

AL-ITQĀN

JOURNAL OF ISLAMIC SCIENCES AND COMPARATIVE STUDIES

Special Issue (1)

November 2018

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eISSN:26008432

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Tel: +603 6196 5558
Website: <http://journals.iium.edu.my/al-itqan/index.php/alitqan/index>
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Published by:
IIUM Press, International Islamic University Malaysia
P.O. Box 10, 50728 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Phone (+603) 6196-5014, Fax: (+603) 6196-6298
Website: <http://iiumpress.iium.edu.my/bookshop>

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Islamic Spirituality and Its Impact on Life as a Muslim

Wan Mohd Azam Mohd Amin*

Masitoh Ahmad*

Adibah Abdul Rahim*

Abstract

This paper offers observations on the concept of Islamic spirituality, its scope and its significance in the well-being of man. The authors highlight the discussion on the concept of man and the human soul, and his relationship with God and the universe as a basic framework of Islamic spirituality. The framework is in accordance with the Qur'ān, the *Sunnah* of the Prophet (p.b.u.h), and the consensus of religious scholars ('*ulamā*'). This research is qualitative, in which a textual analysis technique is applied on classical, as well as relevant contemporary materials on Islamic spirituality. Findings show that the well-being of a Muslim and the sustainability of his living depend on some fundamental principles, such as the unity of God (*tawhīd*), the vicegerent of God (*khalīfatu 'Llah*), god-consciousness (*ihsan*) and others. These principles constitute as core manifestations of Islamic spirituality as evident from the life of Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h).

Keywords: Islamic spirituality, Sufism, *tawhīd*, human soul, ethics.

Introduction

The religion of Islam which is derived from Arabic word *s, l, m*, means peace, safety, submission, and surrender.¹ It has its own distinct spiritual dimension based on the holistic nature of revelation, the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet (p.b.u.h). This spiritual dimension of Islam lies in the relationship between man and God as well as his relationship with

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¹ Sachiko Murata and William C. Chittick, *The Vision of Islam*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006) 3-7; S. M. Naquib al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism*, (Kuala Lumpur: ABIM, 1978) Pp. 5-61.

others including the universe. As a servant of God and His vicegerent, man should worship Him and take care of the universe to the utmost sincerity. The worship of God and the man's deal with others and universe are embodied in the concept of *'ibādah* (servitude) towards Allah. The acts of worship or servitude towards God aim at drawing one closer to Him through the feeling of *ihsān* (God's presence) without the dereliction of this universe.¹ Explaining the word *ihsān*, the Prophet (p.b.u.h) described this relationship as "to serve Allah as though you could see Him, for though you cannot see Him yet He sees you". Thus, spirituality applies the sense of responsibility, accountability, and obedience to God as well as seeking for His pleasure in every action of the man's life. Man is the most important creation of God in the concept of Islamic spirituality for his position as a servant (*'abd*) and successor (*khalīfah*) in the Islamic world view.

The origin of the Islamic spiritual² system can easily be traced back to the Qur'an and Sunnah, which become apparent in the spiritual life (*ḥayāt al-rūḥiyyah*) of the Prophet (p.b.u.h). The life of the Prophet (p.b.u.h) or Sunnah that serves as the interpretation of the Qur'an is a holistic model laden with physical and spiritual guidelines of life for Muslims to be followed.

¹ William C. Chittick, *Faith and Practice of Islam*, (Kuala Lumpur: S. Abdul Majeed & Co, 2000) 5; Sachiko Murata and William C. Chittick, *The Vision of Islam*, 3-7.

² The term "spirituality" was not used in the early days of Islam but rather –clearly– that the term is originally a Christian terminology. Some Muslim scholar views that the term "spirituality" also referred to a situation where there is a "blessing", and man lives in a blessed state as he is blessed with the perfection of morality and the highest level of spiritual achievement in life. The interpretation of "spirituality in this sense, has led some scholars to view that "Sufism" represents the spirituality of Islam, as it deals with issues and problems related to Muslim's spiritual life and provides guidance to those who are in their journey to God to attain the highest level of spiritual state. Sufism forms a spiritual or mystical dimension of Islamic Teachings, known as "Haqiqa" (esotericism), besides its physical dimension, known as "Shari'ah" (exotericism). See Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Spirituality: Foundations*, (New York: Crossroad, 1987) xvi; William Stodart, "The Masterpiece of Sufism I, Sufism: The Mystical Doctrine and the Idea of Personality," *The Mystical Doctrine and Methods of Islam*, (Delhi: Adam Publishers & Distributers, 1998), 3-4; Frithjof Schoun, *The Transcendent Unity of Religion*. (U.S.A: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1984), i.

