

# Ritual, Religion, and Reform: The Impact of *Khurûj* on the Tablighi Jamaat Community

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## Abstract

## **Purpose**

This article examined the impact of Khurûj, a ritual practice of the Tablighi Jamaat, on personal transformation and community solidarity. Khurûj, practiced as a form of worship, aims to encourage adherence to Islamic teachings and foster brotherhood among Muslims. This activity served as a means of both self and communal reform, enhancing individual influence within the community and building a sense of belonging and support

## Method

Through a qualitative study of the Tablighi Jamaat community in Jakarta, this research highlighted how Khurûj influenced personal development, deepens spiritual experiences, and strengthens communal bonds. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with members who participated in Khurûj for more than five years, and participatory observation during Khurûj activities. Thematic analysis revealed key themes such as personal transformation, spiritual growth, and enhanced community solidarity

# Results/findings

The study underscored the crucial role of ritual interactions in reinforcing social bonds and religious identity among members. Despite perceptions of isolationism, the findings show significant social engagement, including efforts to combat drug use and provide community services, demonstrating a positive contribution to broader society

## Conclusion

The concludes that Khurûj is valuable for fostering religious adherence and community cohesion, and further research is needed to explore its long-term impacts and influence in different sociopolitical contexts

#### Keywords

Tablighi Jamaat, Ritual Interaction, Khurûj, Religious Identity, Community Solidarity

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#### Abstrak

## Tujuan

Artikel ini mengkaji dampak Khurûj, yaitu sebuah praktik ritual Jamaah Tabligh, terhadap transformasi pribadi dan solidaritas komunitas. Khurûj yang dipraktikkan sebagai bentuk ibadah, bertujuan untuk mendorong kepatuhan terhadap ajaran Islam dan menumbuhkan persaudaraan di antara umat Islam. Kegiatan ini berfungsi sebagai sarana reformasi diri dan komunal, meningkatkan pengaruh individu dalam komunitas dan membangun rasa memiliki dan dukungan

## Metode

Melalui studi kualitatif terhadap komunitas Jamaah Tabligh di Jakarta, penelitian ini menyoroti bagaimana Khurûj memengaruhi pengembangan pribadi, memperdalam pengalaman spiritual, dan memperkuat ikatan komunal. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan anggota yang telah berpartisipasi dalam Khurûj selama lebih dari lima tahun, dan observasi partisipatif selama kegiatan Khurûj. Analisis tematik mengungkapkan tema-tema utama seperti transformasi pribadi, pertumbuhan spiritual, dan peningkatan solidaritas komunitas

#### Hasil/temuan

Studi ini menggarisbawahi peran penting interaksi ritual dalam memperkuat ikatan sosial dan identitas keagamaan di antara para anggota. Meskipun ada persepsi isolasionisme, temuan tersebut menunjukkan keterlibatan sosial yang signifikan, termasuk upaya untuk memerangi penggunaan narkoba dan menyediakan layanan masyarakat, yang menunjukkan kontribusi positif bagi masyarakat yang lebih luas

## Kesimpulan

Implikasi praktis menunjukkan bahwa Khurûj berharga untuk membina kepatuhan agama dan kohesi masyarakat, dan penelitian lebih lanjut diperlukan untuk mengeksplorasi dampak dan pengaruh jangka panjangnya dalam konteks sosial-politik yang berbeda

## Kata Kunci

Jamaah Tabligh, Interaksi Ritual, Khurûj, Identitas Keagamaan, Solidaritas Masyarakat

## الملخص

#### لعدف

يتناول هذا البحث تأثير الخروج. والخروج هو ممارسة طقسية لجماعة التبليغ، على التحول الشخصي والتضامن المجتمعي. ويهدف الخروج الذي يُمارس كشكل من أشكال العبادة إلى تشجيع الالتزام بالتعاليم الإسلامية وتعزيز الأخوة بين المسلمين. ويعمل هذا النشاط كوسيلة للإصلاح الذاتي والجماعي، وتعزيز التأثير الفردي داخل المجتمع وبناء الشعور بالانتماء والدعم.

#### الطريقة

هذا البحث دراسة كيفية لمجتمع جماعة التبليغ في جاكرتا. و يسلط هذا البحث الضوء على كيفية تأثير الخروج على التنمية الشخصية، وتعميق التجارب الروحية، وتعزيز الروابط المجتمعية. وقد تم جمع البيانات من خلال مقابلات شبه منظمة مع الأعضاء الذين شاركوا في الخروج لأكثر من خمس سنوات، والملاحظة التشاركية أثناء أنشطة الخروج. أما التحليل الموضوعي فهو الكشف عن موضوعات رئيسية مثل التحول الشخصي والنمو الروحي وتعزيز التضامن المجتمعي.

