

ABDUS SHAMAD AL-PALIMBANI'S CONCEPT OF MAHABBAH AS AN ANTIDOTE TO THE SPIRITUAL CRISIS OF MODERN MAN

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Abstract. *Modern man's spiritual crises is a fascinating topic that is constantly pertinent to be discussed. The promise of a remedy to this modern dilemma is even more intriguing. Abdus Shamad al-Palimbani is a prominent Sufi figure in the Malay Indonesian Archipelago, with Sufi mahabbah teaching that is favorable to resolving this spiritual crisis. This work aims to explore the notion of mahabbah of al-Palimbani and its significance in overcoming modern humans' spiritual dilemmas. This study is library research using a qualitative approach. The data were collected utilizing documentary techniques referring to books, articles, and other published materials. The acquired data is then analyzed employing the descriptive-analytical method. This study finds that, according to Abdus Shamad, human love is divided into stages, starting with love for others, wealth, family and relations, self-love, and love for Allah and His Messenger. If a man is bound by the four worldly degrees of love, he will suffer a spiritual crisis. Only by achieving the ultimate level of love, mahabbatullah, can he discover himself, both material and spiritual.*

Keywords: *Abdus Shamad al-Palimbani; Mahabbah; Spiritual Crisis; Sufism*

Introduction

The modern era, dominated by globalization, is like a double-edged sword, with both positive and negative impacts simultaneously. The positive impact is the increased enthusiasm for spurring the development of advanced science and technology, which can lead to a more convenient and more practical life. On the other hand, the negative effect is the creation of imbalance in their lives,¹ as the material dimension becomes extremely dominant, far defeating or even denying the spiritual aspect. Seyyed Hossein Nasr refers to this as "the world...as devoid of a spiritual horizon."² All of these heinous atrocities occurred as a result of "modern man has simply forgotten who he is."³ Modern man has lost sight of his true nature as a servant of God, created to serve Him.

In the Western world, this era began in the 17th century AD. Humans were engulfed in streams that were solely concerned with ratio. A perspective tinged with secularism, rationalism, and metaphysical disclaimers arose from the scientific

¹Adian Husaini, *Mengapa Barat Menjadi Sekuler-Liberal?*, Kedua (Ponorogo: CIOS, Universitas Darussalam Gontor, 2015). p. viii

²Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islam and the Plight of Modern Man* (Chicago: KAZI Publications, 1975).

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³Nasr. p. 5

worldview.⁴ These schools have altered the human perspective on everything. They have more control over their minds and are free of metaphysics. All thoughts and views are kept separate from the essence beneath them. As a result, they emphasize their ratio and deny the metaphysical form that underpins it all. With these current circumstances, modern humans can be likened to humans at the highest end of the world.⁵ He feels that having everything makes him the most elevated.

The development of modern times with the flow of globalization, the longer the run is not good. Most modern humans are starting to realize the imbalance in their lives, the emptiness in their souls. So, they try to find a way out of the void and light to illuminate the emptiness of their souls. Seeing this crisis, Sufism scholars saw and analyzed that Sufism could contribute to solving this crisis. Sufism is seen as being able to guide humans out of the confines of the problem, and it can soothe an empty human heart.⁶ Like water that rains down on an arid desert, it will grow various plants that beautify the desert. Thus, there is a need for an in-depth study of the teachings of Sufism that can contribute to a solution to this problem.

Abdus Shamad al-Palimbani is The Malay-Indonesian Archipelago Sufi scholar steeped in several Sufism teachings. Some of his teachings can be analyzed to solve this crisis. Several *maqamat* applied in his teachings lead modern humans back to the Divine. The final *maqam* is *mahabbatullah* or loving Allah.⁷ According to al-Palimbani, with *mahabbatullah*, or loving God sincerely, modern humans will get His pleasure and love in the form of pleasure and light for their dark lives. Allah will love His servant more than his love and reward him with worldly pleasures and hereafter. Thus, the concept of *mahabbah* needs to be reviewed in detail and clearly to become the right and appropriate solution required to treat modern humans' spiritual crises.

Spiritual crisis or spiritual emergency refers to situations in which people's ideals are questioned. These situations can cause emotional turmoil and nervous breakdowns and lead to substance abuse, mental illness, and suicide attempts,⁸ which manifest as confusion, a persistent worried mood, identity crisis, and disorientation.⁹ However, spiritual emergency also encompasses positive experiences: an inner awakening, visions, a sense of an energized aura, hearing voices, a sense of unity with the cosmos, a detachment from the physical world, past-life recollections, and out-of-

⁴Hamid Fahmi Zarkasyi, *Liberalisasi Pemikiran Islam* (Ponorogo: CIOS UNIDA, 2008). p. 6

⁵C. G Jung, *Modern Man In Search Of A Soul* (United States of America: Harvest Press, 1933). p. 197

⁶Muhammad Iqbal Irham, *Membangun Moral Bangsa Melalui Akhlak Tasawwuf* (Ciputat: Pustaka Al-Ihsan, 2013). p. 3.

⁷Abdus Shamad Al-Palimbani, *Siyar As-Sâlikîn Ilâ Tbâdat Rabb Al-'Âlamîn* (Jakarta: Dar El-Kutub Al-Islamiyyah, n.d.).p. 122

⁸Zohar Danah and Marshall Ian, *Spiritual Intelligence: The Ultimate Intelligence* (Edinburgh: Bloomsbury, 2011), p. 101.