God and the Universe

Allah is the name of one God in Islam. One who believes and acknowledges Him as the only God and Creator is called a *Muslim*.¹ The action of acknowledging the oneness of Allah is *Tawhīd*, which can be applied in all aspects of Muslim's life. Meanwhile, the universe that is referred to as words or signs of God (*āyāt Allāh*) in the Qur'an is an orderly creation of God. It comprises millions of living and non-living things that were not created by God without purpose or in vain but serving the Creator's purposes.² One of the purposes is to be subtly utilized (*taskhīr*) by man, the vicegerent of God (*khalīfat Allāh*) in this world. As a vicegerent of God, man can freely utilize the universe as a platform for him to grow and survive. Since the universe belongs to God, which is a trust confided to man, the utilization of it should be in line with the ways prescribed by Him in order to maintain the prosperity and balance of the whole universe.

Furthermore, man's utilization of this universe has its limit in the sense that it will not disturb the law of nature and thus destroy this world. The discourse of limitations and regulations to use the components of the universe falls under the ambit of Islamic ethical system that was laid down in the Qur'an and traditions of the Prophet (p.b.u.h). Thus, any act of waste, destruction, and ruining the nature's ecological balances is not allowed in Islam. Above all, the ultimate purpose of creation of the universe is to steer man to know and acknowledge the existence of almighty Allah, thus serves Him obediently.³

As the servant and vicegerent of God, man is endowed a privilege that is freewill. The good and bad fates of this universe are in the hand of man as everything is subjugated to him. Hence, the creation of man and his role was discussed in the Qur'an and traditions of Prophet (p.b.u.h). The universe has fulfilled man with his physical, intellectual, and spiritual needs in many ways. In terms of the physical needs of mankind, the universe contains ample supplies of all raw materials which man needs to survive physically in life, for instance, food and drinks, shelter, clothing, medicine, and means of transportations. Indeed there are many Qur'anic verses which highlight scientific data of the creation, which can be utilized for man's physical survival and comfort. Planting trees and taking care of grazing areas are also considered as meritorious acts that deserve rewards from God.

¹ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Ideals and Realities of Islam*, (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1985) 26-29.

² Isma'il R. al-Faruqi, *Al-Tawhīd: Its Implications for Thought and Life* (Herndon: IIIT, 1992) p. 11.

³ Al-Faruqi, *Al-Tawhīd: Its Implications for Thought and Life*, 57-59.

Obviously, God creates the universe to facilitate man's existence, and the Qur'an invites human beings to exploit the resources of the universe for their benefits. In utilizing and managing the material resources, man should be simultaneously responsible to God, the real Owner. His proper relationship with God would determine his relationship with others in which he would be inspired to act in the right manner. Man has been reminded not to misuse the material resources but utilize them with accountability and responsibility towards God. The material resources should not be the ultimate possessions rather they are the trust confided by God to be utilized in proper ethical ways. Allah said,

“The life of this world is alluring to those who reject faith, and they ridicule and scorn those who believe, but the pious will be above them on the Day of Resurrection”¹

“The material things which you are given are nothing; also the conveniences of life and the glitter thereof are nothing. But which is with Allah is better and more enduring.”²

Meanwhile, in terms of intellectual needs of mankind, the universe has been described as an open book in which man needs to look at it mindfully. The richness of the universe opens the doors for various researches to be conducted which eventually lead to new intellectual discoveries. Most importantly, the universe fulfills the spiritual needs of mankind in which it can be considered as the medium for meditation and self-contemplation. Reflecting upon the natural surroundings of the universe may enhance man's spiritual sensitivity and draw him closer to God. The universe reveals the signs of God in which observation leads to the acknowledgement of the power of God. Allah said,

“Behold! In the creation of the heaven and the earth and the alteration of night and day, there are indeed signs for man to understand.”³

The above verse is inviting man to observe the arrangement and stability of the environment and recognize God as the supreme Creator and Regulator. By reflecting on and understanding of the universe, man will be able to improve the quality of his life physically, intellectually,

¹ Al-Qur'ān 2: 212

² Al-Qur'ān 28: 60

³ Al-Qur'ān, 3:190

and spiritually. Therefore, man should not ignore the importance of the universe in a worldly life.

