*Vateen Nayla Nurul Varyda¹, Rosidi², Abdul Mun'im Cholil³*

# REVISITING K.H. HASYIM ASY'ARI'S SUFI ETHICS IN THE CONTEXT OF CONTEMPORARY ISLAMIC SOCIAL ACTIVISM IN INDONESIA

[1,2,3]Institut Al Fithrah Surabaya, Indonesia
Email: vateennayla@gmail.com¹, rasyd111@gmail.com², piyofadil@gmail.com³

**Abstract**

*In post-Reform Indonesia (1998–present), social challenges such as radicalism, moral disorientation, and identity fragmentation demand a religious approach integrating spirituality with social realities. This study revisits the ethical Sufism (tasawuf akhlaki) of K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari (1871–1947), founder of Nahdlatul Ulama and Pesantren Tebuireng, examining its contemporary relevance for Islamic social activism in Indonesia. Specifically, it analyzes how his Sufi ethics—rooted in sincerity (ikhlas), self-purification (tazkiyah al-nafs), moral conduct (adab), and spiritual struggle (mujahadah) are reappropriated by NU-affiliated organizations and pesantren-based movements addressing modern societal issues. Employing a qualitative historical-hermeneutic method, data were collected through close reading of Hasyim Asy'ari's original works (Adab al-'Alim wa al-Muta'allim, Risalah Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah), secondary sources, and academic journals documenting NU social initiatives (2000–2024). Findings reveal that his ethical Sufism functions as a moral framework cultivating social awareness and civic engagement, institutionalized through pesantren education and manifested in grassroots movements addressing religious pluralism, deradicalization, and community empowerment. This research contributes to recontextualizing Sufism in modern civic ethics by demonstrating how classical Islamic spirituality operates as a framework for contemporary social activism, bridging religious scholarship on tasawuf and sociological studies of Islamic movements. The study suggests further comparative research between pesantren-based moral education and global character formation models, plus empirical investigation into Sufi ethics' measurable impacts on community resilience.*

**Keywords**: *K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari; Ethical Sufism; Islamic Social Ethics; Pesantren Education; Sufi-Based Social Reform; Post-Reform Indonesia.*

## INTRODUCTION

In the dynamics of contemporary Indonesian society, the relationship between religion and social life exhibits increasingly complex patterns. Challenges such as structural poverty, social inequality, and the growing phenomenon of religious radicalism concretely reflect how religion particularly Islam continues to grapple with its active role as a transformative social force. This condition demonstrates that the presence of Islam should no longer be positioned merely as a form of personal cultural and spiritual expression, but rather as a social energy capable of responding to public concerns in a tangible and inclusive manner (Hermawan et al., 2024).

In this context, the thought and praxis of Sufism become increasingly relevant to be reexamined. The Islamic mystical tradition, which has often been perceived as passive or detached from worldly affairs, in fact possesses a strong practical dimension when understood through ethical and social perspectives. As demonstrated in the thought of Sahal Mahfudh, Sufism is not merely a means of individual spiritual purification but also serves as a moral foundation for fostering social awareness, solidarity, and public ethics within Indonesian Muslim society (Asmani, 2019). Social Sufism emerges as a form of religious praxis that is not confined to spiritual exclusivism but instead extends into the realm of social and political responsibility within society.

Historically, Sufism has played a significant role in shaping the inclusive, tolerant, and moderate culture of Indonesian Muslim society. The roles of Sufi orders (*tarekat*) and networks of *ulama* in spreading Islam across the archipelago not only reflected a profound sense of religiosity but also conveyed social messages emphasizing justice, collective well-being, and harmony (Rohmawati & Zulkifli, 2024). Therefore, the sharp separation between spirituality and social activism is a modern narrative that needs to be critically reconsidered. The integration of spirituality and social responsibility has become an ethical necessity in addressing the moral crisis that shadows modern life.

In the Indonesian context, K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari stands as a concrete representation of how Sufism and social movements can be harmoniously integrated. As the founder of *Nahdlatul Ulama* and a traditional Sufi thinker, he demonstrated that Sufism is not merely an individual spiritual method but a source of values and ethics for building a just and prosperous society. Through works such as *Adab al-'Alim wa al-Muta'allim*, Hasyim Asy'ari emphasized the importance of integrating personal morality with social responsibility, where education and spirituality function as instruments of societal transformation (Nahar & Suhendri, 2021).

Furthermore, the Sufi approach developed by Hasyim Asy'ari was not a form of escapism but rather a construction of values aimed at strengthening social structures. His views on *insān kāmil* (the perfect human), sincerity (*ikhlas*), and morally grounded leadership position Sufism as an ethical paradigm that is both grounded and operational within the public sphere. His inclusive and multicultural leadership illustrates that Islam possesses the capacity to coexist peacefully within a pluralistic society (Suhendi et al., 2025). Within this

framework, Sufism functions as an instrument of character education that uplifts human dignity and cultivates collective consciousness.

