

Sufi Healing in Martin Lings View: *Dzikir* and Prayer as Healing Therapy

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Abstrak

The problem of spiritual emptiness is not enough to only be cured by medical methods, but also by spiritual treatment, for example by Sufi healing methods. Sufi healing methods are considered relevant to heal patients who experience emotional and mental disorders. This paper focuses on studying Sufi healing with the method of prayer and dzikir in the view of Martin Lings. This paper is analyzed with a qualitative approach using exploratory and analytical methods. The findings obtained are, for Martin Lings the conception of Sufism can be used as a method for spiritual treatment, where the goal is to lead people who have problems with their spiritual emptiness to have kindness and peace of mind. Healing therapy methods that can be used are prayer and dzikir. According to Martin Lings, prayer will give birth to a sense of awareness of the human need for God. Meanwhile, with dzikir gives birth to self-realization of all the shortcomings of oneself and the hope of Allah's forgiveness.

Keywords: Prayer, Healing, Martin Lings, Sufi. Dzikir.

Abstrak

Permasalahan kehampaan spritual tidak cukup hanya disembuhkan dengan metode medis, melainkan juga dengan pengobatan spritual, misalnya dengan metode *sufi healing*. Metode *sufi healing* dirasa relevan untuk menyembuhkan pasien yang mengalami gangguan emosi maupun mental. Tulisan ini memfokuskan mengkaji *sufi healing* dengan metode doa dan zikir dalam pandangan Martin Lings. Tulisan ini dianalisis dengan pendekatan kualitatif menggunakan metode eksploratif dan analitis. Adapun temuan yang didapatkan yaitu: bagi Martin Lings konsepsi tasawuf dapat digunakan sebagai metode untuk pengobatan spritual, dimana tujuannya akan mengantarkan manusia yang bermasalah dengan kehampaan spritualnya menjadi memiliki kebaikan dan ketenangan hati. Metode terapi *healing* yang dapat digunakan adalah doa dan zikir. Dimana menurut Martin Lings dengan doa—akan melahirkan rasa kesadaran butuhnya manusia pada Allah. Sementara dengan zikir melahirkan keinsyafan diri akan segala kekurangan diri dan pengharapan ampunan Allah.

Kata Kunci: Doa, Healing, Martin Lings, Sufi. Zikir.

INTRODUCTION

The modern era is a series of eras of human life characterized by advances in knowledge and technology. Humans in modern life depend on the help of machines and the tendency to matter. Modernization that occurs in human life on the one hand brings convenience and on the other hand modernization also leaves various life problems and even causes serious impacts on human life itself. Humans are faced with various problems that make them feel difficulty (feeling difficulty), feelings of anxiety (anxiety), to cause depression (depression) or stress (stress). Various ways are done to restore their happiness. In this context, the existence of science related to the human soul becomes important as an effort to unravel the problems of modern human psychology (Arroisi, 2018).

It is Sufism among the sciences that can answer the problems of modern society. Sufism as a form of mysticism becomes important to purify the soul and is the need of every generation. Its role should not be reduced along with the changing times (Nasir & Malik, 2013). To address this, there have been various attempts to make spiritual and Sufism a method for healing mental problems. This method became known as spiritual healing and Sufi healing. Spiritual healing aims to awaken human

qualities that can have a positive impact on their lives, such as generating love and compassion, patience, tolerance, forgiveness, responsibility, peace and harmony (Rahman, 2014). The word healing itself in Islam is equivalent to the word *shifa'*.

One of the Sufism activists who is concerned about Sufi healing is Martin Lings. Martin Lings also pays special attention to the soul in several of his Sufism works. Such as *A Return to The Spirit*, *What is Sufism*, *The Eleventh Hour*, *The Spiritual Crisis of the Modern World in the Light of Tradition and Prophecy*, and others. For Martin Lings, the essence of Sufism is related to the perfection of the human soul. Sufism is an attempt to present divine qualities and remove people from habits and prejudices that have become their character. Then Sufism fills its character with the peculiarities of human nature which are presented in the image of God (Lings, 2005). *Dzikir* and prayer—a method used by Martin Lings as a healing therapy—through these methods he seeks a solution to the problems of the human soul who live in this modern era.