⁹John Weir Perry, *Trials of a Visionary Mind: Spiritual Emergency and the Renewal Process* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1999), p. 31.

body experiences.¹⁰ If utilized constructively, spiritual emergencies such as creativity and compassion can promote spiritual development.¹¹ In the context of spiritual crises that can play a role in spiritual development, the concept of *mahabbah* in Sufism can considerably contribute to treating this spiritual illness. Those going through a spiritual crisis will be assisted by *mahabbah* to solve their problems and significantly enhance their spirituality. At this juncture, John Weir Perry states:

*“What turns out to be the ultimate goal of spiritual emergence and renewal process? I think the most concise way of putting it is that it is the same as the mystic way of meditation, which is phrased in Buddhist practice as wisdom and compassion or love. That pair is what emerges in the process and what is required of the partner in the work.”*¹² (p. 2).

Several topics of writings have been published by researchers that peculiarly discuss the thoughts and teachings of al-Palembani. Some of the works included two papers on his ideas in education,¹³ two articles on his views on *jihad*,¹⁴ three articles on his contribution to building Islamic tradition and culture in this Archipelago,¹⁵ and five publications on his thoughts on Sufism. The five writings in Sufism each discuss his

¹⁰Christina Grof and Stanislav Grof, *Spiritual Emergency: When Personal Transformation Becomes a Crisis* (Michigan: Penguin Publishing Group, 1989).

¹¹Emma Bragdon, *The Call of Spiritual Emergency: From Personal Crisis to Personal Transformation* (HarperCollins Publisher, 1990), p. 3.

¹²John Weir Perry, “Spiritual Emergence and Renewal,” *Spiritual Emergency Network Newsletter*, December 1985, p. 2. Other works that share this view, among others, are: Bonnie Lee Hood, “Spiritual Emergencies: Understanding Transpersonal Crises” A Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School of University of Massachusetts, 1986. Eldon Stephen Rogers Jr, “The Peril and Promise of Spiritual Emergency” (California: University Palo Alto, 2017). Christina Grof and Stanislav Grof, “Spiritual Emergency: The Understanding and Treatment of Transpersonal Crises,” *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies* 36, no. 2 (2017). Stephen G Wright, *Burnout – a Spiritual Crisis on The Way Home* (England: Sacred Space Publications, 2010).

¹³Alhamuddin, “Abd Shamad Al-Palimbani’s Islamic Education Concept : Analysis Of Kitab Hidayah Al-Sālikin Fi Suluk,” *QIJS: Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies* 6, no. 1 (2018) and Suriadi, “Etika Interaksi Edukatif Guru Dan Murid Menurut Perspektif Syaikh ’Abd Al-Samad Al-Falimbāni,” *Dayah: Journal of Islamic Education* 1, no. 2 (2018): 145–163

¹⁴Asep Saefullah and Agus Permana, “Al-Palimbani and the Concept of Jihad,” *Al-Tsaqafa : Jurnal Ilmiah Peradaban Islam* 16, no. 2 (2019): 176–187 and Muhammad Julkarnaen, *TAJDIID*, Vol. XV, No. 1, Januari-Juni 2016.

¹⁵Wahyudi Buska, Yogia Prihartini, and Ali Muzakir, “Abdusshamad Al-Palembani; His Thoughts and Movements In The Spread Of Islam In Indonesia,” *Al-Fikra: Jurnal Ilmiah Keislaman* 19, no. 1 (2020) and Arafah Pramasto, “Kontribusi Syaikh Abdus Shamad Al-Palimbani Pada Aspek Intelektual Islam Di Nusantara Abad Ke-18,” *Tsaqafah dan Tarikh: Jurnal Kebudayaan dan Sejarah Islam* 4, no. 2 (2020): 95 and Dzulkifli Hadi Imawan, “The Intellectual Network of Shaykh Abdusshamad Al-Falimbani and His Contribution in Grounding Islam in Indonesian Archipelago at 18th Century AD Jaringan Intelektual Syaikh Abdusshamad Al-Falimbani Dan Sumbangsihnya Dalam Membumikan Islam Di Nusantara Pad,” *Millah: Jurnal Studi Agama* 18, no. 1 (2018): 31–50.

views on *tawakkal*,¹⁶ *suluk*,¹⁷ Shammaniyah orders,¹⁸ neosufism,¹⁹ and his criticisms of the pantheistic tenets of Sufism.²⁰

So far, no significant research has discussed al-Palembani's thoughts on *mahabbah*, let alone linked with the offer that this idea is used as a solution to the spiritual crisis of modern humans. This work aims to explore the thoughts and teachings of al-Palembani on *mahabbah* and contextualize this concept for efforts to surmount the spiritual crisis of modern humans. The elaboration begins with a description of al-Palembani's biography, then moves on to his formulation of *mahabbah* in Sufism's intellectual and spiritual tradition, and finally utilizes this concept to solve contemporary spiritual crises.

Method

This study is library research using a qualitative approach. The data is collected utilizing documentary techniques from documents such as books, research articles, and other publications. This research draws its primary data from two works by 'Abd al-Shamad, *Hidayah al-Salikin*, an explanation of Ghazali's *Bidayah al-Hidayah*, and *Siyar al-Salikin*, a summary of *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, another al-Ghazali work. Various reputable Sufis works are also employed as secondary data sources to enrich the analysis in this study. The acquired data was then analyzed employing descriptive-explanatory methods, systematically deciphering al-Palembani's thought in Sufism, particularly his concept of *mahabbah* and its contextualization as the solution to the current spiritual crisis. The researcher verifies, categorizes, and interprets all facts in the light of Palembani's construction of the idea of *mahabbah* and its relevance to overcoming modern man's spiritual crisis.

Discussion

Biography of Abdus Shamad al-Palimbani

Shaikh Abdus Shamad al-Palimbani is an archipelago Sufi scholar from Palembang. His full name is Sayyid Abdus Shamad bin Abdurrahman bin Abdul Jalil bin Abdul Wahab bin Ahmad Al-Mahdani (Abdullah 2015). He was born in 1736 AD

¹⁶Pirhat Abbas, "Analyzing the Concept of Tawakkal in Al-Palimbani's Paradigm of Tasawuf," *Esensia: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 20, no. 1 (2019): 18–34.