Research on *tasawuf akhlaki* as the foundation of social movements holds particular urgency, especially in examining Islam's contribution to strengthening social cohesion. A study conducted by Nasrul HS reveals that values such as patience (*sabr*), sincerity (*ikhlas*), and humility (*tawadhu'*) are not merely ethical rhetoric but must be internalized in the attitudes and social policies of the Muslim community. He emphasizes that Sufi education should be directed toward the formation of public morality that serves to unify society and prevent extremism that undermines Indonesian values (HS, 2015).

Furthermore, contemporary Islamic social movements rooted in spirituality hold great potential to serve as an alternative force amid ideological stagnation and political fragmentation. In his study, Haryanto (2016) emphasizes that Islamic religious organizations must renew their paradigms by referring to Sufi values that are both adaptive and humanistic. From this perspective, Sufism functions as a bridge between normative idealism and contextual socio-political praxis. The role of organizations such as *Nahdlatul Ulama* demonstrates that the traditional Sufi heritage possesses both historical resilience and contemporary relevance.

While the aforementioned studies have made valuable contributions to understanding Sufism's ethical dimensions and social potential, they exhibit three primary tendencies that require critical synthesis. First, studies such as those by Asmani (2019) and Nasrul HS (2015) have predominantly emphasized Sufism's theological-ethical orientation as a means of individual moral purification (tasfiyah al-nafs), focusing on personal spiritual development. Second, sociological approaches, as exemplified by Rohmawati & Zulkifli (2024), have explored the communal solidarity fostered by Sufi ethics but have not systematically analyzed how these values are institutionalized within specific organizational frameworks. Third, historical studies have documented the contribution of Sufi movements to Indonesian Islam's moderation and inclusivity, yet they often treat this heritage as a static phenomenon rather than an evolving praxis.

What remains underexplored is the operational mechanism through which classical Sufi ethics are translated into contemporary social activism within institutional settings. Previous scholarship has largely emphasized Sufism's moral individualism but has rarely examined its institutionalized social dynamics within pesantren culture and community empowerment frameworks, particularly in the context of post-Reform Indonesia (1998– present). Furthermore, there is a lack of systematic analysis on how K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari's tasawuf akhlaki specifically functions as an actionable paradigm for addressing modern challenges such as radicalism, pluralism, and civic engagement.

This research thus aims to address this gap by critically exploring and validating K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari's Sufi thought as an operational model of social transformation. Specifically, this study seeks to: (1) examine the development of his ethical Sufism within its historical and intellectual context; (2) elaborate on the core spiritual values (ikhlas,

tazkiyah al-nafs, adab, mujahadah) he promoted and their epistemological foundations; (3) analyze how these values are institutionalized through pesantren education and NU-affiliated social movements; and (4) assess their contemporary relevance for Islamic social activism in addressing Indonesia's post-Reform societal challenges. By integrating textual analysis of Hasyim Asy'ari's works with contemporary applications of his ethics, this study contributes to the recontextualization of Sufism as a framework for modern civic ethics and offers a bridge between religious scholarship on tasawuf and sociological studies of Islamic movements (Hermawan et al., 2024).

**RESEARCH METHODE**

This research employs a qualitative historical-hermeneutic approach to explore K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari's Sufi thought as the foundation of Islamic social movements in Indonesia. This approach accommodates both the analysis of religious texts and the interpretation of their historical contexts (Abdussamad, 2021). The historical dimension reconstructs past ideas through document examination, while the hermeneutic component interprets meanings within socio-historical and cultural frameworks, enabling the researcher not only to comprehend literal textual content but also to situate them within the contexts in which they emerged (Rohman, 2013). Such interpretation serves as a bridge between traditional religious discourse and contemporary social challenges faced by society.

Data were collected through systematic literature review from three categories: primary sources consisting of K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari's key works, specifically Adab al-Alim wa al-Muta'allim and Risalah Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah, selected for their direct articulation of ethical Sufism and educational philosophy; secondary sources including Nahdlatul Ulama institutional archives (1926-1947) particularly organizational resolutions and educational circulars, pesantren archival materials from Tebuireng documenting pedagogical practices, colonial education reports (Verslag van het Inlandsch Onderwijs, 1900-1940), and contemporary academic publications (2000-2024) analyzing NU's social activism; and supporting literature comprising ethnographic works on pesantren culture by Dhofier (1982) and van Bruinessen (1995), supplemented by historiographical studies on Indonesian Islamic reform movements. Documents were selected purposively based on direct relevance to ethical Sufism or social ethics, verifiable authorship or institutional authority, and clear archival provenance, while excluding documents lacking attribution or focusing solely on jurisprudence (fiqh) (Harahap, 2019). This comprehensive data collection strategy ensured both textual depth and contextual breadth necessary for historical-hermeneutic analysis.

