



SPIRITUAL RETREAT (KHALWAH) IN THE HISTORY OF SUFISM AND THE ROLE OF KHALWAH IN SPIRITUAL TRAINING

Tasavvuf Tarihinde Halvet ve Halvetin Manevi Eğitimdeki Rolü

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Abstract^{1□}

In the process of spiritual training, Sufism utilizes specific methods to educate human. Spiritual retreat (khalwah) is one of these methods peculiar to Sufism. The concept of khalwah refers to a continual effort to distance human from the base and immoral aspects of his/her lower self, which are regarded as the source of his/her bad characteristics. Solitude and concealment function as the two main principles in the khalwah training. Therefore, a person who practices khalwah is required to spend his entire time in a secluded place on educating and purifying his soul, performing acts of worship, ascetic disciplines, contemplation, and dhikr (remembrance of God). In the practical dimension of Sufism, the aim of “khalwah” for a person is to major on the idea that he is always in the presence of Allah, remaining separate from the others for a while.

Keywords: Sufism, Training Method, Nafs/self, Desire, Purification, Contemplation, Dhikr (Remembrance).

Introduction

The aim of Sufism is to educate people spiritually and help them to develop good moral values. From this aspect, its aim is the most sublime. Therefore, Sufism has emerged as a discipline aspiring to educate human materially and spiritually. This discipline brings man in ideal human characteristics during the training process.

Sufis have used various methods for the self (nafs) exoneration and heart purification of human beings such as asceticism, mujahede, contemplation, dhikr (remembrance) and khalwah (seclusion). They have applied these methods properly for people they have taken in spiritual training. Khalwah, being one of these methods, is a mystical concept which refers to the special occasion that a Sufi experiences.

1. Khalwah: Meaning of the Word and Term

Khalwah, an Arabic word, means to stay alone and retreat to a secluded place or to stay alone with somebody in the dictionary.² In the Sufism literature, on the other hand, it refers to a Sufi's spending time with worship, asceticism, contemplation, and dhikr in charge of a mentor in

¹ Bu çalışma, Öncel Demirdaş tarafından kaleme alınan “Tasavvuf Tarihinde Halvet ve Halvetin Manevi Eğitimdeki Rolü” başlıklı makalenin (*EKEV Akademi Dergisi*, 16/53 (2012), 131-142) İngilizce olarak tercüme edilmiş hâlidir. Dipnotlar ve kaynakça İSNAD Atıf Sistemi'ne (2. Edisyon) uyarlanmıştır.

² Ebu'l-Fazl Cemaluddin Muhammed b. Mükerrrem Ibn Manzûr, *Lisânü'l-Arab* (Beyrut: Daru Sadr, 1990), 237-242; Asım Efendi, *Kamus Tercümesi* (İstanbul: Matbaa-i Osmaniyye, 1304-1305), 805.

a place isolated from the outside world for training and purification of his lower self that is the source of bad habits and characteristics.³ To talk to Allah in privacy, and make an effort to clean heart from wrong beliefs and evil habits are also evaluated as khalwah.⁴ The aim of khalwah in the mystic thought for a person who has just entered the mystic life is to isolate himself from his fellow man for a certain period and concentrate his mind on -the thought of Allah.⁵

While Abū Sarrāj Tūsī (d. 378/988) defines khalwah as “to turn away from interests which keep what is apparent or esoteric busy.”⁶ Najm al-Dīn Kubrā (d. 618/1221) describes it as worshipping by staying away from various activities at a dark place where the sunlight does not enter.⁷

The words, “chilla” and “‘arba’in” are also used in place of “khalwah”. The word “chilla” (suffering) comes from the word “chihil” (forty) in the Persian language. This expression in time has been used in the sense of embracing difficulties and troubles or suffering a lot. These hidden worshipping places called khalwah places (khalwahkhāna) are also called as “chillakhāna” meaning suffering places. The word “‘arba’in” means forty in Arabic. Hence, the saying “entered into arbain” for the ones who enter khalwah for forty days starts to be used this way. Besides, it is commented that because the human beings’ embryologic development stages in the mother’s womb are completed in forty days, khalwah will also end in forty days.⁸

³ Muhammed A’lā b. Ali b. el-Fârûkî et-Tehânevî, *Kitâbu Keşşâfî istulâhâtî’l-fimûn* (Beyrut: y.y., ts.), 459; Seyyid Şerif Ali b. Muhammed Cürçânî, *et-Ta’rifât* (Kahire: Dârû’r-Reşâd, ts.), 113; Suâd Hakim, *el-Mu’cemu’s-sûfî* (Beyrut: Daru Nedre, 1981), 434-438; Selçuk Eraydın, *Tasavvuf ve Tarikatlar* (İstanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Vakfı Yayınları, 2004), 139.

