

Sufi Ethics in Serat Centhini Volume I: An Al-Ghazalian Perspective

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ABSTRACT: *Sufi ethics remains a relevant topic of discussion in Indonesian society. Previous studies on the Serat Centhini have generally focused on local wisdom, literature, or theosophical-cosmological syncretism—such as the concept of wahdatul wujud—but have been limited in examining its practical-behavioural ethical dimension (tasawuf akhlaqi). This study examines and analyses Sufi ethics in Serat Centhini Volume 1, specifically from Al-Ghazali's perspective. The main issue addressed is how Al-Ghazali's ethical teachings, centred on the concept of purification of the soul (tazkiyatun nafs), are reflected and expressed in the narratives, symbols, and behaviours of the characters in Serat Centhini, Volume 1. This study employs a hermeneutic research method through a literature review (library research). The categorised data were then analysed using hermeneutic methods to dissect the text in depth, right down to its roots. The research findings reveal that the narrative dynamics and spiritual journeys of the figures (such as Sunan Giri and Syekh Amongraga) are real manifestations of the stages of tazkiyatun nafs, which are concretely embodied in ethical maqams: Tawakal in the face of the crisis of war, patience in the face of physical suffering, social gratitude, zuhud in the form of deferring physical desires for the sake of spiritual practice, wara' (inner vigilance against negligence), khauf-raja', and culminating in muraqabah and muhasabah. The novelty and scientific contribution of this research lie in the demonstration of the presence of "ethical syncretism" —that is, the harmonious integration of moderate Islamic Sufi ethics based on *Ihya Ulumuddin with Javanese cultural wisdom—thereby establishing Serat Centhini Volume 1 not only as a cultural encyclopedia but also as a contextual and relevant guide to the spiritual ethics of Nusantara Islam.*

Etika Sufi tetap menjadi topik diskusi yang relevan dalam masyarakat Indonesia. Studi-studi terdahulu mengenai *Serat Centhini* umumnya berfokus pada kearifan lokal, sastra, atau sinkretisme teosofis-kosmologis—seperti konsep *wahdatul wujud*—namun masih terbatas dalam mengkaji dimensi etika yang bersifat praktis-perilaku (*tasawuf akhlaqi*). Penelitian ini mengkaji dan menganalisis etika Sufi dalam *Serat Centhini* Jilid 1, khususnya dari perspektif Al-Ghazali. Pokok permasalahan yang dibahas adalah bagaimana ajaran etika Al-Ghazali, yang berpusat pada konsep penyucian jiwa (*tazkiyatun nafs*), tercermin dan terekspresikan dalam narasi, simbol, serta perilaku para tokoh dalam *Serat Centhini* Jilid 1. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode hermeneutika melalui studi pustaka (*library research*). Data yang telah dikategorikan kemudian dianalisis menggunakan metode hermeneutika untuk membedah teks secara mendalam hingga ke akar-akarnya. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa dinamika naratif dan perjalanan spiritual para

tokoh (seperti Sunan Giri dan Syekh Amongraga) merupakan manifestasi nyata dari tahapan *tazkiyatun nafs*, yang terwujud secara konkret dalam maqam etis: *Tawakal* dalam menghadapi krisis peperangan, kesabaran dalam menghadapi penderitaan fisik, rasa syukur sosial, zuhud berupa penundaan hasrat fisik demi praktik spiritual, *wara'* (kewaspadaan batin terhadap kelalaian), *khauf-raja'*, serta puncaknya pada muraqabah dan muhasabah. Kebaruan dan kontribusi ilmiah penelitian ini terletak pada penunjukan adanya "*sinkretisme etis*"—yaitu perpaduan harmonis antara etika Sufi Islam moderat yang bersumber dari *Ihya Ulumuddin* dengan kearifan budaya Jawa—sehingga menempatkan *Serat Centhini* Jilid 1 tidak hanya sebagai ensiklopedia budaya, tetapi juga sebagai panduan etika spiritual Islam Nusantara yang kontekstual dan relevan.

Keywords: *Sufi Ethics, Serat Centhini, Al-Ghazalian Perspective.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Sufi ethics remain a hot topic of discussion among Indonesians. Given that early Islam in Indonesia was predominantly Sufi in nature, it is no surprise that even today many Muslims in Indonesia still follow Sufi traditions (Ahmadi, 2017). One example of Sufi ethics in Indonesia is the Qadiriyyah Wa Naqsyabandiyah order, which has significant influence in the country. This order is a merger of two major orders: the Qadiriyyah, founded by Sheikh Abdul Qadir Al-Jailani, and the Naqshbandiyah, founded by Sheikh Baha al-Din Naqshband Al-Bukhari, which Sheikh Ahmad Khatib As-Sambas unified (Septianisa & Nasrudin, 2025).

Conceptually, Sufi ethics is not merely a matter of morality focused solely on outward aspects, but transcends the outward to reach the deepest meaning of a behaviour or action (Faiz et al., 2024). Sufi ethics also considers what is good and bad through the lens of reason and intuition (Kizi, 2025). This is also related to the science of *tasawwuf*—the discipline that studies the attainment of the state of *ihsan*, which is to worship Allah as if you were seeing Him, or as if He were seeing you (Suratman et al., 2021).

Many Islamic philosophers have studied ethics, including Al-Ghazali, who presented a theory of Sufi ethics in his book *Ihya Ulumuddin* (Azmi et al., 2024). Al-Ghazali was a great scholar who successfully integrated Sharia, philosophy, and Sufism. Through *Ihya Ulumuddin*, Al-Ghazali emphasises the core of ethics: purifying the soul, which constitutes noble character (Salaeh et al., 2023). According to Al-Ghazali, ethics is not merely a set of outward norms but also a spiritual process that leads to closeness with Allah and the attainment of happiness (Arroisi et al., 2023).