Departing from the description of the discussion above, the author would like to examine more deeply the views of Martin Lings related to Sufi healing—especially the methods of *dzikir* and prayer that he carries as healing

therapy. By asking the question, what is Martin Lings' view on Sufi healing? Also how is the method of *dzikir* and prayer in Martin Lings' view as healing therapy?

RESEARCH METHODS

This research is a qualitative research using exploratory and analytical methods. The exploratory method is used as a comprehensive exploration of Martin Lings' thoughts related to Sufi healing, prayer and *dzikir* methods. While the analytical method is used as a method to conduct a more detailed and in-depth study of the thoughts of Martin Lings so that a conclusion is found about what to look for. The primary sources for this research are the works of Martin Lings, *The Eleventh Hour*, *The Spiritual Crisis of the Modern World in the Light of Tradition and Prophecy*, *A Return to The Spirit*, *What is Sufism*, and *Kitab al-Yaqin*. The technical reasons for conducting research on Sufi healing and Martin Lings are, first, because the Sufi healing method is very relevant to answer/treat the spiritual emptiness of modern-day humans. Second, the character of Martin Lings with his works which seeks to raise the spirit of Sufism as a method that is useful for modern human life.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Sufi Healing in Sufism Literature

Sufism is one of the cultures that exist in Islam that can constantly

develop and adapt to various conditions. The presence of Sufism in its development is felt to be able to provide solutions to various problems and issues that occur in life by directing it to the way of God. Sufism in its development always experiences a shift from organizational, political, philosophical and even theological forms. Even in the modern context, the orientation of Sufism was developed from a focus on individual spirituality into a method or method of healing which experts call the term Sufi healing or Sufi healing (Al-Haramain, 2011). In terms of terminology, Sufi healing consists of two words Sufi and healing. The word Sufi refers to a person or someone who is looking for peace of mind by drawing closer to Allah. While the term healing is formed from the word heal which means to heal or heal. Thus, Sufi healing can be understood as a healing method using the Sufism method or method (Al-Haramain, 2011).

The existence of Sufi healing as a method of treatment in recent times has become a trend for people such as in Indonesia. Several studies have shown that there is a tendency for people to use Sufi healing methods such as Syamsul Hadi's research on the role of kiai healers (physicians) in traditional medicine at the Pondok Inabah Islamic boarding school in Surabaya. Another study was conducted by

Abdul Jalil Research (Malaysia) on methods and practices of healing with *dzikir* and prayer in Surabaya (Al-Haramain, 2011). This study concludes that there is a contribution of treatment and healing using the Sufi healing method. Alternative medicine using the Sufi healing method does not only occur in Surabaya as the research above shows, but in almost all parts of Indonesia. This can be seen from the tendency and seriousness of the Indonesian people to watch television media shows or other media in alternative healing programs using the Sufi healing method (Al-Haramain, 2011). This shows that there is a new phenomenon in the shift in perspective in seeing Sufism.

Psychiatric therapy in Sufism is specifically based on quranic cues about the nature of the human soul, as the word of God in QS. as-Shams [91] 7-9:

"And the soul and its perfection (its creation), then Allah has inspired the soul (the way) of wickedness and piety. Indeed, successful is the one who purifies his soul, and indeed the loser is the one who pollutes it." (QS. as-Shams [91]: 7-9)

The verses of the Koran in as-Sham as quoted are the basis and reference in the development of psychology in Islam. This verse motivates each individual to pay more attention to the dimensions of his soul by doing good deeds that

will have an impact on inner peace. This is because the soul that tends to goodness will lead its owner to peace and happiness that is formed from the closeness of the soul to its creator (Arroisi, 2018).

This verse also emphasizes that since creation humans have been equipped with two different tendencies, namely the tendency to do good and do bad. Tendency to indulge one's sensual and physical desires and be immersed in the enjoyment of sensual and worldly pleasures. On the other hand, there is a tendency to reach the peak of virtue, goodness and piety. Humans are given the power to determine and are even encouraged to develop good tendencies and piety (Najati, 2005).

To develop an inclination towards goodness, the human soul must be guided by religion. Human failure to fulfill the tendency to the goodness of his soul will bring various mental illnesses. These mental illnesses by the Sufis can be cured by taking the path to Allah. Humans are required to be able to resolve conflicts that occur within themselves through treatment and strengthening spirituality, including through *mujahadah* as practiced in the world of Sufism.