⁴ Ebû Abdîrrahmân Muhammed b. el-Hüseyn b. Muhammed es-Sülemî, *Tabakâtü’s-sûfiyye* (b.y.: y.y., t.y.), 43; Şeyh Tahir Tokâdî, *Mantikü’l-Gayb* (*Gayb Aleminden Sesleniş*), haz. Tahir Hafızalioğlu (İstanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 2003), 43; Erhan Yetik, *İsmail Ankaravî Hayatı, Eserleri ve Tasavvufî Görüşleri* (İstanbul: İşaret Yayınları, 1992), 188-9; Ethem Cebecioğlu, *Tasavvuf Terimleri ve Deyimleri Sözlüğü* (İstanbul: Ağaç Yayınları, 2009), “Halvet”, 249; Robert Frager, *Kalb, Nefs ve Ruh*, çev. İbrahim Kapaklıkaya (İstanbul: Gelenek Yayınları, 2005), 159-160.

⁵ Hayrani Altıntaş, *Tasavvuf Tarihi* (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Basımevi, 1991), 125.

⁶ Ebu Nasr Serrâc Tûsî, *el-Lüma*, çev. Hasan Kamil Yılmaz (İstanbul: Altınoluk Yayınları, 1996), 354.

⁷ Serrâc, *el-Lüma*, 76.

⁸ Mustafa Aşkar, “Bir Türk Tarikatı Olarak Halvetiyye’nin Tarihi Gelişimi ve Halvetiyye Silsilesinin Tahlili”, *AÜİFD* 39 (1999), 536.

Also, “‘uzlah” (solitude), “waḥdah” (unity), “inziwā” (retreat), and “i’tikāf” have close meanings with “khalwah.” This way of living of Zāhids and Sufis isolated from the society repeatedly or at certain intervals hermetically is also named with these similar words.⁹

Abū Ḥaḥṣ Shihāb al-Dīn ‘Umar al-Suhrawardī (d. 632/1234) emphasizes the difference between khalwah and “‘uzlah”. Khalwah, according to him, is to retreat to a place away from society and crowds while ‘uzlah stays away from naḥs, its desires and demands, and everything that occupies the mind with things other than Allah and abandoning all these. He stated that khalwah is generally a physical separation from society, while ‘uzlah is a spiritual and conscious separation.¹⁰ In this respect, it is understood that –the closeness of heart to Allah is called ‘uzlah, whereas the alienation of physical existence from crowds is called– khalwah.¹¹ When this explanation about the difference between khalwah and ‘uzlah is considered, in khalwah a need for staying away from society is felt, while the essential of ‘uzlah is the effort to be with al-Ḥaqq within the society.

2. Brief Historical Account of Khalwah

2. 1. Khalwah in the History of the Prophets

In the history of the prophets and life of our beloved Prophet it is possible to see the traces of khalwah applications accepted among the folk and gained prevalence even within the sayings related to khalwah like, “hands at profit; hearts with lover”, “the hearts’s absence within the folk, readiness with Allah.”

The period assigned for khalwah is inspired by the conversation of the Prophet Moses with Allah. As decreed in the ayat; “And we made an appointment with Moses for thirty nights and perfected them by (the addition of) ten; so the term of his Lord was –completed as forty nights.”¹² Apart from this, it is narrated that the Prophet Moses passed

⁹ Süleyman Uludağ, *Tasavvuf Terimleri Sözlüğü* (İstanbul: Marifet Yayınları, 1995), “Halvet”, 220; Cebecioğlu, “Halvet”, 249.

¹⁰ Adem Çatak, *Şihâbeddin Sühreverdi, Hayatı, Eserleri ve Tasavvuf Anlayışı* (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Doktora Tezi, 2007), 478–479.

¹¹ Eraydın, *Tasavvuf ve Tarikatlar*, 140.

