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## The Influence of *Halalan Tayyiban* on Muslim Decent Spiritual Life and its Relation to al-Ghazali's Concept of Breaking the two Desires—Food and Sex

### Pengaruh Halalan Tayyiban terhadap Kehidupan Rohani Muslim dan Hubungannya dengan Konsep Menundukkan Dua Keinginan Nafsu Makan dan Seks Menurut al-Ghazali

Ssuna Salim\* & Syahrul Faizaz Abdullah\*\*

#### Abstract

The concept of *halalan tayyiban* is very central to a Muslim spiritual life, it has a direct influence on the true practice and fulfilling the religious obligations as demanded by Almighty Allah. The centrality of this concept attracted and still attracts numerous studies, which cover a multiplicity of topics ranging from mainly branding to scientific technicalities involved in the production of permissible consumable products during modern times. This study will focus on the implication and influence of *halalan tayyiban* on Muslim decent spiritual life and how this relates to al-Ghazali's concept of breaking the two desires—food and sex. The study uses a descriptive analytical approach which is mainly interpretative in form of textual commentary. The study observed that a combination of these two concepts will lead to a more refined understanding of the concept of *halalan tayyiban* and its influence on one's spiritual life.

**Keywords:** *Halalan Tayyiban*, Muslim Spiritual Life, Religious Obligation, Breaking the two Desires—Food and Sex, al-Ghazali.

#### Abstrak

Konsep *halalan tayyiban* sangat penting bagi kehidupan kerohanian Muslim kerana ia mempunyai pengaruh secara langsung terhadap amalan dan dapat memenuhi kewajiban agama sebagaimana yang dituntut oleh Allah SWT. Konsep ini sangat menarik dan masih menjadi perhatian banyak kajian yang merangkumi pelbagai topik berkaitan

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**241 The Influence of *Halalan Tayyiban* on Muslim Decent Spiritual Life and its Relation to al-Ghazali's Concept of Breaking the two Desires— Food and Sex**

dengan penjenamaan hingga kepada kaedah teknikal saintifik yang membabitkan dalam pengeluaran produk kegunaan harian yang halal pada zaman moden. Kajian ini akan memfokuskan pada implikasi dan pengaruh konsep *halalan tayyiban* terhadap kehidupan rohani Muslim dan kaitannya dengan konsep mematahkan dua keinginan makanan dan sex menurut al-Ghazali. Kajian ini menggunakan pendekatan analisis deskriptif yang bersifat interpretatif dalam bentuk analisa teks. Hasil kajian mendapati bahawa penggabungan kedua-dua konsep ini akan membawa kepada pemahaman yang lebih mendalam mengenai konsep *halalan tayyiban* dan pengaruhnya terhadap kehidupan rohani seseorang.

**Kata Kunci:** Halalan Tayyiban, Kehidupan Rohani Muslim, Kewajiban Beragama, Menundukkan dua Keinginan Hawa Nafsu Makanan dan Sex, al-Ghazali.

### Introduction

The term *halalan tayyiban* appears in the Quran in various ways; at times as *halal* as in al-Nahl 16:116:

وَلَا تَقُولُوا لِمَا تَصِفُ أَلْسِنَتُكُمُ الْكَذِبَ هَذَا حَلَالٌ وَهَذَا حَرَامٌ لَتَفْتَرُوا عَلَى  
اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ ۚ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَفْتَرُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ لَا يُفْلِحُونَ

Allah the Almighty commands the people not to proclaim by themselves what is **permitted** and what is not **allowable** as this is a fabrication created against the Creator, whose doer will never prosper. And another as *halalan tayyiban*, (al-Baqarah 2:168)

أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ كُلُوا مِمَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ حَلَالًا طَيِّبًا وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ ۚ  
إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِينٌ

Allah the Great allows people to eat the **permissible** and **wholesome** and evade the paths of the devil their arch enemy. And again, as *rizqan hasana* as in (Hud 11:88)

قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِن كُنتُ عَلَىٰ بَيْنَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّي وَرَزَقَنِي مِنْهُ رِزْقًا حَسَنًا ۖ  
وَمَا أُرِيدُ أَنْ أَمْخَلِكُمْ إِلَىٰ مَا أَنهَاكُمْ عَنْهُ ۖ إِن أُرِيدُ إِلَّا الْإِصْلَاحَ مَا  
اسْتَطَعْتُ ۚ وَمَا تَوْفِيقِي إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ ۗ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَإِلَيْهِ أُنِيبُ

Prophet Shuaib said to his people see whether I have a clear Sign from my Lord who has given me nourishment **pure** and **good**.... Once more as plural **tayyibaat** as in (5:4).

