

CHAPTER FIVE

IBN ABĪ AL-DUNYĀ'S CREATIVITY AND METHODOLOGY IN PURIFYING THE SOUL

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, purification of the soul at the societal level was analyzed and discussed based on Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā's works. Related works of Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā were discussed to introduce the link between each topic and purification of the soul at the societal level. Then, the contents of each work were analyzed to present the contributions of Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā related to purifying the soul at the societal level. Thus, this chapter is a conclusion of chapters three and four. It aims to introduce the creativity of Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā in dealing with purification of the soul through his works. It also sheds light on the methodology adopted by Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā throughout his works in purifying the soul at both levels: the individual and societal.

5.2 Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā's Creativity In Purifying The Human Soul

In the first chapter of this thesis, the creative personality and traits of Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā were presented and discussed. Thus, eleven traits were found based on the information available through his biography. Those traits are namely: Fluency, flexibility, originality, elaboration, sensitivity to problems, redefinition, objectivity, intuition, commitment and inner motivation, intelligence and open mindedness. Hence, after studying Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā's personality according to these traits, it is appropriate now to study them in relation to Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā's works to introduce

his creativity in dealing with such a sensitive and fundamental topic as purification of the soul. According to a study provided by Kerr (2009), “There are different personality traits among groups of creative people and that these traits may influence the domain in which an individual is able to be creative” (p. 186). This means that personality traits of creative people like Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā, influence the field in which the creative individual is keen on or focused. Therefore, creative traces of Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā are expected to be apparent on his works. Thus, it is the aim of this section to shed light on these traces and introduce them to people.

5.2.1 Fluency

As defined earlier, fluency means the ability to produce a great number of ideas or problem solutions in a short period of time. This is clearly shown in the large number of books Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā wrote to treat the faults and shortcomings he detected in the society during his time. Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā managed to write a large sum of books (217 books) within the limited period of his lifetime. Thus, his enthusiasm is very noteworthy to write so many books although he was not a man free of duties as he used to be the tutor of several Abbasid princes and had several students that he taught. This all emerged from his sense of responsibility and from his strong desire to provide solutions to the problems of his time.

Moreover, Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā did not only come up with ideas and solutions to the problems of his time, but he was also selective in the topics he wrote about and he was creative in the way he introduced the contents of each topic. Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā, in many of his works, is considered one of the earliest, if not the first, who developed different types of genres. To mention but a few, *kitāb Al-Manāmāt*, *Qīṣar Al-Amal*, *Al-Tawāḍu‘ wa Al-Khumūl*, *Mudārāt Al-Nās*, *Man ‘asha ba’d Al-Mawt*, *Al-‘Iyāl*, *Al-Ṣamt*

wa *Ādāb Al-Lisān* and *Iṣlāḥ Al-Māl*. His book, *Muḥāsabat Al-Nafs wa Al-Izrā' Alayhā*, is considered the earliest work to be written in such a genre. Except for one book entitled *Ādāb Al-Nufūs* (self-discipline) written by Al-Ḥārith Al-Muḥāsibī (d. 243 AH), but this book is not a *musnad* (i.e., contains a continuous chain of narrators) unlike Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā's. This means that Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā was not only able to come up with great ideas and solutions to problems in a short period of time, but also was creative in his selection and publishing.

5.2.2 Flexibility

Flexibility is an essential element of creative thinking that is usually used by creative people. It could be considered along with fluency, originality and elaboration as the cornerstone for creative thinking. Flexibility means the ability to generate a variety of ideas and responses across different fields or categories and to look at things from different points of view. It is also the ability to think about different concepts simultaneously, as well as, to switch between them. High flexibility thinkers are non-linear thinkers and are able to hold two opposing points of view in their mind at the same time.