¹⁷Ahmad Bagus Khazimi, "Konsep Suluk 'Abd Al-Shamad Al-Falimbani: Studi Kitab Siyar Al-Salikin Fi Tariqah Al-Sadat Al-Sufiyah," *Ushuluna: Jurnal Ilmu Ushuluddin* 6, no. 1 (2020): 92–106.

¹⁸Miftah Arifin, "Abd Al-Shamad Al-Palimbani dan Tarekat Samaniyah di Palembang," *Al-'Adalah* 18, no. 1 (2015).

¹⁹Umi Masfiah, "Neo Sufism Teaching of Syekh Al-Palimbani In The Book of Hidayah Al-Salikin," in *ICoReSH (International Conference on Religion, Spirituality and Humanity)* (Salatiga: IAIN Salatiga, 2019), 201–16.

²⁰Arafah Pramasto, "Kritik Terhadap Pemikiran Kontroversial Bercorak Panteistik dalam Karya Syaikh Abdus Shamad Al-Palimbani Abad Ke-18," *Sindang: Jurnal Pendidikan Sejarah Dan Kajian Sejarah* 2, No. 1 (2020): 8–18.

or 1150 H.²¹ It is known that his father was a Sufi scholar from San'a or Yemen. The father served as a grand mufti in the Kedah Kingdom, and later married a Palembang woman named Raden Ranti.²² Thus, the genealogy of 'Al-Palimbani' belonging to Abdus Shamad can be traced back to his grandmother's path. She was the main relative of the Palembang Palace and was directly descended from the Sultan at that time.²³

Abdus Samad's education started from the basic level of religious education that he received from his father, Shaykh Abdul Jalil. Then, the father took Abdus Shamad to a *pondok* in Pattani, Thailand. This *pondok* pesantren is famous for its teachings filled with religious sciences and the *pondok* system. During in *pondok*, Abdus Samad received more education on memorization. This is due to the rules of pesantren which require students to memorize each lesson, namely *tambid*, *fiqh*, *tafsir*, *akhlaq*, and other lessons.²⁴

While at *pondok*, Abdus Samad was known for his intelligence. So, after studying at *pondok*, his teacher, Shaykh Abdur Rahman bin Abdul Mubin Pauh Bok, recommended continuing his schooling in Makkah and Medina. At that early age, Abdus Shamad then went to study in Makkah and Madinah, under the recommendation of his teacher. Upon arrival in Makkah, Abdus Samad followed the Jawi Community. He studied *aqidah*, *shari'ah*, *akhlaq*, and other disciplines in Islam with the leading scholars of Mecca for about 20 years. The names of Abdus Shamad's teachers among others are Muhammad Sa'id bin Muhammad Sunbul, Abdul Ghani bin Muhammad al-Hilal, Ibrahim bin Muhammad Zamzami al-Ra's, Muhammad bin Sulaiman al-Kurdi, Sulaiman bin Umar bin Mansur and Atha ' Allah bin Ahmad. All the pieces of information are stated in his manuscript entitled Faydh al-Ihsani.²⁵

After completing his study in Makkah, Abdus Shamad migrated to Madina. The city is famous as a repository of scholars who are experts in various fields of science. Abdus Shamad learned about *aqidah*, *ushul fiqh*, *nabwu*, *sharf*, and Sufism. One of his prominent Sufism teachers during in Madina was Shaykh Muhammad bin Abdul Karim Al-Samman.²⁶ Shaykh al-Samman is the most remarkable reference on the various issues and especially in Sufism. It is to him that Abdus Samad studied and deepened the al-Sammaniyyah order and its teachings. Finally, Shaikh al-Samman

²¹Harapandi Dahri, *Buku - Kajian Naskah Klasik Buku Tasawuf* (Jakarta: Penerbit Maloho Jaya Abadi Press, 2010). p. 185

²²Arafah Pramasto, "Syaiikh Abdus Shamad Al-Palimbani: Rekonstruksi Silsilah, Latar Belakang Pedagogi, Serta Karya-Karyanya," *Tsaqafah dan Tarikh: Jurnal Kebudayaan dan Sejarah Islam* 4, no. 2 (2019). p. 97

²³Arafah Pramasto, "Kontribusi Syaikh Abdus Shamad Al-Palimbani Pada Aspek Intelektual Islam Di Nusantara Abad Ke-18," *Tsaqafah dan Tarikh: Jurnal Kebudayaan dan Sejarah Islam* 4, no. 2 (2020). p. 98

²⁴Dahri, *Buku - Kajian Naskah Klasik Buku Tasawuf*. p. 188

²⁵Mal An Abdullah, *Syaiikh Abdus-Samad Al-Palimbani-Biografi Dan Warisan Keilmuan* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pesantren, 2015). p. 26

²⁶Ahmad Bagus Khazimi, "Konsep Suluk 'Abd Al-Samad Al-Falimbani: Studi Kitab Siyar Al-Salikin Fi Tariqah Al-Sadat Al-Sufiyah," *Ushuluna: Jurnal Ilmu Ushuluddin* 6, no. 1 (2020).p. 97

appointed him as his caliph in Mecca. Then when he returned to the Archipelago, Abdus Shamad brought the *tarekat* teachings and spread them in his hometown, the city of Palembang.²⁷

