

THE ROLE OF THEOLOGY IN ADDRESSING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: INSIGHTS FROM JAMALUDDIN AL-AFGHANI'S THOUGHT



Melani Novita Sari¹, Mutia Khairanisa²

*Correspondence:

melaninovita3@gmail.com

Authors Affiliation:

^{1,2}Universitas Islam Negeri
Imam Bonjol Padang,
Indonesia

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Abstract

This study examines the theological thought of Jamaluddin Al-Afghani, focusing on its relevance to contemporary global challenges and sustainable development. Al-Afghani emphasized liberation, independence, and the active role of theology in societal progress, framing it as a solution-oriented discipline beyond mere ritual. Contextualized within the complexities of the modern era, particularly the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), this research employs library research with a descriptive-analytical method and a philosophical-critical approach. Data sources include academic journals, theses, and scholarly works related to theology and Al-Afghani's contributions. The findings reveal that Al-Afghani's theological thought extends beyond ritualistic dimensions, offering practical solutions that inspire human agency, scientific advancement, and social justice. His ideas are universally applicable, promoting efforts to empower the marginalized and encourage the pursuit of knowledge for the betterment of society. The study contributes to academic discourse by demonstrating the relevance of Al-Afghani's thought as a critical framework for addressing contemporary challenges, enriching the intersection of theology and sustainable development in both Muslim and global contexts.

Abstrak

Studi ini mengkaji pemikiran teologis Jamaluddin Al-Afghani, dengan fokus pada relevansinya dengan tantangan global kontemporer dan pembangunan berkelanjutan. Al-Afghani menekankan pembebasan, kemerdekaan, dan peran aktif teologi dalam kemajuan masyarakat, meringkainya sebagai disiplin yang berorientasi pada solusi di luar ritual belaka. Dikontekstualisasikan dalam kompleksitas era modern, khususnya Tujuan Pembangunan Berkelanjutan (SDGs) Perserikatan Bangsa-Bangsa, penelitian ini menggunakan penelitian kepustakaan dengan metode deskriptif-analitis dan pendekatan filosofis-kritis. Sumber data meliputi jurnal akademik, tesis, dan karya ilmiah yang terkait dengan teologi dan kontribusi Al-Afghani. Temuan ini mengungkapkan bahwa pemikiran teologis Al-Afghani melampaui dimensi ritualistik, menawarkan solusi praktis yang menginspirasi agensi manusia, kemajuan ilmiah, dan keadilan sosial. Ide-idenya berlaku secara universal, mempromosikan upaya untuk memberdayakan yang terpinggirkan dan mendorong pengejaran pengetahuan untuk perbaikan masyarakat. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi terhadap wacana akademis dengan menunjukkan relevansi pemikiran Al-Afghani sebagai kerangka kritis untuk mengatasi tantangan kontemporer, memperkaya persimpangan teologi dan pembangunan berkelanjutan dalam konteks Muslim dan global.

INTRODUCTION

The development of theology in Islam is influenced by both internal and external dimensions. Internally, theological thought is shaped by Islam itself, such as the development of rational thinking to resolve issues and the emergence of differences in interpreting Islamic teachings, which leads to theological conflicts within Islam. Externally, the influences come from factors outside of Islam, such as the impact of Greek



philosophy introduced through Persia, the beliefs of pre-Islamic societies, and the absorption of Greek philosophical teachings that were circulating at the time. Additionally, political, social, and cultural factors also played a role in the emergence of theological schools (Winter, 2008).

Given the context of evolving times, which generally brings forth issues in understanding faith, various theological sects in Islam emerged. These schools of thought can be categorized as traditional (textual), moderate, and rational. These movements emerged as responses and oppositions to the interpretations of beliefs that were considered incompatible with the understanding of different scholars. From these differences in views, new thoughts, and ideas were developed by scholars to address problems by the texts and in alignment with the context of the *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) of earlier scholars that were still relevant. As the times progress, new issues will inevitably arise, requiring answers to face the challenges of the era. Scholars need to provide the public with a clear understanding of the correct and sound concepts of faith (*aqidah*) (Taufik & Taufik, 2023).