¹² *Kur’ân-ı Kerim Meâli*, çev. Halil Altıntaş – Muzaffer Şahin (Ankara: Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı

through several severe sufferings in Median as long as he stayed with the Prophet Shuaib.¹³ Moreover, the Prophet Moses had told the Israelites when in Egypt that he would bring a Book explaining what is halal and forbidden and showing the limits ordained by Allah and judgments when the Almighty Allah destroyed their enemies and rescued them. When Allah, The Supreme being, destroyed Pharaoh and saved them, Moses asked for the book from His Lord. His Lord ordered him to fast for thirty days. Then it was the month Dhu al-Qa‘dah and at the night of the thirteenth day, he did not like the smell coming from His mouth and washed it with a miswak made of hirnub tree. Upon this, the angels told the Moses: “We were smelling musk odor from your mouth, you spoiled it with miswak. Allah the Supreme ordained him to fast ten more days in Dhu al- Hijjah.¹⁴ It is said that forty days khalwah application comes from here. When the Prophet David was afflicted with a fault, he used to prostrate himself until he was forgiven by his Lord.¹⁵

Khalwah applications also existed in the life of the Prophet. He liked solitude, sometimes he retreated to the Cave Hira near Mecca and lived an ascetic life, entered i‘tikāf after his prophethood can be evaluated within this scope. Regarding the fact that the Prophet liked solitude and he lived a secluded life in Cave Hira, ‘Ā‘ishah (RA) relates: “Divine inspiration to Rasūlallah started through accurate dreams he saw in his dreams. There was no dream which did not come true the next day. Later, he started to enjoy solitude and khalwah. He used to go to the Mountain Hira and occupy himself with contemplation and worship and eat food. Afterward, he used to go back near Khadījah and eat food again. During his presence in Mountain Hira, Allah used to send him an angel and deliver His divine message.”¹⁶

Yayınları, 2009), al-A‘rāf 7/142.

¹³ Mehmet Zeki Pakalın, *Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü* (Ankara: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1971), “Halvet”, 1/713.

¹⁴ Ebū Hafṣ Şihābuddīn Ömer es-Sühreverdī, *Avārifu’l-ma‘ārif*, çev. Hasan Kamil Yılmaz-İrfan Gündüz (İstanbul: Vefa Yayınları, 1990), 263-264.

¹⁵ Sühreverdī, *Avārifu’l-ma‘ārif*, 279.

¹⁶ Ebū Abdullah Muhammed b. İsmail el-Buhārī, *Sahihul-Buhārī* (Riyad: Dāru’s-Selam, 1999), “Bed’ul-vahy”, 1 (No. 3); Ebū’l-Hüseyn Müslim b. el-Haccāc b. Müslim el-Kuşeyrī, *Sahihul Müslim* (Riyad: Dāru’s-Selām, 2000), “İman”, 1 (No. 252); Fuat Günel, “Hira”, *Türkiye Diyanet*

I'tikāf means for a certain period and to worship to stay in a masjid where jumu'ah prayers are performed. The person who enters i'tikāf cuts his bonds with the external world in a way and devotes himself to worshipping, reading the Qur'ān, dhikr, and contemplation. A person practicing i'tikāf is beware of empty words, stays in clean dresses, and perfumes himself with a nice fragrance. He does not go out of masjid as long as he does not have a valid reason like taking ablution.¹⁷ Although i'tikāf is a kind of khalwah, distinctively khalwah has to be performed under the supervision of a murshid.

Khalwah has become the subject not only to/of actual but also verbal Sunnah. The Prophet's saying, "The ones whose eyes are filled with tears in a deserted place will be among the holders of privilege in hereafter" is an example of verbal Sunnah.¹⁸ Also, the hadith "whoever acts just for Allah sincerely for forty days is given great wisdom from his heart towards his tongue."¹⁹ can be evaluated in this context.²⁰

2.2. Khalwah in the Early Period of Sufi

In the first two centuries of the Hijri calendar which is accepted as the first period of Sufism, it is observed that some ascetics besides obeying the Prophet, under the influence of political-social life also abandoned the community life and withdrew into seclusion at a corner in their houses or preferred living in deserted places. In the following periods, Sufis pursuing these traditions of ascetics before them rendered khalwah an essential basis of mystical life. Some of them even went to extremes by deserting their houses and starting to live in graveyards, wrecks, ruins, or in small shelters, they built for worship and even in caves. For that reason, there are some groups called "shikeftiyyah." These are reported to go to settlement areas only for Jumah or funeral prayers. It is possible to

Vakfî İslam Ansiklopedisi (İstanbul: TDV Yayınları, 1998), 18/121-122.

