

The Influence of al-Ghazali Thoughts in the Book of *Penawar Bagi Hati*

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Abstract

As we all know, *Ihya Ulumuddin* is a book that is written in a beautiful words and letter. As for the readers, they might have their own opinion on this book this is written after he gone through the *Marhalah Sulukiyah*. At only this point he realize that there is still some knowledge he still never learned, although he was already a big scholar at the time. As for this reason, he started to undergo the life of an angel-like. This is portrayed in his daily activities and his books. The Jawi manuscript tradition is closely associated with questions of identity and the civilization of the Malay people. It succeeded in shaping their strength and elevating their excellence as early as the 14th century, driven by Malay scholars who conveyed their thoughts through Jawi manuscripts as a medium for educating, imparting knowledge, giving reminders, and so forth. Sheikh Abdul Qadir al-Mandili (1910–1965 CE) was a Malay scholar who mastered various fields of Islamic knowledge such as theology (*uṣūl al-dīn*), jurisprudence (*fiqh*), politics, hadith, education, ethics, and others

Keywords: *Penawar Bagi Hati*, al-Ghazali, Sheikh Abdul Qadir al-Mandili



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INTRODUCTION

Al-Ghazali is considered as imam (the most prominent) in epistemological critique and religious sects during his time, and one of the most prominent in defending the belief of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah (Sunni Muslims, Sunnis, Sunnites). He is also considered one of the most prominent of theorizing of the Ash'ari theology (*Asharites* or *Ash'arism*) and Sufi thought. He was able to purify philosophy from superstition, and clarifies what is bad from what is sound, and he is considered as Mujadid (reformer) in his time.

Al-Ghazali managed to rectify the understanding of the philosophers during his time. He explained that the Muslim understanding towards rationalism must be based according to the Al-Quran and As-Sunnah rather than the intellect alone (Abdul Salam Yusuf 2014).

THE HISTORY OF AL-GHAZALI

His real name was Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali al-Tusi al-Syafie al-Sufi. He was an expert in the jurisprudence of Islam during his time. He was also known as an expert in logical field in Islam and gave a lot of advice to the rulers (Hajam, Nurzaki and Dedeh Nur Hamidah 2020).

Imam Al-Ghazali struggle for knowledge has experienced epistemological dynamics starting in the study of sharia and then Greek philosophy until he lost balance in his spiritual wandering. Imam Al-Ghazali in the end pursued and stopped in the knowledge of Sufism until he felt an inner condition that could transcend to God (Abdul Azis Awang Kechik and Mohd Hasbie Al Shiddieque Ahmad 2015).

Despite his success, al-Ghazali experienced a profound spiritual and psychological crisis in 1095, which he described as a loss of sincerity and certainty. He abandoned his prestigious position and embarked on a decade-long period of withdrawal, traveling to Damascus, Jerusalem, Mecca, and Medina, dedicating himself to worship, reflection, and Sufi practice. This transformation period marked his turn toward tasawwuf as the true path to knowledge of God.

During and after his retreat, al-Ghazali produced his most enduring works, including *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* (The Revival of the Religious Sciences), which sought to reconcile Islamic law with inner spirituality, and *Tahafut al-Falasifah* (The Incoherence of the Philosophers), a critical engagement with Greek-influenced Islamic philosophy. His writings integrated jurisprudence, theology, ethics, and mysticism into a unified vision of Islam.

Al-Ghazali eventually returned to teaching in Nishapur but later retired to his hometown of Tus, where he established a small school and Sufi lodge. He passed away in 1111 CE, leaving behind a legacy that profoundly shaped Sunni theology, Sufism, and Islamic pedagogy. His synthesis of reason and revelation continues to influence Muslim thought and remains central to discussions on spirituality, ethics, and civilization.

IHYA ULUMUDDIN

The book of *Ihya Ulumuddin* was written between the year of 489 and 495 *Hijrah*. It is also said that this book was written when he just went back from *Hajj*. This was when he stayed in Damascus, Syria where there was a mosque named *Masjid Jami' Al-Umawi*. He wrote this book in a corner in this mosque.