Data analysis was conducted in three operationalized stages. First, thematic coding through content analysis identified four core Sufi values: ikhlas (sincerity), tazkiyah al-nafs (self-purification), adab (moral conduct), and mujahadah (spiritual struggle), with each term coded along with its textual context using color-coded annotations and subcodes developed inductively for example, ikhlas subdivided into ikhlas fi al-'ilm (sincerity in

knowledge) and ikhlas fi al-'amal (sincerity in action). Frequency analysis revealed adab as the most prominent theme (47 instances compared to 23 for ikhlas and 19 for tazkiyah), indicating its centrality to pedagogical ethics. Second, coded ethical terms were cross-referenced with socio-political themes in NU documents (1926-1947) and colonial records; for instance, adab references were mapped onto NU resolutions on teacher training, revealing how abstract principles translated into institutional policies, while the emphasis on mujahadah was contextualized against anti-colonial resistance narratives, demonstrating Sufism's dual spiritual-civic function. Third, contextual interpretation aligned findings with three historical frameworks: early 20th-century Islamic educational reforms, Indonesian nationalist consciousness (1900s-1920s), and NU's response to modernist movements, synthesizing textual data with historiographical sources to explain how Hasyim Asy'ari's Sufism functioned as a social paradigm (Khilmiyah, 2016).

Validity and reliability were ensured through source triangulation, repeated readings, and peer debriefing. Triangulation was achieved by systematically comparing textual interpretations across Hasyim Asy'ari's original writings, pesantren archival narratives, and historiographical sources, with discrepancies resolved by prioritizing contemporaneous documentation to minimize theological bias. Key texts underwent minimum three iterations of repeated readings to capture semantic nuances, with ambiguous passages cross-checked against classical Sufi lexicons such as Al-Ghazali's Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din for terminological accuracy. Preliminary findings were validated through peer debriefing sessions with scholars specializing in Indonesian Islamic history and Sufi studies to identify interpretive blind spots and ensure conclusions were grounded in both textual evidence and broader academic consensus (Harahap, 2019). This rigorous methodological framework enables the construction of an integrative narrative connecting Islamic spirituality, social ethics, and societal transformation, contributing both to the corpus of Islamic thought and to practical social ethics grounded in Sufi values (Abdussamad, 2021).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Historical and Intellectual Background of K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari

K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari was a prominent Islamic scholar who held a strategic position in the intellectual and socio-religious development of Indonesia. He was born on February 14, 1871, in Jombang, East Java, into a pesantren family deeply rooted in scholarly traditions. From an early age, Hasyim Asy'ari was nurtured in a pesantren environment imbued with the teachings of Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah. He pursued his studies in several renowned pesantren across the archipelago before continuing his education in the Haramain (Makkah and Madinah), where he studied directly under prominent scholars such as Shaykh Ahmad Khatib al-Minangkabawi and Shaykh Mahfudz at-Tarmasi (Mulyadi et al., 2025). This cross-pesantren educational experience and scholarly interaction in the Middle East greatly influenced the structure of his thought, including the formulation of a tasawuf akhlaki (ethical Sufism) that is practical in nature.

In addition to his strong scholarly background, Hasyim Asy'ari was highly responsive to the social and political issues faced by Indonesian Muslims at the time. His lifetime coincided with the Dutch colonial period, which not only brought political pressure but also undermined the independence of local religious institutions. Within this context emerged an awareness that Islamic scholarship could not remain confined to ritualistic dimensions but needed to possess a strong social orientation. Hasyim Asy'ari responded to this need by founding Pesantren Tebuireng, which became a center for moral and intellectual development, and later initiated the establishment of Nahdlatul Ulama in 1926 as both an ideological resistance to colonial domination and a movement for religious purification and community empowerment (Nahar & Suhendri, 2021).

Historically, the pattern of Hasyim Asy'ari's thought was deeply shaped by his commitment to the values of nationalism, communal unity, and the importance of ukhuwah (brotherhood). He developed a worldview that positioned unity as the central pillar in confronting the challenges of his time. His ideas reflect a theological and sociological stance that does not separate Islamic values from devotion to the homeland. In his works, including Adab al-'alim wa al-Muta'allim, Hasyim Asy'ari emphasizes that the essence of a true Muslim lies not merely in intellectual mastery but also in the cultivation of firm ethical integrity and a strong sense of social responsibility (Fadli & Kissiya, 2024).

To strengthen this argument, a closer reading of Adab al-'alim wa al-Muta'allim reveals that Hasyim Asy'ari does not define knowledge solely as cognitive proficiency but as a moral force that shapes character. He writes, for example, that knowledge must be accompanied by tahdzīb al-nafs (refinement of the soul), because "al-'Ilm bila adab ka an-nar bila ḥaṭab," meaning "knowledge without adab is like fire without wood," a principle that transforms knowledge into an ethical-spiritual practice. This textual emphasis allows us to interpret that his concept of tasawuf akhlaki is not abstract spirituality but an epistemology where learning itself becomes an act of moral formation and social responsibility. This perspective resonates with the classical Sufi articulation of al-Junayd, who defined Sufism as "taking on every noble character and leaving behind every vile one," and with al-Ghazali's framework that merges purification (tazkiyah) with societal obligation.

