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SA'D AL-DĪN TAFTĀZĀNĪ'S METHOD OF CLASSIFYING AND PROVING CREEDAL MATTERS

Abstract: *Sa'd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī al-Ḥanafī (722-792 / 1322-1390) is regarded as a prominent representative of the Second Eastern Renaissance. He is a scholar who wrote in Arabic, ancient Turkic, and Persian languages, and produced valuable works on al-naḥw, al-ṣarf, balāga (eloquence) uṣūl al-fiqh, and furū' al-fiqh (ḥanafī, shāfi'ī, and mālikī), logic, 'aqīdah, ḥadīth, tafsīr, geometry, astronomy, and other similar fields of science. In particular, in his books, Sa'd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī separately explored the levels of Sharī'ah issues and their evidence that serve the correct understanding of Islam. In addition to the Qur'an and ḥadīths, the scholar also used the exact sciences to substantiate doctrinal issues. Indeed, the scholar's approach serves as an important impetus to create a scientific perception in the general public about the call of Islam for enlightenment and peace. His scientific views are also of great importance in overcoming biased, unscientific views on the interdependence of Islam and science. This article addresses these issues.*

Key words: ḥanafī, māturīdī, ash'arī, fiqh, īmān (faith), kalām, 'aqīdah (creed), manṭiq (logic), dalīl (evidence), heaven, hell, tafsīr, al-'Isrā', al-Mi'rāj.

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Introduction

Understanding the creedal matters of Islam in their original form and correctly interpreting and comprehending the evidence is not only important in history but also relevant in today's globalization process. Because it is a historical fact that various conflicts and conspiracies have arisen between people as a result of distorted interpretations of creedal matters. In this context, this topic is relevant and sensitive and has been the focus of the attention of scholars who have lived and worked in different periods and regions. In particular, Sa'd al-Dīn Taftāzānī paid special attention to this topic and did an in-depth scientific analysis of the subject. It should be noted that, on the one hand, the scholar was faced with the issue of scientifically substantiating the fact that the teachings of Māturīdīya and Ash'arīya are from the Ahl as-Sunnah and mutual agreement between both teachings, and on the other hand, the problem of proving the falsity of the views of such

misguided sects as *Khawārij, Mu'tazila, Murji'ah, and Jahmīya*. He cited that only the most learned scholars of the proponents of the teachings of Māturīdīya and Ash'arīya do not accuse each other of being misguided, although there are some differences between these two teachings [17 : 231-232]. He, therefore, tried to reconcile the ideas of these two doctrines as much as possible. However, the scholar fully supported the views of the teachings of Māturīdīya on matters on which it was impossible to reconcile ideas. An example of this is the fact that there is wisdom in the actions of the Almighty Allah [14 : 93].

An analysis of Sa'd al-Dīn Taftāzānī's works on the subject shows that there are four cases on this issue. The first of them is the division of doctrinal issues into topics; the second is the classification and definition of *Sharī'ah* rulings; the third is the classification of *Sharī'ah* matters into categories such

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as doctrinal and jurisprudential; the fourth is the interpretation of creedal evidence.

1. Separation of creedal issues by topics within their scope. Although each of the scholars in the field had their own acceptable, separate approach to the division of creedal issues into topics within their scope, they did not cause any contradiction or controversy.

