

The Concept of Repentance According to Kiyai Ahmad Sahibul Wafa in *Miftah Al-Sudur*

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Abstract

Kiyai Ahmad Sahibul Wafa, better known as Abah Anom, is a highly regarded spiritual guide (*mursyid*) in the Qadiriyyah wa Naqsyabandiyah Order (TQN). He has authored numerous works, including the book *Miftah al-Sudur*, which explores various aspects of TQN teachings. Among the key topics addressed in this book is the concept of repentance (*taubat*), a central element in the spiritual journey of the order's followers. Although *Miftah al-Sudur* discusses repentance, its approach is not systematically organized and tends to be repetitive. Therefore, this study was conducted to analyze Abah Anom's teachings on repentance using a qualitative method, particularly through document analysis. The primary source for this study is the book *Miftah al-Sudur*, supplemented by references from the works of renowned Islamic scholars (*ulama muktabar*) to assess the alignment of these teachings. The findings reveal that Abah Anom's teachings on repentance encompass three main aspects, **the call to repentance, the importance of repentance and the essence of repentance**. This study concludes that Abah Anom's teachings on repentance align with the perspectives of esteemed Islamic scholars. His approach revitalizes the classical understanding of repentance, making it practical and accessible for his followers. The outcomes of this study are expected to deepen the understanding of repentance as conveyed by Abah Anom, offering valuable insights for students and scholars alike. Moreover, it contributes to the enrichment of Islamic scholarship, particularly in the fields of Sufism and the study of spiritual orders (*tarekat*).

Keywords: Tawbat, Abah Anom and the Book Miftah al-Sudur

Introduction

Every human being is not exempt from sin due to the inherently imperfect nature of humans, who are constantly exposed to the temptations of desires and Satan. In Islam, sin refers to actions that violate Allah's commands or the neglect of what He has enjoined. Sins are not limited to major acts that contravene Islamic law but also encompass minor sins or acts of negligence.

Although a servant may commit forbidden acts or neglect obligatory duties commanded by Allah SWT, He still provides opportunities and avenues for the servant to return to Him, specifically through repentance. Repentance serves as a means to cleanse oneself from all sins and to return to Allah SWT. It involves profound regret, the abandonment of sins, and a resolute determination not to repeat the same mistakes. Through repentance, a person can obtain Allah's forgiveness and mercy. Abah Anom, in his work *Miftah al-Sudur*, discusses several aspects related to repentance, including the command to hasten repentance, the virtues of repentance, and the essence of repentance.

Biography of Kiyai Ahmad Sahibulwafa and the Miftah al-Sudur Book

KH. Ahmad Sahibulwafa Tajul Arifin bin Abdullah Mubarak was born on January 1, 1915, in Kampung Godebag, Suryalaya, Tanjungkerta Village, Pagerageung District, Tasikmalaya Regency, West Java, Indonesia (Yusaini, 2021). He received his early education from his father and was well-known for his intelligence, sharpness, and high enthusiasm for learning, surpassing his peers (Salehuddin, 2013). Throughout his life, he pursued various forms of knowledge at several local and international institutions (Praja, 2011).

At the age of 18, Abah Anom was entrusted by his father to conduct *talqin* (spiritual initiation) for new students at the Suryalaya Islamic boarding school (*pesantren*). He also engaged in spiritual practices (*riyadhah*) under his father's guidance and frequently visited the graves of pious individuals (Mulyati, 2010). In 1950, Abah Anom's father handed over the leadership of the Suryalaya Islamic boarding school to him as his successor (Praja, 1991).

The *Miftah al-Sudur* is a book that encapsulates several teachings of Abah Anom, divided into two volumes. The first volume consists of four chapters:

1. The first chapter discusses the *dhikr* of negation and affirmation (*nafi wa isbat*).
2. The second chapter explains the method of vocal *dhikr* (*dhikr jahr*).
3. The third chapter addresses the origins of *talqin*.
4. The fourth chapter elaborates on the obligation to mention the spiritual lineage (*silsilah*) that traces back to Prophet Muhammad.

