

A PURIFICATION OF SOUL ACCORDING TO SUFIS: A STUDY OF AL-GHAZĀLĪ'S THEORY

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Abstrak

Artikel ini membincangkan secara ringkas tentang teori tadhkiyyah al-nafs (penyucian jiwa) yang diutarakan oleh ahli Sufi bermula daripada zaman awal perkembangan sehingga ke zaman Imām al-Ghazālī (m. 505/1111). Ia bertujuan memaparkan idea-idea ahli Sufi tersebut mengenai metode penyucian jiwa serta cuba melihat persamaan dan perbezaan dalam praktikal kerohanian bagi mencapai tujuan perjalanan kesufian mereka. Walaubagaimana pun, penekanan yang lebih diberikan kepada metode penyucian jiwa yang dikemukakan oleh Imām al-Ghazālī dalam karyanya Jāmi' al-Ḥaqā'iq bi Tajrīd al-'Alā'iq.

Introduction

Until nowadays, many books have been published on the spiritual life in Islam, especially concerning Sufism. Each of them has touched a different facet, because the phenomenon of Sufism is so wide and its appearance so variable, so that nobody can venture to describe it fully.¹ Since Sufism is to be very large extent built upon

¹ Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1975, p. 3.

the principle of the disciple's initiation, the different methods of spiritual education, the exercises practiced in the Sufi orders, the psychological phases of the progress, the formation of orders, and their sociological and cultural role are rewarding fields of research.² In this article, the writer resolved to undertake an analysis of the most popular theory in Sufis discipline i.e. the purification of soul (*tadhkiyyah al-nafs*). Yet, the subject is too large to be treated adequately in a few pages, so that the following analysis will only discuss the theory proposed by several eminent and distinguished Sufis who lived in different phase of the development of Sufism. This article attempts to briefly show similarities and differences points of view between those Sufis on the theory of purification of soul.

Tadhkiyyah Al-Nafs

A discussed on the purification of soul is normally closely to morality. Morality according to the Holy Qur'an is conscientious action in accordance with the Moral Law (*akhlāq*). But conscientious action is not possible without the possession of purity of motive by the moral agent, which in its turn necessitates a continuous psychological effort, named in Islamic terminology as *tadhkiyyah*.³ Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

By the soul and the proportion and order given to it and its enlightenment as to its wrong and its right: - truly he succeeds [in his spiritual moral struggle] who subjects it successfully to *tadhkiyyah* and he fails who corrupts it.⁴

Literally, the word *tadhkiyyah* means the removal of undesirable growths and impurities.⁵ As a spiritual-moral term, it denotes

² Annemarie Schimmel, *op.cit.*, p. 7.

³ F. R. Ansari, "Tazkiyah: The Role of the Prophet", *Islamic Order*, Vol. 5, No. 4, 1983, p. 11.

⁴ 91: 7-10.

⁵ F. R. Ansari, *op.cit.*, p. 11.

the self-imposed effort of moral agent for eradicating those tendencies within the human self, which form obstacles in the path of moral development.⁶ Thus, it can be understood that the eradication consisting in resolving the conflict between good and evil that rages in human soul.

The Holy Qur'an affirms the existence of two aspects of human nature, i.e. *al-Nafs al-'Ammārah* (the Impelling of Carnal Self) and *al-Nafs al-Lawwāmah* (the Reproaching of Moral Self) and the conflict that occurs between them. Therefore, it affirms that the situation of conflict has to be resolved through discarding the behests of the *al-Nafs al-'Ammārah* at the instance of *al-Nafs al-Lawwāmah*, thereby enabling the self to transform into *al-Nafs al-Muṭma'innah*. It is through undertaking this kind of process that an individual can achieve the *tadhkiyyah al-nafs* as what has been said in the Holy Qur'an:

Assuredly Allah has shown grace to the Believers when He raised up unto them a Messenger from among themselves, who rehearses unto them His Signs, purifies them [of spiritual and moral evils] and teaches them the Scripture and the Wisdom, although afore they were in flagrant error. (3: 164)

Sufis and *Tadhkiyyah Al-Nafs*

Usually, the Sufis have spoken of the threefold meaning of *taṣawwuf* according to the *shari'ah*, the Muslim law; the *ṭariqah*, the mystical path; and the *ḥaqīqah*, the truth. Indeed, all the meanings involves purification and they regard that it is a purification on different levels, firstly, from the lower qualities and the turpitude of the soul, then secondly, from the bondage of human qualities, and eventually a purification and election on the level of attributes.⁷ Generally, the aims of all the Sufis are essentially the