There are several terms used to describe the methods or values of Sufism that can be used as a method of treatment through Sufism, namely Sufi healing and therapy. The term therapy comes from the root word

therapeutic which is an adjective that has the meaning as elements or values of treatment. This word then gets an additional "s" (therapeutics) containing the meaning of science related to examination or treatment. M. Amin Syukur stated that therapy has a broad meaning, namely treatment that aims to bring physical and mental health to people who are sick (Syukur, 2012).

In the Sufi tradition, the practice of Sufi healing begins when they enter Sufi stages with three general concepts. First, the emptying of the soul from all things that can tarnish and damage the soul (takhalli), then followed by the tahalli process, namely filling the soul of the servant with various good and noble deeds. The last process is the stage of application and appearance of the results that have been undertaken which is called tajallili. In the process carried out several things namely mujadah, riyadah through maqamat and ahwal. Finally, everything is called nihayah as the last station because the servant has reached the level of ihsan, which is doing good. Those who have reached this stage are called *ahlul 'irfan* (Syukur, 2012).

Sufism as a Solution to Spiritual Crisis in the View of Martin Lings

The crisis of spirituality in Martin Lings' view is an important note in this day and age. Thousands of years ago society was built on the

power of religion. Islam in particular, which came hundreds of years ago, has strengthened people's belief in God, the Last Day and belief in the near future. In contrast to what is happening today according to Martin Lings, belief in God and scriptures is getting weaker than before, and especially for Westerners most of these beliefs are replaced by agnosticism to not proclaim atheism until the fall of communism. Plus the systematic indoctrination of children. Belief in the theory of evolution developed in such a way (Lings, 2002). This has increasingly become a trigger for a spiritual crisis in modern humans.

Martin Lings as an Islamic thinker with a convert to Islam background consistently fights for the upholding of Islamic spiritual values in the frame of tradition and prophethood in Islam. Two of his works, *The Eleventh Hour* and *A Return to Spirit*, contain his concerns about the spiritual crisis experienced by most modern societies. Through these works, Martin Lings tries to provide solutions to the current spiritual crisis. Sufism is a path that Martin Lings offers to modern society as a way to rediscover the joy of life. This is because the material cannot deliver humans to the level of true happiness (Lings, 2002).

Martin Lings is a thinker with a background in arts and comparative religion and an important figure in the development of perennial

philosophy in the modern age. With his diverse scientific background, Martin Lings tries to introduce Islam and its spirituality. Martin Lings was able to voice his inner voice peacefully to Western society. As Shuha Guppy points out that Martin Lings is one of the most eloquent and serene Western voices (Lings, 2002). This means that Martin Lings became the spokesperson in explaining Islam well to the Western world.

Martin Lings' attention to Sufism is not only aimed at preserving Sufism as a conceptual Islamic mysticism. For Martin Lings, Sufism is a way that people must know to get back to their happiness. Departing from the concept that humans are poor creatures, for Martin Lings humans cannot achieve happiness apart from spiritual and divine values. Happiness is a matter of the human heart. Therefore, according to him, Sufism is nothing but aimed at the weakness of the heart (*qalbu*). Martin Lings stated as follows,

“But all of those Qur’anic term which maybe said to refer to them and to no one else except a priori the Prophet, the most significant as well as the most recurrent is probably the somewhat enigmatid phrase those who have hearts, and mention of this has been reserved until now because it is important enough to be the central theme of chapter. For what indeed is sufism, subjectively speaking, if not heart wakefulness.” (Lings, 2005).

As a person who lives in the modern era with all its dynamics, Martin Lings can feel the problems of life in his time. Modern life is characterized by the busyness of humans in their lives and believes that money, possessions, physical comforts are more important than spiritual matters. Not infrequently spiritual teachings are considered foreign and only considered as past culture that ever existed. On the other hand, humans do not find happiness. Happiness can be defined as a state of mind that is free from anger, sadness, fear. In this context, material cannot provide hope for human happiness (Nasir & Malik, 2013).

Happiness is a feeling of inner and outer pleasure, to get true happiness, you can never measure it from something that can be lost, exhausted or destroyed. The size is something that can last too. Like a sense of adequacy that is formed from morals, so that regardless of the situation and conditions of life, the feeling of *qanaah* will continue to adorn. Or a sense of closeness to God that is formed through the way of Sufism, so that any situation and condition is always seen as a form of God's love.

