

## CELESTIAL FLAMES: RABI'AH AL-ADAWIAH'S SPIRITUAL JOURNEY THROUGH LOVE

Suraiya IT

Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, Indonesia

Email: [suraiya.it@ar-raniry.ac.id](mailto:suraiya.it@ar-raniry.ac.id)

### Abstract

By referring to God as the Beloved, Rabi'ah al-Adawiah, the first Sufi woman, articulated the relationship with the Divine in a way that has come to be recognized as uniquely Sufi. The love described in the Pattern of Rabi'ah is thought to be pure love for God; the lover must walk along the route of love in order to remember God alone, not Hell or Paradise. When Rabi'ah speaks of "love," he means something more fundamental than something constrained by reward or hope. Her affection is truly lovely. The first woman to discuss the practicalities of Sufism in an approachable and comprehensible manner was Rabi'ah. The genuine embodiment of the relationship between a human being and God is found in Rabi'ah's love. She has contributed significantly to the growth of Sufism. I will explore Rabi'ah al-Adawiah's practice of love in this article. She was a follower of the Sufi Way, a mystical path within Islam. She will share stories of her efforts to witness truth in many realms, as well as her dreams and visions, as well as her sacred songs and poetry.

**Keywords:** *Rabi'ah al- Adawiah, Spiritual Journey, Love*

### Abstrak

Dengan menyebut Tuhan sebagai Yang Dicintai, Rabi'ah al-Adawiah, perempuan pertama yang terkenal sebagai Sufi, mengartikulasikan hubungan dengan Yang Ilahi dengan cara yang diakui sebagai khas Sufi. Cinta yang digambarkan dalam Pola Rabi'ah dipercayai sebagai cinta murni kepada Tuhan; pencinta harus berjalan di sepanjang jalur cinta untuk mengingat hanya Tuhan, bukan Neraka atau Surga. Ketika Rabi'ah berbicara tentang "cinta," ia bermaksud sesuatu yang lebih mendasar daripada sesuatu yang terikat oleh imbalan atau harapan. Kasih sayangnya benar-benar indah. Perempuan pertama yang membahas praktik-praktik Sufisme dengan cara yang mudah diakses dan dipahami adalah Rabi'ah. Perwujudan yang sungguh-sungguh dari hubungan antara manusia dan Tuhan ditemukan dalam cinta Rabi'ah. Ia telah memberikan kontribusi yang signifikan bagi perkembangan Sufisme. Saya akan menjelajahi praktik cinta Rabi'ah al-Adawiah dalam artikel ini. Dia adalah seorang pengikut Jalan Sufi, sebuah jalan mistis dalam Islam. Dia akan berbagi kisah-kisah tentang usahanya untuk menyaksikan kebenaran di banyak ranah, serta mimpinya dan penglihatannya, serta lagu-lagu suci dan puisinya.

**Kata Kunci:** *Rabi'ah al- Adawiah, Perjalanan Spritual, Cinta*

## **A. Introduction**

Focused on Islamic purification, spirituality, ritualism, austerity, and esotericism, Sufism, also called "Tasawwuf," is a mystic body of religious practice found within Islam. Sufism focuses on the methods and approaches that Muslims might use to get as close to God as they can (Harun Nasution, 1992, p. 56).

A Sufi is someone who seeks unending knowledge; if one stays drawn to worldly interests, they would never even begin to appreciate the significance of the Sufi path. Therefore, releasing oneself from the world's cravings and realizing that this kind of freedom leads only to actual inner freedom rather than mortification, is one of the prerequisites for becoming a Sufi. Such independence makes room for improved reasoning, healthier lifestyles, and the achievement of peace.

Islam views spirituality as an integral aspect of what it means to be human in relation to God. Stated differently, the core ideas of God's message are embodied in the principles of Tauhid. In all its facets and facets, it is Islamic mysticism. One's awareness of Tauhid is the primary factor that determines the extent of their spiritual achievement. The Qur'an, the foundation of all Islamic mysticism, is the primary example of Tauhid in Islam. Islamic teachings foretell both the spiritual and material facets of life. Islamic spirituality encompasses both the exoteric and the "esoteric in nature," therefore it cannot be limited to only those elements (IT. et al., 2019).