Throughout the course of history, K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari demonstrated an exceptional ability to bridge classical Islamic thought with the challenges of modernity. He did not reject the idea of renewal; rather, he consistently framed it within the objectives of maqaṣid al-shari'ah and the broader welfare of the Muslim community. As both a Sufi and a social leader, Hasyim Asy'ari introduced a form of spirituality that was not exclusive or escapist, but inclusive and deeply grounded in the realities of life. In several of his notes and teachings, he highlights concepts such as ikhlāṣ and mujāhadah as practical disciplines that prepare individuals to contribute ethically within society an approach consistent with the tasawuf amali tradition of Javanese pesantren. His articulation that "al-mujāhadah aṣl kulli falāḥ" ("striving is the foundation of all success") situates Sufism as a transformative ethical project rather than a contemplative withdrawal from worldly affairs (Nizar, 2017).

Linking this interpretation with the hermeneutic method outlined in the study, the identification of concepts like ikhlāṣ, adab, and mujahadah emerges through thematic reading of his text, followed by comparative interpretation with earlier Sufi formulations. Such a process reveals the unique social dimension of Hasyim Asy'ari's Sufism: it is both personal purification and a pedagogical framework designed to strengthen communal ethics. With this integration of textual evidence and hermeneutic analysis, Hasyim Asy'ari is thus remembered not merely as a religious scholar, but as a moral architect whose Sufi-ethical vision was deeply intertwined with the sociopolitical landscape of his time.

### The Concept of Akhlaki Sufism in Hasyim Asy'ari's Thought

K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari's Sufi thought places morality (akhlaq) at the core of spiritual purification and Muslim character formation. In his view, Sufism (tasawuf) is not an escape from worldly realities, nor merely a set of ritual practices, but a process of internalizing divine values into everyday conduct. The four foundational principles he emphasizes ikhlas (sincerity), tazkiyah al-nafs (self-purification), adab (moral discipline), and mujahadah (spiritual struggle) function not only as personal virtues but also as social ethics that guide individuals toward contributing to a morally rooted and civilized society ((Astuti et al., 2022).

A closer reading of *Adab al-'Alim wa al-Muta'allim* through the hermeneutic procedure outlined in this study shows that Hasyim Asy'ari consistently ties knowledge to moral responsibility. The thematic coding of key ethical terms in the text reveals that adab occupies a central position in shaping the intellectual spiritual identity of both students and teachers. His repeated assertion that knowledge without adab loses its spiritual and social value highlights the interdependence between epistemology and moral formation. Within the pesantren context, these values such as humility, reverence toward teachers, intellectual perseverance, and ethical accountability form the cultural framework that shapes santri holistically (Hasanah & Mahfud, 2021).

Recent global scholarship reinforces this moral dimension of adab as a defining element of Sufi spirituality (Chiabotti et al.,2020) in the Journal of Islamic Ethics explain that Sufi adab represents not only behavioral etiquette but an ontological discipline connecting the seeker to the Divine. This interpretation situates adab as the visible embodiment of inner purification, a process that mirrors Hasyim Asy'ari's own integration of knowledge, humility, and moral restraint. Thus, his pedagogical vision participates in a wider Islamic ethical tradition that links spiritual self-cultivation with social harmony.

Theologically, Hasyim Asy'ari's akhlaqi Sufism emerges from the doctrinal structure of Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah. Through comparative reading with classical Sunni texts, it becomes evident that he places creed ('aqidah) as the foundation upon which moral behavior is constructed. Moral education thus becomes a manifestation of faith-in-practice rather than merely a social ideal. The integrative relation among 'aqīdah, 'ibadah, and akhlaq found in his writings demonstrates a pedagogical vision in which inner purification

and outward ethical conduct form a unified system of character development suited to the conditions of pesantren and broader Indonesian society (Mustofa et al., 2022).

The hermeneutic analysis further indicates that Hasyim Asy'ari saw moral transformation as the starting point for social change, placing ikhlāṣ and mujāhadah at the heart of his ethical project. Through contextual interpretation, these values can be understood as a response to the socio-political pressures of his era, functioning as both spiritual disciplines and frameworks for communal resilience. His broader educational ideas, as reflected in *Gugusan Ide-Ide Pendidikan Islam KH. Hasyim Asy'ari*, show that Sufi ethics were intended not merely to form pious individuals but to cultivate socially responsible actors capable of guiding community reform based on traditional Islamic principles (Nahar & Suhendri, 2021).

At the same time, a critical reflection is necessary. While Hasyim Asy'ari's akhlāqī Sufism provides a robust ethical foundation, its emphasis on individual virtue formation raises questions about its sufficiency for addressing modern structural injustices or ideological extremism. Within a contemporary context, moral internalization alone may require complementary institutional and systemic mechanisms to achieve broader and sustained social transformation. Recognizing this tension does not diminish the significance of his Sufi framework; rather, it situates his thought within an ongoing discourse on the relationship between personal ethics and societal change.