From Haramain, Abdus Shamad continued his journey to the city of Damascus and Egypt. In Damascus, he learned hadith specifically from Shaykh Syamsuddin bin Ahmad bin Salim Al-Safarini Al-Nabulsi Al-Asari. Then traveled to Egypt where he joined many *halaqahs* with the leading *masyayikhs*. One of the halaqah he joined was with Shaykh Shihab Ahmad bin Abdul Fattah Al-Malawi to learn his books entitled *'Umdah al-Abkam* and *Thabaqat al-Syafi'i*.²⁸ In addition to being busy in his study by seeking knowledge from famous *masyayikhs*, Abdus Shamad was also busy contributing to the Jawi Community in Mecca just as he also never stop to have contact and correspondence with *ulama'* and *umara'* in The Archipelago. He had a good relationship with both of the groups.²⁹

Abdus Shamad was a prolific writer who produced many works in various disciplines in Islamic studies. Among his works are *Zubratul Murid fii Bayani Kalimat al-Taubid*, published in 1764 AD; *Hidayatu as-Salikîn fî Sulûki Maslaki al-Muttaqîn*, was first published in 1778 AD; *Siyar as-Sâlikîn ilâ 'Ibâdat Rabb al-'Âlamîn*, published in 1788 AD; *al-Urwatul Wutsqa wa Silsilah Waliyy al-Atqa*, *Ratib Syaikh Abdus Shamad Al-Palimbani*, *Nasihatul Muslimîna wa Tadzkîrat al-Mu'minîna fî Fadhbâil al-Jihâd wa Karâmat al-Mujtahidîna fî Sabîlillah*, *ar-Risâlat fî Kaijiati Ratib Lailat al-Jum'ab*, *Mulani'ah fî Jihâd fî Sabîlillah*, *Zaid al-Muttaqîn fî Tauhîd Rabb al-'Âlamîn*, and others.³⁰ Some of the works were written in Arabic and some others in Malay-Indonesian. Two works that became phenomenal from him are *Hidayah Salikîn* and *Siyar Salikîn*. The first work is a plating of *Bidâyah al-Hidâyah* by al-Ghazali and the second is a summary of *Ihyâ 'Ulûm al-Dîn* which is also the work of al-Ghazali.³¹ It is clear from this fact, how great the influence of Imam Al-Ghazali in the thought of Abdus Shamad.

Mahabbah According to Abdus Shamad al-Palimbani **Definition of Mahabbah**

In general, *mahabbah* is the feeling of love. As for in Sufism, the *mahabbah* becomes one of the *maqam* in the relationship between man and Allah. Life in this world will be meaningless if not accompanied by a relationship between man and the Creator. The stronger the relationship with Allah, the more human beings can reach the highest *maqam*, that is *ma'rifatullah*.³² This will affect the way man sees the world,

²⁷Abdullah, *Syaikh Abdus-Samad Al-Palimbani-Biografi Dan Warisan Keilmuan*. p. 46

²⁸Khazimi, "Konsep Suluk 'Abd Al-Samad Al-Falimbani: Studi Kitab Siyar Al-Salikin Fi Tariqah Al-Sadat Al-Sufiyah." p. 98

²⁹Syamsul dan Umiarso Rijal, "Rekonstektualisasi Konsep Ketuhanan Abd Samad Al-Palimbani," *Teosofi: Jurnal Tasawuf dan Pemikiran Islam* 8, no. 1 (2018). p. 92

³⁰Dahri, *Buku - Kajian Naskah Klasik Buku Tasawuf*. p. 190

³¹Rijal, "Rekonstektualisasi Konsep Ketuhanan Abd Samad Al-Palimbani." p. 95

³²Jamaludin and Zulkifli., *Akblah Tasawuf, Kalimedia* (Yogyakarta: Penerbit Kalimedia, 2018). p.

and man will realize that there is nothing perfect in this world, and all that exists is only a deposit of His. Some classical Sufi scholars have interrelated and distinctive definitions of *mahabbah*. The first to introduce and explore the concept of *mahabbah* in Sufism was a female Sufi named Rabi'ah Al-Adawiyyah. She maintained that *mahabbah* is love only to Allah and there is no love other than Him. To her, *mahabbah* always grows together with a longing for the Divine and that can only be felt alone without others knowing. This is *mahabbatullah* which is pure, and sincere for and from Him. So with this sincerity, Allah will reward him with perfect love.³³ So, *mahabbatullah* is the most profound feeling of love and sincerity.

Starting from Rabi'ah, the concept of *mahabbah* developed and became the central theme in the teachings of Sufism. So that many Sufi scholars interpret the concept of *mahabbah*. The concept of *mahabbah* belonging to Rabi'ah Al-Adawiyyah became the driving force for other Sufis such as Imam Al-Qusyairi in interpreting its meaning. Imam al-Qushairi says the perfect form of love is when you sincerely love Allah. And all His favors and mercy in the world are the result of the love of His servants.³⁴ Thus, a man simply surrenders all his feelings of love to Allah, and He will respond more perfectly even without the request of His servants.

Different focus in interpreting *mahabbah* is that of Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyyah. He interpreted *mahabbah* as a remedy for liver and physical diseases. Because the essence of *mahabbah* is holy love for Allah that can cure all diseases.³⁵ He will purify the heart with the purity of this love so that man only dedicates his heart only to Allah. In contrast to Ibn Qayyim, Imam Al-Ghazali explicated the dependence between *mahabbah* and *iman*. To him, *mahabbah* is the highest level of *iman*, so it is not possible that *mahabbah* is separate from *iman* and that the highest level of *iman* is *mahabbatullah*.³⁶ So the more profound *mahabbatullah*, the stronger the level of one's *iman*, and he will reach the level of *ma'rifatullah*. Thus, *mahabbah* is very significant in one's spiritual life. In line with the thinking of Imam Al-Ghazali, Abdus Shamad defines *mahabbah* as a form of praise to Allah and a path to the highest dignity in life, namely *ma'rifatullah*.³⁷ And in this dignity, one's love for God will be reciprocated more perfectly in the form of abundant worldly pleasures.

