

Understanding the Hidden Meaning of the Spirituality of Prayer: A Study from Al-Ghazali's Perspective

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Abstract

This research examines the issue of what are the spiritual values in humans according to Al-Ghazali's view. This research aims to find out the hidden meaning of the spirituality of prayer from Al-Ghazali's perspective. Researchers utilize literature to provide an in-depth and comprehensive analysis of this problem. Facts and data are seen in interpreting the meaning of otherworldly petitions, then the information is described, analyzed first, discussed to answer the problem lies in the ability of a worker to complete his request solemnly. Because we can feel the presence of Allah before us truly when we ask who must have the choice to offer his heart, is Tafahhum, Takdzim, Raja', Haibah, and Haya' The impact of prayer for humans is also felt by people who are solemn. Ultimately, people will become more disciplined because they have the impression that Allah is all-powerful and will not waste their time.

Keyword: Al-Ghazali; Prayers; Spirituality

Introduction

Muslims believe that prayer is a form of communication between humans and God (Gimnastiar, 2005). This communication is intended to be sincere before Allah Swt. Additionally, the supplication is expected to affirm the Oneness of Allah, submitting and obeying His commands and prohibitions. In Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), supplication to Allah is marked by various recitations (discourse) and activities that begin with the takbir and are concluded with good news, accompanied by extraordinary needs. This understanding is also highly symbolic, meaning it holds a broad significance for human life, particularly regarding the right to submit (*tha'ah* or obedience) (Khalaf, 2000). And an individual's submission to Allah (Islam). After the first takbir, which signifies the greatness of Allah and is established as the first pillar (*takbiratulihram*), an individual in their supplication is expected to align all of their character and considerations exclusively toward the object of worship,

specifically the Creator of the entire universe, with the attitude of a servant standing before their Master. Therefore, the meaning of prayer for a servant of Allah becomes very significant because the supplication involves three aspects of the human being without a moment's delay: the physical development, the verbal expression, and lastly, the inner spirit, all of which are coordinated toward Him.

Previous research conducted by Akbar and Soleh (2024), titled "Epistemology of Islamic Irfani: A Comparison Between Al-Ghazali and Al-Jabiri," published in *Kutubkhanah: Jurnal Penelitian Sosial Keagamaan*. Highlights the importance of studying Irfani. This topic is crucial so that society does not merely hear the term "Irfani" without understanding its meaning. In this research, the authors attempt to elucidate several understandings of Irfani, particularly focusing on the perspectives of Al-Ghazali and Al-Jabiri, both of whom are significant figures in Irfani thought. The purpose of this study is to provide readers with insights into how Irfani is perceived by both Al-Ghazali and Al-Jabiri. The research method employed is entirely based on a literature review, drawing from primary sources such as books and journals relevant to the topic under discussion. The findings of the study are as follows: 1) Al-Ghazali asserts that spiritual knowledge originates from Allah, while intellectual knowledge is derived from human reason. 2) Al-Jabiri, on the other hand, posits that Irfani is divided into two aspects: in terms of attitude, it involves disregarding worldly matters in favor of focusing on human conditions and tending towards individualism; in theory, this concept is embraced by Islam and is divided into two forms, namely Irfani in *i'tiba* and *qiyas*. These are expressed through *kashf* (unveiling) of what is apparent in the text and are conveyed through *shathahat*, a verbal expression of the omnipotence of God (Akbar & Soleh, 2024).

Committing to supplication for paradise can foster a genuine sense of servitude (*ubudiyah*) to Allah, embodying truth, surrender, and humility before the pure essence of the Almighty. When they pray, they ask for everything from Allah, seeking His guidance in the right direction. A person who is willing to ask and give everything to Him – whether it be light, guidance, mercy, or tranquility – demonstrates a profound devotion (Muhaimin, 1994). Properly conducted supplications have a significant impact on the individual who performs them. The love and compassion expressed in these prayers bring peace, tranquility, and harmony into human life. When tragedy strikes, the heart of a peaceful person will not be shaken or saddened. By diligently offering supplications for paradise within the set limits, it is believed that one will continuously remember Allah (*dhikr*), and thus, in every action and movement, will feel as though they are being observed and focused upon by the All-Knowing, All-Present, and All-Hearing Being. The result is an effort to avoid any behavior that contradicts Islam (Sholikhin, 2011).

