



INDONESIAN ISLAMIC DISCOURSE ON HAPPINESS:
A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE VIEWS OF
MUHAMMAD QURAIH SHIHAB AND
KOMARUDDIN HIDAYAT

BY

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ABSTRACT

Happiness is subjective with each individual seeking to determine his personal level of spiritual and material happiness. Given the common association between the pursuit of personal happiness and all human endeavours, this research attempts to ascertain the extent to which Indonesian scholars addressed the Islamic perspective of happiness. For this, the research focuses on the thought of two prominent Indonesian Muslim scholars, Quraish Shihab and Komaruddin Hidayat. Both the scholars have thoroughly discussed the issues of psyche and happiness. Their thoughts are generally welcomed by all strata of Indonesian society. Through his deep reflections of the Qur'ān, Quraish Shihab provides an insightful understanding of the meaning of human happiness, while Komaruddin Hidayat explores Islamic philosophy as the basis of defining human happiness and the meaning of life. This study aims to highlight “Indonesian happiness” by referring to both scholars who share similarities as well as differences in their study of Islam. The study adopts the qualitative method for collecting and analysing the data. The study is based primarily on library research, analysis of data and textual analysis of Quraish Shihab’s and Komaruddin Hidayat’s works, coupled with an examination of their life. The research concludes that Quraish Shihab and Komaruddin Hidayat are concerned with the scientific accuracy and the objective study of the human purpose in life. They offer definitions on happiness that comply with some systematic and empirical studies. They advocate that happiness is a choice that can be emulated, and that to receive happiness is a blessing and to give happiness is a gift.

خلاصة البحث

السعادة مسألة نسبية. لكل فرد رأيه الخاص في تحديد مستوى السعادة، مادية كانت أو روحية. والسعادة هي ما يسعى إليه كل فرد ، وبالطبع يمكن تحقيقها بطرق مختلفة. يهدف هذا البحث إلى معرفة مدى تناول العلماء الإندونيسيين لموضوع السعادة، لغرض إبراز مفهوم السعادة من المنظور الإسلامي. وقد اعتنى قريش شهاب وقمر الدين هدايت في دراستهما بقضية إندونيسيا، وذلك عن طريق النظر في عدة عوامل إيجابية وسلبية، ومن المتوقع أن تكشف هذه الدراسة عن أبرز توجهات الإنسان حول الهدف الأسمى في حياته. وقد تطرق العالمان الإندونسيان إلى القضايا النفسية والسعادة بدقة في كتاباتهما، وهي لا تزال تتصل بالواقع الحالي وتستحق الدراسة فيها. وعموماً، فقد تلقى أفكارهما القبول من قبل جميع طبقات المجتمع الإندونيسي. وقد قدّم قريش شهاب فهماً متعمقاً حول معنى السعادة البشرية اعتماداً على فكره الإسلامي الراسخ من خلال فهم القرآن، بينما حاول قمر الدين هدايت إبراز الفلسفة الإسلامية بوصفها أساساً لتحديد سعادة الإنسان و معنى الحياة. يهدف هذا البحث إلى إلقاء الضوء على "السعادة الإندونيسية" وذلك بالإشارة إلى كل من العالمين الذين يشتركان أوجه التشابه والاختلاف في دراستهما للإسلام. اعتمد البحث المنهج النوعي في جمع البيانات وتحليلها. ويستند المنهج أساساً على البحث المكتبي، وتحليل البيانات، وتحليل النصوص من مؤلفات قريش شهاب و قمر الدين هدايت. وإلى جانب ذلك، فقد تمت دراسة جوانب حياتهم وأفكارهم بدقة. وقد أثبتت الدراسة أن كلا من قريش شهاب و قمر الدين هدايت يعتنيان بالدقة العلمية والموضوعية في دراستهما لأهداف الإنسان في حياته. وقد قدّم العالمان تعريفات السعادة التي تتوافق مع بعض الدراسات المنهجية والتجريبية. ويمكن تنفيذ أفكارهما من أجل أن نعلم أن السعادة هي الخيار الذي يمكن أن يحتذى به؛ وأن نعلم أنّ تلقى السعادة نعمة وإعطاءها هدية.

APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion, it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Islamic and Other Civilization.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ICMI	<i>Ikatan Cedekiawan Muslim Indonesia</i> , Muslim Intellectual Association of Indonesia.
MIGAS	<i>Minyak dan Gas</i> , oil and gas.
MUI	<i>Majelis Ulama Indonesia</i> , Indonesian <i>Ulama</i> Council.
Pancasila	The official philosophical foundation of the Indonesian state (Five Principles).
UMI	<i>Universitas Muslim Indonesia</i> , Muslim University of Indonesia.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

Seeking pleasure in the pursuit of worldly happiness is both a simple and practical human goal. In contemporary times, especially in a country with a rapidly growing population, people aspire for happiness, yet its true meaning is grasped by few.

Discourses on happiness by two Indonesian scholars, namely Muhammad Quraish Shihab and Komaruddin Hidayat make interesting case studies for Muslims. Both scholars have commented extensively on the social life of Muslims in Indonesia and offer insights as to the physical and spiritual aspects of personality conducive to the attainment of happiness. For a Muslim, as those who interpret religion, ‘*ulamā*’ can help a person attain happiness by serving as a guide.

Any religion is expected to invite to better human and spiritual welfare. However, westernization of Muslim societies has undermined the role of spirituality in human happiness. Accompanied with the fact that the development of any civilization is the result of the progress of modernization, modern science and technology have brought about fantastic changes in contemporary life. Our world has shrunk tremendously and we can travel from one corner of the earth to another in a matter of hours.¹ Such technological advances potentially offer a better life even by inadequate moral ethics or misleading freedom. This led the two scholars to respond to such

¹ Azhar Arsyad, “The Role of Spiritual Education in Encouraging World Peace” in *Islamic Millennium: Social Reconciliation and Gender Justice*, edited by M. Habib Chirzin and Rifaat Amhariz (Indonesia: Islamic Millenium Forum (IMFO) and Asian Muslim Action Network (AMAN), 2001),106. 106.

challenges by advocating a religious doctrine to shield society from corrupting its true purpose in life.

The importance of this research is to ascertain how Indonesian scholars have discussed the issue of happiness. The purpose is to explore the studies on the Islamic values. Accordingly, this study seeks to analyse Muslim scholars' views on the ultimate purpose of human life and can also be defined as a self-introspection and self-control of human to lead to a better life with true happiness.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The meaning and means of happiness is not always clear to all. Some think that happiness is amassing wealth. Under such an understanding, both husband and wife are completely occupied with work consequently neglecting their children. Parents' smiles are no longer for their kids, but restricted to business partners and customers. When asked why they work all the time? The answer is "for our beloved-family's happiness". For the sake of happiness, their children are left in a luxurious villa with all the convenience and luxuries they need. However, regrettably, their children see these advantages as mental imprisonment. In the end, their son frequents clubs as a means to distract him from his empty life void of parental guidance. Under such circumstances, such children are easily affected by westernization that offers them a social life with free sex and intoxicating drinks. Is this future happiness?

Although many enjoy a selection of social, cultural and economic luxuries, they continue to suffer from doubt, anxiety, grief, disappointment and all the evils that affect the heart. This is because they do not have faith that changes the soul and gives strength and extraordinary resilience. In addition, mankind who live in the age of advancement need an open discourse in addressing life issues. Contemporary social

and cultural life pose new questions to the contemporary pursuit of happiness. Therefore, the views of scholars on how to achieve true happiness, mainly those of Quraish Shihab and Komaruddin Hidayat, are expected to be a solution to Muslims, particularly Indonesians Muslims as they tackle what it means to be happy in the context of contemporary Indonesia.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study seeks to understand the meaning of happiness in light of the discourses of two prominent Indonesian scholars. The specific objectives are:

1. To explore the social and individual needs of Indonesians in order to identify the extent to which a person's happiness is achieved.
2. To review happiness of the Indonesians who live in a society where Islamic doctrines and Western secular ideals are mixed.
3. To examine the concept and practice of true happiness according to two prominent Indonesian Islamic scholars.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the social and individual needs of Indonesians to lead a happy life in the society?
2. What is the impact of Islamic doctrines and Western thought on the Indonesians' pursuit of happiness?
3. What are the views of Muhammad Quraish Shihab and Komaruddin Hidayat on happiness?

RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE

This research presents the views of two prominent Indonesian Muslim scholars on happiness. It highlights the thoughts of Muhammad Quraish Shihab and Komaruddin Hidayat on the issue of happiness in Indonesian society and analytically compares the views of both scholars. It is hoped that this dissertation offers a practical understanding of the meaning of happiness and how to achieve it according to the views of Muhammad Quraish Shihab and Komaruddin Hidayat.