In defining *mahabbah*, al-Palimbani refers to the hadith of the Prophet:

عن ابن عباس قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم "أحبوا الله لما يغدوكم كم
نعمة وأحبوني بحب الله". (رواه الترمذي)

³³Abdul Mun'im Al-Hanafî, *Rabi'ah Al-Adawiyyah Imamâtu Al-'Asyiqîn Wa Al-Mahzûnîn* (Cairo: Dar Ar-Rasyad, 1992).p. 35

³⁴Abu Qasim Al-Qusyairi, *Ar-Risâlah Al-Qusyairiyyah* (Beirut: Dar El-Kutub Al-'Ilmiyyah, 2001).p. 348

³⁵(بيروت: دار الكتب العربية, 2003) in 3 "ابن القيم، الجوزية،" مدارج السالكين، p. 9

³⁶Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali, *Ihya' 'Ulumu Ad-Dîn* (Beirut: Dar Ibn Hazm, 2005). p. 1657

³⁷Abdus Shamad Al-Palimbani, "Hidayatu As-Salikin Fî Sulûki Maslaki Al-Muttaqîn" (Thailand: Penerbit Ibnu Halaby, n.d.).p. 96

(Love God for what He nourishes you with, and love me with the love of God). This Prophetic tradition tells us to love God because one is so hungry and all the blessings that exist are the realization of the love of Allah to His creatures. So without expecting His love, Allah will reward him with a very abundant favor.³⁸ The meaning of *mahabbah* is then the feeling of love or liking for something that gives pleasure in one's life. If someone loves something, he will focus only on the one he loves. The opposite of the word *mahabbah* is hatred; hatred of something that hurts and troubles him.³⁹ If one is already focused on what is loved, one will find a way to achieve it. If one has reached *mahabbatullah*, then one will struggle to get *ma'rifatullah*. Judging from some concepts of *mahabbah* from the classical Sufi scholars, it can be drawn the same that *mahabbah* is a feeling of love for Allah. The essence of love is to surrender all feelings of love only to the Divine so that there will be no more feelings of love for other than Him.⁴⁰ And with the fact of love will cleanse one's heart so there will be no more envy, jealousy, or the like. Thus, Allah will reciprocate his love by bestowing abundant blessings in worldly life and life hereafter.

Hierarchy of *Mahabbah*

Imam al-Ghazali mentioned nine *maqamat* in Sufism that are considered significant to go through in a spiritual journey. The nine are repentance, asceticism, patience, gratitude, **khauf, raja', ridla, tawakkal, mahabbah, and ma'rifah**. The *mahabbah* is the last *maqam* before heading to the highest one, *ma'rifah*.⁴¹ The highest level of *mahabbah* is *mahabbatullah*. As stated by some Sufi scholars, the highest level of love is the love of God Almighty. That is why it can be confirmed that there are several levels under *mahabbatullah*. And for the level of *mahabbah*, according to Shaykh Abdus Shamad al-Palimbani, can be classified according to his interpretation of this hadith⁴²:

وفي الصحيحين عن أنس رضي الله عنه قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم : لا يؤمن أحدكم حتى يكون الله ورسول أحب إليه من نفسه وأهله وأولاده وماله والناس أجمعين.

(None of you believes until God and His Messenger is dearer to him than himself, his family, his children, his money, and all people). From this Hadith, it can be interpreted that a person is not declared a believer if he does not love Allah and His Messenger greater than himself, his family, his relatives, his children, his property, and mankind as a whole. Thus, it can be concluded that there are several levels of *mahabbah*.

The first is love for Allah SWT. Wise people are those who love Allah SWT more than all other loves. Because all that is in him and his heart is from God. For

³⁸Al-Palimbani. p. 96

³⁹Al-Palimbani, *Siyar As-Salikhin Ilâ Tbâdat Rabb Al-'Âlamîn*. p. 120

⁴⁰Hamka, *Tasawuf Perkembangan Dan Pemurniannya* (Yayasan Nurul Islam, 1978). p. 206

⁴¹Jamaludin and Zulkifli., *Akblab Tasawuf*. p. 100

⁴²Al-Palimbani, "Hidayatu As-Salikhin Fî Sulûki Maslaki Al-Muttaqîn." p. 96

love other than Him comes from the love bestowed by Him on every human being.⁴³ His love is more perfect and more significant than that of His servants. This is written in the verses of the Qur'an in Surat Ali Imran verse 31, which states that anyone who loves Allah should follow what is commanded. In this way, Allah will reciprocate his love with a more perfect one.⁴⁴ Thus, it can be concluded that in addition to a man loving his Lord, He also has a sense of love for His servants. And the sincerity of His servant's love will be rewarded with a perfect love.

The second is love for the Prophet Muhammad, the companions of the Prophet, then *auliya'* Allah, and the scholars. By loving Allah, one must love the Messenger of Allah as His messenger. Because loving the Messenger of Allah will certainly make love to Him common. Likewise, for the *auliya'* and scholars who became followers of the Prophet. Thus, loving Allah's messengers will be brought home to love Allah more than love for them.

Third, love the treasures of the world, which include food, clothing, and women. It is necessary to remember that worldly possessions are only a deposit from Allah. Worldly possessions will not be entrusted if human beings do not consider the existence of Allah, the Giver of favors.⁴⁵ Food, clothing, and other forms of enjoyment of sustenance are other forms of God's love for humans. All worldly pleasures are given to humans to strengthen their worship of Allah and also their love for them. Because all of these are blessings given by Allah to humans.⁴⁶ On the other hand, by asceticism from worldly possessions and surrendering his love only to Allah alone, Allah will reciprocate his love with worldly pleasures. As Abdus Shamad said, whoever knows how great the love of Allah will love Him more, and whoever knows about the world will be ascetic to him.⁴⁷ Thus, a person who truly loves his Rabb will know which is good and bad to be loved. So, it is better to love the Lord first than to love his precepts, including all that is in the world.

