

## **The Importance of Symbols in the Sufi Tradition: An Example of the Concept of Justice**

**Tuğçe Şensöz**

*Dokuz Eylul University, Turkey*

*Abstract:* The concept of justice is a concept that has been emphasized in every age, every religious and moral life style and every culture since the emergence of the philosophical way of thinking. In all social, religious or moral perspectives, the concept of justice is expressed with different symbols in a guiding nature. Symbols inspired by nature such as the sun, moon and stars are also examples of these. We see that the concept of justice is discussed and examined in the light of symbols in the Mayan civilization, Ancient Chinese teachings and Ancient Greek thought, as well as in the Islamic Sufi tradition. The concept of justice, which is the sum and integrator of the virtues, regulates their functioning and organizes the entire moral life within the framework of the principles of fairness and equality, has functioned like a sun or a pole star in the Islamic Sufi tradition. In this article, the place of the concept of justice in Islamic mysticism will be discussed through symbols. Considering justice as a natural figure, its effect on the Sufis' perception of spirituality will be examined, based on the original definition that emerged in Islamic Sufism. Thus, it is aimed to make this concept clear and understandable by showing the aspects of the concept of justice, which has a deep-rooted historical and cultural background, that contribute to both theoretical and practical life in Islamic Sufi thought.

*Keywords:* Justice, Symbols, Sufism, Spiritual Perception

The concept of justice has been defined in very similar meanings in different ages and cultures. There are many definitions of justice, such as everyone getting what they deserve, individuals treating each other honestly and impartially in society, honesty, a

set of rules regulating life, and a legal judicial system.<sup>1</sup> When we look at Islamic literature, we see that the definitions of justice have developed within a philosophical and religious framework, especially the Quran and the Sunnah. In this context, justice in the Islamic tradition generally refers to acting fairly, living in accordance with the principles of truth and equality, multiplying the good and avoiding the bad, obeying the rules, getting one's due, peace and order.<sup>2</sup> It is a virtue that is the key to living an orderly and fair life according to the principles of truth and fairness, both individually and socially.<sup>3</sup> The symbol is referred to as "remz" in the dictionaries and means "to point, to express something by means of a sign; It means "sign, symbol, insignia, implicit expression."<sup>4</sup> The basic function of symbols is to associate a meaning with a word or sentence pattern.

The Islamic Sufism tradition, which is accepted to have flourished since the 8th century, brought an unusual religious and moral dimension to the world of Islamic thought at that time. As a science, Sufism describes a form of inner life that prioritizes morality and the purification of the heart.<sup>5</sup> As a science of state, Sufism is related to the practical rather than the theoretical. The main elements of rational thought traditions are theoretical elements such as reasoning and knowing how to think. In Sufi teaching, feeling with the heart and putting these feelings into practice by creating a whole in the soul and body is the nature of the science of state we mentioned.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, this teaching, which highlights the heart and feeling as well as the mind as a means of

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<sup>1</sup> "Justice," *Oxford Learner's Dictionary*, <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/justice?q=Justice>.

<sup>2</sup> Mustafa Çağrıncı, "Adalet," *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi (DİA)*, no. 1 (1981): 341-44.

<sup>3</sup> Müfit Selim Saruhan, "Erdemlerin Erdemi: Adalet," *Adam Akademi* 5, no. 1 (2015): 2.

<sup>4</sup> İsmail Durmuş, "Remiz," *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi (DİA)*, no. 34 (2007): 558-60.

<sup>5</sup> Hacı Bayram Başıer, "Teşekkül Döneminde Tasavvuf," *İslam Düşünce Atlası*, ed. İbrahim Halil Üçer (İstanbul: Konya Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kültür Yayınları, 2017).

<sup>6</sup> Mehmet Demirci, "Hâl," *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi (DİA)*, no. 15 (1997): 216-18.

knowing, has had a great impact on the rapidly increasing number of Muslim communities in a few centuries.