At the time of Jamaluddin Al-Afghani, history repeated itself, and the problems of *aqidah* began to surface. As a reformer who had high ideals for the glory of Islam, he did not only focus on politics but there were thoughts about theology that answered the problem of *aqidah* at that time. Al-Afghani was born in Afghanistan, but he went to school in France. He had witnessed the influence of Western culture developing in Islamic territories. The decline of Muslims is caused by Muslims themselves who tend to adopt foreign culture but forget to filter it with proper *aqidah*, thus making someone a Muslim by mentioning and writing only (Rusli, 2018, p. 6). This made Al-Afghani restless and wanted to renew the *aqidah* of Muslims themselves.

Aqidah (Islamic faith) began to resurface. As a reformist figure with a high vision for the glory of Islam, al-Afghani did not focus solely on politics; he also offered theological ideas that addressed the *aqidah* problems of his era. Al-Afghani, who was born in Afghanistan but educated in France, witnessed the influence of Western culture spreading across the Islamic world. He observed the decline of the Muslim ummah, largely due to Muslims themselves, who tended to adopt foreign cultures without adequately filtering them through the correct Islamic *aqidah*. This led to the situation where individuals identified as Muslims only in name and in writing (Rusli, 2018). This caused al-Afghani great concern and led him to seek the renewal of the Muslim community's *aqidah*.

In contrast to the views of more traditional thinkers like Abdul Wahhab, who adhered to a textual approach, al-Afghani proposed a solution to the *aqidah* problems that he believed were superficial and not effectively practiced by Muslims. According to al-Afghani, the door to *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) remained open for the benefit of the ummah. He cited the Quran, specifically Surah Yusuf, verse 2, to support his stance.

Contextually, as per the data, during al-Afghani's lifetime, many Islamic countries in the Middle East were under the influence of Western imperialism and colonialism (Yustisia, 2008). The gap between the true *aqidah* of Islam and the actual beliefs held by Muslims at the time created a sense of unease, where Islam had become merely a label. Therefore, al-Afghani believed that Islam needed to be purified, much like it was during the time of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions.

The main issue of this research is related to the relevance of Jamaluddin Al-Afghani's theological thought in the contemporary era as a solution for sustainable living. The key points of Al-Afghani's thoughts about the sustainable development program need to be explored because, through this exploration, it can be understood that theology can also address contemporary issues, not just those related to divine knowledge. To solve this

problem, the researcher explores information through a library research method with a descriptive – analytical approach.

The researcher first collects all relevant data and then selects valid information. After reading and noting important points, the researcher describes the results of the analysis of the relevance of Jamaluddin Al – Afghani's theological thought to the contemporary era as a solution for sustainable living in a critical manner. The data sources for this research are obtained from books, journal articles, theses, and websites related to Jamaluddin Al – Afghani's theological thought. In line with the main issue regarding the relevance of Jamaluddin Al – Afghani's thoughts to the contemporary era, the research focuses on the following research questions: a) What was the trajectory of Jamaluddin Al – Afghani's life? b) What is the nature of Jamaluddin Al – Afghani's theological thought? c) How does Jamaluddin Al – Afghani's theology remain relevant in the contemporary era as a solution for sustainable living? This study aims to identify the key aspects of Jamaluddin Al – Afghani's theological thought that are relevant to the contemporary era so that its contribution can be understood and applied as a solution to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Previous research trends related to Jamaluddin Al – Afghani's thoughts have been widely explored. First, there is research about theology, such as the study conducted by Rido Putra et al. on Jamaluddin Al – Afghani's views on rational theology. (Putra et al., 2022) Another study by Noorthaibah Mansur, entitled *The Renewal Thought of Jamaluddin Al – Afghani: A Study of Kalam Thought on Destiny*, focuses on theological domains such as reason, human actions, and destiny. (Noorthaibah, 2015) The second trend of research relates to Jamaluddin Al – Afghani's political thought (Akbar et al., 2022; Bistara, 2021; Hayumi & Drihestyawati, 2024; Kusumawati, 2023; Raihan, 2024; Zam'arini, 2021). The third research trend involves Al – Afghani's reform of education (Rizadiliyawati & Roza, 2024).