The *Ihya'* is structured into four major sections, each addressing a fundamental dimension of religious life. The first section, *Rub' al-'Ibadat* (Acts of Worship), discusses the spiritual dimensions of rituals such as prayer, fasting, zakah, recitation of the Qur'an, and remembrance of Allah. Al-Ghazali emphasises that worship is not valid merely through physical performance, but must be accompanied by sincerity, presence of heart, and inner awareness. The second section, *Rub' al-'Adat* (Social Customs), deals with everyday human activities such as eating, marriage, earning a livelihood, and social interaction, showing that ordinary actions can become acts of worship if guided by correct intention and ethical conduct.

Overall, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* stands as a holistic synthesis of Islamic sciences, integrating jurisprudence (fiqh), theology ('aqidah), hadith, ethics, and Sufism into a single coherent framework. Its enduring relevance lies in its ability to address not only legal and

doctrinal questions, but also the deeper existential and spiritual needs of human beings. Through accessible language and practical examples, al-Ghazali succeeds in presenting Islam as a complete way of life that harmonious knowledge, action, and spiritual consciousness. (William Chittick 2016).

AL-GHAZALI CONCEPT OF *TAJDID*

The concept of *tajdid* (renewal) in Al-Ghazali's thought is primarily spiritual, moral, and intellectual in nature, rather than political or revolutionary. For him, *tajdid* does not imply creating new religious doctrines, but rather revitalizing the authentic essence of Islam by restoring sincerity, sound knowledge, and proper religious practice within the Muslim community. Al-Ghazali viewed *tajdid* as the process of reviving religious life in the hearts of believers. He observed that over time, acts of worship often become routine rituals lacking inner meaning, while religious knowledge turns into a formal exercise disconnected from personal transformation. As a result, renewal requires reconnecting external religious actions with internal spiritual awareness. This idea is strongly emphasized in *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, where he warns that worship without sincerity (*ikhlas*) is spiritually ineffective, and knowledge without practice (*'ilm bila 'amal*) leads to self-deception (Eric Ormsby 2023).

A fundamental component of Al-Ghazali's understanding of *tajdid* is *tazkiyat al-nafs* (purification of the soul). He believed that the most serious problems facing the Muslim community are not external challenges, but internal moral weaknesses such as arrogance, hypocrisy, greed, excessive attachment to worldly life, and forgetfulness of God. Genuine renewal, therefore, must begin with inner moral reform. Only when individuals reform themselves spiritually can meaningful social change take place. Another important dimension of Al-Ghazali's concept of *tajdid* is the harmonization of Shari'ah and spirituality. He rejected the division between legal scholars who focused only on external religious rules and mystics who neglected legal obligations. For Al-Ghazali, true renewal lies in restoring balance: Shari'ah provides the framework for religious life, while spirituality gives it depth and meaning. Without law, spirituality becomes misguided; without spirituality, religious law becomes empty and mechanical.

Al-Ghazali also connected *tajdid* with the ethical reform of religious scholarship. He criticized scholars who sought knowledge for personal gain, social status, or political power, describing them as corrupt scholars (*'ulama' al-su'*). In contrast, the true agent of renewal (*mujaddid*) is someone who embodies the values he teaches, whose life reflects humility, sincerity, and devotion. Thus, in Al-Ghazali's view, the *mujaddid* is primarily a moral and spiritual exemplar rather than a political reformer. Finally, Al-Ghazali understood *tajdid* as a gradual and educational process, not a radical or forceful transformation. Renewal occurs through teaching, writing, spiritual discipline, and personal example. His own life illustrates this approach: after withdrawing from public life, he returned to teaching with a focus on ethical and spiritual reform rather than intellectual rivalry or public recognition. In this way, *tajdid* in Al-Ghazali's thought can be seen as the revival of inner faith that ultimately renews the outward condition of the Muslim community.

THE INFLUENCE OF AL-GHAZALI THROUGHOUT THE WORLD

Al-Ghazali's impact on the world is both extensive and long-lasting, establishing him as one of the most influential thinkers in Islamic history and a significant contributor to global intellectual tradition. Within the Muslim world, Al-Ghazali played a central role in shaping Islamic theology ('*aqidah*), jurisprudence (*fiqh*), and spirituality (*taṣawwuf*). Through major works such as *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, he successfully harmonized Sufism with Sunni orthodoxy, demonstrating that spiritual life must be firmly rooted in the teachings of the Qur'an and the Sunnah. This approach helped integrate Sufi practices into mainstream Islam and deeply influenced religious scholars and institutions across regions including the Middle East, North Africa, Central Asia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia. His writings remain widely studied in traditional Islamic educational systems, particularly in the areas of ethics and spiritual development. (W. Montgomery Watt 1963)