#### النتائج

تؤكد الدراسة على الدور الحاسم للتفاعلات الطقسية في تعزيز الروابط الاجتماعية والهوية الدينية بين الأعضاء. وعلى الرغم من تصورات الانعزالية، تظهر النتائج مشاركة اجتماعية كبيرة، بما في ذلك الجهود المبذولة لمكافحة تعاطي المخدرات وتقديم الخدمات المجتمعية، مما يدل على مساهمة إيجابية في المجتمع الأوسع.

#### الخلاصة

تشير الأثار العملية إلى أن الخروج مفيد لتعزيز الالتزام الديني والتماسك المجتمعي، وهناك حاجة إلى مزيد من البحث لاستكشاف تأثيراته ونفوذه على المدى الطويل في سياقات اجتماعية وسياسية مختلفة.

## الكلمات الرئيسية

جماعة التبليغ؛ التفاعل الطقسى؛ الخروج؛ الهوية الدينية؛ التضامن المجتمعي

## INTRODUCTION

The practice of *Khurûj*, a form of missionary journey undertaken as worship by the Tablighi Jamaat community, plays a crucial role in encouraging Muslims to follow Islamic teachings (Nilhakim, 2021), fostering brotherhood among Muslims, and promoting good behavior (L. Wang & Marzaki, 2023). This activity serves not only as a means of proselytizing but also as a way of teaching and religious preaching, aimed at facilitating self and communal reform (J. A. Ali & Sahib, 2022). By requiring participants to leave behind their daily routines and focus on spiritual practices, *Khurûj* allows individuals to grow spiritually, develop leadership skills, and gain influence within their communities (Sila, 2020; Latif & Fatmawati, 2020). Furthermore, the repeated interactions and bonds formed during *Khurûj* help foster a sense of belonging, especially for those who may feel marginalized, thereby creating a supportive community (Sandøy, 2014).

Khurûj is not only a physical journey but also a spiritual one, allowing members of Tablighi Jamaat to deepen their faith, strengthen relationships with fellow Muslims, and promote good behavior (L. Wang & Marzaki, 2023). The practice of Khurûj encourages self-reflection and personal growth among members of Tablighi Jamaat, offering participants the opportunity to confront their shortcomings, develop humility, and strive for self-improvement (Nilhakim, 2021). The challenges and experiences faced during Khurûj provide valuable lessons in patience, perseverance, and empathy, contributing to the holistic development of individuals within this movement (Siyami & Musawwamah, 2015).

In the context of the Tablighi Jamaat, *Khurûj* forms the foundation for interactional rituals relationships characterized by physical presence, shared emotional energy, and collective participation (Summers-Effler & Barone, 2002). These rituals, with their focus on shared emotions and collective actions, are essential for creating meaning, enhancing well being (Chen, 2023; Meng et al., 2022), and facilitating mechanisms of learning and teaching (Metiu & Slavova, 2015). Participation in these communal activities strengthens individuals' sense of belonging and social support (Caligiuri et al., 2020), while also reinforcing identity and pride, fostering a deep sense of ownership within the community (Deeb-Sossa, 2024). Moreover, such interactional rituals are critical in various social, educational, and religious activities, enabling the building of solidarity and community engagement. (Núñez, 2009; Olitsky, 2006).

By combining spiritual and communal aspects, *Khurûj* not only deepens personal faith but also strengthens communal bonds, offering a holistic framework for both individual and collective growth within the Tablighi Jamaat. Through shared rituals and challenges, participants gain a deeper sense of purpose, belonging, and resilience, shaping both their spiritual journey and their role within the broader Muslim community.

However, despite the rich discussions around the practice of *Khurûj* and the Tablighi Jamaat, there is still limited understanding of how these activities contribute to personal transformation and community solidarity, particularly within the context of the Tablighi Jamaat in Jakarta. Therefore, this study seeks to address two main questions: (1) How does *Khurûj* influence the personal transformation of its participants? (2) How does *Khurûj* foster solidarity and collective identity within the Tablighi Jamaat community?

In addition, by situating *Khurûj* within Indonesia's unique socio-political context, this study will offer comparative insights by examining how the practice aligns or contrasts with other dakwah movements like Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama. Such comparisons will shed light on the distinctive role of Tablighi Jamaat and *Khurûj* in the broader religious and social framework of Indonesia. Moreover, this article will explore the concept of *Khurûj* as a 'spiritual respite,' where emotional regulation and disengagement from daily activities provide participants with motivation and spiritual fulfilment (J. A. Ali, 2010).

The data for this study is derived from ethnographic research involving participation in nearly weekly *Khurûj* sessions, interviews with leaders and community members, and a thorough examination of key texts used by the Tablighi Jamaat, such as *Fadhâil al-A`mâl*,

Hayât al-shahâbah, Dalil-Dalil Enam Sifat Para Sahabat, among others.

Following this introduction, the article will provide an overview of the history and development of the Tablighi Jamaat in Indonesia, examine the concept and practice of *Khurûj*, analyze its impact on personal transformation and community solidarity, and conclude by exploring its broader social implications.