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj, *Kitāb al-Luma' fī al-Taṣawwuf*, (ed.) R.A. Nicholson, Leiden and London, 1914, pp. 27-28; Annemarie Schimmel, *op.cit.*, p. 16.

same. In fact, the quintessence of the long history of Sufism is to state anew, in different formulation, the overwhelming truth that "there is no deity but Allah" and also to realize that He alone can be the object of worship. According to A. Schimmel the history of Sufism is really a chart showing some of the stations and states on this path of interpretation, some of the forms in which this reality was expressed, some of the different ways in which the Sufis tried to reach their goal through gnosis or through love, by means of asceticism or through practices leading to ecstatic rapture.⁸

Many scholars particularly those who support Sufism as one of the disciplines of knowledge in Islam, agree that the Prophet Muḥammad (p.b.u.h.) was a Sufi throughout his sojourn as a Prophet.⁹ The way of his life is followed by his companions and their successors who is said as to develop a detailed of spiritual ascetics. Almost all earliest figures seem pronouncedly ascetical as Ibn Khaldūn writes in his *Muqaddimah*:

The Sufis came to represent asceticism, retirement from the world and devotion to divine worship. Then, they developed a particular kind of perception, which comes about through ecstatic experience.¹⁰

And al-Qushayrī gives details about them as he writes:

Those who were most deeply concerned with matters of

⁸ Annemarie Schimmel, *op.cit.*, pp. 23-24.

⁹ Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb-i Kīmīyā-yi Sa'ādāt*, (ed.), Ahmad Aram, Tehran, 1955, p. 280; Duncan B. Macdonald, *Development of Muslim Theology, Jurisprudence and Constitutional Theory*, New York, 1903, p. 227; Henry Corbin, *History of Islamic Philosophy*, (tr.), Liadain Sherrard with the assistance of Phillip Sherrard, London, 1993, pp. 187-188; Che Zarrina Sa'ari, "An Analytical study of Rise and Development of Sufism: From Islamic Asceticism to Islamic Mysticism", *Journal of Usuluddin*, vol. 10, December 1999, p. 23.

¹⁰ Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah, An Introduction to History*, (tr.) Franz Rosenthal, Vol. 3, London, 1958, p. 76; cf. E. G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, Vol. 1, London, 1902, pp. 297-298; D. L. O'leary, *Arabic Thought and Its Place in History*, London, 1954, p. 191.

religion objected to all indulgence, which could entangle the soul and avoided luxury and ostentation.¹¹

As a result, the theory of *tadhkiyyah al-nafs* by these early Sufis is shown by their way of life. The ascetics figure at that time commonly discussed issues such as the value of celibacy, poverty and retreat. Their lives were marked by fear of Allāh, fear of heedlessness, temptation, sin and other things, repentance, abstinence, yearning for paradise, practicing doctrine of love of Allāh and etc.¹² Among those eminent Sufis figure were al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/738), Mālik ibn Dīnār (d. 131/748), Ibrāhīm ibn Adham (d. 161/779), Rābī'ah al-'Adawiyah (d. 169/787), Dāwūd al-Ṭā'ī (d. 165/783), al-Fuḍayl ibn al-'Iyāḍ (187/803), Shaqīq al-Balkhī (d. 194/810) and many others.¹³

Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, for an example, was deeply steeped in the sadness and fear. His fear of the Day of Judgment and his scrupulosity are reflected in many sayings of his contemporaries or later Sufis. He and the ascetics who followed him especially those who came from Basrah and its environment are seen to have tendencies almost exclusively devotional and lacked any interest in speculative thought. On the contrary with the growing luxury of life, the men and women of these groups advocated strict renunciation of the world and what was in it. They also were known as *bakkā'ūn* (those who constantly weep) for the miserable state of the world and the meditation of their own shortcomings. All these matters made them cry in hope of divine help and forgiveness.¹⁴

It seem that their way of *tadhkiyyah al-nafs* is more reliable on the concept of asceticism together with the doctrines such as fear,

¹¹ Al-Qushayrī, *al-Risālah al-Qushayriyyah*, Cairo, 1867, p. 25; Che Zarrina Sa'ari, (Dec. 1999), *op.cit.*, p. 23.

¹² Martin Lings, *What is Sufism?*, Cambridge, 1975, pp. 104-106; L. M. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, Cambridge, 1988, pp. 109f; Che Zarrina Sa'ari (Dec. 1999), *op.cit.*, p. 23.

¹³ Che Zarrina Sa'ari (Dec. 1999), *op.cit.*, p. 23.

