sanctity of the original terms but also connects the work to the foundational texts of Islamic mysticism, such as the Quran and Hadith

9. Contextual Embedding: Kabara situates Sufi terms within the broader Islamic intellectual tradition, drawing connections to Quranic verses, prophetic sayings, and classical Islamic scholarship. This contextualization grounds abstract mystical concepts in a familiar religious framework, making them more accessible to a diverse audience

10. Personal Spiritual Insights: The poet draws deeply from his own spiritual journey and mystical experiences, lending authenticity and authority to his use of Sufi terminology. His descriptions of "Takhalli" (Emptying), "Sirr" (Secret), and "Djanabul Haqq" (Divine Proximity) reflect a lived understanding of these states, enriching the text with genuine spiritual depth.

11. Transformational Emphasis: Kabara highlights the transformative nature of Sufi concepts, presenting them as not merely theological ideas but as dynamic processes of inner change. The progression from "Takhalli" (purging the self of base desires) to "Tajalli" (divine illumination) illustrates the aspirational path of spiritual seekers striving for divine union.

12. Universal Themes within Local Context: While deeply rooted in universal Sufi principles, Kabara subtly incorporates cultural and contextual elements, making his work resonate with local audiences. By adapting mystical language to reflect the lived realities of his community, he bridges the gap between classical Sufi doctrine and contemporary spiritual life.

Through these methods, Shaikh Nasiru Kabara masterfully transforms The Prayer of Gnostics into a profound spiritual guide, rich with layers of meaning and deeply rooted in the Sufi tradition. His intricate use of language and symbolism not only enriches the literary landscape but also offers readers a pathway to explore the transformative depths of Islamic mysticism.

SUFI SYMBOLISM AND ITS ROLE IN SUFI LITERATURE

Sufi symbolism involves the use of metaphors, allegories, and symbols to articulate profound spiritual realities and mystical experiences that often transcend conventional language. These symbols are intricately tied to Islamic theology, cultural heritage, and the natural world, serving as conduits for



expressing ineffable truths. Sufi authors and poets employ these symbols to weave a tapestry of spiritual insights that resonates with the inner journey of the seeker.

TYPES OF SUFI SYMBOLS

1. Natural Symbols:

Symbols derived from nature, such as the rose, the nightingale, the sun, and the ocean, are frequently employed in Sufi literature. The rose, for instance, often symbolizes divine beauty and the soul's blossoming in spiritual enlightenment, while the ocean represents the boundless depths of divine mystery.

2. Archetypal Symbols:

Archetypes like the lover and the beloved, the journey, and the quest are central to Sufi thought. These symbols encapsulate universal experiences of love, yearning, and transformation, mirroring the seeker's relationship with the Divine and their spiritual evolution.

3. Islamic Symbols:

Rooted in Islamic theology and traditions, symbols such as the Kaaba, the Quran, and the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) represent guidance, sacred knowledge, and divine connection. These symbols bridge the metaphysical and the tangible, making divine truths accessible within an Islamic framework.

SIGNIFICANCE OF SUFI SYMBOLISM IN LITERATURE

1. Expression of Complex Truths:

Sufi symbolism allows for the articulation of intricate spiritual concepts, such as unity (Tawhid), annihilation (Fana), and subsistence (Baqaa), in ways that engage both the intellect and the heart.

2. Eliciting Mystery and Wonder:

The veiled nature of symbols invites readers to delve into their meanings, fostering a sense of mystery and spiritual curiosity.

3. Depiction of the Ineffable:

By their very nature, symbols transcend the limits of language, offering glimpses into experiences and realities that words alone cannot encapsulate.

4. Guidance for Spiritual Growth:

Symbols act as signposts on the spiritual path, offering insights into the stages of the soul's journey and the virtues necessary for divine proximity.

5. Encouraging Reflection and Contemplation:

Sufi literature, enriched by symbolism, provides fertile ground for meditation, prompting seekers to explore the deeper dimensions of their existence and their relationship with the Divine.