#### **METHOD**

This study uses a Sociology of Religion Approach with a case study design to explore the impact of *Khurûj* on personal transformation and community solidarity within the Tablighi Jamaat in Jakarta. This approach was chosen because it allows for a deep and contextualized understanding of religious practices and their influence on both individual and communal levels. A case study design is particularly well-suited to examining specific, localized phenomena like Khurûj, as it enables the researchers to gather detailed, qualitative data that reflects the complexities of the participants' experiences. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with members who have participated in *Khurûj* for more than 5 years, ensuring that the insights are based on significant experiences. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, focusing on those with substantial involvement in *Khurûj*. Although this approach targets experienced individuals, future studies could include participants with varied lengths of involvement to provide a more diverse perspective.

The primary data collection method involved semi-structured interviews, where participants shared their personal experiences, the impact of *Khurûj* on their daily lives, and how it fosters community solidarity. In addition, participatory observation was conducted by attending *Khurûj* activities, allowing direct observation of social interactions and religious practices. These combined methods provided a comprehensive understanding of both personal and communal aspects of *Khurûj*.

Data was thematically analyzed to identify key themes such as personal transformation, spiritual development, and community solidarity. To ensure validity, triangulation was applied by cross-referencing interview findings with observations, and member checking was used to confirm the accuracy of the participants' responses. Additionally, independent researchers reviewed the data analysis to minimize bias and enhance reliability. This method provides a clear and thorough exploration of *Khurûj's* impact on the participants and their community.

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION

## Historical Development of Tablighi Jamaat in Indonesia

The Tablighi Jamaat is an Islamic missionary movement founded by Maulana Muhammad Ilyas Kandhlawi in 1926 in the Mewat region of India. The movement emerged in response to declining religious practices among Muslims and pressures from Hindu movements (Metcalf, 1993). Its primary goal is to return Muslims to core Islamic teachings, focusing on worship, morality, and proselytization (Reetz, 2006). Influenced by the Deobandi tradition, the Tablighi Jamaat emphasizes strict adherence to Islamic orthodoxy and scripturalism (Irpan et al., 2018). while maintaining flexibility towards Sufism (Sajjad, 2024). Its teachings focus on essential practices such as prayer, knowledge, *dhikr* (remembrance of God), and spreading Islamic values (Ali, 2014; Gilliat-Ray, 2018; Sajiad, 2024).

The movement promotes sincerity in following the Prophet's example, particularly encouraging congregational prayers (M. Ali, 2014; Latif & Fatmawati, 2020). This has positively impacted family resilience and religious values (Kabir, 2009; Tsaaqib, 2022). Additionally, Tablighi Jamaat members travel in groups, living and worshipping together to spread Islamic teachings (Mian, 2022). Since its establishment in Indonesia in 1952, the movement has expanded widely, reaching remote regions like West Papua and gaining millions of followers globally (Sahib et al., 2020; Latepo & Suharto, 2017).

The appointment of H. Zulfakar as the first amīr and the establishment of Masjid Kebon Jeruk as the headquarters (Andrian, 2019; M. B. Mustofa, 2019) were pivotal in strengthening the Tablighi Jamaat's presence in Indonesia. The mosque serves as a *markaz* (center) for training, coordination, and spiritual development, facilitating the spread of Islamic principles and creating a sense of belonging within the community (Effendy & Rustandi, 2020, Ismailbekova & Nasritdinov, 2012). The status of the mosque as a markaz enhances its significance as a spiritual and operational center for missionary activities, strengthening the movement's presence and impact.

The movement experienced further growth after Kyai Na'man's journey to India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh in 1988, emphasizing the important role of Kiai in shaping religious values and education in Indonesia (Azizah et al., 2021; Geertz, 1960; Hiroshi, 1987). Kiai are respected for their spiritual guidance, leadership, and influence on social norms (Muali et al., 2021; Nasith, 2024; Suharya et al., 2018). Through direct interaction and learning from Tablighi centers, Kyai Na'man was able to bring back experiences and knowledge that were then applied in the local context (Hamdi, 2021). His influence helped bridge cultural gaps and introduced new approaches to proselytization that aligned with local traditions, thereby expanding the reach and impact of the Tablighi Jamaat in Indonesian society.

Pesantren Al-Fatah Temboro is located in Temboro Village, Karas District, Magetan Regency, East Java, now a hub for Tablighi Jamaat activities, has significantly influenced religious education and community life in East Java, fostering adherence to the Prophet's Sunnah and contributing to economic development through initiatives like One Pesantren One Product (OPOP) (Badriza, 2022; Alfath, 2020). However, the movement faces criticisms for being too conservative and for having fluctuating membership dynamics, with some participants engaging only temporarily (Irpan, 2022; Ilyas et al., 2022; Sabri, 2023). This evolving acceptance reflects a broader trend where individuals engage with religious movements more personally, adapting teachings to align with their beliefs and values.