¹⁴ 'Abd al-Rahmān Jāmī, *Nafahāt al-Uns*, (ed.) Tawhīdīpūr, Tehran, 1957, p. 299; Annemarie Schimmel, *op.cit.*, p. 31.

love, weeping, poverty, stations and states and so on which they developed, whether individually or collectively.

By the early fourth century A.H./tenth century A.D., the development of Sufism was grounded in philosophical and metaphysical conceptions of God's being.¹⁵ The Sufis combined ascetic renunciation with the spiritual development leading toward union with God.¹⁶ They talked about longing, gnosis, annihilation, eternity, passionate love and etc.. Among them who live in this period were al-Ḥusayn al-Nūrī (d. 295/907-908), al-Junayd al-Baghdādī (d. 298/910), al-Ḥallāj (d. 309/915), al-Ḥākim al-Tirmīdhī (d. between 255-320 / 874-939), al-Kalābādhi (d. 371/990) and many others.¹⁷

In order to elucidate their views on mystical path including *tadhkiyyah al-naḥs*, many of them discussed about *naḥs*, *rūḥ*, *ʿaql* and *qalb*. Al-Junayd al-Baghdādī, for an example was one of them who is believed to inherit treatises which one of them namely *Kitāb Dawā' al-Arwāḥ*. A. J. Arberry who translated and reviewed this treatise writes his synopsis as follows:

The present opuscle is in reality a meditation on the theme of the vision, or perhaps more properly, the knowledge of God. The author takes a handful of Qur'anic passages in which God is spoken of as appearing – to Muḥammad, or to Moses – and by applying the principle of *istinbāt* indicates their significance for the Sufi in his dealings with God. He concludes with a meditation on the familiar theme, "the true sufi".¹⁸

¹⁵ John Obert Voll, *Islam Continuity and Change in the Modern World*, London, 1982, p. 136; A.M.M. Mackeen, *The Sufi Qawn Movement*, London, 1963, p. 217; Qāsim Ghānī, *Tārīkh al-Taṣawwuf fī al-Islām*, (tr.) Ṣādiq Nash'ah, Cairo, 1970, pp. 71, 81; Che Zarrina Sa'ari, (Dec. 1999), *op.cit.*, p. 32.

¹⁶ L.M. Lapidus, *op.cit.*, p. 115.

¹⁷ Che Zarrina Sa'ari, (Dec. 1999), *op.cit.*, pp. 32-37.

¹⁸ A.J. Arberry, "The Book of the Cure of Souls", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, London, July 1937, p. 332.

Whereas, another prominent Sufi figures, al-Ḥākim al-Tirmīdhī also wrote about a Sufi psychological treatise, namely, *Bayān al-Farq Bayn al-Ṣadr wa al-Qalb wa al-Fu'ād wa al-Lubb*. In this treatise, he is primarily concerned with a description of the heart (*qalb*) and the human nature (*nafs*). He suggests that through discipline (*riyāḍah*), *nafs*, which he considers as full of evil desires and passion, can be brought under control in order to achieve the Sufis goal.¹⁹

It seem that the Sufis method of *tadhkiyyah al-nafs* in this period is more reliable on the discussion on concept of *nafs*, *rūḥ*, *qalb* and *'aql* together with the philosophical and metaphysical doctrines such as longing, gnosis, annihilation, eternity, passionate love and so on which they developed during their mystical journey.

In the fifth century A.H./eleventh century A.D., the Sufis made more efforts to compose books of Sufism to discuss different issues. Some of them wrote on the laws governing asceticism and self-scrutiny, how to act and not act in imitation of model (saints), some others wrote on the behavior of Sufis and their different kinds of mystical and ecstatic experience in states and so forth.²⁰ Among those who lived in this period were al-Sulamī (d. 410/1028), al-Isfahānī (d. 419/1037), al-Qushayrī (d. 456/1074), al-Ghazālī and many others. However, only al-Ghazālī's theory of *tadhkiyyah al-nafs* in his *Jāmi' al-Ḥaqā'iq bi Tajrīd al-Alā'iq*²¹ be dealt.

¹⁹ Nicholas Heer, "A Sufi Psychological Treatise", *The Muslim World*, Vol. 51, 1961, p. 25-26; cf. Muhammad Ibrahim al-Geyoushi, "Al-Tirmidhi's Conception of the Struggle Between *Qalb* and *Nafs*, Reason and Gnosis, Carnal Soul and Appetite", *Islamic Quarterly*, Vol. 24, July-Dec. 1974, pp. 3-14.

²⁰ Ibn Khaldun, *op.cit.*, p. 80; Che Zarrina Sa'ari, (Dec. 1999), *op.cit.*, pp. 38-39.

