

SOME ASPECTS OF SUFISM IN *MINHĀJ AL-‘ĀRIFĪN* OF AL-GHAZĀLĪ

By:

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Abstrak

Artikel ini menghuraikan beberapa asas pemikiran al-Ghazālī yang dikemukakan dalam karyanya *Minhāj al-‘Ābidīn*. Perbandingan secara analitikal turut dibuat di antara asas pemikiran tersebut dengan karya-karya utamanya yang lain untuk mendapat gambaran yang lebih jelas berkenaan beberapa aspek pemikirannya tentang tasawuf.

Introduction

This article tries to analyse *Minhāj al-‘Ārifīn* written by al-Ghazālī. There is one manuscript in addition to two published editions of this work.¹ For this research, the edition of it in *Majmū‘ah Rasā‘il*

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¹ The *Minhāj* is mentioned by Brockelmann, C. in *Geschichte der Arabischen Litteratur*, Vol. 1, Leiden, 1943-1949, p. 745, as having been in a published compilation of al-Ghazālī's treatises entitled *Farā'id al-La'ālī min Rasā'il al-Ghazālī*, (ed. Fajr Allāh al-Kurdī), Cairo, 1343/1924, pp. 101-120, which contains *Mi'rāj al-Sālikīn*, *Minhāj al-‘Ārifīn* and *Rawḍat al-Ṭālibīn*. The treatise was then republished in Beirut in a

*al-Imām al-Ghazālī*² will be used. No comparison can be made on the edition because of difficulty to access to the other editions. The *Minhāj* is listed only by Brockelmann as among the works of al-Ghazālī. Bouyges who also mentions this work says that the *Minhāj al-‘Ārifīn* is identical to the *Minhāj al-‘Ābidīn* which is also attributed to al-Ghazālī.³ However, they are in fact not similar books.⁴ Al-Subkī, al-Zabīdī and Tāshkopruzāde make no mention of the *Minhāj* in their works.

The Views of Previous Scholarship on the *Minhāj*

Some scholars such as Brockelmann, Massignon and Tāshkopruzāde accept the authorship of the *Minhāj*, while others such as Palacios, Watt and Badawī have raised doubts about its authenticity. Palacios does not believe that the *Minhāj* was written by al-Ghazālī as he claims that the treatise which consists of twenty-eight very short articles on themes of asceticism and mysticism does not justify the title of the work. He also says that the treatise does not have a prologue in which the author sets forth in the customary manner the reason for the book, nor does it give any mention of the other works of al-Ghazālī. For these reasons, he says that its authenticity is very doubtful.⁵ Palacios is followed by Watt who does not pursue his own argument, but rather agrees with Palacios's evaluation.⁶

In response to Palacios and Watt, it is not enough to prove their argument by textual facts alone. Their claim that the contents

compilation of al-Ghazālī's works entitled *Majmū‘ah Rasā‘il al-Imām al-Ghazālī*. A manuscript of it can be found in Maktabah al-Fātih, Istanbul under the title *Manāhij al-‘Ārifīn*, no. 2896.

² Vol. 4, Beirut, 1406/1986, pp. 65-83. Hereafter referred to as *Minhāj*.

³ Bouyges, Maurice, *Essai De Chronologie Des Oeuvres De al-Ghazali*, Beirut, 1959, p. 91.

⁴ See Badawī, ‘Abd al-Rahmān, *Mu‘allafāt al-Ghazālī*, Kuwait, 1977, p. 248.

⁵ Palacios, M. Asin, *La Mystique d’ al-Ghazālī*, Vol. 4, Beirut, 1914, p. 385; Watt, W. Montgomery, "The Authenticity of the Works attributed to al-Ghazālī," *JRAS*, (1952), pp. 32-33.

⁶ Watt, W. Montgomery, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

of the *Minhāj* do not justify the title of the work is not sufficient to reject its authenticity. This treatise seems to provide knowledge of Sufism for those ordinary people who want to begin their journey in exploring the mystical path. Thus, a very short treatise is suitable for them. A careful examination of it shows that the contents do correspond to the title of the work. In fact, the *Minhāj* has a prologue which the author calls as “*khuṭbat al-risālah*” (introduction to the treatise).

Badawī, who also rejects the *Minhāj*'s authenticity, accepts Palacios's argument. He, however, says that the latter's claim that the *Minhāj* does not even mention al-Ghazālī's other works is not strong enough to support Palacios' argument. Badawī suggests that al-Ghazālī sometimes in his securely attributed works does not mention his other works. Nevertheless, Badawī does not give any example to support his claim.⁷ This article, however, tries to show the difference and similarities between the *Minhāj* and al-Ghazālī's other works.

Introduction to the Treatise: Style and Presentation

The *Minhāj* is only a short treatise on themes of asceticism and mysticism and looks like a summary of another treatise. In spite of that, al-Ghazālī makes a clear and systematic arrangement of his material, using sub-titles. There are no repetitions in the treatise. As usual, al-Ghazālī begins his work with *khuṭbah al-risālah* (introduction to the treatise). He uses rhetorical prose to mention the features of gnostics (*al-‘Ārifīn*) and states that Muhammad is their leader (*qā'id*).⁸ Although this style of introduction is common in Islamic treatises including those of al-Ghazālī himself, its use of the term *‘Ārifīn* so early in the treatise is not found elsewhere in al-Ghazālī's other works.

⁷ Badawī, 'Abd al-Raḥmān, *op. cit.*, p. 249.

⁸ *Minhāj*, p. 67; Che Zarrina Sa'ari, "A Study of Some Works of Sufism Commonly Attributed to al-Ghazali," 1998, unpublished Ph.D thesis in Edinburgh University, pp. 117-118. Hereafter referred to as Trans. *Minhāj*.