Sa'd al-Dīn Taftāzānī also has his approach to this issue, which he first described in “Maqāṣid al-ṭālibīn” and then in his book “Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid”. In his book “Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid”, the scholar stated that the doctrinal issues are divided into five chapters: *al-umūr al-‘āmmah* (general issues), *al-a’rād* (accident), *al-jawāhir* (substance), *al-ilāhīyah* (theology) and *al-sam’īyah* (text evidence) [16:159]. Then, he presented the issues in the same order and, at the same time, added a chapter entitled *al-mabādi’* (principles), and called them *al-maqāṣid* (goals). Sheikh Muhammad Sadiq, one of the modern scholars, divided the creedal issues related to theology into four main topics, which are called such as *al-ilāhīyah* (theology), *al-nubuwwa* (prophecy), *al-kawnīyah* (cosmology), and *al-sam’īyah* (text evidence) [8]. A comparative analysis of the modern approach with Sa'd al-Dīn Taftāzānī's method on this issue can make a certain difference between them. In particular, the scholar's peculiarity in the classification of doctrinal issues is that he described the subject of *al-nubuwwa* (prophecy) in the modern classification by adding the part of *al-sam’īyāt* and some of the issues of *al-kawnīyah* (cosmology) to *al-umūr al-‘āmmah* (general issues) and the rest to *al-jawāhir* (substance).

2. Classification and definition of the Shari'ah rulings. This issue differs in a certain sense, first between the four *madḥab* (path) of the Ahl as-Sunnah and then from each other within the framework of the views of the scholars of one *madḥab*. The point of the matter is that some of them are directly related to the criterion of one's religious affiliation with a religion or leaving a religion. In particular, some ḥanafī-mātūrīdī scholars, such as Sa'd al-Dīn Taftāzānī, have divided ḥarām into two types, such as *al-ḥarām li-dātīhi* (الحرام لذاته) (original prohibited) and *al-ḥarām li-ḡayri dātīhi* (الحرام لغير ذاته) (non-original prohibited) [10 : 262-263]. Indeed, such a classification of this ruling is important in terms of al-‘Aqā'id. This is because there is a general doctrinal principle in the Shari'ah sources that “to regard *al-ḥarām* (prohibited) as *al-ḥalāl* (lawful) is to turn a person away from Islam”.

Therefore, in his book “Sharḥ al-‘Aqā'id”, the scholar cited the doctrinal rule that “to regard an original *al-ḥarām* and a deed based on solid evidence of impurity as *al-ḥalāl* is blasphemy” and “to regard a non-original *al-ḥarām* deed as *al-ḥalāl* (lawful) is not blasphemy” [15 : 383]. An example of this is given by the scholar in another work, “al-Talwīḥ”. In this book, the issues of eating carrion, drinking *al-khamr*

(intoxicant), and the son marrying his mother were given as examples of the original *al-ḥarām*, and the eating a property without the owner's permission was given as an example of non-original *al-ḥarām* and elaborated them in detail [12 : 262-264]. However, although there is no example of the rule that “an uncertain evidence of impurity”, it is consistent with the ruling of *al-makrūh al-taḥrīmī* (close to *al-ḥarām*) [12 : 264]. Therefore, it is clear from these opinions of the scholar that not even doing the *al-ḥarām li-ḡayri dātīhi* and *al-makrūh al-taḥrīmī* deeds, and even regarding them as *ḥalāl*, is to turn a person away from Islam.

3. Classification of Shari'a issues into categories such as al-‘aqidah and al-fiqh based on certain criteria. The separation of doctrinal and jurisprudential issues within the subject has led to mutual controversy and contradictions, and this situation can be observed even today in many countries.

The essence of the matter is that while doctrinal and jurisprudential issues differ from each other, they will have to be cited in their respective sources. Indeed, due to various factors, some jurisprudential issues have also been included in the creedal texts. The study of this issue shows that its history dates back to the 2nd / the 8th century. In particular, Imām Abū Ḥanīfa's treatise “*al-Fiqh al-Akbar*”, the founder of the *Ḥanīfa* school, deals with matters of jurisprudence, such as the wiping on the inner shoes (الخفان) and performing the *al-tarāwīḥ* prayer in the month of *Ramaḍān*, which is fixed by the *sunnah*, and which can be permissible by praying behind sinful or pious believers [4 : 325].

First of all, to shed more light on this issue, it is expedient to clarify the lexical and terminological meanings of the words *al-fiqh* and *al-‘aqidah*. Jamāl al-Dīn Abū al-Faḍl Muḥammad ibn Mukarram al-Anṣārī (630-711/1232-1311) in his work “*Lisān al-‘Arab*”, lexically defined, the word *al-‘aqidah* as “to firmly bind one thing to another” and the word *al-fiqh* as “to know about something specific and to understand it” [3].