The global spread of the Tablighi Jamaat has created a complex network of religious connections and shared practices that transcend national boundaries. In Indonesia, its adaptability to local cultures, combined with the influence of key religious figures like Kyai Na'man and institutions such as Pesantren Al-Fatah Temboro, has allowed the movement to thrive. Despite criticisms, the Tablighi Jamaat continues to have a profound impact on both individual spiritual development and communal religious life. Its global success is reflected in the ability to balance traditional Islamic teachings with local customs, making it a resilient force in the global Islamic landscape.

# Dakwah Khurûj: Concept and Practice

Khurûj is the primary method by which Tablighi Jamaat members spread Islamic teachings. It involves small groups traveling to various places, delivering religious messages, giving lectures, and inviting Muslims to return to the fundamentals of Islam, often through mosque meetings to discuss and practice core Islamic principles. This grassroots approach forming cells of "preachers" across the world is seen as the key to the movement's success, enabling the revitalization of active faith among Muslims (M. B. Mustofa, 2019). The practice emphasizes proselytization as a means to encourage others to follow Islamic principles, rather than simply delivering lectures. However, it also raises questions about the obligations left behind, such as family responsibilities during these missions (M. B. Mustofa, 2019). Khurûj is rooted in the example of the Prophet and his companions, underlining the essential task of spreading Islam. Participants are expected to serve as role models for Islamic living, with their shared commitment fostering mutual respect, brotherhood, and solidarity based on common values and goals (Rosyidi & Dulwahab, 2017). While Khurûj can have both positive and negative impacts on familieswith wives adopting coping mechanisms during their husbands' absence, such as relying on faith and managing household duties (Hamdi, 2021) it is also viewed as a path for spiritual growth and closeness to Allah SWT through activities like *bayan* (religious lectures), *muzakarah* (group discussions), and *ta'lim* (religious education) (Irpan, 2022).

Khurûj is open to all four schools of Islamic jurisprudence, but Tablighi Jamaat members generally emphasize the Hanafi tradition. Alongside the Qur'an, the core text for the movement is Faza'ile-A'maal (also known as Tabligh Nisab), which each participant is required to study daily. Compiled by Mohammad Zakariyya (d. 1982), a cousin and sonin-law of Ilyas, this book focuses on the stories of the Sahabah (companions of the Prophet Muhammad), commentaries on the Qur'an and hadith, and advice on moral regeneration. Zakariyya aimed for the book to inspire an Islamic revival, correct the poor practices of millions of Muslims involved in false worship, and offer examples of authentic Islamic life as models for readers. However, there have been allegations that many hadiths in the book are weak or fabricated, and that the selection reflects a bias towards Ilyas's teachings. Ilyas recognized that many people invited to work with the Tablighi Jamaat in the mid-1940s were largely illiterate and lacked a deep intellectual understanding of Islam. Thus, he emphasized six core principles that any Muslim, regardless of education level, could follow in their daily lives to align with religious teachings. These Six Principles, considered foundational for proper Islamic practice, are: 1) recitation of the kalima (Shahada); 2) salāt (obligatory prayers); 3) knowledge of Islamic principles and dhikr (remembrance of Allah); 4) respect for fellow Muslims; 5) sincerity of intention; and 6) time contribution and the good use of leisure time in the path of Allah (Ilyas, 1967).

Non-verbal communication during *Khurûi*, such as gestures and expressions, plays a key role in strengthening the bonds of brotherhood among Tablighi Jamaat members, serving as a means of expressing solidarity, respect, and support, which in turn reinforces Muslim identity and honors fellow Muslims, enhancing the overall sense of brotherhood (Rosyidi & Dulwahab, 2017). The Six Points of the Tablighi Jamaat provide a comprehensive framework for living according to Islamic principles, with the exception of the sixth point, which focuses on devoting time to missionary activities. The belief is that by contributing time to spreading the message, Muslims can improve their religious practices, deepen their faith, and ultimately form a critical mass of devout followers who can shape a broader Islamic society. Central to the movement is the orientation towards salvation, where participants view worldly life as temporary and believe that failure to secure salvation leads to eternal damnation. This focus on heaven, hell, and judgment is deeply embedded in Tablighi lectures, leaving a strong impression on listeners regarding the importance of reorienting their religious practices. Khurûj offers an opportunity for participants to withdraw from worldly distractions and focus on their faith, with time spent in worship and spiritual activities aimed at drawing closer to Allah SWT, reviving the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) through communal prayers, traditional practices, and promoting a Sunnah-based lifestyle within their communities (Masud, 2000; L. Wang & Marzaki, 2023; Asror, 2018). The structured nature of *Khurûj*, which includes activities like muzakarah (group discussions), ta'lim (religious education), and spiritual reflection, provides a framework for members' spiritual growth, allowing them to focus their energy on religious pursuits and deepen their connection with Allah (Ali & Sahib, 2022; Irpan, 2022; Weismann, 2017). This separation from daily life enables Tablighi members to engage in prayer, reflection, and religious activities, leading to significant spiritual development (Nilhakim, 2021, J. A. Ali & Sahib, 2022).