In the realm of philosophy and intellectual discourse, Al-Ghazali had a transformation influence by critically examining Greek philosophical ideas adopted by Muslim philosophers such as Ibn Sina (Avicenna). In his work *Tahafut al-Falasifah* (The Incoherence of the Philosophers), he questioned metaphysical arguments that conflicted with Islamic beliefs. Rather than dismissing rational inquiry altogether, he clarified its boundaries and emphasized the primacy of revelation and inner spiritual knowledge. This shift redirected the development of Islamic philosophy toward a more theologically centered framework.

Al-Ghazali also left a lasting mark on educational theory and moral thought. He maintained that knowledge should not be pursued for intellectual achievement alone but must result in ethical refinement and spiritual closeness to God. This perspective shaped Islamic approaches to education for generations, influencing teaching traditions from the Ottoman world to the Malay-Indonesian region.

Outside the Islamic world, Al-Ghazali's ideas reached Europe through Latin translations of his works during the medieval period. His discussions on scepticism, causality, and the limits of human reason influenced Christian scholars and later Western philosophical debates. Some researchers even note similarities between his views on causation and those of philosophers like David Hume, indicating that his thought had relevance beyond Islamic civilization. In summary, Al-Ghazali's worldwide significance lies in his ability to unify religious law, theology, philosophy, and spirituality into a comprehensive intellectual system. He not only reshaped Islamic thought but also contributed to global philosophy by offering enduring insights into the relationship between faith, reason, and moral life.

Al-Ghazali's intellectual and spiritual legacy has significantly influenced Islamic thought, particularly in the fields of ethics, spirituality, theology, and moral education. His approach combines knowledge of the Qur'an and Sunnah with spiritual purification and practical guidance for human development. These ideas can be observed in *Penawar Bagi Hati*, a work that presents Islamic teachings concerning the purification of the heart and the development of virtuous character (Saari 1998).

The book emphasizes the importance of controlling negative qualities such as envy, arrogance, greed, anger, and excessive attachment to worldly pleasures. At the same time, it encourages believers to cultivate sincerity, patience, gratitude, humility, repentance, and remembrance of Allah (Parrot 2007).

AL-GHAZALI INFLUENCE IN THE MALAY WORLD

Al-Ghazali's influence in the Malay Archipelago (Nusantara) is deep, long-standing, and foundational to the development of Islamic thought, education, and spirituality in the region, especially in Malaysia, Indonesia, Southern Thailand, and Brunei. One of the most significant areas of his influence is in Sufism and spiritual practice. Al-Ghazali's synthesis of Sufism with Sunni orthodoxy became the dominant model of spirituality in the Malay world. His ethical and spiritual teachings, particularly from *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, shaped how Muslims in the region understood worship, sincerity (*ikhlas*), repentance (*tawbah*), self-discipline (*mujahadah*), and purification of the heart (*tazkiyat al-nafs*). Many Malay scholars adopted his framework, ensuring that mystical practices remained firmly grounded in the Qur'an and Sunnah, rather than drifting into extreme or heterodox forms.

In the field of Islamic education, Al-Ghazali strongly influenced the curriculum of traditional institutions such as pondok, pesantren, and madrasah. His works, either in Arabic or adapted into Malay Jawi texts, became standard references for teaching theology, ethics, and spirituality. Malay scholars often used his ideas to structure religious education around moral formation, not just legal knowledge. This approach shaped the character of Islamic learning in the region, where education is seen as a process of cultivating both intellect and soul.

Another major channel of influence was through Jawi literature. Many Malay religious texts were either direct translations, summaries, or adaptations of Al-Ghazali's works. Books such as *Bidayat al-Hidayah*, *Minhaj al-'Abidin*, and parts of the *Ihya'* were rendered into Malay and widely circulated. Local scholars like Shaykh 'Abd al-Şamad al-Falimbani, Shaykh Daud al-Fatani, and later figures such as Shaykh 'Abd al-Qadir al-Mandili drew heavily on Al-Ghazali's ethical and spiritual framework when composing their own works for Malay audiences.