The *Minhāj* treats a variety of topics connected with religion very briefly, nowhere giving a detailed picture of the subjects discussed. However, in the writing which are known to be al-Ghazālī's, any treatment of any subject quite as briefly as in the *Minhāj* cannot be found. This is the case even in an abridgement by him, *Kitāb al-Arba'in*.⁹

The sub-title of the section after the *khuṭbat al-risālāh*, which is - Explanation to disciples - gives us an idea of the purpose of the treatise. It is trying to present an outline of the path to Sufi reality (*ḥaqīqah*). In the main it is concerned with esoteric ideas which are presented by the author in the discussions of the devotional acts and several mystical practices. Al-Ghazālī in the *Minhāj* seems only concerned with the inner meaning of the ritual acts he describes. On the other hand, al-Ghazālī in his other works is much more interested in the relationship of the inner meaning with the outward but he only gives us a description of the inner meaning after he has dealt with the outward meaning.¹⁰

Al-Ghazālī in his *Minhāj*, however, uses the same method as many other earlier writers to discuss his esoteric ideas concerning devotional acts and mystical practices. He adduces Qur'anic verses or citations of the Traditions of the Prophet which are related to the topic under discussion. He also quotes many sayings from well-known Sufi figures when he discusses mystical views. He cites two quotations from Yaḥyā b. Mu'ādh, to describe invocation of the greatest name of God and to explain how to fulfil obligatory reli-

⁹ For example the discussion of the *Minhāj* on intention (*niyyah*) contains only five lines in one paragraph compared to the *Arba'in* in which the same topic is discussed in several pages. (*Minhāj*, p. 70; Trans. *Minhāj*, p. 121; al-Ghazālī, *Arba'in fī Uṣūl al-Dīn*, Cairo, 1344 A.H., pp. 171-179).

¹⁰ According to al-Ghazālī, the outward aspect is as it were the body or shape (*ṣūrah*) of the act, and the inner aspect is its life (*ḥayāh*) or spirit (*rūh*). If one does not perform the inner aspect, the act is merely motions of the body and is incapable of producing the desired effect on the soul. Al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, Vol. I, Beirut, 1982 p. 206; cf. also Sherif, Mohamed A., *Ghazali's Theory of Virtue*, New York, 1975, p. 77; Miskawayh, *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq wa Taḥīr al-A'rāq*, Beirut, n.d., pp. 79ff.

gious duties (*farā'id*).¹¹ There are quotations from Mālik b. Dīnār to explain fulfilling the condition of invocation, from Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī to describe the invocation of the greatest name of God, from Abū Ḥusayn al-Warrāq to state the benefit of invoking God, from Dāwud al-Ta'ī to discuss the excellence of intimation of God, from al-Fuḍayl b. 'Iyād and Abū Sulaymān al-Dārānī to encourage seclusion and from Abū Bakr al-Warrāq to explain fulfilling obligatory religious duties (*farā'id*). He also cites a saying of Jesus to describe the way of seclusion.¹² All these quotations appear once each.

From the spread of these quotations, it shows that al-Ghazālī is well-versed in many areas of Sufism and is very selective in quoting only the views of well-known Sufis. All these well-known Sufi masters except Abū Ḥusayn al-Warrāq¹³ are usually referred to in al-Ghazālī's other works.¹⁴ Jesus, who is quoted once, is also cited by al-Ghazālī in those books of his.¹⁵

Al-Ghazālī in the *Minhāj* gives his views and ideas by making use of passages and phrases from the Qur'an and the Traditions of the Prophet. This method of citation can be found in most of the

¹¹ *Minhāj*, pp. 79, 82; Trans. *Minhāj*, pp. 135, 141.

¹² For the quotations and information on their life see *Minhāj*, p. 78; Trans. *Minhāj*, p. 134 for Mālik b. Dīnār see *Minhāj*, p. 79; Trans. *Minhāj*, p. 134; For al-Bisṭāmī see *Minhāj*, p. 81; Trans. *Minhāj*, p. 140, for al-Ta'ī, al-Fuḍayl and al-Dārānī; see *Minhāj*, p. 82; Trans. *Minhāj*, p. 141, for al-Warrāq see *Minhāj*, p. 81; Trans. *Minhāj*, p. 139.

¹³ I have not been able to find anything about Abū Ḥusayn al-Warrāq.

¹⁴ Al-Ghazālī's works on Sufism such as the *Ihyā'*, *Kitāb al-Arba'in*, *al-Maqṣad al-Asnā* and *Kimiyā-e Sa'ādat*, etc. contain many citations of the sayings and verses of poetry of his predecessors. For example, he mentions Yaḥyā b. Mu'adh in the *Ihyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 52; Mālik b. Dīnār, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 3, pp. 59, 74, 113, 158; al-Bisṭāmī, al-Ghazālī, *Maqṣad al-Asnā fī Sharḥ Asmā' Allāh al-Ḥusnā*, (ed.) Muḥammad Mustafā Abū al-'Ulā, Cairo, 1968, pp. 133, 149 and *Ihyā'*, Vol. 3, pp. 84; al-Ta'ī, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 3, pp. 53, 146; al-'Iyād, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 3, p. 52; Abū Sulaymān, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 3, pp. 84, 85; Abū Bakr al-Warrāq, *Ihyā'*, Vol. 4, p. 50; and Jesus, *Maqṣad*, pp. 82, 102, 148.

¹⁵ Lazarus-Yafeh, Hava, *Studies in al-Ghazali*, Jerusalem, 1975, p. 474.

earlier treatises regarding Sufism and it can also be found in al-Ghazālī's other short treatises such as *Munqidh* and *Arba'īn* and other works.¹⁶

The *Minhāj* contains thirty six citations of Qur'anic verses. Almost all of them are introduced by the words, "He God 'azza wa jallā says", "He said" and "Allah Most High said."¹⁷ However, sometimes, the author does not use any indication that the words are citations of Qur'anic verses.¹⁸ This use of Qur'anic verses is aimed at corroborating¹⁹ and illustrating²⁰ many of the views and ideas which are discussed in the treatise. Al-Ghazālī himself used the same method as can be found in almost all of his works. In addition to the Qur'an, al-Ghazālī in this treatise relies heavily for his evidence on the Traditions. There are twelve Traditions of the Prophet in this treatise. However, three of them are unable to

¹⁶ Cf. al-Ghazālī, *Munqidh Min al-Dalal*, (ed.) Muḥammad Muṣṭafā Abū al-'Ulā and Muḥammad Muḥammad Jabīr, Cairo, 1973, p. 5; *Arba'īn*, pp. 23; *Idem, Jawāhir al-Qur'ān*, Cairo, 1933, p. 15; *Idem, al-Qiṣṣas al-Mustaqīm*, (ed.) Victor Shalhāt, Beirut, 1959, p. 3; *Idem, Fayṣal al-Tafrīqah bayn al-Islām wa al-Zandaqa*, (tr.) McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment: An Annotated Translation of al-Ghazali's al-Munqidh min al-Dalal and Other Relevant Works of al-Ghazālī*, Boston, 1980, Appendix I, p. 146, secs. 4 - 5.