The second volume, meanwhile, contains two chapters:

1. The importance of remembering Allah (*dhikr*).
2. Methods for weakening the influence of Satan.

The teachings within this book outline the stages a student must go through on their spiritual journey toward Allah SWT to achieve *ma'rifatullah* (gnosis of God). The book was originally written in Arabic but was later translated into Indonesian by Prof. Aboebakar Atjeh at the author's request to facilitate understanding among followers of the Qadiriyyah wa Naqshabandiyah *tarekat* (Sufi order).

Sin and Repentance

Before discussing repentance, Abah Anom first elaborates on the concept of sin. However, he explains it in general terms, focusing more on ways to purify the heart from characteristics condemned by Islamic law. Scholars have differing opinions on the classification of sins. Some argue that sins are divided into two categories: major sins (*kabā'ir*) and minor sins (*ṣaghā'ir*) (Nuh Ali Salman, 1999). This categorization is based on the verse of Allah SWT:

الَّذِينَ يَجْتَنِبُونَ كَبِيرَ الْإِثْمِ وَالْفَوَاحِشَ إِلَّا اللَّمَمَ

Translation:

“[Those] who avoid the major sins and immoralities, only [committing] slight ones occasionally.

(*Surah An-Najm: 32*)

Based on this verse, sins are classified into two types: *kabā'ir* refers to major sins, while *allamam* indicates minor sins (Salman, 1999). Both the Quran and the Hadith include verses and narrations that address various aspects of sin, including punishment and Allah's forgiveness. These reminders and guidance are coupled with specific methods to direct Muslims away from actions that could harm them. Additionally, Islam emphasizes the importance of preserving the purity of one's heart and intentions, as a good intention is a critical factor in determining the merit or harm of an action.

Regarding sins, the Prophet Muhammad SAW said:

الْبِرُّ حُسْنُ الْخُلُقِ وَالْإِثْمُ مَا حَاكَ فِي صَدْرِكَ وَكَرِهْتَ أَنْ يَطَّلِعَ عَلَيْهِ النَّاسُ

Translation:

“Righteousness is good character, while sin is something that makes your heart uneasy and you dislike that people should know about it.”

(*Narrated by Muslim, 2553*)

According to Ibn Hajar al-Haitami, sin encompasses all evil and wrongful deeds, whether major or minor (Bugha & Misto, 2010). Based on the above hadith, two indicators of sin can be identified:

1. Internal Signs: These refer to inner feelings such as unease, anxiety, or discomfort caused by committing a sin.
2. External Signs: These involve a reluctance or worry about having one's sinful actions exposed to others.

In another hadith, the Prophet SAW explains the harmful effects of sin, stating that committing sins darkens the heart. Continuous sinning without repentance can eventually lead to the entire heart becoming darkened. The Prophet SAW said:

إِنَّ الْعَبْدَ إِذَا أَخْطَأَ خَطِيئَةً نُكِّتَتْ فِي قَلْبِهِ نُكْتَةٌ ، فَإِنْ هُوَ نَزَعَ وَاسْتَغْفَرَ وَتَابَ صَقَلَتْ قَلْبُهُ ، وَإِنْ عَادَ زِيدَ فِيهَا حَتَّى تَغْلُوَ قَلْبَهُ

Translation:

Indeed, when a servant commits a sin, a black dot is inscribed on his heart. If he refrains from the sin, seeks forgiveness, and repents, his heart will be cleansed. But if he continues to sin, the blackness increases until it overwhelms his heart.”

(*Narrated by al-Nasa'ie, 11594*)

Furthermore, Al-Ghazali (2020) classified sins into three categories:

1. Sins of neglecting obligatory duties, such as prayer and fasting.
2. Sins of committing prohibited acts, such as consuming alcohol.
3. Sins against others, which involve harm to another person's property, self, dignity, honor, or religion.