RESEARCH SCOPE

This is a comparative study of the views on happiness of Muhammad Quraish Shihab and Komaruddin Hidayat. Quraish Shihab's works and Qur'ānic studies attempt to find the essence of happiness in Islam. Komaruddin Hidayat pursues a philosophical approach to understanding the Islamic perspective on human happiness. References to their works have been made with an understanding of the context of their lives and thought.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is primarily based on library research. The main literature consists of books, articles, eBooks and websites. These materials offer an understanding of the concept of happiness in Islam according to Muslims in Indonesia. In addition, some books containing the collections of other scholarly works are referred to complement the research on happiness in Indonesia. Collecting data sources that supported the analysis of happiness in the context of Indonesian was an important step in this research that allows the forming of conclusions of how Islam views happiness in this cotemporary age.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section discusses the discourses of happiness by Muhammad Quraish Shihab and Komaruddin Hidayat. Some scholars attempt to define happiness as the goal of life in material terms, whereas Muslim intellectuals examine happiness in terms of religious norms in order to attain an understanding of true human happiness.

The emergence of Islamic intellectualism is an influential factor in human society. Some Muslim intellectuals emerged as magnets of the social and political community. “If Islam is to be preserved as a social force in Indonesia, someone will have to serve as a cultural mediator between Islam and the new national culture of Indonesia.”² *In Islam and the State in Indonesia*, Effendy (2003) expressed the view that the development of Indonesia’s new Islamic intellectualism over the past two decades was ignored by the masses. This general tone has been influenced and shaped by the debilitating situation of political Islam and the devastating repercussions that it had on its thinkers and activists. These unfavourable developments emerged mainly due to the poor political relationship between Islam and the state and the resulting sociocultural and political reflection of Islam within the framework of the state.³ Furthermore, Effendy’s work contributes enormously in this study in regards to identifying the role of Muslim intellectuals’ discourses on social life. In this discussion, certain points explain social life in Islam in line with the theme of this thesis.

² Leonard Binder, *Islamic Tradition and Politics: The Kijaji and Alim*, A Commentary to Clifford Geertz’s “The Javanese Kijaji: The Changing Role of a Cultural Broker”, (*Comparative Studies in Society and History* 2, October 1959-July 1960), 256.

³ Bahtiar Effendy, *Islam and the State in Indonesia*, (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2003), 65.

Amien Rais, in his *Islam di Indonesia: Suatu Cara Mengaca Diri*, (1986) stated that every Indonesian has a great responsibility towards the Islamic movement in Indonesia. Hence, Rais introduces many ideas that could actualize the various noble values of Islam. This book is critical of the historical and contemporary circumstances. As stated by Ahmad Syafi'i Ma'arif: "Muslims in post-independence Indonesia should have a strong view, complete strategy and grown life,"⁴ because, "there are various problems faced by Indonesian Muslims and Muslims world-wide which are about differences between doctrine and reality."⁵ Madjid in *Islam: Kemodernan dan Ke Indonesiaan* offers a broad and general analysis of the thought of both scholars regarding human life.

Muammar A. Haris, in the journal of *Islamic View of Heritage and Modernity* (2012), argues that Muslims should be wary of Western modernity and critical towards the secular and modernist tendency in accepted Western modernity in all aspects. By and large, Muslims and the intellectuals among them have problems dealing with the religious tradition.⁶ Modernity today is often considered synonymous to progress and development. In other words, according to Haris (2012), modernity has Western values and does not necessarily mean progress and development. He stressed that the scientific literature is very important to guide and lead Muslims today to understand and implement Islam in life. The knowledge of intellectuals is very important as it can preserve authentic Islam, and lead to true happiness. In its broad outline, the article explores the history and philosophy of science. However, it did not

⁴ M. Amien Rais, *Islam di Indonesia: Suatu Cara Mengaca Diri*, (Jakarta: CV. Rajawali, 1986), 191.

⁵ Nurcholish Madjid, *Islam Kemodernan dan Keindonesiaan*, (Bandung: Mizan, 1993), 124.

⁶ Khalif Muammar A. Haris, "Jurnal Hadhari," *Pandangan Islam terhadap Tradisi dan Kemodernan*, vol. 4, no. 1 (2012): 23. <www.ukm.my/jhadhari>.

offer a critical sociological analysis of true happiness underlying the goal of contemporary human life.