**Implementation of Sufism in Social Movements and Pesantren Education**

The implementation of Sufi values in pesantren education and Islamic social movements reflects not only the spiritual dimension of Islamic teachings but also their practical translation into ethical formation and communal engagement. Using a historical–hermeneutic lens, the interpretation of institutional practices in several pesantren allows these practices to be read as extensions of the normative Sufi concepts found in K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari's works. Through textual analysis of Asy'ari's teachings particularly regarding *ikhlas*, *adab*, *tazkiyah al-nafs*, and *mujahadah* and contextual interpretation of pesantren traditions, the ethical foundations of Sufism become visible in educational structures, leadership styles, and socio-religious mobilization.

In Tebuireng, for instance, Sufi-inspired discipline and leadership ethics emerge from the kyai's role as moral exemplar, reflecting what Dhofier describes as the "charismatic ethical authority" of Javanese pesantren leaders. This hermeneutic reading connects Asy'ari's textual emphasis on *adab* with the institutional practice of character cultivation through routines of self-control, sincerity in action, and moral accountability. Educational culture at Tebuireng thus becomes a lived interpretation of Asy'ari's Sufi ethics, where spiritual virtues are internalized through daily pedagogical interactions rather than through doctrinal instruction alone (Nahar & Suhendri, 2021) ( Dhofier, 1982).

In a broader sense, the ethical values promoted in pesantren-based education correspond with findings in contemporary socio-religious studies that link Islamic religiosity with ethical discipline and professional integrity. Amaliah et al. (2015)

demonstrate that strong Islamic religiosity correlates positively with ethical job satisfaction and moral behavior in industrial contexts, showing that Sufi-based moral internalization has practical implications beyond spiritual education. This supports the idea that Asy'ari's framework of *ikhlas* and *mujahadah* can function as a foundation for developing ethical awareness and civic responsibility, even within modern economic and social institutions (Amaliah et al., 2015).

In pesantren such as Miftahul Huda in Malang, Sufi elements function as pedagogical mechanisms shaping student character through practices like *dhikr*, *riyadah*, and emulation of the kyai's spiritual comportment. When read hermeneutically, these practices represent an intertextual continuation of classical Sufi pedagogy found in al-Ghazālī and extended in archipelagic pesantren culture (Bruinessen, 1995). The cultivation of *taqarrub* and embodied ethics within pesantren demonstrates how Sufi spirituality becomes a framework for both personal refinement and social responsibility (Yasin & Sutiah, 2020). Through cross-case comparison, Miftahul Huda illustrates a pedagogical innovation distinct from Tebuireng's heritage-based model, yet aligned with the same ethical nucleus derived from Asy'ari's thought.

Sufism also plays an important role in shaping collective Islamic activism within Nahdlatul Ulama. Through hermeneutic contextualization, NU's social engagement spanning education, humanitarian work, and political ethics can be understood as an institutional enactment of Asy'ari's moral Sufism. Howell's analysis of Sufism in modern Indonesian Islamic revivalism supports this reading, highlighting how Sufi ethics in NU generate community solidarity, moderation, and resistance to ideological extremism. This aligns with Asy'ari's emphasis on *mujahadah* as both inner struggle and ethical perseverance in public life (Triana et al., 2023) (Howell, 2001). Thus, Sufism serves not merely as spirituality but as a source of communal orientation embedded within organizational culture.

Furthermore, the application of Sufi values in Aceh offers another hermeneutic layer where spirituality intersects with social rehabilitation. In efforts addressing drug abuse and moral crises, Sufi practices such as purification of the heart and strengthening spiritual awareness function as transformative strategies for individual and communal recovery (Muhammad, 2022) . When interpreted alongside Feener's work on Islamic social engineering in Aceh, these practices reveal that Sufism can operate as a socio-ethical framework for addressing structural vulnerabilities in contemporary Muslim communities.

A comparative synthesis of these three cases shows distinct but interconnected expressions of applied Sufism: Tebuireng embodies Sufi-derived leadership ethics; Miftahul Huda represents pedagogical enactment of spiritual discipline; Aceh demonstrates Sufism as a tool of social rehabilitation. Together, they form a coherent continuum of Sufi praxis grounded in Asy'ari's ethical vision.

Nevertheless, a critical reflection reveals certain limitations. The strong emphasis on moral internalization may not fully address structural injustices, institutional

bureaucratization, or the influence of secular educational demands. As Steenbrink and Azra note, pesantren and Islamic institutions often navigate tensions between preserving spiritual authenticity and adapting to sociopolitical modernization. These tensions remind us that Sufi-based ethics, while potent as moral frameworks, require complementary structural mechanisms to achieve sustainable social transformation. Through hermeneutic integration of textual, contextual, and comparative layers, it becomes clear that the implementation of Sufism in pesantren and social movements does not merely preserve a spiritual heritage but actively shapes ethical agency, leadership culture, and community resilience in modern Indonesia.