EXAMPLES OF SUFI SYMBOLISM IN LITERATURE

1. Rumi's Rose and Nightingale:

Jalaluddin Rumi often uses the rose to symbolize divine beauty and the nightingale to represent the soul passionately yearning for divine love.

2. Ibn Arabi's Ocean:

In Ibn Arabi's metaphysical writings, the ocean symbolizes the infinite essence of God, unfathomable and ever-expanding, inviting readers to surrender to the divine mystery.

3. Attar's Birds in The Conference of the Birds:

Fariduddin Attar uses birds to represent individual souls on their collective quest for divine truth, each bird's struggles mirroring the spiritual challenges faced by seekers.

Sufi symbolism is an indispensable element of Sufi literature, offering a nuanced and multifaceted approach to conveying spiritual realities. It not only enriches the textual landscape but also provides readers with tools for introspection and spiritual growth. Understanding these symbols allows for a more profound appreciation of Sufi works and their timeless insights into the journey toward the Divine. Through symbols, Sufi poets and thinkers connect the seen and the unseen, the finite and the infinite, creating a legacy that continues to inspire spiritual seekers across generations.

Theoretical Implications of Hermeneutics Theory in Analyzing Mystical Linguistic Terminologies in Shaikh Nasiru Kabara's The Prayer of Gnostics

This study explores the relevance of Hermeneutics theory in analyzing Shaikh Nasiru Kabara's usage of mystical linguistic terminologies in his poem The Prayer of Gnostics. Hermeneutics provides a robust theoretical framework to understand the multi-layered meanings embedded in mystical texts, particularly in the context of Sufi symbolism. Below are the theoretical implications of Hermeneutics theory for this research:

1. Contextual Interpretation of Mystical Language

Hermeneutics emphasizes the importance of understanding the historical, cultural, and social context in which a text is produced. Applying this theory to The Prayer of Gnostics necessitates exploring the socio-cultural and religious environment of 20th-century Nigeria. The context of Shaikh Nasiru Kabara's spiritual and intellectual milieu enriches the understanding of his mystical linguistic choices.

2. The Circular Nature of Interpretation

Interpretation in Hermeneutics is a dynamic and iterative process, characterized by the "hermeneutic circle," where meaning is derived through continuous interplay between the text and the interpreter's preconceptions. This study applies this principle by acknowledging the interpreter's initial



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understanding of Sufi terminologies and iteratively refining it through engagement with Kabara's poetic expressions.

3. Pre-Understanding as a Hermeneutic Tool

Hermeneutics underscores the role of the interpreter's pre-existing knowledge and biases in shaping the interpretive process. In analyzing Kabara's use of mystical terms, this study recognizes the influence of the interpreter's familiarity with Sufi thought and linguistic traditions, while striving for an objective engagement with the poem's textual elements.

4. Fusion of Horizons in Mystical Symbolism

The concept of "fusion of horizons" in Hermeneutics involves merging the interpreter's contemporary perspective with the historical and cultural framework of the text. This research integrates modern linguistic and mystical analytical approaches with Kabara's classical Sufi terminologies, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the spiritual nuances in his work.

5. Empathy in Understanding Mystical Linguistic Terminologies

Hermeneutics advocates for empathetic engagement with the text, allowing interpreters to connect with the author's spiritual and emotional experiences. In the context of *The Prayer of Gnostics*, this involves interpreting Kabara's mystical language not merely as literary expressions but as profound articulations of his spiritual insights and experiential knowledge of the divine.

RELEVANCE OF HERMENEUTICS THEORY TO THE RESEARCH

By employing Hermeneutics theory, this study transcends superficial interpretations of Shaikh Nasiru Kabara's mystical language, uncovering the intricate interplay between linguistic expression, spiritual experience, and cultural context. The approach facilitates a nuanced understanding of how Kabara's poetic diction conveys esoteric knowledge and mystical insight, enriching both academic discourse on Sufi poetry and the broader understanding of Islamic mystical traditions in 20th-century West Africa.