As it is known, the rationalist tradition of thought in Islam, called Mashai, has been influential in Muslim societies since the 9th century. This tradition has introduced a method of knowing that includes many cognitive processes such as thinking, questioning, asking questions and doubting, within the framework of the commandments of the Quran and the Sunnah. The roots of the Sufi tradition date back to the 8th century. Sufism, which had its golden age in the 13th century, offered a new belief and way of life to all Muslim societies. In the Sufi tradition, the basic elements of belief and worship are the Quran and the Sunnah, just like in the rational tradition. In addition, some elements such as abandoning the earthly desires as much as possible, cleaning the heart from temporal things, worship, dhikr, intuition, inspiration and Kesf are at the basis of Sufi belief and worship.<sup>7</sup> In this respect, Sufism is a method of belief and knowledge unique to the Islamic world and gave a sense of spirituality.

As a result of this unique stance, the concept of justice in the Islamic Sufi tradition has been interpreted differently from rational traditions and aims to make itself understandable to the whole society through association-based ways. There are also different ancient civilizations where this concept was interpreted with various symbolic elements. First, looking at the ways these civilizations understand and implement justice will help us better understand the nature of symbols in Islamic Sufism literature and their examples in tradition.

### *The concept of justice in ancient civilizations*

The perception of justice also manifested itself in different ways in ancient civilizations. One of them, the Mayan civilization, named the pole star/polaris metaphor as the God of Night.<sup>8</sup> The reason for this is that the pole star stays in the same place without

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<sup>7</sup> İbrahim Agah Çubukçu, "İslam'da Tasavvuf," *Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi* 8 (1961): 419.

<sup>8</sup> "Estrella Polar," *Meteorologia en Red*, <https://www.meteorologiaenred.com/tr/estrella-polar.html>.

moving and illuminates its surroundings by emitting light. According to the Mayans, the pole star guides humanity in maintaining daily life and managing spiritual emotions. Because gods are always powerful, unchanging, guiding beings and setting an example. According to them, the God of Night contains the answers and solutions to all questions and problems in daily life. Therefore, the Mayan society appealed to the God of Night to eliminate every problem they encountered in daily life and came to the conclusion that they could find the right path by following his light, that is, the pole star. For this reason, for the Mayans, the pole star was considered the representative of justice, the right path and wisdom.

Similar to the Mayan culture, Confucius also put forward a doctrine that highlights the concept of justice. It can be said that Confucius put forward a unique philosophy of education, politics and morality with his views on human and social relations, which he put forward in China in the 6th century BC. Justice, or being fair, which is one of the subjects he focused on the most, is for him the basic condition of being a superhuman.<sup>9</sup> Confucius claimed that morality remains in its place like the pole star, and everything else revolves around it.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, Confucius relates the reflection of justice on the person to the pole star metaphor and says: "The person who rules the country with morality is fixed in his place, just like the pole star, and others revolve around him like stars."<sup>11</sup> Therefore, the concept of justice is unique in terms of being a guide, just like the pole star.<sup>12</sup> The ruler treats each individual equally while giving the people what they deserve. He shows them the path of truth and goodness. Justice, one of the fundamental principles of moral maturity, does not change according to ages, societies or conditions, on the contrary, events and facts are shaped under its shadow. Therefore, temporary or changing things determine their own path by revolving around the universal and unique justice and benefiting from its light.

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<sup>9</sup> Konfüçyüs, *Konuşmalar*, trans. Giray Fidan (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2021), 1.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. 5.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Selahattin Fettahoğlu, "Konfüçyüs ve Öğretisi," *Ondokuz Mayıs Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 16, no. 16 (2004): 319.