**The Relevance of Hasyim Asy'ari's Sufi Thought to Contemporary Islam**

The contemporary relevance of Hasyim Asy'ari's Sufi thought cannot be understood merely as a continuation of traditional pesantren ethics, but must be examined through a hermeneutic reinterpretation that situates his ideas within today's pluralistic, globalized, and digitally mediated context. Through a historical-hermeneutic reading of *Arba'in Hadithan*, *Risalah Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah*, and *Adab al-'Alim wa al-Muta'allim*, this study identifies core ethical principles *ikhlas*, *adab*, *tazkiyah al-nafs*, and *mujahadah* and recontextualizes them to address contemporary issues such as religious extremism, ethical disorientation, and social fragmentation in the digital age (Fachri Rizki Imani et al., 2025).

Recent developments in Sufi-based psychological and educational research demonstrate that classical spiritual ethics can be operationalized through mindfulness-oriented frameworks Rejeki et al. (2025) emphasize that "mindfulness-based Sufism interventions" promote self-regulation, empathy, and prosocial awareness, thereby translating Sufi practices such as *muraqabah* and *muhasabah* into contemporary psychological education. When contextualized hermeneutically, this model aligns with Asy'ari's concept of *mujahadah* as an inner struggle that sustains both individual well-being and social responsibility.

To situate Asy'ari's Sufi ethics within broader Islamic intellectual discourse, this study engages contemporary thinkers such as (Abdullah An-Na'im et al., 2008) Tariq Ramadan, and Syed M. Naquib al-Attas. emphasizes civic responsibility and ethical pluralism in democratic societies; Ramadan (2010) argues that spiritual reform is the basis of social transformation; and al-Attas (1995) conceptualizes *adab* as the foundation of a just civilization. Parallel arguments by Rahman (2019) highlight that the reinterpretation of Islamic ethics through a hermeneutic framework allows classical values to interact with global humanistic discourses, situating Sufi ethics within a broader philosophical conversation on moral universality. Through hermeneutic comparison, Asy'ari's moral emphasis on *adab* resonates with al-Attas's diagnosis of the "loss of adab," and his insistence on *mujahadah* parallels Ramadan's call for ethical self-discipline. Yet, Asy'ari's approach remains distinct through its pesantren-based relational ethics rooted in communal discipline and embodied learning.

In a similar perspective, Ni'am & Nurhayati (2019) describe Indonesian Sufism as a "Sufism of diversity," in which spiritual discipline fosters religious tolerance, cultural inclusivity, and national unity. Their findings demonstrate that Sufi ethics particularly humility and empathy serve as socio-spiritual instruments to harmonize plurality and strengthen civic nationalism. When read alongside Asy'ari's writings, this framework reinforces the argument that ethical Sufism can operate as a moral foundation for sustaining diversity within Indonesia's modern plural society.

In contrast to the reformist tendencies of Muhammadiyah which, as Beck (2014) observes, sought to redefine Sufism through the lens of rational modernism Asy'ari's model presents a dialogical synthesis between spirituality and social ethics. Beck's analysis of early twentieth-century Muhammadiyah illustrates that the movement's cautious stance toward mystical practices stemmed from its pursuit of religious purification and educational reform. However, Asy'ari's ethical Sufism neither rejects modernity nor romanticizes tradition; it reinterprets both through a hermeneutic of moral consciousness, positioning Sufism as an ethical bridge between faith, modern reform, and civic engagement.

However, the application of Asy'ari's ethical Sufism in the modern world requires critical reinterpretation rather than textual preservation. His moral project emerged within early 20th-century colonial and pre-digital structures shaped by limited mobility, face-to-face transmission, and cohesive communal environments. In contrast, today's challenges algorithm-driven polarization, digital individualism, and secular moral relativism operate beyond the epistemic horizon of his time. Hermeneutic analysis therefore suggests that while Asy'ari's emphasis on inner virtue formation remains valuable, it must be complemented by structural mechanisms such as digital literacy, civic education, and institutional accountability to sustain social transformation (Abdullah An-Na'im et al., 2008) (Ahmad et al., 2020) likewise emphasizes that Sufi ethics in the digital era must evolve into "ethical engineering," integrating spirituality with social institutions to address moral fragmentation in online spaces.

Similarly, the concept of moderation (*tawassut*), often presented as a direct extension of Asy'ari's thought, must be approached with nuance. While he grounded moderation within Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah's balance of reason and revelation, contemporary pluralism presents new tensions between spiritual inwardness and civic activism, and between traditional pesantren ethics and secular educational systems (Nasution et al., 2015) argue that Sufi-based pedagogy must continuously negotiate between spiritual transcendence and civic rationality to remain relevant in plural educational environments. A hermeneutic reinterpretation, therefore, positions *tawassut* not as a fixed doctrine but as a dialogical ethical practice requiring continuous negotiation with diversity, social change, and power relations (Tariq Ramadan et al., 2010).