This theoretical framework positions Hermeneutics as a vital lens for comprehensively analyzing the mystical linguistic richness in *The Prayer of Gnostics*, thus contributing to both literary and spiritual studies.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative content analysis methodology to examine Shaikh Nasiru Kabara's poem *The Prayer of the Gnostics*. The poem, translated from Hausa into English, served as the primary data for a detailed exploration of its language, imagery, and symbolism. The analysis followed a systematic process, including familiarization with the text, coding, categorization, and interpretation to uncover deeper meanings and themes. To enhance the validity of the findings, the study employed triangulation by comparing the poem's elements with classical Sufi texts and contemporary scholarly interpretations.



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Peer review and member checking were also incorporated to ensure reliability and accuracy.

Despite the depth of the analysis, the study faced certain limitations. Challenges included potential misinterpretations due to language translation, the influence of cultural context, and the inherent risk of interpretive bias. Nevertheless, this research provides a

comprehensive examination of the poem's themes, such as Sufi metaphysics and Islamic spirituality. By bridging poetic expression with Sufi thought, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of the spiritual and metaphysical dimensions embedded in the poem.

RESULT

Exploring Sufi Metaphysics in Shaikh Nasiru Kabara ' s The Prayer of the Gnostics: A Hermeneutical Analysis of Tajalli, Takalli, Djanabul Haqq, Azimma, and Qiblah

This study delves into the intricate tapestry of Sufi metaphysics by exploring ten profound concepts: Tajalli (Divine Manifestation), Takalli (Assumption of Divine Attributes), Djanabul Haqq (The Presence of Ultimate Truth), Azimma (Divine Greatness), Qiblah (Spiritual Orientation), Ruhi Madaukaki (The Supreme Spirit), Ganinsa (Witnessing the Divine), Kundin Bayani (Volumes of Knowledge), Limami (The Divine Leader), and Ni (The Pronoun of the Divine Lord). These concepts, as intricately expressed in Shaikh Nasiru Kabara' s poetic masterpiece, The Prayer of the Gnostics, serve as gateways to understanding the Sufi spiritual path.

By integrating classical Sufi teachings with Shaikh Kabara ' s poetic and mystical interpretations, this analysis sheds light on the multifaceted nature of these concepts and their relevance to spiritual seekers. Drawing from the timeless wisdom of Sufi masters like Al-Ghazali, Ibn Arabi, and Al-Junayd, alongside Kabara' s unique perspectives, the study emphasizes the interconnectedness of these metaphysical ideas and their transformative potential for individuals striving for Divine proximity.

Shaikh Kabara' s The Prayer of the Gnostics is not merely a work of poetic beauty; it is a spiritual manual offering profound insights into the path of self-purification and divine realization. His verses transcend literal meanings, weaving together rich metaphors, spiritual symbolism, and practical guidance. The text illuminates the stages of spiritual ascension, beginning with the unveiling of Divine Light (Tajalli), progressing through the embodiment of Divine Attributes (Takalli), and culminating in the intimate awareness of Allah' s Presence (Djanabul Haqq).

The inclusion of concepts like Ruhi Madaukaki, symbolizing the exalted and omnipresent Spirit, and Ganinsa, which captures the mystical act of



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witnessing the Divine, adds depth to the prayer's spiritual framework. Meanwhile, Kundin Bayani, representing the hidden and revealed knowledge within creation, highlights the importance of reflection and contemplation in uncovering Allah's signs. Similarly, the notions of Limami as the ultimate guide and Ni as the divine self-reference reaffirm Allah's absolute sovereignty and unity.

Through its intricate exploration of these metaphysical principles, this study underscores the practical implications of Kabara's teachings. It shows how the concepts articulated in *The Prayer of the Gnostics* not only inspire seekers but also provide a roadmap for navigating the challenges of the spiritual path. The poetry encourages an active pursuit of inner transformation and virtuous living, reminding readers that the journey toward Allah involves both mystical experiences and ethical responsibility.

By bridging classical Sufi thought with contemporary relevance, Shaikh Kabara's work continues to resonate as a timeless source of inspiration for those yearning to deepen their connection with the Divine.