As a result, Sufistic philosophy as a means of reconstructing human spirituality is pertinent to address the phenomena that we previously discussed, given that the Sufi trait of mysticism is shared by nearly all religions (Owie, 2023). Knowing Sufism is the first step towards finding an alternate answer to your problems in life. From the private realm, sufism spreads across Islamic society. Therefore, spirituality is a phenomenon that may be innate in people. The pursuit of sacred objects in life is also referred to as spirituality. The most effective path to regaining spiritual consciousness via the transcendental realm is Sufism. Sufism is also employed as a tool to foster a tranquil perspective on the state of the world. Thus, in order to comprehend Sufism, one must first comprehend mysticism's jargon.

Rabi'ah al-Adawiah was a significant and influential figure in the historical development of the Sufi world. She walked the spiritual path of Islam known as the Sufi Way. Another pattern in the evolution of Sufism can be found in the appearance of Rabi'ah in the history of Islamic Sufism. She raises the Sufism to the level of austerity and love (al-Hubb atau al-Mahabbah). Since pure love has no expectations, it is superior to both hope and fear (M. Alfatih Suyadilaga, 2008, p. 120). Rabi'ah's beginning was love, not fear of damnation or longing for heaven, despite the many challenges she faced in her early years. Because "God is God; for this she love God, not because of any gifts, but for itself," her approach was love for God. Her goal is to dissolve into God, according to Rabi'ah. And that one could find God by looking within oneself. Numerous outstanding academics, such as Margaret Smith, have documented the existence of notable Sufi women; most of these accounts have included Rabi'ah al-Adawiah. By this,

Smith was recognizing her as the pioneer of the Sufi perspective on God as the Beloved. The Sufis themselves grant a woman named "Rabi'ah al-Adawiah" the first position among the earliest Islamic mystics and designate her as the representative of the first development of mysticism in Islam, as Margaret Smith observes in her book *Rabi'ah the Mystic and Her Fellow-Saints in Islam*. This further attests to the high position attained by the Women Sufis (Smith, 1977, p. 3).

A woman, silent, clear-eyed, humble, sincere, and willing to give up all, was left on the earth's shores by the river of time. She was the embodiment of beauty, truth, love, and iman (faith); she talked patiently, taught everything she knew, walked in the footsteps of truth, and shared her beauty and maturity with everyone.

Rabi'ah writes several poems about her practice of keeping all-night vigils. She avoided physical sleep as a means of thwarting spiritual slumber, an ancient strategy. There is even a legend that states Rabi'ah never slept again in her life following an accusing dream (Upton, 1988, p. 11).

I love God: I have no time left

In which to hate the devil.

O Beloved of heart ! I will always love you.

Therefore have pity this day on the sinner who comes to You.

You are my pleasure.

You are my happiness

Just you are in my heart.

The sentiment of the woman who loves her beloved with all of her heart is reflected in this poetry. Although it's hard to define, love is a great feeling. The Sufis discussed love extensively. One of them uttered, "Love is a fire in the heart that consumes all except the Beloved." (See Schimmel, 1975, p. 39) "Love is the inclination of the heart," remarked another sufi. Another remarked, "There are two kinds of love: the love of ecstasy in the sense of attainment, and the love of confession, which belongs to elect and common alike." (See Abu Bakr al-Kalabadhi, 1935) Throughout the centuries, women as well as men have continued to carry Light of this Love.

Within Sufism, the language of the Beloved, and the recognition of the feminine helps to balance some of the cultural stereotypes those were sometimes the Western media have chosen to highlight. Jalaluddin Rumi portrays the modern lady as the epitome of God's creative power on earth, and he does so in a beautiful way. In his *Mathnawi*, he states that "woman is a ray of God." She is more than simply the beloved of the land; she is creative, not made.