Thus, a thorough reading in Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā's works, which are considered one of his main intellectual outcomes, show that flexibility in thinking is apparently present. For example, his ability to generate various ideas from different fields is found in almost all of his books. To illustrate, in his book *Iṣṭinā' Al-Ma'rūf*, Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā mentioned various topics from different fields to convey his complete view of the topic of the book. Some of these topics are: laughter as part of doing the good (i.e., bringing happiness to the heart of others), being thankful when receiving a good deed, choosing whom to ask for good things and being patient with those in need as part of

doing good at an incorporeal level. So, Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā did not only focus on the act of doing good but he expanded that to those who receive it as they have rights and they owe rights to others. Also, he mentioned various types and ways of doing good to others, be it physical or non-physical. Another example is found in his book *Iṣlāh Al-Māl*, which deals generally with wealth. The topic of the book refers to narrations that deal with things that help in restoring one's wealth. However, he included topics such as, inheritance, poverty, abundant wealth and moderation in spending, clothing and eating. This list shows how Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā introduced the topic from different angles.

Furthermore, looking at things from a different point of view can be found, as an example, in Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā's book *Al-Ishrāf fī Manāzil Al-Ashrāf*. He took the example of a man who considered his honour (*ʿird*) as alms. This is considered a noble action, which reflects a deep understanding of the topic at hand and comes as a result of his creative thinking skills. As for his ability to hold two opposing views at the same time and harmonize between them, it can be seen in many of his works such as his book *Al-Jūʿ*, in which he harmonizes between the state of strong hunger plus refusal to eat and the moderate hunger which Islam calls for as described in chapter three.

5.2.3 Originality

Originality often grows out of fluency and flexibility. It is the ability to generate ideas that are unique or very unusual, unexpected or first of a kind. It is also the ability to look beyond obvious solutions and generate novel ideas and responses. These responses will be unexpected and unfamiliar and may often lead to breakthrough solutions. Originality is enhanced by positive moods. So when a person is

brainstorming ideas, a good mood will help him come up with more ideas. Thus, in reference to this clarification on originality, Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā is considered one of the earliest and most prolific writers who developed many genres. For example, he is one of the earliest writers who developed the afterlife genre. He covered the different stages of the hereafter and presented descriptions of the upper worlds in short treatises. His work drew attention to three main ways by which the living can learn about the dead. All of that was presented in his unique book *Man ‘asha ba’d Al-Mawt*. Other works of Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā that show his originality are: *kitāb Al-Manāmāt*, *Qīṣar Al-Amal*, *Al-Iyāl*, *Al-Ṣamt wa Ādāb Al-Lisān* and *Iṣlāḥ Al-Māl*.

5.2.4 Elaboration

Elaboration is the ability to expand on an idea and embellish it with details. In other words, it is the ability to explain something in greater detail. Furthermore, strong writing elaborates ideas with specific information, whereas weak writing is sketchy and general. Elaboration is also considered as the ability to create an intricate plan. Unlike fluency, which is the ability to generate ideas, elaboration refers to the details within each idea. It focuses more on the solution or idea and develops it further. It means that if a creative person is given just a general idea for a task or solution, he or she can figure out the steps it will take to complete it.

The use of this skill of creative thinking is clear throughout Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā's works. It is reflected in the numerous narrations he provides in almost all of his works. Going into detail, providing different narrations that clarify different points of view on the same topic, repeating some narrations under different sections of the same book to reinforce the idea in both sections and repeating same narrations in different books if necessary. The use of all these methods shows the ability of Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā to

elaborate on the topics he worked on. The main aim of using this skill seems to be for acquainting the reader with every available detail on the topic at hand in order to draw a complete picture of it in the mind of the reader. This enhances the understanding of the topic and makes it more prone to be accepted and adopted by the reader. Thus, lacking these details would not have served the aim for which Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā composed his books. Like diners who show disappointment in a meal that lacks important ingredients, readers get disappointed in writings that lack specific details and deprive them from good understanding and comprehending.