TAJALLI (MANIFESTATION)

Tajalli, in Sufi metaphysics, signifies the Divine Light manifesting within the heart of the seeker, unveiling hidden spiritual realities. Ibn Arabi describes it as "the self-disclosure of the Divine Names and Attributes within the heart," enabling the gnostic to simultaneously perceive the unity and plurality of the Divine Essence. Al-Ghazali emphasizes that this unveiling is not merely intellectual but a luminous transformation, where Divine insight penetrates the soul.

Modern scholars such as William Chittick argue that Tajalli is dynamic, proportional to the purity of the seeker's heart. Annemarie Schimmel regards it as the cornerstone of the mystical experience, where the unity of God becomes the foundation of all perception.

IN KABARA'S POETRY

In *The Prayer of the Gnostics*, Kabara illustrates Tajalli as the heart's illumination achieved through devotion and remembrance (dhikr). He compares the heart to a mirror, polished by spiritual discipline to reflect the Divine Light. Kabara's poetic phrase, "Mukhtarin sallarsu yana cike da tajalli" (*The Dawn of the Gnostics is the unalloyed Tajalli of the Supreme Ego*), portrays Tajalli as an ongoing divine encounter, both a gift and a milestone on the spiritual journey.

This concept reminds seekers that Divine Light is not only revealed externally but experienced internally, as the heart becomes attuned to the infinite. Kabara underscores the transformative power of Tajalli, inviting seekers to experience the radiance of God's presence through sustained spiritual effort.





TAKALLI (ASSUMPTION)

Takalli involves the seeker adopting and embodying Divine Attributes— such as mercy, justice, and wisdom— in their character. Al-Junayd identifies it as the internalization of God ’ s perfections, enabling the seeker to reflect divine virtues in their life. Ibn Arabi describes it as the harmonization of the seeker’s being with the Divine Names, fostering a state of ethical and spiritual alignment.

Contemporary scholars, such as Seyyed Hossein Nasr, link Takalli to the principle of Takhalluq bi-Akhlaq Allah—the imitation of God’s attributes—as a cornerstone of spiritual growth.

IN KABARA’S POETRY

Kabara interprets Takalli as the transformation of the seeker through the integration of Divine virtues. He links Takalli with Tajalli, highlighting that the ethical refinement necessary for Tajalli begins with Takalli. The line “Wannan yakan faru kawai idan ka dace da tajalli wanda yakan biyo bayan takhalli” (This occurs to you only if you are exposed to Tajalli, which follows from Takhalli) emphasizes the sequential nature of these spiritual stages.

Kabara portrays the seeker as a vessel for virtues like compassion (rahma), justice (‘adl), and wisdom (hikma), emphasizing that true spirituality manifests not only in mystical experiences but in virtuous action. Through Takalli, the seeker becomes a living embodiment of Divine principles, harmonizing their inner state with outward conduct.

DJANABUL HAQQ (THE PRESENCE OF TRUTH)

Djanabul Haqq represents the intimate realization of God ’ s immanence and transcendence. Al-Ghazali describes it as a state where the heart becomes a repository of Divine truths, transcending conceptual knowledge to achieve direct awareness of God. Ibn Arabi views it as the culmination of the spiritual journey, where the seeker perceives all existence as a reflection of Divine Reality.

Fazlur Rahman and Carl W. Ernst regard this realization as transformative, reshaping the seeker ’ s understanding of existence and aligning their consciousness with the eternal Divine presence.

IN KABARA’S POETRY

Kabara poetically captures Djanabul Haqq’ s essence with the lines, “Da ikonsa Janabu al-Hakki ya zabi kasancewa a boye” (In His August Omnipresence, Djanabul Haqq has chosen to be Inaccessible). Here, Kabara highlights both the transcendence and immanence of God, emphasizing that while God ’ s essence remains beyond full comprehension, His presence can be intimately felt.





Through prayer, contemplation, and submission, Kabara describes Djanabul Haqq as a profound encounter with the Divine that transforms the seeker's perception of reality. It is not merely an intellectual realization but a spiritual awakening where God's presence saturates the seeker's being, revealing the interconnectedness of all creation.

