

## Al-Ghazali's *Ma'rifah* and *Mahabbah*'s Relations

MANSOUREH EBRAHIMI\*, AHMADALI GHOLAMI & KAMARUZAMAN YUSOFF<sup>1</sup>

### ABSTRACT

*A salik is a ṣufī who practices tasawuf (mysticism) with certain ma'rifah (knowledge of Allah) consequent to their devotion to his/her beloved (God); which piety obtains greater maḥabbah (love) and a more intimate pool of ma'rifah. This paper aims to discuss the concept of ma'rifah in al-Ghazali's Kimiya' al-Sa`adah and Iḥyā'Ulum al-Dinn as an initial element of creation and direct result of maḥabbah (love). The qualitative approach is employed. Literature from peer-reviewed and refereed journals, articles and those two books were reviewed in order to reveal the significant spirit of love and knowledge's relations in al-Ghazali's viewpoint as one of the greatest Muslim philosophers, theologians and jurists. The results show that ma'rifah and mahabbah haqiqi (true love and knowledge) are of the same essence and that only those of proven capacity can understand metaphysical domains. Al-Ghazali's perspective reveals that understanding ma'rifah and mahabbah activates a causal chain or continuum that advances, strengthens and motivates this relationship*

**Keywords:** Al-Ghazali, *Kimiya' al-Sa`adah*, *Ma'rifah*, *Maḥabbah*, 'Ilm

Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali al-Ṭusi (hereafter al-Ghazali or Ghazali) was one of the greatest Muslim philosophers, theologians and jurists who excelled in knowledge and character. Born in 1058 CE (450 AH) of Iranian parentage in *Ṭabiran-i Ṭus*, he died there in 1111 CE (505 AH) or thereabout. He lost his father at a very tender age after which his guardian shouldered the responsibility of his and his brother's education. He saw the boy as a *lad o'pairs* with a peculiar zeal for knowledge. Al-Ghazali later came to be viewed as the *binding proof of Islam*, an *ornament of the faith*, and *gatherer of multifarious sciences*. Many called him *al-ṣadiq* (the absolute *mujahid*). Equally regarded as a major Shafi'i jurist, with top shelf expertise in heresiography, public deliberations, principles of doctrine and jurisprudence. By general consensus, he was the reviver of the fifth Islamic century. Al-Ghazali is believed to have spent part of his youth under one of the greatest theologians of his time, Imam al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwayni. His zeal, motivation and enthusiasm to reached pinnacles of knowledge made him an outstanding figure among scholars of his generation. Nizam al-Mulk, the all-powerful vizier of the Saljuq (Seljuks) commended his intellectual achievements and appointed him renowned professor at in the capital's new university. By age 30, al-Ghazali's excellence in scientific fields made him the greatest academic icon of the time (Watt 2007).

The most indelible feature of his life are his colossal contributions to scientific knowledge and Islam. These are divided in to three major periods; beginning in Ṭus, subsequently to Gurgan, and finally to Nishapur. After the death of Imam al-Ḥaramayn al-Juwayni, young al-Ghazali saw

<sup>1</sup> **Mansoureh Ebrahimi**, Ph.D., (\*Corresponding Author), Senior Lecturer of Modern Middle East and Islamic Studies at the Academy of Islamic Civilization, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, 81310 Skudai, Johor, MALAYSIA. Email: mansoureh@utm.my; **Ali Gholami**, Ph. D., Researcher at the Faradidgostar Energy Co., Entrepreneurship Center: Relationships Between University & Industry, University of Mazandaran, Babolsar, IRAN. Email: gholami\_aak@yahoo.com; **Kamaruzaman Yusoff**, Ph. D., Professor of Modern Middle East and Islamic Studies at the Academy of Islamic Civilization, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, 81310 Skudai, Johor, MALAYSIA. Email: y.kamaruzaman@utm.my

the importance of the court of Nizām al-Mulk, vizier of the Seljuk sultans, and relocated there for eventual appointment as Director of the Nizamiyyah (Nizamiyah) College in Baghdad (AH 484/AD 1091) (Nakamura 2008).

He reached another milestone during the second period of his brilliant carrier by successfully combining orthodox Islam with sufism, which made him the most revered-orthodox 'doctor' in Baghdad (AH 484-8/AD 1091-5). Although short, this period bears this and other significance. A crisis rocked Baghdad causing the death of Nizām al-Mulk and the brutal murder of Sultan Malik Shah, which changed the course of Muslim history. Al-Ghazali fled Baghdad, renounced his career and the world, then entered an absolute spiritual crisis. Prior to this he was a renowned lecturer in Islamic jurisprudence and on numerous occasions had refuted heresies and responded to questions from all areas of endeavor (Nakamura 2008). The next period, that of his retirement (AH 488-505/AD 1095-1111) took him to Syria and Palestine as a wandering *sufi*, after which he returned to Ṭus and devoted his time in sufism while writing and teaching disciples until the sudden departure that marked the end of his life (Nakamura 2008).

Al-Ghazali's knowledge of Islamic science began in Ṭus, Gurgan and Nishapur in Northern Iran where he is believed to have gained magnificent levels of knowledge in traditional Islamic sciences. He was an equally devout follower of sufism from a tender age (Nakamura 2008). As opined by Nakamura, al-Ghazali's renunciation of his brilliant carrier and complete embrace of sufism was born from a realization that the most productive method of deriving true knowledge and conviction of revelatory truth was through sufism. This belief launched his criticism and denial of Islamic philosophical knowledge from a purely theological perspective. His attitude ambivalently encompassed criticism as well as objective learning. The reason he mastered philosophy was to criticize then Islamize its content. He proved beyond doubt that metaphysical arguments cannot stand the trial of reason. At the same time, he was compelled to admit that the certainty of revelatory truth, which he devoted his time exploring, could not be established by reason. Subsequently, his zeal led him to attain truth in an ecstatic state or *fana'* of sufism. (Nakamura 2008).