In Islam, man basically understands his position as a servant (*‘ibād Allāh*) as well as vicegerent of God (*khalīfat Allāh*). Knowing his position before God, he should fulfill the necessary obligations to ensure his proper place in the world after. The first effort of man is to equip himself with knowledge of the right path that has been provided both by the Revelation and teachings of the Prophet (p.b.u.h). In addition, man has also been endowed with the faculty of intellect (*‘aql*) as the tool of understanding the truth. *‘Aql* can be considered as an instrument for making a distinction between right and wrong and good and evil. Hence, those who are endowed with *‘aql* but neglect its use in the right direction are chastised by God. Submission, thus, requires man’s intellectual understanding as a rational being.

Dual Nature of Man

The creation of man is of two elements,¹ spirit and body as mentioned in several Qur’anic verses² and the tradition (*ḥadīth*) of the Prophet. The body which originates from dust or clay (*turāb*) represents the worldly elements. The process of creation of man’s body begins with the sperm - a drop emitted (*mā’ dāfiq*)³ enters the ovum in which it grows as *nuṭfah*, *‘alaqah*⁴ and *mudghah*⁵ respectively. The process continues with the growth of bones and flesh⁶ as evident from some of the Qur’anic verses⁷ and tradition of the Prophet.¹

¹ Islam took a middle position between the materialists which views that the nature of man is a complex physical nature of the various chemical substances that arose because of the evolution of the primary living material, and the spiritualist or spiritual tendency that sees human nature as a single spiritual nature. Man – according to the Islamic perspective – is dual in nature; has both material and spiritual aspects which are not inseparable between them but the priority is more to spiritual aspect as it leads man to attain happiness in this worldly life and hereafter. ‘Abd al-Ghanī, ‘Abd al-Maqṣud, *Al-Akhlāq bayna Falāsifah al-Yunan wa Ḥukamā’ al-Islām*. (al- Qāhirah: Maktabah al-Zahrā’, 1993) P. 333-334.

² Al-Qur’ān, 86:7; 35:11; 40:67.

³ Al-Qur’ān, 86:7.

⁴ Al-Qur’ān, 40: 67

⁵ Al-Qur’ān, 22:5.

⁶ Al-Qur’ān, 23:14.

⁷ O mankind! If ye have a doubt about the resurrection, (consider) that We created you out of dust, then out of sperm, then out of leech like clot, then out of a morsel of flesh, partly formed and partly unformed, in order that We may manifest (Our power) to you; and We cause whom We will to rest in the womb

Some of the traditions (*ḥadīth*) suggest that after about 120 days of pregnancy the spirit (*rūḥ*) is breathed into the fetus. The terminology of *rūḥ* is used in the Qur'an to mean spirit. Not much is known about the nature of *rūḥ* except that it is of divine origin and it is breathed into the body by the angel.² The discussion of the reality of the spirit is discouraged by God as He reminded that very little knowledge about it is revealed to mankind.³

The Concept of Human Soul

The combination of spirit (*rūḥ*) and body resulted in the manifestation of the human soul (*nafs al-insān*) and human nature (*fiṭrah*).⁴ This concept is actually construed from several Qur'anic verses that mention the words *nafs* (desire), *qalb* (heart), '*aql* (intellect), and *rūḥ* (source of strength).⁵ The Qur'an enlightens that the lower lust (*nafs*) is of different categories, depending on the degree of one's faith (*īmān*) in God. At the lowest level is the soul which commands to evil (*nafs al-ammārah bi al-sū'*),⁶ gradually ascends to higher levels of the soul which blames bad deeds (*nafs al-lawwāmah*),⁷ and, the peaceful soul (*nafs al-muṭma'innah*)⁸ in accordance with the observation of *iḥsān* in one's devotional actions ('*ibādah*).

The Qur'an also talks on the changeability condition of man's heart (*qalb*) as also depending on the level of consciousness of God that leads to firm faith. Phrases like 'in their heart diseases' (*fī qulūbihim maraḥ*),⁹

for an appointed term...Al-Qur'ān, 22:5.

Then We made the sperm into a clot of congealed blood; then of that clot We made a (foetus) lump; then We made out of that lump bones and clothed the bones with flesh; then We developed out of it another creature: so blessed be Allah the Best to create. Al-Qur'ān, 23:14.