AZIMMA (THE GREATNESS)

Azimma reflects the majesty and grandeur of God, inspiring awe and humility in the seeker. Al-Junayd describes it as the realization of God's infinite majesty, compelling the soul to surrender in reverence. Ibn Arabi explores its metaphysical dimensions, portraying Azimma as a manifestation of Divine sovereignty over all creation.

Tim Winter (Abdal Hakim Murad) connects Azimma with the seeker's spiritual attitude, emphasizing that recognition of God's greatness fosters submission and trust in Divine Will.

IN KABARA'S POETRY

In The Prayer of the Gnostics, Kabara writes, "Kowacce irin azimma ta kau..." (All accountability was suspended when she launched her moral assault). This metaphor underscores the overwhelming nature of Divine Grandeur, which dismantles human arrogance and brings the seeker to their knees in submission.

Kabara encourages seekers to approach God with humility and awe, recognizing their limitations in the face of God's infinite greatness. He portrays Azimma as both a reminder of human frailty and a call to unwavering faith in God's omnipotence.

QIBLAH (DIRECTION)

Qiblah, while traditionally associated with the physical orientation toward the Kaaba during prayer, holds a deeper metaphysical meaning in Sufism. Al-Ghazali describes it as the inward alignment of the heart toward God, while Ibn Arabi portrays it as the axis of the seeker's spiritual journey.

IN KABARA'S POETRY

Kabara reimagines Qiblah as a metaphor for the heart's alignment with Divine Will, writing, "Wannan itace ce babbar kiblah..." (For this is the Great Qiblah towards which whenever you look, you will meet with the Countenance of God). This perspective shifts the focus from physical orientation to an inward spiritual steadfastness.

Through this imagery, Kabara urges seekers to maintain constancy in devotion and orient their entire being toward God. The Qiblah becomes a symbol of unwavering spiritual focus and commitment to the ultimate goal of Divine proximity.





RUHI MADAUKAKI

The term Ruhi is derived from the Arabic root ruh (روح), meaning "spirit" or "soul," while Madaukaki in Hausa translates to "Supreme" or "Exalted." Together, the term means "The Supreme Spirit" or "The Exalted Soul."

Classical Sufi scholars such as Al-Ghazali and Ibn Arabi associate ruh with the divine spark within humans, representing a connection to Allah. It is viewed as a pure and exalted element that facilitates spiritual enlightenment. They emphasize that witnessing the "Supreme Spirit" refers to a direct, inner realization of Allah's beauty and majesty.

Modern scholars like Seyyed Hossein Nasr interpret Ruhi Madaukaki as a reflection of Allah's omnipresence and an individual's spiritual elevation. They argue that in contemporary spirituality, this term serves to remind believers of the intimate and ongoing presence of Allah in their lives, both day and night.

THE SHAIKH'S POEM:

"Da Ruhi Madaukaki cikin tsarkakan zukatansu Mukhtarin sallarsu ya kunshi ganin kyawun ruhi Madaukaki a dare da rana."

"The Dawn Prayer or Al-Arifan consists in witnessing the exquisite beauty of The Supreme Ego in the Day as well as at Night."

Shaikh Nasiru Kabara uses Ruhi Madaukaki to express a constant and unwavering awareness of Allah's beauty and essence. The depiction is rooted in the mystical state of perpetual remembrance (dhikr), where the purified heart becomes a mirror reflecting divine attributes.

GANINSA

The word Ganinsa is derived from the Hausa verb gani, meaning "to see." It translates as "His Seeing" or "His Witnessing."

Classical scholars like Al-Junayd and Imam Al-Qushayri describe ganinsa in terms of tajalli—the manifestation of Allah's divine light to the heart of a seeker. This witnessing does not occur with physical eyes but through spiritual unveiling, a key theme in Sufi thought.

Modern interpretations, such as those by Annemarie Schimmel, emphasize ganinsa as the culmination of spiritual striving. It represents a heightened state of consciousness where distractions cease, and the seeker becomes fully attuned to divine realities.

THE SHAIKH'S POEM:

"Game da ubangiji babu abinda zai dauki hankalinka wajen ganinsa."