Al-Ghazali also influenced theological thought ('aqidah) in the Malay world, particularly through the *Ash'arite* school. His balanced approach to reason and revelation shaped how Malay Muslims understood God, faith, and human responsibility. Classical texts on creed used in Nusantara often reflect *Ghazalian* theology, emphasizing moderation, avoidance of excessive speculation, and reliance on authoritative tradition.

In terms of social and religious reform, Al-Ghazali's role as a *mujaddid* (reviver) inspired Malay scholars to see themselves as moral reformers of society. His idea that scholars must correct both outward behaviour and inward intention influenced the way ulama in the Malay Archipelago approached preaching (*da'wah*). Religious authority was not merely about issuing legal rulings, but about guiding people toward ethical living and spiritual awareness.

Overall, Al-Ghazali's influence in the Malay Archipelago lies in shaping a distinctly Sunni-Sufi intellectual culture. He provided the philosophical and spiritual foundation upon which Malay Islamic civilization was built—one that emphasizes balance between law and spirituality, knowledge and action, intellect and ethics. Even today, his legacy continues through religious schools, Friday sermons, classical texts, and the general spiritual worldview of Muslims in the region (Shaykh 'Abd al-Şamad al-Falimban 1960).

Syeikh Abdul Qadir Al Mandili

Abdul Qadir bin Abdul Muttalib al-Indonesi al-Tapanuli al-Mandili was born in Sigalanggang, in the South Tapanuli region of West Sumatra, in 1910 CE. He married in his twenties and had three wives — six children with his first wife, one with his second, and two with his third. He received his basic education at a Dutch Primary School up to the fifth grade, and later migrated to Kedah to pursue religious studies, specializing in the traditional *pondok* system of learning. From the perspective of personality, al-Mandili was well-known for his admirable traits such as being friendly, humble, kind-hearted, ascetic, generous, sincere, modest, gentle, and practising the knowledge he possessed. He was also said to have never shown anger impulsively or without cause and was gifted with a strong memory. These characteristics reflect a soul that constantly strives (*mujahadah*) for the sake of Allah SWT and is diligent in worship. On this basis, al-Mandili may also be categorized as one of the figures of spirituality or Sufism. This can be seen through his work *Penawar Bagi Hati*, which extensively elaborates on human spiritual matters and discusses several aspects related to Sufi doctrine, including the stages (*maqamat*) (Syeikh Abdul Qadir Mandil 1950)

Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Mandili was also involved in religious reform. He sought to correct misunderstandings in belief and practice, especially superstitious customs and shallow ritualism. However, his reform was not confrontational or political; it was ethical and educational. He believed that true reform begins with the purification of the individual soul, which would eventually lead to a morally healthy society. In the context of the Malay intellectual tradition, al-Mandili stands as a bridge between classical Islamic scholarship and modern Malay society. He preserved the authority of traditional Sunni learning while adapting it to local needs through the Malay language and cultural context. His influence continues today through religious schools, mosques, and classical Jawi texts that are still read and taught across Malaysia, Indonesia, and Southern Thailand. Overall, Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Mandili represents the ideal of the Nusantara scholar: rooted in classical Islamic tradition, spiritually oriented, socially engaged, and committed to educating the Muslim community in a practical and accessible way (Syarifah Basirah Syed Muhsin 2010).

Al Mandili Influence in Modern Days Malaysia and Indonesia

The influence of Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Mandili is primarily concentrated within the Malay Archipelago (Nusantara), particularly in areas where traditional Islamic learning and the use of Jawi texts remain prominent. His impact is especially strong in Malaysia, notably in states such as Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan, and Penang. His writings, most notably *Penawar Bagi Hati*, are commonly taught in *pondok* schools, religious institutions, mosques, and informal study circles (*halaqah*). Many religious instructors continue to rely on his works as essential references for teaching Islamic ethics (*akhlak*), spirituality (*taṣawwuf*), and foundational theology. He also exerts considerable influence in Indonesia, particularly in North Sumatra (the Mandailing region), which is his place of origin. Within Indonesian *pesantren* communities, his works are well regarded, especially among institutions that uphold classical Sunni-Sufi traditions. His spiritual methodology fits naturally with the educational culture of *pesantren*.