²¹ There are several manuscripts and two published editions of this work. It is numbered No. 24 in *GAL* by Brockelmann, Supplementbande, Leiden, 1937, Vol. 1, 422, p. 748, and No. 3898 in *Kashf al-Zunūn 'An Asmā' Kutub wa al-Funūn*, Vol. 2, by Ḥājji Khalifah, Istanbul, 1835-1858, p. 510. The latter mentions it as only "*Jāmi' al-Ḥaqā'iq*". According to C.J. Tornberg, *Ara-bic, Persian and Turkish Manuscripts of the Library of the University of*

Al-Ghazālī and *Tadhkiyyah Al-Nafs*

Abū Ḥamid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ṭūsī al-Ghazālī who is the greatest Sufi figure of the sixth century A.H./eleven century A.D. discussed the *tadhkiyyah al-nafs* in many of his works. He offered different theories of *tadhkiyyah al-nafs* in different work. However, this article will only emphasize on the theory that is discussed in his *Jāmi' al-Ḥaqā'iq bi Tajrīd al-'Alā'iq*.

Al-Ghazālī in the above mention work explains the means of arriving at the stations (*al-maqāmāt*) which should be practiced by the disciple who wants to arrive at such stations like love, longing etc.. Such spiritual exercises are divided into three phases as he writes:

Know that arrival at the stations (*al-wuṣūl ilā al-maqāmāt*) cannot be attained except by purification of the [human] nature (*nafs*), cleansing of the heart and embellishment of the soul (*rūḥ*). The essential purpose (*al-maqṣūd bi al-dhāt*) is the embellishment of the soul (*rūḥ*). Its embellishment cannot be attained except by cleansing of the heart, and its cleansing cannot be attained except by purification of the [human] nature (*nafs*) and purification is a necessary preliminary.²²

Uppsala, Uppssala, 1849, p. 262, a manuscript of it can be found in Uppsala, No. 402.

²² Al-Ghazālī, *Jāmi' al-Ḥaqā'iq bi Tajrīd al-'Alā'iq*, (ed.) M. J. Casas y Manrique, Uppsala, 1937, p. 16; Che Zarrina Sa'ari, "A Study of Some Work of Sufism Commonly Attributed to al-Ghazālī", Unpublished PhD thesis at Edinburgh University, 1998, p. 183. The translation of *nafs* as "human nature" because it is felt that this term is a better means of expressing what al-Ghazālī meant by *nafs* when generally used by him. The term *rūḥ*, which is closely associated in meaning with "spirit" and "breath" is clearly meant to be "the soul" in the work (*Jāmi' al-Ḥaqā'iq bi Tajrīd al-'Alā'iq*) and it is translated as such except in cases where it means "the breath of Allah" or "the spirit from Allah which gives command" (*al-rūḥ al-amrī*).

Al-Ghazālī begins his theory with the purification of the human nature (*nafs*). In this regard, he follows other Sufi figures such as Abū Tālib al-Makki²³ by mentioning that the “*nafs* is a lustful force connected to the whole body jointly and is the place of origin of the blameworthy characteristics. Its purification is a clearance of all blameworthy characteristics and it’s taking on the attributes of the praiseworthy characteristics”.²⁴

From the description of the *nafs*, it appears that al-Ghazālī accepts the theory of the faculties of the *nafs*, which are two in number. He refers to its first faculty as lower desire (*hawā*)²⁵ and the second faculty as anger (*ghaḍab*).²⁶ He remarks that the purification of these faculties is necessary and it can only be achieved by their equilibrium as he says:

Know that *nafs* has two intrinsic qualities, which are lower desire (*hawā*’) and anger (*ghaḍab*), and all the blameworthy characteristics are begotten from them. Its purification can be achieved by their equilibrium.²⁷

²³ Abū Tālib al-Makki in his *Qūt al-Qulūb* calls the *nafs* the treasure of evil (*khizānah al-Sharr*) and also the house of the Devil. (*Qūt al-Qulūb*), Cairo, 1960, Vol. 2, p. 251; al-Qushayrī, *op.cit.*, p. 23; Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj, *al-Luma*’, (eds.) ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd and Ṭahā ‘Abd al-Bāqī Surūr, Cairo, 1960, p. 51; al-Hujwiri, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, (tr.) R.A. Nicholson, *The Kashf al-Maḥjūb: The Oldest Persian Treatise on Sufism*, New Delhi, 1991, p. 33.)

²⁴ Al-Ghazālī, *Jāmi*’, *op.cit.*, p. 17.

²⁵ However, al-Ghazālī in his *Iḥyā*’ refers to the first faculty as the faculty of desire (*shahwah*). Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā*’, Vol. 3, p. 55.