Sa'd al-Dīn Taftāzānī, on the other hand, distinguished the two words in terms of terminology as follows: “Some of the *Shari'a* rulings are related to the state of implementation, which are called *al-far'ī* (subsidiary) and *al-‘amali* (practical), and some of the *Shari'a* rulings are related to the state of belief, which are called *al-aṣlī* (original) and *al-i'tiqād* (creedal)” [15 : 13-14]. These two definitions are a general rule with which jurisprudential and doctrinal matters differ. ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad Jurjānī Ḥanafī (d. 838/1435), a well-known scholar of the *Ḥanafī* school known as Sayyid Sharīf, also explained the terminological meaning of the word *al-‘aqidah* in his book “*al-Ta'rifāt*” as follows: “*al-‘Aqidah* only means trust without performing a deed” [11 : 128]. This also supports the scholar's view. So, this opinion of the

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scholar clarifies the difference between the two terms. But that's just one aspect of the issue. This is because some *Shari'a* matters, although they seem to belong to *al-fiqh*, are naturally bound to the creed in terms of belief.

In this regard, Sa'd al-Dīn Taftāzānī responded using the “question-answer” method as follows: “If it is said that these issues (that is, praying behind a sinner, the wiping on the inner shoes, etc.) are related to *furū' al-fiqh*, then there is no reason to cite them in the method *uṣūl al-kalām*! If Abū al-Mu'īn al-Nasafī means by this statement that the condition of believing in the reality of this creed is necessary, and of the fundamentals, they should not all the matters of *uṣūl al-fiqh* also be included in the science of *al-kalām*? We answer as follows: when he had completed the explanation of the purposes of the science of *al-kalām* in delving into the essence of Allāh ta'alā, His attributes and His actions, *al-ma'ād*, the prophethood, and the *imāmah* according to the principle of the people of Islam, and the path of *Ahl al-sunnah wa al-jamaa'ah*, then he endeavored to accentuate to some of the matters by which the People of the approved path are distinguished from others who differ from them, such as the *Mu'tazila*, or the *Shi'ah*, or the Philosophers or the *malāhidah* (heretics) or any others of the people of innovation and personal desires, whether these matters are details of *al-fiqh* or some particular matters related to the articles of Belief” [15: 369-370].

This view of the scholar shows that some issues related to *furū' al-fiqh* and, in part, *al-'aqidah*, have also been included in the books of *al-'aqidah*, as required by the socio-scientific situation. In particular, the main reason for the inclusion of jurisprudential issues in “al-Fiqh al-Akbar”, such as the wiping on the inner shoes (الخفان) and performing the *al-tarāwīḥ* prayer in the month of *Ramaḍān*, and praying behind sinful or pious believers, were the activities of the *Shi'a* and the *Mu'tazila* sects at that time. Compared to the time when “al-Fiqh al-Akbar” was written, it can be seen that in the 3rd/9th century, as a result of the emergence of the *Karrāmiyyah* and their misconceptions, the issue of “the difference between *al-walī* (guardian) and *al-nabī* (prophet)” was included in the creedal sources of the later period.

Thus, although the issues of *al-'aqidah* and *al-fiqh* are different from each other, the scholar's opinion proves that it is a natural process to include in the creedal books some issues related to *furū' al-fiqh* and, in part, *al-'aqidah*, depending on the situation in each period.

4. Proofing and interpretation of creedal issues. The next major problem is to prove the doctrinal issues and to understand and interpret them correctly. In many cases, the misuse and misinterpretation of the evidence were the main reasons for the emergence of creedal sects and the formation of their followers. Due to this, Sa'd al-Dīn

Taftāzānī elaborated on this issue. He even made a scientific and theoretical analysis of the views of not only the Ahl al-Sunnah and the deviant groups, but also the views and arguments of philosophers and other believers on a particular issue and drew possible conclusions.