## **B. Discussion**

### **1. The Life of Rabi'ah Adawiah**

Daughter of Ismail, Rabi'ah Al-adawiah (717–801) is a quintessential mystic a Sufi woman revered for her chastity and devotion to Allah. "The Saint of Basra" is another name for her. By one account, she was born in 717 CE, and she passed away in

801. She is regarded as an ascetic Sufi woman (Zuhud), meaning that she has devoted her life to worshipping God alone and has no interest in the material world. She lived mostly in retirement and in adoration of the Lord. She left home and parted ways with his brothers when she was ready to become an adult, but somewhere along the way, she was apprehended by a criminal, who then sold her for six dirhams. Ever since, she has been a slave to others. She had to work very hard throughout the day to serve her lord, and at night she would worship the Almighty.

Rabi'ah is like someone who is ablaze with longing and love; she is drawn to her Lord and burned by His brightness; she has lost herself in divine oneness (Micea Eliade, 1986). Many Sufi poets have passed down tales and poetry attributed to her, such as al-Ghazali and Attar, her principal biographer. It was her calling we could almost say mission, given her greatness to incarnate at the greatest level, that is, the realm of the spirit, the placing of God above paradise, in an era defined by a notable decline in morality (Lings, 1977, p. 111).

As a result, there was neither oil for the lamps or linen to wrap Rabi'ah in on the night of her birth. Her father declined her mother's request to borrow oil from a neighbor since he had sworn never to beg for anything from anybody other than God. Then he went to sleep, and in his dream, the Prophet Muhammad told him to not worry, for his daughter who had just been born would grow up to be a renowned saint, revered by 70,000 of his followers. You are going to write a letter to the Amir tomorrow, reminding him that he usually prays to me four hundreds times on Friday and one hundred times every night. Say that he has to give you four hundred dinars as compensation for missing last Friday."

"Give two thousand dinars to sages who have written this, telling him that I would willingly grant him an audience, except that it would be an insult to him: I will travel to his house instead, and rub my beard on his threshold," was the order given by the Amir after Rabi'ah's father wrote and sent the letter. And the dad gave his daughter the name Rabi'ah, which translates to "the fourth."

Rabi'ah's family was dispersed due to poverty after her father passed away. When a slave dealer approached her, she attempted to flee but stumbled, spraining her wrist. She shouted out, "O God! "realizing that her freedom was gone. In addition to being an orphan and soon to become a slave, I also have a fractured wrist. However, that's not what matters to me; instead, I need to know if I've met your needs.

"Don't worry on the Day of Resurrection your rank will be so high that even the closest companions of God will envy you," a voice said to her right away. Then Rabi'ah became a slave, submitting to God's will.

Rabi'ah, a slave, sacrificed her sleep to make time for her devotion to God. She prayed and fasted. When her master awoke one night and peered out his house's window into the courtyard, he noticed Rabi'ah praying. A lamp appeared over her head, suspended in midair, as he was observing her. The miracle lamp's light illuminated the

entire house, leaving him shocked and scared. He returned to bed and remained in a state of astonishment until daylight.

He summoned Rabi'ah to him in the morning, told her what he had witnessed, and then released her, giving her the choice to stay with him if she so desired. She requested permission to leave, which was granted; she then left the house, left the city, and went to pray in the desert.

## **2. Divine Love**

Humans exist in the natural environment, which is full of all the many hues, textures, and dimensions. All people will experience pain and suffering, loss and sadness, comfort and good fortune; these things do not just appear out of nowhere like flowers in the earth. They are a natural part of existence. When bad things happen, the person shouldn't give up and lose hope, and when good things happen, he shouldn't forget to exercise moderation.

A person who cannot bear to endure pain and adversity is not a good fit for the Sufi path. Sufis are seekers of the truth of Being; they do not care about the possibility of gain from reaching it. Sufis seek knowledge and understanding of the laws of existence, whether or whether they are blessed with good fortune. They are aware that obtaining this understanding requires patience. The state of contentment with Being's destiny is called patience. Within Sufism, God is referred to as the true "Beloved" of the human being. The path of Sufism is profoundly relational. As the literature developed, feminine beauty and graces became metaphors for the attraction of the Divine.