Focused dedication to spiritual attainment during *Khurûj* helps members strengthen their devotion to Allah and the teachings of Islam (Ismailbekova & Nasritdinov, 2012). The removal of worldly concerns and distractions during *Khurûj* can lead to emotional tranquility, cleansing the heart from worries that hinder spiritual growth. The practice of prayer in Islam teaches individuals to rest their minds from worldly distractions and fully submit to Allah's will. This mental rest and focus on spiritual matters contribute to the members' spiritual growth and overall well-being (Ali, 2010, 2022). The practice of ta'lim, especially through the reading of *Fadhail A'mal*, provides members with valuable insights into the virtues and rewards of good deeds, prayer, and Islamic practices. This

deepens their understanding of Islamic teachings and motivates them to integrate these virtues into their daily lives (Supian & Farhan, 2021). Stories, lessons, and narratives about faith, piety, and devotion inspire members to strengthen their relationship with Allah, enhance their religious observance, and strive for personal spiritual growth (Husni, 2023). They learn the importance of good deeds, charity, prayer, and adherence to Sunnah practices, which influence their behavior and interactions, leading to positive changes in their daily practices (Supian & Farhan, 2021). Members are encouraged to translate these lessons into concrete actions, such as increased worship, charity, and adherence to Islamic principles, ultimately leading to a more devout and spiritually enriched lifestyle (Masud, 2000).

During Khurûi, members perform five daily congregational prayers, engage in dhikr (remembrance of Allah), and recite the Qur'an, striving to emulate the character of Prophet Muhammad (SAW), which helps them draw closer to Allah and foster spiritual devotion (Ma'sum, 2020). These consistent prayers foster unity and brotherhood among Tablighi Jamaat members, as praying together strengthens bonds, promotes solidarity, and reinforces a shared commitment to faith and worship (Permanasari, 2023). Meetings typically begin with a prayer, followed by a motivational sermon ( $bay\bar{a}n$ ) centered on Ilyas's Six Principles or moral regeneration, often highlighting societal moral decline and calling for believers to reorient their lives towards proper Islamic practice, offering salvation through personal transformation. Many speakers emphasize this message with emotional appeals, encouraging attendees to donate time to the cause, which is recorded along with the duration of their commitment. However, despite their intentions, some individuals may not follow through with their pledge. Regular involvement in dhikr, Qur'anic recitation, and prayers cultivates discipline and consistency, deepening members' devotion, mindfulness, and adherence to Islamic teachings, which enhance their faith and piety (Husni, 2023). These spiritual practices provide guidance and inspiration for righteous living and offer members inner peace and fulfillment, strengthening their connection with Allah (Dayyan et al., 2019, Andrian, 2019). The structured Khurûj schedule, which includes prayers, ta'lim, dhikr, and musyawarah (deliberation), fosters regular spiritual habits that translate into disciplined behavior in daily life (Hermawan, 2024). Active participation also develops a sense of accountability, as members take responsibility for tasks, enhance their leadership and decision-making skills, and work effectively in teams (Trager, 2019, Nurmalia et al., 2022). Through delivering sermons and visiting local communities, members regularly practice public speaking, receiving feedback that helps them refine their communication skills, build confidence, and effectively engage audiences (Dansieh et al., 2021; Juwito et al., 2022). This continuous exposure builds resilience, reduces nervousness, and enables them to deliver clear and compelling messages, improving their ability to articulate thoughts and engage listeners (J. A. Ali & Sahib, 2022; Phan & Bui, 2022).

## Khurûj: Structure and Impact

The concept of *Khurûj* in the Tablighi Jamaat involves a structured framework of ritual interactions aimed at fostering spiritual and moral transformation while strengthening social bonds and Islamic identity within the community (I. Mustofa, 2019). These interactions, characterized by shared goals, collective emotions, and the use of Islamic symbols through regular activities, create a spiritually enriching experience for participants. Traditionally, *Khurûj* was exclusive to men, but this has evolved in recent years. Initially, concerns about logistics, such as maintaining strict gender separation and ensuring the welfare of female participants, limited women's participation. Over time, men recognized the valuable role women could play, leading to encouragement for Tablighi women to organize teaching groups to spread the movement's message among fellow women (Metcalf, 1993). However, these activities are tightly regulated—only married women can participate, requiring explicit permission from their husbands and the presence of a male guardian. This shift has provided women with opportunities to engage in religious obligations

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outside the home, breaking away from household duties. Despite this, Sikand (1999) notes that decisions during these missionary tours are still controlled by the men accompanying the women. Yet, the opportunity to participate in religious activities and lead teaching circles has significantly empowered Tablighi women, offering them personal growth not commonly seen among women in more orthodox Islamic communities. Khurûj groups are hierarchically structured, with leadership positions assigned through consensus. Experienced individuals are chosen to lead, while others familiar with local languages or areas are responsible for identifying Muslim households. Some members stay in the mosque to welcome those interested in learning more about the Tablighi Jamaat, while others manage logistical tasks like preparing food. During Khurûj, participants are prohibited from contacting their families without permission and must avoid distractions like social media or other non-religious matters.