Another issue we need to mention about the importance of the concept of justice appears in the ancient philosophical literature. In the Hellenistic period, as issues related to practical life found voice in philosophy, attention was drawn to the problem of morality. Aristotle, one of the most influential philosophers of this period and the next few centuries, put forward a systematic moral teaching and emphasized the concept of justice. Aristotle attempts to define the concept of justice in his book *Nicomachean Ethics*, where he introduces his original moral philosophy. By considering the concept of justice together with its opposite, injustice, he also defines what justice is not.<sup>13</sup> Arguing that justice is the most perfect virtue in general, Aristotle defines justice as: "Neither the evening star nor the morning star is as extraordinary as justice."<sup>14</sup> According to Aristotle, the evening and morning stars (Venus), which show the east and west directions thanks to the intensity and illumination of their light, are beyond symbols and are such an extraordinary and perfect virtue that they cannot be characterized by them. Such that, according to him, justice is the highest virtue and encompasses all societies and classes.<sup>15</sup> Since justice has a structure that is brighter than the evening and morning stars and gives light and illumination, it surrounds all societies with its principles, rules and sanctions, and does not affect any event, situation, society or society. It does not skip the time period. It has universal and objective criteria.

After briefly talking about the perception of justice in different ancient traditions, it would be appropriate to touch upon the nature of the Sufi tradition in the Islamic world. Thus, the way the concept of justice is handled and processed by Sufi scholars will be understood more clearly.

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<sup>13</sup> Aristoteles, *Nikomakhos'a Etik*, trans. Saffet Babür (Ankara: Bilgesu Yayınları, 2015), 93.

<sup>14</sup> Ali Kahveci, "Adaletin Teolojisi: Teolojik Adalet," in *Uluslararası Din ve İnsan Sempozyumu. Din, Ahlak ve Hukuk*, eds. Üyesi İshak Tekin and Esmâ Turkmen (İstanbul: Sonçağ Akademi, 2021), 496.

<sup>15</sup> Arslan Topakkaya, "Adalet Kavramı Bağlamında Aristoteles - Platon Karşılaştırması," *FLSF Felsefe ve Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* (2008 ): 27-46.

*Sufi tradition in the Islamic world*

This concept, which we call Sufism in Islam and which generally expresses the inner aspect of Islam, became very widespread among Muslims as of the 2nd century Hijri. When Islam reached its third generation, the level of peace and prosperity in Islamic societies increased. As a result of the new belief and lifestyle brought by Islam and the practical conveniences it offered, wars, difficult living conditions and oppression came to an end. In such a society, Muslims, under the influence of the favorable living conditions they live in, have begun to attach importance to worship and look for ways to live a good and religious life. The science of Sufism has also determined the principle of reaching the truth as its main goal and offered Muslims a brand new spirituality and religious lifestyle within the framework of the Quran and the Sunnah.

Sufism is defined as "the spiritual and inner way of life lived within the framework of the manifest and inward provisions of Islam."<sup>16</sup> In this sense, Sufism has played a major role in shaping the perception of spirituality of Muslim societies since its emergence in the 8th century. From tradition to the present, Sufism always aims to strengthen the relationship of Muslim individuals with the Quran and Sunnah. As a result, it regulates the servant's relationship with Allah. It shows how a good and right life is possible.<sup>17</sup> It emphasizes the importance of self-discipline, good morals and purity of heart. In light of all this, Sufism offers Muslims an unusual, original perception of spirituality.

Sufism came into existence at a time when the world of Islamic belief and thought was getting richer day by day and attracted attention throughout the universe. Its origin is based on the Quran and sunnah. It demands to strive to reach the Creator of the universe, to educate and purify the soul, and to give up all material things for this cause. Only the words spoken with the heart, the behavior performed and the feeling of the heart are important. For all these reasons, the science of Sufism has

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<sup>16</sup> Reşat Öngören, "Tasavvuf," *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi (DİA)*, no. 40 (2011): 119-26.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

differentiated itself from other sciences by creating a new perception of spirituality. In order to make the requirements of science easy and understandable to Muslims, he created some symbols inspired by the society, culture and nature in which he lived. He tried to convey the knowledge of higher truths by using these symbols.