5.2.5 Sensitivity To Problems

This trait of creative people along with other primary abilities was suggested by Guilford (1950) in his model of the ‘structure of intellect’ (Harold, 1994: 247). Sensitivity to problems means the ability to identify problems or difficulties or even sense if something is likely to go wrong. It does not involve solving the problem, but only recognizing them. It involves the ability to tell that a situation is going to deteriorate or worsen or to recognise the symptoms of a physical or spiritual problem requiring treatment.

According to the definition above, Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā’s sensitivity towards problems is clearly reflected in his works. He sensed the problems that emerged in his society during the golden age of Islamic civilization. Thus, due to his recognition of the problems of his time, he composed numerous books on different topics to cover as many as he could from the problems he sensed. Therefore, his works are clear indications of his sensitivity toward problems. Moreover, Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā managed to put his hand on a wide scope of problems as it is shown through the topics of his works. He defined each problem successfully and provided appropriate solutions and

techniques throughout his books. For example, one of his works was devoted to asceticism. In it Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā intended to draw the attention of people towards the importance of asceticism while living in prosperity and luxury in order to obtain a balanced life. He also wrote books on hunger, restoration of wealth, shortening long hopes and contentment and abstinence, which are all related to problems of his time.

Furthermore, Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā sensed as well, the social problems that occurred during his time due to the changes that accompanied the golden age. And so, he devoted a good part of his works to social problems, to name but a few, *Al-ʿIyāl*, *Al-Ḥilm wa Dham Al-Fuḥsh*, *TDam Al-Baghī*, *Al-Ghībah wa Al-Namīmah*, *Mudārāt Al-Nās* and *Makārim Al-Akhlāq*.

5.2.6 Redefinition

Redefinition is one of the features of creative people introduced by Torrance and Goff (1989: 142). It refers to the ability to redefine or perceive in a way different from the usual established or intended way. In other words, it is a process that helps to redefine the problems and opportunities one faces to come up with new, innovative responses and solutions to take action. This does not only help to create better solutions, but it creates a positive experience that helps speed up the adoption of new ideas.

Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā showed many examples of redefinition throughout his works. The methodology used and the wording of the headings as well as the topics chosen for his works all show his ability to redefine concepts and ideas. For instance, one of his works was entitled as '*Islāh Al-Māl*' meaning literally, 'reformation of money.' Thus, such combination of '*islāh*' and '*al-māl*' has not been used before and, in fact, it gives lots of shades of meaning rather than the usual combination, for example, *ḥifẓ*

al-māl (i.e., preservation of money). In addition, the use of the word '*iṣlāh*' indicates that Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā had recognised the economic problems that may have shown up at his time and decided to use a comprehensive term that refers to the element of reform and link it with wealth allowing it to include all aspects that wealth can be used in.

Another example for Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā's ability to redefine concepts is his book on loneliness and privacy (*Al- 'Uzlah wa Al-Infirād*). Thus, usually '*uzlah*' has negative connotations and even in Islam it is not the preferred case but it exists in certain cases mentioned in chapter three. However, Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā managed to redefine and reintroduce this concept in a positive way contrary to how people generally interpret it. He focused on the benefits of loneliness when the situation of a person required it. He also mentioned some disadvantages of mixing with people. Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā introduced all this without distorting the basic notion of being a social person and mixing with people to benefit from them and benefit them.

5.2.7 Objectivity

Objectivity is unquestionably one of the most valuable qualities an individual can have. It means that an individual's personal feelings and beliefs do not influence, interfere or change facts for the subject at hand. It involves qualities such as, being truthful, fair, open minded and open to all sides. It allows the individual to make decisions and judgments in a fair way that is not influenced by feelings or personal beliefs (i.e., non-biased judgment). Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā was among those who held the quality of being objective. In terms of personality, this quality has been discussed in chapter one. Hence, holding this quality among one's traits carries the expectations that it should also be reflected in one's sayings, actions and written works. Therefore,

at the level of his written works, Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā tended to search for the truth and for what he believed his society needed without worrying about the acceptance and approval of others. His personality was more focused on doing what he believed in and what he thought was correct be it that others welcomed it or rejected it. However, he did not forget to convey his stance and opinions in a decent, lenient manner.