In Southern Thailand (the Patani region), his books are likewise studied in traditional Islamic schools. Historically, Patani scholars played an important role in preserving and disseminating Jawi literature, and al-Mandili's writings form part of this enduring scholarly legacy. More, broadly, his influence is sustained through the tradition of Jawi scholarship itself. He belongs to a lineage of Malay scholars—such as Shaykh Daud al-Fatani and Shaykh 'Abd al-Ṣamad al-Falimbani—who shaped the intellectual and spiritual outlook of Malay Muslim society. The continued reprinting and circulation of his works ensure that his ideas remain relevant across generations. In essence, Shaykh 'Abd al-Qadir al-Mandili's influence is not international in scope like that of Al-Ghazali, but rather regional and deeply embedded within the religious life of the Malay world, especially in Malaysia, Indonesia (Sumatra), and Southern Thailand, where his writings continue to inform spiritual practice and moral education (Shaykh Daud al-Fatani 1960).

His impact is also significant in Southern Thailand, particularly in the Patani region, where Jawi-based Islamic scholarship has long been preserved. Traditional Islamic schools in this area continue to teach texts written by Malay scholars, including al-Mandili. Historically, Patani scholars served as important intermediaries in transmitting Islamic knowledge between the Middle East and Southeast Asia, and al-Mandili's works became part of this enduring scholarly network. More broadly, Shaykh 'Abd al-Qadir al-Mandili's influence is sustained through the tradition of Jawi scholarship itself, which has been a defining feature of Malay Islamic civilization. He belongs to a distinguished lineage of Malay scholars—such as Shaykh Daud al-Fatani, Shaykh 'Abd al-Ṣamad al-Falimbani, and later twentieth-century reformist scholars who sought to preserve classical Islamic teachings while adapting them to local cultural contexts. Through this tradition, Islamic knowledge was not only transmitted but also localized, making it meaningful and relevant to Malay society.

Furthermore, his influence can be seen in the broader religious culture of the Malay world. His emphasis on spiritual self-discipline, moral responsibility, and sincere devotion contributed to shaping a form of religiosity that values inner transformation as much as outward ritual. In this sense, his legacy is not limited to specific texts or institutions but extends to the general ethical outlook of Malay Muslim communities. In essence, Shaykh 'Abd al-Qadir al-Mandili's influence is not global in scope like that of figures such as Al-Ghazali, but it is deeply rooted and socially embedded within the religious life of the Malay Archipelago. His writings continue to inform spiritual practice, religious education, and moral consciousness in Malaysia, Indonesia, and Southern Thailand, ensuring that his intellectual and spiritual legacy remains alive in contemporary Islamic discourse in the region. (Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud 1998)

The Book *Penawar Bagi Hati*

To this study, the author has referred to and analysed the book *Penawar Bagi Hati* written by al-Mandili, published by Sahabat Press, Yala, in 1964. In the introductory section of this book, al-Mandili discusses the condition of the heart, which becomes the focus of discourse in the science of Sufism

The central theme of *Penawar Bagi Hati* is the concept of spiritual disease (*marad al-qalb*), which al-Mandili identifies as the root cause of moral corruption and inner unrest. He argues that many outward social problems—such as injustice, anger, envy, anxiety, and

despair—originate from inner disorders of the heart. In this sense, the book functions as a form of Islamic psychotherapy, diagnosing human suffering not merely as emotional or social failure, but as a spiritual imbalance caused by the dominance of the *nafs* (lower self) and excessive attachment to worldly desires.

Overall, *Penawar Bagi Hati* stands as a continuation of the classical Sufi tradition within the Malay-Islamic world, particularly reflecting the influence of Imam al-Ghazali's ethical and spiritual framework. The book offers not only personal spiritual guidance but also a broader vision of social reform, asserting that a morally upright and spiritually conscious society can only be achieved through the purification of individual hearts. In the context of modern challenges, the work remains highly relevant as a comprehensive guide for restoring inner balance, ethical responsibility, and spiritual meaning in human life (Syarifah Basirah 2016).

Influenced strongly by al-Ghazali's *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, *Penawar Bagi Hati* serves not merely as a theoretical treatise but as a practical manual for ethical living, emphasizing that true religious knowledge must result in inner transformation, humility, and conscious awareness of God in both personal and social conduct. Beyond its theoretical dimension, *Penawar Bagi Hati* functions as a practical guide for daily spiritual discipline. It emphasizes the importance of self-accountability (*muḥasabah*), continuous repentance (*tawbah*), remembrance of God (*dhikr*), control of desires, and the cultivation of virtues such as humility, patience, gratitude, and sincerity. The book also reflects a pedagogical purpose, serving as a teaching text within the pondok system, where religious education is not separated from moral training and spiritual mentorship. In this sense, *Penawar Bagi Hati* represents a localized form of *Ghazalian* spirituality that integrates Islamic law, ethical psychology, and Sufi practice into a holistic model of personal transformation, aiming to produce Muslims whose outward religious observance is harmonized with inner moral consciousness and spiritual awareness.