While Imam Al-Ghazali divides sins into these three categories, they ultimately fall under the broader classifications of major and minor sins discussed earlier.

Definition of Repentance (Tawbah)

According to the *Kamus Dewan*, *tawbah* refers to the regret for sins (evil deeds and others) and the resolve not to repeat them, accompanied by a sense of unease or remorse for having committed a wrongdoing, along with a firm intention not to repeat it. It also means returning to God. Similarly, Ibn Manzur explains that *tawbah* is the act of returning to Allah from sin, returning to Allah alone, or resuming obedience after sinning, and signifies the act of turning away from sin (Ibn-Manzur, 1303H).

From a terminological perspective, *tawbah* is defined by al-Maqdisi (1997) as: "Repentance is the expression of regret that inspires determination and willpower to abandon sin. This regret stems from the awareness that sins act as barriers between an individual and their beloved (Allah). Imam Al-Ghazali defines *tawbah* in his book *Minhaj al-'Abidin* as the purification and cleansing of the heart from sin. He also quotes his teacher, Abu Bakr al-Turtusi, who describes *tawbah* as abandoning sin by one's own volition (Al-Ghazali, 2020).

Based on these definitions, *tawbah* can be summarized as encompassing three key elements:

1. Regret for the sin committed.
2. Ceasing from the sinful act.
3. Firm determination to not repeat the sin in the future.

These actions must be carried out solely for the sake of Allah SWT. If someone ceases a sinful act due to external factors, such as health concerns, their repentance will not be accepted, as it does not fulfill the conditions of *tawbah* as outlined by the scholars.

The Urgency of Repentance (Tawbah)

Regarding the exhortation to hasten repentance, Abah Anom emphasized that repentance should be done immediately without delay (Ahmad, 2014). This means that those who have committed sins must repent promptly. A similar statement is made by Sheikh Nuh Ali Salman in *Syarah Jauharah Tauhid* on page 213 (Salman, 1999). The urgency of repentance aligns with Islamic teachings, as repentance is considered obligatory (*wajib*), a consensus shared by scholars such as Imam Al-Ghazali, Imam An-Nawawi, and others. Allah SWT states:

وَتُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا أَيُّهَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

The translation is:

"Repent to Allah, all you who believe, so that you may succeed."

(Surah al-Nur: 31)

Allah SWT also says:

وَأَنْ اسْتَغْفِرُوا رَبَّكُمْ ثُمَّ تُوبُوا إِلَيْهِ يُمَتِّعْكُمْ مَتَاعًا حَسَنًا إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى وَيُؤْتِ كُلَّ ذِي فَضْلٍ فَضْلَهُ

The translation is:

"Ask forgiveness from your Lord (for committing shirk), then turn back in obedience to Him. He will give you a good life (in this world) for a specified term, and in the Hereafter, He will give to everyone who excels in righteous deeds their reward."

(Surah Hud, 3)

Both verses clearly command believers to seek forgiveness and repent to Allah SWT after committing sins. Abah Anom further urged repentance by reminding that this world is

not a permanent abode for humans, and it was not created solely for fulfilling desires and indulging in worldly pleasures (Ahmad, 2014). Allah SWT says:

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

The translation is:

"And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me."

[Surah Adh-Dhāriyāt: 56]

The Virtue of Repentance

Many verses of the Quran and hadiths explain the virtue or excellence of repentance. Among these is the assurance that those who repent will attain success. Allah Almighty states:

وَتُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا أَيُّهُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

The translation is:

"Repent to Allah, all you who believe, so that you may succeed."

(Surah al-Nur: 31)

Sins that must be repented from include both external (visible) and internal (hidden) sins. External sins, such as theft, adultery, murder, and neglecting obligatory acts like prayer, fall under this category. Internal sins include arrogance, showing off, seeking praise, backbiting, and others. Moreover, repentance must be hastened because one does not know when they will die. Death, when it comes, cannot be delayed or hastened, as Allah SWT says:

وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ أَجَلٌ فَإِذَا جَاءَ أَجَلُهُمْ لَا يَسْتَأْخِرُونَ سَاعَةً وَلَا يَسْتَقْدِمُونَ

The translation is:

"To every nation is a term (appointed). When their term comes, they cannot delay it for an hour, nor can they advance (it) by a single hour."

