



Contemporary Psychological Disorders and the Spiritual Therapy from the Qur'an and the Sunnah*

Tan Sri Prof Dr Mohd Kamal Hassan

Centre for Islamisation (CENTRIS), International Islamic University Malaysia, 50728 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Abstract

The COVID19 pandemic continues to create havoc, fear and anxiety. More and more people are experiencing serious psychological and mental health issues. Reports show increasing trends toward self-harm, self-injury and incidents of suicide or attempted suicide in Malaysia today. With the increase in mental health issues among Muslims, it is crucial that Muslim practitioners, psychologists, psychotherapists and counselors explore the Islamic religious and spiritual resources from the Qur'an and the Prophetic Sunnah to find ways and means of addressing and overcoming various problems of mental and emotional distress: depression, anxiety, stress, paranoia, excessive fear or excessive anger. The Qur'an and Sunnah offers a treasure of approaches, solutions and answers to several issues of mental health today, promoting physical, moral, intellectual, emotional, social and spiritual resilience that are absent from mainstream conventional Western psychology and psychiatry. Muslims patients should seek Islamic spiritual remedies, which would complement the mainstream medical or counseling solutions, remembering that the latter are secular-based with limitations and shortcomings, if not negative side-effects. The Islamic approach is holistic—but it does not preclude proper medical or psychiatric treatment for certain symptoms or ailments. It is not limited to the biological or social dimensions of mental distress but goes beyond. It seeks a complete and holistic solution by understanding the underlying spiritual roots or ailments of human psychological distress or mental disorders with the aim to bring about lasting as well as sound psychological growth of human beings, who are essentially spiritual and moral beings created by God.

Keywords: *Psychological disorder, spiritual therapy, the Qur'an, Sunnah.*

Abstrak

Pandemik COVID19 terus menimbulkan kekacauan, ketakutan dan kegelisahan. Semakin ramai orang mengalami masalah psikologi dan kesihatan mental yang serius. Laporan menunjukkan peningkatan terhadap kecederaan diri, kecederaan diri dan insiden bunuh diri atau cubaan membunuh diri di Malaysia hari ini. Dengan meningkatnya masalah kesihatan mental di kalangan umat Islam, adalah penting bagi para pengamal Islam, psikologi, psikoterapis dan kaunselor untuk meneroka sumber-sumber keagamaan dan kerohanian Islam dari al-Quran dan Sunnah Nabi untuk mencari jalan dan kaedah bagi menangani dan mengatasi pelbagai masalah tekanan mental dan emosi: kemurungan, kegelisahan, tekanan, paranoia, ketakutan yang berlebihan atau kemarahan yang berlebihan. Al-Qur'an dan Sunnah menawarkan banyak pendekatan, penyelesaian dan jawapan untuk beberapa masalah kesihatan mental hari ini, yang mempromosikan ketahanan fizikal, moral, intelektual, emosi, sosial dan rohani yang tidak ada dalam psikologi dan psikiatri Barat konvensional. Pesakit

beragama Islam harus mencari sumber kerohanian Islam, yang seiring dengan perubatan atau kaunseling aliran umum, dengan mengingat bahawa yang terakhir ini berasaskan sekular dengan batasan dan kekurangan, jika bukan kesan sampingan negatif. Pendekatan Islam bersifat holistik - tetapi tidak

**Corresponding author:*

Tan Sri Prof Dr Mohd Kamal Hassan
Centre for Islamisation (CENTRIS), International
Islamic University Malaysia, 50728 Kuala
Lumpur, Malaysia
Email: Mahmood.42mkh.goldsand@gmail.com

menghalangi rawatan perubatan atau psikiatri yang bersesuaian untuk gejala atau penyakit tertentu. Ia tidak terhad kepada dimensi biologi atau sosial dari tekanan jiwa tetapi ia melampaui batas dimensi tersebut. Ia mencari jalan penyelesaian yang holistik dengan memahami asas kerohanian atau penyakit gangguan psikologi manusia atau gangguan mental dengan tujuan untuk mewujudkan pertumbuhan psikologi manusia yang berkekalan dan sihat, di mana pada dasarnya adalah makhluk mempunyai kepentingan rohani dan moral yang diciptakan oleh Tuhan.

Katakunci: *Gangguan psikologi, terapi rohani, al- Qur'an dan Sunnah.*

1. Introduction

With the COVID19 pandemic continuing to create havoc, fear and anxiety throughout the world, one can expect more and more people will experience serious psychological and mental health issues. This era of political chaos, social disintegration, climate and environmental emergencies, increase in the phenomena of social ills and moral decadence has also produced, through the social media, overflooding of false information, unethical thought, immorality and filth disguised as new knowledge. Consequently, contemporary societies including Muslim societies – especially in urban areas – are losing the traditional moral compass. Already there are reports of increase in trends toward self-harm or self-injury as well as incidents of suicide or attempted suicide in Malaysia today. With the increase in mental health issues among Muslim students or adults, it is crucial that Muslim practitioners, psychologists, psychotherapists and counsellors explore the Islamic religious and spiritual resources from the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet (*s. a. w.*) to find ways and means of addressing and overcoming various problems of mental and emotional distress: depression, anxiety, stress, paranoia, excessive fear or excessive anger. They will discover from the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* approaches, solutions and answers to several issues of mental health in today's world, which they would not get from mainstream secular or conventional Western mental health institutions or experts in psychology and psychiatry.

Mental well-being problems, we are told, are usually caused by big life crises, such as serious or life-threatening illnesses, bereavement, or job-related crises arising from imminent redundancy. We have little or no control over such crises or emergencies, but it is

our ways or habits of responding to such critical situations in life that will determine the state of our mental well-being. This is where our level of resilience, that is our ability to cope with adverse circumstances, is crucial. For Muslim youths and adults who are prone to suffer problems of psychological disorder in these turbulent times, we would advise them to strengthen their level of physical, moral, intellectual, emotional, social and spiritual resilience—instead of relying or depending solely upon secularism-based or materialism-based psychological or psychiatric solutions as provided by Western institutions or traditions—but by resorting to the God-given guidelines provided in the Qur'an and the normative traditions of the Prophet (*s. a. w.*).

There are many symptoms of poor mental health such as: (i) being unable to concentrate; feeling depressed; (ii) confused for an extended period; (iii) having excessive fears or worries; (iv) undergoing extreme mood changes; (v) struggling with feelings of guilt; (vi) wanting to withdraw from friends and activities; (vii) not having high or normal energy level; (viii) wanting to cause self-harm or self-injury; (ix) having problems going to sleep not because of insomnia; and, worst of all, (x) entertaining or feeling like wanting to commit suicide.

The above symptoms of poor mental well-being could be triggered or brought about by any or a combination of several factors such as: (i) unemployment or losing one's job; (ii) grave illness or death of someone dear; (iii) childhood abuse, neglect, or past trauma; (iv) loneliness or social isolation or forced separation from the family; (v) experience of discrimination, injustice, oppression, subjugation or stigma; (vi) severe or long-term stress; (vii) homelessness, poor living conditions or unhealthy social environment; and (viii) struggling with

conditions of deprivation, poverty or heavy financial debt.

The above-mentioned symptoms of poor mental health obviously require proper and effective treatments, which could be in the form of: (a) religio-spiritual therapy, or (b) psychological or psychiatric remedies, or (c) medication from modern or traditional medicine, or (d) meditation, or (e) counselling sessions, or a combination of two or more of those methods of treatment. Each of the above approaches has its strengths and limitations, but in this essay, we would like to focus on the spiritual approach to mental well-being as derived from the worldview and teachings of the Qur'an.