Furthermore, a good example that reflects Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā's objectivity through his writings is the messages he conveyed to the rulers through narrations in some of his books despite the fact he was the tutor of several Abbasid princes at the time. He even mentioned narrations that include advices regarding what one should do if he or she was abused by the ruler of his time. Some of these narrations can be found in his book *Al-'Uzlah wa Al-Infirād*. However, Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā conveyed those messages without pointing out certain names or figures as his aim was to convey general advice to every individual within his society.

5.2.8 Commitment and Inner motivation

Commitment usually refers to a person's willingness to dedicate time and energy to something he believes in, or to make a promise or firm decision to do something. It is an important trait of creative people and involves qualities such as, dedication, patience and diligence. Furthermore, inner motivation is the thing that arises from within the individual. It occurs when the individual acts without the motivation of any obvious external rewards. Thus, this trait helps the creative person to become deeply involved in the task at hand and to be willing to work hard continuously.

Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā began his endless journey for knowledge before reaching ten years old. He continued to learn and convey the knowledge he acquired using all the

possible means and techniques available until the last day of his life. This commitment and inner motivation allowed him to give a good portion of his time and effort to write his books after careful selection and after determining the key aspects of the shortages he sought in his society and the Muslims of his time. This trait is considered crucial in the life of Muslims and there are actually many more Islamic behaviours and manners that are encouraged by Islam. This is mainly based on the concept of *ikhlāṣ* in Islam and that the Muslim should not wait for external motivation to work, because he has the motivation of the reward from Allah. Otherwise, for some Muslims they may fall into hypocrisy or overconfidence.

Hence, the number of books Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā composed during his lifetime besides his other responsibilities is a considerably large number, which surely required commitment and inner motivation. Not only were his works numerous, but he also managed to introduce them creatively and carefully bearing in mind the topics he needed to write about, the selection of words, Hadith narrations and the details he chose to introduce under each topic. All of this requires a significant amount of patience and hard work. These characteristics usually require the presence of commitment and inner motivation.

5.2.9 Intelligence

Intelligence and creativity are often linked together. Intelligence generally involves the ability to interpret information and provide solutions, no matter the circumstance. It also includes the ability to filter solutions efficiently by choosing the most appropriate and effective one amongst them. Therefore, intelligence is vital for understanding creative thinking and improving it since it demonstrates one's ability to gather knowledge and effectively use it.

According to Ḥasan (1996: 3/24), during the ruling period of the Abbasid Caliph Al-Mu'taḍid many brilliant writers, thinkers and poets appeared. Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā was a prodigy writer among the great writers of this period. Ḥasan also noted that these writers were also amongst the great historians of their time (p. 25). This indicates the intelligence of Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā in various fields of science. Thus, this reference to the intelligence of Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā has with no doubt come from inspecting his biography and his intellectual legacy. Furthermore, the intelligence of Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā through his works is presented in the sum of information he provided through narrations and poetry in each of his books. He introduced a variety of informative narrations in each book to acquaint the reader with all the information needed regarding the topic. It is true that generally Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā rarely included any descriptions, explanations or clarification of his own in his works, except for very few times, but he said all that he wanted to say through his calculated and scholarly selection of Hadith narrations and aphorisms.

5.2.10 Open minded

Open mindedness refers to the quality that allows the individual to entertain various ideas, even ones that are contradictory to his own views and deliberate them thereby arriving to the truth. Open-minded people are usually open to all sources and types of information. They also hold deliberative minds and have the ability to focus on how the information pertains to the task or goal at hand and being selective in choosing the needed information. Therefore, open-minded people have greater focus and have the ability to make connections between the presented information and the targeted goal. Thus, being more open-minded leads to being more receptive toward different ideas, cultures, points of views and styles while realizing that their point of

view is not necessarily always right. Hence, an individual cannot be creative if he is not willing to see things differently.