Sufi Healing in the View of Martin Lings

Humans in the view of Martin Lings are creatures filled with deficiencies termed *al-faqr*. As stated

by Ibn al-'Arabi and quoted by Martin Lings that the meaning of al-faqr is people who are brought closer. The identity of human poverty is found in the word of God in QS. al-'Alaq [96], 19 concerning the commandment to prostrate. The command to prostrate is a reflection of human poverty before God.

"Prostrate and draw near to Allah." (QS. al-'Alaq [96]: 19).

Human poverty can also clearly be found in the word of Allah QS. Fathir [35]:15;

"O mankind, you all need Allah, while Allah is Rich, Most Praiseworthy." (QS. Fathir [35]: 15)

The word fuqara 'in this verse has two meanings. First, it is used in a socio-economic context. Second, in the context of human existence. In the socio-economic context, faqir means someone whose income is not balanced with his needs. So he falls into the category of people entitled to receive zakat in Islam. In terms of existence, faqir has the understanding that universally all humans need God. Humans need guidance, love, affection and help from Allah (Ismail, 2002).

The perfection and happiness of the human soul is in the form of *ridhwan* which is interpreted as the bringing of the human soul into His own presence and into His eternal pleasure. This is the soul that has been perfected (Lings, 2002). As the

word of God in QS. al-Fajr [89]: 27-30:

"O serene soul, return to your Lord with a contented heart and He is pleased with you. Enter into the class of My servants and enter into My Paradise." (QS. al-Fajr [89]: 27-30).

The concept of the happiness of the spirit (soul) in Martin Lings' Sufism is related to the concept of *insan al-kamil*. According to him, there are two forms of perfection and beauty, namely rabbinic perfection and human perfection. Rabbani perfection is the highest perfection that cannot be surpassed by human perfection. The height and perfection of the Rabbani is hinted at like the layers of the sky in the Qur'an. Happiness is when the human spirit can travel to rabbinic perfection. Martin Lings presented the events of the *isra'* and *mi'raj* of the Prophet Muhammad. from Makkah to al-Quds then to the Throne which is high in the presence of Allah is a journey of the spirit towards and reaching its happiness. The peak and fruit of this spiritual journey is the heaven of the spirit, namely the pleasure of witnessing the beautiful lights of the sky and the *tajalli rabbani* in the state of the spirit (Lings, 2013). The key to the happiness of heart and spirit for Martin Lings lies in closeness to rabbani perfection (God).

Human failure to achieve happiness shows humans are in mental health disorders. The main

cause of mental health disorders is due to the occurrence of the spiritual emptiness of man himself. Spiritual emptiness is driven by a consumptive and individualistic lifestyle. This will create psychological conditions such as the emergence of feelings of stress, anxiety and confusion. Psychiatric conditions like this are not enough only with medical healing methods but can be cured by spiritual or Sufistic methods (Syukur, 2012). Various human psychological conditions such as stress, anxiety, and confusion show that humans are in the lowest condition of their souls. In conditions like this, each individual often hopes for progress (progress) from him. This is the meaning of prayer according to Martin Lings when one asks for guidance from the Transcendent to always be on His way (Lings, 2005a).

For Martin Lings, the problem of human psychology and health is related to several main things, namely the heart, *dzikir*, sharia and mursyid. The main goal of Sufism is the heart (qalbu) (Lings, 2005a). Martin Lings' statement means that Sufism is for goodness and peace of mind (soul) - the heart (heart) has several meanings. First, the heart as part of the body's organs in this case the heart is a horizontal unit with a limited understanding of itself. Second, heart (qalb) also means spirit. Thus, at the end point

qalb corresponds to the spirit which has a rabbinic aspect (Lings, 2002).

The existence of the spirit as the equivalent of the heart is very important in human life. The existence of the spirit is symbolized like the sun which is the heart of the universe. The heart is the center of human individuality which is known as the small universe (microcosm). Martin Lings uses the symbol of a garden where the tree of life grows and the fountain of life flows. The heart is the source of that life, which in Arabic is called 'syn, which means eyes or springs. The heart is one part that must be a concern for humans in their lives.