His outstanding achievement is a famous work of Islamic sufism that transcends imagination, and largely credited with the belief that knowing one's self is pre-requisite to knowing Almighty Allah. Among his famous writings is *Kimiya' al-Sa'adah*, published in Persia after a ten-year journey (490-500). Prior to his death in 505 AH, this was considered the most fascinating period of his sophisticated works on *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*. *Kimiya' al-Sa'adah* had remarkable effects on the common people and still robustly resonates as a model for all seekers of truth. *Kimiya' al-Sa'adah* includes four important religious elements: *ibadah* (the act of worship); *mu'amalah* (the dealings); *muhlikah* (vices such as vanity, pride, self-gratitude, frugality and anger); and *munjiyah* (virtues such as affection, faith, gratitude, tolerance, contentment, etc.). The rationale behind the book was to instill discipline and remove bad attitudes; thus, to purify the heart from defects and stumbling blocks on the path of righteousness and salvation. It reveals the logical path to genuine *sa'adah* (prosperity) as willfully conscious foundation upon which sufism stands. *Kimiya' al-Sa'adah* was written to describe the pivotal role of morality in religion.

However, a general consensus among numerous investigators is that his oft overlooked contribution to the importance of knowledge is the principle of love, which indicates insufficient effort and discernment on the part of scholars. A careful investigation reveals a paucity of research. Our comprehensive review of all dissertations and theses in the English language this last century say nothing on the subject. The authors therefore concentrate on the relationship of *ma'rifah* and *mahabbah* as fundamental to Ghazali's approach to eternal bliss. As a beginning focus, Ghazali introduces four different forms of *ma'rifah* as tools used to achieve ideal perfection. He introduces *mahabbah* towards the end of the book but in his explanations of *ma'rifah* we found a special continuity with *mahabbah* described as inherent. Hence, this paper reveals an exceptionally meaningful relationship between *ma'rifah* and *mahabbah* according to al-Ghazali.

## Knowledge (*Ma'rifah*)

*Ma'rifah* is an Arabic term that literally means 'knowledge' and is often used by sufis in reference to mystically derived intuitive knowledge that reveals spiritual truth '*reached through ecstatic experiences rather than revealed or rationally acquired*'. *Ma'rifah* entails knowledge of a subject or reality that is practically impossible to attain without wisdom. The Holy Quran, a book full of wisdom and truth, says that Mankind must possess true knowledge in order to stand in awe of (i.e., greatly admire) God (al-Quran, al-Faṭir 35:28) and that we must practice religion purely for the sake of God (al-Quran, al-Zumar 39:11).

Al-Ghazali's greatest work on philosophy was full of wisdom and knowledge whereby he prevented unfruitful innovations and established breeding grounds for knowledge and wisdom to fructify in favor of continuity and stability while standing the test of time. He opined that society's major role is to apply *shari'a* as a yardstick to attain happiness and by which we cement the relationship between man and God. Therefore, the purpose of knowledge is to prepare mankind as a self-conscious being who uses religion to attain salvation and gain eternal bliss. Equally, he dissuades seekers of truth from obtaining social position, happiness, contentment and knowledge apart from the teachings of religion. Anything contrary is illusory, since all revolve around a transient material world (Nofal 2000: 1-19).

Al-Ghazali was specifically interested in problems related to knowledge, concepts, methodology, categories and purpose. He regarded knowledge as the utmost priority. In his view, true knowledge is knowledge of the Supremacy of God as architect of the universe. His philosophy categorizes disciplines like medicine, mathematics and chemistry, etc., as techniques (Al-Ghazali 1982: Vol. II).

The purpose of acquiring knowledge is to equip man with plenitude and happiness in preparation and passport for life in the Hereafter, all of which brings man closer to his Creator in the here and now by putting a knowing smile on his face. Knowledge plays a pivotal role in preparing us to meet God when one's derives usefulness from veracity. Without doubt, religious knowledge is superior to that of secular science because it establishes relationship with God and obtains a passport to eternal bliss. Although secular scientific knowledge cannot be regarded as trivial because of its role in daily life, in terms of everlasting usefulness, religious and secular realms are not comparable (Al-Ghazali 1982, vol. I).

According to Ghazali, self-consciousness is key to actualizing the knowledge of God because knowing one's self leads to knowing God. Man must be conscious of his *being* since nothing is closer to you than yourself. This is the foundation upon which *Ma'rifah* is built and which instills belief in our Creator as the Supreme Architect of the Universe. He writes: *Everyone, who has the capability to understand the knowledge of one's own self can definitely recognize Allah's divinity*. According to the Quran (Fuṣṣilat 41:11) one of God's sign is within the human as *the road of knowledge* from self to God.

A viable tool for finding the truth of one's self is through knowledge of human existence (Al-Bani al-Kilani al-Kourani 2015). People exalted in character and ideology in keeping with Islamic teachings are regarded as signs showing men the straight path as '*tariq Allah*', as also are answers to questions of identity, status, origin, destination, purpose, mission and the separation of good from evil. The first step in attaining *ma'rifah* is to understand truth regarding the soul (*ruh, nafs*), which Ghazali interprets as the heart. One's self is the tool *par excellence* needed to comprehend the truth of things that cannot be quantified. For example, the heart of man is colorless, dimensionless and indivisible; therefore, it is beyond imagination. Man must also pay proper attention to '*hajiyat*' (needs) central to *ma'rifah*. Man, as *homo sapiens*, is subject to feelings he cannot fully comprehend. Equally, love and pain are felt but cannot be seen or implored, neither are they represented by shape, color or size (Al-Ghazali 2013: 52; Al-Ghazali 2001).