Many argue that contemporary social analysis is based on literature that asserts that happiness comes from wealth and jobs. Nevertheless, Seligman (2004) in *Authentic happiness: Using the new positive psychology to realize your potential for lasting fulfillment*, stated that happiness comes from understanding the strength of one's embedded own character and depends on how every person uses it in all aspects of life. Hence, someone who has a great wealth will not necessarily feel real happiness. Moreover, it cannot be denied that the individual character in each culture is different. In addition to cultural factors, a person's perceived happiness is influenced by several factors such as personality, socio-demographic characteristics, economic conditions, and health as argued by Rice and Steele in the article *Subjective well-being and culture across time and space*.⁷

A person's level of happiness is measured by the strength of character as presented by Zakiyah Akmal in the article *Kekuatan Karakter dan Kebahagiaan pada Suku Minang*.⁸ She notes that significant contributions to happiness come from the power of character such as bravery, vitality and hope, in addition to five dominant power characters identified by the Minang people, namely: gratitude, kindness, fairness, integrity, and citizenship. Another interesting point is that involvement in the activities of an organization can be a factor that mostly affects happiness in the Minang tribe. This means that the individuals who are involved in the activities of the organization would be happier than those who are not involved. Other factors listed in

⁷ Tom W. Rice and Brent J. Steele, "Cross-Cultural Psychology", *Subjective Well-Being and Culture Across Time and Space*, (2004): 35-633. Google Search Pdf.

<<http://jcc.sagepub.com/content/35/6/633.full.pdf>> (accessed 23 November 2013).

⁸ Sari Zakiyah Akmal, *Kekuatan Karakter dan Kebahagiaan pada Suku Minang*, (UG Journal) 23, <<http://ejournal.gunadarma.ac.id>> (accessed 24 April 2013).

the data of the participants, such as age, gender, market spending, employment, level of education, marital status, and domicility do not have significant influence on happiness in the Minang tribe.⁹ Based on this quantitative research, the article uses individual surveys in parts of the Indonesian regions to support its authenticity. However, although happiness is often defined by culture, the religious factor should nevertheless play a dominant role in determining happiness. Unfortunately, religion was ignored in this article, which constitutes a major difference from this thesis.

If we examine the state of Muslims in Indonesia, there are discourses on how the present social situation has occurred. Madjid's book is a good reference for studying the Indonesian Muslim society as a whole. Fealy and White (2008) in *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia* mentioned that Indonesia is often cited as the best example of a thriving and continually maturing democracy in Southeast Asia.¹⁰ Fealy and White presented some scientific analysis about the religious life and politics in Indonesia. They provided many descriptions about the social and legal expressions of Islam as a religion and the social dynamics in Java wherein they expose an important identity of the Islamic community in Indonesia, which needs to be studied more extensively in the discussion on the meaning of life for every Muslim.

In the book *Religion in the Contemporary World: A Sociological Introduction*, Aldridge stated that religion is a powerful and controversial force in the contemporary world even in secular societies. Many societies seek to employ religion as a source of social stability and engine of social progress.¹¹ The book discusses the meaning of the

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Greg Fealy and Sally White, *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia*, (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2008).

¹¹ Alan Aldridge, *Religion in the Contemporary World: A Sociological Introduction*, 2nd Edition, (United Kingdom: Polity, 2007).

sociology of religion, and explains the religious position in the contemporary world. Although this book does not explain the standard sense of happiness in the modern world, it explains both the modern social world and religious views about happiness.

Many scholars have discussed happiness and the meaning of human life. They argue that religious and environmental factors are considered the main reason why people are happy. Hence, some scholars conceptualize happiness as the foundation of information that brings into focus a new discussion. Nurcholish Madjid (2007) in his *Islam Universal* conceptually expresses the ideas of happiness and misery. He argues that both happiness and the meaning of life are the most essential matters of humanity and the purposes of human life are none other than achieving happiness and avoiding misery. All the doctrines, either religious or secular, promise happiness to their followers and threaten their opponents with tribulations. Virtually, the description of happiness and misery is multiform, even so, all the doctrines and ideologies have always asserted that happiness and misery are permanent and real.¹² His book is similar to this thesis in describing Islam globally and creating a new discourse concerning the broad meaning of happiness.

In *Lentera Al-Qur'ān: Kisah dan Hikmah Kehidupan*, Quraish Shihab offers a partial discussion on the meaning of life. His work is a comprehensive study of al-Qur'ān as the main criterion to define the meaning of life. In general, this work is very useful because it encompasses the scope of the current social issues. Moreover, it discusses social human psychology and culture which are important factors to support the foundation of scholarly discourses on happiness by Indonesian Islamic scholars. Shihab seeks to elevate society's practical issues under an obvious discussion, using al-Qur'ān as the main reference.