¹⁷ Hasan Kamil Yılmaz, "Ramazan Halveti: İtikaf", *Altınoluk* 50 (Nisan 1990), 18.

¹⁸ Buhârî, "Ezan", 10/36 (No. 659); el-Kuşeyrî, 12/91 (No. 2380).

¹⁹ İsmail b. Muhammed Aclûnî, *Keşfu'l-hağâ* (Beyrut: y.y., 1985), 223-224.

²⁰ Necmeddin Kübrâ, *Risale ile'l-haimi'l-haif min levmeti'l-laim*, haz. Mustafa Kara (İstanbul: Dergah Yayınları, 1996), 76; Süleyman Uludağ, "Halvet", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: TDV Yayınları, 1997), 15/286.



encounter this application which can be evaluated under the framework of 'uzlah since 3./8. centuries in the sources; still practicing khalwah with certain principles under the supervision of a shaikh in chillakhāna or khalwahkhāna is seen since 6./10. centuries.²¹

While ascetics such as Sufyān al-Thawrī (d. 161/778), Ibrāhīm ibn Adham (d. 162/779), Dāwūd al-Ṭā'ī (d. 165/781), Fuḍayl b. 'Iyāḍ (d. 187/803) and Bishr al-Hāfi (d. 227/841) prefer a khalwah life, the authors like Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj al-Ṭūsī, Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. 359/996) mentioned 'arba'īn in their works and also recommended this to people around them.²²

Al-Ghazālī states that thanks to khalwah and uzlet, the tongue will stay far from the disasters of the tongue, the heart will be saved from spiritual illnesses like hypocrisy and one will earn the habits of asceticism and conviction; be saved from being inflicted with evil man, reach certain confidence through worship and dhikr, end the feelings of hatred and hostility, emerge the feelings of closeness to Allah and save the eyes and ears.²³

While the mentioned people were counting the benefits of khalwah, the pioneer name who explained the conditions of making khalwah and its principles in detail was al-Suhrawardī. He touched upon these issues in his work called 'Awārif which he divided into 63 chapters being inspired by the life of the Prophet. He dealt with the conditions to enter khalwah and the situation that may appear during khalwah in the 26th, 27th, and 28th chapters of 'Awārif.

Al-Suhrawardī, preferring khalwah by moving away from people for a long time after he completed his training in science says these about the aim of Sufis practicing 'arba'īn:

"Sufis do not have any other special aim which is different from the times

²¹ Serrâc, *el-Lüma*, 211-212; Süleyman Uludağ-Selçuk Eraydın, "Erbain", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul, TDV Yayınları, 1995), 11/ 270; Cebecioğlu, "Çile", 146-147.

²² Serrâc, *el-Lüma*, 211-212; Ebû Tâlib el-Mekkî, *Kütü'l-kulûb*, çev. Muharrem Tan (İstanbul: İz Yayınları, 1999), 333-334; Ebû Hamid Muhammed Gazzâlî, *İhyâu 'ulûmi'd-dîn*, çev. Ahmed Serdaroğlu (İstanbul: Bedir Yayınları, 1992), 2/592; Uludağ-Eraydın, "Erbain", 11/2270.

²³ Gazzâlî, *İhyâu 'ulûmi'd-dîn*, 2/579-602, 3/174-175; Hasan Kâmil Yılmaz, "Çile-Erbain-Uzlet", *Altınoluk* (İstanbul: Mayıs 1990), 51/31.

when they are out of 'arba'in. When they are overwhelmed by the prohibited desires, they want to control their status. They do this to spread the influence of 'arba'in into all times and always feel as if they are in 'arba'in"²⁴

That is, Sufis do this to suppress the desires of nafs (the lower self). Sufi's devotion to Allah, worshipping, turning towards Him with all his being, and getting free of daily anxieties of life will save him from the feelings of shame he is in. As a result, he will approach the "qurb manzil", which means the source and center of all the sciences, in the presence of the Divine Being. When 'arba'in is completed, all feelings of shame disappear, and knowledge of marifat starts to flow toward him.²⁵

In the works written after al-Suhrawardī by various tarīqa shaikhs, the information mentioned regarding chilla and 'arba'in is transferred from this work. Just some applications of several tarīqas emerge in/over time.