Rabi'ah al-Adawiah called God the Beloved in order to convey the idea of a loving relationship between humans and the Divine. She was inspired to devote her entire day to worshipping and serving the Lord, Beloved, by Mahabbah, or love. She yearns for Beloved nonstop. Her longing caused her tears to always run out. She would often convey her emotions through poetry (syair), occasionally through exquisite prayers. She spoke in private with her Lord, her Beloved, for a considerable amount of time during the night. God's love was everything that filled her heart.

According to Rabi'ah's words, "love" is something more fundamental than hope or reward. Her affection is truly lovely. Oh my Lord, if I worship Thee from fear of Hell, burn me in Hell; if I worship Thee from hope of paradise, exclude me thence; but if I worship Thee for thine own sake, then withhold not from me thine eternal beauty, was the prayer she would always conclude her prayers with (Margaret Smith, 1977, p. 66).

Rabi'ah discovered love as the true expression of the relation between the human being and God. Rabi'ah is regarded as the person who introduced the concept of pure love of God into the ascetic way of life prevalent among God-seeking Muslims during the 4th century. Rabi'ah's greatest contribution to development of Sufism lay in her insistence upon the pure love of God, emphasizing the Qur'anic verse "He loves them and they love Him" (sura 5:59). Rabi'ah's love of God was absolute; there was no

room left for any other thought or love, nor did she give the prophet a special place in her piety, because of the love that filled her whole heart. She did not marry.

For Rabi'ah, the only thing that mattered was the hope of God and the word of his praise, which is sweeter than any other word. The nightly prayer, one of the pivots of early ascetic life, becomes, with her, a sweet and loving conversation between lover and the Beloved.

One of her popular poems is; "I serve God not because I am afraid of hell, not do I want to go to heaven, but because I love Him. My Lord, if I worship you because of I am afraid of hell, then burn me in, if I have you because I hope for heaven, then keep me away from it. My Lord, if I worship you solely because of You, then do not hide the beauty of your eternal beauty from me."

Rabi'ah love for God is so deep and fills the recesses of her heart, that makes her present with God. This is revealed in her poetry:

"I made You a friend to talk to in the heart. Let my body talk to my Friend. With my friend my body always clings. In the heart is always a lover of Love." (Anwar, Rosihon dan Solihin, 2007, p. 122)

The Holy Qur'an's description of Abraham's experience serves as an example of how a soul needs a source of direction. The story reveals his longing for his Lord, whom he first sees in a star, then in the moon, and eventually in the sun. Abraham came to believe beyond all doubt that Allah transcends all of His manifestations, and that was when he realized he was receiving guidance and support from his Lord. Abraham, specifically, experienced a profound insight into the divine, allowing him to grasp that Allah is both manifest and unseen. This is because all elements of nature serve as indications of Allah's presence, known as *ayats*, and because Allah makes Himself known to man both externally and internally. The guidance came from a magnificent source of enlightenment that made the Truth in Abraham's heart clearer than the sun's rays not from texts or words. Abraham was clearly able to recognize both his own *fitra* and the proximity and direction of God.

According to conventional wisdom, the Qur'anic revelation and the Prophet Muhammad's example served as the catalyst for the initial Sufi movement. The spiritual power that the Prophet Muhammad established was dispersed upon the deaths of him and the first four caliphs who followed him. These early Sufis believed that the centrality of Islam lay in the inner spiritual connection, and they worked to elucidate and strengthen it.

Maryam of Basra, a follower and companion of Rabi'ah who works for her, shared Rabi'ah's emphasis on the importance of divine love. She also gave lectures on the topic of love (*mahabbah*), and according to *as-Sulami*, she would experience ecstasies anytime she heard talks on the theory of love. *As-Sulami* relates that Maryam said, "I have never been preoccupied with my sustenance, nor have I exhausted myself in seeking it from the day when I heard the statement of God the glorious and Almighty, 'For in heaven is your sustenance, as is that which you are promised.' (Qur'an61:22)." .

### 3. Rabi'ah and Karamah

Many famous legends about Rabi'ah have been preserved in the Sufi world. The best known legend about her is this one, in the streets of Basra, she was asked why she was carrying a torch in one hand and a awer in the other, and she answered : “I want to throw fire into paradise and pour water into Hell so that these two veils disappear, and it become clear who worships God out of love, not out of fear of Hell or hope for Paradise.”