The execution of *Khurûi*, which involves absences for 3 days, 40 days, or even 4 months, can create challenges for families, particularly in terms of providing income for those left behind (Latif & Fatmawati, 2020; I. Mustofa, 2019). The Tablighi Jamaat encourages regular participation in its three-day missionary tours, allowing Sunni Muslims to engage without making a significant commitment. These shorter tours often lead to participation in longer ones, with 40-day tours designed to help individuals withdraw from worldly distractions and draw closer to Allah while promoting proper religious practice. Some participants undertake 120-day grand chilla tours or even year-long journeys involving international travel, where they move from mosque to mosque, spreading the Tablighi Jamaat's message. The personal experiences of individuals like Aisyah, a housewife who became more patient with her children after a three-day *Khurûj*, and Rahman, a student who learned discipline after a 40-day Khurûj, highlight the need to balance religious duties with family responsibilities. Khurûj also fosters spiritual growth and strengthens group cohesion through shared ritual interactions that transcend symbolic gestures, as seen in Fatimah, a young mother who found inner peace after her 40-day *Khurûj*. The symbolic rituals of the Tablighi Jamaat, such as congregational prayers, collective dhikr, and adherence to the Prophet's Sunnah, play a central role in uniting participants under a common religious framework (J. A. Ali et al., 2018; Asror, 2018). For example, Abdullah, a businessman, became more consistent in his prayers and dhikr after participating in a 40-day *Khurûj*, reinforcing the personal and communal spiritual growth that Khurûj fosters.

During Khurûj, Tablighi Jamaat members gather in mosques or designated locations to carry out various missionary activities, and this physical presence together strengthens camaraderie and solidarity within the group. Ritual interactions, characterized by shared goals, emotional connections, and the use of Islamic symbols, play a crucial role in building both collective identity and group unity among members (Summers-Effler, n.d.). These interactions foster a sense of belonging and mutual purpose, which strengthens the bonds that define the Tablighi Jamaat community (García, 2018). The emphasis on communal activities and repeated Islamic practices helps members develop a collective identity rooted in shared religious values and beliefs (Wu et al., 2022). These daily interactions, often within personal networks, contribute to social cohesion and a deeper sense of belonging within the community. Meaningful symbols such as mosques, prayer rugs, the Qur'an, and traditional clothing reinforce the group's identity, with members committed to staying together, cooking, eating, and sleeping in affiliated mosques during their journeys (Lenz-Raymann, 2014). The more frequently someone participates in Khurûi, the greater the opportunities for leadership within the organization, with those completing a four-month tour earning the title *purani sathi* (old friend) and receiving invitations to special meetings and senior leadership roles (Ali & Amin, 2020).

Mosques play a pivotal role in Tablighi Jamaat activities, acting as key venues for congregational prayers, religious gatherings, and spiritual reflection (Wang et al., 2022). The focus on *dawat* (missionary work) within these sacred spaces highlights their significance in fostering communal worship and a sense of belonging among Tablighi Jamaat mem-

bers (Halim et al., 2020). The mosque serves as a central point for spiritual engagement and collective worship, reinforcing the group's religious identity and their commitment to Islamic teachings. Additionally, prayer rugs symbolize personal devotion and connection to the act of prayer (Minhus & Hui-e, 2021). facilitating daily prayers while reminding members of their religious duties and strengthening their communal bonds. The Qur'an, the primary religious text in Islam, holds deep importance for the Tablighi Jamaat community, guiding and inspiring members on their spiritual journeys through its divine revelations and moral teachings (Ye, 2023). Alongside this, traditional attire further reinforces group identity by visually expressing members' adherence to Islamic values and fostering unity and solidarity among followers (Fan & Zhou, 2020). A key element of Khurûj is not converting others but rather the preacher's own reorientation towards a more orthodox understanding of their faith. According to many Tablighi members interviewed, Khurûj serves as a time to reflect on life's purpose, focus on the divine, and prepare for the afterlife. This journey for salvation runs deeply through Tablighi Jamaat practices, with members striving to save both themselves and fellow Muslims. By forsaking life's comforts during missionary tours—sleeping on hard floors, cooking for themselves, washing their clothes, and reducing dependency on material resources. Tablighi members embrace self-denial, simplicity, and a renewed outlook on life, setting them apart from ordinary Muslims.

# Khurûj: Motivating Action and Social Change

Ritual interaction plays a significant role in motivating action and social change by reinforcing social norms and values, shaping collective identity and solidarity, increasing engagement and active participation, and creating momentum for social change. With a strict focus on salvation, Tablīghī leaders actively encourage their followers to withdraw from involvement in broader society and retreat into the Tablīghī community, where life can be organized based on Ilyās's Six Principles.