The influence of Al-Ghazali can be seen particularly in the emphasis placed on the heart as the centre of human spiritual and moral transformation. His understanding suggests that external religious practices should be accompanied by inner purification (Kukkonen 2011).

The Same Linguistic and Discussion Approach as al-Ghazali

In the book of *Penawar Bagi Hati*, it is discussed the same thing as the one in *Ihya' Ulumuddin*. Al Mandili stated that Inner moral corruption is a spiritual disease that afflicts a person. It exists within an individual's inner self and remains unseen until it manifests through outward actions. This disease is a form of psychological disturbance that affects a person's emotions and is usually expressed through negative behaviours such as gloominess, sadness, grief, anxiety, restlessness, inner turmoil, and a sense of helplessness in facing life's challenges. These symptoms not only affect one's emotional and psychological state but also have detrimental impacts on the physical body, such as difficulty sleeping and the absence of inner calm. The effects of these symptoms may lead to high blood pressure, heart problems, severe headaches, and other related conditions.

The primary cause of various spiritual diseases of the heart is the human *nafs* (lower desires). The *nafs* carries various wants and impulses referred to as *shahawat* (desires). The *nafs* (desire) is granted by Allah SWT so that human life becomes active and productive,

enabling individuals to achieve their aspirations in both this world and the hereafter. Without the *nafs*, human life would become passive (Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Mandili 1960).

Both Talks About Islamic Spirituality

Islam places great emphasis on the aspect of human spiritual health to produce a community capable of driving the development of universal human well-being. Good spiritual values will give rise to individuals who are healthy not only physically but also spiritually. What is happening today shows that the Muslim community is increasingly facing internal challenges, namely the deterioration of moral character and the depletion of spiritual values, both of which must be addressed promptly to ensure the integrity of the community. Although many factors influence how a person thinks and behaves, what the author intends to highlight here concerns spiritual development alone, as it is closely related to elements of Islamic psychotherapy as a medium for resolving issues associated with spiritual or psychological aspects.

One major similarity is their emphasis on integrating knowledge with practice. Both scholars believed that true Islamic knowledge is not merely theoretical but must lead to moral transformation and sincere worship. Al-Ghazali consistently argued that learning without action is spiritually harmful, a theme strongly reflected in al-Mandili’s works such as *Penawar Bagi Hati*, which focuses on purifying the heart and correcting inner intentions. Another key similarity is their focus on spiritual purification (*tazkiyat al-nafs*). Both thinkers placed great importance on cleansing the soul from diseases such as arrogance, hypocrisy, envy, and excessive love of the world. Al-Ghazali’s *Ihya’ ‘Ulum al-Din* and al-Mandili’s Jawi writings both function as practical guides for spiritual self-discipline and ethical living, rather than abstract philosophical treatises.

They also share a strong commitment to Sunni orthodoxy. Both defended Islamic belief and practice based on the Qur’an, Sunnah, and classical scholarly tradition. While Al-Ghazali responded to philosophical and theological debates of the medieval Muslim world, al-Mandili addressed the moral and religious challenges faced by Malay Muslim societies. In both cases, their reform efforts aimed at reviving authentic religious understanding.

Another similarity lies in their role as religious reformers (*mujaddid* figures). Al-Ghazali is widely regarded as a reviver of Islamic religious sciences, and al-Mandili played a similar role within the Malay world by reforming religious education through accessible Jawi texts. Both sought to correct deviations in belief and practice and to bring Muslims back to sincere faith and disciplined spiritual life.

Finally, both scholars emphasized accessible religious education. Al-Ghazali wrote in Arabic for scholars and students, while al-Mandili wrote in Jawi Malay for the public. Despite the difference in language, their intention was the same: to make complex religious and spiritual teachings understandable and applicable to everyday Muslims.