يَسْأَلُونَكَ مَاذَا أُحِلَّ لَهُمْ ۖ قُلْ أُحِلَّ لَكُمْ الطَّيِّبَاتُ ۗ

According to Apnizan Abdullah<sup>1</sup> the word *halal* in Arabic language means indicating a condition under which objects and actions are acknowledged in view of Shari'ah teachings. Thus, the Quran (2:168) sanctions eating what is not only *legalised but also what is wholesome*. This verse clearly employs the two terms, “*halal*” and “*tayyib*”. Al-Tabari (d. 310) in *Jamiu al-Bayan fi Tafsir al-Quran*<sup>2</sup> and also al-Razi<sup>3</sup> (d. 606) in his *Mafaatih al-Ghaib al-Tafsir al-Kubra*, interpreted the above in more detailed form by elaborating that the Almighty Allah meant by this verse that people directed to eat from that which has been permitted to them through the messenger Muhammad (peace be upon him) from what they used to prohibit themselves from, like *Bahira* (a she -camel whose milk was meant specifically for idols), or *Saibah* (a she camel let loose for the unrestricted grassland only false gods) and a *Wasila* (a she camel set free for idols due to its giving birth to a she camel twice repeatedly) and the like of it from which I did not prohibit you from except those foods and drinks that have been prohibited to you, which are filth; carcass, blood, pig meat and what is sacrificed to other deities other than Allah the Almighty and avoid the steps of the devil.

Mohammad Hashim Kamali<sup>4</sup> elucidates that the concepts of *halal*, *mubah* and *jaiz*, occur more repeatedly in the Quran as well as Hadith, though the *Fiqh* literature inclines to the use of *mubah* and *jaiz*. In this case, *halal* refers to a Qura'nic principle of freedom of choice of consumption and there is neither a remuneration nor a reckoning. It is crucial noting that

<sup>1</sup> Apnizan Abdullah, Difference between Halal and Halalan Toyyiban. *New Straits Times*, 14 April 2018.

<https://www.nst.com.my/opinion/columnists/2018/04/357046/difference-between-halal-and-halalan-toyyiban>. Date accessed 25 August 2019

<sup>2</sup> Muhammad ibn Jarir Al-Tabari, *Jami' al-Bayan fi Tafsir al-Quran* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, 1995), p. 457-458.

<sup>3</sup> Fakhr Din al-Razi, *Mafaatih al-Ghaib al-Tafsir al-Kubra* (Damascus: Dar al-Fikr, 1991), Vol. 5, p. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *The Parameters of Halal and Haram in Shariah and the Halal Industry*, Occasional Papers series 23 (London: The International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2013).

**243 The Influence of *Halalan Tayyiban* on Muslim Decent Spiritual Life and its Relation to al-Ghazali's Concept of Breaking the two Desires—  
Food and Sex**

in almost all places in the Quran the phrase *halalan tayyiban* occur side by side as found in *al-Baqarah* 2:168. Allah the Great allows people to eat the **permissible** and **wholesome** and evade the paths of the devil their arch enemy. And in *al-Maidah* 5:4, O Muhammad your companions as you what is allowable for them to eat, convey to them that all **good things ....**

Allah the Almighty commands all Messengers (may the Almighty Allah be pleased with them all) and the believers to eat **good** and **wholesome** which have a bearing on doing good deeds 23:51

Interestingly, the term *halal* is always followed by *tayyib* indicating that *tayyib* is a step beyond after *halal*.

The concept of *halalan tayyiban* thus, has attracted much attention of contemporary Muslim societies mainly focusing on the cleanliness and purity of consumed products in accordance with Shariah. The study carried out by Irfan Sungkar and Darhim Hashim<sup>5</sup> centred on obedience to Shariah Law, product quality, consumer's safety in product consumption, welfare of animals and impartial trade. On the other hand, Hanzae and Ramezani<sup>6</sup> opined that *halal* products are influencing trade views. Thus, *halal* though a religious issue, it has extended to global business, as a sign of quality with an influence as a global symbol for quality certification. It is again observed by Apnizan Abdullah that *halal* and *halalan tayyiban* are used as synonyms as some people think that what is *halal*, must also be *tayyiban*., actually these two terms possess two distinct connotations, whereby *halal* denotes acquiescence with essential Shariah issues, while *tayyiban* delves into details related to the superior descriptions of nutrition related considerations of the consumable products.