Tablīghī members are advised to avoid interaction with the secular world except for the purpose of spreading Islam. Modern society is viewed as being in a state of jāhiliyya, similar to the period of ignorance and moral disorder in pre-Qur'anic Arabia. Jan Ali (2018) argues that this aligns with the broader Islamic revival, particularly emphasizing that "modern values and ways of life promote the idea that happiness and success lie in the possession of material wealth, ultimately leading to questions about fundamental religious values." This argument is further reinforced by the proposal that "this way of life has led to a spiritual void, creating an urgent need to uphold religious blueprints through which tradition can be reestablished, and meaning can be restored to life" (J. A. Ali et al., 2018). Rituals performed repeatedly help to form habits and commitment to group values, while the structure and rules applied during Khurûj help direct the behavior and interactions of Tablighi Jamaat members. Tablīghī leaders walk a tightrope, balancing the blame for the current state of society between Western values and Muslims themselves. According to Jama'ah Tabliq leaders, Muslims as representatives of Allah have become lazy in their religious practices, neglecting their religious and social duties, and instead investing in worldly wealth.

The Jama'ah Tabliq has skillfully highlighted the shortcomings of modern life, particularly how technological advancements have failed to improve moral character. Leaders often point out issues like rising crime, substance abuse, and exploitative media, contrasting these with their message of rejecting worldly attachments and focusing on spiritual growth and salvation. This resonates with followers, encouraging them to reassess their lives and seek deeper meaning.

While Jama'ah Tabliq is sometimes seen as isolationist, it's important to note that this detachment from broader society is viewed by some, like Metcalf, as a deliberate lifestyle choice. This approach allows for the expression of cultural identity and provides individuals with the opportunity to live a disciplined, sacrificial life within a morally supportive community. Participation in rituals and missionary activities, such as leading prayers,

giving lectures, or making house visits, gives members a strong sense of belonging and responsibility, fostering their commitment to the group.

Furthermore, when encouraged to be more socially engaged, Jama'ah Tabliq leaders want to demonstrate that they are not isolationist. Senior Jama'ah Tabliq leaders point out that they "regularly engage with parents who ask us to help their children and save them from problems of crime, drug use, or manipulation by others leading them astray". They can demonstrate that their active role in helping people combat drug use is not just rhetoric, by providing letters from the Ministry of Justice stating that the mosque is a place where people perform community service.

Jama'ah Tabliq leaders have designed a point and reward system, which is important to Tablīghī members, with some even carrying small notebooks to keep track of their points. notes that Ilyās emphasized certain hadiths that "claim that reading certain verses of praise a certain number of times can result in specific blessings countable from Allah," and some Chinese Tablīghī "even carry electronic counters to help tally their blessings." One participant in my research reported that depending on the actions performed, a certain number of points are awarded. If one cleans their plate and licks their fingers, they receive a certain number of points. If they sleep on their right side and clean their bed, they receive a different number of points. At the end of a Muslim's life, "Allah will tally the points and decide who can enter the afterlife." In this way, emulating pious ancestors is not only a way of life in this world but also a way to ensure entry into heaven. During the month of Ramadan, there are additional incentives for Tablīghī members to engage in the movement's work, encouraged through the accumulation of extra points.

# Khurûj and Changes in Local Communities

Khurûj in the Tablighi Jamaat brings various positive changes to local communities through enhancing the quality of worship and spirituality, fostering morality and ethics, improving religious education, strengthening social and religious institutions, and promoting social and economic improvements. Through structured ritual interactions and missionary activities, Tablighi Jamaat members can motivate and inspire the community to enhance their overall quality of life.

Self-centeredness is often observed in society. In the Tablighi Jamaat, selflessness means mutuality and the need for interpersonal bonds. Selflessness does not mean a lack of self-concept or the elimination of personal identity. Instead, selflessness occurs when an individual considers their behavior within the broader context of the cultural group in which they function. The widespread acceptance of Tablighi Jamaat followers in various cultures may be due to the selfless persona they develop through asceticism throughout their involvement in Tablighi activities. Their patience, perseverance, and commitment to inviting fellow Muslims to practice visible Islamic teachings might be the reason for the broad growth of this movement.

Khurûj in the Tablighi Jamaat brings positive changes to local communities by improving worship, spirituality, morality, religious education, and strengthening social and religious institutions. Through structured rituals and missionary work, Tablighi members inspire the community to enhance their quality of life. In the Tablighi Jamaat, selflessness is key, meaning mutual support and strong interpersonal bonds. This selflessness doesn't erase personal identity but encourages members to see their actions within the larger cultural group. The movement's growth may stem from the selfless persona developed through patience, perseverance, and dedication to inviting others to practice Islamic teachings.

While Tablighi Jamaat is sometimes seen as isolationist, this lifestyle is viewed by some as a choice that allows the expression of cultural identity and disciplined living within a supportive moral community. To promote orthopraxy, Tablighi leaders use a points and rewards system, which is important to members. As noted by Stewart (2018), Ilyas emphasized certain hadiths that "claim that reading certain verses of praise a specific number of times can result in blessings countable from Allah." This system motivates

members to stay committed, especially during Ramadan.