In contrast to the physical or organic, the soul or '*ruh*' is on a higher plane and cannot abide division. Its priority and relevance also manifest *ma'rifah* of Allah (Al-Ghazali 2001: 96). The first priority in the acquisition of knowledge by understanding and classifying facts and

truths regarding the soul (*nafs, ruh*). Man's inner self is an immeasurable treasure of deific perfection in terms of uniqueness and primal truths that cannot be commonly comprehended. This realm belongs to the field of '*shahadat*', a high domain that manifests good deeds that emerge as glory, and goodness that emerges as splendor (Al-Ghazali 2001: 96). It is undeniable that the origin and ultimate reality of the human soul relate to another world or dimension, and that the soul drives the entire body. Its cardinal objective is to attain *ma'rifah* of Allah, the All Powerful, The Irresistible, The Compeller, The Loftiest, The Restorer of All Affairs. Another attribution of Allah is '*Al-Rahman*', The Most Compassionate Who bestows blessings on all men and causes man's heart to differentiate between right and wrong. Al-Ghazali refers to his book, '*Ajaib al-Qalb*', for further knowledge of man's 'self'. Regarding clarifications in both books, he says the subject of 'self' is but a trifle that resonates with God's love. He is very vocal with praises for Allah with words describing His attributes and testifies that only He deserves worship. In essence, knowing the truth of 'self' is a prelude to knowing God and key to *ma'rifah* of Allah. The human heart is confined by limits that are difficult to comprehend as a basis of reality. Thus, a more solid foundation must be laid as a path to attain *mujahadah*, which is fundamental to conscious attainment of *ma'rifah* of Allah and a path that should be free from all other forms of learning or listening.

The most fundamental '*ilm*' that every cleansed heart must possess are internal '*ilm*' and external '*ilm*' (Chapter 15, Title 1). Both are foundations upon which everyone differentiates and compares on condition they wish to meet Allah in peace and happiness on the Day of Resurrection. *Kimiya' al-Sa'adah* sheds light regarding these types of '*ilm*', stating that the heart must be free of defects deriving from external '*ilm*' and that one must specifically differentiate between both types. Furthermore, when a soul distances itself from external '*ilm*' there remain no barriers or hurdles (*hijab*) to a firm dedication to the remembrance of Allah, whereby one yearns to attain *kashf*, the wisdom of knowing hidden things. Conversely, if greater priority is given to external '*ilm*', the soul will suffer setbacks and meet Allah in despair. Basically, *ma'rifah* is synonymous with 'truth', owing to the fact that the model and format of *haqiqah* is the foundation upon which reality is built, and thus may be regarded as a framework. Abstinence is therefore the best option. A more concrete foundation is then established with a clearer picture of *haqiqah*' (Al-Ghazali 2013: 37-38; Al-Ghazali 2001).

*Ma'rifah* (knowledge in general) plays a pivotal role as an attenuating medium through which happiness and contentment are achieved on fully achieving *ma'rifah* of Allah. In *Kimiya' al-Sa'adah*, the secret to good fortune and blessing lies in *ma'rifah* of Allah by which man finds solace and takes joy in what he does. For example, the human eye is always pleased with things that are beautiful and extraordinary. The ears always enjoy sounds that give pleasure and comfort according to desire. Happiness emanates from the heart's core when man fulfils objectives according to creation's plan. The major function of the heart is to enable man's search for facts without an iota of doubt about his environment and to widen his horizons of interest. This gladdening of the heart is what grants contentment (Al-Ghazali 2013: 40; Al-Ghazali 2001).

Furthermore, when realizing that happiness relies on *ma'rifah*, and that one acts according one's scope of knowledge, it is possible to develop *ma'rifah* according to taste (Al-Ghazali 2013: 40-41; Al-Ghazali 2001). Al-Ghazali explains in Section 16, Title 1 that heartfelt happiness must tally with the *ma'rifah* of Allah; so also does contentment in terms of what is done under its purview. It therefore becomes obvious that the better purer the *ma'rifah*, the more it is appreciated. Hence, it becomes exciting to know with delight those things that absolutely satisfy everything the heart considers. Hence, Allah is Most Supreme and Highest in Authority as Architect and Origin of the Universe and what lays within. All wonders of the world are under His authority. It is therefore imperative to consider Him above all else. Among Muslims are those who pray, "Our Lord, grant us in the world what is good, and in the Hereafter what is good, and protect us from the punishment of the Fire" (al-Quran, al-Baqarah 2:201).

*Ma'rifah* of Allah is absolute and cannot be compared to anything. The sick heart neglects and disobeys His command and does not yearn for sublime *ma'rifah*. Agony ends when the heart is filled with *ma'rifah* of Allah. Here is where love plays an enormous role by connecting *ma'rifah*

with the heart's delight (Al-Ghazali 2013: 40). Man must give priority to God more than anything, including self. The love of Allah must fill his heart with sincere devotion so that he feels the presence of Allah Who created him from nothing and made him what he is. The love of Allah must accord with the teachings of Rasulullah, the best of all humanity. How to love and worship Allah is documented in authentic *hadith*. The mercy and blessings of Allah are far greater than the love of a mother for her child (Al-Ghazali 2013: 51).

The creation of man is perfect. Allah alone beautified his form far above all other creatures and things. He blessed man with the *ma'rifah* of Allah so man would be grateful and diligently serve Him (Al-Ghazali 2013: 51-52). The more the human heart is filled with Allah's love, the closer he is to Allah. Consciousness of Allah calms us and makes it easier to move closer to Him. In this regard, man becomes aware that Allah knows him more than anyone and thus, cannot be in partnership with anything. The fruitfulness of the *ma'rifah* of Allah reaped after death; otherwise, one will be in sorrow, despair and confusion because he/she he did not attain the *ma'rifah* of Allah during his earthly life. Those who attain the *ma'rifah* of Allah will enjoy happiness, peace and joy in their grave and on the Day of Resurrection.