¹⁷ Cf. *Minhāj*, pp. 68 - 69, 70, 72, 73, 75, 77, 78, 79, 81, 82; Trans. *Minhāj*, pp. 119, 122, 125, 126 - 127, 129 - 130, 132, 133, 134, 138, 142.

¹⁸ For example, the *Minhāj* cites: "He loves them and they love Him" (C. 5:54) and "The bounties of thy Lord are not closed [to anyone]." (C. 17:20). See *Minhāj*, pp. 67, 71, 72, 75, 76; Trans. *Minhāj*, pp. 118, 123, 124, 129, 131.

¹⁹ For example, al-Ghazālī writes in the *Minhāj*: "Your remembrance will be of Him together with His remembrance of you." He then quotes the Qur'anic verse: "And remembrance of God is the greatest [thing in life without doubt]." (C. 29:45) Cf. *Minhāj*, p. 70; Trans. *Minhāj*, p. 122.

²⁰ The *Minhāj* states outward acts that should be followed by inward acts in the explanation of worship and mystical virtues. Al-Ghazālī cites Qur'anic verses to illustrate his ideas. For example, he says: "... Because He remembers you in spite of having no need for you and you remember Him despite your lack of Him." Then he cites the Qur'anic verse (13:28): "For without doubt in the remembrance of God do hearts find satisfaction. (Cf. *Minhāj*, p. 70; Trans. *Minhāj*, p. 122).

discover. Of these three citations, one concerning reflection (*tafakkur*),²¹ is also cited by al-Ghazālī in the *Ihyā'*.

A quotation attributed to 'Īsā the son of Mary can also be found in the *Minhāj*:

Control your tongue, let your house be enough for you,
and let your soul be in the position of a harmful beast and
a burning fire.²²

However, Abū Dāwud cites this part of Tradition from the Prophet Muḥammad.²³ The rest of it:

For people were leaves without thorns and they have become thorns without leaves, and they were medicine which could cure people and they have become a disease for which there is no cure,²⁴

could not be traced as a Tradition of the Prophet. It cannot also be found in the other works of al-Ghazālī which are confidently attributed to him.

Fundamental Ideas of the *Minhāj*

As already stated, the purpose of the *Minhāj* seems to be to present an outline of the path to Sufi reality. Al-Ghazālī in the treatise arranges the sub-titles of the treatise in a systematic order showing ritual acts and mystical practices.

He begins with the description of the fundamental principles for the disciple on the mystical path, that is fear (*khawf*), hope (*rajā'*) and love (*ḥubb*). He seems to distinguish these three states into three ranks. The first rank is fear which is a sub-division of knowledge (*'ilm*); the sign of it is fleeing (*harab*). The second rank

²¹ See *Minhāj*, p. 82; Trans. *Minhāj*, p. 142.

²² *Minhāj*, p. 81; Trans. *Minhāj*, p. 139.

²³ See Abū Dāwud, *Sunan Abī Dāwud*, Vol. 4, (ed. and com.) Muḥammad Muhyī al-Dīn 'Abd Allāh, Cairo, 1950, "*Kitāb al-Malāhin*", p. 175 (no. 4343).

²⁴ *Minhāj*, p. 81; Trans. *Minhāj*, p. 139.

is hope that is a sub-division of certainty (*yaqīn*); the sign of it is searching (*ṭalab*). The third rank is love that is a sub-division of gnosis (*ma'rifah*); the sign of it is preference for the beloved. Here we can see the author implies that 'ilm is the lowest knowledge, followed by *yaqīn* as the middle, and then comes *ma'rifah* as the highest. It is clearly stated that *ma'rifah* is a branch of love, which according to the Sufis, is the ultimate aim of the mystical path.²⁵ Al-Ghazālī also gives an example for these three states; *ḥarām* is an example for fear as it gives safety for one who enters it; *masjīd* is an example for hope as it stops disobedience of God for one who steps into it; and the Ka'bah is an example for love as it occupies the heart with remembrance of God for one who enters it.²⁶ This style of illustration for this subject is not found in al-Ghazālī's other works, although he also distinguishes between 'ilm, *yaqīn* and *ma'rifah*. He treats this subject by giving the definition of 'ilm, *yaqīn* and *ma'rifah*.²⁷

The *Minhāj* uses the terms of inflection (*i'rāb*), i.e. *raf'*, *fath*, *khafd* and *waqf* in a metaphorical sense to express the states of the heart and their signs. He uses the imagery of *i'rāb* like *raf'*, which is the sign of the subject or indicative for raising the heart in remembrance of God and its sign as to raise the heart with compliance, no disobedience and perseverance in longing. He writes that fat, which is the sign of the object or subjunctive for opening the heart in contentment with God; its sign is to open the heart to trust, truthfulness and certainty. He mentions that *khafd*, which is the sign of the noun when in the genitive structure or governed by a preposition and also for ellipsis, means decreasing the heart by

²⁵ Al-Qushayrī, *al-Risālah al-Qushayriyyah*, Cairo, 1959, p. 157; al-Sarrāj, *al-Luma'*, (eds.) 'Abd al-Hālim Maḥmūd and Tāha 'Abd al-Bāqī Surūr, Cairo, 1960, p. 86; al-Hujwiri, *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, (tr.) R.A. Nicholson, *The Kashf al-Mahjūb: The Oldest Persian Treatise on Sufism*, New Delhi, 1991, p. 310; *Arba'in*, p. 189; *Ihyā'*, Vol. 4, p. 294; al-Bīr Naṣr al-Nadīr, *al-Taṣawwuf al-Islāmī*, Beirut, 1960, p. 19.

²⁶ *Minhāj*, p. 68; Trans. *Minhāj*, pp. 118 - 119.