Fourth, the research entitled 'Examining Jamaluddin Al Afghani's Views on Rational Theology' was conducted by Rido Putra, Arrasyid, and Rosi Islamiyati (Putra et al., 2022). This research focuses on the problem of reason revelation and human action. Fifth, research was conducted by Raha Bistara in 2021 entitled 'Modern Theology and Pan Islamism: Looking at the Ideas of Islamic Reform Jamaluddin Al – Afghani'. This research reveals the renewal movement by Jamaluddin Al – Afghani in terms of theology and politics. With his Pan Islamism idea, Jamaluddin Al – Afghani wanted to open the veil of theology that was still confined by fatalism (*Jabariyah*) (Bistara, 2021). Sixth, research conducted by Ainiah with the title 'Modernisation of Thought in Islam in the Footsteps of Jamaluddin Al – Afghani'. This research examines the ideas and steps of modernisation for the revival of Islam initiated by Jamaluddin Al – Afghani. The concept of modernisation covers all fields, from religion, education, and economics to politics (Ainiah, 2021). Seventh, research with the title 'Islamic Education Thought of Jamaluddin Al Afghani' conducted by Taufik Marwina Hakim in 2024. This study shows the thought of Islamic education as a strong determination of Jamaluddin Al Afghani to improve the progress of Muslims. (Hakim, 2024).

Despite these studies, there has been no research that focuses on the relevance of Jamaluddin Al – Afghani's theological thought to the contemporary era as a solution for sustainable living. Previous research has mostly concentrated on political and educational themes, while theological discussions have been more focused on reason, revelation, human actions, and destiny. This study aims to explore the relevance of Jamaluddin Al – Afghani's theology in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This exploration is expected to show that theology is not only a matter of belief and ritual but can also provide practical solutions for contemporary challenges. This constitutes a gap

or novelty in the research on Jamaluddin Al – Afghani's theological thought, contributing new perspectives to the existing body of literature.

BIOGRAPHY OF JAMALUDDIN AL-AFGHANI

Jamaluddin Al – Afghani bin Safdar was born in Kabul, Afghanistan, in 1254 H (1839 AD), and passed away in Istanbul, Turkey, in 1897. Some sources suggest he was born in As'adbad, near Hamadan in Persia. (Putra et al., 2022) He was the son of Sayyid Safdar al – Husainiyyah, a descendant of a famous hadith narrator, At – Tirmidhi, who had migrated to Kabul, Afghanistan. (Al – Afghani, 130 C.E., p. 5) Sayyid At – Tirmidhi is linked to Sayyidina Husain bin Ali bin Abi Thalib, making Jamaluddin a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad (Hawi, 2017).

Al – Afghani spent his childhood and adolescence in Afghanistan. At the age of six, Jamaluddin began learning to read the Qur'an under the guidance of his father, Sayyid Shofdar. (Yusran Asmuni, 1998, p. 76) He was an intelligent child and quickly excelled in his studies. As he grew older, his father also taught him the Arabic language, covering subjects such as *Nahwu* (grammar), *Sharaf* (morphology), *Bayan* (rhetoric), *Badi'* (stylistics), and *Ma'ani* (semantics). Later, prominent teachers were brought in to teach him Islamic sciences, including Tafsir (Quranic exegesis), Hadith (Prophetic traditions), *Mushtalah Hadith* (science of Hadith terminology), *Fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), *Ushul Fiqh* (principles of Islamic jurisprudence), Sufism, Kalam (Islamic theology), *Mantiq* (logic), *Hikmah* (philosophy), Politics, Mathematics, and other areas of knowledge (Irfan & Susmihara, 2024).

Jamaluddin Al – Afghani pursued formal education at Kabul University, where he studied Islamic sciences, philosophy, and the exact sciences until the age of 18. Afterward, he moved to India, where he lived for a year. In India, he received a more modern education and for the first time had the opportunity to delve into science and mathematics (Bistara, 2021). The science and math he learned was based on new European methods (Al – Afghani, 130 C.E.).

Jamaluddin Al – Afghani received his education in the holy cities of Iran, where he was trained in the Shiite tradition under the guidance of Aqashid Shadiq, a prominent theological figure in Tehran at the time. He also studied under Murtadha al – Anshari, a well – known theologian and scholar who had traveled extensively in search of knowledge, including to regions such as the Hijaz, Egypt, Yemen, Turkey, Russia, England, and France (Noorthaibah, 2015).