"As to the Unseen, you cannot be distracted with anything else when you are witnessing the unseen."



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The Shaikh portrays ganinsa as the experience of divine unveiling (tajalli), where the seeker perceives Allah's presence directly in their heart. This state is free from worldly distractions and signifies the ultimate spiritual attainment.

KUNDIN BAYANI

Kundin Bayani in Hausa means "Volumes of Knowledge" or "Books of Revelation." Scholars like Rumi and Ibn Ata'illah suggest that all of creation is a book revealing Allah's attributes. Every particle in existence contains signs (ayat) that point to Allah's omnipotence and wisdom, accessible only through contemplation and spiritual insight.

Contemporary scholars argue that Kundin Bayani symbolizes the interplay between science and spirituality. They see it as evidence that modern discoveries in nature and the universe affirm the majesty of Allah's creation.

THE SHAIKH'S POEM:

"Kowanne burbushi halitta yana kunshe da Kundin bayanai masu ban-mamaki game da ikon Ubangiji."

"The particles of existence are volumes, which inform us about the wonders of Divine Attributes."

Shaikh Nasiru Kabara uses Kundin Bayani to highlight the miraculous nature of creation. He stresses that while some of these "volumes" are accessible to humanity, others remain hidden, known only to the Gnostics who achieve spiritual mastery.

LIMAMI

Limami is the Hausa adaptation of the Arabic word Imam, meaning "leader," particularly in the context of prayer.

Classical interpretations regard the Imam as both a physical leader in congregational prayers and a spiritual guide leading humanity to Allah. Scholars like Al-Muhasibi view the Imam as representing divine authority.

Modern scholars expand the term's scope, seeing Allah as the ultimate Imam, the one who leads creation in worship through His guidance and presence in all aspects of life.

THE SHAIKH'S POEM:

"Ka bari wanda yake binka sallah ya shige gaba, domin shi ne Limami, ba Kaiba; Shi kadai ne Ubangiji Mai gamsarwa."

"Let your follower in prayer come forward, for He is the Imam, not you, and set no partners to Him in your dealings."



Shaikh Nasiru Kabara redefines Limami as a metaphor for Allah, the ultimate guide and leader. This underscores the dependency of creation on Allah's leadership and the futility of setting any partner alongside Him.

NI

The Hausa pronoun Ni means "I," denoting the first-person singular.

Sufi scholars like Al-Hallaj and Ibn Arabi describe the I as the divine self, where Allah proclaims His oneness and supreme authority. This concept often intertwines with Tawhid (Oneness of Allah) and the idea that all existence ultimately reflects Allah.

Contemporary thinkers caution against misinterpretations of such expressions, emphasizing their symbolic nature. They argue that these phrases signify Allah's transcendence and immanence rather than equating creation with the Creator.

The Shaikh's Poem:

"Ni ne Ni, Kuma Limami Shi ne Ni; dukkanin halittu suna nuni da Ni, a irin fahimtar masu bauta da kadaita Ubangiji."

"I am I, the Imam is I. The whole existence is I, in the view of all monotheistic egos."

The Shaikh uses Ni to express Allah's self-declaration of sovereignty and unity. It reflects a mystical understanding of the oneness of existence (wahdat al-wujud), where all creation points to Allah as the ultimate reality. This interpretation aligns with the essence of Sufi metaphysics and Islamic monotheism.

In conclusion, Shaikh Nasiru Kabara's *The Prayer of the Gnostics* offers a rich tapestry of Sufi metaphysical concepts that serve as both a philosophical and practical guide for spiritual seekers. His poetic exploration of Tajalli, Takalli, Djanabul Haqq, Azimma, Qiblah, Ruhi Madaukaki, Ganinsa, Kundin Bayani, Limami, and Ni provides deep insights into the nature of divine manifestation, spiritual realization, and ethical conduct. These concepts, when understood and internalized, offer a transformative path toward divine proximity and self-purification, guiding the seeker on the mystical journey to experience the Divine in all aspects of life.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study offers an in-depth exploration of Sufi metaphysical concepts as articulated in Shaikh Nasiru Kabara's *The Prayer of the Gnostics*. The concepts analyzed in the study—Tajalli, Takalli, Djanabul Haqq, Azimma, Qiblah, Ruhi Madaukaki, Ganinsa, Kundin Bayani, Limami, and Ni—represent core elements of Sufi spirituality, each of which is intricately



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connected to the mystical journey toward Divine proximity. Kabara's poetic treatment of these concepts provides a unique lens through which to understand the metaphysical underpinnings of Sufism and their practical relevance for spiritual seekers.