The Islamic spiritual approach and method, in principle, look at human emotional, psychological, social or mental issues from a holistic perspective whereby the material, social and emotional problems faced by human beings are understood or analysed not only from the external perspectives but also from their connections with the inner dimensions of spirituality, namely the impact from the conditions of the spiritual heart (*qalb*). Every dimension of human life or personality has its own specific ways of maintaining well-being, no doubt, but the foundation of each of them is the religio-spiritual foundation of faith (*īmān*) in Allah (*s. w. t.*) – The Compassionate Creator, Master and Sustainer of all that exist. Thus, by maintaining sound, balanced and proper relationship with the Compassionate Creator and Sustainer, as well as the normative legacy (*Sunnah*) of Prophet Muḥammad (*s. a. w.*), the Muslim believer (*mu'min*) develops the proper perspectives, attitudes and behaviours vis-a-vis Allah (*s. w. t.*), Prophet Muhammad (*s. a. w.*), religions other than Islam, the family, fellow human beings, organisations, cultures, societies, states, nature, life and oneself. It is important to realise that the correct and strong spiritual connection with the Living and Compassionate Creator and Sustainer and His comprehensive guidance in the Qur'an and the Sunnah provide Believers and human beings correct and clear answers regarding fundamental questions of human existence, which independent or secularised human reason cannot provide. The questions are, such as:

- a. How did human beings come into existence, and if they have been created by God, what is the nature of this God?
- b. What is the true nature and true identity of human beings?
- c. What is the true purpose and meaning of human beings' existence and what is their ultimate destiny?
- d. If there is life after death, what is the nature of this life and how do human beings prepare for life in the hereafter?
- e. What is the highest and most authoritative source of guidance for human beings to achieve wellbeing in this world and wellbeing in the Hereafter?
- f. What are the purpose and meaning of the universe, the world, the life of this transitory world (*dunyā*) and nature?
- g. What are the conceptions of true success and true failure, true gain and true loss, true happiness and true misery? What are the correct means of achieving true happiness and of averting true misery and failure in the Hereafter?
- h. What is the meaning of inner peace and harmony? What is the divinely-prescribed way or method of achieving inner peace and harmony for the Believers?
- i. What are the rights, roles and responsibilities of human beings as Allah's servants, vicegerents, Believers and the Community of Believers (*Ummah Islāmiyyah* or *Ummah Muḥammadiyyah*) in the worldview of the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*?
- j. Who are the real adversaries or enemies of the Believers, externally and internally?
- k. What is the best system of life and type of civilisation for Believers and the Muslim *Ummah*?

2. Issues of Mental- Psychological Health in Iium

We believe that IIUM is not entirely free of cases of depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, LGBTQ trends, suicidal tendencies, addiction to pornography, substance abuse and drug-addiction, self-harm, atheistic or agnostic thinking, secularistic dualistic behaviour, paranoia, xenophobia, and racial prejudices, among her immediate and extended communities. Lecturers in psychology and psychiatry, counsellors,

academic advisors, *Mahallah* principals and deans need to understand the different causes and backgrounds of mental/psychological problems or illnesses by:

1. Being objective in trying to understand the causes;
2. Being patient and non-judgemental;
3. Being hopeful and optimistic while giving counselling or advice or guidance;
4. Having empathy, caring and not expecting quick results or success;
5. Exercising forgiveness, but to convey the right teachings of the Qur'an and the Sunnah
6. Being compassionate and never to give up hope and supplication to Allah (s. w. t.)

We should impart to the affected persons the conviction that Allah (s. w. t.) loves to save His servants who have transgressed His limits:

"Say, o my servants who have transgressed against themselves [by sinning], do not despair of the mercy of Allah. Indeed, Allah forgives all sins. Indeed, it is He who is the Forgiving, the Merciful."

The Qur'an (39:53)

We need, therefore, to be gentle, not hard or harsh, in dealing with people having symptoms of psychological disorder. Remember how Allah (s. w. t.) reminds the Prophet (s. a. w.):

"Only through the Divine Mercy have you (O Muhammad) been able to deal with your followers so gently. If you had been stern and hard-hearted, they would all have deserted you a long time ago. Forgive them and ask God to forgive (their sins) and consult with them in certain matters. But, when you reach a decision, trust God. God loves those who trust Him."

The Qur'an (3:159)

We must share the Qur'anic and Sunnatic principle that Allah (s. w. t.) loves gentleness, as reported by Abu Hurairah (r. a.): *"The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said, "Verily, Allah is gentle and He loves gentleness. He grants reward for gentleness what is not given for harshness."*

It is highly recommended that we reflect on and share the relevant *hadiths* with others, which highlight how much Allah (s. w. t.) loves His servants who want to return to Him. As Muslim academics, psychologists or counsellors, we ought to remember and inform our students who are having problems of mental well-being the well-known *hadith* quoted below that Allah (s. w. t.) runs to His servants while they walk to him. Abu Dharr reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said,

"Allah Almighty says: Whoever comes with a good deed will have the reward of ten like it and even more. Whoever comes with an evil deed will be recompensed for one evil deed like it or he will be forgiven. Whoever draws close to me by the length of a hand, I will draw close to him by the length of an arm. Whoever draws close to me by the length of an arm, I will draw close to him by the length of a fathom. Whoever comes to me walking, I will come to him running. Whoever meets me with enough sins to fill the earth, not associating any idols with me, I will meet him with as much forgiveness."

(Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 2687)

To the Muslim youth and adults, including IIUM students and staff, who may be experiencing some problems of mental well-being, the present COVID-19 pandemic provides the best justification for them to find the right and lasting solutions to their problems of psychological trauma or spiritual illness – which are manifesting in poor state of mental well-being – from what the Islamic paradigm of psycho-spiritual well-being can offer (Hooman Keshavarzi 2018). As for the cures or remedies of specific psychological or mental well-being problems or ailments, the Islamic spiritual approach as embodied in the tradition of *taṣawwuf* (science of Islamic spirituality or Sufism) has developed a variety of psycho-spiritual preventive and therapeutic treatments, ranging from the simplest to the most complex remedies.

We know from the worldview of the Qur'an that human well-being as a whole is to be developed and nurtured through strengthening,

enriching and refining the spiritual bond (*īmān*) with Allah (*s. w. t.*) and following what He and His human Prophets and Messengers (peace and blessings be upon all of them), have taught regarding the right ways and means for human beings to attain the optimum physical, emotional, intellectual, social and spiritual well-being and positive growth. By strengthening, enriching and refining the spiritual bond (*īmān*) with Allah (*s. w. t.*), the servant of Allah (*s. w. t.*) is directly and individually connected with his/her Compassionate Creator and Caring Master. Whenever he or she faces a personal problem of mental well-being or other types of problems, the direct and immediate spiritual connection with the Compassionate Creator and Master must be utilised to the fullest, because it is only He who can solve the most difficult or complex problems faced by His servants or Believers, if they turn to Him with sincerity, certitude and absolute faith in His healing powers.

Bearing in mind that human life is full of trials, tribulations and problems, both The Qur'an and the *Sunnah* of Prophet Muhammad (*s. a. w.*) caution and remind Believers that the integrity and purity of Islamic spirituality should not be undermined, weakened, corrupted or destroyed by spiritual-moral "diseases" (*amrād*), insinuations of the Devil/Satan (*Shaitān*) and the delusions of fleeting pleasures of worldly life (*ghurūr al-hayāt al-dunyā*). The diseases of the heart include polytheism, unbelief, hypocrisy, insincerity, arrogance, pride, self-conceit, greed, miserliness, jealousy, rancour, envy, ostentation, craving for popularity, status and public praise, love of wealth, and love of worldly pleasures. Many of these diseases (or reprehensible character traits) are the deep-rooted causes of ethical, social, economic, political and environmental injustices, evils, vices and crises in contemporary societies and civilisations. Therefore the scope of Islamic spirituality should not be confined only to the dimension of human-God relationship-involving the need for "purification of the soul", nurturing of "praiseworthy morality" (*akhlāq maḥmūdah*) or good character traits (*ḥusn al-khuluq*) and getting rid of "reprehensible morality" (*akhlāq madhmūmah*) or bad character traits (*sū' al-khuluq*) – but it should be extended to the

dimension of human-human and human-nature relationships, which come under the generic term "good/virtuous deeds" (*‘amal ṣāliḥ*).