2.3. Khalwah Practices in Tarīqas

When looking at the sources on how to practice khalwah, since the first term authors there is an emphasis that it must be carried out under the supervision of a shaikh and by obeying its conditions. In the case that its conditions are not realized, chilla is ruined. This is named "breaking chilla". The ones who do it are called "chilla breakers". Khalwah is carried out in a dark place where there is no sunlight by staying away from various activities. This means sense organs will be closed to the external world and the eye of the heart will be opened.²⁶

The duration of khalwah differs according to the tarīqas, and there are applications of three days, forty days, or one thousand and one days. The most used period is forty days. Daily food of the Sufi practicing khalwah is until the minimum need is met. During khalwah, a Sufi does not go out except the indispensable situations and occupies himself with worship, asceticism, and contemplation day and night.

Since the period of asceticism, it is seen that khalwah the rules and bases of which have been settled down in the following centuries have

²⁴ Sühreverdî, *Avârifü'l-maârif*, 263.

²⁵ Sühreverdî, *Avârifü'l-maârif*, 264; Çatak, *Şihâbeddin Sühreverdî*, 463-464.

²⁶ Sühreverdî, *Avârifü'l-maârif*, 279-281; Kübrâ, *Risale*, 76; Çatak, *Şihâbeddin Sühreverdî*, 115.



found a place for itself within tarīqas after its being institutionalized and used as a training method. Aḥmad Yasawī, at the age of sixty-three, the age the Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) passed away, entered into the khalwah place (khalwahkhāna) which he had it made himself and until the end of his life, he kept himself busy with worship and contemplation.²⁷

Among the oldest khalwah places inherited in Anatolia in its first form, the ones taking place in Aṣḥāb al-Kahf Islamic monastery dated 612 (1215) near Elbistan, Afşin draws attention with their interesting designs reminding the habit of ascetics' and the Sufis' of the early period using caves as khalwah places.²⁸

Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn al-Rūmī (d. 672/1273) came to a Byzantium monastery on the skirt of a mountain between Konya and Sille he came down to the bottom of a cave where cold water came out and withdrew into seclusion for seven days and seven nights there and afterwards, returned unconsciously. In Mawlawiyyah being attributed to Mawlānā on the other hand, chillā application is much more different. Concerning to the number corresponding to the word, "riḍā" through the numerical account or according to another rumor the total period that Mawlānā got into khalwah, one thousand and one day period has been accepted for suffering.²⁹

There is a personally used khalvet place (khalwahkhāna) which Ḥājī Baktāsh Walī (d. 669/1271), who is said to have practiced khalwah in many cities (Madinah, Pebble, al-Quds, Umayyad Mosque in Damascus) during his travels as well as Aṣḥāb al-Kahf Islamic monastery, in the derwish lodge at Sulucakarahöyük near Kırşehir (today's Ḥājī Baktāsh lodge).³⁰

The main aim of khalwah is to have the consciousness of being in the presence and together with al-Ḥaqq at any moment by removing all the otherworldly concerns from the heart. Thus, some Sufis claim that a person who can reach up to this level of consciousness can realize

²⁷ Fuad Köprülü, *Türk Edebiyatında İlk Mutasavvıflar* (Ankara: DİB Yayınları, 1981), 72.

²⁸ M. Baha Tanman, "Halvethane", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: TDV Yayınları, 1997), 15/388-389.

²⁹ Tanman, "Halvethane", 15/388-389; Abdülbaki Gölpınarlı, *Mevlana'dan Sonra Mevlevilik* (İstanbul: Gül Matbaası, 1983), 391-396.

³⁰ Tanman, "Halvethane", 15/389.

the same application within the folk, too. ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Kushayrī (d. 465/1072) describes a wise person (‘ārif) as “kā’in and bā’in” (somebody who can be separated from the folk while he is with them)³¹. If the main principle is to be with folk outwardly but with al-Ḥaqq inside, in this case, a person does not need to isolate himself from society to be together with al-Ḥaqq. A person can also be practicing khalwah while he is in public. This understanding later has been expressed by the Naqshbandīs as “khalwah within committee” (khalwah dar anjuman).³²

3. The Place of Khalwah in Sharī’a

For the khalwah to be implemented in accordance with its purpose and to take the desired results, it has to be completely relevant to the rules set by Sharī’a and the Sunnah. A khalwah which does not have these qualifications may result desperately. A khalwah that is not suitable for Sharī’a and the Sunnah is useful to obtain knowledge dependent on “riyāḍāt” kind of science to which the philosophers or materialists (dahriyūn) pay attention by purifying nafs (self); and most of the time this takes a person away from Allah. The devil makes man inclined towards this way digressed all the time through ideas the accuracy of which is predicted and riyāḍāt information that befalls the heart. As a result of khalwah training, one is completely attached to riyāḍāt. Hence, the person thinks he has reached his purpose. However, he is not aware that this way is an unprohibited and beneficial one for Christians and Brahmas.³³