Similarly, classical Javanese literature also embodies Sufi values, as seen in *Serat Centhini*. *Serat Centhini* is a Javanese-language book whose contents guide the Javanese ideal of a perfect life (Ansori & Taufiq, 2024). The original Javanese-language text consists of 12 volumes totalling 3,500 pages. Kanjeng Gusti Pangeran Adipati Anom Amangkurat III, also known as Pakubuwana V of Surakarta, wrote *Serat Centhini*; Mr Kamajaya later transcribed it into the Latin alphabet, and the Centhini Foundation in Yogyakarta published it in 1985. *Serat Centhini* serves as a source of diverse knowledge

regarding Javanese culture, encompassing both the material and spiritual realms. Therefore, it is fitting to call this book the "Encyclopedia of Javanese Culture." The *Serat Centhini* was composed on Saturday, Pahing, the 26th day of Sura, with the *Candra Sengkala* "*Paksa Suci Sabda Ji*"—corresponding to the Javanese year 1742 or the Gregorian year 1814. The *Serat Centhini* was originally titled *Suluk Tumbang Raras*. The name *Serat Centhini* is derived from Niken Tambang Raras, the wife of Seh Amorgraga (Pakubuwana V, 1975).

Volume 1 of the 12 volumes of *Serat Centhini* was transcribed from Javanese script into the Latin alphabet by Mr Kamajaya, chairman of the Centhini Foundation in Yogyakarta (Febriyanti, 2024). *Serat Centhini* Volume 1 has received a warm reception from readers, who have urged a reprint. Consequently, the Centhini Foundation collaborated with the Directorate of History and Traditional Values, Directorate General of Culture, Ministry of Education and Culture, to reprint *Serat Centhini* Volume 1 using funds from the research and study project on Nusantara culture (Pakubuwana V, 1975).

Compiled in the early 19th century, this volume is known as an encyclopedia of Javanese culture, as it encompasses scientific, religious, philosophical, and even mystical teachings (Pardi et al., 2020). *Serat Centhini*, Volume 1, depicts its characters' spiritual journeys as they search for meaning in life, explore the relationship between humans and God, and learn methods for controlling worldly desires. Although the *Serat Centhini* manuscript originates in the Javanese cultural tradition, many of its teachings align with Al-Ghazali's Sufi ethical principles (Jalaldeen & Al-Hidabi, 2025).

Thus, Al-Ghazali's Sufi ethics as they relate to *Serat Centhini*, Volume 1, warrant examination. First, it opens a space for dialogue between classical Islamic thought and local literary works of the Indonesian archipelago. Second, this analysis can demonstrate how Al-Ghazali's universal Sufi values are reflected in Javanese religious and cultural traditions. Third, this study offers a broader understanding that ethics is not merely a set of social norms but also a spiritual path toward human perfection (Syihabuddin et al., 2024). Based on previous research, Pramulia (2019) studied syncretism in *Serat Centhini*, Volume 1, by Sri Susuhunan Pakubuwana V. The syncretism in question refers to the fusion of various belief elements—particularly Islamic teachings—with Javanese tradition. *Serat Centhini* is often cited as a primary source because it is regarded as a Javanese encyclopedia that describes Javanese spiritual and cultural practices in detail.

Another study examines Sufi ethics in the *Serat Wulangreh*. This study, written by Bistara (2025) of UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta in 2025, shows that the *Serat Wulangreh* contains Sufi ethics addressing issues ranging from Islam, morality, and ethics to education and linguistics. The Sufi teachings imparted by Pakubuwana IV emphasise doing good, avoiding transgressions, refraining from greed, avoiding excessive attachment to worldly matters, and keeping one's heart pure at all times.

Based on research conducted by Naibin (2024) of Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah State Islamic University in Tulungagung, which examines the Sufi ethics of Jalaluddin Rakhmat, the findings indicate that Jalaluddin Rakhmat's ethics are primarily rooted in religious ethics, with the Quran, Sunnah, and *usul al-fiqh* serving as their sources. Meanwhile, his Sufism refers to ethical Sufism; these two fields of knowledge together form the foundation for the emergence of Sufi ethical thought.

Nevertheless, previous studies still exhibit significant gaps. First, earlier research has largely treated texts as objects of theosophical-cosmological syncretism—such as the

doctrine of *wahdat al-wujud*—or merely as documentation of local culture. Second, studies of Sufi ethics in Javanese literature generally focus on brief normative texts such as the *Serat Wulangreh*. Third, it remains unclear how Al-Ghazali's *tazkiyatun nafs* can be expressed through Javanese cultural symbolism and the behavioural dynamics of figures from the Nusantara.

This study fills that gap by introducing a novel contribution: evidence of ethical syncretism. This contribution shows that the interaction between Islam and Javanese culture in *Serat Centhini*, Volume 1, does not stop at a compromise of dogma but manifests in the harmonious integration of Sufi ethics with Javanese wisdom. Based on this gap and novelty, this study aims to examine and analyse in depth how Al-Ghazali's Sufi ethical teachings are reflected in the narrative, symbols, and behaviour of the characters in *Serat Centhini*, Volume 1.

II. METHOD

This study employs a hermeneutic research method through a literature review (library research). Hermeneutic research is a qualitative research method that focuses on the interpretive analysis of texts, communication, and human interaction. Rooted in the hermeneutic tradition, this approach seeks to understand the meanings contained in texts, words, social actions, and cultural artefacts. This approach operates on the principle that these meanings are not simply self-evident. Rather, they are interpreted and shaped through specific historical, cultural, and personal contexts. Therefore, hermeneutics is considered a significant interpretive method for understanding literary texts (Al Munir, 2021).

The primary source for this study is *Serat Centhini*, Volume I, by Kanjeng Gusti Pangeran Adipati Anom Amangkura III, which was translated into Latin by Kamajaya. The researcher has chosen *Serat Centhini*, Volume I, because it holds crucial scientific significance: it transforms abstract-theoretical Sufi thought into a down-to-earth existential narrative through the spiritual actions of a character named Jayengresmi following the fall of Giri Kedaton. Each instrument of *tazkiyatun nafs* (purification of the soul)—such as patience, gratitude, asceticism, and trust in God—will be tested after Jayengresmi loses everything in the fall of Giri Kedaton.