Islamic scholars of spiritual sciences consider it a religious responsibility of every individual to cleanse the spiritual heart (*tazkiyat al-nafs*) of those afore-mentioned diseases or ailments by cultivating the spiritual virtues as well as the spiritual needs of knowing the One True God (*ma‘rifat Allah*), and practising true repentance (*taubah*), internalising the values of God-consciousness (*taqwā*), sincerity (*ikhlaṣ*), justice (*‘adl*), abstinence (*zuhd*), trust in God (*tawakkul*), gratitude to Allah (*shukr*), spiritual intimacy with God (*uns*), love of God (*maḥabbatu’Llāh*), spiritual contentment (*qanā‘ah*), self-examination (*muḥāsabah*), contemplation (*tafakkur*) and remembrance of Allah (*dhikr*), of death and the Hereafter. In this connection the Believers learn from the Prophetic *Sunnah* and the writings of well-known Islamic spiritual scholars such as al-Ghazālī (d.1111) how to control the bad influence of the carnal soul (*nafs*) or base desires (sing. *hawā*) in their hearts by means of "struggling to control the desires" (*jihād al-nafs*), overcoming the dangers and traps of worldly temptations (*matā’ al-hayāt al-dunyā*) and recognising the continuous whisperings, evil suggestions (*waswasah*, *hamazāt*) and footsteps (*khuṭuwāt*) of Satanic forces (see al-Ghazālī 2007).

Notwithstanding the broad scope of human-human and human-nature relationships serving as avenues of Islamic spirituality, the most important channels by which the Believers manifest their spirituality are the four "pillars of Islam", namely the five obligatory daily prayers (*ṣalāh*), the giving of the obligatory poor due or alms tax (*zakat*), fasting (*ṣaum*) in the month of Ramaḍān, and performance of pilgrimage to Makkah (*hajj*) once in a lifetime for those who are capable of doing so. In addition, in order to gain spiritual proximity (*taqarrub ila’Llāh*) to the Compassionate and Merciful Sustainer, the pious Believers perform many supererogatory acts (*sunnah* or *nawāfil*) of prayers, fasting, performance of minor pilgrimage (*‘umrah*), reading or memorisation of the Qur'an and lots of charitable contributions of money, time, knowledge, wisdom, skills, energy, etc. to

alleviate the needs, the sufferings and problems of the underprivileged, the needy and the marginalised in society. These are additional avenues by which the Believers actualise their spirituality (or condition of absolute faith in Allah, the Most Compassionate) thus bringing them closer and closer to Him. It is important for the Muslim or Muslimah to take note that spiritual integrity and maturity in Islam is a dynamic and continuous process of spiritual-moral development in a Muslim's personality. Islamic spirituality begins with a Muslim's nominal submission (*Islām*) to Allah the Most Compassionate, and rises through the states of faith and conviction (*Īmān*) in Him and His teachings, followed by constant God-fearing consciousness (*taqwā*), beneficence and overflowing moral excellence and moral beauty (*Ihsān*), and culminating in the state of love (*maḥabbah*) of the Compassionate Master and Sustainer and yearning for His grace and pleasure (*riḍwān*) as well as for spiritual proximity to His Final Messenger, Prophet Muḥammad (*s. a. w.*) in this world and in the Hereafter.

We need to reiterate that, from the worldview of the Qur'an, the material world is not an evil place: it is a God-designated space-time and God-given opportunity for human beings to live in, to work and strive (*jihād*) to serve Divine purposes. It is a temporary abode, no doubt, but it is a necessary abode in which a human being is to develop into a good, righteous and virtuous human (*insān ṣāliḥ*), to work together with fellow human beings for a safe, peaceful and bountiful environment towards establishing a virtuous society (*Mujtama' ṣāliḥ*) and a virtuous civilisation (*haḍārah ṣāliḥah*), for the ultimate goal of serving and worshipping (*'ibādah*) God sincerely, thereby earning His pleasure (*riḍwān*) and true success and wellbeing (*al-falāḥ*) in the Hereafter.

It is important to realise that spirituality in the religion and civilisation of Islam is expressed by the Believer, not by rejecting or denying material wellbeing, but by living actively, righteously and peacefully, while being fully engaged in the world as a God-obedient and God-fearing servant and vicegerent who has been entrusted by his/her Creator-Sustainer to develop it in accordance with His commandments. This

means that he or she is to enjoin all that is permissible (*ḥalāl*), good (*khair*) and virtuous (*ma'rūf*) and to prohibit all that is bad (*sharr*) or reprehensible (*munkar*) or forbidden (*ḥarām*). In short, his/her spiritual-ethical duty is to promote the public welfare or public good (*maṣlaḥah*) and prevent that which is harmful (*mafsadah*) or injurious to society and the environment. In this way his/her way of life and developmental efforts will be in harmony with the five fundamental objectives of the Divine Law (*Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*) – the protection, preservation and growth of the Islamic Religion, Life, Intellect, Progeny and Wealth.

The contemporary Muslim community throughout the world needs to be reminded that, as a religious, spiritual and ethical community, the Muslim *Ummah* has been given the responsibility by Allah the Most Compassionate of “enjoining all that is good and virtuous, and prohibiting all that is bad and reprehensible” (*The Qur'an* 3:104). The Muslim community is also charged by Allah (*s. w. t.*) to be “the best community brought forth for mankind” (*The Qur'an*, 3:110), and to be the *Ummah Wasaṭ*, the Middle-Most Community which upholds Justice, Moral Excellence and Balance between the two opposites of liberality on the one hand and extremism on the other (*The Qur'an*, 2:143-146). With those qualities of excellence, the Muslim community is to play the role of Witnesses (*shuhadā'*) for the rest of mankind in terms of implementing Allah's commandments and injunctions.

As members of the divinely-mandated community with a sacred mission to enjoin what is good and prohibit what is bad, the Believers are primarily motivated by their faith and conviction in Allah (*s. w. t.*), in His Final Messenger Muhammad (*s. a. w.*) and in life Hereafter. It is part of their consciousness as Believers also to anticipate that the world and the whole universe will come to a cataclysmic end one day, at a time known only to the Creator-Sustainer. Nevertheless, the true Believers look forward to and aspire, through their good deeds in this worldly life, for the everlasting phase of life in *al-Ākhirah* which provides conditions of permanent bliss and happiness for those who have succeeded in living a virtuous life of

enhanced spiritual connection with and submission to the Compassionate Creator-Sustainer. The hearts of these Believers tremble and shudder at the prospect of having to live a future life of ignominy, terrible shame and utter helplessness—devoid of Divine mercy and grace – which will be the destiny of the rebellious and arrogant worshippers of worldly glory, power and dominance.

3. The Islamic Conception of Man's Soul In Brief

A full Islamic understanding of the soul that explains the reality of its complex nature and the proper relationship of the four spiritual components of the soul, namely (i) *rūh* (spirit), (ii) *qalb* (spiritual heart), (iii) *'aql* (intellect), and (iv) *nafs* (lower self) can be read from al-Ghazālī's *Book of Knowledge* (see al-Ghazālī, 2016) and *Marvels of the Heart* (see al-Ghazālī, 2007).