²⁷ *Ihyā'*, Vol. 1, p. 16; Nabih Amin Faris, *The Book of Knowledge* (Being a Translation with notes of *Kitāb al-'Ilm* of al-Ghazālī's *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*), Lahore, 1958, pp. 83-84; McCarthy, *op. cit.*, pp. 66-67.

other things distracting attention away from God; its sign is to decrease the heart by pride, hypocrisy and covetousness. He says that *waqf*, which is the grammatical term for a pause or full stop, is the pause of the heart in heedlessness of God; its sign is to pause the heart from disobedience.²⁸ This whole process is a clever literary device which shows the author to be a man of literary aspiration. Its use is not found in any of the other works by al-Ghazālī.

Having outlined the three fundamental states (*aḥwāl*) which the disciple should acquire on his path to Sufī reality (*ma'rifah*), al-Ghazālī in the *Minhāj* then deals in four separate sections with the duties which the disciple must carry out in order to follow this path. They are: attention (*ri'āyah*), intention (*niyyah*), remembrance [of God] (*dhikr*) and gratitude [to God] (*shukr*).

Attention (*ri'āyah*) seems to mean that the disciple should be constantly aware of the possibility of spiritual instruction. In order to emphasise awareness he quotes the Tradition from the Prophet:

Seeking knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim.²⁹

Although in his other works, al-Ghazālī has encouraged the seeking of knowledge, he did not use this particular aspect elsewhere.³⁰

In order to make sure that the disciple is deliberately pursuing the path, after attention, al-Ghazālī mentions intention. This is an essential duty for the disciple even though it is difficult. It can be seen in his other works that he also discusses intention but treats it more generally. He says in *Kitāb al-Arba'in*:

Indeed, an intention of your heart will not succeed except you have a firm faith and you banish your eagerness for

²⁸ *Minhāj*, p. 69; Trans. *Minhāj*, pp. 119-120.

²⁹ Ibn Mājah, *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, Cairo, n.d., "al-Muqaddimah", Vol. 1, p. 81. Cf. *Minhāj*, p. 69; Trans. *Minhāj*, p. 120.

³⁰ For an example see *Ihya'*, Vol. 1, pp. 4ff; *Book of Knowledge*, pp. 10ff.

the baseness of the pleasure of this world and consider the importance of the reward of the Hereafter ... if you cannot do this, you cannot maintain your intention.³¹

Having recommended attention and intention as necessary duties to follow the Sufi path, al-Ghazālī then turns to remembrance of [or constantly mentioning] God (*dhikr*). He stresses that this duty is of great importance on the Sufi path. He divides remembrance of God into two categories:

Remembrance is of two types: sincere remembrance (*dhikr khāliṣ*) by agreement of the heart to decline the contemplation of other than God; and pure remembrance (*dhikr ṣāfi*) by annihilation of any ambition for anything other than remembrance. The Apostle of God said: "I cannot count praise upon You Yourself as [much as] You have praised Yourself."³²

Remembrance (*dhikr*) is one of the basic features of Sufism and al-Ghazālī also deals with it, however, somewhat differently. He writes:

Constant remembrance with the presence of the heart is profitable and fruitful. And remembrance with the tongue together with heedlessness of the mind brings lesser rewards ... And the presence of the heart in remembering God is only for a moment but then its neglect of God is [because] of its distraction by worldly matters which also bring lesser rewards. And the presence of the heart constantly with God is above all other devotional acts. Indeed it is nobler than the rest of devotional acts and this is the

³¹ *Al-Arba'īn*, pp. 174-175.

³² Mālik b. Anas, *Al-Muwatta'*, The Version of Yahyā b. Yahyā b. Kathīr al-Laythī, "Kitāb al-Qur'ān", Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1989, p. 131; Abū Dāwūd, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, "Kitāb al-ṣalat, bāb fī al-du'ā' fī al-rukū' wa al-sujūd", p. 322 (no. 879); *idem*, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, "Bāb al-qunūt fī al-witr", p. 86 (no. 1427); al-Nasā'ī, *Sunan al-Nasā'ī*, Vol. 2, with commentary by Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, Cairo, 1930, "Kitāb al-iftitāh", p. 166; Ibn Mājah, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, "Kitāb al-iqāmah", p. 373 (no. 1179). Cf. *Minhāj*, pp. 70-71; Trans. *Minhāj*, pp. 123.

ultimate form of worship with regard to [bodily] actions ...
When there is eagerness for remembrance, man forgets
other things except God.³³

By this, man may reach the state of closeness to God. At this stage his heart is only preoccupied with Him.³⁴ From the quotation given above, it can also be deduced that al-Ghazālī divides remembrance into three grades.³⁵

- a) The remembrance of God completely takes possession of the heart and it does not remember other than Him. The heart forgets all things except God and it cannot easily be deflected. This is the highest grade of remembrance.
- b) The heart remembers God only at a moment and then it turns from remembrance of God because of being disturbed by worldly affairs. This is the second grade of remembrance.
- c) The heart is not together with the tongue, i.e. the tongue alone is used to remember God, where this remembrance cannot produce any effect on the soul. This is the lowest grade of remembrance.

Thus al-Ghazālī in the *Ihyā'* gives three grades whereas the *Minhāj* briefly alludes only to two.

The fourth fundamental duty of the disciple on the Sufi path is gratitude to God because of His bounty (*ni'mah*). The *Minhāj* divides it into two types, the lowest gratitude (*adnā al-shukr*) and perfect gratitude (*tamām al-shukr*). The former is to express gratitude externally where one sees the bounties of God and the latter is to express it through the inmost tongue.³⁶ For the *Minhāj*, true

³³ *Ihyā'*, Vol. 1, p. 301; cf. *al-Arba'īn*, pp. 42 - 43.

³⁴ Cf. *al-Arba'īn*, p. 58. Nevertheless, in his *Iļjām al-'Awāmm 'an 'Ilm al-Kalām*, on the margin of 'Abd al-Karīm al-Jilī, *al-Insān al-Kāmil*, Cairo, 1949, p. 76, al-Ghazālī mentions that the *tahajjud* prayer i.e. a super-erogatory prayer which is assumed as a mean of gaining closeness to God, is regarded as the best of all acts of worship.