Secondary sources were drawn from studies published in books and journals over five years, including reputable journals, primary works on Al-Ghazali's thought, and research relevant to *Serat Centhini* Volume I and Sufi ethics. This study uses Al-Ghazali's theory of Sufi ethics, as presented in *Kitab Ihya Ulumuddin*. This encompasses every instrument of *tazkiyatun nafs* (purification of the soul), including *tawakkal* (surrender), *sabar* (patience), *syukur* (acceptance), *zuhud* (detachment), *wara'* (prudence), *khauf* and *raja'* (fear and hope), and *muraqabah* (self-monitoring).

This study collected data through library research, carried out systematically in three conceptual stages. First, the study identified data sources by determining primary data—namely, the transliterated text of *Serat Centhini*, Volume 1—and secondary data in the form of relevant, reputable books and journals. Second, data reduction was performed using close reading techniques to select narrative fragments representing Al-Ghazali's ethical thought, such as those found in each instrument of *tazkiyatun nafs*, namely *tawakkal* (surrender), *sabar* (patience), *syukur* (acceptance), *zuhud* (detachment), *wara'*

(prudence), *khauf* and *raja'* (fear and hope), and *muraqabah* (self-monitoring). Third, the filtered data was then classified into eight indicators of Al-Ghazali's Sufi ethics.

The grouped data was then analysed using hermeneutic methods to dissect the text in depth, down to its very roots. In this study, the analysis is broken down into three stages. First, the analysis examines the literal and contextual meanings of the character Jayengresmi following the collapse of Giri Kedaton to understand the character's initial psychological state. The second step involves conceptual connections, in which the character's spiritual actions in *Serat Centhini*, Volume I, are compared with Al-Ghazali's framework of *tazkiyatun nafs* to be tested within the text. The third step is interpretation, drawing philosophical conclusions about how Islamic Sufi theological concepts were indigenized in Javanese culture.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The History of the *Serat Centhini*

The *Serat Centhini* originated from the will of Kanjeng Gusti Pangeran Adipati Anom Amengkunagara III, the son of Pakubuwana IV (1788–1820 CE) in Surakarta. The person assigned to lead the compilation of the *Serat Centhini* was a court official (*abdi dalem kliwon carik kadipaten*) named Sutrasna, also known as Ki Ngabei Ranggasutrasna, who was assisted by (Pakubuwana V, 1975):

1. Raden Ngabei Yasadipura II (Raden Tumenggung Sastranagara) as the court official serving as the regent-poet of the duchy.
2. Raden Ngabei Sastradipura, a court official serving as a kliwon carik of the duchy.

In compiling the *Serat Centhini*, he was also assisted by:

1. Prince Jungut Mandurareja, the religious leader of the Wangga Palace in Klaten, Surakarta.
2. Kyai Kasan Besari, a prominent Islamic scholar in Gebangtinatar and Panaraga, and also the son-in-law of Pakubuwana VI.
3. Kyai Mohamad Minhad, a prominent Islamic scholar in Surakarta.

The main plot of the *Serat Centhini* centres on Syekh Amongraga's journey. Kanjeng Gusti Pangeran Adipati Anom presented the manuscript of the *Suluk Jatiswara* and instructed that it be expanded in an engaging way. The *Suluk Jatiswara* dates to the Javanese year 1711, during the reign of Pakubuwana III; thus, scholars speculate that Pakubuwana III wrote this *suluk*. Work on the *Serat Centhini* began on Saturday, Pahing, the 26th of Sura, with the *sengkalan* “*Paksa Sud Sabda Ji*” in the Javanese year 1742 or the Gregorian year 1814 (Rofiqoh & Atmaja, 2024). Thus, the *Serat Centhini* is 171 years old (as of this publication). Upon completion, the manuscript was named *Tambangraras suluk*, commonly known as the *Serat Centhini*. The name “*Centhini*” is derived from *Cethi* (servant) Niken Tambangraras, who became the wife of Syekh Amongraga (Pakubuwana V, 1975).

***Serat Centhini*: Sufi Ethical Teachings from the Perspective of Al-Ghazali**

The *Serat Centhini* stems from a tradition and background distinct from Al-Ghazali's Sufi ethics as presented in *Ihya Ulumuddin*; yet, as a 19th-century Javanese encyclopedic work, it shares a profound harmony with Sufi ethical teachings. Al-

Ghazali's work focuses on purifying the soul (*tazkiyatun nafs*) within the Sharia framework. At the same time, *Serat Centhini* depicts its characters' spiritual journeys as they search for meaning in life, the relationship between humans and God, and ways to control worldly desires. Given this alignment in teachings, the researchers examined the *Serat Centhini* through the lens of Al-Ghazali's Sufi ethics (Khairil et al., 2021).

Al-Ghazali's full name was Abu Hamid Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Thusi al-Ghazali. He was born in the region of *Thabaran*, located between two cities in Thus, Persia—now near Mashhad in Khorasan, Iran—in 1058 CE / 450 AH. He was both a prominent Islamic thinker and a humanitarian. Al-Ghazali was also a man of brilliant intellect across various fields. During his time, Al-Ghazali mastered all branches of Islamic jurisprudence (except for the science of hadith, which he acknowledged he did not master in depth) (Artika et al., 2023).

Al-Ghazali mastered *fiqh*, *usul al-fiqh*, *kalam*, logic, philosophy, ethics, Sufism, and other fields. Al-Ghazali wrote books in each field he mastered, characterised by originality, depth, and broad scope. Al-Ghazali is known as "*Hujjatul Islam*" (the Proof of Islam) due to his broad perspectives and deep understanding across various disciplines of religious studies (Artika et al., 2023). One of Al-Ghazali's most popular works in Indonesia is *Ihya Ulumuddin*, which explains concepts related to revitalising religious knowledge, including discussions on ethics. Because ethics are derived from the Qur'an and the Hadith, moral issues can be resolved through inner purification (Hasanah et al., 2021).