Al-Ghazali made it decidedly clear that the soul must act in accord with rules and regulations of conduct contained in *shari'a*. The two most important points are *ma'rifah* of 'Nafs' and *ma'rifah* of Allah, especially their relationship. The soul who seeks *ma'rifah* of Allah must strive for it. In Section 9, Title 2 of *Kimiya-i-Sa'adat*, al-Ghazali describes how the successful man achieves a high position in this world and the next (Al-Ghazali 2013: 64; Al-Ghazali 2001: 68).

1. The best medium for divine blessings is the search for *ma'rifah* of Allah.
2. Through sincere belief and devotion to Allah, the heart finds solace. Love for Allah then dominates the heart and obtains strict adherence to the remembrance of Allah.
3. The more you love Allah, the more you worship him.
4. It is from Him we come and to Him we return, there is no dispute about this.
5. The more one loves Allah, believes in Him, cherishes Him and adores Him, the more blessings. Because Allah loves sincere worshippers who are devoted, humble and grateful, those who offer this noble conduct are surely rewarded.

He further writes how the heart is purified from defects so that it will be blessed. Avoid sin and distance yourself from places that are full of sin. Engage in constant *zikr*, be steadfast in prayer and recite the holy Quran. This generates *mahabbah* of Allah. When the heart attains this level, that person is called a '*falah*' (Al-Ghazali 2013: 64).

In Section 2, Title 3 (Chapter 2, Title 2) of *Kimiya' al-Sa'adat*, he reveals important matters required to reach *ma'rifah*. The key absolutely relies on man's ability to admit that Allah's bounties and blessing are immeasurable and that through gratitude and sincere appreciation for these blessings man develops a viable relationship with Allah. In essence, the food of every believing heart is *mahabbah*, upon which the *ma'rifah* of Allah is built as a foundation and reiterative framework that feeds each replicating sphere of knowledge. Hence, the foundation must be a reservoir full of nourishment and sustenance that re-energizes and reinvigorates the heart's movement toward the *ma'rifah* of Allah (Al-Ghazali 2013: 73).

Al-Ghazali in *Kimiya' al-Sa'adah* (Section 1, Title-Element 1) explains that the path of true *ma'rifah* is to worship truly and sincerely and in all obedience (essential elements). The first step is *mujahadah*, a complex and far reaching subject which the seeker must constantly pursue. Claims of *ma'rifah* without *mujahadah* is misleading and holds grave disadvantage (Al-Ghazali 2013: 118). In Section 5, Title-Element 2 (*Babi* or Inlet 1), he explains that the 'Friendship of Allah' cannot be compared to ordinary friendship. They are never equal. The 'Friendship of Allah' is solely based on firm belief, piety and faith. Accordingly, the love of 'Allah' is in faith and has two levels. The first is based on private motives and personal interests in all considerations of 'Allah'. The second is far more elegant and profound, in that it is loving 'Allah' without private motives or personal interests. This latter type of love is that of godship and belongs to the divine realm. It implies loving someone only for the love of Allah. The final grade of this second love is '*ishq*': "when

the adoration of a lover reaches its climax, he comes to dote on everything even remotely connected with his beloved". Hence, the 'Friendship of Allah' comprises two parts: one for blessings in this world and in the Hereafter; the other belonging to 'Allah' so that there is nothing in it because it is whole, full and complete [this section refers to the *principle of love*] (Al-Ghazali 2013: 333-335). If there is intention to love for the sake of God, it is therefore for God and there is no doubt it lacks merit unless done willingly, and love begets from willingness (Al-Ghazali 1982 Vol. IV: 115).

To attest that the knowledge of Allah is best known as the perfect way of happiness for every living soul is to:

1. Devote time and energy in search of Allah's *Ma'rifah* to the best of one's ability.
2. Appreciate that only He is beneficent and merciful, and to seek his *Nur*, *Jamal* and *Quadrat* in his divine qualities and in all of creation.
3. Extend sincere appreciation and gratitude for His kindness to all humanity.
4. Worship Him alone with all sincerity and devotion.
5. Heed His commands.
6. When a soul fulfills these conditions, it expects blessings in this world and the Hereafter where he/she will remain forever (Al-Ghazali, 2001). أنا بذك اللزم فالزم بذك. I am your necessary inevitability so hold finely to your inevitability (Al-Bani al-Kilani al-Kourani 2015: 172).

The remembrance of Allah (*zikr*) emanates from the heart and intercedes for man as his deeds on the Day of Resurrection as long as they are done under the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). *Zikr* makes a believer's heart soft and kind, causing it to abstain from evil, which scores a higher position in the sight of Allah. A sincere heart is peaceful and clean. The grandeur of a "*Falah*" lies in it (Al-Ghazali 2001) — i.e., to obtain the "*mahabbah*" of leaving evil and sin.

"Prosperous indeed is he who purifies himself (of sins, and of his wealth by spending from it in God's cause and for the needy); and who mentions the Name of his Lord and does the prayer (al-Quran, al-A'la 87:14-15). This is another evidence to show that worldly life is connected to the life in the Hereafter and its interconnected between them.

Nothing is permanent in this world and man must one day depart and make an accounting for all his deeds on the day of resurrection. Thus, life on earth is but a medium upon which humans work to assign their own positions after death, and sometimes regarded as an oasis or foot hold in the vast desert of *ma'rifah*. The major difference between the world and the Hereafter is that the former serves to certify the latter. Thus zeal, motivation and enthusiasm towards the service of Allah scores higher positions. The key to *ma'rifah* lies in the ability to appreciate Allah's kindness towards humanity and to believe in destiny, whether for good or bad (Al-Ghazali 2001). This is what he believed as a three dimension of relationship between man and other creatures (in a horizontal line) and man and God (in a vertical line).

It therefore suffices to say that '*Mahabbah*' and *ma'rifah* of Allah are major qualities of those who serve Allah, and more than equal to the notion that the body relies on food for sustenance and benefit for survival. Therefore, both *ma'rifah* types are essential to meeting Allah with joy and happiness.