³⁵ See *Ihyā'*, Vol. 1, p. 301.

³⁶ i.e. the heart. Cf. *Minhāj*, p. 71; Trans. *Minhāj*, p. 123.

gratitude is only achieved through the further bounty which God conveys to the disciple. Thus the duty of gratitude is never ending. In the *Ihyā'*, al-Ghazālī gives an illustration of the states of mind of gratitude which indirectly explain its types. He says:

When a king gives a horse to someone, the latter feels joy for three reasons: first, for getting a horse which will be useful for him ..., second, for getting it from the head of the state ..., third, for getting enjoyment by riding on it.³⁷

The *Minhāj*, after expressing the fundamental principles and the fundamentals duties of the disciple, then turns to the subject of garments.³⁸ In this he may perhaps be referring to the donning of the *khirqah* which is the garment that a Sufi takes from his master as an acknowledgement of his commitment to the Sufi path. He refers to the garment as a bounty from God. In describing them as the garments of *taqwā*, which is usually translated as piety, al-Ghazālī may be alluding to one of the root meanings of the word which is to give protection. Thus in donning the garment of *taqwā*, the Sufi is seeking protection from God as he follows the Sufi path. This seems to be a subtle image not found in al-Ghazālī's other works. However al-Ghazālī in those work such as the *Ihyā'* does allude to clothes, either in the description of the Prophet's clothes or in invocations when dressing.³⁹

The *Minhāj* then appears to describe the beginning of the day on the Sufi path. Perhaps he is using the images of rising from sleep (*al-qiyām*), using the toothpick (*al-siwāk*), evacuation (*al-tabarruz*) and ritual purity (*al-ṭahārah*)⁴⁰ - all actions ordinarily practised at the beginning of every day - as the beginnings and preparatory actions for the disciple on the Sufi path. All four are only

³⁷ *Ihyā'*, Vol. 4, p. 83.

³⁸ *Minhāj*, p. 72; Trans. *Minhāj*, p. 124.

³⁹ *Ihyā'*, Vol. 2, pp. 374 - 377. Al-Ghazālī does not deal with this topic in his *Arba'in*.

⁴⁰ Like al-Ghazālī in his other works, he also regard in the *Minhāj* the act of ritual purity as a precondition of the ritual prayer (*ṣalah*). Cf. *Minhāj*, p. 72; Trans. *Minhāj*, p. 126; *Ihyā'*, Vol. 1, p. 126.

briefly discussed and the spiritual dimension of each is emphasised.⁴¹ For the esoteric feature of the use of the toothpick, he writes:

Use the toothpick because it is a purifier for the mouth, [and a means of affording] gratification to God. Purify your outward and your inner [self] from the filth of disobedience, cleanse your deeds from the dirt of hypocrisy and vanity, and polish your heart by sincere remembrance of Him.⁴²

From this quotation, it can be deduced that al-Ghazālī in his *Minhāj* states two functions of the toothpick. The first is to purify the mouth and the second is to purify the outward and inner self from blameworthy characteristics. In al-Ghazālī's other works, he only deal with the first function. He writes:

The purpose of using the toothpick is to purify his mouth for the reading of the Qur'an and the invocation of God in prayer ... The Apostle says: "Use the toothpick: it is a purifier for the mouth and well-pleasing unto God."⁴³

However, in his brief discussion of purity (*ṭahārah*), in the *Minhāj* al-Ghazālī describes it as preventative.⁴⁴ There have been many descriptions of the rituals associated with purity (*ṭahārah*) being effective against sins already committed. Al-Ghazālī also does this in *Kitāb Asrār al-Ṭahārah* in the *Ihyā'*.⁴⁵ He writes:

The Apostle of God said: "When a Muslim, during the act of ablution, rinses his mouth, the sins leave it; when he washes his hands, the sins, even those beneath his finger nails are removed; when he washes his head, he rids it of

⁴¹ *Minhāj*, pp. 72-73; Trans. *Minhāj*, pp. 125-126.

⁴² *Minhāj*, p. 72; Trans. *Minhāj*, p. 125.

⁴³ *Ihyā'*, Vol. 1, p. 132.

⁴⁴ *Minhāj*, p. 73; Trans. *Minhāj*, p. 126.

⁴⁵ *Ihyā'*, Vol. 1, pp. 132-133; *Idem, The Mysteries of Purity*, Trans. of the *Kitāb Asrār al-Ṭahārah* of al-Ghazālī's *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, (tr.) N. A. Faris, Lahore, 1966, pp. 37-38. Hereafter referred to as *Mysteries of Purity*. Cf. Ibn Ḥanbal, *Sunan*, "*Kitāb al-Ṭahārah*", p. 156.

its sins, even those in and behind his ears; when he washes his feet, he cleanses them from sins, even those beneath his toe nails."⁴⁶

However, rarely are the actions of ritual purity (*ṭahārah*) alluded to in terms of preventing sins from being committed. This is an interesting image and it fits very well with the earlier image of the garment of *taqwā* being a garment of protection.

The imagery of following the Sufi path is then taken up by a section on leaving the house to go to the mosque. Again the disciple is instructed to act with dignity and consideration towards his fellows, who are the creation of God. In this way the Sufi disciple embarks on the spiritual journey that is to be his life.⁴⁷

In describing these rituals of worship (*'ibādah*) of Sufi life using the imagery of *'ibādāt, ṣalāt: ifitāḥ al-ṣalawāt, qirā', rukū', sujūd, tashahhud* and *sālam*. In describing these actions, the *Minhāj* gives a brief meditation on the spiritual implications of these actions.⁴⁸ The same is the case with the other *'ibādāt*. In effect, he produces a brief but very effective spiritual commentary on the formal religious rituals of Islam. Only in his discussion on prayer (*ṣalāt*) does al-Ghazālī's treatment of the rituals in his other works have similarity with the *Minhāj*. The *Minhāj* states that prayer starts with standing and facing towards the *qiblah*. When performing this act, al-Ghazālī says:

Turn your heart to the truth and do not be light-hearted..

⁴⁶ *Ihyā'*, Vol. 1, p. 135; *Mysteries of Purity*, p. 49.