In The Qur'anic conception of man, every human being – Muslim or non-Muslim – has an innately pure and good nature, *fiṭrah*, which Allah (s. w. t.) has created. It is spiritually connected to its Creator but it can become clouded, covered over or forgotten as a result of childhood upbringing, parental influence or environmental factors. Spiritual and moral corruption of the human self also suppresses the positive impact of the inherent goodness of the *fiṭrah*. Allah (s. w. t.) reveals in the Qur'an that the human soul originates from Him and that He has endowed it with the capacity for righteousness, piety and high spiritual elevation as well as the capacity for waywardness, wickedness and deviation. But whoever takes care to nourish, clean and purify the soul will gain true wellbeing and success (*ḥalāl*), while the one who allows it to be buried in darkness, soiled or corrupted, will be ruined (*The Qur'an*, 91:7-10). At the centre of the self or personality is the spiritual heart (*qalb*) which is the spiritual centre of the person. It has the potential to turn toward the lower impulses of the soul (*nafs*) due to the influences of this-worldly (*dunyā*) distractions or temptations of Satan, resulting in increased symptoms of negative emotions or "blameworthy" (*madhmūmah*) characteristics, or what the Qur'an terms as "diseases" (*amrād*) of the *qalb*.

The *qalb* can also turn towards the higher, Godly nature of the Spirit (*rūh*) with acts of obedience, *taqwā* character and remembrance of Allah (*dhikru'llāh*) and the *Ākhirah*. This will result in increased positive emotional and moral characteristics (*akhlāq maḥmūdah*) of the Believer. If he/she sustains the praiseworthy moral and spiritual qualities of a true Believer by being steadfast (*istiqāmah*) with the virtues of *taqwā*, spiritual-moral excellence (*iḥsān*) and love and longing (*maḥabbah*) for Allah's pleasure, then it is highly likely that he/she would return to Allah (s. w. t.) on that Dreadful and Awesome Day of Judgement "with a sound, healthy, and purified heart" (*bi-qalb salīm*, *the Qur'an*, *al-Shu'arā'* 26:87-89). This is one of the major aspirations of a true Believer in Islam. The good news is that this level of spiritual elevation and purification is attainable if the Believer obeys and follows the injunctions and guidance of Allah (s. w. t.) and His Messenger (s. a. w.), and knows how to avoid falling into the different deceptions (*ghurūr*) of this-worldly life, Satan and passion. Hence the "striving against the lower self" (*jihād al-nafs*) is regarded in Islam as "the greater *jihād*" in comparison to the physical or military struggle.

The duty of cleaning and purifying the self (*tazkiyat al-nafs*) is a fundamental religious duty of every adult Muslim. It involves a constant inner spiritual struggle of the self to overcome the ailments in the heart, with constant acts of seeking forgiveness from Allah (s. w. t.), true repentance to Him, and remembrance of Allah (s. w. t.) amidst the distractions of the *dunyā*. The aim is to liberate oneself from the downward pull of the "evil-inciting soul" (*al-nafs al-ammārah*), to be at least at the level of the "blaming soul" (*al-nafs al-lawwāmah*), and eventually – with divine assistance – attain the level of the "the tranquil soul" or "the soul at rest" (*al-nafs al-muṭma'innah*) (*The Qur'an*, 89:27-28). In this vital inner struggle, the intellect or reason (*'aql*) of the Believer has to play the positive role of strengthening, supporting and protecting the *qalb* from Satanic insinuations and misleading empirically or rationally acquired knowledge or information. The *'aql* of the Believer, according to the Qur'an, is not a separate or independent entity as understood in secular cultures: it is in

fact the cognitive function of the *qalb* which is not supposed to be disconnected from the foundation of *Tawhidic* faith. As such the '*aql*' of a Believer is naturally illuminated and guided by the light of Divine Truth and is nourished by Divine Wisdom so that its divinely-connected reasoning, contemplation or logical thinking would provide the much-needed solutions to many problems in human life—solutions which do not contradict revealed truths or Divine values and norms, as is the case in contemporary secular humanistic civilisation. It is for this reason that the Qur'an exhorts human beings to use their reason, intellect and rational observation not only to appreciate the teachings of Islam but also to understand the mysteries in Allah's creation and the universe. Islam also elevates the position of God-fearing scholars ('*ulamā*') and "people who possess sound reason" (*Ulu'l-Albāb*) because they use the cognitive function of their spiritual hearts in the proper way as enjoined by the Creator.

It is important, therefore, that we Muslims have a good understanding of the "hearts of the Believers" ("*qulūb al-mu'minīn*" in the Qur'an) as opposed to the hearts of the hard-core materialists, the self-deluded hypocrites, the arrogant disbelievers, the defiant atheists or the unrepentant sinners. The hearts of the Believers are hearts, which are informed and guided by the knowledge and wisdom of the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*. These hearts inspire, motivate, strengthen and spur the Believers to greater heights of spiritual-ethical development and progress, against the tide and forces of disbelief, polytheism, corruption, anarchy, depravity, immorality, falsehood, nihilism, atheism, individualism, racism and secularism. It is these hearts (which include the intellects within them) which will help the Believers to overcome the problems of psychological disorders such as depression, anxiety, worries, excessive anger, lack of self-esteem, paranoia, etc., which are affecting more and more people in this era of uncertainty, post-normal times and COVID-19 pandemic.

The *qalb* as the Allah-gifted spiritual entity (*al-Imām* al-Ghazālī calls it "*laṭīfah rabbāniyyah rūḥāniyyah*"—a subtle spiritual entity of Divine origin) is of immense worldly

and other-worldly value, which we Muslims and fellow human beings need always to preserve, protect and purify from all kinds of corrupting elements, and remove all the "stains" or "rusts" of our bad deeds and bad influence of the lower self, the *hawā* and the *al-naḥs al-ammārah bi's-sū*' that incites to disobedience against religious norms and rules, immoral acts and evil deeds. Allah (s. w. t.) mentions in several verses of the Qur'an that human hearts are susceptible to spiritual diseases, or moral ailments, by saying: "in their hearts is a disease" (*The Qur'an, al-Baqarah* 2:10; *al-Mā'idah* 5:52; *al-Anfāl* 8:49; *al-Muddaththir* 74:31) and similar verses, which have been analysed in many Sufi works. The heart as a dynamic spiritual core of human personality can therefore, according to the Qur'an, be "healthy" (*al-Shu'arā* 26:88-89); be "tested" (*al-Hujurat* 49:3); be "blind" (*al-Hajj* 22:46); be "hard", (*al-Hajj* 22:53); be "locked" or "full of rust" (*al-Muṭaffifin* 83:14; *al-Baqarah* 2:7); "follow the whispers" of Satan (*al-An'ām* 6:113) or be "without understanding" (*al-Anfāl* 8:24).

At this juncture, it is important to bear in mind that the ability to distinguish between what is *ḥaqq* (truth, real) or *ma'rūf* (right, good, beneficial, acceptable) and *bāṭil* (false) or *munkar* (wrong, bad, harmful, objectionable, rejected) is an essential skill in the life of a Muslim. But what makes it difficult sometimes to distinguish good from evil is when the lower self, the *al-naḥs al-ammārah bi-'s-sū*' comes into play to blur the distinction or to weaken the positive influence of the '*aql*'. The lower self, which always instigates the human being to commit evil deeds can easily be exploited by Satan in his war against the Believers and the forces of good. Knowing this unique nature of the *qalb* would help Muslim educators, leaders and parents to give proper attention to the holistic growth, development and elevation of the *qalb*.

It is important to know, first, that Allah (s. w. t.) does not use the word '*aql*' (intellect, intelligence, reason) as a noun in The Qur'an, although it exists in the Arabic language. Rather the All-Knowing, the All-Wise Creator-Sustainer uses the verbs "*ya'qilūn*" (they understand, comprehend or they reason), "*na'qilu*" (we understand, we use our reason) and "*yafqahūn*"

(they understand, comprehend) as actions and functions of the *qalb*. The following two verses need to be studied carefully:

“Have they not travelled through the earth, and have hearts [qulūb] by which they could reason/gain wisdom or understanding [ya‘qilūn], and ears by which they could hear? For indeed, it is not their eyes that have become blind but it is the hearts [qulūb] that are in their breasts that have become blind!”