Khalwah is carried out without obeying its conditions as the monks, Brahmas, and some philosophers do by taking the sense organs away from preoccupation effectively in purifying the inside world. Nevertheless, this status of solitude can enlighten the heart only if it is in the direction of Sharī’a and the Sunnah. The inclination of the person towards

³¹ Abdülkerim Kuşeyrî, *er-Risâle* (Beyrut: Dâru’l-Hayr, 1993), 101-103.

³² Yâkûb-ı Çerhî, *Risâle-i ünsiyye*, düz. Muhammet Nezir Rancâ (İslâmabad: Merkez-i Tahkikât-ı Fârisî İran u Pakistan, 1983), 30; Abdurrahman Câmî, *Nefahâtü’l-üns min hazarâti’l-kuds*, çev. Lamiî Çelebi (İstanbul: y.y., 1872), 419; Ali b. Hüseyin Vâiz el-Kâşifî, *Reşahât-ı aynü’l-hayât*, çev. Mehmed Rauf Efendi (İstanbul: y.y., 1291), 36; J.S. Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (Oxford: y.y., 1973), 74-78.

³³ Sühreverdi, *Avârifu’l-maârif*, 271.



worldliness decreases and make him reach the taste of dhikr. It enables one to do any worship like praying and reading the Qur'ān sincerely.³⁴

Al-Suhrawardī explaining the rules and conditions of practicing khalwah in detail draws attention to the point that firmness of intention and making it faithfully is required. According to him, one must get involved in khalwah for the salutation of religion, destruction of nafs factor and to be able to perform acts towards Allah cordially. About this issue, he mentioned these warnings:

“A group among Sufis being confused about khalwah and 'arba'īn have diverted the words from their correct meanings and been exposed to the intervention of the devil. Because the devil has misled them, they have started to get into khalvet without giving it its due truly and in a way far from the main destination. Upon hearing that mashāyikh and ṣūfiyya during their khalvet are exposed to some facts and revelation, they have chosen the way of khalwah for this reason. This is the very self of going astray. Real Sufis choose khalwah and solitude for the salvation of religion, the disappearance of nafs conditions, and the possibility of the performance of acts for Allah sincerely.”³⁵

Supposing khalwah as a means to reach divination or karāmah (miracles) and entering into khalwah just for this reason is not acceptable by Sharī'a and the Sunnah. Experiencing such situations does not have any value in terms of showing the spiritual maturity of the seeker. Contrarily, al-Suhrawardī reminds this warning of Abū Tamīm al-Maghribī regarding that one mustn't trust these instances.

“Tahir b. Abu'l- Fadl informed us through an authorization letter that Abū Tamīm al-Maghribī uttered these: The one who prefers khalwah to *ṣuḥbah* (meetings for spiritual training) it is essential to get rid of all thoughts except divine dhikr (dhikr al-ilāhi), stay far from all the desires other than the will of Allah (Murād al-Subḥānī) and alienate himself from all the reasons related to the desires of nafs. One who does not enter into khalwah without these qualifications is absolutely exposed to fitna or trouble.”³⁶

³⁴ Sühreverdī, *Avârifü'l-maârif*, 271.

³⁵ Sühreverdī, *Avârifü'l-maârif*, 270.

³⁶ Sühreverdī, *Avârifü'l-maârif*, 270.

What is more, al-Suhrawardī informs the dreadful situation of somebody who loses his faithfulness to reach karāmah and claims existence in himself being deceived by the emergence of divination (kashf) and karāmah in this world and hereafter through these expressions:

“A seeker has to know that he must not be taken in by revelations opened to him and these never provide benefit to him even if he walks over water, flies on air as long as he does not give them due to taqwā and asceticism (zuhd). A person being deceived by dreams and impossibilities (muḥāl) and does not realize his khalwah faithfully gets into khalwah in vain and goes out of it by fooling himself. This person eradicates the taste of worship and nice treatment from himself; his concern about Sharī’a leaves him, hence being disgraceful in this world and hereafter.”³⁷

