

# A Forum of Scholars' Oversights; Imam al-Suyuti's Attitudes in Facing the *Khilaf*

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## Abstract

*Khilaf* or the divergence of opinion among the scholars is keep going on all the time; in fact it has increase in this latest era as what had been behold by prophet S.A.W in His word. Originally, *khilaf* among the scholars is an immensity of Syaria and the mercy to people will become delimit when it is involve with the desire element and selfish behavior, thus it will transform into disunity, strife and inflict chaos situation among community. This article is designed to discuss about the oversight situation among the ages scholars which had been wrote in the works created by them which we still can have them until today. Taking the lessons from a fairly prominent scholar, Imam Suyuti, there are a lot of morals and messages that can be obtained from the *khilaf* situation happened. Among of the lesson that can be taken from the good behavior that had been showed by Imam Suyuti is: The present scholars should take a deep breath to think about the consequences from the oversight view. The elements which are able to cause the continually of *khilaf* need to be avoided. The comportment of contention by showing of the fluency of argument and the capability of speaking should be avoided. The great ethical and the noble manners should be prioritized when confront with the oversight situation. Imam Suyuti does not give a quick reply or open an argument setting, in fact with his great manners; he gives the answers calmly and with the nature of a noble writer through his writing that can be seen with a calm mind out of pressure.

**Keywords:** *Al-Imam Al-Suyuti, Khilaf, Islamic Scholars, Dealing With Difference*

## Introduction

*Khilaf* in arabic means contradiction and in actual word is disagreement towards something. Every person takes a different path either in term of word or opinion (Al-Usaimi: 1430H) According to al-Kamus al-Muhit, *khilaf* also means contrary or opposite with the agreement affairs. (al-Abadi: 2005) *Khilaf* also brings the meaning of something that comes after another

thing thus takes his place. (Ibnu Faris: 1979). According Abdullah Abdul al-Muhsin al-Tariq (1997), *ikhtilaf* dan *mukhalafah* are, someone who takes the different path from other people in term of behavior or words.

*Khilaf* indeed happens all the time. Prophet S.A.W had mentioned this matter as in His word which means:

“Indeed for those of you, who live after me, will see great disagreement”. (Abi Daud, hadith 4607)

*Khilaf* among scholars originally is an immensity of sharia and mercy to the people but it will become narrow and hard when it is involve with the desires and selfish attitude. If it is happened, it will only transform into disunity, strife, and inflict chaos situation among community.

When the crisis of *khilaf* happen or the difference of opinion which brings to disunity and strife, what should be done or what is the resolution? Prophet Muhammad S.A.W had showed the solution to this matter in his word, means:

“You must then follow my sunnah and that of the rightly-guided caliphs, which had showed the guidance”. (Abi Daud, hadith: 4607)

Besides, there are verses in the Quran that explain the ways in order to come out from the *khilaf*, among of the verse that Allah S.W.T said in Surah al-Nisa’ means:

‘O you who have believed, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you. And if you disagree over anything, refer it to Allah and the Messenger, if you should believe in Allah and the Last Day. That is the best [way] and best in result’. (Surah al-Nisa’ verse 59)

In the verse Allah obliges all the Muslims to obey all His command by doing all the laws and good manners as what had been required. In the same time, obey all the guidance which had been delivered by Prophet Muhammad S.A.W, in fact it is compulsory to obey all the laws made by the authority or the government. If there is a conflict or the argument and *khilaf* happen, Allah recommends referring to the religion’s guidance which is Quran and Sunnah. There is no other effective ways from what had been showed in the Quran and the Sunnah from His Messenger S.A.W.

### **Background of Imam Suyuti**

He referred to al-Imam al-Hafiz Abu al-Fadhil Jalal al-Din Abdul al-Rahman bin Kamal al-Din Abi al-Manaqib Abi Bakr bin Nasir al-Din Muhammad bin Sabaq al-Din Abi Bakr bin Fakr al-Din Usman bin Nasir al-Din Muhammad bin Saif al-Din Khadir bin Najm al-Din Abi al-Salah Ayub bin Nasir al-Din Muhammad bin al-Syeikh Hammam al-Din al-Hammam al-Khudairi al-Uyuti.