⁴⁷ *Minhāj*, pp. 73-74; Trans. *Minhāj*, pp. 126-128.

⁴⁸ Among the earliest Sufi writers who write on the esoteric features of the devotional acts are al-Muḥāsibī, al-Makkī, al-Sarrāj, al-Hujwīrī and al-Ghazālī himself. (Cf. al-Muḥāsibī, *Kitāb al-Waṣāyā*, (ed.) 'Abd al-Qadīr Aḥmad 'Atā, Beirut, 1406/1986, pp. 136ff; *Idem, Kitāb al-Masā'il fi A'māl al-Qulūb wa al-Jawāriḥ*, MS. Jār Allāh 1101, fols. 18b-24b; Smith, Margaret, *An Early Mystic of Baghdad*, London, 1935, p. 54; al-Makkī, Abū Ṭālib, *Qūt al-Qulūb*, Vol. 2, Cairo, 1960, pp. 164-250; al-Sarrāj, *op. cit.*, pp. 194ff; al-Hujwīrī, *op. cit.*, pp. 300ff; *Ihyā'*, Vol. 1, pp. 159ff; *al-Arba'in*, pp. 23ff).

⁴⁹ Cf. *Minhāj*, p. 74; Trans. *Minhāj*, p. 128. According to al-Muḥāsibī, when performing this act, one should abandon what is not befitting to prayer, of

bring to mind that you will be standing before Him on the Great Day of Judgement.⁴⁹

In the *Ihyā'*, al-Ghazālī states the inner features of this act which are quite similar to the *Minhāj*:

So let the face of your heart be with the face of your body. Know that as a face does not turn toward the direction of the *qiblah* except by turning away from everything else, so the heart does not turn towards God except being free of all else besides.⁵⁰

As for the act of bowing (*al-rukū'*), al-Ghazālī in the *Minhāj* suggests that it should be completed by submitting the heart and the limbs to God. The prayer should even hope for God's help, favour, grace, safeguarding and forgiveness.⁵¹ In the *Ihyā'*, al-Ghazālī describes a similar perception of the act of bowing, that it reflects the renewal of remembrance of the mightiness of God. He writes:

In your bowing, make a fresh beginning for God as to lowliness and humbleness, and strive to move your heart, and renew your humbleness, and you should feel that as well as the might of your Lord together with your own lowliness and the highness of your Lord, and you seek aid in establishing that in your heart by means of your tongue.

the activities of the world and the desire for worldly profit. (Cf. al-Muḥāsibī, *Fahm al-Ṣalāt*, Beirut, n.d., p. 364). And al-Hujwiri says: "The outward *qiblah* being the Ka'bah and the inward *qiblah* being the throne of God, by which is meant the mystery of Divine contemplation." (Cf. al-Hujwiri, *op. cit.*, p. 301).

⁵⁰ *Ihyā'*, Vol. 1, p. 166; Calverly, Edwin E., *Worship in Islam*, Being a Translation with Commentary and Introduction of the *Ihyā'* on Worship, London, 1957, p. 56.

⁵¹ *Minhāj*, pp. 75-76; Trans. *Minhāj*, p. 130. This view is similar to that of other Sufis who say that the act of bowing in the prayer should be done with humility. Cf. al-Muḥāsibī, *Fahm al-Ṣalāt*, p. 371; Makki, Abū Ṭālib, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, p. 194; al-Sarrāj, *op. cit.*, pp. 205, 207; al-Hujwiri, *op. cit.*, p. 300; *Ihyā'*, Vol. 1, p. 167.

Then you say the praise of your Lord and bear witness to Him of His greatness, and say, "O the praise of my great Lord! He is greater than every great one!" Reiterate that in your heart, that you may confirm it by your reiteration.⁵²

Concerning the act of prostration, the *Minhāj* opines that one praying must think about his creation which was made from a drop of sperm in order to become a humble servant. For God has made prostration as the means for attaining closeness to God.⁵³ A quite similar notion is given by al-Ghazālī in his other works:

You bend down for prostration which is the highest degree of submission. For the dearest of your members which is your face gets hold of the humblest thing which is the dust... So that your prostration on the ground produces greater humbleness and is more conducive to lowliness. Know that you have placed it in its proper place..., for of the dust were you formed and to it you return... Then, when your heart is moved, let your hope find assurance in the mercy of God, for His mercy makes haste towards weakness and lowliness, and not towards pride and conceit.⁵⁴

The confession of faith (*tashahhud*) which is performed before salutation (*al-salām*) at the end of prayer is described by the *Minhāj* as praise and gratitude to God, seeking for more of His favour and His generosity, submitting to His command, blessing His Apostle⁵⁵ and the *Ihyā'* writes:

As for confession of faith (*tashahhud*), when you sit for it, sit down in a proper manner and state that all the perfor-

⁵² *Ihyā'*, Vol. 1, p. 169; Calverly, Edwin E., *op. cit.*, p. 65.

⁵³ *Minhāj*, p. 76; Trans. *Minhāj*, p. 130. Other Sufi figures also consider that such a position can take the place of self knowledge which is done with abasement. (Cf. al-Muḥāsibī, *Fahm al-Ṣalāt*, p. 271; al-Makkī, Abū Tālib, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, p. 193; al-Sarrāj, *op. cit.*, pp. 207-208; al-Hujwiri, *op. cit.*, pp. 300-301; *Ihyā'*, Vol. 1, p. 167).

⁵⁴ *Ihyā'*, Vol. 1, p. 169; Calverly, Edwin E., *op. cit.*, pp. 65-66.