“The meaning of khalwah is not karāmah. As a matter of fact, one of the Sufis said that: ‘The Supreme Being asks for uprightness from you, but you are after karāmah!’”³⁸

4. Khalwatiyah

It is true that as well as having different khalwah applications in tarīqas, khalwah has been rendered as the main element of tarīqa and even the founder of Khalwatiyah gave the tarīqa its name due to his entering into khalwah plenty of times. The formation of this tarīqa called Khalwatiyah is realized this way:

Abū ‘Abdallāh Sirāj al-Dīn ‘Umar ibn Akmal al-Dīn al-Jīlānī al-Lāḥijī (d. 750/1349 or 800/1397), born in Lahijan in the region of Gilan, became affiliated with his uncle ‘Akhī Muḥammad Khalwaṭī (d. 780/1378–79) who was serving for the guidance activities as the khalīfa of Ibrāhīm Zāhid al-Gīlānī and after his death he replaced his uncle’s leading maqam. ‘Umar al-Khalwaṭī afterward continued his guidance activities by going to Tabriz under the sovereignty of Qara Qoyunlu. The tarīqa chain is united with Zāhidiyyah, a tarīqa attributed to Ibrāhīm Zāhid al-Gīlānī by means of ‘Akhī Muḥammad but could not become an institutionalized one. The chain has turned out to be Ṣafawīyya under Ibrāhīm

³⁷ Sühreverdī, *Avārifu’l-maārif*, 278.

³⁸ Sühreverdī, *Avārifu’l-maārif*, 271.

Zāhid al-Gilānī's khalīfa Ṣāfiyy al-Dīn Ardabilī and Khalwatiyah under 'Umar al-Khalwatī. From Ṣāfawīyya to Bayrāmīyya; from Bayrāmīyya to Jalwatīyya tarīqas were born and Khalwatiyah from which many branches emerged has become one of the most widespread tarīqas of the Islamic world.³⁹ Together with these branches Khalwatiyah has spread to a wide geography and has become an institutionalized tarīqa applying especially khalwah training.

Although the tarīqa is attributed to 'Umar al-Khalwatī its spreading to a wide area is thanks to Sayyid Yaḥyā al-Shirwānī al-Bākūwī. For this reason, he is called the second pir (pir-i sani) of the tarīqa. After Yaḥyā al-Shirwānī, born in Shemah and passed away in Baku (869/1464) it was separated into four main branches. These are:

Rūshaniyya: The branch founded by Dada 'Umar Rūshanī (d.892/1487)

Jamālīyya: The branch founded by Shaikh Meḥmed Chelebī Jamālī (d.899/1496) being famous as Chelebī Khalīfa.

Aḥmadiyya: The branch pioneered by Aḥmad Shams al-Dīn al-Marmarāwī (d. 910/1504).

Shamsiyya: The branch founded by Shams al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Sīvāsī (d.1006/1597).⁴⁰

The case that Sunni-inclined tarīqas were supported by the Ottoman government was also valid for Khalwatiyah. In this event, as well as itikadi trends, a search against Ṣāfawīyya which started to become a threat due to their Shī'a tendencies had influence.⁴¹

In the history of Sufism and tarīqas, why is khalwah occupying such a

³⁹ Ethem Cebecioğlu, *Hacı Bayram Veli ve Tasavvuf Anlayışı* (Ankara: Muradiye Kültür Vakfı, 1994), 119-120; Mehmet Rıhtım, *Seyid Yahya Bakuvi ve Halvetilik* (Bakü: Qısmet Yayınları, 2005); Hasan Almaz, *Bakü'den Anadolu'ya Yansıyan Işık: Halveti Pir Seyyit Yahyâ Şirvânî, Hayatı ve Eserleri* (Ankara: Bizim Büro Yayınları, 2007), 36-37.

⁴⁰ Câmî, *Nefahâtü'l-üns min hazarâti'l-kuds*, 574-575; Sadık Vicedani, *Tomar-ı turuk-ı aliyye*, haz. İrfan Gündüz (İstanbul: Enderun Kitabevi, 1995), 179, 187-188; Rahmi Serin, *İslam Tasavvufunda Halvetilik ve Halvetiler* (İstanbul: Petek Yayınları, 1984), 83-169; Süleyman Uludağ, "Ahmediyye", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: TDV Yayınları, 1989), 2/171; Mehmet Serhan Tayşi, "Cemaliyye", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: TDV Yayınları, 1993), 7/318.