In educational contexts, Asy'ari's Sufi ethics continue to inspire character formation but must adapt to digital learning environments. Traditional pesantren pedagogy relies on embodied interaction, exemplary conduct (*uswah*), and affective transmission of *adab*

methods challenged by virtual communication, online anonymity, and fragmented digital identities. Reinterpreting Sufi virtues such as humility, sincerity, and discipline within these settings prevents the romanticization of pesantren as uniformly moral spaces and ensures that Asy'ari's ethical legacy remains socially relevant (Nahar & Suhendri et al., 2021). Complementing this view (Kamal and Yusuf et al., 2025) note that Sufi principles can shape digital ethical literacy and promote responsible online behavior when recontextualized through virtual pedagogical models, emphasizing continuity between classical ethics and digital-era moral education.

In conclusion, the hermeneutic analysis demonstrates that Hasyim Asy'ari's Sufi ethics retain significant potential for promoting moderation, civic responsibility, and moral renewal. Yet, their contemporary effectiveness depends on integrating personal virtue with contextual adaptation to structural, technological, and cultural change. Together, these recent interdisciplinary studies confirm that hermeneutically reinterpreted Sufi ethics remain vital for shaping ethical consciousness and communal harmony in the modern global era. Through this dialogical and critically reflexive approach, Asy'ari's Sufi thought evolves from a preserved tradition into an active moral discourse capable of addressing the ethical challenges of global modernity.

## CONCLUSION

K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari's conception of Sufism not only offers a profound spiritual dimension but also presents an ethical-practical framework highly relevant to the development of Islamic education and social transformation in Indonesia. Emerging from a historical background shaped by the dynamics of the pesantren tradition, the influence of Haramain scholars, and the struggle against colonialism, Hasyim Asy'ari formulated an integrative approach that harmonized classical Islamic scholarship with the demands of social change. His concept of tasawuf akhlaki (ethical-moral Sufism), as elaborated in works such as Adab al-'Alim wa al-Muta'allim, emphasizes the values of sincerity (ikhlas), purification of the soul (tazkiyah al-nafs), proper conduct (adab), and spiritual struggle (mujahadah). These principles serve not only as the foundation for personal spiritual formation but also as a moral basis for building a civilized and just society, as evidenced in the pesantren education system he established and in social movements such as Nahdlatul Ulama.

In the contemporary context, Hasyim Asy'ari's Sufi thought remains profoundly relevant in addressing crises of identity, radicalism, and moral disorientation in the digital era. The operationalization of his ethical framework within NU-affiliated institutions and pesantren-based community empowerment programs provides concrete evidence that classical Sufi values can be effectively translated into modern civic practices. Practical pathways for applying his thought include integrating tasawuf akhlaki principles into national character education curricula, developing training programs for religious educators that combine spiritual formation with community organizing skills, and

establishing pesantren-university partnerships that bridge traditional Islamic pedagogy with contemporary social sciences. These applications demonstrate how spirituality can function as a transformative force in character education and social cohesion.

This research contributes to the broader discourse on Islamic moral education and post-secular ethics by positioning Sufi spirituality not as withdrawal from the world but as a viable model for civic engagement in plural societies. Theoretically, it challenges the modernist dichotomy between mysticism and activism, demonstrating that ethical Sufism functions as a middle path between exclusivist traditionalism and secular liberalism. By documenting how Hasyim Asy'ari's ethical framework has been institutionalized within pesantren culture and operationalized through NU's social movements, this study advances scholarly understanding of how religious values translate into collective action. Future research could expand upon these findings through comparative studies examining Hasyim Asy'ari's ethical Sufism alongside global post-secular models of moral formation, empirical investigations measuring the impact of tasawuf akhlaki-based education on civic attitudes and community engagement, and action research collaborating with pesantren educators to develop contemporary curricula based on his principles. Therefore, the tasawuf articulated by K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari should not only be appreciated as a theological legacy but also engaged as a living intellectual resource for developing an inclusive, ethical, and visionary Islamic society, offering a framework for navigating modernity's challenges without abandoning spiritual depth.

# REFERENCES

Abdussamad. (2021). *Metodologi Penelitian Sejarah Islam*. Kencana.

Amaliah, I., Aspiranti, T., & Purnamasari, P. (2015). The Impact of the Values of Islamic Religiosity to Islamic Job Satisfaction in Tasikmalaya West Java, Indonesia, Industrial Centre. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *211*, 984–991. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.11.131

Asmani, J. M. (2019). *Tasawuf Sosial KH. MA. Sahal Mahfudh*. PT Elex Media Komputindo (Grup Quanta).

Astuti, A. F., Ismail, Z., & Hasanah, T. (2022). Konsep Akhlak Menurut KH Hasyim Asy'ari Dalam Kitab Adab Al-Alim Wa Al-Muta'alim. *At-Tadris:Journalof Islamic Education*, *1*(1), 75.

Beck, H. L. (2014). The contested state of Sufism in Islamic Modernism: The case of the Muhammadiyah movement in twentieth-century Indonesia. *Journal of Sufi Studies*, *3*(2), 183–219.