In 1857, Al – Afghani traveled to Mecca to perform the Hajj pilgrimage (Usmani, 2022). Upon returning from Mecca, he continued his journey to Afghanistan, where he joined the administration of Amir Dost Muhammad Khan. After Amir Dost's death and the ascension of Amir Sher Ali in 1864, Al – Afghani became his advisor. A few years later, he was appointed Prime Minister by Muhammad A'zam Khan. However, due to British political interference in Afghanistan and his defeat in struggles against British – supported factions, Al – Afghani left Afghanistan in 1869 and moved to India. In India, he was constantly monitored by the British colonial authorities, prompting him to leave for Egypt (Kurdi, 2015). In Egypt, Al – Afghani settled in Cairo, where he initially distanced himself from political issues and focused his attention on scientific and literary pursuits in the Arab world (Jamil Ahmad, 1984, p. 319).

His stay in Cairo was partly due to an invitation from Riyad Pasha to teach young people informally about Islamic education and philosophy. One of his students was Muhammad Abduh (Priatna, 2003). In 1876, Al – Afghani reentered politics when the

British came to Egypt. He joined a political group made up of Egyptian politicians, known as the Freemasons. In 1879, he helped form a political party called *Hizb al-Watani* (The National Party), through which he sought to instill a sense of nationalism among the Egyptian people (Asrul, 2019).

Al-Afghani's activities in Egypt had a significant impact on the Muslim community. However, due to his involvement in politics, he was expelled by the Egyptian authorities in September 1879. (Hoesin, 1975) In 1883, he founded a movement called "*Jamiyat al-Urwa al-Wuthqa*" (The Society of the Indissoluble Bond), which included Muslims from India, Egypt, Syria, North Africa, and other regions. The movement aimed to unite Muslims. (Noorthaibah, 2015) Al-Afghani also published a magazine called *al-Urwa al-Wuthqa*, which called for the liberation of Egypt from British occupation and raised awareness among Eastern nations about the dangers of Western colonial domination. The magazine was eventually banned and censored. Kurdi, "Jamaluddin Al-Afghani Dan Muhammad Abduh (Tokoh Pemikir Dan Aktivistik Politik Di Dunia Islam Modern)."

In 1892, Al-Afghani moved to Istanbul at the invitation of Sultan Abdul Hamid. Given Al-Afghani's extensive influence across various Muslim countries, Sultan Abdul Hamid sought his help to implement his political plans. The Sultan believed that the support of Muslim nations was crucial to resist European powers, which were increasingly threatening the existence of the Ottoman Empire in the Middle East. However, the cooperation between the progressive and democratic Al-Afghani and the autocratic Sultan Abdul Hamid could not last long. Fearing Al-Afghani's growing influence, the Sultan began to restrict his movements. Al-Afghani was unable to leave Istanbul, where he was eventually confined, and died of cancer on Tuesday, the 5th of Shawwal 1314 H / 9th of March 1897 (Djarnawi Hadikusuma, 2014, p. 28).

Al-Afghani's influence was not limited to religious matters; it was also profound in politics, which led to numerous invitations from rulers to help resolve various issues. Ultimately, however, Sultan Abdul Hamid limited his activities and forbade him from leaving Istanbul until his death. Nevertheless, Al-Afghani's influence and writings continued to have a significant impact in the fields of philosophy, politics, and even theology.

JAMALUDDIN AL-AFGHANI'S THEOLOGICAL THOUGHT

The Problem of *Qadha* and *Qadar*

Jamaluddin Al-Afghani's theological ideas were rooted in the condition of the Muslim society of his time. At that time, many Muslims subscribed to the belief of Jabariyah, which held that fate (or destiny) was predetermined from eternity, and that human actions were merely a reflection of the fate that had been assigned to them. This belief led to a misinterpretation of the concepts of *qadha* (divine decree) and *qadar* (fate or destiny), which made people adopt a fatalistic attitude. This fatalism meant that individuals passively accepted life's challenges and believed everything was preordained, leaving them with little motivation to strive for a better life (Rusli, 2018). The Muslim community, in this view, believed they were weak and helpless in the face of life's trials and challenges, and they surrendered to their circumstances without making an effort to improve their condition (Kurdi, 2015).

Al-Afghani opposed this fatalistic mindset. He argued that humans have the ability to shape their own lives, while still maintaining faith in God and religion. For Al-Afghani, *qadha* and *qadar* must be understood in the context of causality that everything that happens is due to a chain of causes and effects (Bistara, 2021). He believed that human

willpower operates as a causal law, which can be understood through the concepts of *takdir* (destiny) and *ikhtiar* (free will).