He was born in Egypt on Saturday night in early Rejab, in year 849 Hijrah which was equal to 3rd October 1445 Masehi. (al-Suyuti: 1975, al-Tiba': 1996) Al-Idrusi had told that the father of Imam Suyuti asked his wife to bring a book from his library, so his wife went to take the book when in sudden his wife felt like to deliver her baby while were surrounded by the abundant of books, and that was the time when his wife gave birth to his son, Imam Suyuti, then out of that situation, Imam Suyuti had been referred as Ibnu al-Kutub. (al-Tiba': 1996, 29).

Imam Suyuti was a well-known scholar in his generation; he was enthroned as one of the greatest scholar on the century of 9 Hijrah. Imam Suyuti had explained in his work *Husn al-Muhadarah* that he had been endowed by Allah SWT to dominate seven fields of study, among of them are tafsir, feqah, nahwu, knowledge of al-ma'ani, and knowledge of al-bayan, plus his deepest understanding and refine towards everything that were related to the knowledge.

According to Syeikh Abdul al-Qadir al-Syazili, Imam Suyuti was a leader in the knowledge of hadith in his age, a fighter and defender of the noble sunnah of Prophet SAW using his writing and speaking. According to Imam Suyuti's student, Ibnu Iyas, Imam Suyuti was a very prominent scholar in the knowledge of hadith.

### **Character and the specialty of Imam Suyuti**

The scholars had certified that Imam Suyuti had a noble manner, there was in his self an honorable nature, a person who practices with all the field of knowledge that Allah had gave to him, he practiced his knowledge not to show off but because of afraid of Allah SWT. Besides, among of his good attitude and manners is he really loved the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad SAW, always holding on the Sunnah and always follow the salaful saleh's path. al-Syazili, Imam Suyuti's student said, since Imam Suyuti was a kid, he had been taught to love Prophet Muhammad SAW and hold onto His Sunnah, beside he really hate the bid'ah taught, and had been trained to avoid from the bid'ah members.

Imam Suyuti had said, "indeed Allah SWT with his superiority and mercy had created the nature in myself when I was seven year old on several criteria, among of them are:

i) Love towards the kindness, love the pious practices, love to pay attention when people invite towards goodness, and hate the crime and evil. My heart is uninterested towards those who invite the crime.

ii) I am a person, who thinks well towards the poor and kind people, the ascetic and the religion experts. Anything that had been categorized to something good, then I will think well about it.

iii) I am not blundering and rushing in doing something. May the thing that I want to do take several years until Allah SWT give the toleration to do it and may sometimes, when people tell me something bad about other's crime, and I see in them 2 characters, then may I not take an immediate bad thinking about him and nothing can change me from think well about that man, unless I have been with him for ages, or his crime had achieved the successive level which cause me far from him.

iv) Acknowledge that, since I was younger, I grown up in the environment, which I had been inspired to love the sunnah and hadith, hate the bid'ah and the ancient's knowledge of the philosophy and mantiq. I had constructed the things that denounce the mantiq and I consider this knowledge as the impermissible maqruh. Other than that, I am not listening to any problem in which had been categorized to the philosophy which I hate to listen to it. I refrain myself from go through any book which is relate to the mantiq and philosophy.

v) I grow up in the state of I love the pious and always thinking well about them. So, if I ascertain about a pious, I will visit him and take the blessing from him".(Syazili:1998)  
Iyad Khalid al-Tiba' (1996) added there was a nature in Imam Suyuti but had not been told by him, which is he is a principled person, someone who not follow others, he is not easy to be subjugated by people's greed, someone who obey to Allah SWT and a person who would tell the truth even it will cause the animosity between the community.