Martin Lings encourages people to discover that the heart of the heart is the inner sun. Referring to classical Sufis, the sun symbolizes the spirit, while light is *ma'rifah* (gnosis), during the day is the upper realm, transcendent and night is this world. The symbols used by Martin Lings show that the heart has an important position as the sun of the human soul. Its light will illuminate the soul, as the sun illuminates the universe. It is the heart that gives light to the darkness, just as the light of the sun gives light to the darkness of the moon (Lings, 2005a).

An important part of Martin Lings' Sufism is about methods to strengthen the heart. According to Martin Lings, the heart can experience and face obstacles much like a cloud covering the moon.

Thus, Martin Lings gives a symbol of the blemishes of the heart that will make the heart uneasy. Obstacles of the heart manifest in several conditions such as hardness of heart, with various characteristics and circumstances surrounding it. Religion becomes an important part of the heart to face its obstacles. Obstacles of the heart in religious messages can be overcome with *dzikrullah* (remember Allah). In the Koran as the main book in Islam, *zikrullah* is always associated with improving the quality of faith and the human spirit. *Zikrullah* is also useful for restoring human awareness of his existence. *Zikrullah* gives the effect of inner peace, the soul of enlightenment of knowledge and positive psychological effects. This effect will give birth to various forms of ethics in humans such as the emergence of a preventive attitude towards evil (Hakiem, 2002).

***Dzikir* and Prayer as Healing Therapy Methods in Martin Lings View**

Dzikir (as mentioned earlier) and prayer are ways proposed by Martin Lings as a method for dealing with the obstacles of the heart. Obstacles of the heart in Martin Lings's view is another name for various psychological problems faced and experienced by the human soul's heart. The soul as described by Martin Lings is like the night. The light of the full moon at night will not turn night into day. How to revive a soul that has been engulfed

in darkness? Reviving the goodness of the soul by Martin Lings is like Abraham's question to God how to bring the dead back to life as Allah says in QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 260:

“And (remember) when Abraham said, "My Lord, show me how You bring the dead to life." Allah said, "Are you not sure yet?" Ibrahim replied, "I have convinced him, but so that my heart remains steady (with my faith) Allah says, "(Then) take four birds, then chop them all up by you. (Allah says), "Then put on each hill one part of it, then call them, surely they will come to you quickly." and know that Allah is Mighty, Wise.” (QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 260)

According to Martin Lings, there is a part of the verse, according to Martin Lings, in the statement of Prophet Ibrahim so that my heart can be at peace, so that the belief in my heart is peaceful, not disturbed by the surface waves of reason and wishful thinking. Munajat (prayer) and *dzikir* are two things according to Martin Lings that can revive a dead heart like the request of Prophet Ibrahim. As is usually done by Muslims, *dzikir* and prayer are additional acts of worship (sunnat) of prayer. Although, in *dzikir* most ways and methods are not a concern for most Muslims, but it is different for a Sufi. The body movements in munajat performed by Sufis in their *dzikir* have their own meaning, such as a swaying head and hands raised when praying is a form of embodiment of the attitude of spiritual poverty. These methods are part of the self-relief method (Lings, 2005a).

Prayer and *dzikir* are two additional acts of worship outside of the main worship such as prayer which has been practiced since the beginning of Islam as a method of attaining spiritual heights. The methods of purification of the soul according to Martin Lings have been offered by the Koran as in QS al-Muzammil [73]: 1-4, which are categorized by scholars as revelations that came down in the early period:

“Get up for (for prayer) at night, even if it is a little (of it), i.e. half, or less than that, or less than that. And recite the Qur'an slowly, chant the name of your Lord, and worship Him with diligence.” (QS. al-Muzammil [73]: 1-4)

Although, the editorial of this verse is addressed to the Prophet Muhammad SAW., according to Martin Lings the content of the command applies to all Muslims to carry out worship. In this context, the practice of *dzikir* as the core of Sufism teachings practiced by Sufis has been applied since the beginning of Islam even before other worship orders such as prayer as an esoteric dimension of Islam. In addition to *dzikir*, the method of achieving inner peace that has been practiced since the beginning of Islam is spiritual solitude known as *i'tikaf* worship. Solitary activities in the form of *i'tikaf* according to Martin Lings are a method of spiritual purification that already exists and is found in pre-Islamic religious teachings. As in the religious teachings of the Prophet

Ibrahim. This indicates that there is a continuity of the esoteric teachings of Prophet Ibrahim to Islam (Lings, 2002).