One characteristic of Sufism is that a person experiences moral growth. Thus, Sufism is closely related to moral theory, commonly called ethics. Al-Ghazali generally wrote his ethical theory after he embarked on the Sufi path. In the Sufi tradition, a person attends not only to external matters but also to internal ones, and both are inseparable from carnal desires and spiritual ailments. Thus, in discussing ethics, Al-Ghazali contributed his thoughts in *Ihya Ulumuddin* (Nuridin, 2021). This book provides a comprehensive explanation of ethics, including:

1. *Tawakal*

According to Al-Ghazali, the maqam of *Tawakal* consists of knowledge, intention, and action. *Tawakal* means surrender, which helps purify the human heart so it is not bound by or preoccupied with worldly matters (Ghazali, 1988). According to the Sufis, *Tawakal* involves entrusting everything to the destiny and will of Allah SWT (Mahamid, 2022).

In *Kinanthi*, stanza 1, line 17, page 6

*Tiyang alok mungsuw rawuh. sumedya ngrisak ing Giri. kalam ingkang kagem
nyerat. anulya binucal aglis. andodonga ing Pangeran. sinem'badan ing sakapti.*

Meaning: Someone is warning that the enemy is coming. They intend to destroy Giri. A pen is used for writing. Then it is quickly discarded. He prays to God. All his wishes are granted.

The pen's transformation into a *keris* illustrates self-expression rewarded with divine assistance. This demonstrates the attitude of *Tawakal* in one chapter of *Serat Centhini*, Volume 1—namely, entrusting matters to God through Sunan Giri's prayer. God then granted his prayer. The verse quoted above is not merely a magical event (*karamah*), but also a symbolic representation of humanity's transition from human effort toward

Tawakal (absolute surrender). The word *kalam* (pen) symbolises a human intellectual act, specifically writing one's own destiny. Sunan Giri's act of discarding his *kalam* when the enemy arrived represents the limits of human worldly effort and self-reliance. In Al-Ghazali's thought (*Ihya Ulumuddin*), *Tawakal* is a unity comprising knowledge, action, and circumstances—not merely passive surrender that leads to fatalism.

When Sunan Giri cast aside his pen and prayed (*andodonga ing Pangeran*), he practised *Tawakal*. By casting aside the pen and maintaining inner resolve, Allah's assistance (*sinem'badan ing sakapti*) proves that when a servant lets go of dependence on worldly matters and purifies his monotheism, his prayers will be answered because all laws are subject to Him.

Gambuh verses 9, 10, and 20:

Wadya Surapringga kadya singa krura. manggalak (ng)gegirisi. samyambeg palastra. kang pejah ingidakan. rlwut ruket ing ngajurit. tan ana nedya. ngucira ing ngajurit.

Meaning: Surapringga's troops were like ferocious lions. They led with terrifying ferocity. All were determined to die (to fight to the bitter end). Those who fell were trampled underfoot. They clung tightly to one another (fighting side by side) on the battlefield. None intended to retreat from the battle.

Pan karasa paparinge gustinira. sedya amales becik. ngetohaken pejah. wus ruket ing ngayuda. larih-linarih ing keris. tumbak-tinumbak. penthung-pinenthung genti.

Meaning: They truly felt the leader's generosity. They wanted to repay that kindness. They risked their lives. They were fully engrossed in the battle. They attacked each other with *keris*. They stabbed each other with spears. They took turns striking each other with clubs.

Endrasena (n)dhoko madyaning ngayuda. rnangkana wadya Giri. myang prajurit Cina. tyase wus samya growah. kernba tandange ngajurit. wong Surabaya. sadaya ambeg pati.

Meaning: *Endrasena* crouched in the midst of the battle. Meanwhile, the hearts of the Giri troops and the Chinese soldiers had begun to waver. They hesitated in battle. The people of Surabaya were determined to fight to the death.

In verses 9, 10, and 20, the spirit of *syaja'ah* (willingness to die) and *Tawakal* (surrender to God's will) emerges. True courage is not physical courage driven by carnal desires or worldly ambitions, but spiritual courage that springs from faith in the decree of Allah SWT. In *Ihya Ulumuddin*, Al-Ghazali writes:

"Syaja'ah adalah kekuatan jiwa yang menahan diri antara pengecut (jubn) dan nekat (tahawwur)." (Ihya Ulumuddin', Juz 3).

Thus, a soldier who is "*ambeg pati*" is not merely war-obsessed, but one who carries out his worldly duties with a heart rooted in *Tawakal*. A soldier who does not flee does so not out of love for the world, but because he feels he has received *paparinge Gusti* (God's grace). The "*ambeg pati*" (willingness to die) attitude of the soldiers of Surapringga and Sunan Giri is not courage based solely on recklessness (*tahawwur*), but a demonstration of the integration of *syaja'ah* and *Tawakal*. For Al-Ghazali, *syaja'ah* is an inner balance between cowardice (*jubn*) and recklessness (*tahawwur*).

The courage these soldiers demonstrate reflects a spiritual awareness rooted in the concept of "*paparinge gusti*" (the mandate to lead or represent God).

Al-Ghazali defines *syaja'ah* as a state of inner moderation (*al-wasat*) that lies between cowardice (*jubn*) and recklessness or folly (*tahawwur*). Here, the courage of Javanese warriors is not an outburst of emotional anger (*gadhab*), but a spiritual awareness rooted in the concept of "*paparinge gusti*" (a gift or mandate from a leader, or a representation of God).

This highlights the distinctiveness of Javanese culture in its use of the word "*gusti*," which signifies devotion to God vertically and devotion to one's leader horizontally. Surrender to life and death (*Tawakal*) becomes a symbol of a warrior's loyalty (*darmaning ksatriya*) and the fearlessness of being trampled upon (*kang pejah ingidakan*) because their inner self has transcended worldly attachments. For Al-Ghazali, the pinnacle of *Tawakal* is the death of worldly desires within the heart, so that physical risks cannot shake one's resolve.

In the poem "*Pucung*," stanza 15 marks the pinnacle of the *tahalli* expression:

*Sunan Giri (n)dengengek wacana arum. ya walahualam Allah ingkang ngudaneni.
amba Tuwan sumendhe karsa Pangeran.* Stanza 15, page 29

Sunan Giri looked up and spoke gently: "Only Allah knows best; I submit to God's will."