The Qur'an (22:46)

“And certainly many are the invisible beings and humans We have made for hell who have hearts [qulūb] with which they understand not [lā yafqahūna bihā] (or fail to grasp the truth), and eyes with which they fail to see [lā yubṣirūna bihā], and ears with which they fail to hear [lā yasma‘ūna bihā]. They are like cattle - no, they are [even] more misguided: it is they, they who are the [truly] heedless [of warnings]!”

The Qur'an (7:179)

The explanation given by Abdullah Yusuf Ali on The Qur'anic meaning of *qalb* is most enlightening. The word for heart [*qalb*] in Arabic speech imports both the seat of intelligent faculties and understanding as well as the seat of affections and emotions. Those who reject Allah's Message may have their physical eyes and ears, but their hearts are blind and deaf. If their faculties of understanding were active, would they not see the Signs of Allah's Providence and Allah's Wrath in nature around them and in the cities and ruins if they travel intelligently? (Abdullah Yusuf Ali n.d. 964)

On the Qur'anic verse *al-A'rāf* (7:174), Abdullah Yusuf Ali says that “though they have apparently all the faculties of reason and perception, they have so deadened them that those faculties do not work, and they go headlong into Hell. They are, as it were, made for Hell.” (Abdullah Yusuf Ali n.d. 459).

We would like to add here, with regard to maintenance of mental well-being, that one of the five principal objectives of the *Shari'ah* is the *hifz* (preservation, the protection and the sustainability) of the sound '*aql*. With sound reason being grounded upon true *īmān* and

taqwā, the human mind knows and remembers its Compassionate Master and operates in accordance with the will of the Master, like the mind of the true scholars ('*ulamā'* with *khasyah* – awe and fear – of Allah's wrath and displeasure (The Qur'an, 35:28) and the God-oriented mind of true Believers and the *Ulu'l-Albāb* (The Qur'an, 3:190-194). However, under the steady influence and dominance of secular education and culture, secularised media and ICT, and secularised science and technology of contemporary secular humanistic civilisation, the '*aql* and thinking of many Muslim students, academics, scholars, professionals, economists, politicians and national leaders have been uprooted from the anchor of *īmān* and *taqwā* and freed from Divine Guidance. The Muslim '*aql* then becomes a creature, which transgresses all divine and religious limits on human freedom. It is transformed into an independent source of relativistic or speculative knowledge, and serves as an instrument of intellectual arrogance, ostentation, oppression, dehumanisation, injustice, agnosticism, cynicism, nihilism and relativism—these being some of the root causes of contemporary problems of depression, anxiety, despair, Islamophobia and meaninglessness among the younger generation of Muslims.

Under these circumstances, the '*aql* becomes impervious to the Divine Light of wisdom and enlightenment, and the *qalb* in which the cognitive rational faculty resides becomes hardened. At this stage the *qalb* then deserves to be “sealed” as Allah (s. w. t.) says:

“Their hearts were stamped so they do not understand/comprehend” (The Qur'an, *al-Taubah* 9:87; *al-Munāfiqūn* 63:3) and *“Allah stamped their hearts so they do not know (have knowledge)”*.

The Qur'an (9:93)

4. The negative impact from the external force of satanic Influences

Now we come to a very important matter related to the inner spiritual struggle of human beings to reach the goal of *al-falāḥ* or comprehensive and holistic well-being, which is rarely discussed in mainstream intellectual discourses or mainstream human development modules; i.e. the disruptive and deviationist role of an unseen “Perpetual

Virus" (like the Coronavirus) in human life, culture and civilisation coming from highly conniving and persistent but invisible Forces of Evil, which have the ability to do, among other things, the following:

- a. Camouflage or disguise what is *munkar* as *ma'rūf*, failure as success, falsehood (*bāṭil*) as truth (*ḥaqq*), vice (*radhīlah*) as virtue (*faḍīlah*), misery as blessing, poison as honey, or divine wrath as divine pleasure;
- b. Convert the less educated Muslim masses or confused Muslim youth, students or young professionals to believe in polytheistic supernatural forces, or to become followers of hedonism, nihilism, relativism, post-modernism, neo-liberalism or neo-atheism;
- c. Lead Muslim traditional rulers, political leaders (including Prime ministers, Ministers, and Members of Parliament), policy makers, business and industry players, senior civil servants, law enforcement (including the judiciary) and immigration officers, to be involved in practices of cheating, fraud, scandalous deals, corruption of all kinds, abuse of authority, cronyism, collusion, favouritism and cronyism.
- d. Make Muslims believe that since Allah (s. w. t.) is All-Merciful and All-Forgiving, Muslims can afford to indulge in some kinds of *munkar* or sinful acts, because they would eventually be forgiven by their Compassionate and Merciful Master. They could also plan to perform *Hajj* or *Umrah* in the distant future when they would make the necessary *taubah* (repentance) sincerely with all their hearts, and seek forgiveness most of the time while performing pilgrimage, as a *Hajj* that is accepted (*mabrūr*) by Allah (s. w. t.) would absolve them of all their sins.
- e. Instil and develop in young Muslim personalities or middle-age professionals or government servants, the popular Malay expression of "*tidak apa*" "*ok lah*", thus reflecting the attitudes or mindsets of complacency, laxity, mediocrity, irresponsibility as well as the tendency to procrastinate or to defer doing good deeds, including acts of seeking divine forgiveness (*istighfār*), *taubah* or *Hajj* to a much later date in one's life. In the meantime, it should

be quite O.K., they think, to "make hay while the sun shines".

- f. Inject into the mind and psyche of Muslims the idea – later to become a firm conviction – that there is no need to worry too much about the Hereafter; instead Muslims should concentrate on achieving material progress in their worldly life so as to be on par, if not better, than the Western standards of living, by imitating or adopting their models, systems or theories.

We know from the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* that *Iblīs* and Satan are capable of conjuring much more lethal, yet subtle, techniques or stratagems to lead Muslims and others astray from the path of the true Believers, the path that would lead to true goodness and well-being conditions in the world and true happiness in the Hereafter. Adult Muslims, including religious scholars, intellectuals and students can certainly learn more about the subtle techniques of Satan from the chapter on "Condemnation of Deception" (*Dhamm al-Ghurūr* in Book 3) of al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* in order to be better prepared to avert the deadly spiritual diseases of pride and arrogance, desire for human adoration or appreciation, and the deadliest disease in the form of self-admiration or conceit (*'ujb*), which is considered to be a form of hidden *shirk* – associating things other than Allah (s. w. t.) as an object of worship.

The avowed aim of the *Iblis* and Satan is to take all human beings, if they could, along with them onto the outwardly attractive, appealing and seductive trajectories of human, societal or civilisational development which are designed to lead humans into the deep chasms of miseries in life on earth and life after death. Therefore, we need to study and understand profoundly some relevant verses of the Qur'an regarding our antagonistic relationship with the unseen evil force. Allah (s. w. t.) declares that Satan is an *'Aduwwun Mubīn* (an Obvious Enemy) in the following verse:

"O mankind! Partake of what is lawful and good on earth, and follow not Satan's footsteps: for, verily, he is your obvious enemy [*'aduwwun mubīn*] and he bids you only to do evil, and to

commit deeds of abomination, and to attribute unto God something of which you have no knowledge."

The Qur'an (2:168-169)

Let us now look at those verses, which reveal: (a) the historical background of the fatal disobedient act of *Iblīs* which prompted him to plan for the vindictive spiritual destruction of the human species until the Day of Resurrection, and (b) what he and his armies have decided to do to spread their mischievous influence among mankind with the permission given by Allah (s. w. t.) and (c) what Allah (s. w. t.) had said upon hearing the evil strategies proposed by *Iblīs*:

"And We have certainly created you [O mankind] and given you [human] form. Then We said unto the angels, "Prostrate yourselves before Adam!" - whereupon they [all] prostrated themselves, except for Iblis: he was not of those who prostrated."