⁵⁵ *Minhāj*, pp. 76-77; Trans. *Minhāj*, pp. 131-133.

mances of the prayer and good things by which you seek access are Allah's ... Then remember the Prophet in your heart, and also his noble personality and say: "Peace be upon you, O Prophet, and the mercy and blessing of God!" Let your expectation be firm that it will reach him, and that will return to you one more perfect than it.⁵⁶

In discussing the rites of the pilgrimage (*hajj*), the *Minhāj* and the *Ihyā'* have very different approaches. The *Minhāj* appears to concentrate more on cleansing the soul from blameworthy qualities and getting near to God as he writes:

[He] frees himself from his [lower] soul at the moment of entering *ihrām*. Then he washes away his sin, dons the garment of sincerity and loyalty, prohibits himself in the *Ḥarām* from everything that will estrange him from God Most High,⁵⁷

whilst al-Ghazālī in his *Ihyā'* describes such acts as for remembering the Hereafter. He states:

When you put the garment of the *ihrām* on, remember the garments of the shroud with which you will be clothed... As there is no stitching on the shroud, so there is no stitching on the garment of the *ihrām*.⁵⁸

Regarding circumambulation (*ṭawāf*) and stopping (*wuqūf*) at 'Arafat, the *Minhāj* goes further in describing the way of purifying the soul, as he says:

[He] walks with his heart around the throne (*kursī*) of His beneficence and purifies his outward and his inner self at the moment of stopping (*wuqūf*) at Ṣafā, and hurries to

⁵⁶ *Ihyā'*, Vol. 1, p. 169; Calverly, Edwin E., *op. cit.*, p. 66. The Sufis admit that the act of witnessing can take the place of intimacy (*al-'uns*) to God. Cf. al-Muḥāsibī, *Fahm al-Ṣalāt*, 377; Qut, Vol. 2, p. 200; *al-Luna'*, pp. 208-209; *Kashf*, p. 301; *Ihyā'*, Vol. 1, p. 170.

⁵⁷ *Minhāj*, p. 80; Trans. *Minhāj*, p. 137.

⁵⁸ *Ihyā'*, Vol. 1, p. 268; *al-Arba'in*, p. 34.

⁵⁹ *Minhāj*, p. 80; Trans. *Minhāj*, p. 137.

escape from his passion, [and] acknowledges his errors at 'Arafat.⁵⁹

On the other hand, the *Ihyā'* goes on to explain that the actions reflect the Hereafter and encourage man to get close to God. He writes:

Do not think that the object of your circumambulation is the circumambulation of your body around the Ka'bah, but its object is the circumambulation of your mind to the remembrance of God ... Think that Şafā is the scale of good deeds and Marwah of bad deeds. By running between this two hillocks, think which of the scales becomes heavy. To wait (*wuqūf*) in 'Arafat...you will remember the case of the great gathering on the Day of Resurrection that people will gather there with their Prophet...and they remain eager to know whether his intercession was accepted or not.⁶⁰

By waiting (*wuqūf*) at Muzdalifah, stoning (*ramā*), slaughter (*dhabh*) and shaving (*ḥalaq*), the *Minhāj* says that the acts should be done in order to get close to God and purify the soul from passion and sins:

He, who comes close to God at Muzdalifah, throws away his desires when stoning Jamarāt and he slaughters his passion and shaves off his sins.⁶¹

In the *Ihyā'*, however, al-Ghazālī does not mention the esoteric quality of shaving (*ḥalaq*) and waiting (*wuqūf*) at Muzdalifah explicitly, rather he states the invocation which should be recited by the pilgrim:

When you reach Muzdalifah, recite the following: "O God, this is Muzdalifah, people of different tongues have gathered here seeking different necessary things from You. Make me one of those who have sought from You and

⁶⁰ *Ihyā'*, Vol. 1, pp. 269-270.

⁶¹ *Minhāj*, p. 80; Trans. *Minhāj*, p. 137.

⁶² *Ihyā'*, Vol. 1, p. 256.

You have granted them." ... When you shave, recite the following: "O God, maintain my good deeds, wipe off my sins and raise my rank close to You."⁶²

He then mentions that the act of throwing (*ramā*) stones at Jamarāt is following the action of Abraham:

Obey God's command by throwing stones and show sincerity and honesty ... Then intend to follow the deeds of Abraham who drove away the Devil by throwing stones at him when the latter wanted to misguide him.⁶³

The *Minhāj* clarifies the visit to the Ka'bah, touching the Black Stone and performing the Farewell Circumambulation as something revealing the relationship between God and man. He says:

He visits the House of God to glorify its owner, touches the [Black] Stone in acceptance of His decree, bids farewell to everything other than God in the Farewell Circumambulation (*Tawāf al-Widā'*).⁶⁴

The *Ihyā'* too presents the same idea relating to visiting the Ka'bah and touching the Black Stone. Al-Ghazālī states:

When you look at the Ka'bah, remember its glory and hope to meet its owner... When you kiss the Black Stone, think that it is a sign of allegiance and kissing His hand.⁶⁵

However he does not clearly mention the esoteric feature of the Farewell Circumambulation; rather he says:

Recite the following words: "O God, truly, this house is Your house, this servant is Your servant ... If You are content with me, then add on me more contentment ... before I leave this house and at the time I depart from it. If You

⁶³ *Ihyā'*, Vol. 1, p. 270.

⁶⁴ *Minhāj*, p. 80; Trans. *Minhāj*, p. 138; *Ihyā'*, Vol. 1, pp. 239-240, 191. See also, al-Hujwiri, *op. cit.*, p. 326.

⁶⁵ *Ihyā'*, Vol. 1, p. 269.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 258.

give me permission not to change my attitude to You and to Your house, then I will not leave You and Your house away [from my heart].⁶⁶

As one of the concluding sections, the *Minhāj* discusses “*salāmah*” which has been translated as “peace of mind.” It is an important state which the Sufi disciple must endeavour to attain on his path to God. This peace of mind comes about by the abrogation of self and total trust in God. A particular way of attaining this is by the process of isolation of the self from worldly matters (*‘uzlah*).⁶⁷ However, the ultimate attainment of this *‘uzlah* is only accomplished after the Sufi disciple has acquired peace of mind (*salāmah*). Although al-Ghazālī has discussed *‘uzlah* many times and particularly in the *Ihyā’*, nowhere does he seem to combine it with peace of mind (*salāmah*) in such a neat explanation as in the *Minhāj*.