¹ "Verily the creation of anyone of you takes place when he is assembled in his mother's womb; for forty days he is as a drop (*nutfah*), then he becomes a clot ('*alaqah*), in the same way, and then, in the same way, a mass (*mudghah*). Then an angel is sent to him, who breathes the *rūḥ* (spirit) into him." Al-Nawawī, 1982:36-39.

² Al-Qur'ān, 15:29.

³ Al-Qur'ān, 17: 85.

⁴ Sachiko Murata and William C. Chittick, *The Vision of Islam*, 137-138.

⁵ Shah Wali Allah al-Dihlawi, *Hujjat Allāh al-Bālighah*, trans. Marcia K Hermansen, *The Conclusive Argument from God*, (Leiden: Brill, 1996) 53-56.

⁶ Al-Qur'ān, 12:53.

⁷ Al-Qur'ān, 75:2.

⁸ Al-Qur'ān, 89:27.

⁹ Al-Qur'ān, 47:16

‘your hearts hardened’ (*qasat qulūbukum*),¹ ‘blind hearts’ (*ta‘mā al-qulūb*),² ‘hearts wherewith they cannot understand’ (*qulub lā yaʾfahūn*),³ ‘God-fearing hearts’ (*taqwā al-qulūb*),⁴ ‘content hearts’ (*taṭmaʾin al-qulūb*),⁵ ‘with sound heart’ (*bi qalb salīm*),⁶ and others are used in the Qurʾān referring to its changeable nature. Besides, the word ‘*aql* (intellect) is also used in the form of verbs such as *yaʾqilūn* (they are thinking), *lā taʾqilūn* (they do not think), and others in issues of differentiating between the truth and false. The discussion on the concept of man’s nature (*fiṭrah*) and human soul (*nafs al-insān*) fall in the realm of spirituality as they are related to the inner dimension of man in his servitude towards God.

Since al-Qurʾān deliberately highlights these terminologies, it was further explored and developed by Muslim scholars in the field of spiritual education (*tarbiyyah al-rūḥiyyah*). According to the Qurʾān, man’s soul is of positive and negative qualities depending on his relationship with the Creator who is the Truth (*al-ḥaqq*). If the soul acknowledges sincerely that God is his Creator, and serves Him out of love and consciousness (*iḥsān*), the soul will attain the level of god-fearing (*taqwā*), contentment, and tranquility (*muṭmaʾinnah*). On the contrary, if the soul rejects the truth (*al-ḥaqq*), the negative qualities such as diseases (*amrāḍ*), arrogance, envy, greed, and rancour will harden (*qāsiat*) the soul.⁷

Theory of Human Soul Purification

Muslim scholars attempt to fathom this subject and give emphasis on the issue of qualities of the soul. Based on the Qurʾanic verses and

¹ Al-Qurʾān, 2:74.

² Al-Qurʾān, 22:46

³ Al-Qurʾān, 7:179

⁴ Al-Qurʾān, 22:32

⁵ Al-Qurʾān, 13:28

⁶ Al-Qurʾān, 26:89

⁷ Man - as an entity composed of physical being and spirit – is in a middle position between the beast and the angels; he has a potential to ascend to the highest level of angelic horizon if he strive towards nearness to God and fulfilment of his duty in accordance with the divine will, as well as descending to the level lower of animals if his behaviour and attitude are corrupted. Abū al-Qāsim al-Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad al-Asfihānī, *al-Zariʾah Ilā Makārimi al-Sharīʾah*, (al-Qaḥerah: Dar al-Safwah, 1985) 25; Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, vol 3, p. 881-882.

traditions, scholars¹ further postulated that human soul is of many faculties; the intellect (*‘aql*), heart (*qalb*), and desire (*nafs*).² The intellect (*‘aql*) inclines toward virtues naturally. The heart (*qalb*) which is the center of emotion is neutral. Moreover, it has the power of moral judgment and drives the body to either performing the righteous or wrong deeds. The desire (*nafs*) always inclines towards vices naturally. If the heart is influenced by the intellect, the whole body will become good and righteous, during which the desire will be subdued. On the contrary, the whole body inclined toward vices if the heart is influenced by desire during which the intellect will justify the bad deeds committed.³ This is in line with the tradition of the prophet (p.b.u.h) who said: "...Truly in the body, there is a morsel of flesh (*mudghah*), which, if it be whole, all the body is whole and which, if it be diseased, all of it is diseased. Truly it is the heart."⁴

Since the soul is prone to be affected by negative qualities, Muslim scholars attempt to identify and find out solutions to solve the problems. As the Sunnah is the interpretation of the Qur’ān, the solution is well found in the spiritual life of the Prophet (p.b.u.h). The Prophet’s (p.b.u.h) life is a comprehensive spiritual guidance for the Muslims who seek spiritual remedies. Most of the traditions of the Prophet (p.b.u.h) are recommended to emulate examples of which are emulating his way of life that includes supererogatory devotional actions, dressing, eating, teaching, and learning. Following the way of life of the Prophet (p.b.u.h) is of great significance as it serves as a guideline for Muslims to achieve felicity in this world and salvation in the hereafter.