Sunan Giri exemplified *ridha* and *Tawakal*—the pinnacle of spiritual tranquillity. For Al-Ghazali, this constitutes the *maqam* of *ridha*, a state in which the heart remains unaffected by the fluctuations between joy and sorrow, for everything stems from the will of Allah SWT. Sunan Giri's statement above represents the pinnacle of *tahalli* and leads to the *maqam* of *ridha* (contentment). The word "*sumendhe*" means to lean on and rely completely on Allah SWT as the source of support. According to Al-Ghazali, *ridha* is the fruit of *Tawakal*. For those who have reached this *maqam*, no inner conflict remains between good and bad fate, sweet and bitter experiences, or joy and sorrow, as they recognise that everything stems from the Will of Allah SWT. The statement that "*Allah ingkang ngudaneni*" (Allah is the All-Knowing) expresses the conviction that there is no longer any arrogance in thinking one knows best; rather, only Allah SWT is the All-Knowing.

2. Patience

Patience is one of the essential virtues required of a Muslim (Ghazali, 1988). As a Muslim, it is only fitting to remain steadfast in bearing all trials and hardships with composure.

In the first stanza of "*Kinanthi*," verse 1

*Ing Giri apan wus tundhuk. kang ibu grahe ngranuhi. rinubung sakeh juragan.
rawuhe Jeng Sunan Giri. karamating waliyolah. kang ibu dipun peraki.* Stanza 1,
page 4

Meaning: In Giri, the situation was already under control. His mother was seriously ill and moaning in pain. All the local leaders surrounded him. Then Sunan Giri arrived. Through his miraculous powers as a saint of Allah, he approached his mother.

The fortitude of Sunan Giri's mother in facing illness and longing, and her fortitude in facing the fate of death. Sunan Giri's mother was extremely patient in accepting her illness, even though it was severe and caused her great suffering. This passage shows that the *Serat Centhini* highlights her patience. Although she also had to endure the pain of separation, she remained steadfast in accepting it.

The mother's physical suffering (*grahe ngranuhi*/severe illness) and the arrival of the *Wali*, who brought with him miraculous powers, serve as an illustration of human suffering and a test of faith. In Javanese culture, physical suffering is often viewed as a spiritual practice to purify the soul (*tirakat*). The mother's fortitude—remaining silent as she awaits the *Wali* as the ninth intermediary (*wasilah*) from Allah, even though merchants were already present—shows the virtue of patience.

Patience in the face of physical trials (illness) involves refraining from verbal complaints and keeping the heart calm before Allah's decree. Al-Ghazali divides patience into several levels, including patience in the face of physical trials or illness (*ash-shabru 'ala al-bala'*). Patience, in Al-Ghazali's view, is not about bearing a burden with resentment, but rather a broad-mindedness that restrains the tongue from complaining to other creatures and keeps the heart calm in the face of Allah's decree. This state of illness creates space for reflection, training inner fortitude before facing the moment of death (*sakratul maut*).

3. Gratitude

Gratitude is one of the spiritual stations of those who walk the spiritual path. Gratitude also comprises knowledge, spiritual condition, and good deeds (Ghazali, 1988). A person cannot be considered grateful unless they recognise that everything in this world comes from Allah. If even a hint of doubt arises, a person will not experience true joy (Siregar & Wantini, 2024).

In the second stanza of the sinom poem, line 4 expresses an attitude of gratitude,

Wasana aris ngandika. syukur alhamdulillah. heh ta kulup Endrasena. iki ngalamate dadi. angel wong mijet ranti. rekasa wong (n)jara timun. kuciwa tan kacandhak. Jeng Pangeran Surabanggi. kacekela miris tyase wong Mantaram.

Meaning: Sunan Giri was grateful for the victory, which was seen as a sign of great success. However, he regretted that Prince Pekik had escaped, because capturing Prince Pekik would have greatly intimidated and frightened their greatest enemy, the Kingdom of Mataram.

This quote demonstrates an explicit attitude of gratitude within the Sufi tradition, as expressed by Sunan Giri. The victory achieved was not solely the result of one's own strength, but rather a gift from God. Although he felt political ambition (regretting Prince Pekik's escape), saying "Alhamdulillah" places worldly success under divine authority and grace. Sunan Giri's expression of gratitude, "*syukur alhamdulillah*," for the military victory—followed by regret over Prince Pekik's escape—offers a fascinating critical lens on how Al-Ghazali's Sufi teachings engage in a dialectical relationship with the political realities of power in Java.

Sunan Giri's expression of gratitude—"syukur alhamdulillah"—for the military victory, followed by regret over Prince Pekik's escape, is particularly interesting. On the one hand, Sunan Giri expressed gratitude to attribute the victory to Allah; on the other, as a military leader, he showed political calculation through his regret over the enemy's

escape (*Kuciwa tan kacandhak*). This illustrates that Sunan Giri's identity as a Sufi did not preclude his role in the power struggles among the kingdoms of the Nusantara.

Sunan Giri's sense of gratitude actually invites us to reinterpret the meaning of gratitude (in its context). It shows how gratitude can frame the purpose of the struggle so that it remains within the bounds of theological submission, attributing all the results of war to God, without eliminating tactical and political ambitions.

In the third stanza, stanza 4

Wikan lamun kadhatengan. gya mijil sangking ing panti. wus pinanggih lan rahadyan. samya sasalaman katri ki Dhatuk ngandika ris katabetan ingkang rawuh. sru begja kemayangan. de ana kang sudi kampir. mring asonya mas putu pundi pinangka.

Meaning: Realising that a guest had arrived, he immediately went out of the house. He met the young master. The three of them shook hands. Ki Dhatuk spoke gently, welcoming the guest. "What a blessing and an honour. Someone has deigned to stop by this humble abode of mine. My grandson, where are you from?"

Ki Dhatuk's remark that he felt "lucky and honoured" (*sru begja kêmayangan*) by the guest's arrival reflects social gratitude. He values the guest's presence not as a burden, but as a gift of honour from God, in accordance with Sufi ethics that regard others as a path to Allah. Ki Dhatuk's expression "*sru begja kêmayangan*" (extremely fortunate and happy) upon the arrival of guests symbolises a shift in gratitude from a transcendental-vertical dimension (toward God) to an axiological-horizontal one (toward humanity).