### *The importance of symbols in the Sufi tradition*

Symbol is a general name given to visual and linguistic forms that serve to convey a meaning.<sup>18</sup> It is a concrete concept put forward in response to something outside itself.<sup>19</sup> The science of Sufism in the Islamic world differs from the ancient traditions that search for truth with its unique method. While sciences such as fiqh, tafsir, hadith or philosophy develop their fields of influence on a theoretical basis, Sufism focuses almost entirely on the practical field. Sufis claimed that Muslims would attain the truth as a result of taking the Prophet as an example and performing their worship with a full orientation towards Allah, without pursuing worldly purposes.<sup>20</sup> In this respect, worship refers to all kinds of actions we do with the aim of turning towards Allah. Therefore, not only the physical worships such as prayer, fasting and dhikr, but also the heart and mental worships such as understanding the Quran in the most accurate way, acting according to its orders and prohibitions in daily life, repentance, asceticism and discovery are meaningful when done with the aim of being one with Allah. is winning. The importance of symbols in the Sufi tradition emerged as a result of such worship.

From the moment the religion of Islam was formed on earth, Hz. Muhammad's unique efforts and zeal, an atmosphere of peace and trust was created among Muslims. At that time, Muslims were finding answers to all their issues or unique and specific questions and problems by asking the Prophet. This situation continued during the period of the companions after the death of the prophet.

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<sup>18</sup> Sadık Kılıç, "Sembolün Gücü ve İslam'da Semboller," *Diyanet İlmî Dergi* 49 (2013): 9.

<sup>19</sup> Selçuk Güngör, "Sembolizmin Tarihi Serüveni," *Genç Atebe Dergisi* 3 (2022): 73.

<sup>20</sup> Ömer Türker, *İslam Düşünce Gelenekleri* (İstanbul: Ketebe Yayınları, 2020), 113.

People who personally met the Prophet, talked to him, and took part in his assembly, eliminated the question marks by leading opinion among Muslims. But as time progressed, the number of these people decreased. It became difficult to find people who had contact with the Prophet or those who met him. During this time period, the religion of Islam spread to larger lands day by day. As the number of Muslims increased and the living conditions in these Muslim societies improved with the tranquility brought by religion, the questions asked about beliefs and practices also increased. In order to leave no question marks in the minds of Muslims and to live in accordance with the verses of Islam that encourage them to think, question, research and learn the truth, the leading scholars of that society developed a new formula.

In the century and the lands where the religion of Islam emerged, aside from the religious belief, lifestyle and culture of that period, the level of education was quite low and the number of educated people was quite low, so it was very difficult for the Holy Quran and the words and actions of the Prophet to be understood and accepted. has happened. Hz. Muhammad did his best to convey his message to all humanity and have it accepted. Because Islam is not the religion of the elite or a certain group, but a timeless and universal religion that appeals to all humanity. Therefore, it covers all humanity, regardless of education level, age and gender. Throughout his life, while explaining Islam to people, the Prophet took into consideration their ability to understand and interpret, and addressed each person according to his level.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, sometimes he could explain the Qur'an to them by giving concrete examples from daily life, nature, and events experienced in the past. They clearly stated what they wanted and eliminated any confusion.

Because the Quran contains high universal truths. And there are some points that cannot be understood by just reading or listening. At the point of understanding these truths, symbols were used in order not to create confusion in the mind and heart of people who are insufficient to process intelligence and information.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Ebu Davud Süleyman bin Eş'as, *Sünen* (İstanbul: Çağrı Yayınları, 1992), 40.

<sup>22</sup> Zeynep Büyükünâl, "Mevlânâ'nın Tasavvuf Felsefesinde Sembolizm" (PhD diss, Necmettin Erbakan Üniversitesi, Konya, 2014), 16.