Prayer as an act of worship is an important method of mental health of a person. As Martin Lings put it, prayer is proof of human feelings about their poverty before God. In the development of modern Islamic self-healing studies, it can be proven that prayer is a method of treating the heart (soul). The practice of prayer can create a sense of optimism, self-confidence, peace and serenity because people who pray can feel peace because they feel close to God. In modern healing theory, these practices can stimulate the hypothalamus to decrease the production of CRF (corticotropin releasing factor). CRF will stimulate the anterior pituitary gland to decrease the production of ACTH (Adreno Cortico Tropin Hormone). According to the theory, this hormone will stimulate the adrenal cortex which aims to reduce cortisol secretion. Cortisol will suppress the human immune system so that it can break down and reduce anxiety (Cita, Wulandari, & Istanti, 2016).

Along with the development of modern nursing science, nursing methods with a religious (psychoreligious) approach are increasingly gaining a place as a healing method. Several studies have shown that the level of belief, faith is related to the level of immunity and

endurance of a person in dealing with various problems in life which are psychosocial stressors. As is believed in Islam, various conditions such as anxiety-depression are considered a calamity that must be faced with patience which encourages sufferers to *dzikir* and pray (Cita et al., 2016).

By praying wholeheartedly a person will feel that he gets help in dealing with calamities related to his mental problems. Feelings of sadness, stress, frustration, hopelessness, worry, and fear are some of the severe mental symptoms (Tafsir, 2002).

In 1984 the UN World Health Organization WHO has determined the element of religion (spiritual) as one of the 4 elements of health. Physical, psychological, spiritual and social health. This approach was later adopted by American psychiatrists who were gathered in the APA (The American Psychological Association), known as the bio-psycho-socio-spiritual approach. In an epidemiological study conducted by Lindethal S. (1971) it was concluded that religious residents/communities experience a lower risk of stress than non-religious residents in their daily lives (Cita et al., 2016).

Another study conducted by Nia et al, in 2009 on 80 people under hemodialysis treatment showed that prayer therapy is appropriate and suitable for chronic kidney patients

because it has the effect of reducing stress levels and increasing spiritual status (Cita et al., 2016).

Furthermore, the essence of *dzikir* is the existence of an acknowledgment of one's imperfection before the Creator (Rahman, 2014). *Dzikir* in Martin Lings' view is not only limited in terms of remembering but includes various other worship such as reading and reciting verses of the *Quran* or readings recommended by the Prophet Muhammad (Lings, 2002).

Farhat Naz Rahman in his writing on spiritual healing and Sufi practices suggests several healing techniques through spiritual healing and Sufi healing,

1. Read the letters and verses of the Koran. In this healing practice, the officer (healer) reads special verses from the Koran about the parts that are felt sick or suffered by the patient. Giving water and reading a prayer is then handed over to the patient to drink.
2. *Dzikir*. In this type of treatment, the officer/companion/physician repeats the reading of the names of Allah to the patient at regulated time intervals.
3. Suggestion. In this type of healing the healer directs the patient to instruct the patient's body and mind to act.
4. Blow the hand and put it down. The healer recites the verses and the name of Allah then rubs it on

the patient / sufferer (Rahman, 2014).

CONCLUSION

The answers to the questions posed in the introductory points above are, for Martin Lings, Sufi healing is an alternative that can be used as a method of spiritual treatment—the conception of Sufism which is the basis of human spiritual medicine is useful in achieving goodness and peace of mind (soul). According to Martin Lings, mental health disorders experienced by humans due to spiritual emptiness are not enough to be cured only by medical methods, but also by Sufistic medicine to complicate their spiritual healing. Then, the method of prayer and *dzikir* can be used as a method of healing therapy guided by a competent healer. The prayer method will trigger the patient's feeling and mentality that he is a weak creature who needs God's help and at the same time a sense of calm will be present. While *dzikir* will give birth to the patient's self-awareness that he is full of all shortcomings and imperfections so that he needs God's forgiveness and love, at that time a sense of resignation to God's provisions will arise and the hope of living a good life will be reborn.

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