### **The Accusation Towards Imam Suyuti**

Even though Imam Suyuti had an honorable attitudes and manners, unfortunately his whole life was full of varied of argument crisis with the scholars in his era and the government due to his nature, which was well known with his braveness, courage and firmness except for the truth. People with this kind of character by implication will expose to a lot of persecution and cruelty which had been done by their enemies.

The abhorrence towards Imam Suyuti had begun in 875 Hijrah, when he stood up to defense Ibnu al-Faridh. Through a book written by Imam Suyuti entitled, "Qam al-Ma'aridh fi Nusrat Ibnu al-Faridh", he rejected the opinion from the individual that had destroyed Ibnu Faridh which was the effect from the accusation of the belief al-hulul wa al-ittihad. His attitude, actually got the support from many scholars such as al-Kafiyaji dan al-Saif al-Hanafi, Syeikh Zakaria al-Ansori r.a. (al-Surabaji: 2001).

Among of the main circumstances which had caused a lot of people went against him is his theory which had prohibited the mantiq in his small book entitled "al-Ghous al-Mughriq fi Tahrim al-Mantiq". (al-Syazili: 1998)

When Imam Suyuti became well known as people reference, where he stood in line with the great scholars, there was arose the jealousy groups, the competitors start to accuse and critic, in fact personal attacked, making various accusation and showing the disgrace and weakness' of Imam Suyuti. Not being left behind, the great scholars in his generation also involve with the personal attacked on him. Among the people reported to have denouncing and criticizing Imam Suyuti were al-Sakhawi, Sams al-Din Muhammad al-Jaujari, Burhan al-Din Ibn al-Karaki, Ahmad Ibn Muhammad al-Qastalani, Ahmad Ibn Husein Ibn al-Allif al-Makki (al-Jaujari's student) and the abhorrence and strife keep going on the a long period of time. (Al-Surabaji: 2001)

Iman Suyuti had rejected the allegation and the accusation thrown to him through the books written by him such as : *al-Kawi fial-Rad 'Ala al-Sakhawi*, *al-Jawab al-Dzakiy 'an Qumamah Ibn al-Karaki*", *al-Sarim al-Handaki fi Unuq Ibn al-Karaki*", "*al-Lafz al-Jauhari fi Rad Khubbat al-Jaujari*", ect. (al-Surabaji: 2001).

### **The Criticism from al-Sakhawi towards Imam Suyuti**

Imam Suyuti got a strong opposition from al-Sakhawi we he talked about Imam Suyuti's bio in his book *al-Dhaw' al-LAmi'*. In the book, al-Sakhawi threw various criticisms towards Imam Suyuti and had classified him as unintelligent and follows his desires. (al-Sakhawi: 1992)

Among the criticisms and accusation that had been thrown out by al-Sakhawi were Imam Suyuti had plagiarized his writing and his teacher's, Ibnu Hajar, writing. He also claimed that Imam Suyuti had stolen books from the al-Mahmudiyah Library. He also mentioned several books which were stole by Imam Suyuti such as *al-Khisal al-Mujibat li al-Zilal*, *al-Asma' al-Nabawiyah*, *al-Solat'ala al-Nabi SAW wa Maut al-Abna'*. While Ibnu Hajar al-Asqolani's writing that had been mentioned were stole by Imam Suyuti were *Lubab al-Nuqul fi Asbab al-Nuzul*, *Ain al-Isabah fi Ma'rifat al-Sahabat*, *al-Nukatal-Badi'at 'ala al-Maudu'at*, *al-Mudarraja la al-Mudraj*, *Tazkirah al-Mu'tasi bi Man Haddatha wa Nasi*, *Tuhfah al-Nabih bi Talkhis al-Mutasyabih*, *Wa Ma Rawahu al-Wa'un fi Akhbar al-Ta'un*, *al-Asas fi Manaqib Bani al-Abbas*, *Juzu' fi Asma' al-Mudallisin*. *Kasf al-Naqab An al-Alqab*, *Nasr al-Abir Fi Takhrij Ahadith al-Syarh al-Kabir*, (al-Sakhawi:1992).