The Qur'an (7:11)

"[And God] said: "What has prevented you from prostrating when I commanded you?" Answered [Iblis]: "I am better than he: You have created me out of fire, whereas You have created him out of clay."

The Qur'an (7:12)

As stated further in the Qur'an:

"[Iblis said]: Tell me, is this [foolish being, Adam] the one whom You have exalted above me? Indeed, if You will but allow me a respite till the Day of Resurrection, I shall most certainly cause his descendants - all but a few - to obey me blindly!"

The Qur'an (17:62)

[God] said: "Descend then from this [Paradise] - for it is not for you to show arrogance here! So go out, then: indeed, you are of the debased!" [Iblis] said: "Grant me a respite till the Day when all shall be raised from the dead." [And God] replied: "Indeed you shall be among those who are granted a respite." [Whereupon Iblis] said: "Now that You have sent me astray, I shall most certainly lie in ambush for them all along

Your straight path. Then I shall most certainly fall upon them from before them and from behind them [openly as well as in a manner beyond their ability to understand], and from their right and from their left: and You will not find most of them grateful to [You]"

The Qur'an (7:13-17)

However, Allah (s. w. t.) assures that *"Indeed, you shall have no power over My creatures - unless it be those who are [already] lost in grievous error and follow you [of their own will]"*

The Qur'an (15:42)

This means that although Allah (s. w. t.) has given the permission to *Iblīs* and his army to tempt human beings and cause havoc in inter-human relations, they would have no power to seduce those who are truly conscious of God. It would also appear from Allah's responses in the dialogue that despite *Iblīs*'s ostensible rebellion against his Creator, he and *Shaiṭān* would play a role of "the eternal tempter who enables man to exercise his God-given freedom of choice between good and evil and, thus, to become a being endowed with moral free will" (Muhammad Asad 2011: 463).

[And God] said: "Go out from here, disgraced and disowned! [And] as for those among them who follow you - I will most certainly fill hell with all of you!"

The Qur'an (7:11-18)

The Qur'an provides an additional statement by Allah (s. w. t.):

[God said] Entice, then, with your voice such of them as you can, and bear upon them with all your horses and all your men, and be their partner in [all sins relating to] worldly goods and children, and hold out [all kinds of] promises to them: and [they will not know that] whatever Satan promises them is but meant to delude the mind.

The Qur'an (17:64)

Allah (s. w. t.) gives His assurance by saying: *"[And yet,] behold, you shalt have no power over [such of] My servants [as place their trust in*

Me]; for none is as worthy of trust as thy Sustainer."

The Qur'an (17:65)

In another verse *Iblīs* openly reveals, at this point, his mischievous plan:

I shall indeed make [all that is evil] on earth seem goodly to them, and shall most certainly beguile them - into grievous error.

The Qur'an (15:39)

But, *Iblīs* did mention an exception as follows:

"[I will beguile all], except those among them, who are your sincere servants!"

The Qur'an (15:40)

Meaning that there would be, among human beings, "those who are so deeply conscious of Allah (s. w. t.) that no 'blandishment of Satan' can lead them astray". Muhammad Asad 2011: 462). In order to know more about this ever-present, pervasive and spiritually-ethically destructive influences of the stratagems of *Iblīs* and Satan, it would be useful for leaders of the Muslim community to be able to benefit from the insights and wisdom of our foremost spiritual masters and savants, such as al-Imām al-Ghazālī (1058/1059-1111 C.E.) particularly in his *Min 'ajā'ib al-Qalb* (Wonders of the Heart), in which he describes in detail the eleven great gates or doors through which Satan enters the *qalb* of human beings (al-Ghazālī 2007: 106-135); Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyyah (1292-1350 C.E.) in his *Ighāthat al-Lahfān min Maṣā'id al-Shaiṭān* (Aid for the Yearning One in Resisting Satan; and in *Talbīs Iblīs* (Deceit of *Iblīs*) of Ibn al-Jauzī (1116-1201 C.E.). They have taken great pains to write important ground-breaking treatises to educate Muslims masses as well as scholars on the lures, seductions, delusions, deceptions, traps and machinations, manufactured by Satans to deceive all kinds of human beings, in order to distance them from obedience to Allah (s. w. t.) and make them sin against God or become their followers or slaves.

Al-Ghazālī (2007: 106-135) states that there are seven physical organs of the body, which are capable of becoming tools for generation sinful acts that serve as the external

gates to the heart of man. Those organs are the (1) tongue; (2) eyes; (3) ears; (4) hands; (5) private parts; (6) stomach; and (7) feet. But there are eleven major invisible inner gates of the heart by which Satan gains deeper penetration into the soul of human beings to corrupt and create diseases in it. Those major non-material gates are: (1) anger and appetite; (2) envy (*hasad*) and greed (*hirs*); (3) satiety (*shaba'*) of food; (4) love of material adornment; (5) covetous desire (*tama'*); (6) haste and lacking steadfastness; (7) love of material wealth and possessions; (8) stinginess and fear of poverty; (9) sectarian and partisan prejudices; 10) inducing the common people to indulge in abstract theological issues about the essence and attributes of God; (11) thinking ill of other Muslims (*sū' al-ẓann bi'-muslimīn*). Al-Ghazālī says that the way to overcome these personal shortcomings is to close the gates by cleaning the heart and through the constant remembrance of Allah (s. w. t.), (al-Ghazālī 2007: 122-123).

5. Islamic spiritual means of addressing psychological disorders

In overcoming some cases of psychological disorders, Muslims are taught to seek divine assistance from the Compassionate Creator, Omnipotent Master and Beneficent Sustainer, because He alone has the power to solve all human problems. Believers are being advised by the Compassionate Sustainer to seek help from Him by means of internalising the virtue of patience and perseverance (*ṣabr*) and the channel of direct communion and communication with Him via prayer (*al-ṣalāh*) and supplication. Allah (s. w. t.) has given this great advice to all His believing servants, because He is with those who persevere with self-restraint, patience and sincere prayer to Him alone:

"O you who do believe! Seek help and assistance (in your affairs) from sabr (patience, perseverance, self-restraint and constancy) and from prayer, for surely Allah is with those who have patience and perseverance."

The Qur'an (2:153)

Allah (s. w. t.) Himself urges human beings to make supplications to Him and He would respond accordingly:

"O Muhammad), when My servants ask you about Me, tell them I am quite near; I hear and answer the call of the caller whenever he calls Me. Let them listen to My call and believe in Me; perhaps they will be guided aright."

The Qur'an (2:186)

"And your Lord says, "Call upon Me; I will respond to you." Indeed, those who disdain My worship will enter Hell [rendered] contemptible."

The Qur'an (40:60)

Allah (s. w. t.) reveals to all human beings that Allah waits for anyone to call upon Him in order to respond positively at a particular time at night. Abu Huraira narrated: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said: *"Our Lord descends to the lowest heaven in the last third of every night, and He says: Who is calling upon Me that I may answer him? Who is asking from Me that I may give him? Who is seeking My forgiveness that I may forgive him?"* (Reported by both al-Bukhārī and Muslim).

The Prophet (s. a. w.) has also said: *"There is no disease that Allah has created, except that He also has created its treatment* (reported by al-Bukhari, Book 71).

When a Muslim acquires – through the spiritual connection with the Compassionate Master – the attributes of Believers and develops those attributes into habits of the heart, he/she will be able to get the spiritual, moral or emotional nourishment his/her soul needs from the Caring Master. This is so, because the Master promises in many verses of The Qur'an that He would be with the true Believers and bestow him/her the kind of knowledge and skills he/she requires to overcome any personal problems or challenges in life, including psychological and psychospiritual ones. The Compassionate Master has promised, in no uncertain terms in The Qur'an, that He will surely assist the Believers who possess true faith (*īmān*) and God-fearing (*taqwā*) qualities in ways that could never be provided by other creatures of

the Master-Creator. He assures the believing servants that He is always with (*ma'iyyah*) the patient and perseverant servants, with the God-fearing (*muttaqūn*) and the benevolent servants (*muḥsinūn*).