Symbols were also frequently used by Sufis in expressing religious realities. Because the Sufis, who put forward a unique epistemology by prioritizing Kesf and inspiration, had difficulties in explaining the divine knowledge that came to the heart through these methods to people who were not deepened in the inner sciences. Sufis, who wanted to avoid these difficulties, chose to explain these truths implicitly to people who did not have the necessary equipment or ability to understand them.<sup>23</sup> For this reason, they used symbols. Because explaining the abstract with the concrete and making the invisible visible is possible with symbols. In Sufism, the implicit meaning comes to light as a result of symbols. Sufis used symbols as a means of transferring knowledge.<sup>24</sup> Sufis, who had knowledge of the truth, used symbols as a means of transferring this knowledge to unqualified people. In this way, they helped people who were lower in terms of knowledge and rank in their beliefs and worship with concrete examples. They have clearly revealed the doubts and doubts about the esoteric with the external and eliminated the question marks. They also used some symbols to show the importance of some words and concepts mentioned in the Holy Quran, both in practice and in the world of belief and meaning. The concept of justice is one of the concepts that Sufis express with symbols.

#### *The concept of justice as a symbol in the Islamic Sufi tradition*

We evaluated the importance of symbols and their reflections on practical life from ancient cultures and the beginning of Islam to the present day. Therefore, it would be useful to examine the nature of the concept of justice in the Islamic Sufi tradition and its embodiment in practical life in the light of symbols.

Since the 8th century, when the Islamic Sufism tradition came into existence, it has taken care to express the truths of the Islamic religion and the issues that need to be taken into consideration in the maintenance of religious life, in a language that

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Muhammed Shalaan, "Süfi Uygulamaları ve Bireyleşme Yolu Arasındaki Bazı Paralellikler," in *Sufi Psikolojisi*, ed. Kemal Sayar (İstanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 2000), 158.

they can understand, to people who cannot understand them through experience. In this context, Sufi scholars have simplified their own language and placed different concrete concepts and symbols in their expressions according to the knowledge and information processing levels of their interlocutors. The concept of justice, as a social, moral and political virtue in the Sufi tradition, has been discussed extensively in different ages and geographies and expressed with different symbols. Among the scholars who carry this tradition and have explained justice with different symbolic metaphors, it is necessary to mention Rûmî first. He is one of the most important religious scholars in the Sufi tradition and is also a poet. The concept of justice holds a key place in his teachings. Rûmî evaluated the concept of justice by considering its opposite, injustice. He made a general definition of this concept by saying “Justice means putting everything in its place. The shoes are on your feet. The cone also belongs to the head.”<sup>25</sup> According to him, the situation where something is not in its place in accordance with its nature is injustice. Emphasizing one of the universal definitions of justice in Mesnevi, Rûmî sometimes discussed justice in the context of rights and law and also evaluated it within the political doctrine. According to him, justice is a divine ocean that includes law.<sup>26</sup> Only the judge who takes the rule of law into consideration can make fair decisions.<sup>27</sup> Legal rules, by which rights are protected, are the only way to establish justice, peace and order in society. A state where the rules of law prevail ensure justice in society. and such a state administrator governs his society by making fair and equitable decisions. In societies where rules are disregarded, there is nothing but injustice and therefore chaos.

Rûmî compares justice to the sun in a different part of his Mesnevi.<sup>28</sup> According to him, the concept of justice illuminates the entire universe like a sun. Just as the sun gives heat and light equally to everything that exists, justice, if fulfilled and applied, serves the entire world of existence with all its tools and functions. In this sense, according to Rûmî, justice is universal and essential

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<sup>25</sup> Murat Erten, “Mevlana’nın Adalet Anlayışı,” *Anasay* 6 (2022): 136.

<sup>26</sup> Mevlana, *Mesnevi* VI/1495, trans. Ali Yaver Caferi (Tablet Yayınları, Konya, 2007), 575.

<sup>27</sup> Mevlana, *Mesnevi*, 575.

<sup>28</sup> Mevlana, *Mesnevi* I/510, 83.

for all humanity. Likewise, Rûmî also uses the mountain symbol for the concept of justice in *Mesnevi*. Citing the size, power, indestructible and impenetrable majesty and magnificence of the mountains as an example, Rûmî underlines that the concept of justice is immutable, unfalsifiable and irrefutable for all humanity.<sup>29</sup> Just as it is not possible to topple a mountain without a divine power, as long as justice is established, Likewise, it cannot be changed, refuted or falsified. Because all the rules of justice are general, independent of time, place and events and are universal.