Modern Scholars Who Adopted Both Scholars Thinking

In the modern world, the thought of al-Ghazali and scholars influenced by his intellectual-spiritual tradition, including figures such as Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Mandili within the Malay scholarly network, continues to be adopted primarily by traditional Sunni scholars, Sufi

movements, and Islamic educational institutions rather than political or ideological groups. Contemporary scholars such as Abdal Hakim Murad (Timothy Winter), Hamza Yusuf, and Said Nursi reflect a Ghazalian approach in their emphasis on inner purification, ethical self-discipline, and the balance between religious law and spirituality. At the institutional level, major movements such as Nahdlatul Ulama in Indonesia, as well as the pondok and pesantren systems in Malaysia, Southern Thailand, and Indonesia, explicitly or implicitly transmit Ghazalian teachings through the study of classical works like *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, *Bidayat al-Hidayah*, and *Minhaj al-'Abidin*. These institutions preserve a model of Islam that prioritizes moral character (*akhlaq*), spiritual refinement (*tazkiyat al-nafs*), and scholarly authority, thereby sustaining the legacy of al-Ghazali and al-Mandili as living intellectual traditions that continue to shape contemporary Muslim religious life, particularly in Southeast Asia (Azyumardi Azra 2004).

Furthermore, the influence of this tradition can be observed in contemporary discourses on Islamic moderation, spiritual resilience, and moral psychology, especially in contexts facing the pressures of secularization, consumerism, and digital culture. Modern scholars influenced by al-Ghazali frequently argue that the fragmentation of modern Muslim identity—manifested in anxiety, moral confusion, and ideological extremism—stems from neglect of inner ethical cultivation in favour of external symbols of religiosity. In this sense, the Ghazalian–Mandili approach functions as a form of intellectual and spiritual critique of modernity itself, proposing that technological advancement and legal reform alone cannot produce meaningful religious life without the parallel purification of intention (*niyyah*), discipline of desire, and cultivation of spiritual consciousness (*taqwa*). Consequently, their legacy endures not as a nostalgic attachment to premodern thought, but as a living ethical paradigm that continues to shape how many Muslim communities understand personal piety, social responsibility, and the ultimate purpose of religious knowledge in the modern age

The Solution Given by Both of Them to Treat the Souls

Al-Mandili's explanation of the diseases of the heart and their remedies in *Penawar Bagi Hati* emphasis the methodology used in Sufism, namely the concept of *tazkiyyah al-nafs*, or the purification of the soul. This is because the concept of *tazkiyyah al-nafs* is closely related to matters concerning the soul and the heart.

Generally, *tazkiyyah al-nafs* carries the meaning of purification, cleansing, and the nurturing of the self. It refers to a determined and earnest effort to purify and cleanse oneself from reprehensible and vile traits. This purification is then followed by the effort to cultivate and adorn the self with virtuous qualities, so that the process may become more complete (Vasalou 2022).

Al-Mandili adapted this concept of soul purification through two processes: *takhalli* and *tahalli*. *Takhalli* means “emptying” oneself of blameworthy and evil traits, while *tahalli* refers to “adorning” or filling oneself with praiseworthy qualities. Al-Mandili's emphasis on this concept can be observed in all aspects he discusses regarding the blameworthy diseases of the heart — that such traits must first be “emptied” from the heart of a person and then “filled” with noble and virtuous qualities, as recommended by him. Al-Ghazali views the soul (*nafs* or *qalb*) as the central moral and spiritual reality of the human being, whose condition determines both

ethical behaviour and proximity to God. For him, the soul is not merely a metaphysical entity but a living spiritual organism that can be healthy or diseased, and therefore in constant need of purification and discipline. Drawing on a medical analogy, al-Ghazali describes the scholar and spiritual guide as a physician of the soul, whose task is first to diagnose inner illnesses such as arrogance, envy, hypocrisy, excessive attachment to the world, and uncontrolled desire.