### Love (*Mahabbah*)

Literally love means trust. Once you put your trust in someone it means you love them. To fulfill obligations to 'Allah', trust in Him must supersede all else. Trust in Allah with sincerity and submission is considered love for Allah as architect of the heavens and the earth. This is the greatest of loves humans are advised to express. It is incomparable, since there is no one as important as He who created us. The most important aspect is faith in Him alone as the highest expression of a love without bounds (Al-Ghazali 1982 Vol. IV). Thus, for an individual to attain perfection, the love of Allah must firmly supersede all others:

Abu Huraira (RA) reported that the Prophet Muhammad said that Allah, the Exalted and Glorious said, "*I am near to the thought of My servant as he thinks about Me, and I am with him as*

he remembers Me. And if he remembers Me in his heart, I also remember him in My heart, and if he remembers Me in assembly I remember him in assembly, better than his (remembrance), and if he draws near Me by the span of a palm, I draw near him by the cubit, and if he draws near me by the cubit I draw near him by the space (covered by) two hands. And if he walks towards Me, I rush towards him.” (Sahih Muslim)

This *hadith* declares that an individual attains the highest position in the eyes of Allah by loving Him with all sincerity. Such a love and affection without limit can be subjected to a scale of measurement called *‘ishq*. In *Kimiya’ al-Sa`adah* (Section 9 of *Love & Hope*), Ghazali opines that knowledge and information are vital to cementing this relationship and that acquisition depends on five external senses plus wisdom. Knowledge is essential for every aspect of life but fades when humans fail to appreciate the importance and sacrifices of others. Thus, knowledge brings all to a common ground so that they can love and respect one another. Ghazali further explains that wisdom equally exerts influence on the human heart by means of intelligence and credible information. Wisdom is the most fundamental aspect of human relations. Insight serves as a yardstick that differentiates us from animals (Al-Ghazali 2013: 901-903).

Love, friendship and brotherhood is the best way to draw near to God. Friendship results from good conduct. Good conduct and manners are the root of love for one another and are praiseworthy. The intention of love for the sake of Allah includes neighbors, companions in travel, etc (Al-Ghazali 1982, Vol. II). In sum, love has two conditions in Ghazali’s considered opinion four categories as described in Table 1 (Al-Ghazali 1982 Vol. II).

**Table 1.** The Division of Love (Al-Ghazali 1982 Vol. II)

Love’s Conditions	1	A thing is loved for its merits without another objective.
	2	A thing is loved to reach a goal by its help.
	NB	This goal is unconfined and connects with the next world and with God.
Kinds of Love	1	A man is loved for his own merits and becomes an object of love.
	2	A man loves another to gain the love of a third person.
	3	A thing is not loved for its sake but for something else and not for the good of this world but for that of the next world. To love a spiritual guide becomes a means of gaining spiritual knowledge. The objective is to obtain success in the next world.
	4	The highest love is most secret and subtle. Love for Allah and hate for Allah is selfless, disinterested love. When love for God envelops the heart it rules and envelops everything.

Human perfection is this: that the love of Allah should possess a man’s heart so that he receives complete pleasure from this connection with the peculiar quality of its emanation to all things. Even if it does not wholly possess him it should supersede his love of all other things. Al-Ghazali strove to prove that all other kinds of love can be fully manifested only within the sphere of man’s love for Allah, as “He alone” deserves love (Al-Ghazali 1980: 238). He also wrote that the causes of the love are five and that ‘Allah’ is the final goal and merit of love (Al-Ghazali 2013: 904-905).

1. The first cause: The love of self and survival.
2. The second cause: The love of wellness and goodness.
3. The third cause: The love a righteous person and benefactor.
4. The fourth cause: The love of attraction and beauty: “*love of beautiful things only for the sake of beauty and not for any other thing*” (Al-Ghazali 1982 Vol. IV: 307).
5. The fifth cause: The love shows a secret connection between two different natures; e.g., a lover and his beloved. However, not just for beauty.

According to Al-Ghazali, when beauty is appreciated by the wise, it becomes an object for the love of wisdom. Thus, the greater a thing is known for beauty and perfection, the more honorable the knowledge, and since Allah is the Author of all beauty, knowledge of Him is uppermost. Allah is also All-knowing so that human knowledge cannot be compared with His knowledge as He is also the Author of all knowledge (Al-Ghazali 1982 Vol. IV: 307-308). Everything in the universe is therefore within His knowledge. The nature of real intellect is *ma'rifah*; i.e., the spiritual knowledge of 'Allah' is where one finds true pleasure. Pleasure differs with respect to different objects. The best and highest pleasure is obtained by pursuing knowledge related to Allah and His attributions (Al-Ghazali 1982 Vol. IV: 312). Continuing this thematic, al-Ghazali writes that the greatest pleasure depends on the vision of Allah for which the following are fundamental elements of proof:

1. The first element : Comfort and dependence on knowledge.
2. The second element: The pleasure found is stronger than that for other things.
3. The third element: The greatest pleasure is knowledge of 'Allah'
4. The fourth element : The pleasure of '*Nazar*' (vision) is greater than the pleasure of knowledge.

*Ma'rifah* thus seeds next-worldly sight because knowledge is key to any vision of 'Allah'. Higher ranks in knowledge equate with higher levels of this vision of 'Allah'. All people differ with regard to pleasure and vision (Al-Ghazali 2013: 917) and when *ma'rifah* is achieved, love enters. When man loves 'Allah' he takes pleasure therein (Al-Ghazali 1982 Vol. IV: 321). The pleasure of this vision differs according to one's pleasure in knowledge because there is a difference between these two (Al-Ghazali 2013: 918).