In this case, the first point to consider is the types of evidence substantiating doctrinal issues. In particular, Sa'd al-Dīn Taftāzānī divided the evidence into two parts, such as narrative and mental [15 : 281]. This shows that the scholar supported and acknowledged the teachings of Māturīdīya and the method of *al-mutakallimun*. Indeed, in the period before this doctrine came into being, only narrative evidence was used in the Ḥanafī school. In general, he used logic as a mental argument and the Qur'an, *al-mutawātir* (consecutive) and *al-mashhūr* (popular) *al-ḥadīth*, *al-'ijmā'*, and *al-aṥhar* as narrative evidence to substantiate doctrinal issues by this classification. However, as the case may be, it can be observed that in the works of the scholar, to substantiate a particular doctrinal issue, he effectively used both narrative and rational evidence in one place, and only one of them elsewhere.

Sa'd al-Dīn Taftāzānī used two different methods to prove a particular creedal issue when narrative evidence and logical evidence contradict each other. If it is possible to reconcile the arguments, they are interpreted with a method rule or some other specific argument. In particular, if it could be reconciled between two proofs, they were interpreted by a method rule, or other specific evidence.

However, it is not possible to conclude from this that the scholar emphasized the ins of the evidence, not its appearance. This method is directly related to Sa'd al-Dīn Taftāzānī's view of narrative evidence. In this regard, he stated that “if the meaning of the verses and hadīths is not obscured by any conclusive evidence, their apparent meaning will be taken away” [15 : 381-382]. As a rule of *al-'aqidah*, the scholar's analysis of the subject is based on the same principle and has not been taken out of it, nor has it been applied in its place. This can be observed in the second case. That is, if it is not possible to reconcile facts, the truth of the matter has been referred to the knowledge of Allah without any additional explanation or evidence. An example of this is the refutation of the views put forward by the *Khawārij*, one of the first sects to emerge in Muslim society under the influence of seditionists. In particular, in their view, the one who commits a grave sin is an apostate, and they cited the following verses from the Qur'an as evidence for their opinions:

وَمَنْ لَمْ يَحْكَمْ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْكَافِرُونَ

And whoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed – then it is those who are the disbelievers. (Sūrah al-Mā'idah, 44)

وَمَنْ كَفَرَ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ

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But whoever disbelieves after that – then those are defiantly disobedient. (Sūrah al-Nūr, 55)

They also cited the following *ḥadīth*:

عن أنس أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: من ترك الصلاة متعمداً فقد كفر جهاراً.

It is narrated by Anas bin Malik (r.a.), where Rasullullah (PBUH) said: “Whoever intentionally leaves prayer, then he has clearly disbelieved” [9 : 483-484].

Sa’d al-Dīn Taftāzānī, on the other hand, said, “The apparent meanings of the verses and *ḥadīths* cited as evidence by the *Khawārij* have been omitted. A believer who sins according to the strict narrations (the Qur’an and the *ḥadīths*) is not a disbeliever, and this is supported by *al-ijmā’* (the consensus of the Islamic community) as described above. The *Khawārij*, on the other hand, is the one who denies the *al-ijmā’*, whence their views are ignored” [15 : 269-270].

Evidence presented by the *Khawārij* in this position as proof of their views can be analyzed in two different ways, namely, by interpretation or by the rule of *al-uṣūl*. The scholar chose the second way – the rule of *al-uṣūl*, in which he pointed out that the apparent meaning of the evidence presented by the *Khawārij* had been abandoned. This is an indisputable fact. The scholar described *zāhir al-dalīl* (the apparent meaning of the evidence) in “Kitāb al-ḥudūd” as follows: “*al-zāhir* (apparently) is a concept that has two meanings, one of which has a stronger sign than the other” [13 : 8]. The method used in this case is to cite a stronger document with the argument of the opposing party in the debate. Elsewhere on the subject, the scholar explained the contradiction of the matter by confronting the verse of the Qur’an with the verse of the Qur’an in the method of *burhān al-tumānī* (the argument of antagonism, which is one of the important theological arguments for the oneness of God).