1. TAJALLI (DIVINE MANIFESTATION)

Tajalli, as the Divine Light manifesting within the heart of the seeker, signifies the unveiling of hidden spiritual realities. In both classical and contemporary Sufi thought, Tajalli is viewed as a dynamic force that reveals the unity and diversity of the Divine Essence. The study highlights Kabara's portrayal of Tajalli as both a transformative and ongoing encounter with the Divine. By presenting Tajalli as a luminous experience that progressively illuminates the heart, Kabara emphasizes the pivotal role of sustained spiritual practice in facilitating Divine insight. This aligns with the perspectives of classical Sufi scholars like Ibn Arabi, who viewed the heart as a mirror reflecting the Divine light, and modern scholars such as Chittick, who emphasized its transformative potential.

2. TAKALLI (ASSUMPTION OF DIVINE ATTRIBUTES)

Takalli involves the internalization of Divine Attributes, which is essential for aligning the seeker's character with Divine perfection. The study underscores the sequential relationship between Tajalli and Takalli, with Kabara highlighting that ethical refinement through Takalli is a prerequisite for the deeper spiritual experiences associated with Tajalli. This understanding of Takalli is in line with classical scholars like Al-Junayd, who stressed the importance of embodying virtues such as mercy, justice, and wisdom, as well as contemporary scholars like Nasr, who saw it as a means of cultivating the divine qualities within. Kabara's poetry reflects this transformation, portraying the seeker as becoming a living embodiment of the Divine virtues, thus merging mystical experience with ethical responsibility.

3. DJANABUL HAQQ (THE PRESENCE OF ULTIMATE TRUTH)

Djanabul Haqq is a concept that signifies the intimate experience of God's immanence and transcendence. Kabara's treatment of Djanabul Haqq emphasizes the duality of God's Presence, wherein God is both transcendent and immanent. This view is consistent with the mystical experiences described by Sufi luminaries such as Al-Ghazali and Ibn Arabi. Kabara's poetic expression that God is "Inaccessible" yet simultaneously present resonates with the complex nature of Divine awareness, wherein the seeker experiences both the mystery and the nearness of God. This concept challenges the seeker to embrace the paradox of Divine reality — where God's essence remains beyond full comprehension, but His presence is felt deeply within.

4. AZIMMA (DIVINE GREATNESS)

Azimma reflects the awe-inspiring grandeur of God. The study highlights how Kabara uses Azimma to invoke humility in the seeker, urging them to submit





to God's infinite greatness. This theme echoes the teachings of Al-Junayd, who spoke of the necessity of surrendering to the majesty of God. Kabara's use of Azimma emphasizes that an awareness of God's greatness compels the seeker to recognize their own limitations and submit in reverence. Modern scholars like Tim Winter further illuminate this by linking Azimma to the seeker's spiritual attitude, where awe and humility become essential to true devotion.

5. QIBLAH (SPIRITUAL ORIENTATION)

The concept of Qiblah traditionally refers to the physical direction towards the Kaaba, but in Sufi metaphysics, it symbolizes the alignment of the seeker's heart with Divine will. Kabara's reimagining of Qiblah shifts the focus from the physical to the inward, suggesting that true spiritual orientation involves turning the heart toward God. This aligns with the interpretations of Al-Ghazali and Ibn Arabi, who understood Qiblah as representing the axis of the seeker's spiritual journey. Kabara's poetry reinforces this idea, suggesting that the seeker must maintain unwavering devotion and orientation towards God, regardless of external distractions.