The highest level of love develops after purification of knowledge from worldly thoughts accompanied by clarity along with constant '*zikr*' and ceaseless review of Allah's attributions and sovereignty over all the worlds (Al-Ghazali 2013: 918; Al-Ghazali 1982 Vol. IV: 321). Thus, *ma'rifah* produces '*mahabbah*', its result (Al-Ghazali, 2013: 925). There is no limit to the *ma'rifah* of Allah. Therefore, there is no limit to different degrees of love manifest by different individuals (Al-Ghazali 2013: 925; Al-Ghazali 1982 Vol. IV: 324). The human accomplishes perfect *ma'rifah* by two methods: one is the sufi way (*muhadirat*); the other by learning '*ilm al-Ma'rifah*'. The pleasure found in '*ilm*' is stronger than all other things (Al-Ghazali 1982 Vol. IV: 321). Hence, those who develop deep insight take 'Allah' as their only object of love, just as ignorant people take others as their objects of love.

### Love and Knowledge

Education is the backbone of sustainable development. Muslims recognize that knowledge is fundamental to fruitful living in this world and the Hereafter. According to al-Ghazali, *ma'rifah* and *mahabbah* are fundamental to both. Philosophically, Ghazali demonstrated that love emanates from what people know; that compassion and understanding for what love is all about bring men closer to what they truly desire, and that love is a property of a cognitive creature, since non-living things cannot express it (Al-Ghazali 1980: 230; Omelchenk 2012: 9-18). Unanimous philosophical belief holds that love is the inherent empathy of an individual for all things amiable. If the so called 'sympathy' is strong, we are in a state of love. Conversely, antipathy is innate animosity for obnoxious things for which the magnitude of hostility can morph into hatred. Al-Ghazali asked: 'If not via sympathy for things that are delightful, what is the essence of learning about love?' (Al-Ghazali 1980: 230-231; Omelchenk 2012: 9-18). He opined that love is a product of knowledge; specifically, the gaining of quality. Love encompasses the human soul and cognitive abilities have tremendous effects on knowledge processing and output (Omelchenk 2012).

The general consensus of those with philosophical knowledge of al-Ghazali's perspectives agree that Love for Allah as *The Most Compassionate* is crucial to understanding His '*Might & Supremacy*'. Therefore, the only valid medium by which individuals reach higher esteem in this

world and in the Hereafter is to love Allah and thoroughly acquaint themselves with knowledge of Him.

### **Al-Ghazali on the Inextricable Relation between Worldly Matters and Heavenly Wisdom**

Al-Ghazali never separated impacts deriving from worldly deeds and the Hereafter. However, he did regard good deeds performed without inward observance a kind of lifeless body. He considered them done out of habit and devoid of conscientiously focused spiritual essence or inner substance. Therefore, such deeds missed the goal of obtaining merit for life Hereafter (Quasem 1974: 50). According to al-Ghazali, inner knowledge was paramount to achieving inner meaning in all forms of worship (Abd Rahman *et al.* 2017). Inner meaning includes *Ma'rifah* and *mahabbah* as previously mentioned. Abd Rahman and Abdul Muthaliff (2017) suggest that al-Ghazali stringently emphasized the inner knowledge that leads to right actions that obtain benefits from good deeds. Both *ma'rifah* and *mahabbah* significantly impact both here and Hereafter and especially serve to protect Muslims from punishment in the life to come (al-Quran, al-Baqarah 2:201). *Mahabbah* is an inner spiritual quality that best incorporates material objectivity because it educates and refines the soul. The grandeur of *mahabbah* manifests as *tawhidic* understanding, which, unfortunately, sometimes evades mainstream narratives in *fiqh* and *'uṣul al-din* because of legalism's formal approach to knowledge and religious praxis (Masri 2013).

Al-Ghazali, the *mujaddid* (revivalist) of his century, stressed the importance of *tazkiyah al-nafs* (purification of the soul) as the essential condition that attains happiness in both worlds as stated in the Quran (Ash-Shams 91:7–10). Those who purify 'self' the right way will succeed, and this is in stark contradistinction to those who corrupt 'self'. According to al-Ghazali':

The *nafs* of man is occupied with disobedience and following the Devil. Consequently, a black dot will appear in the *ruh*. When disobedience of the *nafs* increases, the blackness of the *ruh* will increase until it becomes wholly black. As a result, the doors of benevolence of Allah Most High will be closed to it (Sa'ari 2002).

The purpose (*maqasid*) of al-Ghazali's revival was *maslahat*; that is, to advance humanity's benefits in both worlds. Al-Ghazali's love of God and regard for self, world and Hereafter wholly aimed to create opportunities that allowed latitude in worldly matters that remained in balance with well-being as a way of life filled with the radiance of heavenly wisdom.

Islam associates well-being with the provision of divine guidance for all aspects of life, whether in times of ease or discomfort (Noor 2008). While difficulty improves character, the concept of *'ibadah*, as prescribed in Islam, is not limited to specific ritual but embraces all undertakings that are performed with the intent to obey God and fulfill our responsibilities. Of such deeds there can be no limit because they construct our very relationship with God Almighty. According to Achour *et. al.* (2015), the measurement of religiosity in the Islamic context assesses its effects on personal well-being. Determinants include belief, prayer and worship. These three demonstrate that religiosity affords significant strategies when believers confront life's problems. Thus, religiosity positively affects well-being. Al-Ghazali (2013) said that *'ibadah* must also be attached to *zikr* (remembrance) and *mudawimat* (continuance). He considered them the most essential elements with respect to the production of joyful living both here and Hereafter. Hence, *'ibadah* helps us cope with problems of earthly life and prepares us for the Hereafter.

*Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* literally means "The Revival of the Religious Sciences". In it, al-Ghazali focused on daily desires and ethical behaviors with specific attention given to the Hereafter. In the forty books of *The Revival*, al-Ghazali severely criticizes coveting worldly matters and reminds his readers that human life is a path towards Judgment Day and reward or punishment. Compared with eternity in the next life, this life is almost insignificant, yet it seals our fate in the world to come (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy).

