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Therapy of Zuhd Based on Al- Ghazali Spiritual Theory Through Kitab Al-Arbain Fi Usul Al-Din

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Abstract

Within the ambit of tasawwuf discipline, zuhd is defined as a quality that put the life of hereafter on the higher point compared to this temporary worldly life. Besides, it is one of the praiseworthy actions and demanded to be practiced by Muslims. Nonetheless, this article is trying to discuss the quality of zuhd based on spiritual theory of al-Ghazali (w.505D) in order to face the current challenges. This research used the content analysis method by referring the al-Ghazali masterpiece entitled “al-Arbain Fi Usul al-Din”. This study found that the quality of zuhd that have been discussed by al-Ghazali is parallel to what had been projected by the prominent Sufi masters such as al-Hasan al-Basri (d. 10H/ 729 AD) (Mat Saad, 2011), al-Harawi (d. 481H/ 1089 AD). Besides, al-Ghazali in this writing piece also focussed on how to inculcate the zuhd quality within the human soul. This study concludes that zuhd that had been shown by al-Ghazali and the previous prominent Sufi masters is referring to an action of enjoying the worldly pleasures moderately and not putting the luxurious life as their aim of life. This study also found that the zuhd portrayed by them able to shun the extreme feeling of loving the worldly pleasures that always favoured by soul cum brings the destruction to social life.

Keywords: Therapy, *Zuhd*, Spiritual Theory, al-Ghazali, *al-Arbain Fi Usul al-Din*.

Introduction

Zuhd is one of *tasawwuf* disciplines in achieving quality of daily life (Fahmi, Ishak & Farhan, 2016). The term *zuhd* is derived from Arabic Language ‘*zahida*’ which means to avoid or abstain something due to weakness and humiliation (Ibn-Manzur, n.d.; Halim, 2019). From the aspect of its lexical, *zuhd* means someone whom is pious and have no interest or prioritize the worldly life (Noresah e.t al., 2002). Meanwhile, from the perspective of *tasawwuf*, *zuhd* is referring to as taking something just within their needs from the halal sources (Zulkifli, 2019). By reviewing the literatures, most of them are centring the discussions on the division of *zuhd* characteristics (al-Harawi, 1988; al-Ghazali, 2003; Zulkifli, 2019).

Studying on the definition of *zuhd* characteristics from their masterpieces (al-Ghazali, 1988; al-Marbawi, 2015), *zuhd* can be comprehended as a characteristic that able to abstain someone from all demanded desire which is not recommended to be followed towards

something that is better and should be prioritized over it (al-Ghazali, 1988). From the aspect of application, there are few characteristics that depict the element of *zuhd*; hating this world and shunning himself from the life pleasures since his heart is concentrating on the hereafter life, not wishing anything that is unable to be achieved, able to getting rid the sadness on something that is not able to be fulfilled and annihilating the feeling of happiness for any of their pleasure and leisure (Zulkifli, 2019).

Research Methodology

This article studies on the therapy of *zuhd* based on the spiritual theory of al-Ghazali through his masterpiece *al-Arbain Fi Usul al-Din*. This is due to the personality and quality of al-Ghazali that is known for his purifying soul method or called as *tazkiyah al-nafs*. He is seen to have his own distinctive way in shaping the *mahmudah* characteristic within soul, especially the quality of *zuhd* that able to shun the soul from any tendency towards the temporary worldly pleasures. The content analysis on the book of *Arbain Fi Usul al-Din* had been used in studying the discussions of al-Ghazali's perspective on the quality of *zuhd*.

Brief Biodata of Al-Ghazali

Al-Ghazali or Abu Hamid Muhammad bin Muhammad bin Muhammad al-Ghazali was born in Tūs (second city in Khurasan after Naisabur) on Dzu al-Qaidah 450H/ 1058CE. He died during *fajr*, on Monday of 14 Jamadi al-Akhir 505H/ 18 December 1111CE (al-Ghazali, 1988; Nabil, 2000; Edi, 2011; Iliopoulou & Anastasiadou, 2014). During his lifetime, al-Ghazali was one of the teachers in Nizamiyyah and published many writing pieces such as *Ihya Ulum al-Din*, *Bidayah al-Hidayah*, *Tarbiah al-Awlad*, *al-Arban Fi Usul al-Din* and sundries.

Henceforth, this article is studying the quality of *zuhd* based on al-Ghazali spiritual theory through his writing, *al-Arbain fi Usul al-Din*. In this context, al-Ghazali was amongst the prominent Sufi scholars that discussed the concept of therapy of soul through his writing pieces (al-Ghazālī, 1988; Zarrina, 2003).

Quality of Zuhd Based on Al-Quran

Zuhd is one of the demanded qualities that should be within all Muslim individuals. Related to this quality, Allah SWT says in al-Quran:

“Whoever desires the harvest of the Hereafter - We increase for him in his harvest. And whoever desires the harvest of this world - We give him thereof, but there is not for him in the Hereafter any share”.