5.1 Taqwā

It is remarkable that the virtue of *taqwā* in the personality of a Muslim or Muslimah would produce solutions to different kinds of inter-personal problems in the life of Muslims. The Rayan Institute has summarised in a very attractive way the wonderful consequences of *taqwā* in the following ways:

i. Ease in matters

"And whoever fears Allah, He will make for him ease in his matter."

The Qur'an (65:4)

Whoever has *taqwā*, Allah makes matters easy for him in this world as well as the next. This does not necessarily mean that the person will not face difficulty, but through the blessings of his *taqwā*, he is guaranteed ease and the strength to bear these difficulties without losing faith or hope.

ii. A way out of problems and difficulties

"And whoever fears Allah, He will make for him a way out."

The Qur'an (65:2)

Taqwā serves as a divine guard against trials of this world as well as the difficulties of the hereafter. We see an example of this in the Qur'an where, in the story of Khidr ('*alaihissalam*), it was the righteous nature of the father that saved his sons from loss even after his death. The Qur'an says:

"As for the wall, it belonged to two orphan boys in the town; and there was under it a treasure belonging to them; and their father was a righteous man, and their Lord intended that they should attain their age of full strength and take out their treasure as a mercy from your Lord."

The Qur'an (18:82)

iii. Unexpected sustenance

"And He will provide for him from sources he could never imagine."

The Qur'an (65:3)

The Almighty Allah is the Creator, Sustainer and Nourisher of the universe. Whatever a person requires and desires of sustenance can be found in His vast treasures. The divine promise is that the God-fearing will be sustained from sources they would never perceive to receive sustenance from. The Noble Qur'an reiterates this in another verse:

And if the people of the towns believed and had Taqwa, certainly We should have opened for them blessings from the heavens and the earth.

The Qur'an (7:96)

iv. Ability to distinguish truth from falsehood

"O you who believe! If you fear Allah, He will grant you a criterion (furqan)."

The Qur'an (8:29)

When a believer sees to it that his obedience to Allah and love for him stay above everything else, he is gifted by Allah with *furqān* (such insight that leaves no doubt between truth and falsehood). Every matter becomes clear in his mind and when he is faced with confusing situations of the heart, he will be guided to the light. The Qur'an, terms the day of the Battle of Badr as "Yawm-al-Furqān" (the Day of Distinction). This was a decisive day in the history of Islam, which proved that no enemy can destroy a people who have the support of Allah and such individuals will be successful in all missions they undertake.

v. Tranquility

"It is He (Allah) who sent down tranquillity into the hearts of the believers."

The Qur'an (48:4)

Calmness and tranquillity are sought after states in the daily rat-race of life. These are bounties

from Allah, which are specifically focused towards the hearts of the true believers. People seek solace in material items, sports, relationships and some even seek it in sin and vice, whereas the true solace that the heart craves can only be acquired from The Creator of the heart Himself. When a servant attaches his heart, actions, longings and aspirations to Allah (s. w. t.), The Almighty sees to his affairs and keeps him in a state of peace which even those with abundant worldly wealth envy.

"Those who believed and whose hearts are assured by the remembrance of Allah. Unquestionably, by the remembrance of Allah hearts are assured."

The Qur'an (13:28)

Besides the above benefits of adopting *taqwā*, The Lord of great bounty has more long term benefits in store for the righteous believers. The high status of the people of *taqwā* is mentioned in various verses of the Qur'an, one of which will suffice for all.

"For those who have taqwā there is Triumph (Paradise)."

The Qur'an (78:31)

A frequent supplication of the Messenger of Allah was: "O Allah! Instil righteousness in my soul, and purify it as You are the best to purify it, You are its Guardian and Protecting Friend." (Muslim) (Rayyan Institute, 2018, <https://rayyaninstitute.com/5-benefits-of-adopting-taqwa/>).

Another observation on the conditionalities of efficacious *taqwā* is worth quoting: *taqwā* requires constant work, a constant state of awareness of your actions and rectification of any lapses. *Taqwā* forms the waypoints on the journey towards Allah (s. w. t.). It is through moving up the ranks of *taqwā* that one moves closer to Allah (s. w. t.). You move up through these waypoints by the way of *zuhud*, doing away with the pleasures of this world. One at a time, *taqwa* isn't a static state but it's an upward battle where you progressed through different states.

You begin with abandoning the major sins, then you move to abandoning the minor sins and you keep progressing in your *taqwa* until you reach the state of the *awliya* where your needs and desires are completely aligned with those of Allah (s. w. t.). (Reddit.com, 2018; [https://www.reddit.com/r/islam/comments/7d7wmc/and_whosoever_has_taqwa_of_allah_\(s.w.t.\)_he_will_make/](https://www.reddit.com/r/islam/comments/7d7wmc/and_whosoever_has_taqwa_of_allah_(s.w.t.)_he_will_make/)).

Dr Zohair Abdul-Rahman explains in an article on the importance of spiritual intelligence that: The Islamic spiritual tradition contains a wide variety of practices and beliefs that can be analysed for therapeutic benefit. Rather than presenting a comprehensive overview, we have elected to focus on one prescribed [Prophetic] practice for anxiety and depressive symptoms: a specific *du'ā'* (prayer) designed to ward off anxiety and depression. Whoever is afflicted with grief or anxiety, and then he should supplicate with these [Prophetic] words: *"Oh Allāh, certainly I am your slave, the son of your male slave and the son of your female slave. My forehead is in Your Hand. Your Judgment upon me is assured and Your Decree concerning me is just. I ask You by every Name that you have named Yourself with, revealed in Your Book, taught any one of Your creation or kept unto Yourself in the knowledge of the unseen that is with You, to make the Qurān the spring of my heart, and the light of my chest, the banisher of my sadness and the reliever of my distress";* (Musnad Imam Ahmad Sahih in Zohair Abdul-Rahman, 2017).

He mentions further that: "the second category of diseases of the heart is based on emotional states such as anxiety, sadness, depression, and anger. This type of disease can be treated naturally by treating the cause or with medicine that goes against the cause...And this is because the heart is harmed by what harms the body and vice versa." (Zohair Abdul-Rahman 2017).

5.2 *Du'ā'* and *dhikru'l lāh* as psychotherapy

There are many supplications practised and taught by Prophet Muhammad (s. a. w.) which are effective in overcoming personal,

psychological or spiritual disorders. The Prophet (s. a. w.) recommended that Believers should supplicate Allah (s. w. t.) with the *du'ā'* of Prophet Ayyūb (a. s.) who was afflicted with severe disease and poverty, when he called out to Allah (s. w. t.) *"Indeed, adversity has touched me and you are the Most Merciful of the merciful"*, or the *du'ā'* of Prophet Yunus (Jonah) when he was in the stomach of the sea creature that swallowed him:

...But he cried through the depths of darkness, "There is no one worthy of worship but You. Glory be unto You, indeed I have been among the wrongdoers."

The Qur'an (21:87)

One of the most popular *du'ā'*s taught by the Prophet (s. a. w.) for people facing serious emotional, physical, mental or psychological disorders is the following: *"O Allah! I seek refuge with You from worry and grief, I seek refuge in You from incapacity and laziness, I seek refuge in You from cowardice and miserliness, I seek refuge in You from being heavily in debt and from being overpowered by (other) men."*

As for the importance of *dhikru'llāh* as a means of overcoming personal problems of all kinds, they are too numerous to be listed here. Suffice it to say that it is the quality of the *qalb* and conduct that Allah (s. w. t.) looks at in considering His appropriate response. It is not the quantity of *dhikr*, *du'ā'*, *ṣalāh* and *munājāt* that matters to Allah (s. w. t.) It is the degree or depth of the Believers' sincerity, honesty, transparency, steadfastness, optimism and reliance upon Allah (s. w. t.) and conformity to the *Sunnah* of the Prophet (s. a. w.) which is the determinant factor in the sight of Allah (s. w. t.) as the True Healer (*al-Shāfi*) of all ailments, True Remover and Most Powerful Eradicator of all worries, anxiety, depression, sadness, pain, sufferings, persecutions, calamities, turmoils, oppressions, jealousies, hatreds, rancour, greed, egoism, subjugations, manipulations, enmities and injustices.