In contrast to Al-Palimbani, long before his time al-Saraj only classified *mahabbah* into three levels, namely *Mahabbah al-'Ammah*, love from God for humans in general for their *dhiker* and faith, *Mahabbah al-Shiddiqin wa al-Mutabaqqiqin* is love that is born from gratitude for worldly pleasures from Allah and *Mahabbah al-Shiddiqin wa al-'Arifin* is eternal love only for Allah without reason and cause.⁴⁸ And in the time of al-Jauziyyah, he concluded that there were four levels of *mahabbah*. The highest is loving Allah, loving people who love Allah, loving for the sake of Allah, and loving people

⁴³Wan Mohd Shaghir Abdullah, "Terjemah Hidayatus Salikin Syeikh Abdus Shamad Al-Falimbani" (Kuala Lumpur: Khazanah Fathaniyah, 2002). p. 114

⁴⁴Al-Palimbani, *Siyar As-Sâlikîn Ilâ 'Ibâdat Rabb AL-'Âlamîn*. p. 131

⁴⁵Syamsun Ni'am, *Tasawuf Studies Pengantar Belajar Tasawuf* (Yogyakarta: Penerbit Ar-Ruzz Media, 2014). p. 121

⁴⁶Shaghir Abdullah, "Terjemah Hidayatus Salikin Syeikh Abdus Shamad Al-Falimbani." p. 114

⁴⁷Al-Palimbani, *Siyar As-Sâlikîn Ilâ 'Ibâdat Rabb AL-'Âlamîn*. p. 121

⁴⁸Abu Nashr As-Saraj Ath-Thusy, *Al-Luma'* (Mesir: Dar El-Kutub Al-Haditsah, 1960). p. 87

who are with Allah.⁴⁹ Al-Jauziyyah emphasizes every level to keep returning to love Allah and love for Allah.

How to Achieve *Mahabbatullah*

The highest level of love is to love Allah. To reach that level, Abdus Shamad gave two ways to get it. The two paths to *mahabbatullah* are the path of *fardlu* and *sunnah*. The path of *fardlu* is to attain *mahabbatullah* by carrying out all of His commands and avoiding all of His prohibitions. In this way, a person will be clean from immorality, love his Lord sincerely and purely, and be pleased with all his *qadla* and *qadar*. The second is the path of *sunnah*, by performing all the acts of *sunnah* and avoiding things that approach *shubhat* and *makruh*.⁵⁰ One will be on the straight path to his Rabb with these two paths. He will be clean from what Allah does not like and submit himself only to Allah. After knowing the path to attaining *mahabbatullah*, Abdus Shamad explained some of the signs of attaining *mahabbatullah*. Ten important signs are explained by Abdus Shamad by quoting from *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* of Imam al-Ghazali.⁵¹

The first is the desire to die because, with the pickup of death, a person will also soon meet the Owner of Love, namely Allah. The second is to obey everything that the love commands and stay away from everything that will strengthen his lust and weaken the love of his Lord. The third is always to recite *dhiker* to mention His name as an effort to continuously strengthen his love and make his heart not lonely. The fourth is to always pray to Allah, alone (**uzlah**) with *dhiker* and multiply prayers and recite the Qur'an. The fifth is the growth of a sense of calm in his life so that there is no fear of losing because he realizes that all is only his deposit. The sixth is obedience in his life to all His commands so that all the hardships in his life disappear because of his intense worship. The seventh is to live as a Muslim who hates infidels. The eighth is the growth of fear, devotion to His majesty, and respect for Allah by worshiping and adoring Him without fear of destruction. The ninth is the attitude of **tawadlu'** by hiding his love for Allah from the people in general. And the last is a sincere heart of everything done only for Allah and continually praise Him with all forms of praise.⁵²

***Mahabbah* as Facing the Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man**

It has been established that modern human exhibits an excessive amount of affection for everything. As a result, they lose their genuine love. Because they are absorbed with exterior realities, they do not even love themselves. They're self-centered individuals. Rather than yielding to God's plan, they choose to be free to pursue their desires, which have become comfortable with the benefits of globalization.⁵³ Their lives were ruined because of their self-centeredness. In terms of

⁴⁹Ibn Qayyim Al-Jauziyyah, "Raudhatu Al-Muhibbina Wa Zahratu Al-Musytaqqina" (Kuwait: Dar 'Alim al-Fawaid, n.d.) p. 119

⁵⁰Al-Palimbani, *Siyar As-Salikin Ilâ 'Ibâdat Rabb Al-'Âlamîn*. p. 121

⁵¹Al-Palimbani, "Hidayatu As-Salikin Fî Sulûki Maslaki Al-Muttaqîn." p. 97

⁵²Al-Palimbani, *Siyar As-Salikin Ilâ 'Ibâdat Rabb Al-'Âlamîn*. p. 124

⁵³Jung, *Modern Man In Search Of A Soul*. p. 196

social psychology and mental destruction, they break the bonds of brotherhood and even lose love for God to deny God's existence. While in essence, humans are God-created creatures who live to worship Him. People in modern times, on the other hand, value higher importance on their wealth, material belongings, and the world. This is the same as placing affairs at the lowest level and then elevating them to the highest. This is a glaring betrayal of life's essence. As a result, people lose sight of a crucial component of their lives: loving God.

Modern humans' love is focused solely on earthly goods due to a lack of awareness of how to live this life. This is a far cry from love's actual nature. As previously stated, pure love is the ultimate level of love because it exclusively loves for the Divine. Love will be born love with what He offers or worldly issues since the center and beginning of love is love to God.⁵⁴ Modern humans' love, on the other hand, is only filled with ego and fear of losing what they have. In the meantime, worldly love is the lowest level of love and will be lost.