According to Apnizan people in Malaysia have limited knowledge on the applied meaning of *halalan tayyiban* as per its use in the *halal* market itself, this in turn limits the laws and regulations related to this concept as compared to those governing the *halal* concept. In another study of shaping

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<sup>5</sup> Irfan Sungkar and Darhim Hashim, The Global Halal Food Market and Updates on Global Halal Standards. Paper Presented at The World Bank First EAP Regional Agribusiness Trade and Investment ++Conference "Agro-enterprise Without Border" Holiday Inn Atrium, Singapore, 30-31 July 2009.

<sup>6</sup> Kambiz Heidarzadeh Hanzae and Mohammad Reza Ramezani, "Intention to Halal Products," *The World Markets in Interdisciplinary Journal of Research in Business*, vol. 1, Issue. 5, May 2011(pp.01-07).

the *halal* into a brand, Wilson, and Liu<sup>7</sup>, were concerned about the usage and consumption of *halal* within advertising and branding. They did observe that, the doctrine of what is *halal* generated components and other elements. Thus, Wilson and Liu conclude that, *halal* full capacity is virgin with some areas to be refined.

Another interesting evaluative case study was carried out by Nor Faradhila Shafiee et. al. (2018) on *halalan tayyiban* street food merchant's perception in Shah Alam, to evaluate food handling practices and to make recommendations on how to ease their understanding of this concept in relation to food preparation. Six informers were observed and interviewed: street food dealers, food handlers (assistants), and three officers in *halal* business, public authority and health and environment inspector. The study realized that the concept of *halalan tayyiban* is yet to be properly understood, consequently, the need for educational guidance for food street traders on food handling technicalities, as well as *halalan tayyiban* features. Mohammad Hashim Kamali on the other hand, observes that although the *halal* industry is in its infancy, it has attained an amazing advancement, due to its strict guidelines on food security, sanitation, and monetary impartiality.

It is vital to note that although most studies in modern times have been directed towards the business and economic aspect of *halalan tayyiban*, its spiritual aspect still plays a key role, since soul purification is a necessary element in discharging duties as vicegerent on earth. Consequently, the Prophet peace be upon him offered various ways how this can be attained. The scholars in return, come up with a multiplicity of means how this can be achieved. In view of this, the current study scrutinizes how al-Ghazali's concept of breaking the two desires relates to the concept of *halalan tayyiban* as a means of purifying and disciplining the soul for spiritual strengthening.

It is of paramount importance to note that the main objective of *halalan tayyiban* is Allah's command to apostles and the believers to enjoy (all) things **good** and **pure**, such that they can work righteousness. Interestingly, al-Ghazali took even further the *tayyib* concept by looking into the two desires of food and sex and their associated negative influences which eventually affect the spiritual aspect of an individual. He continues to expose merits of hunger, and the ways how to subjugate the greed of the

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<sup>7</sup> Wilson, Jonathan A.J. and Liu, Jonathan, "The challenges of Islamic branding: navigating emotions and halal," *Journal of Islamic Marketing*, Vol. 2 No. 1, 2011: 28-42 Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

**245 The Influence of *Halalan Tayyiban* on Muslim Decent Spiritual Life and its Relation to al-Ghazali's Concept of Breaking the two Desires—  
Food and Sex**

stomach by delaying or reducing the food of which one consumes, he further exposes the rule and virtue of hunger in accordance to men's surroundings and flashiness which follows from the pronouncement of desire as well as the dangers of lust for sex.

This study focuses on Qur'anic meaning and implication of the term *halalan tayyiban* and its influence on Muslim decent spiritual life and how this relates to al-Ghazali's concept of breaking the two desires and its manifestations in the life of contemporary Muslim society.

This is a library study which uses a descriptive analytical approach which is mainly interpretative in form of textual commentary.

The study observed that a proper understanding of the term *halalan tayyiban* is a necessity for the modern Muslim spiritual life, which should be supported by al-Ghazali's ideas of breaking the two desires, which delves into uncontrolled eating habits and its related negative effects.