(al-Shuura, 42:20)

Based on the above-stated verse, al-Qushayri (1971) interpreted that Allah SWT will increase within a soul that strive for the better hereafter by bestowing the obedience towards Him and giving *hidayah* (guidance) cum by these two qualities, that particular individual may receive knowledge and clearer perspective on the essence of this life. Besides, Allah SWT will endow him rewards, put him closer and save from the harm of worldly matters and elevate his position next to Allah SWT. Meanwhile, for those that are striving for this life, Allah will make his life sufficient and wishes fulfilled but they surely miss the rewards for the hereafter life (al-Qushayri, 1971).

Referring to the interpretation by al-Qushayri, it can be comprehended that someone whose is having a quality of *zuhd* for this world will get happiness in this life and receive a successful and abundant of pleasures in the hereafter. Zulkifli (2019) through his article has divided this quality into three. First, believe that Allah is the great possessor beyond what someone believe that he owns by himself. Second, happiness of receiving rewards upon the difficulties of this life such as the situation of losing wealth, family members and others surpass the feeling of joy whenever they rejoicing the happiness of this life. Third, possessing a similar feeling either receiving compliment or insultation upon their praiseworthy actions (Zulkifli, 2019). Nonetheless, if someone is loving this life wholeheartedly, hence the pleasure of this life is solely will be rejoiced in this world without any chance to enjoy the goodness of the permanent hereafter life.

Zuhd From the Perspective of Prominent Sufi Masters

The quality of *zuhd* towards this world had been practiced by Prophets PBUH and his companions, followed by *tabiin* and pious peoples on the following generations. In relation to this quality, Ali bin Abi Ṭalib RA (w. 40H/ 661CE) said that *zuhd* towards this life is referring to the feeling that of not over contented to the worldly pleasures and not be in a great sadness if not achieving them. Besides, Abu Idris al-Khaulani r.a. stated that the quality of *zuhd* for this world is not to forbid the *halal* (permissible) things or not involve in any wealth and pleasures, but *zuhd* towards this world is putting a certainty on whatever that is sitting next to Allah is extremely better than what is currently in the possession. For example, when someone is shouldering tribulations in life, that particular individual may only hope that Allah will endow him rewards and the pleasures of *akhirah* (hereafter) despite of having to bear it throughout of his life (Zulkifli, 2019).

Meanwhile, al-Thauri (w. 161H/ 778CE) also stated that the quality of *zuhd* towards this life is by having short wishes for this life but not by consuming a tasteless food or wearing shabby and ragged clothes (Zulkifli, 2019). In this context, according to Zarrina (2003), al-Hasan al-Basri and his followers (mostly from Basrah) had emphasized this *zuhd* concept and worried about the punishment from Allah SWT in their life until they were known for being very devoted in worshipping Allah. Besides, they also put aside the luxurious and wealthy lifestyle even though they were living in the triumph days of Islam (Zarrina, 2003).

In discussing the issue of *akhlaq* or attitude through his writing of *Manazil al-Sairin*, al-Harawi also focussed on the quality of *zuhd*. According to him, *zuhd* means to annihilate all the wishes and hopes towards this life and divided this quality into three stages. First stage is *zuhd* towards the *shubhah* (doubtful) matters. The position of *shubhah* is just on the boundary gap between *halal* (permissible) and *haram* (forbidden). Individuals that are within this stage of *zuhd* are afraid of Allah's wrath and degraded by Allah and have no interest to communicate with *fasiq* people (al-Harawi, 1988).

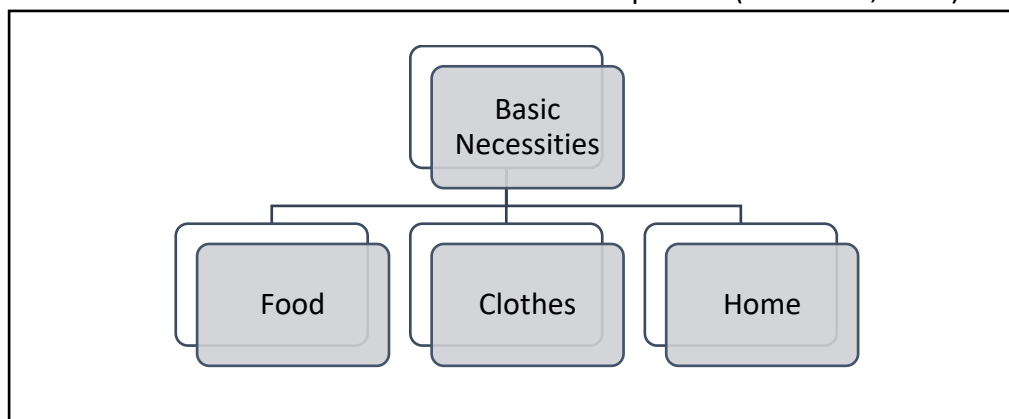
Second, *zuhd* towards any matters that go beyond the necessities by utilizing the time maximumly with the praiseworthy deeds, freeing heart from attaching to luxurious life that is related to food, drinks, accommodations and clothes just as how practiced by Prophet SAW and his companion. This stage of *zuhd* is higher than the former one due to the major allocation of time is to strive for better hereafter by getting closer to Allah SWT (al-Harawi, 1988).