⁴¹ Tanman, "Halvethane", 15/388-393.

significant place needed? Or what kind of a psychological situation leads man to perform khalwah? Now we will deal with these issues briefly.

5. The Psychological Side of Khalwah

Al-Ghazālī says regarding the benefits of khalwah and retreating into seclusion that these make people worship more sincerely, may save them from sins like hypocrisy, gossiping, and lying, distance them from fitnah and corruption, may save them from the oppression and torment of the community and make them cease to have expectations from human beings.⁴²

Khalwah, besides one's ruling over his nafs, is one of the keys to opening the doors of inspired 'ilm ('ilm al-ladunnī) and one of the most important methods to save the heart from the delusions of nafs. Although nafs do not like it, somebody retreating from people by performing khalwah, in another word, a person who imprisons his nafs for the sake of obedience to Allah by drawing his nafs back from their usual location will start having pleasure out of this application after a certain period.⁴³

Apart from its being heavy for nafs, the main reason why khalwah is not found pleasant is monophobia (fear of solitude), an inherent phenomenon. Nevertheless, there are basically two kinds of solitude; one is obligatory and the other is optional. Obligatory solitude is a kind of loneliness that human avoids. Optional solitude, on the other hand, infuses trust into a human instead of fear unlike the other. In such a solitude like khalwah an individual discovers his beauty and the source he originates.

The feeling of solitude, in a way, is the feeling of a deep longing to go back to the place where we are left out or had to leave after coming by birth from the most secure place, the mother's womb. The first story of *Mathnawī* talks about a ney missing the place it originates.

Micheala Mihriban Özelsel, also a psychologist, transformed her monophobia which became one of her biggest fears after a trauma she experienced into solitude which she chose consciously and performed

⁴² Gazzālī, *İhyāu 'ulūmi'd-din*, 2/579-602.

⁴³ Sühreverdī, *Avârifu'l-maârif*, 264, 266.

khalwah. By this means, she has held on to life again and has even thrown firsts reflecting the state of mind she experienced in her work.⁴⁴

Khalwah, according to the statement of Özelsel, is to clean the mind from conditionings and make it open for new suggestions. If conditionings are restricting and restraining a person and disposal of all these enables him to adopt wide-angled better options, this kind of conscious solitude will free him.⁴⁵

These fixings of Özelsel in fact supports al-Suhrawardī's evaluations about khalwah centuries ago:

"Mankind's devotion himself to Allah, worshipping, turning towards Him with all his being and getting free of daily anxieties of life will save him from the shames he is in. As a result, he will approach the 'qurb manzil', which means the source and center of all the sciences, in the presence of the Divine Being to the extent that shades disappear. When 'arba'in is completed all feelings of shame disappear and knowledge of marifat starts to flow toward him."⁴⁶

In this position, a Sufi practicing khalwah resembles a person who does not leave the door of al-Ḥaqq and repeats his wish until his need is satisfied. Within this process, he participates into existence in a sense and realizes the transience of the world and values to be reached mainly.

After such an enlightenment, Sufi joins the community. Neither trade or shopping nor any kind of other wordly activity can detain this Sufi from Allah. Thus, a Sufi still can maintain his khalwah mood within the society, which is the meaning of the concept "khalwah dar anjuman" taking part among the principles of Naqshbandiyya.

Conclusion

Eventually, khalwah is a significant step for a Sufi on his way to reaching the secrets of being "ashraf al-makhlūqāt" (the most honorable of the creatures) freeing himself from his dirt of sins, stresses, and anxieties. Human is not able to realize true and moral behaviors without truly dis-

⁴⁴ Michaela Mihriban Özelsel, *Halvette 40 Gün*, çev. Petek Budanur Ateş (İstanbul: Kaknüs Yayınları, 2002).

⁴⁵ Sefa Kaplan, "Alman Psikolog Michaela Üsküdar'da 40 Gün Halvete Girdi", *Hürriyet* (8 Şubat 2003).

⁴⁶ Sühreverdî, *Avârifü'l-maârif*, 264.

covering and understanding himself/herself. For a person to be able to understand others and life, he has to understand himself. In this respect, the khalwah experience is an important training stage in Sufism. Sufis passing through this stage successfully become people who manage to stay alone and keep their silence now and then and, if expressed through psychology language, who succeed in being individuals within the society. As in the khalwah experience, preferred solitude through maintaining self-harmony inside and enjoying without harming personality integrity functions as a crucial psychological support for the peace and happiness of human.

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