Out of love to the Prophet (p.b.u.h),⁵ the companions practice and follow the *Sunnah* for many other reasons. One of them is that the *Sunnah* is a part of revelation through which guidance is channeled to mankind who is advised to emulate the Prophet’s life.⁶ Furthermore, from the ethico-legal

¹ Scholars like al-Fārābī (d. 950), Ibn Sīnā (d. 1037), Ibn Miskawayh (d. 1030), al-Ghazālī (d. 1111), al-Sha’rānī (d. 1565), al-Dihlawī (d. 1762) and others discuss the concept of soul in their writings.

² Miskawayh, *Tahdhīb al-akhlāq*, trans C.K. Zurayk, *The Refinement of Characters*, (Beirut: The American University of Beirut, 1968) 5-26; Ibn Sīnā, *Kitāb al-Najāt*, trans. Fazlur Rahman, *Avicenna’s Psychology*, (Oxford: Oxford University press, 1952) 56-63.

³ Miskawayh, *Tahdhīb al-akhlāq*, 5-26; Abul Quasem, *The Ethics of al-Ghazālī* (New York: Caravan Books, 1978).

⁴ Al-Nawawī *Matn al-Arba’in*, trans. Ezzeddin Ibrahim, *Imam al-Nawawī’s Collection of Forty Hadith*, (Beirut: Dar al-Koran Publishing House, 1982) 42-43.

⁵ Al-Qur’ān, 3:31.

⁶ Al-Qur’ān, 53:3-4; 33:21.

status point of view, although without knowing the wisdom of practicing the *Sunnah*, they are rewarded by God as the actions are recommended. Another reason is that since God created man in due proportion, the *Sunnah* presents two-fold benefits to the physical and spiritual health. For example, the *Sunnah* of fasting not only led to salubrious physical life but also purifies the soul from qualities that lead to perdition.¹

Some essential principles of Islam that contribute to the well-being of man are oneness of God (*tawhīd*), moderation (*wasāṭiyyah*), asceticism (*zuhd*), gratitude (*shukr*), god-consciousness (*ihsān*), patience (*ṣabr*), and self-mortification (*mujāhadah*). As mentioned elsewhere in the writing, belief in the oneness of God entails a commitment to observe His regulations that are outlined in the Islamic ethical system. By observing the doctrine of *tawhīd*, it will draw one closer to God spiritually. One will also strengthen the unity in the society in preserving the relationship between man and society as a part of meritorious act and servitude (*‘ibādah*) in Islam.

The principle of *ihsān*² is of great importance since it educates man to worship God to the utmost sincerity. It is one who worships Allah with the feeling of nearness to Him as if one is looking towards Him. Although one cannot see God but He truly is invigilating his servants all the time.³ All aspects of man's actions must be performed with the feeling of *ihsan* so that true sincerity can be achieved. Moreover, the feeling of *ihsan* entails protecting this world from any action that led to destruction as it includes in the concept of submission (*‘ibādah*) and vicegerent (*khalīfah*) of Allah.

Hence, the *wasat* is the best middle position (*khayr*) in between two extremities. Many Qur'anic verses describe the features of *khayr* (righteousness) such as just (*al-‘adl*), truthfulness (*al-ḥaq*), knowledge, almsgiving, benevolence, and fostering good relation between a man and others. It covers all aspect of man's life such as morals, spiritual, social, education, economy, and politics.

¹ Abdul Majid Mackeen, Some thoughts on the meaning of "following the *Sunnah*," *Islamic Studies*, XX (4) 1981:1-23

² Sachiko Murata and William C. Chittick, *The Vision of Islam*, xxxii-xxxiii, 265-276.

³ Al-Nawawī, *Maṭn al-Arba‘ūn al-Nawawīyyah*, trans. Ezzedin Ibrahim and Denys Johnson-Davies, *An-Nawawī's Forty Hadith* (Damascus: The Holy Koran Publishing House, 1977) 30-31.