According to Al–Afghani, God has entrusted humans with the ability to exercise their will and make choices. Humans have been given the potential to acquire knowledge and put it into practice. However, Al–Afghani also acknowledged that belief in destiny (*takdir*) is essential in Islam. Without belief in *takdir*, a person loses an important aspect of faith. This belief in destiny was what allowed the early Muslim community, in the time of the Prophet and the companions (*Sahabah*), to advance and reach a golden age. They were able to overcome numerous challenges, defeat their enemies, and expand their territories across the world with determination and fearlessness in the face of death. For them, both life and death were valuable in the effort to uphold the religion of Allah (Noorthaibah, 2015).

Belief in *takdir* is, therefore, an acknowledgment of causality recognizing the connection between the past, present, and future. Humans possess free will, but this will is not separate from God's larger plan. In this sense, the small–scale *takdir* shaped by human effort and choice is part of the grander divine *takdir* (Bistara, 2021). In his writings, particularly in *al-Raddu 'ala Dahriyyin*, Al–Afghani elaborates on his thoughts about faith in *qadha* and *qadar*, offering a more balanced understanding of destiny and free will.

The Problem of *Taqlid* and *Ijtihad*

Baina al-Ajdad wa al Akhfad, an article that contains al–Afghani's suggestion to return to the Qur'an and sunnah as a simple creed, by discarding all practices and teachings that are not in accordance with Islamic guidance. This suggestion was made because at that time Muslims had been surrounded by *taqlid* and *bid'ah* by incorporating teachings and beliefs that did not originate from Islam (Salim, 2018). Although this movement to cleanse *taqlid* seems harsh, its methods are not radical, he is more concerned with how to advance scientific and technological civilization by imitating societies with more advanced civilizations, without losing Islamic roots. Al–Afghani placed the purification of faith in a larger framework, namely the revitalization of Islam (Rusli, 2018).

Islam as a universal teaching and a way of life for its adherents, has covered everything that is needed by its adherents. The reform that needs to be done is to interpret the spirit of the original Islamic teachings that are free from heresy, which can raise dignity, strengthen unity and expand the horizons of knowledge. On the other hand, *ijtihad* no longer shows its development after the *Mazhab* finished in the 9th century AD, the right to *ijtihad* began to be restricted, although there is no official expression regarding the closing of the door to *ijtihad*, but the majority of scholars consider that *ijtihad* is not really permitted and is supported by the historical fact that there is no new official *madhhab* (Habibie, 2020). In fact, *ijtihad* functions to decipher the meaning contained in sharia texts, answering problems that occur in society (Siswanto, 2011).

Awareness of the need for *ijtihad* began to emerge in the 19th century, this arose because of the role of several Muslim reformers who began to realize the need to adjust to new times or living conditions. *Ijtihad* was carried out systematically with expanded content and content as a realization of Islam's adjustment to modernity due to Muslim contact with the West. According to him, Muslims must learn from the West about the progress they have achieved without leaving the basic principles of Islam (Rahman, 1985).

Al–Afghani is based on the belief that Islam is *shalih li kulli zaman wal makan*. Islam is suitable for any age, place and time. In other words, Islam is in accordance with all

nations, times and conditions (Arsyi, 2020). Although Al – Afghani called for the spirit of *ijtihad*, there are still conditions that must be met by someone who will carry out *ijtihad* although the conditions he proposed were not as strict and complicated as the requirements by the scholars of *ushul fiqh*. According to al – Afghani, a person who makes *ijtihad* must have Arabic language skills, be mentally and physically healthy, have knowledge of the lives of the *salaf*, know *ijma'*, *qiyas*, and the traditions of the Prophet. If a person fulfills the above conditions, then he is allowed to observe the law in the Quran, study, explore, understand and draw conclusions from it (Rusli, 2018).

Islam is a teaching that is open to the times. Furthermore, Islam in al – Afghani's belief is a religion that is suitable for all nations, times and conditions. From this sentence the author understands several things; first, Islam is a religion that is easy to teach and can be accepted by everyone. Second, Islam is a religion that can adapt to the times. Third, Islam is a religion that has teachings where whatever the point of the problem to be asked, the answer is available in Islam. Simply put, Islam is a flexible religion (Putra et al., 2022).