There were a lot of scholars that rejected the accusation from al-Sakhawi due to the position and the honorable knowledge owned by Imam Suyuti. Looked at the authority and the ability of Imam Suyuti, indeed he was able to create what he had created. It was under his great potentiality. Even if it is able to say that he takes the courage and advantage from the ancients' writings and works, it is a nature and not something wrong. Perhaps at the early stage, he plagiarized the ancients' ideas, but after that he had created the content based on his efforts and his own abilities. (al-Surabaji: 2001; 145-146)

al-Syaukani had mentioned that the matter had become a custom among the author who came after, they took the previous' books, then they summarized, explained or criticized the contents in the books, criticized the books and etc., these were the factors which cause them to write a book. In point of fact, the professionals in any fields of study, when they write about the field that they were master in, they will take the advantage from the previous authors. (al-Syaukani: 2012)

al-Surabaji denied the allegations from al-Sakhawi by saying that the accusations were without prove, he said it was correct that Imam Suyuti had borrowed the books from the library but his intention was to get some help from the books as his references for his writing. Imam Suyuti always mentioned the resources and the books he had referred when writing his books. (al-Surabaji: 2001; 146)

Imam Suyuti had Immaculate himself from al-Sakhawi's allegations in his book entitled *Bazl al-Mahjud fi Khazanah Mahmud*, he explained that the al-Mahmudiyah Library had helped him in writing, because there were a lot of books in various aspects of study inside the library while mentioning the name of the related books. If he wants to take the contents of the books to make as his own writing, then he is surely will not mention the books to the public. (al-Surabaji:2001 ; 147)

In the book, *al-Kawi fi Tarikh al-Sakhawi*, he also answered the accusations from al-Sakhawi. "A lot of people know and also Allah knows that it becomes my attitudes in writing that I am not plagiarizing even one letter from a book unless it should be me who stand the matter to the owner as to fulfill of my thank you obligation and to dispense the burden and mistakes". (al-Suyuti:1989). He also had mentioned as the same thing in his book entitled *al-Muzhar fi Ulum al-Lughat*. This answer in the same time had answered the criticism from al-Sakhawi to him.

Al-Sakhawi also accused that "Imam Suyuti made a lot of mistakes in his writing, because he is not an author with a refine understanding. He never befriend with great scholars and never he seat in the knowledge occasion of the great scholars, in fact, he is taking the knowledge alone, by himself from the books and papers". al-Imam al-Syaukani explained the accusation towards which said he made a lot of mistakes in his works, al-Syaukani said " that is the baseless accusation, just look at his well arrangement writings which is very meticulous".(al-Syaukani:2012).

### **Imam Suyuti's Approach in Fighting the Enemy's Criticism**

Imam Suyuti had mentioned: "when I want to reply someone's accusation, I will voice out base on the knowledge, I will speak courteously and I will really take care of my tongue. I want to follow the pious' path with my best way, I never accustom my tongue by saying bad about people or slander people, never say any word which is afraid may be questioned, I will behold with the truth and will not go far from it. I will collect all the valuable information in the very aspect of wisdom, putting the righteous intentions with the pure heart, not am I saying that to be proud by it, yet only to mention the blessing that Allah had gave to me and be grateful of it. I dream of to withhold the detriment, bring the goodness and follow the *salaful salleh's* steps. I also want to eradicate the mistake and disclose the truth, I want to soften my words, spruce the answers, live the knowledge anything related to it, I want to behave with the attitude of the better in religion and manners, immortalize all the benefits and the value in my work which will remain all the time long, it is able to exert people who come after me as how I get the advantage from the ancients' works. From these works, the individual who give the wide opinions may be able to get the mercy from Allah SWT and Prophet Muhammad SAW and get the greatest position in Allah's heaven, al-Jinan and anything that had been provided for the pious from the superiority and blessing. Because of that, any sluggish actions that are showed

to me, the bad sayings, and the writing to insult me, won't be something hard for me to confront with it".(al-Suyuti:1989).