Indeed, it is possible to interpret their arguments. However, if the method of interpretation is used here, there will be a scientific difficulty. Firstly, it is difficult to find equal evidence for it, and secondly, even if the narrations of the Companions on the subject are presented as evidence, it is impossible that the sects will recognize them. For example, if history is wrapped up, it will be clear that in a similar situation, the followers of the *Khawārij* did not accept the views of the Companions on the interpretations of the Qur’an and the *ḥadīths*. In particular, when ‘Alī (r.a.) sent ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Abbās (r.a.) as a representative to the *Khawārij* to guide them to the right path, it is a fact that, despite his efforts, most of them remained steadfast in their opinions [5 : 64-93]. However, ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Abbās (r.a.) was the most knowledgeable of the Companions in the interpretation of the Qur’an.

In cases where it is not possible to reconcile the doctrinal evidence, Sa’d al-Dīn Taftāzānī chose to refer to the truth of the matter to the knowledge of

Allah. An example of this is the subject of *al-Janna* (paradise) and *al-Jahannam* (hell). There are three issues directly related to it, the first of which is that heaven and hell exist at the same time or have not yet been created; the second is where they are located, and the last is their mortality or eternity. Thus, the essence of the problem here is that although there is a consensus among the scholars of *Ahl as-Sunnah* on two of the three issues on this subject, namely, the creation and eternity of heaven and hell, there are several opinions on where they are at the same time [7: 102]. This is due to conflicting evidence about them in the sources. A narration from ‘Abdullah ibn Mas‘ūd (r.a.) states that Paradise is at the top of the fourth heaven and Hell is at the bottom of the seven layers of the earth. A narration from ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Abbās (r.a.) states that Paradise is at the top of the seventh heaven and Hell is at the bottom of the seventh sea [2: 156]. So, the proofs on this issue are difficult to reconcile, and there has been a lot of debate about them. For this reason, Sa’d al-Dīn Taftāzānī argues that referring their truth to the knowledge of Allah is the best thing to do [17 : 108-111; 14 : 106-107].

Sa’d al-Dīn Taftāzānī responded according to *al-uṣūl*, logic, or scientific-theoretical rules, as required by the situation, without providing additional evidence to support the truth, when the primary-external meaning of the narrative and mental arguments within a particular doctrinal subject seemed to contradict each other. Including, the similar evidence for the attributes of Allah, such as *al-yad* (hand) and *al-wajh* (face), which are narrated in verses and hadiths, can be cited as examples. The adjectives that appear in similar evidence presuppose, from the point of view of the mind, that the side and the physicality are required. For this reason, some misguided sects have even described God in human forms, such as a “beardless young man”, an “old man with white hair”, “composed of flesh and blood” or “a light” [1 : 119]. Indeed, Allah is free from such metaphors. A study on this issue shows that there are three different views on this subject. The first of these is to obtain the apparent meanings of *mutashābih* (allegorical) proofs without interpreting them. This has been put forward by such sects as *al-Jahmiyyah* and *al-Mujassima* in history, and their claims are false. The second is to refer to the truth of the apparent meanings of the *mutashābih* (allegorical) proofs for the knowledge of Allah, considering that there is an interpretation of them. The third is to interpret the *mutashābih* (allegorical) proofs appropriately. These last two views are narrated by the Companions [6 : 78-89]. It is important to note that this issue was resolved during the time of the Companions. This first view appeared much later in the 2nd / 8th century. Sa’d al-Dīn Taftāzānī pointed out that the emergence of this view was due to the thoughts of some misguided groups that “every being is a body”. The scholar, on