**Breaking the two Desires**

The desire of the stomach is the utmost fatal of all sins according to al-Ghazali in *Ihya Ulum Din*,<sup>8</sup> it is due to this that Adam, and Eve (upon whom be peace) were ousted from the dwelling of Permanence into the residence of disgrace and insufficiency. Both were commanded by the Almighty Allah not to come closer to the Tree, but their desire overwhelmed them, and they ate from it and consequently their nakedness was exposed. Al-Ghazali further stress that the belly is the main spring of desires and the source of diseases and disorders, after which arises the desire of sex and voracious appetite for women, and then yearning after fame and wealth; which prompts one's greed and desire in greater measure. These are followed by fame and wealth acquisition, later to be accompanied by several kinds of wickedness; competitions and jealousies, giving rise to the vices of display, boasting, competition for wealth and arrogance, leading to rancour, envy, enmity and hate, consequently causing injustice and corruption. All these in al-Ghazali's view are because of paying insufficient heed to the stomach which is a result of satiety and eating one's fill.

According to al-Ghazali, when the individual humbles his soul through hunger, he narrows dawn the devil instigations, thus, becoming obedient to Allah the Almighty by renouncing the excesses, he avoids being hauled into preferring this present abode worldly things. It is due to the

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<sup>8</sup> Abu Hamid al- Ghazali, *Ihya Ulum Din*, edited by Shahat al-Tahaany and Abdullahi al-Manshawi (Cairo: Maktabatul al-Iman, 1996), vol. 3.



severe defect of the stomach that al-Ghazali delves into it, in order to provide an exposition of its hazards and evil so that this may act as a warning in order to explain how it can be resisted and to draw attention to the merit that lies underneath it by way of encouragement, likewise, in the case of sexual desire, which is its subordinate.

The merits of hunger and a condemnation of satiety, al-Ghazali quotes numerous *Hadith* of the Prophet peace be upon him.

The Prophet (May God bless him and grant him peace) taught that the believer eats with one belly while the hypocrite eats with seven”<sup>9</sup> implying that the appetite of a hypocrite is seven times as great as that of the believer.

In another related Hadith Aisha (may God be pleased with her) said:

The Prophet (may God bless him and grant him peace) never ate to his satisfaction, under extreme hunger Aisha asked him why he does not take something just sufficient to do away with hunger and to strengthen himself, the Prophet then remarked that the resolute among the Prophets were steadfast in the face of circumstances still harsher, but persevered, so that when they return to their Lord they will have a munificent reward. Thus, I find myself ashamed to enjoy any comforts in this life, consequently, not attaining their degree. Firmness for a few days is better for me than seeing my lot reduced in the afterlife, for my main desire is to catch up with my companions and my brethren.<sup>10</sup>

Abu Huraira narrated that

“The Messenger of Allah (May God bless him and grant him peace), at no time eat to his fill of wheat-bread for three successive days until he left this world”.<sup>11</sup>

In another Hadith, al-Hassan narrated that the Emissary of Allah (May God bless him and grant him peace), once said,

The most dignified in the sight of God on the Day of Judgment are those who hungered and meditated the longest

<sup>9</sup> Al-Ghazali, *Ihya Ulum Din*, vol. 3, 119. Hadith narrated by Umar and Abu Huraira, agreed upon by Bukhari (5394/5395), and Muslim (2060/182). See also al-Ghazali, *On Disciplining the Soul (Kitab Riyadat al-nafs)*, vol. 3, 110.

<sup>10</sup> *Ihya Ulum Din*, vol. 3, 119-120; *On Disciplining the Soul*, vol. 3, 111-112.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

**247 The Influence of *Halalan Tayyiban* on Muslim Decent Spiritual Life and its Relation to al-Ghazali's Concept of Breaking the two Desires— Food and Sex**

for His sake (Glorified is He) while the most dreadful are those who slept, ate and drank abundantly<sup>12</sup> In a famous advise Umar (may God be with pleased him) observed that satiety is liability in this life and a birthplace corruption after death.<sup>13</sup>

Sahl al-Tustari stressed the importance of hunger whereby on the Day of Arising, no good work shall be of more benefit than the abandonment of excessive imitating the Prophet (may God be with pleased him)” according to him, men of intelligence consider hunger an ordinary religious life, for nothing is more detrimental to those who seek the Afterlife than food, this is because prudence and acquaintance have been customized in hunger and illiteracy and vice in satiety. Thus, disobedience to whims through renouncing something lawful, consequently, creates finer means of worshipping God.<sup>14</sup>

Al-Ghazali went on to expose the benefits of hunger and the evils of satiety. Some one wonders as to what benefits to reap from fasting, whose harmfulness is obvious in form of hurting the stomach and enduring torment. According to al-Ghazali hunger has got lots of benefits more especially to those who wish to advance from mere faith to awareness, for Allah the Omniscience rises the believers and those who have knowledge to high degrees among people.<sup>15</sup>

Hunger refines the heart and brightness the normal character by sharpening one's insight, satiety on the other hand, stimulates foolishness and impairs in the heart by increasing the vapours in the brain to produce a form which represses the sources of thought, thus the heart finds it troublesome to think and to perceive things easily. On this, the Prophet (may God be pleased with him) declared in a narration by Ibn Abbas that the heart of whosoever eats fill and then sleeps will grow harder then he declared, for there is a tith (zakat) for everything, and the tith of the stomach is hunger.<sup>16</sup> Said al-Shibli observed that whenever he hungered a

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<sup>12</sup> *Ihya Ulum Din*, vol. 3, 117; *On Disciplining the Soul*, vol.3, 108.