Allah (s. w. t.) has emphasised the importance of *al-ṣabr* and *al-ṣalāh* as spiritual means of overcoming all kinds existential problems, including psychological disorders.

The Prophet (s. a. w.) highly recommends that Believers communicate and have spiritual communion with Allah (s. w. t.) during the period of *Tahajjud* prayers and at the time of *sahūr* (later part of the night before dawn of the day):

"Men/women who are steadfast, truthful, obedient, spend (in the way of Allah) and implore the forgiveness of Allah before daybreak."

The Qur'an (3:17)

Conclusion

Islamic spiritual perspective of psychological disorders and mental well-being is based on the following metaphysical premises:

- The conception of human beings as spiritual-moral beings, with purity of *fiṭrah* and *rūḥ* from Allah (s. w. t.) and the necessity to cleanse and purify the *qalb*, the '*aql* and the *nafs*, with special attention to curbing and conquering the *hawā* (passion).
- When human beings acquire sound *īmān*, '*amal ṣāliḥ*, *taqwā* and *ihsān*, then Allah (s. w. t.) ensures for them *ḥayāh ṭayyibah* (the good life). If not there will be *khusrān* (true loss and misery) and '*adhāb* (punishment from Allah (s. w. t.)).
- If human beings choose to follow his/her base desires (*ittibā' al-hawā*), or choose a lifestyle that defies the reminders and advice of Allah S.W.T, thus contracting many diseases of *qalb* and corruption of '*aql*, *kufr al-ni'mah*, (ingratitude with regard to divine bounties), *ghaflah* (heedlessness), then Allah (s. w. t.) promises a life of stressful existence (*ma'īshah ḍankā*) without inner peace or tranquillity even if they may be financially or materially affluent.
- Corruption and imbalance of *nafs*, *qalb*, '*aql*, *rūḥ* plus the negative impact of *hawā*, *waswasah al-shaitān*, *ghurūr al-ḥayāt al-dunyā* are the spiritual roots of psychological disorders and mental well-being problems.
- Understanding the Qur'anic concept of *ghurūr* (deception, self-delusion, illusion) and being vigilant against it is an important preventive measure. *Ghurūr* abounds in this-worldly life and scholars are not spared of

the disease either. These destructive maladies (*muhlikāt*) can destroy those scholars who do not have the fear of Allah's displeasure and wrath in their hearts. Hence the need to constantly strive to purify the soul or *cleanse the spiritual heart* to remove the poisonous qualities or toxic elements, which are hidden from human eyes, but not at all concealed from the sight and knowledge of Allah Most Gracious.

f. Some of the relevant verses of the Qur'an are:

"Every soul shall have a taste of death: And only on the Day of Judgment shall you be paid your full recompense. Only he who is saved far from the Fire and admitted to the Garden will have attained the object (of Life): For the life of this world is but goods and chattels of deception."

The Qur'an (3:185)

"The life of this world is nothing but a sport and a pastime, and the life of the Hereafter is far better for those who seek to ward off their ruin. Will you not, then, understand?"

The Qur'an (6:32)

"Know that the life of this world is only play, and idle talk, and adornment, and boasting among you, and rivalry in increase of wealth and children. like the example of rain whose (resulting) vegetation pleases the tillers, then it dries, then you see it turn yellow, then it becomes straw. And in the hereafter is severe punishment, and forgiveness from Allah, and (His) good pleasure. And this-worldly life is nothing but a deceiving enjoyment."

The Qur'an (57:20)

In conclusion, we would like to explain that our paper has emphasised the importance of overcoming psycho-spiritual disorders by (i) strengthening the spiritual and ethical foundations of the human self and personality, (ii) restoring the bond with the Creator and Sustainer of all that exists, and (iii) instilling the worldview of The Qur'an in one's lives. We are not suggesting that all psychological disorders, including depression, anxiety, fear or schizophrenia or substance abuse should be or

could be solved *only* by spiritual-ethical therapy or approaches. We recognise that some psychological disorders have their causes in social, inter-personal or biological or emotional factors. In such cases, we would recommend that those suffering from such symptoms first seek proper attention from medical, psychiatric or counselling experts who would address the underlying causes and provide appropriate treatment.

However, as Muslims, the patients should *also* seek divine assistance or Islamic spiritual or remedies, which would complement the medical or counselling solutions, without forgetting that the mainstream secular-based medical and psychological practices have their limitations as well as shortcomings, if not negative side-effects. The reliance on anti-depressant drugs such as Prozac and Sarafem, or the use of drugs such as Methadone to counter the symptoms of substance abuse is one such limitation. The Islamic approach, it should be noted, is holistic but it does not preclude proper medical or psychiatric treatment for certain symptoms or ailments. The Islamic approach is not limited to the biological or social dimensions of mental distress; it goes beyond the material, the biological, the emotional and the social causes. It seeks a complete and holistic solution by understanding the *underlying spiritual roots* or ailments of human psychological distress or mental disorders with the aim to bring about lasting as well as sound psychological growth of human beings, knowing that human beings are essentially spiritual and moral beings created by God.

References

- Abdul-Rahman, Z. (2017). "Islamic spirituality and mental well being". Yaqeen Institute, 2017. Retrieved May 1, 2021 from <https://yaqeeninstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Islamic-Spirituality-and-Mental-Well-Being-revised.pdf>.
- Ali, A.Y. (n.d.). *The Holy Qur'an*. Madinah al-Munawwarah: The Presidency of Islamic Researches, IFTA.
- Asad, Muhammad (2011). *The Message of the Qur'an*. Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust.

- Al-Ghazālī (2016). *Kitab al-'ilm the book of knowledge* (tr. Kenneth Honerkamp). Louisville: Fons Vitae.
- Al-Ghazālī (2007). *Wonders of the heart* (tr. Walter James Skellie). Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust.
- Keshavaezi, H. (2018). "Islamic perspectives on psychological and spiritual well-being and treatment". In Moffic, H.S., Peteet, J.R., Hankir, A., Awaad, R. (Eds.) (2018). *Islamophobia and Psychiatry*. Switzerland: Springer Press.
- No Author, (2018). "5 Benefits of adopting *taqwā*". Rayyan Institute. (2018). Retrieved November 11, 2020, from <https://rayyaninstitute.com/5-benefits-of-adopting-taqwa/>.
- No Author, (2018). "And whosoever has Taqwa of Allah (s. w. t.), He will make a way for him to get out. And He will provide him from where he never could imagine. And whoever relies upon Allah - then He is sufficient for him." Reddit.com. (2018). Retrieved November 11, 2020, from [https://www.reddit.com/r/islam/comments/7d7wmc/and_whosoever_has_taqwa_of_allah_\(S.W.T.\)_he_will_make](https://www.reddit.com/r/islam/comments/7d7wmc/and_whosoever_has_taqwa_of_allah_(S.W.T.)_he_will_make).
- Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyyah (1292–1350 C.E.), *Ighāthat al-Lahfān min Maṣā'id al-Shaiṭān* (Aid for the Yearning One in Resisting Satan).
- Ibn al-Jauzī, *Talbīs Iblīs* (Deceit of *Iblīs*)

Article History

Received: 30-05-2021

Accepted: 18-06-2021

*The content of this paper has been presented, as a plenary speech, at the 3rd session of the *World Congress on Integration and Islamicisation of Human Acquired Knowledge: Mental Health and Well-being in the 4th Industrial Revolution*. Organized by IIUM, held at IIUM Kuantan Campus, June 4-6, June, 2021.