The replied answers that had been given by Imam Suyuti to the party that attacked him had been presented clearly based on the strong syariah evident, every word and the excerpt being backed up on the right place.

### **The Morals from Imam Suyuti's Attitudes in Facing the Allegations and Criticism**

Imam Suyuti was proved to be a great author. He stood on the level where people rarely are able to achieve it. The actions that were existed and showed by him were very self-respecting actions. He was not quickly to react when being critics and censured by people surround him even by the scholars in his ages. Instead, he used his writings in order to answer all the criticism and the accusations toward him.

He showed a calm manner in facing the criticism and accusation situation. This was clearly showed when was invited to debate with the particular party, he did not quickly irritated or make a rushing decision, whereas as a scholar in his position was unnecessarily to be worried to be in the debate occasion or dialogue as the intelligence and the mature thinking owned by him. In fact, he chose a better and more appropriate medium which were the books and papers.

The idea and argumentation had been well arranged and explained with the strong and enough of syariah evidence. The opposing party also can take enough time to understand and review all the answers calmly without being overshadowed by the anger and depression. Clearly Imam Suyuti gave a justification on why he chooses to answer through writing and printed medium. He argued that someone with mujtahid status should not debate with someone with muqallid status. "If I were to choose the debate medium, my debate should be recommended and organized by two people with mujtahid status. Should one of them have the debate with me and the other one be the judge or jury." (al-Suyuti:1975)

From his speech, Imam Suyuti seems like to have enunciate several ideas for us, among of them are may be if we argue with someone with low education, the debate should not be comparable and will not give a good result, so if there is exist someone who wants to debate with him, be ensure that that person is really worthy to debate with, really understand the policy of debate, has good attitude and manners and is able to self-control and emotions.

This term and condition is seen to be very important in order to keep the advantage of the public besides, ensure to achieve the good outcome or the result as how the assemblage of knowledge has hoped for. May be he is already be able to read from the early stage which is the result from the debate that had been suggested when it being looked from the actions and the attitudes of the person who is courage to make the accusation and criticism without evidence. May be he already knew the main purpose of the debate is to against the opponent,

not on the fact to find the truth or look at the importance and the ethics of educations. That is why he had mentioned about the neat organization and should be handled by an intelligence moderator or should be controlled by the judges with *mujtahid* status.

The morals from Imam Suyuti's speech is that he is a calm person and able to control his emotions when he was facing the criticism situations. He was in fact had showed the characteristics of an author, not any person who would like to debate and fluent in argumentations. Every time when there was someone critics and attacked him, he not quickly react to the situation and did not give the answer by his tongue or mouth, in fact he chose to give the answers using his pen as this showed that he is a great scholars.

## Conclusion

*Khilaf* is a reality which is should be accepted by all parties. *Khilaf* will happen all the time as what had been told by Prophet Muhammad SAW. However, the question is how we manage the *khilaf*, that is what more important. In order to avoid from the symptom of *khilaf*, The Prophet had gave the clear guidance, which is any party involved should behold with the sunnah, the guidance which was left by the prophet Muhammad SAW. The sunnah should be an authentic sunnah, not just any sunnah, because there is also the incorrect sunnah which people assumed it as the correct one, so if any individual hold onto the correct and authentic sunnah, they will be apart from the *khilaf* and they will be given with a good reward due to his kind attitudes. There are many things that we can learn from Imam Suyuti, in term of the noble behavior and manners that had been showed by him and his attitudes when facing the *khilaf* situations. The attitudes and manners showed by Imam Suyuti had educated millions of people. As today's scholar should learn from him, who had thought about the consequences and implications from *khilaf* situation. That is what more important that should be thought by the entire intellectual. The consequences and implications from *khilaf* may sometime kill the courage of love and begrime the clearness of brotherhood. The intellectual should learn from Imam Suyuti, not the fluency of speaking that we are looking for, not also the confident in argumentations that we are dreaming of, but the attitudes, manners and the morals that he had showed to us when he was confronting *khilaf* or the accusations and criticisms. Learn his ways when answering all the criticisms and allegations.

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