After peace of mind (*salāmah*), the *Minhāj* states that the practices of solitude are ten:

(i) Seeking the knowledge of truth and falsity, (ii) asceticism, (iii) the choice of hardship, (iv) ... seclusion and peace of mind (*salāmah*), (v) consideration of the consequences, (vi) ... think that others ... are nobler, (vii) ... remove ... evil from people and ... not cease to perform [good] deeds, (viii) ... not be conceited by position, (ix) ... keep his house devoid of surplus ..., (x) and that he should cut off that which cuts him off from God Most High.⁶⁸

Al-Ghazālī in the *Ihyā’*, however, puts forward the practices of solitude as twelve:

[The Sūfi should] (i) intend to save himself from the harms of men, (ii) seek safety (*salāmah*) from bad deeds, (iii) free [himself] from faults in fulfilling his duties to the Muslims, (iv) prefer loneliness to perform [other forms of] worship, (v) engage himself in learning, remembrance,

⁶⁷ *Minhāj*, pp. 80 - 81; Trans. *Minhāj*, p. 138.

⁶⁸ *Minhāj*, p. 81; Trans. *Minhāj*, p. 139.

reflection and other acts of worship, (vi) not to allow the people to mix with him, (vii) not to allow others to put questions to him, (viii) not to ask about other places or other people, (ix) satisfy [himself] with little, (x) remain patient, (xi) not to hear the praise of others, (xii) know the merits of the path to the Hereafter.⁶⁹

As far as the practices of solitude are concerned, it can be seen that both works, the *Minhāj* and the *Ihyā'*, approach several similar practices, i.e. seeking knowledge of the truth, seeking safety, practicing asceticism and seclusion and consideration of the benefits of solitude. They differ in mentioning other practices as the *Minhāj* seems, even for one in solitude, to emphasise a relationship with other people (i.e. think that others are nobler, remove evil from people). However, the *Ihyā'* appears to restrict the relationship between the one in solitude and others (i.e. to save himself from the harms of men, not allow the people to mix with him, not allow others to put questions to him, not ask about other places or other people, not hear the praise of others).

The *Minhāj* sums up the general outline of the Islamic rituals with a short section on worship (*'ibādah*). In this he indicates that these forms of Islamic worship are fundamental to the Sufi path and form an essential and fundamental element in Sufi worship.⁷⁰ These are sentiments strongly supported by al-Ghazālī in the whole of his *Ihyā'*.

The *Minhāj* culminates with the final section on the reflection. He emphasises the need to reflect on the transitory nature of mankind and the world. Al-Ghazālī in the *Minhāj* also cites the verse of the Qur'an⁷¹ that urges man to reflect on the greatness of God. This same verse is also quoted by al-Ghazālī in the *Ihyā'* when he discusses the method of reflection on the creation of God.⁷²

⁶⁹ *Ihyā'*, Vol. 2, p. 242.

⁷⁰ *Minhāj*, p. 82; Trans. *Minhāj*, p. 141.

⁷¹ God Most High says: "Has there not been over man a long period of time, when he was nothing [not even] mentioned?" (76:1). (*Minhāj*, p. 82; Trans. *Minhāj*, p. 142; *Ihyā'*, Vol. 4, p. 439).

⁷² *Ihyā'*, Vol. 4, p. 439.

According to his view, the most important kind of reflection that man must engage in is the reflection on God and on himself. He says:

The most important reflection of the servant in respect to himself is to reflect upon his character traits and states and in respect of his God it is to reflect upon the attributes and actions of God and His beautiful names.⁷³

This kind of reflection is similar to that mentioned in the *Minhāj*, although the author expresses it indirectly. He writes:

Remember what your conditions are and take heed of what has passed of this world according what you see. Has it spared anybody?⁷⁴

Conclusion

The analysis of the *Minhāj* which has been presented in this article can be summed up as follows. It can be deduced that there are significant similarities and difference between the *Minhāj* and al-Ghazālī's other works which are securely attributed to him, especially the *Ihyā'*.

The evaluation of the method of presentation and style shows several similarities and differences. They both use rhetorical prose for their introduction to the treatise and they also have similar attitudes to citing many sayings of well-known sufi figures. On the other hand, they differ from each other because in al-Ghazālī's other works, he is used to giving an explanation of his discussion in order to help the reader's understanding, while the *Minhāj* gives only very brief clarification. However, this brief clarification always gives an adequate instruction to any person seeking to follow the Sufi path. The *Minhāj* never uses the method of analogy and syllogism as the latter often does in his securely attributed books.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, Vol. 4, p. 428.

⁷⁴ *Minhāj*, p. 82; Trans. *Minhāj*, p. 142.

Our appraisal of the scriptural aspects indicates that both works have similar methods and ideas in quoting the passages of the Qur'an and the Traditions. Many such passages from the *Minhāj* are found in al-Ghazālī's other works.

As far as the fundamental ideas of the *Minhāj* and al-Ghazālī's other works are concerned, they show that there are some similarities and difference. The similarities can be seen in their ideas on the mystical path which are concerned with how the disciple should perform devotional acts and mystical practices in order to achieve closeness to God. In fact, the contents of the *Minhāj* could be presumed to be a summary of the *Ihyā'* or the *Arba'in*. The works differ however, in the mode of elaboration of these devotional acts and mystical practices; for the *Minhāj* only emphasises their esoteric features, while al-Ghazālī, in most of his works on devotional acts and mystical practices, combines their outward actions with their esoteric features. This aspect of the *Minhāj* does not look like al-Ghazālī's other abridgements such as the *Arba'in*. In addition, there are several discussions in the *Minhāj* which cannot be found in al-Ghazālī's other works, such as the description of the fundamental principles for the disciple, i.e. fear (*khawf*), hope (*rajā'*) and love (*mahabbah*); the metaphorical sense to explain the states of the heart; the style of using the term "*ri'āyah*"; the category of remembrance (*dhikr*) of God; the illustration of the concept of gratitude (*shukr*); the subject of garments; the elucidation of actions ordinarily practised at the beginning of the day; the ritual purity as a preventative of sins; the esoteric features of the rite of pilgrimage; the descriptions on peace of mind (*salāmah*) and solitude (*'uzlah*).

From the above discussion, it shows that the *Minhāj*'s ideas on the esoteric features of devotional acts and mystical practices are similar to those of al-Ghazālī's other works but the style of presentation and writing of the former is different from al-Ghazālī's other

⁷⁵ Smith, Margaret, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

works. It can be understood that the *Minhāj* is one of al-Ghazālī's works on esoteric knowledge which presented his simple literary style for the understanding of ordinary people.⁷⁵