On the other side, the higher he climbs, the further he becomes from the things that matter in his life. As a result, modern humans have lost touch with their metaphysical side, and their rationality has surpassed them. Spirituality, according to one American health teacher, has the potential to overcome this dilemma. Spirituality is defined as the process by which a person becomes aware of what is wrong with him and then seeks answers to the problem. Spirituality will shine a light on people's dark areas.⁵⁵ Dark spots are created by the dread of losing what is in the world of worrying about not keeping up with the fast-paced globalization. The growth of globalization promotes egoism. The more advanced technology becomes, the greater the demand for this convenience. The more advanced technology develops, the more forced individuals would feel to enjoy this convenience. Finally, there is a fear of failure and an imbalance in life on the opposite side.

The significant teachings of Islam and Sufism can assist Westerners who are beginning to feel dry on the inside and in their inner life. Islamic teachings that lead to a brighter path can provide the desperately needed recovery. This type of search is also be found in Christianity, Buddhism, and other religions.⁵⁶ Unlike other religions that educate only about escaping the monotony of life through '*uzlah*,' Islam has a vibrant spirituality that penetrates all of its worship practices. Even with current technological advances, Islam is worthy of being used as a point of return for humans who have lost their way.

Islam and its Sufism teachings introduce the sacred relationship between man and his God. Love that exceeds love between humans. With this, love will burn out worldly desires and be purified only to love the Divine. This relationship is the pinnacle

⁵⁴Hamka, *Tasawuf Perkembangan Dan Pemurniannya*. p. 204

⁵⁵Deepak Chopra, *Spiritual Solutions-Answers to Life's Greatest Challenges* (New York: Harmony Book, 2012). p. 12

⁵⁶Muh Fihris Khalik, "Reposisi Agama Sebagai Sumber Spiritulitas," *Asb-Shahabab* 3, no. 1 (2017). p. 6

of one's spirituality and the highest peak of true love.⁵⁷ That way, the world's love is only loving that is not complete and only human lust. So, Sufism brought back modern man to purify his heart and his love only for his Lord.

Seeing the balance of life that requires spirituality and rationality and material things, Nasr tries to find a way to this balance—starting with criticizing the crisis of modern humans and then providing an alternative way with Sufism to fill the light in the spirituality of modern humans. Because according to Nasr, the gradual practice of Sufism bringing people closer to God can burden the spiritual side. Sufism in Islam is like the heart that is so central in the revelation of Islam.⁵⁸ Sufism can provide energy in both social and intellectual life. With Sufism, humans will always involve God and spirituality in every side of their lives. In a life full of convenience and alternatives in this modern era, a wrong side needs to be corrected and even treated to get back on the straight path. The path leads humans to a world full of balance between material and spirituality. So that humans can be aware of the things that deserve to be loved perfectly and everything in life to the Creator.

There are so many things and ways to heal this spiritual crisis in Islam. So can this be applied to spiritual crises in other religions? Hossein Nasr stated that there are three ways of applying Sufism, including the concept of *mahabbah* to the adherences of other religions.⁵⁹ The first is the active practice of Sufism in the lives around them by killing their lustful selves and being regenerated with a new spiritual soul. Second, by studying Islam more excitingly and openly to eliminate the flawed views of the West on Islam, they are open to the noble values of Islam contained in their teachings and practices. The third is to wake them up from the long slumber of materialism that causes them to forget spirituality and realize how important the spiritual dimension is for life. With these three ways, Nasr hopes to provide a way out of the emptiness and spiritual dryness that occurs in the West.

Trying to change the worldview of modern humans who do not consider the importance of spirituality in life. Become a secular human being who forgets the existence of God, Heaven, and Hell, and considers religious teachings to be a constraint and not freedom. With the theory of Nasr, it can be taken on the second path to be a solution to the spiritual crisis. Trying to spread Islam to the West with a more attractive presentation with the harmony in Sufism which is the essence of the spiritual aspect of Islam. So, it is necessary to explain the concepts in Sufism teachings to show the West that what they are looking for to be a cure for emptiness is in Sufism in Islam. One of them is the true nature of love. Modern humans often love the world more and detach themselves from religion and its teachings. This is what triggers a spiritual crisis.

Shaykh Abdus Shamad al-Palimbani with the *mahabbah* concept can be relevant to be a solution for worldly love. *Mahabbah* is the tendency of the heart to like

⁵⁷Haidar Bagir, *Buku Saku Tasawuf* (Bandung: Penerbit Arasy, 2005). p. 84

⁵⁸Nasr, *Islam and the Plight of Modern Man*. p. 204

⁵⁹Nasr. p. 91

something according to its nature. It will start with loving things that are delicious and liked by lust. The Prophet in his hadis mentions these things are fragrant smells, women, and pleasure in worship. And with these three things, humans should return to love the Giver, not to love the world excessively. And bases his love for the world on the love of Allah. So that every feeling of love is the result of loving Allah.

He stated that the sanctity of a person's life is when he loves his Lord.⁶⁰ He included his statement with the statement from Abu Bakar ash-Siddiq r.a:

من ذاق خالص محبة الله عز وجل منعه ذلك من طلب الدنيا وأوحشه ذلك من جميع
البشر

(Whoever tastes the pure love of God Almighty prevents him from seeking this world and makes him more despicable than all human beings). Whoever loves Allah will get love from Him in return with perfect love. And whoever feels the sincerity of His love, then he will be awake from worldly pleasures that are only temporary, even from mortal human love that keeps him in purity. So, by loving Allah, one will be cured of the selfishness of those who love the world too much. This will bring them to the essence of love and worldly and hereafter happiness. If one only loves oneself, one's family, and even only worldly possessions, one will be haunted by the fear of loss. He will try his best to keep what he has, which is essentially only a deposit from Allah. Therefore, they need awareness to return all their love only to Allah.⁶¹ No matter how much power humans have in defending their property, it will all return to the owner. True love only loves Allah, so it is better to love the Owner of everything than to love the property that is only a temporary deposit.