In addition to emphasizing the importance of *ijtihad*, Al Afghani also emphasized the importance of developing the teachings of *salafiyah*, a school that seeks to restore Islamic teachings as they were taught in the early days of Islam. According to Al – Afghani, if Muslims follow the *salafussaleh* or the early generation of Islam, it is believed that Muslims can rise and regain their glory (Faqihuddin, 2022). Al – Afghani was not the pioneer of this *salafiyah* movement, but he supported the movement that advocated a return to the pure teachings of Islam (Suhilman, 2019).

From its history, *salafiyah* was introduced by Ibnu Taimiyah who introduced the concept of purification, namely practicing Islamic teachings as in the time of *salafussaleh* or the early generations of Islam. Then it was followed by a different movement but had the same goal carried out by Abdul Wahhab in the 18th century. However, the *salafiyah* movement carried out by Jamaluddin al – Afghani had obvious differences with its predecessors. This *Salafiyah* flow has three main parts, namely: 1) if Muslims return to the pure teachings of Islam and emulate the lives of the prophet's companions, then al – Afghani believes that with him Muslims will achieve their glory and progress again. 2) Opposing and fighting colonialism and domination brought by the western world to the Islamic world in all aspects of Muslim life, be it economic, cultural, political and others; and 3). Not rejecting western science and giving recognition to the progress and superiority of western science in terms of science and technology (Hawi, 2017).

Muslims do not have to block everything related to the west, there are things that require Muslims to learn and catch up with the west. Therefore, Muslims should learn from the West in these areas while still selectively and critically filtering the benefits of Western science and technology in order to regain the glory of Islam. Al – Ghazali wanted Muslims to have a habit of worship as in the time of the prophet and companions and reason and thought that must keep up with technological developments (Musa, 2020).

Purification of Islamic Teachings

As a guide for Muslims, the Islamic creed must be kept pure so that it remains in line with the Koran and Hadith. In maintaining the purity of the Islamic creed, Al – Afghani stated that four ways must be done to achieve this renewal. First, Muslims must be free from all superstition and khufarat. Second, Muslims must be confident that they can achieve noble character and morals. Third, the foundation and foundation of life for Muslims must be faith in Allah (Faqihuddin, 2022). Fourth, the younger generation is the

main actor in achieving the success of the renewal and the participation of each generation in achieving these goals (Saefuddin, 2003, p. 88).

The *salafiyah* movement aims to eradicate the beliefs of the people that have been mixed with heresy, superstition and *khufarat*. The movement seeks to restore the teachings of Islam in accordance with what is taught in the Qur'an and hadith, which teach Muslims to practice monotheism and avoid shirk. Worship is cleansed of all heresy and *taqlid*, Muslims must also remind each other in goodness and avoid a life that pursues material and luxury that prioritizes the world rather than the hereafter (Faqihuddin, 2022).

Al-Afghani's awareness of the deviations that have been committed by Muslims, making him feel he has an obligation to return to the reminder to return to pure Islam to achieve modern progress in Islam. First, Muslims are encouraged to visit their brothers and sisters in Islamic countries to foster friendship and brotherhood. Second, strengthening Islamic educational institutions from the lowest to the highest level. Third, translation of literature from foreign languages into the mother tongue of Muslims in each country is carried out. Fourth, there should be publications and organizations that can lead Islam to progress. Fifth, conduct research and publish it so that it can be read by, not only Muslims, but also all circles (Saefuddin, 2003).

JAMALUDDIN AL-AFGHANI'S THEOLOGY AND THE SDGs

In terms of theology, al-Afghani tends to reflect on human life based on a strong spiritual dimension by leaving forms that are indifferent to the problems of the world and the hereafter. This theologian offered renewal in the realm of theology with the aim of the progress of the people so as not to be confined by the colonizers and to be free. He criticized the fanatical nature of surrendering to fate, and only surrendering to religion without maximizing effort (Bistara, 2021).

The effort referred to by al-Afghani has to do with the meaning of life that every human being must have, because people who know themselves can maximize their potential and can solve the test of life. The book *Man's Search for Meaning* explains that people who understand the meaning of their lives will have the enthusiasm and drive to make changes, so as to increase individual value (Khoirudin, 2021, p. 3). This is in line with the concept offered by al-Afghani to the realities faced by humanity. Theology can be a guide and direction that can overcome the fears within, so as to achieve personal independence and advance civilization. Influences that come from various sides including Western culture can be sorted out and used as an opportunity, especially by Muslims.