¹² Nurcholish Madjid, *Islam Universal*, (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2007), 269.

In addition, every aspect of human relationship is governed by social values according to Mohammad Sham in *Islamic Values*. In Islam, all values affecting man are based upon the Qur'ānic concept that each human being is endowed by Almighty God with the highest potential for doing good deeds.¹³ This reference is quite similar to Quraish Shihab on defining the meaning of life based on the Qur'ānic discourse.

Muchtar Ghazali (2005) in his *Pemikiran Islam Kontemporer: Suatu Refleksi Keagamaan yang Dialogis* discusses the universal values of Islam that are at the core of religion which unify all humanity. The universal values such as the basis of social ethics should be linked to real conditions to have an effective role in the community.¹⁴ Interestingly, the studies of faith and purpose in the meaning of human life have been studied in-depth through religious and philosophical approaches. In *The Concept of an Islamic State*, Mahmood (1989) stated that Islam is not just a religion, but also a universal ideology, a civilization and a philosophy of life. Islam is a total integrative religion which includes all aspects of human behaviour.¹⁵ In addition, the discussion about the concept of humanity in Indonesia has been addressed by Amien Rais in his *Islam di Indonesia: Suatu Cara Mengaca Diri*. Rais tries to understand the real purpose for a Muslim's life, which involves the formulation of external factors of advancement or decline of the Muslim society.¹⁶ Rais advanced some examples to describe the human environment as the best medium to develop human life. Although Ghazali, Mahmood and Rais did not discuss happiness in life directly, they did nevertheless mention a notion of normal life as suggested in religious doctrines.

¹³ Mohammad Sham, *Islamic Values*, (London: Islamic Educational Foundation, 1993), 83.

¹⁴ Adeng Muchtar Ghazali, *Pemikiran Islam Kontemporer: Suatu Refleksi Keagamaan yang Dialogis*, (Bandung: Pustaka Setia, 2005).

¹⁵ Sohail Mahmood, *The Concept of an Islamic State*, (Pakistan: Progressive Publishers), 1989, 1.

¹⁶ M. Amien Rais, "Islam di Indonesia: Suatu cara Mengaca Diri", 271.

The purpose of human life is a significant point to be studied. It allows the explanation and consideration of pessimism and optimism. In *Islam: Doktrin dan Peradaban “Sebuah Telaah Kritis tentang Masalah Keimanan, Kemanusiaan, dan Kemoderenan”* by Nurcholish Madjid (2005), the author expressed the view that the optimists who think that life is meaningful believe that religion is a goal in their life. However, the pessimists deny that the meaning and purpose in life is not religious or even anti-religious. The pessimist represented by Schopenhauer began a discourse with a particular view on death; “every death is a tragic and pathetic event.” According to the pessimists, this life is a process moving steadily toward tragedy and misery, but only some of them chose “Back to the nothingness” instead of living with all this tragedy. According to them, happiness is false and spurious; hence, man is a miserable creature. “Happiness is life without any misery” is another pessimist argument of happiness which interprets their meaning and purpose in life.”¹⁷ This is a discourse upheld by modern pessimists as they encourage people to believe that humanity can attain perfection and happiness without waiting for death and the Hereafter.

However, Madjid in one of his writings said, “The purpose of human life is “converging” (liqā’) with Allah, God Almighty, within his blessings. Whereas, the meaning of human life is earned by earnest effort *mujāhadah*, to achieve the purpose in life is not only through the positive meaning and aim, but also through full tribulations, so it is exactly better to die than to live.”¹⁸ The book which critically examines the issues of faith, humanity, and modernity by Nurcholish Madjid is similar

¹⁷ Nurcholish Madjid, *Islam: Doktrin dan Peradaban “Sebuah Telaah Kritis tentang Masalah Keimanan, Kemanusiaan, dan Kemoderenan”*, 5th Edition, (Jakarta: Paramadina, 2005), 20-21.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 18.

to the content of this research and needs to be studied critically, due to the three issues becoming the most important discourses which will continue to evolve.

When reviewing happiness, many Muslim scholars agree that happiness cannot be separated from the worldly life and the Hereafter. Happiness should be accompanied by a meaningful life. In *Psikologi Kematian “Mengubah Ketakutan Menjadi Optimisme”* Hidayat indicated that the meaning and value of life is progress. Factors of age, educational level, and economic status would positively affect the understanding and appreciation of the meaning of life.¹⁹ Hidayat’s book is an in-depth study of religion and reflections that identified death as the cornerstone of perfect life. Therefore, when someone remembers death it is a means to realize a meaningful life. Yet, he did not dwell on a detailed discussion of happiness, which is the ultimate goal of man.