Prayer, like any other activity, requires the involvement of both the body and the heart. Even if you perform the prayer five times a day, it cannot be considered meaningful without the "presence" of the heart. Physical activity alone is insufficient to determine the true value of worship. The presence of the "heart" is another sign of the connection between a servant and their Master.

People in today's society should be concerned when they pray only with their bodies, while their souls are absent. As a result, we may become trapped in daily routines of devotion that lack spirit. Humans, being creatures endowed with intellect, must seek life with a full awareness of the essence and purpose of existence, which is to seek the pleasure of Allah Swt. With its influence in strengthening the heart and calming the soul, which underpins the ideals of living this life, love becomes the capital for humans in the afterlife to face challenges (Khalid, 2005).

In every life, there is a primary priority, but small things should not be overlooked because often, great things begin with small actions. It should be emphasized that prayer holds the key to achieving all righteous deeds. The younger generation of Muslims has lately been neglecting prayer and jihad, which are starting to fade away. Today's society seems to have forgotten its ultimate goal, which is to seek His pleasure, due to the many external influences. Nowadays, people view prayer as merely a command, not as a necessity. Sanctifying a symbol of prayer can lead its practitioner towards idolatry, and thus it should not be revered or sanctified (Al-Ghazali, 1999). Like other forms of worship, prayer is a crucial component of Islamic worship. In addition to having its own wisdom in every movement and recitation, prayer has a significant impact on the overall development of a Muslim's personality. Of course, we do not receive these benefits immediately or directly during prayer. The advantages will gradually manifest and become part of the life of a practicing Muslim (Hasan, 2000).

The Creator and His servant can communicate through prayer. Additionally, gratitude for all of God's blessings can always be expressed through this means of communication. Moreover, the feelings of a servant can also be conveyed through prayer. In the study of the mind, there is a concept known as therapy, which essentially means releasing everything pent up inside, both positive and negative. Consequently, prayer has the potential to become a means of release, bringing peace to an individual (Musbikin, 2006).

One of the most influential Islamic thinkers is Imam Al-Ghazali. He was a scholar who sought to expand strict religious knowledge. Al-Ghazali earned the title "Hijjatul Islam" because he successfully integrated doctrine, Sharia, and ethics into Sufism, making it a foundational source of Islam. Many of his works are well-known, one of which is the gem "Ihya' Ulumuddin." He held the belief that prayer essentially consists of reflection, recitation, supplication, and dialogue. This cannot be performed perfectly unless the heart is present, and

elements such as understanding, reverence, fear, hope, and humility are required for its perfection. You will also be able to feel the presence of your heart and experience more fear as your knowledge of Allah increases.

Al-Ghazali presented various religious issues, acts of worship, and moral considerations in his monumental works. In other words, Al-Ghazali enables a person who adheres to Islamic principles and practices to achieve the necessary spiritual dimension for devotion to Allah. Al-Ghazali also stated, "When you hear the call to prayer (adhan), let your heart be present with the fear of the call on the Day of Judgment. Rush with both your outward and inward being to fulfill it. Those who hasten to fulfill this call are the ones who will be called upon gently on the Day of Judgment." He further added, "If you find your heart filled with joy and eager to fulfill it, then similarly, on the Day of Judgment, your soul will find solace in prayer."

A prayer that qualifies as a great supplication to heaven is one that is lightly radiated within the heart. When a servant prays, his actions are respected by ten heavenly messengers. This is because the servant has practiced sitting, standing, bowing, and prostrating. A servant who dedicates himself to God and prays with humility will now gain access to paradise. Al-Ghazali stated that when a person prays, he can demonstrate his gratitude to God. To achieve this, one must first purify the soul with noble moral adornments and worship Allah sincerely, without compulsion (Ghazali, 2002).