Rûmî used similar symbols for the head of state as he used for the concept of justice. For example, he used the term "sea of justice" for the head of state.<sup>30</sup> The head of state can only be a just ruler if he rules the society by complying with the rights and rules of law. And in this way, it is like a sea that carries within itself the requirements, rules, sanctions and all aspects and functions of justice. Rûmî placed great emphasis on the concept of justice in *Mesnevi*, one of his works that transcends the ages. The symbols he chose to educate and raise public awareness about justice were generally inspired by nature. Moreover, he reinforced these symbols with the stories he told and emphasized the concept of justice with a unique system. With his stories, he pointed out the universality and timelessness of the concepts of rights, law and justice centuries ago, and made warnings that remain valid today.

Another Sufi who explained the concept of justice to society through symbols was Yunus Emre, who lived in the 13th century. Yunus is a folk poet and Sufi scholar, the pioneer of Turkish poetry in Anatolia. The stories he tells and the advice he gives in his poems transcend the ages. He combined the concepts of tolerance and love, which he emphasized in his poems, with the teachings of Sufism. He always aimed to guide people to the good, the beautiful, the right and the truth. The comprehensiveness and timelessness of Yunus' poems have led to his recognition in all societies around the world and to his advice being taken as an example in solving social, political, moral, etc. problems.

In Yunus' Sufi teaching, the concept of justice is discussed together with equality. According to Yunus, treating everyone

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<sup>29</sup> Mevlana, *Mesnevi I/ 3794*, 118.

<sup>30</sup> Mevlana, *Mesnevi I/ 2854*, 95.

equally and not taking away anyone's rights are among the basic actions of a just person. Therefore, if a person wants to act justly, he must treat everyone equally in every respect and give everyone their rights. Yunus Emre argues that justice pursues innocence. In other words, a just person is not after the guilty and cruel, but is after the innocent, the good, the truth and the right. With the lines "I love creation because of the Creator".<sup>31</sup> He advises us to approach people and treat them equally and fairly, regardless of their differences in religion, language, nationality, etc. Loving people with the awareness that they are a part of the Creator's power also brings with it acting with justice, without discrimination between them.

Yunus Emre used symbolic elements in his poems, just like Mevlana. He uses the pole star metaphor for the concept of justice, just like Confucius. He emphasizes that justice is fixed like a pole star and everything else revolves around it. The light of the star of justice is not shadowed, moreover, it illuminates the surroundings with its light. Just as the pole star stands steadily in its place without moving and constantly emits light and illumination, justice always points to right, good, reality and reality, regardless of time, place and event. In this respect, justice is a key point that is fixed in place like a pole star, remains unchanging under any circumstances, and regulates the functioning of the universe together with the concepts of right, equality and righteousness.

### *Spirituality awareness in the light of symbols*

It is a fact that in Islamic Sufism, knowledge is processed in the heart and transferred to practical life within the framework of the truth brought by the Holy Quran and the Sunnah. Although Sufi scholars accept the senses and reasoning as a method of acquiring knowledge, they claim that the knowledge brought by revelation can only be achieved through discovery and inspiration through the heart. But unfortunately, not all Muslims can have such an experience. Therefore, we stated that the knowledge of the truth was expressed through symbols to Muslims who were deprived of this experience.

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<sup>31</sup> Mustafa Tatçı, *Yunus Emre Divânı ve Risâletün -Nushiyye* (İstanbul: MEB, 2005), 62.