<sup>13</sup> *Ihya Ulum Din*, vol. 3. 120; *On Disciplining the Soul*, vol.3, 113

<sup>14</sup> Sahl b. Abdullah al-Tustari, *Tafsir al-Tustari*, Annabel Keeler and Ali keeler (Trans), Aman Jordan: Royal Aal -Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2011; al-Ghazali, *Ihya Ulum Din*, vol. 3, 121; Al-Ghazali, *On Disciplining the Soul*, vol. 3, 114.

<sup>15</sup> Al-Quran, 58:11.

<sup>16</sup> *Ihya Ulum Din*, vol. 3, 122; *On Disciplining the Soul*, vol. 3, 199.

door of wisdom opens in his heart with an ability he did not have before.<sup>17</sup> Al-Ghazali further stresses that the purpose of worship is intellection (*fikr*) which leads one to an inner perception into the realities of God; satiety impede this while hunger stipulates its operation. Based on the above, Luqman advises his son that when the stomach is full, then the intellect sleeps, wisdom is silenced, and the members of the body are sluggish to perform any act of worship” The Prophet (may God be pleased with him) emphasized that the light of wisdom comes from hunger, while remoteness from God comes from satiety, and proximity from Him comes from loving the poor and being close to them, therefore, eating to repletion extinguishes the light of wisdom which resides in the hearts, for an individual who spends his night praying, having eaten lightly is surrounded all night by the Angels until the dawn comes.<sup>18</sup>

Through hunger, the heart softens and get purified as it is set to attain the joy of friendly speech with God and to be motivated by His commemoration. However, some hearts even in the state of constant various attentive tongue remembrance acts still fail to find any delight and not even affected as if they are covered by a veil causing the hardness of the heart. This situation however according to al-Ghazali changes on empty stomach when the heart will be most affected powerfully by the remembrance, thereby, taking great delights in communing with Allah the Almighty. Abu Sulayman observes that when the heart is hungry and thirsty, it becomes clear and soft, whereas when it is sated it becomes blind and rough.<sup>19</sup>

The soul is humiliated and degraded by nothing more effective than hunger, for jubilation, rejoicing and excitement are the foundation of rebellion and carelessness to Allah the Almighty, which when prevails causes it to have calm trust in its Lord and fear of Him, and to be aware of its vulnerability and condemnation when it weakens and becomes distressed for the piece of bread which it misses. Al-Ghazali again stresses that, for as long as an individual fails to observe the wickedness and weaknesses of his own soul he will not be able to see the glory of his Lord; his saving contentment therefore lies in seeing himself at all times to disreputable and powerless and his Lord Glorious, Mighty and Powerful. In that case, one should continue to be hungry without ceasing, to turn to his Lord through experience (*dhawq*). This is why when the Prophet (May God bless him and grant him peace) was offered the world and all its treasures he rejected it

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<sup>17</sup> *Ihya Ulum Din*, vol. 3, 12; *On Disciplining the Soul*, vol. 3, 118.

<sup>18</sup> *Ihya Ulum Din*, vol. 3, 123; *On Disciplining the Soul*, vol. 3, 119.

<sup>19</sup> *Ihya Ulum Din*, vol. 3, 119-120; *On Disciplining the Soul*, vol. 3, 119-120.