Many classical and modern scholars ¹ discussed the theory of *wasatīyyah* or moderation, its methodologies and how to achieve it. Some of them discussed the role of doctrine of moderation or mean (middle position) in relation to the balanced state of human soul as the foundation of Islamic spirituality. A man's soul will achieve the balanced and mean state by controlling three faculties of the soul; the intellect (*'aql*), heart (*qalb*), and desire (*nafs*). The means state of the intellect will produce wisdom (*hikmah*); it is a state between two vices of stupidity and wickedness that can differentiate between true and false in a statement, and between good and evil in actions. The heart will produce courage (*shajā'ah*); it is a state between two vices of cowardice and rashness. It could control and channel vices into the good ones.

The desire will produce temperance (*'iffah*); it is a state between two vices of greed and annihilation of desire. The combination of means state of the three will manifest another faculty of the soul that is justice (*al-'adl*). Thus, it led man to perform justice in his relationship with man and other creatures in this world. Since this universe is subjugated to mankind, treating it justly is a practice based on the framework of Islamic spirituality.

Ibn Miskawayh (d.1030 CE) and al-Ghazālī (d.1111CE) elaborated the doctrine of means further by inculcating Islamic values into the teachings as deduced from the Qur'ān and Sunnah.² Al-Ghazālī offered a frame work on how to achieve the state of means (*wasatīyyah*) in line with Islamic teachings in his science of Ethics (*'Ilm al-akhlāq*). He named his theory with many phrases such as the science of the path of other worldly life (*'ilm tarīq al-ākhirah*), science of the pious predecessor (*'ilm salaf al-ṣālih*), and science of human's relation (*'ilm al-mu'āmalah*).³

In order to educate man's soul, the asceticism (*zuhd*) is one of the good qualities taught by Islam to its followers. It is a turning away the desire from a thing towards some better things. In line with the doctrine of *wasatīyyah*, it does not mean one has to completely reject one's desire of this world but rather turning to better ones.⁴ It is a quality that should be equipped by one in the soul so that desires toward non-meritorious acts can be replaced by meritorious ones. The standard of a meritorious deed is defined by two sources of revelation; the Qur'an and

¹ Such scholars were Aristotle (d.322BC), Yahyā b. 'Ādī (d. 974), Ibn Miskawayh (d.1030), al-Rāghib al-Isfahānī (d.1108) al-Ghazālī (d.1111), Yūsuf al-Qarādāwī and others.

² Aḥmad ibn Miskawayh, *Tahdhīb al-akhlāq*, trans. C.K. Zurayk, *The Refinement of Character*, (Beirut, The American University of Beirut, 1968).

³ Abul Quasem, *The Ethics of al-Ghazālī*, p. 22.

⁴ Abul Quasem, *The Ethics of al-Ghazālī*, p. 16.

traditions of the Prophet (p.b.u.h), and man's reasoning. It applies in all aspects of human life especially dealing with the environment, economic, politics, dietary, and career of life.

Another quality that is emphasized in the spiritual education of Islam is gratitude (*shukr*). Gratitude means a feeling of joyful that mingled with a sense of submission and humility towards God for granting His bounties.¹ It involves one's knowledge about God, and the virtues of wisdom, courage, and temperance in the soul. The combination of knowledge and virtues manifest actions of praising God, giving away charity, and donation which God has given, fulfilling responsibilities and respecting other creatures. It is a combination of knowledge of God, dispositions, and actions that make up gratitude. This quality can be achieved by man through training and repeated action for a span of time.

Patience (*ṣabr*) is one of the important principles in Islamic spirituality. It is a mental and bodily power to restrain and endure vices that emerge from the imbalanced state of the soul especially rashness and cowardice, and greed and annihilation of desire. It is also a quality of the soul that emerges from the virtues of courage in the heart after overcoming the conflicting motive of religion and passion in every action of a man. There are two types of patience; mental and bodily. Mental patience is to restraint the demands of carnal desires and anger, while bodily patience endures physical pain during the performance of worshipping (*ibādah*) to God.² Patience is needed in every stage of the man's life, he is always concern with the conflicting motive of lower soul and motive of religion. This quality can also be achieved through training and habituation.