6. RUHI MADAUKAKI (THE SUPREME SPIRIT)

Ruhi Madaukaki, or the Supreme Spirit, signifies the exalted and omnipresent Divine essence. Classical Sufi scholars like Al-Ghazali and Ibn Arabi interpreted ruh as the divine spark within the human being, facilitating spiritual enlightenment. Kabara's use of this concept emphasizes the continuous awareness of Allah's beauty, both day and night, as an integral aspect of the seeker's spiritual practice. The study shows that Kabara views Ruhi Madaukaki not just as an abstract concept but as a constant presence, which the purified heart is able to reflect. This highlights the idea of perpetual dhikr (remembrance of God) as the key to maintaining this awareness.

7. GANINSA (WITNESSING THE DIVINE)

Ganinsa, or witnessing the Divine, is a state of direct, spiritual perception of Allah. The study reveals that for Kabara, witnessing the Divine is not a passive experience but an active process of unveiling, where the seeker perceives Divine realities in their heart. This aligns with Al-Ghazali and Ibn Arabi's views that witnessing God's presence occurs through spiritual unveiling (tajalli), which cannot be perceived by the physical senses but only through the heart. Kabara's poetry underscores the purity required for this direct witnessing, suggesting that when a seeker is free from distractions, they become attuned to the presence of the Divine.

8. KUNDIN BAYANI (VOLUMES OF KNOWLEDGE)

Kundin Bayani, or "Volumes of Knowledge," refers to the hidden and revealed wisdom embedded in creation. Kabara draws attention to the idea that all of creation is a book containing signs (ayat) that point to Allah's omnipotence and wisdom. This understanding resonates with the metaphysical teachings of Rumi and Ibn Ata'illah, who saw the universe as a





reflection of Divine knowledge. Kabara's portrayal of Kundin Bayani underscores the importance of contemplation and reflection in uncovering the hidden knowledge embedded within creation. Modern scholars further support this interpretation by linking it to the idea that scientific discoveries in nature confirm the wisdom and majesty of Allah.

9. LIMAMI (THE DIVINE LEADER)

Limami, or the Divine Leader, is a title that underscores Allah's role as the ultimate guide and leader of all creation. Kabara's reimagining of Limami as Allah, the true Imam, calls attention to the importance of following Divine guidance in all aspects of life. This interpretation aligns with classical Sufi thought, where the Imam is seen as a spiritual guide leading the community towards Allah. Kabara's poetry emphasizes the futility of following anyone other than Allah, reinforcing the concept of Divine sovereignty and the necessity of absolute submission to God's guidance.

10. NI (THE PRONOUN OF THE DIVINE LORD)

Finally, the use of "Ni" (I) in Sufi discourse signifies the self-manifestation of Allah. Kabara's use of Ni expresses the idea of Divine unity and sovereignty, highlighting that all of existence ultimately points to Allah. This aligns with the teachings of Al-Hallaj and Ibn Arabi, who emphasized the oneness of existence (wahdat al-wujud), where the distinction between the Creator and creation dissolves in the direct experience of Divine unity. Kabara's poetic declaration of "I am I" reflects the profound realization that all creation exists as a reflection of the Divine, reinforcing the Sufi conception of the absolute oneness of Allah.

CONCLUSION

This study illuminates the multifaceted nature of Sufi metaphysical concepts through Shaikh Nasiru Kabara's *The Prayer of the Gnostics*. Kabara's poetic treatment of these concepts demonstrates their interconnectedness and their relevance for spiritual seekers. By integrating classical Sufi teachings with Kabara's mystical interpretations, this analysis provides a deeper understanding of the transformative potential of these concepts for individuals striving to draw closer to the Divine. Through the exploration of Tajalli, Takalli, Djanabul Haqq, Azimma, Qiblah, Ruhi Madaukaki, Ganinsa, Kundin Bayani, Limami, and Ni, the study underscores the importance of inner transformation, ethical conduct, and divine awareness as integral elements of the Sufi path. Kabara's work continues to serve as a timeless source of inspiration for those seeking a deeper connection with the Divine.

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