The main issue in this study is understanding the hidden meaning of the spirituality of prayer from Al-Ghazali's perspective. The research question posed in this study is how to understand the hidden meaning of the spirituality of prayer from Al-Ghazali's perspective. The objective of this study is to comprehend the hidden meaning of the spirituality of prayer from Al-Ghazali's perspective. Theoretically, this research is beneficial in contributing to the literature on the spirituality of prayer from Al-Ghazali's perspective. Practically, this research provides understanding for the community to always perform prayers on time.

Research Methodology

This research employs a qualitative method with a literature review approach. The literature review involves examining sources related to spirituality in prayer, including journal articles, books, and other relevant sources. The data collection technique includes gathering both primary and secondary data. Primary data consists of relevant works by Al-Ghazali, while secondary data includes journal articles and other sources related to the research topic. Once the data is collected, it is processed and analyzed using a qualitative descriptive approach with a focus on Sufism.

Result and Discussion

1. The Life History of Al-Ghazali

Due to the vast number of ideas contributed by Al-Ghazali, both in classical and modern times, he is considered one of the most famous figures in Islamic thought (Sholihin, 2001). He was given the title "Al-Hujjatul al-Islam" (the proof of Islam), a name bestowed upon this great Islamic thinker in the 5th century Hijri. His ideas often became the subject of debate and criticism. His full name is Muhammad bin Muhammad bin Ahmad Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali, according to some sources (Mustofa, 2004) However, others believe his name to be Abu Hamid Muhammad Wadah Muhammad Wadah Muhammad Al-Ghazali Ath-Thusi An-Naysaburi Al Faqih Puing Shufi Asy-Syafi'i Al-Asy'ari. The name Al-Ghazali is the one most commonly associated with him, although he also used several other names.

Al-Ghazali was born in Ghazaleh, a town near Tus, Khurasan, in 450 H/1058 CE. According to different sources, he was born in a small town near Tus in Khurasan, which was one of the centers of knowledge and part of the Baghdad region under the Seljuk dynasty. He was given the name Al-Ghazali because his father was a wool weaver (ghazzal), and he came from a devout family that lived a simple life. His father passed away when he and his younger brother Ahmad were still children. A Sufi friend took care of them after their father left them with a small amount of money. Ahmad, his younger brother, was his father's hope that they would receive guidance and education. His father advised that Al-Ghazali and his siblings attend a madrasa to seek knowledge and support themselves when their caretaker could no longer provide for them.

2. Definition of Spiritua

The terms 'spirituality' and 'spiritualism' come from the Latin words 'spiritus', meaning 'breath', and 'spirare', meaning 'to breathe', since 'to live' comes from 'to breathe' and 'to breathe' means 'to have a spirit'. The term 'spirit' has two meanings in spirituality and religion. Firstly, the main foundation of spiritual beliefs is the nature and essence of the human soul, each of which is interconnected with one another. The 'spirit' is the deepest part of the soul, and 'spirit' is used to communicate with God or connect humans to Him. Secondly, it alludes to the idea that each interconnected 'Spirit' is important for greater solidarity.

As per the reference of Kata Besar Bahasa Indonesia, worldliness is connected to ruh (deep, inner), worldliness is self-awakening or enlightenment in achieving the purpose and importance of life and is the most important part of one's general wellbeing and well-being. Otherworldliness is that which is connected to the soul. Otherworldliness has an eternal reality that relates to the motivations behind human existence, often contrasted with the mundane and temporary. Spirituality is a form of habluminallah or man's relationship with God through prayer, fasting, zakat, hajj, and other acts of worship. In general,

spirituality refers to spiritual life, which can be seen in the way a person thinks, feels, prays, and works.

The term 'soul' is used to describe spirituality in Sufism. Some scholars of Sufism argue that 'soul' refers to 'spirit'. Having merged with the body, the union of the soul with the body gives rise to the effects that the body has on the soul. Since the soul is the subject of 'spiritual' activity, so too. To fulfil one's need for God, one must unite one's spirit and soul. To reflect the attributes of God requires the release of the spirit, so that the spirit can provide balance in uniting the soul (Hawa, 1995).