Fadli, M. R., & Kissiya, E. (2024). Character Education Perspective KH. Hasyim Asy'ari's and its Relevance in the Digital Age. *Swarnadwipa*, *8*(1), 17. https://doi.org/10.24127/sd.v8i1.3266

Harahap, A. S. (2019). *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif: Teori dan Praktik*. Prenadamedia Group.

Hasanah, U., & Mahfud, M. (2021). Konsep Etika Pelajar Menurut KH. M. Hasyim Asy'Ari Dalam Kitab Adab Al`Alim Wa Al-Muta`Allim. *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam Miazhar*, *1*(1), 46–47.

Hermawan, A., Kesuma, A. S., & Yudha, G. (2024). The Influence of KH. Hasyim Asy'ari's Moderate Political Thought on Efforts to Counter the Radicalism Movement in Indonesia. *JPW (Jurnal Politik Walisongo)*, *6*(2), 179–192. https://doi.org/10.21580/jpw.v6i2.20653

HS, N. (2015). *Akhlak Tasawuf*. Aswaja Pressindo.

Khalil, A. (2020). Ethics and Spirituality in Islam: Sufi adab, edited by Francesco Chiabotti, Eve Feuillebois-Pierunek, Catherine Mayeur-Jaouen, and Luca Patrizi. *Journal of Islamic Ethics*, *4*(1–2), 268–273. https://doi.org/10.1163/24685542-12340039

Khilmiyah, A. (2016). *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif dalam Studi Islam*. LKiS Pelangi Aksara.

Muhammad, R. (2022). Implementasi Nilai-niilai Tasawuf sebagai Upaya Pencegahan Narkoba dalam Masyarakat Aceh. *Ibrah: Jurnal Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat*, *1*(1), 39–50. https://doi.org/10.47766/ibrah.v1i1.563

Mulyadi, SA, S., Asmaret, D., & Julhadi. (2025). Menelusuri Jejak Intelektual KH. Hasyim Asy'ari dalamPendiriandanPerkembangan Nahdlatul Ulama di Era Modern. *Menara Ilmu : Jurnal Penelitian Dan Kajian Ilmiah*, *19*(1), 954–963.

Mustofa, H., Wahyu Nurita, F., Al Mutamaddinah, F., & Ichsan, Y. (2022). Pendidikan Aqidah Akhlak dalam Perspektif K.H Ahmad Dahlan dan KH. Hasyim Asy'ari. *Jurnal Pendidikan Tambusai*, *6*(2), 12937–12944.

Nahar, S., & Suhendri. (2021). *Gugusan Ide-Ide Pendidikan Islam KH. Hasyim Asy'ari*. CV. Adanu Abimata.

Ni'am, S., & Nurhayati, A. (2019). Tasawuf Kebhinnekaan (The Sufism of Diversity) according to the Perspective of Indonesian Sufis: A Response toward the Problem of Diversity, Religiousity and Nationality in Indonesia. *International Journal*, *7*(2), 1–19.

Nizar, M. C. (2017). Pemikiran KH. Hasyim Asy'ari tentang Persatuan. *Endogami: Jurnal Ilmiah Kajian Antropologi*, *1*(1), 63. https://doi.org/10.14710/endogami.1.1.63-74

Rejeki, S., Haryono, Sunawan, Mulawarman, & Hakim, A. (2025). Mindfulness Based Sufism Intervention: Systematic Literature Review. *Ethics, Medicine and Public Health*, *33*, 101180. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jemep.2025.101180

Rohman, M. (2013). *Hermeneutika: Teori dan Metode Penafsiran Teks*. LKiS Pelangi Aksara.

Rohmawati, H. S., & Zulkifli, Z. (2024). The Role of Sufi Orders in Social Change in Indonesia: A Systematic Literature Review. *Teosofia: Indonesian Journal of Islamic Mysticism*, *13*(2), 187–212. https://doi.org/10.21580/tos.v13i2.22567

Suhendi, S., Khoiruddin, H., Ihsan, M. N., Nasir, T. M., & Sain, Z. H. (2025). Hasyim Asy'ari's Dimensions of Multicultural Spiritual Leadership: Harmony in Education and Society in Indonesia. *Al-Hayat: Journal of Islamic Education*, *9*(1), 1–27. https://doi.org/10.35723/ajie.v9i1.50

Triana, N., Yahya, M. D., Nashihin, H., Sugito, S., & Musthan, Z. (2023). Integrasi Tasawuf Dalam Pendidikan Islam dii Pondok Pesantren. *Edukasi Islami: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, *12*(01), 299–314. https://doi.org/10.30868/ei.v12i01.2917

Yasin, N., & Sutiah. (2020). Penerapan Nilai-nilai Tasawuf dalam Pembinaan Akhlak Santri pada Pondok Pesantren Miftahul Huda Gading Malang. *Al-Musannif: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Dan Keguruan*, *2*(1), 49.