In his *Kimiya' al-Sa'adah* or *Alchemy of Happiness* or *Alchemy of Eternal Bliss*, he defines *'ibadah* as one of the primary or essential elements leading to joyful living now and Hereafter. A servant who submits to prayer, fasting, *Hağ*, *Zakat*, etc., and does not criticize or object but considers them a source of goodness and happiness, has a calm spirit and a confident soul. According to Mirsepassi and Fernée (2019), al-Ghazali wrote *The Alchemy of Happiness* in response to political and moral calamities that accompanied social complexities attending the expanding Abbasid civilization. We understand this as a return to basic religious tenets because the Quran clearly states that “every soul will be (held) in pledge for its deeds” (Al-Muddaththir 74:38). Thus, *ma'rifahs* major role plays out for everyone, since whoever does good that is “equal to the weight of an atom, shall see it” (al-Quran, al-Zilzal 99:8). Put differently, we cannot achieve happiness in the Hereafter if we fail to understand the importance of good behavior during our earthly sojourn.

Al-Ghazali's ideas regarding knowing self, God, the world and the Hereafter comprise a unique philosophy of worldly matters that obtains a comprehensive approach to *rida*, which is a level of optimized satisfaction that is reached after perfecting our contentment, pleasures and happiness in compliance with divine will. *Rida* is therefore the summit of perfection in submission to divine will. Before reaching this peak, man must express his/her obedience to God and actually receive divine favor because the relationship between God and man is more than the mere feelings of sympathy or empathy expressed between individuals. When a *salik* is in the realm of God, supernal dynamics allow him or her to know their destiny per divine plan based on wisdom and expediency. The *salik* becomes forever patient and satisfied and will submit to whatever God wills and decrees. He neither protests nor frets over what happens to others nor about events in the universe. All is achieved through robust *iman* (faith), trust in God, prayer, worship, Quranic recitations, *zikr*, *du'a* (supplication), *şabr* (patience), and *shukr* (thankfulness).

*Ridda* is achieved after the effective practice of *ma'rifah* and *mahabbah*. Man, then lives free from turmoil, anxiety and worry; like a ship anchored in safe harbor. Whether poor, rich, ugly, beautiful, short, tall, white, black, healthy, ill, with children or barren, the believing servant is satisfied and never objects. Contentedly knowing one is blessed comes when reaching *rida* by way of realizing one's divinely guided destiny, knowing all duties were and are prescribed by God. Accepting what God desires for us and grants therefore obtains the spiritual security that manifests as absolute submission and obedience to God (Ebrahimi & Yusoff 2017). Therefore, whosoever believes in God is satisfied with their divinely decreed destiny and judgment. What brings us to the state of *rida*, that is, from 'satisfaction with destiny' to 'satisfaction with divine judgement' is the knowledge of God. Indeed, “The knowledge (of that, and true and full knowledge of all things) is with God. And I am but a plain warner” (The Quran Al-Mulk 67:26). The greater one's knowledge of God the easier it is to submit to divine will. *Riadah al-Nafs* (disciplining the soul) therefore acts to warn us to prohibit sinful deeds and develop virtue.

Al-Ghazali's contributions to Islamic science have had remarkable impacts that will remain indelible. He wrote for every generation and positioned Islam synonymously with Greek philosophers. Attacks against Islam were launched daily yet al-Ghazali' answered with sound solutions for criticisms even westerners acknowledge. He also revealed the most suitable manners for successful interactions with non-Muslims that are taken straight from Islam's fundamental way of life (Watt 2007).

Love is a platform that accompanies the deepest revelation of being or vitality of existence (the *ordo amoris* of Max Scheler). It is of great importance for humans being to be lovingly conscious of the world in order to actualize their dreams. As some observe, love make us ingenious, wiser and smarter. The truth of our 'being' manifests to faculties of reason imbued with love, which implies it is possible for sympathetic souls to discover truth. The love of humanity is only revealed by knowing truth (Omelchenk 2012). Al-Ghazali stipulated that mutual relationships of love involve 'the infinitude of their being', in that every living human desires everlasting life and strives hard, in religious terms, to occupy a position in paradise. This is extraordinary, showing that nothing remains an obstacle to eternal expectations. Al-Ghazali advocated love as a binding force that mutually brings families together with a sense of belonging

and appreciation of purpose, future ambitions, and above all, the acknowledgement that self-love and reciprocity are fundamental to civilized living (Omelchenk 2012). This type of love will bring happiness to their life in the Hereafter.

In his quest for truth, al-Ghazali devoted much time seeking *ma'rifah* and suggested two possible means for the acquisition of true knowledge. He said only a fraction of the people can apply the first, which is true sufism. The other is learning '*Ilm al-Ma'rifah*'. His most profound and remarkable achievements encompass fifty books that remain relevant. These include *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, *Tahafut al-Falasifah (The Incoherence of the Philosophers)* and *al-Munqiz min al-Dalal (Deliverance from Error)* (Nofal 2000: 1-19). *Kimiya' al-Sa'adah* marks the end of his output but it has not been studied in detail compared to his other works, largely due a lack of proper collaboration. Furthermore, al-Ghazali's profound studies of mainstream Islamic and scientific knowledge produced essential foundations for *mahabbah* and *ma'rifah* upon which individuals can equip themselves with knowledge of the Hereafter. *Mahabbah* and *ma'rifah* are synonymous in terms of indicating the valid path to eternity. The most appropriate paths, according to him, are sufism and knowledge: '*ilm al-ma'rifah*'.

Al-Ghazali stressed that the only possible and viable medium through which happiness in the Hereafter is attained is achieved by *ma'rifah* of Allah. He defined four essential elements as the only yardstick by which eternal bliss is achieved, specifically indicating the importance of '*ibadah, mu'amilat, muhlikat, munjiyat* and *mujahadah*, coupled to *zikr* and *mudawimat* as the most essential elements leading to a joyful life in the Hereafter. He firmly advocated the importance of knowing Allah as '*Supreme*' as the necessary path to consolidating a relationship with Him. The evolution of knowledge and love has the pivotal role of cementing this relationship; thus, priority should be given to love and the knowledge of Allah with the utmost care and consideration.