(Surah Al-A'raf: 34)

Besides, those who repent will also receive forgiveness from Allah SWT and will be admitted into Paradise. Allah SWT says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا تُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ تَوْبَةً نَّصُوحًا عَسَىٰ رَبُّكُمْ أَن يُكَفِّرَ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَيُدْخِلَكُم جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ

The translation is:

"O you who believe! Repent to Allah with sincere repentance, perhaps your Lord will remove your sins and admit you to Gardens beneath which rivers flow."

(Surah At-Taḥrīm: 8)

Furthermore, the importance of repentance can be seen in the works of various scholars. For instance, repentance is the initial step for those who are just beginning their spiritual journey towards Allah SWT. This has been emphasized by the scholars of Sufism, including Abu Ya'qub Yusuf bin Hamdan as-Susi, who said, 'The first station of all spiritual stations that must be traversed by those devoted to Allah SWT is repentance' (Abu-Nasr, n.d.). Such statements are also explained by many scholars, such as Shaykh Abdul Qadir al-Jilani in his book *Sirr al-Asrar*, al-Qushayri in *al-Risalah al-Qushayriyyah*, and Shaykh Amin al-Kurdi in *Tanwir al-Qulub* (Amin al-Kurdi, 1995). Likewise, it has been emphasized by Shaykh Abdul Somad al-Falimbani in his book *Hidayah Salikin*, stating that repentance is the beginning of the path for salikin, those who seek to tread the way towards Allah SWT (Abdul Somad, n.d.). Imam Ghazali in his work *Minhaj al-'Abidin* states that the implementation of repentance is obligatory for two reasons: First, to gain guidance to perform acts of obedience to Allah SWT,

as sins obstruct one from attaining goodness and lead to disgrace. Secondly, to ensure that acts of worship are accepted by Allah SWT.

Based on the verses of the Qur'an, Hadith, and the views of scholars, it can be concluded that the importance of repentance lies in achieving success, as sins are forgiven, gaining the love of Allah SWT, serving as the first step towards attaining His pleasure, receiving guidance, the acceptance of worship, and ultimately entering a paradise filled with bliss."

Method of Repentance

Many books explain the method of repentance, including *al-Luma' fi al-Tasawwuf* by al-Sarraj (1960), *Minhaj al-'Abidin* by al-Ghazali (1989), *al-Risalah al-Qushayriyyah* by Abu al-Qasim (1989), and *Riyadh al-Salihin* by al-Nawawi (n.d.). Based on the explanations from these books, it can be understood that the method of repentance is divided into two categories:

1. If the sin (ma'siyah) is solely between the servant and Allah SWT without any involvement of others, then there are three conditions:
 - Abandon and leave the sin.
 - Feel regret for committing the sin.
 - Make a firm resolve never to repeat the sinful act again.
2. If the sin involves others, such as harming others' property, an additional fourth condition is required: returning the right of the wronged party. This shows that true repentance not only involves regret but also a transformation in behavior and a firm commitment to refrain from repeating the sin. This concept emphasizes sincerity and seriousness in seeking repentance from Allah SWT.

Additionally, Abah Anom, in his book titled *Ibadah Sebagai Methoda Pembinaan Korban Penyalahgunaan Narkotika dan Kenakalan Remaja*, suggests (not as a requirement) performing a ritual bath of repentance (*mandi taubat*) and the prayer of repentance (*solat taubat*) at night, just before dawn. The ritual bath of repentance, according to the TQN method, is performed with the intention of repenting and removing sins from the entire body, starting from the top of the head to the feet. It is done during the late-night hours, just before performing the tahajjud prayer, when the environment is cool. This practice is best performed before each obligatory prayer. The ritual bath is based on the spiritual indications found in the Qur'anic verse: "If you are impure, purify yourselves" and "Remember when Allah made you feel drowsy as a rest from Him and sent down rain from the sky to purify you with it and remove the impurity of Satan, and to strengthen your hearts and make firm your feet thereby." (Quran 8:11).