²⁶ Otherwise, in his discussion on the faculties of *nafs*, al-Ghazālī often referred the two faculties, i.e. lust (*shahwah*) and anger (*ghaḍab*), which are taken jointly as lower desire (*hawā*). He believes that they are faculties of the animal soul. (al-Ghazālī, *Mi’yār al-‘Ilm fī Fann al-Manṭiq*, Beirut, 1982, pp. 55-56) Although these faculties are created in man for his benefit, he remarks that they also the sources of evil in man which are regarded as the touch of evil, i.e. every act to which they are inclined must be regarded as evil. (al-Ghazālī, *Kīmīyā-yī Sa’ādāt*, pp. 10, 624-625; cf. M. Abul Quasem, *The Ethics of al-Ghazālī: A Composite Ethics in Islam*, Selangor, 1975, p. 50).

²⁷ *Op.cit.*

To describe this theory of purification of the *nafs*, al-Ghazālī divides the *nafs* into two: moderate and excessive.²⁸ He explains that when lower desire is excessive, it will produce the quality of lust (*shahwah*), covetousness (*hirs*), expectation (*amal*), vileness (*khiṣṣah*), baseness (*danā'ah*), avarice (*bukhl*), cowardice (*jubn*), back-biting (*ghībah*) and calumny (*buhtān*).²⁹ Otherwise when the faculty of lower desire is successfully moderate, many praiseworthy characteristics will appear in the *nafs* such as modesty (*jūd*), generosity (*sakhāwah*), love (*maḥabbah*), compassion (*shafaqah*), respect (*ta'ẓīm*) and patience (*ṣabr*).³⁰

Furthermore, al-Ghazālī explains that when the faculty of anger is excessive, it will produce arrogance (*takabbur*), antagonism (*'adāwah*), rage (*ḥiddah*), vanity (*'ujub*), pride (*fakhr*), conceit (*khuyālā'*) and lying (*kadhb*). He also elaborates that if the faculty of anger able to act, it will produce rancor (*ḥiqd*) and if it is unable to do so, it will produce the quality of weakness (*'ajz*) and idleness (*kasl*).³¹ Therefore he says that when the faculty of anger is moderate, the praiseworthy characteristics will appear in the *nafs* such as humbleness (*tawaddū'*), gentleness (*ḥilm*), sense of honor (*murūwah*), contentment (*qanā'ah*), courage (*shajā'ah*), generosity (*badhl*) and affection (*ithār*).³²

For this phase, al-Ghazālī emphasizes man to purify his *nafs* until he achieves this kind of moderation of these faculties, which he names it as equilibrium (*i'tidāl*).

²⁸ On the other hand, al-Ghazālī in his *Ihyā'*, divides it into three: moderate, excessive and defective. Al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 3, pp. 54-55. T. J. Winter, *Al-Ghazālī on Disciplining the Soul (Kitāb Riyaḍāt al-Nafs) and on Breaking the Two Desires (Kitāb Kasr al-Shahwatayn). Book XXII and XXIII of the Revival of the Religious Sciences (Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn)*, translated with an Introduction and Notes, Cambridge, 1995, pp. 20-22.

²⁹ Al-Ghazālī, *Jāmi'*, pp. 17-18.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 18.

Al-Ghazālī then says that after the purification of the *nafs* is achieved, man should busy himself with cleansing the heart (*qalb*), which he describes as being able to ruin the whole body when it, i.e. the heart is ruined. Al-Ghazālī cites the popular Tradition from the Prophet (p.b.u.h.):

Truly, in the body is a chunk of meat, when it is good, the whole body will be good by it, and when it is ruined, the whole body will be ruined by it, indeed it is the heart, a chunk of meat suspended beneath the chest to the left side.³³

He says:

Know that the *qalb* can have rightness and wrongness; its rightness is in its purity and its wrongness is in its turbidity. Its purity is in the soundness of its senses and its turbidity is in the deficiency of its senses. When the senses are sound, the heart will be sound.³⁴

Like other Sufi masters, al-Ghazālī regards the *qalb* as being like a mirror, which grows rusty like iron. He quotes the tradition from the Apostle of Allah (p.b.u.h.):

Qalb become rusty as iron becomes rusty. It was said: "With what can it be polished, O Apostle of Allāh?. He said: "The remembrance of Allah Most High and the recitation of the Qur'an"³⁵

Such a *qalb*, he suggests may be polished by struggling against desires, acquiring good characteristics, seclusion, solitude and continually remembering (*dhikr*) Allah.³⁶ Through polishing the *qalb*,

³³ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, "Kitāb al-Imān", Vol. 1, Beirut, 1981, p. 42; al-Dārimī, *Sunan*, "Kitāb al-Buyū", Vol. 2, Beirut, t.t., p. 169.