As pointed out earlier, Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā was open to different points of view that may have even been contradicting sometimes at times, but he usually found a way to relationship and compromise between them in one way or another. It is his methodology in writing his books to lay down all possible views and then sheds light on the views he thought were correct and most appropriately suited his goal. He also calls the attention of the reader to very sensitive differences between concepts and views to differentiate between them and for the reader to be aware of their results, regardless of being negative or positive.

5.3 Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā's Methodology In Purifying The Human Soul

In general, there is a certain pattern that was followed repeatedly in almost all of Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā's books, which were studied in this thesis. Before talking about the methodology of Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā in purifying the soul through his works, it is worth highlighting his general methodology in writing his books.

5.3.1 Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā's General Methodology In His Works

5.3.1.1 Book Preface

Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā does not provide any introduction or preface at the beginning of his books that introduces the topic; neither does he mention anything about the methodology he uses. Instead he starts each book by writing, *bismillah Al-Rahmān Al-Rahīm*, and by asking Allah to help him throughout his writing and to be able to finish each book in a good, proper way.

5.3.1.2 Subtitling And Organization

Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā sometimes introduces his book with subtitles and provides under each subtitle a variety of narrations according to each subtitle, such as: *Al-Tahajjud wa Qiyām Al-Layl*, *Al-Tawbah*, *Al-Ahwāl* and *Iṣlāḥ Al-Māl*. However, in other books he merely lists the narrations without any subtitling or precise order, although the narrations would usually be placed in an order that discusses each aspect of the book independently, such as: *Al-Mutamannīn*, *Al-Jūʿ*, *Al-Tawakkul ʿala Allah* and *Qaḍāʾ Al-Ḥawāʾij*.

5.3.1.3 Hadith Ascription

Among Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā's methodology is to state the narrations without pointing out to the degree of the Hadith being, *ṣaḥīḥ*, *ḥasan*, *ḍaʿīf*, etc.

5.3.1.4 Variety Of Narrations

Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā's works consist of usually six categories, which are: Prophetic Hadith, the sayings and anecdotes of the companions and followers, Israeli tales, traditional wisdom of the sages, wise sayings and poems. However, not all of these five are always included in each of his books. For example, in his book *Iṣlāḥ Al-Māl* he included only Hadiths, wise sayings, anecdotes of the companions and followers and poems.

5.3.1.5 Comments And Clarification

Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā does not often uses comments, explanations or clarifications in his works. He usually mentions the narrations one after the other without commenting. However, he does sometimes provide a clarification for unfamiliar

words or phrases such as the one in his book *Al-Ikhwān* (1988: 145), in which he explains the meaning of seven unfamiliar words mentioned in the narration. Also, Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā sometimes presents his own comments and provides his explanation to some narrations. For example, in his book *Makārim Al-Akhlāq* (n.d.: 31) he explained what is meant by patience, lenience and good manners in the context they appeared in.

5.3.1.6 Repetition

Repetition is one of the techniques within Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā's writing methodology when producing his works. Sometimes he repeats exactly the same narration, but in a different part of the book because a need for the narration is called for or may be to emphasize on the meaning included in the narration and show its importance. For example, he uses this technique in his book *Dham Al-Ghībah* (1993: 77–78, 82). At other times he repeats narrations but with some slight changes in the wording or the vocab of the narration, as in his book *Al-Ikhwān* (1988: 39–41). Also, he may repeat the narration in the same place but with additional information, such as in his book *Al-Ishrāf fī Manāzil Al-Ashrāf* (1990: 101–103).

5.3.1.7 Foregrounding

Another technique that is widely used by Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā is foregrounding, which is the practice of making something stand out from the surrounding words. It is a linguistic strategy that catches the readers' attention to make them alert and attentive. Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā used this method to foreground certain narrations that he believed were significant and then started off his book or a section with it.