Third, *zuhd* within *zuhd* which is by not self-honouring the action of their *zuhd*, balancing the situation either to get or abstain from doing something and do not expecting rewards or returns from their doings. For instance, an individual may fulfil his heart with love towards Allah SWT will surely not seeing this world that mean to be left behind as something valuable. Meanwhile, the value of balance while getting or abstaining something is referring to the similar way of viewing life either during having all the luxurious and worldly pleasures or while forgetting them all. Hence, that particular individual is not expecting to demand any position next to Allah despite for the worshipping deeds that have been done due to feeling of being ashamed to demand for that special place (al-Harawi, 1988).

Zuhd Quality Based on Spiritual Theory by Al-Ghazali

Zuhd is a quality that able to shun a soul from the tendency to love this world by obeying Allah SWT despite of his ability to access all the pleasures of this world. This quality is generally related to three elements which are fundamentals, essence and result. The fundamental of the existence of this quality within a soul is knowledge and light that turn to make a heart feel at ease by knowing that the hereafter life is better than this present world. Meanwhile, the essence of *zuhd* is by annihilating the world from a soul towards the obedience to Allah and entail the result of the ability to inculcate the quality of *qanaah* (condition where one is satisfied with something) towards this life by living it solely by to fulfil the basic needs of food, clothes, home and its appliances (al-Ghazali, 2003).

Figure 1: Basic Necessities Based on al- Ghazali Perspective (al-Ghazali, 2003)



From the aspect of food, al-Ghazali (2003) explained that there are three stages of food in certain houses that will picture the quality of *zuhd* within an individual. First, the food is just to curb hunger in the morning and nothing left for evening meal. Second, keeping the food supply for a month or up to forty days. Third, the food supply is allocated for a year. In case of someone is keeping the food supply more than the above-stated periods, hence he is no longer can be regarded as *zuhd* in the aspect of food.

Meanwhile the aspect of clothes, it is also depicting the *zuhd* of someone towards this world. First, the clothes that is solely used for covering *awrah* as how taught by Islamic *shariah* and to protect them from the hot and cold weather. Second, the clothes used to cover the head is from the rough fabric. Third, owning only two pair of clothes. If anyone own more than that, hence that individual is no longer seen as *zuhd* towards clothes.

Discussing about accommodation or home, there are three stages that had been highlighted by al-Ghazali in portraying an individual that possesses a quality of *zuhd*. The first stage is a group of people that only live in the corner of mosque as how did by *ahl suffah*. Second, a special place that satisfy the self-needs such as a rental or bought room. Third, a private room that has only a required space and width. Other than that, al-Ghazali also explained about two stages of home appliances in describing the quality *zuhd*. First, as how owned by Prophet Isa AS that only had a comb and cup for drink. Second, use the multipurpose tools from the rough material (al-Ghazali, 2003).

Besides, al-Ghazali also underlined the stages of *zuhd* towards this life. The first stage is an individual that has no tendency and love for this world and not departed from this world for his view says that this current life is just a temporary stop along this life journey. The second stage is describing a person that abstains himself from pleasures of world and his heart has no love and tendency to its wealth. This is due to the consciousness of this group that the pleasure of this world and the enjoyment of hereafter could not be merged in one stage. Third, someone that have a quality of *zuhd* towards this world but the soul still attached to it. However, in the same time, these individuals try to abstain from the pleasure of this life by concentrating the daily *ibadah* (worshipping) practices. In this matter, this third group does not belong amongst the members of *zuhd* but merely at a preliminary stage in inculcating the quality of *zuhd* and being called as *mutazahhid* (al-Ghazali, 2003).

Based on the aforementioned description by al-Ghazali, it can be comprehended that the quality of *zuhd* towards this world is referring to the action of taking the pleasure and enjoyment of this world solely for satisfying the necessities and convenience in order to live this life. However, this situation does not mean the prohibition to own any wealth or being refuse to own it at all until burdening their life and distracting the sustainability to practice *ibadah* to Allah SWT. It may create a worrying situation where all of the *ibadah* is solely considered to get compliments by certain people (al-Ghazali, 2003).

Conclusion

Zuhd is one of the qualities that extremely being focused in the tasawwuf discipline and being discussed clearly by the prominent Muslim scholars such as al-Ghazali. The demand to beautify the soul with this quality is proven to be a strong justification by the existence of *dalil* in al-Quran and Allah promises that the hereafter life will be beautiful for those that are *zuhd*. By the explanation of those prominent Sufi masters such as Ali bin Abi Ṭalib RA, Abu Idris al-Khawlani RA, Hasan al-Basri, Sufyan al-Thauri, al-Harawi and al-Ghazali on *zuhd*, it can be simplified that this quality is referring to a less-preference of someone towards this worldly life and just treat it in accordance to their basic needs. This is owing to their soul is more focussing on the hereafter life by practicing *ibadah*, charity and obedience to Allah SWT.

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