Similarly to Hamka, Abdus Shamad said that loving worldly things is not true love. The essence of love is to love Allah as the Lord of the Owners of everything. By loving Allah, a person will be filled with love in his heart, automatically loving what is in the world according to its level. Loving fellow human beings without envy because Allah has filled his heart with the gift of love.⁶² And with true love, modern man will not be afraid to lose what he has. He will also always draw closer to his Lord because love grows from his closeness to his Lord. This proves that spirituality grows simply by loving Allah with sincerity. So, a person's spirituality will fortify his lust for temporary treasures.

Hamka even classifies worldly wealth into two, intrinsic wealth and imaginary wealth. Real wealth exists but is sufficient and well-received because it is a favor from Allah. Imaginary wealth is wealth that is abundant but blinds its owner. So that he only loves his wealth and forgets love for others, even for his own God he forgets.⁶³ The wealth in front of the eyes is not the essence of wealth. The essence of wealth is a form

⁶⁰Al-Palimbani, "Hidayatu As-Salikin Fî Sulûki Maslaki Al-Muttaqîn." p. 96

⁶¹Hamka, *Tasauf Perkembangan Dan Pemurniannya*. p. 207

⁶²Al-Palimbani, *Siyar As-Sâlikîn Ilâ 'Ibâdat Rabb AL-'Âlamîn*. p. 131

⁶³Hamka, *Tasauf Modern* (Yayasan Nurul Islam, 1981). p. 157

of gratitude from its owner for the favors God has given. Although a little thankful and felt enough, that is the real rich. In contrast to abundant or even accumulated wealth, only wealth blinds a person. If a man loves his worldly possessions too much, then he has become blind to wealth and forgotten the love of his Rabb, who is, in fact, the Owner of everything.

Al-Sarraj is also of the view that by cultivating a love for Allah, a person will focus his gaze and vision only on Allah alone. He will see that everything that exists is the enjoyment of Him. He will also see with the eyes of his heart so that he will feel closer to Him.⁶⁴ Loving Allah is not just loving, but by loving Him, one will be fortified and centered at one point, Allah. He will not give up his love for the world and its contents. Nor will he turn his gaze to things of a temporary nature. In that way, Allah will also reciprocate the love of His servants with perfect love. Everything in the world is only a temporary deposit. That way, no matter how hard man pursues the world, he will end up in emptiness and mean nothing. Abdus Shamad reminds us of this by quoting the hadith of the Prophet:⁶⁵ If God gives the world to love and to love and does not give faith unless it is loved, indeed, Allah will give everything in the world to those whom He loves. And Allah will not give the world even the blessings of faith to those who are hated.

Al-Sarraj maintained that only by surrendering all feelings of love to Him will He reciprocate with all worldly pleasures. But this is only for those whom He loves. People whom Allah loves are not given things that are harmful or detrimental. For those who repent of their previous sins,⁶⁶ God will remove them later. Even if death has invited, but Allah loves him, he will get the opportunity to repent. By repenting, one has become a person loved by Him. This can be seen from His Word in Surat Al-Baqarah verse 222, that Allah loves those who repent and those who are pure.⁶⁷ Thus, if you want a happy and calm life, love Allah, repent for all the sins that exist, and do not love anything more than love for Him.

In essence, humans come from one nature. Based on spirituality that comes from one teaching. So that when they feel the dryness of their spirituality, they can return to their nature. Human nature is the teachings of Allah contained in Islam. This is based on the word of Allah in *Surah* al-Rum verse 30. Thus, naturally, humans have intense personal needs for religion and all its teachings. Because in essence, all things that exist in the world exist because of Allah as God and exist in religious teachings so that there is a cure for spiritual crises. The need for humans to return to love their Lord and all his teachings. Do not love the world excessively because the world is just a storehouse of anxiety and fear. So, knowing the nature of love and who has the right to love will bring modern humans out of the world's darkness.

⁶⁴Ath-Thusy, *Al-Luma'*. p. 86

⁶⁵Al-Palimbani, *Siyar As-Salikhin Ilâ Tbâdat Rabb Al-'Âlamîn*. p. 131

⁶⁶Al-Palimbani.

⁶⁷Muhammad Fuad Abdul Al-Baqi, *Al-Mu'jam Al-Mufahras* (Cairo: Dar El-Kutub Al-Mishriyyah, 1945). p. 429

Conclusion

The preceding pages of this research have disclosed Abdus Shamad's exposition of *mahabbah*, which covers his discussion of its definition, hierarchy, the way to reach it, and its contextualization as a solution to the spiritual crises of modern man. *Mahabbah*, according to Abdus Shamad, is to adore Allah alone, not things that are only His creation. Because love is a feeling bestowed by Allah on His people, *mahabbah*, with its stages, will always lead to *mahabbatullah* or Allah's love because adoring Allah is the highest level of love. Allah will reciprocate His servant's love by loving Him perfectly with the appearance of devotion, worldly favors, and even a deep faith. As a result, he will never be separated from Allah's love.

Modern Western ways and lifestyles contribute to people's spiritual crises, which cause them to neglect the most crucial aspect of their lives: the source of true happiness. Abdus Shamad's explication of *mahabbah* teaching is an appropriate and practical solution to this terrible crisis and painful predicament. This ideology and message encourage modern humankind to return to Allah's love and leave this finite world behind. This love arouses the awareness that everything in the world is the outcome of His creation in modern humans. As a result, it is preferable to love the Creator, who bestows ideal worldly pleasures, rather than simply loving His creation.

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