One of the methodologies that required in educating human soul in Islamic spirituality is *mujāhadah* or self-mortification. It means striving against carnal desire as well as endeavours against the passion and downward-pulling tendencies of the lower self.³ It is derived from Arabic word *j, h, d* which means to strive against carnal desires and lower soul to the utmost. It is associated with self-exercise (*riyāḍat al-nafs*). In practicing *mujāhadah*, one is required to find a learned man in order to assist one identifying spiritual weaknesses such as greed, strong

¹ Abul Quasem, *The Ethics of al-Ghazālī*, p. 158.

² Abul Quasem, *The Ethics of al-Ghazālī*, pp. 155-157.

³ Amatullah Armstrong, *Sufi Terminology: The Mystical Language of Islam*, (Kuala Lumpur: A.S. Noordeen, 1995) p. 153.

anger, wickedness, and envy.¹ The learned man will prescribe some practices of the Prophet (p.b.u.h) such as fasting, praying, and remembering God, and others actions to be practiced. If one cannot make it alone, one is advised to practice in the group so that one's spirit will be strong. These are some other praiseworthy qualities of the Prophet or those which lead to salvation (*al-munjiyāt*) that should be equipped by one in the soul. They are like repentance (*tawbah*), hope (*al-rajā'*) for forgiveness, and fear (*al-khawf*) of the wrath of God, sincerity, truthfulness, self-examination, trust, and love God.²

The praiseworthy qualities should be equipped by man to replace the blameworthy qualities (*akhlāq al-madhmūmah*), those which lead to perdition (*al-muhlikāt*). They are also called the diseases of the heart (*amrād al-qulūb*) such as gluttony, excessive in sex, excessive speech, cursing (*la'n*), false promise (*al-wa'd al-kādhīb*) preceded from the hypocrisy, lying, slander, backbiting, strong anger, rancor, envy, love of the world, love of wealth, miserliness, love of influence, ostentation, pride, and conceit.³

All the recommended actions of the Prophet (p.b.u.h) including devotional, supererogatory actions or his Sunnah aim at equipping one with noble qualities and to subdue blameworthy qualities of the soul. Some of the purifying practices of the soul are like prayer (*ṣolāt*), fasting (*ṣawm*), remembrance of God (*dhikrullāh*),⁴ almsgiving (*zakāt*), and donation (*ṣadaqah*). *Ṣolāt*⁵ can be defined as the specific actions and utterances that commenced with *takbīrat al-ihrām* (glorifying God- which stops one from doing any other action and reading) and ended up with *taḥiyyah* (salutation to the Prophet Muhammad). It consists of basic movements and positions like standing, bowing, prostration, and sitting. There are two types of prayers; compulsory which is five daily prayers, while the recommended voluntarily ones can be observed as many as one likes.

Prayers serve two-fold benefits; physical and spiritual. The repeated performance of basic movements and positions of the body serve as a physical education to one who prays, while the specific utterances and supplications of the Qur'an that require some degree of concentration to God serve as spiritual education. It is recommended that any wish and problem be

¹ Sachiko Murata and William C. Chittick, *The Vision of Islam*, pp. 20-22.

² Abul Quasem, *The Ethics of al-Ghazali*, pp. 171-186.

³ Abul Quasem, *The Ethics of al-Ghazali*, pp. 105-141.

⁴ Sachiko Murata and William C. Chittick, *The Vision of Islam*, pp. 147-149.

⁵ Abul A'la Mawdudi, *Towards Understanding Islam*, (Lahore: Idara Tarjuman-ul-Qur'an, 2000) pp. 88-91.

prayed to God in *Ṣolāt* especially during the prostration position. This can be performed as much as possible during voluntary *Ṣolāt* at night.

Fasting (*ṣawm*)¹ is a general technic to purify man's soul and body. It can be defined as abstinence from any food, liquid, and sexual intercourse from the dawn (*fajr* prayer) to dusk (*maghrib* prayer). It also includes one's avoidance of any bad speech, action, pulse, and intention. The very idea of fasting is to control one's diet by limiting one's consumption of food for at least a period of 30 days per year, and thus led to a better healthy life.

Muslims are also recommended to do virtuous deeds during fasting days such as reading the Qur'an, doing charity, observing voluntary prayers, uttering remembrance of Allah and others for righteous deeds will be rewarded by God. Indirectly, those deeds draw a Muslim closer to God spiritually. There are two types of fasting; compulsory and voluntarily. The compulsory fasting is 30 days during the ninth month (*Ramaḍān*) of Islamic calendars. In this fasting month, every qualified person is required to pay a small amount of alms for his existence in this world (*zakāt al-fīṭr*)² to the responsible body of Islamic authority.³

Apart from *zakāt al-fīṭr*, there are many other forms of giving alms that are required to be paid by some Muslims only such as alms of profit of the business, saving of wealth, and possession of gold and silver. In order to express their gratitude toward God, Muslims are also encouraged to give donations to those who are in need throughout the year for He will double up His bounties to those who are grateful. The collections of alms giving and donation will be used to help some special needy groups as prescribed by the Qur'an and Sunnah.