Symbols were introduced into Sufi terminology with the aim of preventing all confusion of meaning and consolidating the Islamic faith in the mind and heart. In this regard, being aware of the meanings of the symbols used by Sufis enables one to understand both the religion of Islam and Sufism.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, the only way to strengthen people's spiritual awareness is to use symbols.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, in the Islamic Sufi tradition, symbols have been the point of reference to teach religious truths to a person and instill spiritual awareness. The symbols used to express these higher truths are chosen rather from nature and culture. The most important reason for this is the effort to convey a religious concept, ruling, truth, order or an issue to the ordinary person as clearly as possible, without leaving room for doubt or doubt. In the Sufi imagination, the path to truth is experienced through feeling. They wanted these experiences to be imagined through symbols in the minds of ordinary people. In the Islamic Sufi tradition, the balance between matter and meaning is established through symbols. People's understanding of the ambiguous verses and implicit expressions in the Holy Quran was also possible thanks to the transfers made from the abstract to the concrete. Sufi scholars gave examples from nature while conveying both the knowledge brought by the Quran and the Sunnah and their own theories of knowledge. This ensures that concepts are clear and distinct in terms of thought, belief and worship.

Symbols are created based on the knowledge of experiment, which is the first and basic way of gaining knowledge. In other words, Sufi scholars, who aim to create the perception of spirituality in minds in the light of the basic information brought by the five senses, have chosen symbols mostly from nature. They also revealed the concept of justice by using symbols.

The concept of justice has been tried to be expressed in Sufi terminology in the light of information that can be easily obtained through observation, such as the pole star, the sun, the mountain, the moon. From the moment it came to light as a universal and true religion, Islam has emphasized the infinity and limitlessness of

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<sup>32</sup> R. Bahar Akarpınar, "Sufi Kültüründe Sembollerin Yeri ve Önemi Hakkında Bir Deneme," *Türkbilig* 7 (2004): 15.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

God's wisdom and justice. In Islam, issues related to justice such as the nature and importance of justice, the value of equal and fair actions for Allah, and the evil of cruelty and revenge occur in Sufi scholars, without any intermediaries or veils, with their unique methods of knowing. However, people who are not familiar with this method of knowing cannot fully understand the meaning of these concepts. Therefore, it is possible to encourage them to do good and avoid evil and to ensure that they live a life in accordance with Allah's commands and prohibitions by expressing these concepts to them with symbols. A Muslim who understands the nature and importance of justice in the light of symbols does not resort to any path that is far from justice, and prefers to trust in God's justice instead of taking revenge when he is oppressed. He always treats those around him fairly and equally. For example, a Muslim who considers justice as equivalent to a pole star symbol understands the importance and power of justice and being fair, based on the constancy of the pole star, its size, and the light and illumination it emits around him, and incorporates it into his own life. In this way, he fulfills the commandments of Islam and lives a life as Allah wishes. Therefore, in the Sufi tradition, symbols are the most important element of preventing Muslims from falling into a crisis of doubt in faith and belief by exposing them to the hard-to-comprehend realities that exist in God's infinite knowledge. Moreover, symbols play an important role in providing spiritual awareness and strengthening individuals' beliefs.

Symbols guide human beings on many issues such as the unity of God's existence, creation, the nature of religious belief, virtues, freedom of will, life in the afterlife, and so on. The Sufi tradition, which aims to enlighten all humanity about the Islamic religion and belief and instill spiritual awareness, uses symbols to achieve this goal. Sufism, which chooses feeling, discovery and inspiration as a way of gaining knowledge, makes religious truths understandable by transferring the abstract to the concrete through symbols. This is why Sufi scholars strive to describe the concept of justice with the majestic elements of nature. The establishment of justice in people's minds as an attribute of God, a religious element and a virtue plays an important role in strengthening the feelings of social peace, brotherhood and trust. All these feelings show that the individual's relationship with the spiritual is strong and

meaningful. In this sense, the Sufi tradition enriches the human world of meaning with symbols and makes it understandable. The Sufi tradition, which continues today with its various extensions, continues to add a different breath to the Islamic faith with the symbols it uses, its unique epistemology and metaphysics.

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*Tuğçe Şensöz*  
*Dokuz Eylül University*  
*Faculty of Theology, Izmir, Türkiye*  
*Adnan Süvari Mah. 108/2 sok. No:20 35140*  
*Karabağlar/Izmir/Türkiye*  
*<sensoztugce@gmail.com>*