The phrase "*Sru Begja Kemayangan*" expresses good fortune brought by a guest's arrival at one's home. It represents an effort to honour a guest (*mulyake tamu*) on a horizontal level (person-to-person). This is followed by the phrase "*de ana kang sudi kampir*," which demonstrates humility (*tawadhu*)—the recognition that one is not of a higher status than a guest, whoever they may be. This is a form of human relationship expressed through gratitude in the form of hospitality toward visiting guests. In *Ihya Ulumuddin*, one example of gratitude is honouring fellow human beings and viewing all creatures as a means (*wasilah*) through which God's mercy is manifested. Sufi ethics strongly emphasise respecting guests.

In *Kinanthi*, stanza 3, line 1

Kalangkung gunging panuwun. paduka sung tedah jati. penet awoning pakaryan wenang mokaling sanggami. kang sayogya linampahan. patut linaluri-luri.

Meaning: I am deeply grateful. Your Highness has provided the right guidance. Recognising the wrongfulness of an action gives one the right to refuse consent. This is what should be done. It is worth pursuing continuously.

This excerpt from *Serat Centhini*, Volume 1, shows that gratitude expresses thanks for His Majesty's guidance, as well as a deep sense of gratitude for spiritual guidance. This aligns with Al-Ghazali's ethical philosophy on gratitude, as reflected in *Serat Centhini*, Volume 1. The phrase "*kalangkung gunging panuwun... Penet awoning pakaryan wenang mokaling sanggami*" refers to gratitude for receiving moral and spiritual guidance. For Al-Ghazali, being grateful for spiritual blessings such as guidance, knowledge, and being spared from sin is superior to gratitude for material blessings such as food, clothing, and other possessions.

The gratitude expressed in the *Serat Centhini* exemplifies gratitude for gaining an understanding of moral and ethical boundaries in relationships. In the context of *fiqh* and Sufism, Al-Ghazali emphasises the need for understanding how to manage one's desires. Gratitude here is expressed because one's inner self has been spared from moral corruption through the teachings of the *Sinuwun*. For Al-Ghazali, this is gratitude for preserving the soul's purity from the degradation of sin.

4. *Zuhud*

Zuhud is renouncing desires for things that benefit nothing in the afterlife—that is, indulging excessively in permissible things (Ghazali, 1988). According to al-Ghazali, the essence of *zuhud* is to turn away from worldly matters and to seek the afterlife (Islamiyati & Amallia, 2024).

In the third stanza of *Sinom*, line 1

Mangkana tyasira radyan. dupi m-yarsa andikaning. Kyai Ageng Pariwara. dadya supe dhahar guling. ing nala kang. kalingling. amung sihira Hyang Agung. rum manis aturira. kiyageng lamun marengi. dasihipun arsa dumugekken lampah.

Meaning: Such was the young master's heart. Upon hearing Kyai Ageng Pariwara's words, he forgot to eat and sleep. Deep in his heart lay only love for the Almighty God (Allah). Gently and sweetly, he said, "Kyai Ageng, if Your Highness permits, I humbly ask to continue my journey."

The attitude of the young master (*Radyan*)—who “forgets to eat and sleep” (*supe dhahar guling*) because his hidden heart (*kalingling*) is filled only with “the love of the Almighty God” (*sihira Hyang Agung*)—is the essence of *Zuhud*. He sets aside his physical needs to focus on his spiritual goal (continuing his journey). The journey here symbolises an inner journey (*suluk*) that is more important than worldly comforts. In this excerpt from the manuscript, the concept of *Zuhud* also shifts radically. Javanese poets no longer advocate an extreme ascetic movement that is anti-worldly or total asceticism. Rather, this phenomenon of “forgetting to eat and sleep” is better understood as an aesthetic metaphor for conditioning the inner self to achieve a state of selflessness.

According to the Javanese cosmos, the world need not be hated or physically abandoned to attain the essence of *Zuhud*; rather, humans must abandon the egoistic attachment that binds them to the world. This is demonstrated when *Tuan Muda (Radyan)* continues his physical journey (*suluk*) in the real world. This means he continues to face worldly matters, but his position remains under spiritual control. The conceptual shift from Al-Ghazali's transcendent *Zuhud* to the immanent-practical *Zuhud* in *Serat Centhini*, Volume 1, is not viewed as a spiritual impurity but as a testing ground where humans test their inner resilience (Alfariz, 2025).

5. *Wara'*

Wara' is a trait that encompasses caution and the avoidance of anything that is haram, including matters that are ambiguous or questionable (Abdussalam & Shodiq, 2022).

In the seventh stanza of the *Sinom* poem, *wara'* is evident.

lya nagri Sokaraja. pra wadu matur nekseni. ratri mengko ka sukana. maulud dhikiran singir. (m)bungahna wadya alit. gan jaren sapantesipun. kang padha mentas yuda. dimene rambah kuwanin. nanging kulup aywa atinggal waweka.

Meaning: "That is, the land of Sokaraja. The soldiers testified that they had witnessed it. Tonight, hold a celebration—*Maulid*, *zikir*, and singing. Cheer up the young soldiers (your subordinates). Give them appropriate rewards—especially those who have just returned from battle—so their courage grows even stronger. But my son, do not let your guard down (remain cautious)."

In the third stanza of the *sinom*, the second line

Paduka kantuna arja. kawula anyuwun pamit. iya kulup hywa pepeka. ingsun nyangoni basuki. sawusnya manganjali. sasa. Iaman nulya mundur. Gathuk Gathak pamitan. wus linilan kalihneki. ruruntungan tan pisah lan bendaranya.

Meaning: "May Your Highness remain safe and well." "I must take my leave." "Yes, my child, do not be negligent (careless or forgetful). I grant you safety (well-being)." After (Raden) bowed (in respect), shook hands, and then immediately withdrew (departed), *Gathuk* (and) *Gathak* (the servants) also took their leave. Both had been given permission. They walked side by side, never parting from their master.