### References

- The Qur'an, Annotated Interpretation in Modern English. 2008. Translated by Ali Unal. New Jersey, U.S.A: The Light, Inc.
- Abd Rahman, Mohd Rosmizi, Abdul Muthaliff, Mohamed Mihar, Mahyuddin, Muhammad Khairi, Mokhtar, Ahmad Najaa', Ahmad, Yuseri and Yucel, Salih. 2017. A Spiritual Model of Good Deeds accepting to Imam Al-Ghazali. *International Journal of Business and Social Science*. 8(2): 181-189.
- Abd Rahman, Mohd Rosmizi and Abdul Muthaliff, Mohamed Mihar. 2017. The Inner Knowledge ('*Ilm Al-Batinah*) of Good Deeds according to Iman Al-Ghazali. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*. Special Issue – Islam and Contemporary Issues), 7: 215-226. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBS/v7-i13/3196>
- Achour, M., Grine, F., Mohd Nor, M.R. and MohdYusoff, M.Y.Z. 2015. Measuring Religiosity and Its Effects on Personal Well-Being: A Case Study of Muslim Female Academicians in Malaysia. *Journal of Religion and Health*. 54: 984-997, doi: 10.1007/s10943-014-9852-0
- Al-Bani al-Kilani al-Kourani, Mulla Hassan Ibn Mousa. 2015. *Kashf al-Borhan fi Sharh-i Risalat As-Sheikh Arsalan (Fi Towhid)*. Beirut, Lebanon: Dar Al Kotob Al Ilmiyah, Kitab Nasheroun.  
[https://books.google.com.my/books?id=m\\_FHDwAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.com.my/books?id=m_FHDwAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false). Retrieved: 12 April 2020.
- Al-Ghazali, *Deliverance from Error (al-Munqid min al-Dalal)*. 1980. Translated by RJ Mccarthy, American University of Beirut, Louisville. KY: Fons Vitae.
- Al-Ghazali, *Imam Gazzali's Ihya Ulum-Id-Din*. 1982. Translated by Al-haj Maulana Fazlul Karim, Vol. I. India: Kitab Bhavan.
- Al-Ghazali, *Imam Gazzali's Ihya Ulum-Id-Din*. 1982. Translated by Al-haj Maulana Fazlul Karim, Vol. II. India: Kitab Bhavan.
- Al-Ghazali, *Imam Gazzali's Ihya Ulum-Id-Din*. 1982. Translated by Al-haj Maulana Fazlul Karim, Vol. III. India: Kitab Bhavan.

- Al-Ghazali, *Imam Gazzali's Ihya Ulum-Id-Din*. 1982. Translated by Al-haj Maulana Fazlul Karim, Vol. IV. India: Kitab Bhavan.
- Al-Ghazali, *Kimiya-I-Sa'adat: An English Translation of Imam Ghazzali's Alchemy of Eternal Bliss (Abu Hamid al-Ghazali)*. 2001. Full English translation of the Persian original texts, Translated by Muhammad Asim Bilal, Revised by Munir Ahmad Mughal. Lahore-Pakistan: Kazi Publications.
- Al-Ghazali, *Kimiya-i-Sa'adat: A Persian Interpretation of Imam al-Ghazali's Kimiya-i-Sa'adat by Parwin Qa'imi*. 2013. Tehran: Gulban.
- Ebrahimi, Mansoureh. and Yusoff, Kamaruzaman. (2017), "Islamic Identity, Ethical Principles and Human Values", *European Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*. 2(6): 326-337. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.26417/ejms.v6i1.p325-336>
- Masri, Ridzuan. 2013. The Idea of Love in Al-Ghazali's Literature. *Infrastructure University Kuala Lumpur Research Journal*. 1(1): 67-74.
- Mirsepasi, Ali. and Fernée, Tadd Graham. 2019. Deen (Faith) and Donya (The Secular): Al-Ghazali's The Alchamy of Happiness. *English Studies at NBU*. 5(1): 9-39, doi: <https://doi.org/10.33919/esnbu.19.1.1>
- Nakamura, Kojiro. 2008. AL-GHAZALI, ABU HAMID (1058-1111). Ghazali Study Group, Ltd. <http://ghazali.org/articles/gz1.htm>. Retrieved: 12 April 2019.
- Nofal, Nabil. 2000. AL-GHAZALI (A.D. 1058-1111; A.H. 450-505). *The Quarterly Review of Comparative Education*, Paris, UNESCO: International Bureau of Education, 23(3): 1-19. [https://archive.org/stream/IslamKnowledge/Al-Ghazali\\_Intro\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/IslamKnowledge/Al-Ghazali_Intro_djvu.txt). Retrieved: 14 April 2020.
- Noor, Noraini M. 2008. Work and women's well-being: Religion and age as moderators. *Journal of Religion and Health*. 47: 476-490, doi: 10.1007/s10943-008-9188-8
- Omelchenko, Nikolay. 2012. Al-Ghazali on the Essence of Love", *Journal of Philosophical Anthropology*. 1: 9-18, available at: <https://philpapers.org/rec/OMEAOT-2>, (accessed 14 April 2020).
- Quasem, Muhammad Abul. 1974. Al-Ghazali's Theory of Devotional Acts. *Islamic Quarterly*. 18(3-4): 48-61.
- Sa'ari, Che Zarrina. 2002. A Purification of Soul according to Sufis: A Study of Al-Ghazali's Theory. *AFKAR* 3: 95-112.
- Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/al-ghazali/#EthRevRelSci>. Retrieved: 25 July 2020.
- Watt, W. Montgomery. 2007. The Faith and Practice of Al-Ghazali. Islamic Philosophy Online, Inc. <https://www.ghazali.org/works/watt3.htm>. Retrieved: 12 April 2019.