5.3.2 Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā's Methodology In Purifying The Human Soul Through His Works

A closer look at Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā's works will reveal his concern about asceticism and similar themes. As noted before, he wrote on various fields of science but his focus was evidently on topics of asceticism. Thus, asceticism is a very crucial part of the purification process of the soul. Due to this, Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā has presented a good data on the topic of this thesis, which enabled the researcher to study his methodology in that particular field.

The methodology Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā based on his tools and techniques for the purification of the human soul is comprehensive. He successfully managed to introduce the reader to a comprehensive perspective and a clear guide to the path of purification. He wrote on many different aspects that are related to the purification of the soul. Indeed, most of his written works that has been found and studied is related to purification of the soul and is considered an effective tool that helps in the process of purification. That is due to the nature of purification, which is involved in almost every aspect of life. Thus, if purification means to leave out all that is evil and bad, and to take in all that is good, then this makes purification inevitably integral to all details of one's life. Hence, the details or aspects of life related to purification need to be carried out according to the Islamic criteria Islam has established in order for it to be purified.

According to this, Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā's methodology in establishing the concept of purification and setting up the methods to achieve it successfully is based on three main principals: belief, morals, worship and social dealings.

5.3.2.1 Belief [*al-‘aqīdah*]

Belief is the cornerstone that establishes everything good in the life of a Muslim. Without correct ‘*aqīdah*, the Muslim’s life is haphazard and free of supreme goals. As such, an individual will end up living in this life catering to his endless desires. Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā depended on this principal as the basis for his methodology in purifying the soul. Every structure should have a solid and consistent base in order to persist and to stand strong. Similarly, belief is a very important foundation that every Muslim has to start from; otherwise they will fall and fail to accomplish the aim of their living.

Furthermore, in order for the soul to be righteous and purified, a true belief in the oneness of Allah and the religion He called people to, is needed. Thus, this belief should not be a mere utterance of words, but it must be accompanied with the affirmation of the heart and compliance in action. Hence, the more one’s belief is deep and solid, the more purified his soul and the more righteous his actions. Due to this, the belief in the oneness of Allah is the first bases for purifying the soul, which is reflected in the first part of the *Shahādatayn*¹³⁶. Then follows the second part, which is concerned with the recognition of the Prophet (SAW) and keeping firm with what he come with; the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of the Prophet (SAW). Next in importance is the belief in the six pillars of faith: Belief in the Oneness of Allah (SWT), belief in His angels, belief in His books, belief in His Prophets and Messengers, belief in the Day of Judgment and belief in divine decree, good or bad.

Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā introduced this basis for purifying the soul through ten of his books, namely: *Al-Ikhlās*, *Al-Riḍā ‘an Allah bi-Qaḍā’ih*, *Al-Wajal wa Al-Tawaththuq bil‘amal*, *Al-Yaqīn*, *Al-Tawakkul ‘ala Allah*, *Ṣifat Al-Nār*, *Ṣifat Al-Jannah*, *Al-Qubūr*,

¹³⁶ A declaration of belief in the Oneness of Allah (SWT) and on Muhammad (SAW) as His last Prophet.

Al-Ahwāl and *Husn Al-Ẓan bi-llah*. He states clearly in his book *Al-Ikhlāṣ* that *Ikhlāṣ* is a sign of a man's religion (n.d.: 33). He also states a narration by Ibrāhīm, a jurisprudence scholar, saying: a man may do a deed that looks good in the eyes of people, or he may do the good deed but not for the sake of Allah, then he would receive in turn the dislike and disapproval of people and vice versa (p. 40). A stricter narration is seen on page (45), which says the angel goes up pleasantly with the deed of a man and it reaches Allah (SWT), He says: take it to *sijjīn* (a register inscribed where the record of wicked is preserved), it was not for my sake.