True spiritual reform, in his view, begins with self-awareness and honest recognition of these internal defects. The method of treatment involves sustained spiritual struggle (*mujahadah*) and systematic spiritual training (*riyadah*) through acts of worship, remembrance of God (*dhikr*), self-accounting (*muhasabah*), and ethical self-discipline. Al-Ghazali emphasizes that spiritual vices cannot simply be removed but must be replaced with corresponding virtues, such as humility, contentment, gratitude, patience, and sincerity. Ultimately, the goal of this spiritual therapy is the attainment of a purified heart (*qalb salim*), capable of true knowledge of God (*ma'rifah*), in which religious knowledge is not merely intellectual but becomes an embodied spiritual experience that transforms the individual's character and inner life. (Syarifah Basirah Syed Muhsin 2016)

Relevancies of Both Scholars in Modern World

The book *Penawar Bagi Hati* is highly meaningful and offers great benefit when examined closely, understood, and put into practice. Since all human actions are determined by the condition of the heart, it is only natural that the development of a civilized society must also begin with the heart. From a heart that is pure and sincere comes correct thinking, which in turn produces actions that are precise and effective. Thus, the internationalism of the teachings in this book will give rise to the following outcomes (Muhamad Farid Bin Hamlud 2020).

The Formation of a Civilized Society

morality and hearts are nurtured and preserved. The world will not be at peace simply because of grand buildings if there are no noble individuals inhabiting it. Nor will it be elevated by abundant wealth and blessings without honourable people who safeguard them responsibly. Whatever the state of the world may be, it will remain peaceful and harmonious only when its people cultivate good character and build a noble sense of identity.

A Society That Measures Goodness with the Right Standard

Goodness cannot be judged merely by pleasant behaviour or by the willingness to help others. True goodness is attained only by those who wholly submit and obey Allah. This is the true measure of goodness, and it is the only path that brings safety in this world and the hereafter

A Society That Fulfill the Rights of Its Members Properly

People will become fearful of taking what belongs to others, and they will strive to fulfil the rights that others have over them in the best possible manner. Every action is carried out of love and devotion to Allah. Thus, when someone is wrong, they are not scolded excessively; and

when someone is right, they are not praised beyond due measure. All forms of blessings, strengths, and even shortcomings are faced with patience and gratitude. The poor understand and accept the demands of their circumstances, just as the wealthy understand the responsibilities placed upon them.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined the spiritual and intellectual legacy of Imam al-Ghazali through his monumental work *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, and its reflection within the Malay-Islamic tradition through the thought of Shaykh Abdul Qadir al-Mandili in *Penawar Bagi Hati*. Through historical, textual, and thematic analysis, it is evident that both scholars share a common epistemological and spiritual framework which emphasis the purification of the heart as the foundation of religious life and social well-being (Moad 2009).

Imam al-Ghazali's intellectual journey, which moved from jurisprudence and philosophy towards Sufism, represents a critical transformation in Islamic thought. His experience of spiritual crisis and subsequent retreat from worldly prestige enabled him to reconstruct Islamic knowledge upon a moral and spiritual basis. The *Ihya'* does not merely transmit religious rulings but seeks to revive the inner meanings of worship, ethics, and belief through simple yet profound language. By integrating fiqh, theology, hadith, and tasawwuf, al-Ghazali offered a holistic model of Islam that balances reason, revelation, and spiritual discipline.

This same intellectual and spiritual methodology is clearly mirrored in the works of Shaykh Abdul Qadir al-Mandili. Writing within the Jawi manuscript tradition, al-Mandili adapted al-Ghazali's approach to the socio-cultural context of the Malay world. His *Penawar Bagi Hati* serves as a practical guide for spiritual healing, diagnosing moral corruption as a disease of the heart rooted in the *nafs*, and prescribing *tazkiyyah al-nafs* through the processes of *takhalli* and *tahalli*. Like al-Ghazali, al-Mandili emphasised inner reform before outward change, and prioritised simplicity of language to ensure accessibility for the wider community (Solikhudin 2022).

The relevance of both scholars in the modern world remains significant. In an age characterised by materialism, psychological distress, moral confusion, and spiritual emptiness, their teachings provide an alternative civilisational model rooted in ethical consciousness and inner balance. Both works demonstrate that true civilisation is not measured by technological advancement or economic growth alone, but by the quality of human character, sincerity of faith, and moral responsibility towards others (Frank Griffel 2009).

Ultimately, this study affirms that al-Ghazali and al-Mandili represent a continuous spiritual tradition within Islam that transcends time and geography. Their shared emphasis on the heart as the centre of transformation highlights that sustainable social reform must begin with inner purification. The revival of such spiritual pedagogy is therefore not merely a personal religious pursuit, but a necessary foundation for building a just, peaceful, and morally grounded society in the contemporary world

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