The pattern of Rabi'ah's love is regarded as pure love of God, that the lover must be in the way of love so that he does not remember Hell or Paradise, but only God.

Many legends surrounding Rabi'ah center on her journey to Mecca to see the Kaaba. Ultimately, the Kaaba had to come to her, as she never quite appeared to be able to get there. Her inability to finish the pilgrimage appears to represent both her own struggles adjusting to the traditional Islamic community and the struggles of the mystic path; additionally, the Kaaba's visitation to her may allude to the reality that God Himself takes both the first and the last step on that path.

During her Mecca journey, Rabi'ah led an ass into the desert to carry her belongings, but the ass ended up dying. She turned down offers of assistance from other caravan members and prayed to God instead, asking, "Is this how a great King treats a Weak, helpless woman He has invited to visit His House?" The ass instantly came back to life, and Rabi'ah carried on with her quest.

According to Story, it took Ibrahim Ibn Adham fourteen years to reach the Kaaba in pilgrimage, because he said long prayers at every shrine along the way but when he got there, there was no Kaaba to be seen. “What is this?” he ask to himself, “Have I gone blind?”

“No,” a voice said, “you cannot see the Kaaba because it has gone out to meet a woman.” Burning with jealousy, Ibrahim ran toward the outskirts of Mecca till he ran into Rabi'ah, who was just arriving. He turned around, and saw the Kaaba back in its usual place. The he turned to Rabi'ah. “What 's this craziness you have brought into the world, woman?” he demanded. “It's not I who am the author of craziness,” she replied, “but you. You were crazy enough to take fourteen years to get to the Kaaba with your ritual prayer, while I, with my inner prayer, am here already.”

There are some miracle stories about Rabi'ah;

Hasan of Basra happened to spot Rabi'ah by the riverside one day. Approaching her, he laid down his prayer mat on the water's surface and invited her to join him in prayer.” Rabi'ah said, “Do you really have to sell yourself in the market of this world to the consumers of the next?”. Then she unrolled her own prayer rug in thin air, and sat on it; “ What you did any fish can do, Hasan, and what I did any fly can do. Our real work is far beyond the work of fish and flies.

In yet another miraculous tale, Rabi'ah and her attendant girl were preparing to break a multi-day fast one day. The waitress was on her way to the next door to borrow

an onion because she needed one, but Rabi'ah said; "forty years ago I vowed never to ask for anything from anyone but God. We can do without onion."

Just then a bird flew over, and dropped an onion into Rabi'ah's frying pan, peeled and ready to fry. "Interesting but not convincing," she said. "Am I supposed to believe that God is an onion vender. I mean, really." That day they fried their bread without onion (Erns, 1999, p. 183).

### **C. Conclusion**

One of the most well known aspects of Rabi'ah's teachings is her view of divine love. According to her, love of Allah is as the highest goal and declared that she loves Him for Himself, without expecting His reward or heaven. This approach expresses the level of sincerity and declaration in seeking God's presence and her journey toward union with the Beloved. She devoted herself to spirit ascetically, apart from society.

Pure of love for God is the pinnacle of Rabi'ah Sufism. The Holy Qur'an reveals that the pure nature (fitra) has led great souls to a Common Path that has fulfilled their longing. That Common Path is a language of a spirit who longs for full surrender to the Eternal Law of Life.

For the sake of sharpening, with the barb of paradox, her demonstration of the rights of the Absolute, Rabi'ah sacrifices every other point of views. As it is told, Sufyan Thawri often came to Rabi'ah with questions, and also requesting her advices and prayers. One day Sufyan asked her, "What is the best thing by which the servant seeks nearness to God Most High?" She said, "That God knows that the servants love nothing in this world or the next except God." We are dissolved into Love, and we become love, God willing.

As Rabi'ah also said;

In love, nothing exists between breasts and Breasts,

Speech is born out of longing,

True description from the real taste,

The one who taste, knows;

The one who explains, lies,

How can you describe the true form of something

In whose Presence you are blotted out?

And whose Being you still exist?

And who lives as a sign for your journey?.



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