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the other hand, chose the third way in this matter, the correct interpretation of the *mutashābih* (allegorical) proofs, and refused the misguided sects according to the rules of *al-uṣūl* and logic [14 : 79]. In this case, Sa'd al-Dīn Taftāzānī refused the misguided categories with the logic and scientific-theoretical rules on a particular doctrinal issue. An example of this is the *al-Mi'rāj* event. Existing opinions on the matter can be divided into two categories, initially confirming the event and denying it. The reason for these conflicting opinions was the one-sided understanding of the evidence within the subject and the inability to mentally accept the event. Even from the point of view of that period, the ascension of man to heaven did not fit everyone's mind. The next problem is that there are four conflicting opinions among the proponents of *al-Mi'rāj*. In particular, four different views have been put forward as to whether he was in a dream or awake, only with the spirit, or with the body. The reason for this is that there are several narrations whose apparent meanings are contradictory.

The scholar cited the following narrations on the subject:

When Mu'āwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān (r.a.) was asked about, said, "*al-Mi'rāj* was a real dream".

عائشة رضي الله عنها قالت ما فقد جسد رسول الله عليه السلام ليلة المعراج.

Ā'ishah bint Abī Bakr (r.a.) said: "The body of Muhammad (PBUH) was not absent the night of *al-Mi'rāj*".

Then, he commented on the phrase in the first narration, "Muhammad's (PBUH) body did not disappear (from the world)" that "his body was not separated from his soul, but that his body was with his soul". With this view, the scholar refuted those who say that "the Prophet ascended only with his spirit". The scholar commented on the second narration that "if *al-Mi'rāj* had taken place in a dream, the believers would not have denied it at that time". With this fact, the scholar refuted those who believed that "*al-Mi'rāj* took place in a dream". There is a second aspect of the matter, namely, the reasonable rejection of those who deny *al-Mi'rāj* altogether. In his book "Sharḥ al-'Aqā'id", Sa'd al-Dīn Taftāzānī commented on this: "the denial of *al-Mi'rāj* and the claim of it as an impossible event are based on the rules of philosophers. Otherwise, it is possible to pierce the heavens and ascend to them if the opinion of philosophers is not taken into account. Because all

bodies are structurally similar to each other. Just as other bodies ascend to heaven, so can mankind. Allah is powerful to perform all possible things" [15 : 335].

The scholar commented on the phrase "piercing the heavens" in his "Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid" with the simple phrase, "It is possible to pierce the heavens just as it pierces the earth" [17 : 48-49]. This scientific theory has found its practical proof in modern science. For example, if the words used by the scholar about the heavens, such as "الخرق" (piercing) and "الالتام" (ascension), are analyzed from the point of view of modern astrophysics, these expressions are not simple dictionaries but appear to mean a scientific rule about. Also, the phrase "because all bodies are structurally similar to each other" is a clear indication of the fact that substances that have been scientifically proven in chemistry and physics are structurally composed of atoms.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it should be noted that Sa'd al-Dīn Taftāzānī's views on the science of creed are of great importance in the correct understanding and interpretation of the creedal issues and proofs. The scholar's unique method of analyzing evidence serves as a scientific basis for avoiding various misunderstandings, overcoming useless long-running disputes, and finding the truth. It is especially commendable that different currents and misunderstandings did not damage their dignity by rejecting them. At the same time, there are opinions expressed by him as a refutation of the lost sects, which eventually are being finding their scientific and practical confirmation. It is especially commendable that in refuting, the scholar did not touch on the dignity of the different sects. At the same time, there are opinions expressed by him as a refutation to the misguided sects, which are finding scientific and practical proof over time. The scholar's theory of *al-Mi'rāj* found its practical proof 954 years later, on April 12, 1961, when the man went into space on a rocket. In addition, the scholar has other scientific views, the study of which is also important for today's society.

Indeed, Sa'd al-Dīn Taftāzānī has reached this position by reading, examining, understanding, and interpreting the Qur'an and *ḥadīths*. This is another historical-scientific example of Islam being a religion of peace and enlightenment.

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