³⁴ Al-Ghazālī, *Jāmi'*, p. 19.

³⁵ Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, Vol. 3, Beirut, t.t., p. 82.

³⁶ Al-Ghazālī, *Jāmi'*, p. 21; see also *idem*, *Iḥyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 12; R. J. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment: An Annotated Translation of al-Ghazālī's al-Munqīdh min al-Da'āl and Other Relevant Works of al-Ghazālī*

al-Ghazālī says that the *qalb* will manifest “vision of lights (*mushāhadat al-anwār*), unveilings (*mukāshafāt*) of the unseen and manifestation of divinity (*al-tajalliyyāt al-rubūbiyyah*), commensurate with the stations (*maqāmāt*) and the states (*aḥwāl*)”.³⁷

Al-Ghazālī also mentions that the *qalb* have five senses like the senses of the body, which should be purified in order to achieve the sound *qalb*. He explains such senses as follows:

It has hearing to hear the speech of the people of the unseen world; it has eyesight to see glimpses of the unseen world; it has a sense of smell to smell the scent of the unseen world; it has taste to find thereby by sweetness of love; it has touch to understand rational concept. When its senses are sound, its soundness will be obtained, and when soundness is obtained, the soundness of the *qalb* will be obtained. When its senses are unsound, the *qalb* will be unsound and the rest of the body will be unsound because of it.³⁸

In this contact, al-Ghazālī quotes two Qur’anic verses as an evident for his theory as follows:³⁹

Many of the jinns and men we have made for Hell, they have hearts wherewith they understand not, eyes wherewith they see not and ears wherewith they hear not. They are like cattle, nay more misguided: for they are heedless [of warning]. (7:179)

It is not their eyes that are blind, but their hearts, which are in the chests. (22:46)

Boston, 1980, Appendix V, p. 378, sec. 43; T. J. Winter, *op.cit.*, p. 237; cf. al-Muḥāsibī, *Ri’āyah li Ḥuqūq Allāh*, (ed.) ‘Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad ‘Aṭā, Cairo, 1970, p. 54; Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī, *Awārif al-Ma’ārif*, Beirut, 1983, p. 106.

³⁷ Al-Ghazālī, *Jami*’, p. 21.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

In the *Jāmi'*, al-Ghazālī also states that, "the *qalb* has seven phases just as the body has seven organs", i.e. the "chest" (*ṣadr*), the "outer heart" (*qalb*), the "pericardium" (*shaghaf*), the "inner heart" (*fu'ād*), the "grain of the heart" (*ḥabbat al-qalb*), the "in-most heart" (*suwaydā' al-qalb*) and the "core of the heart" (*muhjat al-qalb*). He uses the terms "*ma'dan*" (source) and "*maḥall*" (center) to show the activities of each phase and he supports each activity with evidences from Qur'anic verses.

Al-Ghazālī elaborates that *ṣadr*⁴⁰ is the source of Islam as Allāh Most High said: "Is one whose heart Allāh has opened to Islam, so that he has received enlightenment from Allāh." (39:22) And he says that if the *ṣadr* is not attributed with the characteristics of Islam, it is the source of unbelief and a center of devilish insinuations and the seduction of the soul, as Allāh Most High said: "Such as open their breast to unbelief, on them is wrath from Allāh". (16:106) And He said: "[The same] who whispers into the chests of mankind among jinns." (114:5)⁴¹

Whereas the second phase which is regarded as the 'outer heart' (*qalb*),⁴² is considered by al-Ghazālī as the source of faith as Allāh Most High said: "For such He has written faith in their hearts (*qulūb*)." (58:22). Beside that, he also considers it as the center of the light of the intellect and the center of vision (*ru'yah*), as Allāh Most High said: "So that their hearts [and minds] may thus learn wisdom. Truly it is not their eyes that are blind, but their hearts." (22:46)⁴³

⁴⁰ In treating the breast (*ṣadr*) as an aspect of the heart, al-Ghazālī in this work follows an earlier Sufi, al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (d. 320/932), who also concerned himself with the morphology of the inner being. (al-Tirmidhī, *Bayān al-Farq Bayn al-Sadr wa al-Qalb wa al-Fu'ād wa al-Lubb*, (ed.) Nicolas Heer, Cairo, 1378/1956, pp. 40-46.)

⁴¹ Al-Ghazālī, *Jāmi'*, p. 20.