**249 The Influence of *Halalan Tayyiban* on Muslim Decent Spiritual Life and its Relation to al-Ghazali's Concept of Breaking the two Desires—  
Food and Sex**

and preferred to hunger on alternate days, in order to have patience and endurance and gratitude and appreciation on eating to his fill.”<sup>20</sup> This is because craving for food and women constitutes one of the gates of Hell, which originates in satiety, while, abasement and humility are one of the gates of heaven, thus, whoever closes one of the gates of Hell has of necessity opened one of Heaven's gates, since they oppose each other.<sup>21</sup>

Al-Ghazali continues to accentuate that one will never forget God's prosecutions and anguishes, for the sated man is liable to forget the hungry people and even hunger itself. The ordeals of this life will remind an individual of tribulation of Afterlife; when he is craving for water he remembers the situation of people longing for water on the Day of Arising, and when he famishes, he remembers the starvation of the people of Hell, which is so extreme that they shall desire to gobble thorn-fruit, and the fruit of the *zaqqum* tree, and drink *ghassaq* and molten lead. As such one should never forget the punishments, torments and calamities of the Afterlife, for it is these which stimulates fear, consequently, whosoever is not in a state of humility, sickness, poverty and tribulations will forget Afterlife, which will not be manifested in his soul. Joseph (upon him peace be) was asked why does he expose himself to starvation when he was the caretaker of the storehouses? His worry was that when he is satisfied, he will not remember the starving people. Consequently, remembering those in need will result into compassion to cater for the hungry and to do charity towards God's creatures, on contrast, the sated person will be neglectful of those who are starving.<sup>22</sup>

The greatest benefit of hunger is that it breaks all the yearnings for sin, as well as regulating the soul which commands evil. Al-Ghazali is of the view that, the main source of vices is a person's desire and strengths, which always spring from food. So, controlled eating will weaken these cravings thus attaining soul control, which results into happiness, while annihilation and desolation are due to being controlled by own law desires (*nafs*). It is narrated by Aisha (may God be pleased with her) the first novelty after the demise of the Prophet: (God bless him and grant him peace) was that people's souls fastened to the worldly pleasures and ate indulgently. Controlling one's want is accompanied with a multiplicity of other benefits, thus, hunger come to be recognized as a storehouse of all benefits, hence, it

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<sup>20</sup> *Jami' al-Tirmidhi*, vol. 4, hadith 2451.

<sup>21</sup> *Ihya Ulum Din*, vol. 3, 123; *On Disciplining the Soul*, vol. 3, 120-121.

<sup>22</sup> *Ihya Ulum Din*, vol. 3, 123-124; *On Disciplining the Soul*, vol. 3, 122-123.

is also one of God's storeroom, as the least thing that is deflected by hunger is plea for sexual and also for speech, hence man in a state of starvation has less vigour for redundant gossip, thus, avoiding tongue related offences, such as defamation, crime, deceitful, spitefulness, as opposed to a sated man who amuse himself by belittling others.

Man, in the words of al-Ghazali has been subjected to sexual desire to know its delight so that he is able to draw an analogy what the delights of the Afterlife are like. If sexual enjoyment were to be ultimate that would constitute the utmost gratification of the body! In addition to that, sex allows humanity to continue, however, sexual desire has its negative effects which could obliterate both religion and the world if not orderly and subdued to its balance, thus, His word (Exalted is He!) O Lord! Burden us not with more than we can endure! Which refers to great lust. Ibn Abbas understood the words of Allah (Exalted is He) from the evil of what He has created... to refer to a masculine organ. It is also said that an erection results in the loss of two thirds of the aptitude. The Prophet (May God bless him and grant him peace) used to say in his prayers "I seek refuge in Thee from the evil which may be in my ear, my heart and my semen.

On the other hand, the hazard of sexual desire is apparent and it can be overcome by hunger, whereas a man in a sated situation will not be able to control his sexual desire, even if preserved by the fear of God, he will be unable to control his eyes since they commit fornication as the genitals do. Al-Ghazali confirms that in case one can lower his gaze, he is still not capable of governing his thoughts, which will become an obscene, so that his soul discourse to him regarding the causes of sexual desire which will distract him from intimate communion with God, and this may even happen while in prayers. Al-Ghazali placed more emphasis on the danger of the tongue and genitals as an example, but all the sins of the seven extremities<sup>23</sup> stem from the strength which proceeds from eating one's fill.<sup>24</sup>

Another benefit is the repugnance of sleep and acquisition of the ability to remain conscious for extended time; a man who eats his fill will drink lavishly thus sleeping copiously, which in turn results into waste of one's lifetime, besides missing *Tahajjud* prayers, leading to a dull character and a stiffness of the heart. A lifespan in the eyes of al-Ghazali is the most valuable possession which must be wisely utilized for the life after, sleep on the other hand, is a kind of demise whose excess curtails one's occupancy of

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<sup>23</sup> The eye, the ear, the tongue, the genitals, the feet, the hands, and the stomach. Al-Ghazali, *On Disciplining the Soul*, vol. 3, 123.