Besides, the voluntary fasting can be observed on any day except two great festivity days of Islam; the *fīṭrah* celebration (*ʿīd al-fīṭrī*) that took place just after thirty days of fasting of *Ramaḍān*, the first day of tenth month of Islamic calendar (*Shawwāl*), and the tenth to thirteenth day of twelfth month of Islamic calendar (*Dhū al-hijjah*); the pilgrimage celebration (*ʿīd al-aḍḥā*).

Another practice that is very much related to one's spiritual enlightenment is a remembrance of Allah (*dhikrullāh*). It is a repetition of uttering the names and attributes of Allah who was described in the

¹ Abul A'la Mawdudi, *Towards Understanding Islam*, 91-93; Sachiko Murata and William C. Chittick, *The Vision of Islam*, pp. 17-19.

² Sachiko Murata and William C. Chittick, *The Vision of Islam*, p. 16-17.

³ In most of the states of Malaysia, depending on their cost of living the tax is about RM7.00 for everyone who is qualified.

Qur'an for more than 100 times. Among famous *dhikrullāhs* are *Allāh Akbar* (Allah the greatest), *Subhān allāh* (praise be to Allah), *Al-ḥamd li Allāh* (gratitude be to Allah), *lā Ilāh illā Allāh* (there is no deity except Allah) and others. Reciting the Qur'an is another form of remembrance of Allah as the Muslims believe that it is His words and revelation. Since the Qur'an consists of stories of previous ancient people, set of general rules of life, advice, principles, and guidelines of living, one is recommended to understand, ponder, and think the messages that Allah wanted to convey during the reading of Qur'ānic verses.

The practice of thinking and understanding the Qur'ānic verses is called *tafakkur* (meditation) and *tadabbur* (understanding).¹ By practicing the remembrance of Allah and meditation on the ancient people mentioned in the Qur'an, one will improve one's knowledge and spiritual life. Many previous generations of ancient people were destroyed for their misdeeds and wrong praxis. One is recommended to make supplication (*du'ā'*)² to Allah so that He will forgive one's sins for sin will incur the wrath of God, which is evident in the stories of the destruction of some previous ancient people. Furthermore, one's prayers and supplications are offered to be blessed by God with guidance to achieve felicity in this world and the hereafter. Thus, *du'a* is a kind of direct communication to strengthen the relationship between man and God spiritually.

Conclusion

The spiritual dimension is the most significant aspect of Muslim's life as it represents the essence of the religion of Islam. Islamic spiritual dimension is taken from two sources of revelation; al-Qur'ān and Sunnah of the prophet which taught that man is dual in nature; physical being and soul, and man's well-being in this worldly life is very much related to his spiritual achievement for "if a piece of flesh in the body or man's heart is sound, the body is all sound."³

The concept of spirituality in Islam is based on the principle of *Tawḥīd* or Oneness of God that requires man to worship God to the utmost sincerity and with Consciousness of God or *Iḥsān*. The conviction of "there is no Deity worthy to be worshipped but Allah" leads man to give a total submission to Him through constant reference to God and ensure that every activity that he did is in accordance with

¹ Abul Quasem, *The Ethics of al-Ghazali*, pp. 176-178.

² Sachiko Murata and William C. Chittick, *The Vision of Islam*, pp. 295-298.

³ Al-Nawawī, *Matn al-Arba'ūn al-Nawawīyah*, pp. 42-43.

the divine will, and utilizing to the fullest extent all the faculties and potentialities bestowed upon him for seeking God's pleasure. With his capacity as a vicegerent of God, who is answerable before Allah for all his activities, man is directed towards regulating the worldly affairs in a way in which God wants them to be regulated. The better a man does this, with a sense of responsibility, obedience, and humility secure divine pleasure of the closer will he be to God. This, undoubtedly, establishes a constant awareness; mindfulness and God-consciousness in everything that man does and consequently leads toward a prosperous life and human well-being in this world.

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AL-ITQĀN

JOURNAL OF ISLAMIC SCIENCES AND COMPARATIVE STUDIES

Special Issue

November 2018

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