⁴² The expression "the source of faith" is also used by al-Tirmidhī and Najm al-Dīn Dayā Rāzī. (Tirmidhī, *op.cit.*, p. 53; Najm al-Dīn Dayā al-Rāzī, *Mirṣād al-'Ibād min Mabda' al-Ma'ād*, (tr.), Hamid Algar, *The Path of God's Bondsmen from Origin to Return*, New York, 1982, p. 83.

⁴³ Al-Ghazālī, *Jāmi'*, p. 20.

The third phase which is called “pericardium” (*shaghaf*) is considered by al-Ghazālī as the source of love, ardent love and compassion towards creation, as he quotes Allah Most High said: “Truly hath he inspired her with violent love” (12:30) While the fourth phase which is called by al-Ghazālī as the “inner heart (*fu’ād*)⁴⁴ is regarded as the source of seeing (*mushāhadah*) and the center of vision of the Divinity, as Allah Most High said: “The [Prophet’s mind and] heart in no way falsified that which he saw.” (53:11)⁴⁵

Therefore, al-Ghazālī discusses about three other phases with the fifth phase which is called the “grain of the heart” (*ḥabbāt al-qalb*) is the source of love of the presence of the Divinity. Whereas the sixth phase is the “inmost heart” (*suwaydā’ al-qalb*)⁴⁶ is a source of unveilings of the unseen (*al-mukāshafah al-ghaybiyyah*) and the center of the sciences of spiritual intuition (*al-‘ulūm al-laduniyyah*) and the origin of the secrets of the Divinity (*al-ilāhiyyah*). While, the seventh phase is called by him as the “core of the heart” (*muḥjat al-qalb*),⁴⁷ which is the source of the appearance of the lights of manifestation (*anwār al-tajallī*).⁴⁸ These aspect of the heart like the *ḥabbāt al-qalb* and *suwaydā’ al-qalb* is not suggested by any Qur’anic verse.

⁴⁴ No word suggests itself as a translation for *fu’ād*, which is conventionally rendered as “heart”, but is here merely an aspect of the heart, its organ of vision. (Tirmidhī, *op.cit.*, p. 62; Najm al-Dīn Dayā Rāzī, *op.cit.*, p. 83.)

⁴⁵ Al-Ghazālī, *Jāmi’*, p. 21.

⁴⁶ Lit. means “small spot”.

⁴⁷ Blood of heart. Al-Ghazālī speaks of the black blood in the ventricle of the corporeal heart as being the source of the spirit (soul). (al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā’*, Vol. 3, p. 3). On the other hand, Najm al-Dīn Dayā Rāzī in his *Mirṣād al-‘Ibād* considers it as the hidden meaning of Qur’anic verse, (17:70) as Allah said: “We have enabled the sons of Ādam”, for his nobility was not conferred on any other species of being. (Najm al-Dīn Dayā Rāzī), *op.cit.*, p. 83.

⁴⁸ Al-Ghazālī, *Jāmi’*, p. 21.

Al-Ghazālī further mentions that the cleansing of the heart should be accompanied by the ornamentation of the soul (*rūḥ*), which is “the command of Allah”.⁴⁹ He says that the *rūḥ* is a substance, subtle and luminous, which can be dispensing with nourishment. He also says that the *rūḥ* of everything is formed in the image of its body (*jasadīh*), as the Apostle of Allah (p.b.u.h.) said: “Allah most High created Ādam in his image”,⁵⁰ meaning Allah created his form according to the image of his soul which is from the world of command. Therefore, al-Ghazālī explains that the world of command (*‘ālam al-amr*) is an expression of the world, which does not possess quantity, quality and area because it became existence through *al-kāf* and *al-nūn*.⁵¹ He says, this kind of world is opposite of the world of creation because the latter appears through the means of matter and the extension of the days. To support his idea, al-Ghazālī quotes Qur’anic verse: “Who created the heavens and the earth in six days” (7:54, 10:3, 11:7, 57:4).⁵²

By mentioning the specialty of *rūḥ*, al-Ghazālī therefore, mentions that the *rūḥ* has five states, which begin with the state of non-existence (*al-‘ādam*),⁵³ the second is the state of existence (*al-wujūd*) in the world of the souls; the third is the state of its connection with the body (*jasad*); the fourth is the state of separation; and the fifth is the state of returning. In order to embellish these five states of the *rūḥ*, al-Ghazālī writes:

⁴⁹ Al-Ghazālī cites a popular Qur’anic verse: “They ask thee concerning the soul [of inspiration]. Say: The soul [cometh] by command of my Lord”. (17:86). See al-Ghazālī, *Jāmi‘*, p. 22.