Rahardjo (1989), in his *Islam Indonesia Menatap Masa Depan*, intends to reveal and re-formulate the fundamental values of Islam, to develop the science that is based on Islamic values, to extract the Islamic cultural heritage and to devise a better future within any Islamic perspective.²⁰ Most of the books by Indonesian scholars such as Nurcholish Madjid, Moeslim Abdurrahman and Emha Ainun Nadjib reveal some important issues about human life, which can be bettered by following the guidance of religion. Islam as a whole is supposed to eradicate all the social problems of the world in general and the problems of individual Muslims in particular. Shihab (1994), in the *Membumikan al-Qur’ān: Fungsi dan Peran Wahyu dalam Kehidupan*

¹⁹ Komaruddin Hidayat, *Psikologi Kematian: Mengubah Kematian menjadi Optimisme*, (Bandung: Mizan, 2010), 76.

²⁰ M. Dawam Rahardjo, *Islam Indonesia Menatap Masa Depan, (P3M) Perhimpunan Pengembangan Pesantren dan Masyarakat*, (Jakarta: 1989), 242.

Masyarakat, explains that negative transformation can be circumvented by understanding and practicing the Qur'ānic values.

A person would not attain the ultimate goal of his life if he does not value his personal life. In fact, the ultimate goal forms the principle and basis for a person to live happily in this world and in the Hereafter. In *Islam Indonesia Menatap Masa Depan*, Rahardjo discusses the opinions of many scholars on the meaning of life to guide Muslims to the right path and doctrines in accordance with Islam. These discussions are expected to reveal Muslims' views about true happiness in life. Unfortunately, Rahardjo does not directly address in his work the nature of happiness, which can be a real basis for humans to live peacefully. This will be discussed in this research.

Regarding the nature of happiness, some Muslim scholars have studied it through a spiritual approach by referring to classical Islamic doctrines. In *Al-Ghozālī: The Alchemy of Happiness*, Field (1983) posits that Al-Ghazālī has an impressive discussion and composition of happiness. In his statement, he tried to purify the human heart through the mind and to explain broadly the word 'Alchemy' and 'Happiness' as turning away from the world to God. The most exciting part of the discussion was when Field explains human nature as Al-Ghazālī argues that: "In truth, man in this world is extremely weak and contemptible; it is only in the next that he will be of value. Otherwise, this condition will be worse than that of the beasts, which perish and turn to dust."²¹

It is important for man, at the same time, to be aware of his superiority as the perfection of all creation; he is supposed to know his limits because it is one of the

²¹ Claud Field, *Al-Ghozālī: The Alchemy of Happiness*, Translated from the Hindustani, (Lahore: SH. Muhammad Ashraf, 1983), 32.

keys to achieving the knowledge of God.²² The lesson that can be drawn is the importance of knowledge which covers the meaning of self, God, the world and the Hereafter. Al-Attas, in *The Meaning and Experience of Happiness in Islam*, quotes Al-Ghazālī: “happiness according to the perspective of Islam is expressed by the term *sa’ādah*, and it relates to two dimensions of existence: the Hereafter (*ukhrāwiyyah*) and the present world (*dunyāwiyyah*).”²³ Accordingly, the four series of Al-Ghazālī and discussions by several Muslim intellectuals are expected to uncover the veil of human purpose to achieve true happiness in life, even though some references do not directly explain the essential meaning of happiness in the modern world.

To conclude, Islamic intellectualism is an influential factor in human society. Some Muslim scholars introduced many discussions about how man could attain his purpose in life. In Indonesia, Muslims demand guidance to lead them to the right path. Currently, Muslims live in an age full of many negative influences. Negative influence destroys the character of people who live in a secular world. People are growing accustomed to separation between worldly life and religious issues. In fact, religion is a powerful force in the contemporary world even in secular societies. Therefore, many scholars discuss the meaning of human life either in terms of religious or secular views. In the religious view, Islam relies on the Qur’ān as the main reference to define the meaning of life. In fact, the ultimate goal in life according to the Qur’ān is in the form of principles for a person to live happily in this world and in the Hereafter. However, secularists believe that humanity can attain perfection and happiness without waiting for death and the Hereafter. Therefore, this study seeks to discover the true purpose of human life through the definition of happiness according to

²² Ibid.

²³ Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *Meaning and Experience of Happiness in Islam*, (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization ISTAC, 1993),1.