In a hadith narrated by Sayyidina Abu Bakr Al-Siddiq R.A., he said: "I heard the Messenger of Allah SAW say..."

مَا مِنْ عَبْدٍ يُذْنِبُ ذَنْبًا فَيُحْسِنُ الطُّهُورَ ثُمَّ يَقُومُ فَيُصَلِّي رَكَعَتَيْنِ ثُمَّ يَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ إِلَّا غَفَرَ اللَّهُ لَهُ ثُمَّ قَرَأَ هَذِهِ الْآيَةَ وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا فَعَلُوا فَاحِشَةً أَوْ ظَلَمُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ ذَكَرُوا اللَّهَ إِلَىٰ آخِرِ الْآيَةِ

The translation is:

"There is no servant who commits a sin, then performs ablution properly, stands and prays two rak'ahs, and asks for forgiveness from Allah, except that Allah will forgive his sin." Then he recited this verse (Surah Al-Imran, verse 135).

(Narrated by Tirmizi,:

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The Reality Of Repentance

According to Abah Anom, the reality of repentance is to magnify every command of Allah SWT in all situations (Ahmad, 2014). Magnifying the commands of Allah SWT in all situations means respecting, obeying, and following all of Allah's commands—whether obligatory or recommended—regardless of the circumstances or conditions one is facing. This involves a compliant attitude towards Allah's laws in all aspects of life, whether in times of joy, difficulty, hardship, or trials, with full decorum and respect.

By magnifying the commands of Allah SWT in all situations, a person is establishing a strong relationship with their Creator and facing life with the confidence that righteous actions and adherence to religious teachings will lead to goodness in both this world and the Hereafter. Furthermore, Abah Anom states that anyone who does not magnify the commands of Allah SWT and does not show love to fellow human beings will be far from Allah SWT (Ahmad, 2014). Allah SWT says:

صُرِّبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الذَّلَّةُ أَيَّنَ مَا تُوَفَّقُوا إِلَّا بِحَبْلِ مَنْ أَلَّهِ وَحَبْلِ مَنْ أَلَّاسِي

The translation is:

"They are afflicted with humiliation (from all directions) wherever they may be, except when under the protection of Allah or under the protection of people."

(Surah Ala Imran, 3: 112)

Among the books suitable as references and guides for understanding and internalizing the commands of Allah SWT are *Ihya' Ulum al-Din* and *Bidayatul Hidayah* by Imam Ghazali. These books not only explain the proper methods for performing acts of worship according to Islamic law but also outline the etiquette that must be observed by those seeking to perform acts of worship, whether it be the etiquette before, during, or after the completion of any act of worship.

Conclusion

Repentance is a process or action undertaken by a person to turn away from sins that have been committed. It involves deep regret, a willingness to acknowledge mistakes, and a firm resolve to change behavior for the better. Repentance is not merely about seeking forgiveness from Allah, but also about striving to improve oneself and avoid forbidden actions. The process of repentance includes several key steps, such as acknowledging one's sins, feeling regret for those actions, seeking Allah's forgiveness, and making a firm intention to avoid repeating the same mistakes.

Repentance also provides an opportunity for the servant to restore their relationship with Allah SWT and lead a more meaningful life. It is not only about removing sins but also about fostering a life of greater obedience to the values of the religion. Through repentance, a person is expected to achieve inner peace and attain Allah's forgiveness and mercy. Therefore, the understanding of sin and repentance plays a crucial role in one's spiritual life. Awareness of sins and sincerity in repentance are vital elements in striving to improve one's quality of life and drawing closer to Allah SWT. It reflects the awareness and remorse over past sins, along with the desire to reform and strengthen one's connection with Allah SWT.

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