⁵⁰ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, “*Kitāb al-Isti’zān*”, Vol. 8, p. 43; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, “*Kitāb al-Birr*”, Vol. 4, p. 386; Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, Vol. 13, p. 44 (no. 7319).

⁵¹ The letters that make up the word *kun*, “be”: The creative fiat: “His command, when he desires aught, is to say to it, “be”, and it is.” (36:82)

⁵² Al-Ghazālī, *Jāmi‘*, p. 22.

⁵³ This state of non-existence seems to reflect the idea of the soul existing in a state of potentiality before its actual existence.

As for the benefit of the state of non-existence, it is to attain knowledge of the creation of his soul (*nafs*) and the eternity of his Creator. As for the benefit of the state of existence in the world of the souls (*'ālam al-arwāḥ*), it is to know Allah Most High through the essential attributes (*al-ṣifāt al-dhātiyyah*) such as being Omnipotent, Omniscient, Living, All-Hearing, All-Seeing, All-Speaking and All-Willing. As for the benefit of connection with the body, it is to acquire perfect knowledge concerning the world of the unseen and to become aware of particulars and universals. As for the benefit of breathing the spirit into the body, it is to obtain knowledge through the active attributes such as being Provident, Ever-Repenting, All-Forgiving, Gracious, Merciful, Beneficent, Charitable and Bestowing. As for the benefit of the state of separation, it is to remove wickedness, which was acquired by the *rūḥ* through the companionship of bodies, and drinking and tasting in the station of nearness. As for the benefit of returning, it is to obtain the bounties of the hereafter.⁵⁴

Al-Ghazālī's discussion of the effect which spiritual exercises will achieve, is particularly concerned with an understanding of two terms "*nafs*" and "*rūḥ*", between which he makes a definite distinction as mentioned above. This distinction is paralleled by his opinion in the *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* when defines his general use of the term *nafs* in his *Ihyā'* in the following way:

The first is that it means the thing (*ma'nan*), which unites the irascible and concupiscible power in man... This usage is that which prevails among the Sufis. For they mean by *nafs* the principle which unites the reprehensible qualities of a man. They affirm: One must strive against the *nafs* and break it. To this is the allusion in the Prophet's utter-

⁵⁴ Al-Ghazālī, *Jāmi'*, p. 23.

ance – Peace be upon him- “ Your worst enemy is your *nafs* which is between your two sides”.⁵⁵

As in the *Ihyā'*, he also uses, but only occasionally, *nafs* to mean what we would describe as the *rūḥ*. Thus in the *Ihyā'*, al-Ghazālī says:

The second thing [designated by *nafs*] is the subtle thing, which we have spoken of and which in reality is man. It is man's soul and essence (*dhāt*). But it is characterized by different qualities according to the difference of its states. When it is tranquil under the command [it is in tranquil subjection to Allah's command] and free from agitation because of the opposition of the passions, it is called the soul at rest (*al-nafs al-muṭma'innah*).⁵⁶

In general, al-Ghazālī asserts a theory that the *nafs* of man is occupied with disobedience and following the Devil. Consequently, a black dot will appear in the *rūḥ*. When the disobedience of *nafs* increases, the blackness of the *rūḥ* will increase until it becomes wholly black. As a result, the doors of the benevolence of Allah Most High will be closed to it. When the *rūḥ* becomes black and the door of light are closed against it, an action appropriate to that blackness will appear in the limbs. Thus al-Ghazālī suggests that the clearing away of its blackness will be accomplished through faith.⁵⁷

Relating to this discussion, al-Ghazālī never goes into such detail on the subject of *rūḥ* except in his *Ma'ārij al-Quds*. However, as usual, al-Ghazālī in the *Jāmi'* successfully discuss the theory of *tadhkiyyah al-nafs*, although in only a few pages.

⁵⁵ Al-Ghazālī, *Jāmi'*, *op.cit.*, p. 17; *idem*, *Ihyā'*, *op.cit.*, Vol. 3, p. 4; McCarthy, *op.cit.*, Appendix V, p. 366, sec. 12.

⁵⁶ Al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 4; *cf.* McCarthy, *op.cit.*, p. 366, sec. 12.

⁵⁷ Al-Ghazālī, *Jāmi'*, p. 24.

Conclusion

As a conclusion, it can be seen that throughout the historical facts of development of Sufism, the Sufis dealt vigorously with the theory of purification of soul. However, their approach method is different between each other for they denote different way of life and thinking. As can be understood from the mystical path of the Sufis who is said to have different experiences during their journey, they threw different points of view on the theory of purification of soul.