In both quotations, the advice to "do not let your guard down (*waweka*)" and "do not be negligent (*pepeka*)" are manifestations of *Wara'*. Although the context involves war strategies and physical journeys, spiritually speaking, *waweka* and *pepeka* refer to inner vigilance so as not to be caught off guard by the temptations of desire or dangers that undermine ethical conduct. Spiritual safety (*basuki*) is attained through vigilance (*wara'*). These pieces of advice appear amidst the excitement of the *Maulid* celebrations and *zikir* following the end of the Sokaraja War, as depicted in stanza 7 of the *Sinom* poem. It is here that the depth of interpretation of the passages from stanzas 7 and 2 of the third volume of the *Serat Sinom* lies: the authors of the *Serat Sinom* have successfully grounded the legalistic concept of *wara'* into the practice of *waweka* (an awareness that prevents humans from being lulled by the illusion of worldly achievements).

In *Kinanthi*, stanza 4, line 5

Lelakone kang kalulun. aJin-aJin denkalilin. lelenga aywa kaalan. ywa lalu atmah lali. kalunta-lunta kalintang. tan wiyang mayanga westhi.

Meaning: Behaviour that is carried away or swept along. As if surrounded. Be open-minded; don't let yourself be defeated. Don't keep being negligent. It is very painful (if you are negligent). Indifferent to the looming danger.

This verse illustrates the virtue of *wara'*—that is, one must not continually be negligent. Negligence leads to great suffering; prudence urges one to avoid harmful or evil deeds. In the Javanese context, caution is not merely about verifying the halal status of food according to Islamic jurisprudence, but rather a form of inner vigilance to prevent the soul from slipping into a state of fatal spiritual negligence (*atmah lail*) (Kholil, 2007). When a person becomes negligent due to the euphoria of success, their ethical defences simultaneously erode (Alfariz, 2025). Through the conceptualisation of *waweka*, *wara'* no longer appears as a rule that restricts human freedom of action but has transformed into an active strategy for the social and spiritual organisation of Javanese society, ensuring its stability amidst the escalating political conflicts in Mataram at that time.

6. *Khouf* and *Raja*’

According to Al-Ghazali, fear (*khauf*) and hope (*raja*’) are two wings; it is with these two wings that those who are close to Allah attain every praiseworthy station (Jalaldean & Al-Hidabi, 2025).

In *Kinanthi*, stanza 1, line 20

*Kagyat risang amanengkung. miyat dhuwung kuthah getih. dahat panalangsana.
dyan dodonga mring Hyang Widdhi. mugi Allah ngapuntena. solah amba ingkang
sisip.*

Meaning: He was startled while worshipping/praying. He saw a blood-stained *keris*. He deeply regretted his actions. Then he prayed to Hyang Widdhi (God), “May God forgive my wrongdoing.”

Fear and remorse for one’s mistakes. In this stanza, Sunan Giri is startled and feels deep remorse (*dahat palanangsana*) upon seeing a blood-stained *keris*. Sunan Giri's fear (*khauf*) does not manifest as an abstract fear of hellish torment in the afterlife; instead, his fear is immanent and down-to-earth: the bloodstain on the *keris*, which indirectly symbolises the destruction of life's harmony caused by war. In Javanese society, disrupting the balance or harmony of life is considered the greatest spiritual catastrophe (Marhani, 2021).

Sunan Giri's remorse culminates in a plea for *Hyang Widdhi* (God) to accept his repentance. Through this excerpt from the *Kinanthi*, stanza 1, verse 20, it is indirectly shown that the *Serat Centhini* successfully shifts the dialectic of *khauf* and *Raja*’ from rigid and abstract theology toward the aesthetics of local culture (Marhani, 2021). Here, fear and hope are not merely understood as a doctrine but are increasingly managed as spiritual tools to maintain collective harmony and peace (Murwati, 2018).

7. *Muraqabah* and *Muhasabah*

Muraqabah means constantly observing and reflecting on what one ought to do in relation to God. Meanwhile, *Muhasabah* is the process of self-reflection to assess one's suitability as a disciple (Anditasari et al., 2025).

Dhandhanggula, stanza 26, p. 316

*Watekannya risang Pandhusiwi. kang sumendhi myang wuragilira . ing warna tan
na sanese. myang solah bawanipun sang Nangkula Sadewa sami. tan pae ing
paeka sakaliyan jumbuh. marang Hyang Purbawisesa. mung sumarah datan
andarberu kapti. meneng tan mengku karsa.*

Meaning: The character of the *Pandhusiwi* (Nakula and Sadewa)—who are submissive and the youngest of their brothers—is no different from theirs. Likewise, Nakula and Sadewa behave the same way. Identical in all their stratagems, the two are united. To Hyang Purbawisesa (God Almighty), they are completely resigned, harbouring no ambition, remaining silent and not clinging to their own will.

In this passage, Nakula and Sadewa are portrayed as humble individuals, not driven by worldly ambition, and placing their trust in Hyang Purbawisesa as the foundation of their lives. The expression “*mung sumarah marang Hyang Purbawisesa*” signifies a complete surrender to God. At the same time, the phrase “*meneng tan mengku karsa*” implies that a person is no longer dominated by their own will but strives to align all

their thoughts, intentions, and actions with God's will. This surrender is not passive, but a form of self-control born of deep spiritual awareness.

This verse explains that total surrender to God (*sumarah marang Hyang Purbawisesa*)—the pinnacle of *muraqabah*—will automatically lead one to refrain from all intentions and actions that are not in harmony with the will of the All-Watchful (God), thereby reaching a state of "not clinging to one's own will." This aligns with the concept of *muraqabah*, which means surrendering oneself completely to God.

Dhandhanggula stanza 28 page 316

Apa dadi ala kang kinapti. ala maneh kalamun areppa kang becik nora rinanggeh. dadya mung gumalundhung angalindhung maring Hyang Widdhi. tan darbe ratampikan. ran darbe panuwun. tan darbe dayaupaya amung lila sukur pasrah ing dewa di,awit Hyang Wicaksana.