3. Definition of Shalat

Term "shalat" is derived from Arabic, which means "to pray." According to Islamic law, supplicating to Heaven involves specific words and actions, starting with the Takbiratul Ihram and ending with expressions of glad tidings. The words in question include Quranic recitations, Takbir, supplications for Heaven, and other requests. Activities related to prayer involve movements such as standing, bowing (*ruku'*), prostrating (*sujud*), sitting, and other actions performed during prayer (Sunarto, 2001).

Hasbi Ash-Shiddieqy states that prayer involves having faith in Allah with all one's heart, being devout in His presence, being sincere, and engaging the heart fully in prayer, remembrance, and praise. This represents the spirit or essence of a sincere supplication, and supplicating for Heaven is not recommended for its outward appearance but rather for its inner essence (soul). The term *khushu'* semantically derives from the Arabic root *khasha'a-yakhsha'u-khushu'an* or *ikhta* and *takhasysya'a*, which means to focus one's gaze downward and close one's eyes or speak with a softer tone while praying.

Phonetically, *khushu'* also means humility and bowing, simplicity and quietness, modesty and obedience, seriousness, attentiveness, and certainty, or heartfelt attentiveness. *Khushu'* can manifest through sight, body, and voice. These three aspects are signs (indicators) of an individual's devotion in supplication. According to its definition, *khushu'* is a state of calm and humble soul. When *khushu'* is present in the heart, its effect will radiate throughout the body. Meanwhile, according to A., perfecting the beauty of outward appearance and filling it with the presence of the heart, consciousness, and understanding of all expressions of the outward appearance, *khushu'* is intentionality, sincerity, and submission both outwardly and inwardly (Ash-Shiddieqy, 1999).

When praying, believers are commanded by Allah to face the qibla. To be accepted by Allah after committing sins and displeasing Him, one must express the true contents of their heart when standing before Him. Praying to God is one way of communicating to feel close to the Creator. A servant who prays will be protected by Him, and their prayers will be heard. From

various interpretations of supplicating for paradise understood by scholars, it can be concluded that supplication is a form of love that should be practiced by Muslims who are content with their current state. Furthermore, words and actions in prayer are used to demonstrate humility and to draw closer to the Creator. In performing worship, a worker should also be pious with sincerity and honesty, which means being devout only to Allah and not to others, as no act of worship is accepted except with genuine devotion solely for Him and there is no partner with Him.

4. Al-Ghazali's Perspective on Understanding Prayer

Here we will explore the relationship between prayer and *khushu'* (presence of heart). *Khushu'* originates from the Arabic word *khasha'a*, which means to bow down. Some also interpret *khushu'* as remaining calm, humble, and silent. The word *khudu'*, which means "to bow," has a similar meaning to *khushu'*, but it specifically refers to physical behavior. On the other hand, *khushu'* encompasses the heart, voice, sight, and all bodily organs. It governs the individual's emotions, with fear closely related to the concept of *khushu'*. According to Islamic law, *khushu'* is a state of the heart that is calm, gentle, and functions to avoid base desires originating from animalistic instincts. It is also interpreted as a form of humility before Allah, removing traits of arrogance, self-centeredness, and pride. A servant should approach Allah with their entire heart, performing only what He commands and avoiding any actions that contradict His will.

"Presence of heart (*khushu'*) is the essence of prayer; it must at least be present during *takbiratul ihram*," according to Imam Al-Ghazali's perspective on *khushu'*. A person who is negligent throughout their prayer cannot remember their Lord; anything less than this is considered a flaw. The more serious one is, the more their soul is enhanced in their supplication. Just as a living body that cannot move resembles a corpse, so does a negligent prayer partner. Although they may appear alive, they are essentially dead—alive in body but dead in heart (Al-Ghazali, 2008).