Al-Afghani's overall theological view does not reject Western influence, but at least there is strict filtering in terms of creed. The intention is for Muslims to be more introspective about themselves as creatures who have God. So that way, Muslims can rise up and try as much as possible by critically examining what is a Western product, and also leaving blind *taqlid* to predecessors who are considered final in any case (Khairiyanto, 2019, p. 146).

In this case, al-Afghani's thought also influenced Muhammad Abduh in the field of theology, namely, Abduh prefers the provision that humans are free to determine their actions, both those related to their actions but there are limits, as well as the issue of destiny and the function of reason. Thus, the function of reason plays an important role in human action. So that humans can determine their attitudes and choices in any case and can evaluate them as well as possible. This tends to lean more towards the use of reason, it just limits it to the provision that natural law becomes the fundamental reason that humans need to know (Khairiyanto, 2019).

The relevance of Al – Afghani's theology after his time is that it is still used, especially by figures who have ideals in purifying Islamic teachings. Al – Afghani's thinking about the door to *ijtihad* has not been closed, opening the minds of Muslims to study Arabic language rules and other Islamic sciences in depth. The purpose of this deepening is so that the requirements in understanding the nash are not just made up but based on science.

Al – Afghani's thoughts were later adopted by figures such as Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Ridha who further developed the principles of Islamic modernism. Universally, Al – Afghani's theology played an important role in the development of Islamic modernism and remains relevant in the Islamic world. Where the concept of modernism emphasizes the unification of beliefs with modern values that develop (Charles C. Adams, 1993). In the contemporary era, Al – Afghani's concept is related to the Sustainable Life Goals (SDGs).

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are broadly defined as, "Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." The phrase was first introduced in "Our Common Future," a report published by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) in 1987 (Ngoyo, 2015).

The SDGs are progressive development measures that incorporate various sectors, are rights – based, and focus on community participation. The goal is to unify global efforts to change the way development is done by 2030.(Fadil et al., 2023) As a continuation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the SDGs aim to coordinate development in a comprehensive manner. The SDGs have a balanced role towards developed, developing, and least developed countries.(Anggraini & Nugraheni, 2024) In addition, this goal is in line with the theology developed by Jamaluddin al – Afghani, who directed that theology can be a solution to the problems that appear in society. This theology is also known as liberation theology.

Liberation theology has several distinctive criteria, namely directing towards a harmonious human life in this world and in the hereafter. It does not support the status quo that protects the rich, is anti – establishment, is active in defending oppressed groups, and asserts that humans have the freedom to determine their destiny. This theology aims to encourage the development of practices that view human freedom and destiny as not contradictory, but complementary.(Bistara, 2021) This concept is referred to by Asghar Ali Engineer, but what Engineer offers is in line with al – Afghani's theological thinking.

After the MDGs era in 2015 led to the SDGs program which has a target to be achieved by 2030. The SDGs program or sustainable development program has 17 goals to be achieved, namely:

"1) End poverty in all its forms everywhere; 2) End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture; 3) Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages; 4) Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all; 5) Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls; 6) Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all; 7) Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all; 8) Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and full and productive employment and decent work for all; 9) Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation; 10) Reduce inequalities among and within countries; 11) Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable; 12) Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns; 13) Take urgent action to combat climate change and its

impacts; 14) Conserve and sustainably use oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development; 15) Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat land degradation, and halt and reverse land degradation and biodiversity loss; 16) Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels; 17) Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development." (Ngoyo, 2015).

The seventeen points are closely related to what Al – Afghani meant by theology as a solution to human problems. Liberation theology as a solution is the application of religious values that are not limited to the realm of rituals, but to current problems, for example, to eradicate poverty with the concept of theology that offers effort and prayer, not just surrender.

CONCLUSION

Jamaluddin al – Afghani's theology can be used as a solution to achieve the goal of sustainable life because the ultimate hope of al – Afghani is the life of the people who are balanced between the world and the hereafter. This theological thought seeks to liberate and teach the meaning of independence. In the sense that theology is not only a belief, but theology can answer the challenges of the times. Al – Afghani's theological thinking that can be a solution to SDGs includes religion not only in the realm of rituals but also directing humans to have the spirit to try, not just surrender to fate. This concept can be a solution to the first SDG point. In addition, al – Afghani also offers the importance of education and the elevation of women's status which is a solution to SDGs points number four and five. Overall, his thoughts are in line with the context of the times which can be a solution as well as an antithesis of the problem.

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