<sup>24</sup> *Ihya Ulum Din*, vol. 3, 124-125; *On Disciplining the Soul*, vol. 3, 122-123.

**251 The Influence of *Halalan Tayyiban* on Muslim Decent Spiritual Life and its Relation to al-Ghazali's Concept of Breaking the two Desires—  
Food and Sex**

his life. The distinct value of night prayers will be lost with plentiful sleep, let alone being overpowered by fatigue thus, not testing the pleasantness of devotion.<sup>25</sup>

Lengthy acts of worship are made easier with hunger. Al-Ghazali discerns that food stops man from *Ibadah* as much of his time is devoted to eating; he has to purchase and prepare his food, clean his body parts, with frequent visits to the lavatory as a result of too much drinking, this time could be committed to remembrance and intimate communion with God with a variety of worship, thus benefiting greatly. As a result, disproportionate eating and drinking hinders ritual purity.<sup>26</sup>

Al-Ghazali stress that diseases are caused by overeating, which creates a scum of humours in the stomach and the arteries, thus, preventing one from worshipping; it diverts the heart from remembrance and reflection, it spoils one's life, and obliges one to submit to bloodletting and cupping and to take medicine and seeing physicians, all of which require money, but hunger makes all of this unnecessary. Harun al-Rashid one time summoned Indian, Greek, Iraqi and Sawadi physicians and asked each one's opinion about medicine which itself result in no sickness. The Indian physician said black myrobalan, the Iraqi said it is nasturtium cress, the Greek said, it is hot water, Sawadi physician the most learned of them said, Myrobalan sours the stomach, Nasturtium renders the stomach oily, hot water slackens the stomach all of these are sicknesses. Harun al-Rashid then asked his opinion and he said the medicine that contains no sickness consists in refraining from food until one has an appetite, and in ceasing to eat when one is yet unsated, which Harun al-Rashid confirmed as the truth.

In another instance, one of the people of the Book; a philosopher and a physician was astonished when once he heard the statement of the Prophet (May God bless him and grant him peace) "one third for food, one third for drink, and one third for the breath" He remarked these are wise words indeed, I have never heard wiser words than these concerning frugality in eating. Abu Hurairah narrates that the Messenger of Allah (May God bless him and grant him peace) said fasting ensures good health."<sup>27</sup> Consequently, fasting, hunger, and eating less leads to a health body, free of

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<sup>25</sup> *Ihya Ulum Din*, vol. 3, 125; *On Disciplining the Soul*, vol. 3, 125.

<sup>26</sup> *Ihya Ulum Din*, vol. 3, 125-126; *On Disciplining the Soul*, vol. 3, 125-126.

<sup>27</sup> This hadith is found in *al-Awsat li-Tabrani* and in *Tibbi al-Nabawi Abu Naeem*, see *Ihya*, 3:126.

disorders, and of the heart, which becomes free from the diseases of rebellion and jubilation as well as a number of other complaints.<sup>28</sup>

Whoever has a regulated and controlled eating style will be satisfied by his salary because of his structured spending, on the other hand, a man with uninhibited eating will be obligated to earn from illicit incomes thus, committing an evil. Al-Ghazali continues to affirm that a person in this situation may even need to direct his wishful gaze towards other people, the greatest form of shame. The people get destroyed because of greed for things of the world which results from desire for food and sex, the latter being the upshot of the former. All these gates are closed by a frugal diet; they are gates to Hell, which, when shut, open the gates into Heaven.<sup>29</sup>

Al-Ghazali, further notes that it is made possible for the individual to put others before him, through giving charity to the orphans and the poor from the surplus of his wants. The Prophet taught that, what is eaten is stored in latrine, while what is given in charity goes to the grace of God. Therefore, man benefits from his wealth by giving it away whose reward permanently remain.<sup>30</sup>

Consequently, hunger is a great storehouse of benefits as well as the key to the Afterlife, and the gateway to denial. On the other hand, satiety is the key to the world and the gateway to voracity. Al-Ghazali finally warns that one must understand the teachings of the Prophet (may God bless him and grant him peace) in relation to this aspect in order to rise above the level of mere faith, otherwise, simply believing in the merits of hunger will make one not go beyond the level of those who receive their faith through imitation.