According to Imam Al-Ghazali, the inner meaning of supplication to Allah is very broad, but it can be summarized in six key statements: a). Presence of Heart (*Hudhurul-qalb*), this refers to the heart's presence with Allah or the feeling that Allah is right before us. A worshiper who seeks to reach this level in prayer must discard all distractions other than what is being completed or recited during the prayer.

b). *Tafahhum*, This is the process of understanding from top to bottom the meanings contained in an explanation. People have different levels of understanding regarding the implications of the Quran and supplications to Allah. The extent of beautiful and subtle meanings that one can grasp during prayer may not have been previously considered. Hence, prayer is seen as a means to prevent wicked and immoral behavior. A worshiper

making supplications must be able to comprehend what is being said during prayer. For instance, when reciting Surah Al-Fatihah, one should understand the significance of the surah. In this way, we draw closer to Allah.

c). *A'zhim*, This denotes magnification and attentiveness. During prayer, a servant shows respect and reverence towards Allah, the Creator. d). *Haibah*, This is a mentality that transcends *ta'zhim* (magnification). It reflects a state of fear greater than the fear of wild animals. This kind of anxiety is directed towards Allah. Thus, for humans to recognize their error, they should experience this fear during their prayers. e). *Raja'* or Hope. Many people praise a ruler, fear him, and stress over his discipline, yet they do not expect rewards. Conversely, a servant of Allah who prays anticipates rewards from Allah for their supplications and fears His discipline due to their negligence. f). *Haya'* or Modesty. This is a tendency that encompasses the aforementioned sentiments. It originates from the heart's awareness of its shortcomings and the awareness of having committed a wrong. Generally, there can be *ta'zhim* (magnification), fear, and trust, but without a sense of shame, or at the very least, without recognizing or acknowledging one's mistakes or sins.

The presence of the heart is the most significant of these six aspects. With the presence of the heart in supplication, a person will genuinely desire to feel close to Allah. By practicing these six aspects, individuals will realize the importance of spirituality. When we pray, we not only feel *khushu'* (reverence) but also as if Allah is present and standing before us.

5. The Influence of Prayer on Humans According to Al-Ghazali

When a Muslim performs prayer perfectly, sincerely, and correctly in its practice, the prayer will influence the state of the human soul. A worshiper who prays with intensity will experience several impacts, including: First, focus on time and divine attention. Through prayer, a person becomes focused on their time and feels observed by Allah. Second, *Tawadhu'*, During prostration, the head and feet are aligned, and all worshipers are on the same level, as only Allah deserves true honor. Third, Those who pray sincerely will be kept away from engaging in reprehensible behaviors until their next prayer. Fourth, Prayer brings calmness, serenity, and harmony into human life (Ghazali, 2002)

After discussing the importance of prayer and the meanings of its movements and recitations, it is advisable for people to start transforming their prayer practices. Previously, they may have only focused on understanding the conditions and pillars of prayer. Now, they should deepen their understanding of its meaning to ensure that their prayers are not in vain. Since prayer has a significant impact on oneself, one's environment, and personal character, a prayer performed with enthusiasm and perfection will not be futile. A prayer performed with humility can

positively affect oneself, making a person feel better, maintain discipline with their time, and utilize the time given to them effectively. Humble prayer fosters harmonious living among people and prevents envy, as one will believe that what Allah provides is sufficient. Lastly, in terms of ethics, a prayer performed without blemish will significantly impact one's moral conduct, as an individual's evaluation is based on honorable ethics.

As previously mentioned, prayer can prevent a person from committing evil deeds. The impact of supplicating to Allah is profound. One should never neglect prayer because the past cannot be recreated.

Conclusion

According to Al-Ghazali, prayer is about establishing a connection between a servant and their Lord when the servant prays with full sincerity. Six key elements that indicate sincerity in prayer include the servant's ability to embody *hudhurul-qalb* (presence of heart), *tafahum* (understanding), *ta'zim* (reverence), *haibah* (awe), *raja'* (hope), and *haya'* (shyness) during supplication. Al-Ghazali asserts that through these six elements, one can attain spiritual values through prayer. He claims that prayer has four effects on humans. First, prayer makes a person disciplined with their time and prevents the squandering of precious blessings, as they always feel observed by Allah. Second, during prostration, the head and feet are aligned, showing that everyone is equal in prayer, with only Allah deserving true honor. Third, a person who prays sincerely will be protected from committing sinful actions until their next prayer. Fourth, prayer brings harmony, tranquility, and peace into human life. The hope is that by reading this article, people will gain a deeper understanding of the meanings of prayer recitations, ensuring that their supplications are not in vain.

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