Interactions between Tablighi members and local communities lead to revitalized mosques, better social conditions, and stronger solidarity. The movement's regular activities help create more religious and harmonious communities. Open communication between Jama'ah Tabliq leaders and followers strengthens morale and productivity, with all participants involved in decisions and feedback, integrating values from Islamic teachings that contribute to the movement's success.

Despite debates surrounding the movement, no one can deny the role of discipline in coordinating efforts. The disciplined adherence to patterns, without formal structure, binds followers into an effective and productive system. Volunteers are driven by a mix of altruism, egoism, and citizenship behavior. Their dedication, often involving personal sacrifices for the well-being of others, is a unique and crucial factor in Jama'ah Tabliq's success.

The findings of this study highlight the profound influence of *Khurûj* on both the personal transformation of its participants and the collective identity within the Tablighi Jamaat community. Khurûj serves as a significant catalyst for individual spiritual growth. Participants engage in a disciplined routine of religious practices, including congregational prayers, dhikr, and religious instruction (ta'lim), which deepens their connection with Allah and reinforces their commitment to Islamic teachings. By temporarily stepping away from daily life and focusing entirely on religious duties, participants undergo a reflective process that leads to improved moral character, enhanced self-discipline, and greater devotion to religious practices. For example, studies report that individuals who participate in Khurûj often demonstrate heightened resilience and spiritual discipline, cultivated through the challenges of communal living and physical hardships (Hamdi, 2021; Ali & Sahib, 2022). This separation from worldly distractions creates an environment conducive to spiritual purification, providing participants with emotional peace and an intensified focus on their relationship with Allah (Irpan, 2022). In essence, Khurûj acts as a transformative experience that promotes personal growth by aligning participants more closely with Islamic principles.

Moreover, *Khurûj* plays a vital role in fostering solidarity and collective identity within the Tablighi Jamaat community. The shared rituals and group activities, such as communal prayers and group discussions (musyawarah), help create a strong sense of unity and shared purpose among participants. These collective experiences reinforce social bonds and foster mutual respect, building a cohesive community dedicated to spreading Islamic teachings (Effendy & Rustandi, 2020). Symbolic practices, such as the use of mosques and traditional Islamic attire, further strengthen this sense of collective identity by visually and spiritually linking members to the broader Muslim community. Additionally, the hierarchical structure within *Khurûj*, where leadership roles are determined by experience and consensus, instills a sense of responsibility and belonging, as participants actively contribute to the mission's success (Mustofa, 2019). This collective identity, rooted in shared religious values and goals, strengthens solidarity within the group, ensuring that the Tablighi Jamaat remains cohesive and continues to grow. Thus, *Khurûj* not only nurtures personal spiritual development but also plays a crucial role in building and sustaining a strong collective identity among its members.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study demonstrates that *Khurûj*, as practiced by the Tablighi Jamaat, plays a crucial role in both personal transformation and strengthening community solidarity. Through the structured religious activities of *Khurûj*, participants deepen their faith, develop leadership and teaching skills, and experience a stronger sense of belonging within the community. The communal aspects of *Khurûj* such as collective prayers, dhikr, and religious instruction foster close interpersonal bonds and reinforce a shared religious identity. These collective rituals create a cohesive spiritual environment, enabling individuals to grow personally while contributing to a united community. Furthermore, the practice

helps develop influential figures within the group, enhancing the movement's broader impact.

While the study highlights these positive outcomes, it is important to acknowledge and critically examine potential challenges associated with *Khurûj*. Prolonged absences from families and societal responsibilities, as well as criticisms regarding the movement's perceived isolationist tendencies, require deeper reflection. Although Jama'ah Tabliq has made efforts to address broader societal issues, such as substance abuse prevention, these actions may not fully counterbalance perceptions of disengagement from secular society. A more balanced evaluation of *Khurûj*'s effects would also include an analysis of the possible social and familial strains it imposes on participants.

The findings of this study have significant implications for understanding the role of *Khurûj* in fostering religious adherence and community cohesion. By promoting personal spiritual growth and solidifying communal bonds, *Khurûj* serves as a model for strengthening Islamic identity within local and global Muslim communities. The practice has potential applications beyond the Tablighi Jamaat, offering insights for religious and community leaders looking to foster unity and religious devotion among their followers. Furthermore, *Khurûj*'s emphasis on collective action and leadership development can inform broader strategies for community-building within diverse social and religious contexts.

To address the limitations of this study, future research should expand geographically and demographically to include participants from diverse regions and socio-political contexts, offering a more comprehensive understanding of *Khurûj*'s long-term effects. Studies should also explore potential negative consequences, such as family strains and disengagement from societal responsibilities, to adapt *Khurûj* to different cultural settings while minimizing drawbacks. Additionally, religious and community leaders could integrate *Khurûj*'s collective structure into programs that balance spiritual growth with societal duties, fostering leadership and community cohesion. Exploring the leadership and teaching skills gained through *Khurûj* can benefit both religious and secular institutions.

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