Modern medicine too, cautions against the dangers of overeating, thus, agreeing with al-Ghazali, a 14<sup>th</sup> century Muslim scholar, Dr Jo Young Kim declares that every illness has its own origin, always related to the individuals eating pattern, thus, eating too much and poor-quality foods intake results into weakening. This in turn, causes uneasiness, distress and feebleness of body limbs and feet. Even those with a healthy digestive system overindulgence will cause drowsiness or fatigue, besides, over burdening body system, causing strain on one's abdomen, intestines and all the major organs. Under normal circumstances the body holds a regulated quantity of blood and energy, too much eating makes all the major organs require more energy to function leaving the brain and limbs with less

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<sup>28</sup> *Ihya Ulum Din*, vol. 3, 126; *On Disciplining the Soul*, vol. 3, 128-129.

<sup>29</sup> *Ihya Ulum Din*, vol. 3, 127; *On Disciplining the Soul*, vol. 3, 128-129.

<sup>30</sup> *Ihya Ulum Din*, vol. 3, 127-128; *On Disciplining the Soul*, vol. 3, 128-131.

**253 The Influence of *Halalan Tayyiban* on Muslim Decent Spiritual Life and its Relation to al-Ghazali's Concept of Breaking the two Desires—  
Food and Sex**

strength for their normal functioning. Body nutrient absorption is also affected leading to the malfunction of the digestive system as well as failure of the overall body. In the case of females, this upsets reproductive system and menstrual cycle, and a decrease of libido as well as triggering persistent fatigue in men. The digestive system is at risk due to a surge in body toxic build, due to the consumption of instant foods, alcohol, salt, sweet, spicy, and oily foods which negatively affect digestive capability and the operation of all other major organs. This results in additional weight, high blood pressure, contraction of blood vessels leading to diabetes and cancer.

Consequently, everything must be taken in moderation, including water. Dr. Jo further criticizes a misunderstanding that taking too much water purifies one's body and assist in staying sterile. According to him, drinking just sufficient water is acceptable, but over drinking is harmful, since water needs to be processed by body as the body must preserve a pH of 7.4, besides that, the stomach must maintain a definite acidity, as too much water weakens it, thus, over working the digestive system causing unsteadiness. The situation is further worsened by drinking too much cold water, which cools the body's internal temperature, thereby reducing the immune capabilities. It is concluded by Dr Jo that overindulgence is a commonly neglected habit which courses a lot of sickness.<sup>31</sup>

On the method how discipline breaks the greed of stomach al-Ghazali emphasizes that it is incumbent upon an individual to only eat lawful foods (halal). One is required to estimate the quantity of food he takes; which should take a gradual process, until a level whereby one partakes only what is necessary for life, for an abrupt change will lead to considerable hardship and distress. It is again observed by al-Ghazali on varieties most conducive to the satisfying or renunciation of one's desire, that the tradition of the traveller on the path of Hereafter is to limit himself to bread in order to control his desire, for each appealing food develops a longing which hardens the soul causing absent mindedness in his heart stimulated by the pleasures of this life, finally creating a hatred for death and meeting with God (exalted is He!).<sup>32</sup>

Al-Ghazali recommends taking an equilibrium position in all matters since immoderations in both situations are blameable, as such, it is preferred that one eats just enough not to burden his stomach and protect himself from

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<sup>31</sup> Dr. Jo Young Kim, Technical Advisor Self Balancing Food, Doctor at Dah Jung Hospital.

<sup>32</sup> *Ihya Ulum Din*, vol. 3, 137; *On Disciplining the Soul*, vol. 3, 133.



the pains of hunger. For eating aims at conservation of life as well as attaining vigour for adoration, something that cannot be attained on a dense stomach as it diverts the heart.<sup>33</sup>

### Conclusion

Islam is a complete way of life which takes care of its followers by providing a holistic guidance to ensure that man plays his vicegerent role diligently. To achieve this, one of the ways lies in consuming *halalan tayyiban* foods which have a direct bearing on one's spiritual journey. This aspect has been given due consideration in the production of *halalan tayyiban* products which can be easily found in modern times. However, consumption of *halalan tayyiban* products is not itself enough, for the eating habits and styles play a significant role as indicated by al-Ghazali as well modern empirical studies which show the dangers and negative effects of overindulgence and overeating, whereby modern science is more concern about the health situation of an individual, well as al-Ghazali was more concern with the spiritual dimension which ultimately has a bearing on the health condition of an individual. Consequently, this study is of the view that a combination of *halalan tayyiban* and al-Ghazali's concept of breaking the two desires will not only give a multiplicity of benefits, but also strengthen a Muslim spiritual life.

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

**255 The Influence of *Halalan Tayyiban* on Muslim Decent Spiritual Life and its Relation to al-Ghazali's Concept of Breaking the two Desires— Food and Sex**

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