Meaning: What is desired turns out to be bad. It is also bad to desire good but fail to attain it. Therefore, one can only turn to Hyang Widdhi (God) for refuge. There is no refusal. There is no petition. No effort; only sincerity, gratitude, and surrender to the deity, Hyang Wicaksana (the Wise God).

This verse describes the spiritual state of a person who has thoroughly examined their inner self through deep self-reflection (*muḥasabah*). In accordance with Al-Ghazali's philosophy, awareness of one's limitations leads a person to understand that both unfulfilled bad desires and unfulfilled good desires will ultimately become burdens; consequently, they let go of ego and ambition and seek refuge in God. Thus, he finds himself in a state of total submission, in which he no longer has a will of his own but is solely submitted to the Divine Will. This represents the outcome of a profound process of *muḥasabah*, in line with Al-Ghazali's concept of *muḥasabah*.

This study reveals profound ethical Sufi values in the first volume of the *Centhini* manuscript, showing that Javanese-Islamic syncretism occurs not only in metaphysical cosmological aspects—such as *wahdatul wujud*—but also in ethical aspects. Thus, the authors of *Centhini* (court scholars and poets) consciously selected and integrated widely accepted, applicable moral principles: a moderate, behaviour-based form of Sufi ethics (*Tasawuf Akhlaqi*). This adds a new dimension to syncretism: it is an ethical syncretism that balances Javanese theosophical teachings with the Islamic morality of *Ihya Ulumuddin*.

Pakubuwana IV further reinforces this through Sufi ethics in the *Serat Wulangreh*. Both the *Serat Centhini* and the *Serat Wulangreh* convey Sufi ethical teachings. The *Serat Wulangreh* emphasises *ihsan*—doing good, avoiding greed, and not loving the world excessively. Similarly, this study focuses on Al-Ghazali's Sufi ethics, which, at its core, also teach people to do good.

Ultimately, this study reveals that *Serat Centhini*, Volume 1, is not only a work of 19th-century Javanese literature and culture, but also an encyclopedic text rich in Islamic spiritual values, particularly the ethical teachings of Sufism. Through the journey of Syekh Amongraga and the other characters, the text depicts moral and spiritual values symbolically through the actions and everyday dialogue of the religious Javanese community. Using Al-Ghazali's Sufi ethical perspective, which emphasises *tazkiyatun nafs*, or purification of the soul, this study found strong alignment between Al-Ghazali's ethical concepts and the moral teachings of *Serat Centhini*, Volume 1. This alignment is manifested in the following ethical maqams:

1. *Tawakal*, dalam bentuk ketergantungan tetap kepada Allah ketika menghadapi persoalan dan ancaman.
2. Patience, as perseverance in facing trials and longing, exemplified by Ibu Sunan Giri.
3. Gratitude, both spiritually and socially, through the awareness that all blessings come from God.
4. *Zuhud*, which involves freeing oneself from dependence on worldly pleasures to prioritise one's spiritual journey.
5. *Wara* ', namely, exercising caution and avoiding matters that could lead to sin and spiritual negligence.
6. *Khauf* and *Raja*, which stem from a fear of making mistakes and a hope for divine forgiveness
7. *Muraqabah* and *muhasabah*, which reflect self-discipline and inner reflection in the pursuit of moral perfection.

These findings indicate that the author of *Serat Centhini*, Volume 1, successfully internalised Islamic teachings—particularly Sufism—into Javanese tradition through a subtle, aesthetic, and narrative form of cultural da'wah. Thus, *Serat Centhini* Volume 1 can be understood not only as a work of Javanese culture but also as a universal guide to spiritual ethics, in harmony with Al-Ghazali's thought and remaining relevant in modern religious culture. Consequently, this study affirms that *Serat Centhini*, Volume 1, makes a significant contribution to the study of Islamic ethics in the Indonesian archipelago by presenting the integration of Sufi ethics into local wisdom. This work deserves continued study and preservation as a source of morality, spirituality, and culture for Javanese Muslims.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study shows that *Serat Centhini*, Volume 1, contains Sufi ethical values that align with Al-Ghazali's perspective on ethical Sufism, so the Sufi teachings in the manuscript are not merely a spiritual element but also serve as the foundation for developing moral character. This finding shows that *Serat Centhini* Volume 1 goes far beyond its status as a 19th-century Javanese cultural encyclopedia, as it presents Islamic spiritual values through narrative, dialogue, symbols, and the life journeys of its characters. The core of Al-Ghazali's Sufi ethical teachings—*Tazkiyatun nafs*, or the purification of the soul—is strongly reflected in the various events that shape the characters' personalities, thereby revealing a philosophical and practical harmony between Javanese local wisdom and Al-Ghazali's Sufi thought.

This harmony is evident through complementary ethical principles: *Tawakal*—an attitude of surrender to Allah in facing life's various challenges; patience in accepting trials and suffering, as exemplified by the figure of Ibu Sunan Giri; gratitude, manifested as the awareness that all blessings come from Allah and is also expressed in social relationships; *zuhud*, understood as the ability to detach oneself from attachment to worldly pleasures to prioritize the spiritual journey; *wara'*, an attitude of caution in guarding oneself against actions that could lead to sin; *khauf* and *raja'* as a balance between fear of Allah and hope in His mercy; and *muraqabah* and *muhasabah* as forms of self-monitoring and self-evaluation in the process of moral refinement.

The presence of these values shows that the authors of the *Serat Centhini* successfully internalised the teachings of ethical Sufism into Javanese literature through a subtle, communicative cultural approach, allowing Islamic teachings to be understood without compromising Javanese cultural identity. This finding also reveals continuity with the ethical-Sufi tradition in *Serat Wulangreh* by Pakubuwana IV, which similarly positions literature as a medium for moral education by emphasising *ihsan*, self-control, non-greed, and not loving the world excessively. Overall, this study affirms that *Serat Centhini* Volume 1 is not merely a classical literary work but also a guide to spiritual ethics, showing how Al-Ghazali's Sufi teachings were transformed into local Javanese wisdom without losing their core values. This enriches research on Islamic ethics in the Indonesian archipelago and shows that Javanese literary heritage contributes significantly to moral and spiritual teachings that remain relevant to contemporary society.

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