Furthermore, in his book *Al-Riḍā 'an Allah bi-Qaḍā'ih* he points out a significant Hadith that shows the positive affect of being pleased with Allah's decree, which is calmness and tranquility of the soul: "I am in wonder of a believer; Allah (SWT) does not prescribe for him only what is good for him" (1990: 41–42). Thus, if all that Allah prescribes for Muslims is good, then this results in trusting Allah, which paves the way for many other good manners, such as: patience, contentment, pleasure, deep faith, humility, certainty and, indeed, purification of the soul. Moreover, fearing Allah (SWT) is a must for every Muslim as it is a condition for faith. However, this fear should be accompanied by hope so that one does not override the other and cause a loss of the balance between them that enhances the purification of the soul. Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā managed to point out the importance of fear of Allah in the Muslim's life and that fearing itself is not sufficient if it was not followed by action (1997: 27).

Moreover, *al-yaqīn*, which is a pure action of the heart that requires action is reflected by Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā in his book through numerous narrations and sayings. He points out the importance of *yaqīn* through the saying of Abū Bakr Al-Siddīq in which he says that *yaqīn* is among the best of things a Muslim may acquire (1993: 14–15). He focused on the strength of the Muslim's *yaqīn* and that if it is weakened it

lessens the individual's trust in what Allah has for him (p. 34) and it is a cause for more flaws (p. 27). Further, *al-tawakkul* is another pure action of heart that Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā focused on and wrote about. It is the truthful reliance of the heart on Allah (SWT) in bringing the good, and driving away the evil matters of this life and the Hereafter. Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā concentrated on a number of meanings that help in the correct understanding and practice of the concept *tawakkul*. He reminds Muslims of the Prophet's Hadith that reads: "If you were to rely upon Allah with the reliance He is due, you would be given provision like the birds: They go out hungry in the morning and come back with full bellies in the evening" (1987: 34). This Hadith urges Muslims to put their worries aside and to put their faith in Allah who owns everything they need. This leads to another action of the heart, which is *Husn Al-Zan bi-llah*. Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā mentions in this book that the Messenger of Allah (SAW) said, Allah, the Exalted and Glorious, said: "I am to My servant as he thinks of Me and I am with him when he remembers Me" (1993: 13–14). This Hadith shows the importance of having good expectations of Allah (SWT) because what comes from Him is purely good.

The remaining books Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā introduced with his methodology to purify the Muslim's soul are related to the unseen world such as, hellfire, paradise, graves and the horrors that occur on the Day of Judgment. The effect of these topics on purifying the soul is evitable. For example, *Ṣifāt Al-Nār* handles part of the psychological aspect, which disparages Allah's commands and his prohibitions. It works on purifying the soul through fear of the miserable ends of those who do not comply with Allah's commands. Whereas, *Ṣifāt Al-Jannah* works on purifying the individual's soul through encouraging individuals to work hard and comply with

Allah's commands for a happy and bright ending. On the other hand, *Al-Qubūr* and *Al-Ahwāl* implies an influence that is almost the same as *Ṣifat Al-Nār*.

5.3.2.2 Morals [*al-akhlāq*]

Morals are very important in people's lives. There cannot be a humanitarian society that lacks morals and good manners. Indeed, morals are the characters that grow with humans and are needed and used by them until death. Allah (SWT) decreed that success in this life and the hereafter is determined by the degree of purification of the soul and the degree of a person's noble characteristic. It is therefore the duty of every Muslim to seek noble character and emulate their Prophet (SAW), who said: "I have been sent only to perfect noble character." Thus, Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā realized the importance of character refinement and emphasized the important traits and qualities that every Muslim should seek to acquire. Due to the importance of morals and the need of the societies for advancement and prosperity, Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā composed numerous books in that concern. For example, he wrote book entitled: *Dham Al-Dunyā*, *Tham Al-Muskir*, *Dham Al-Malāhī*, *Makā'id Al-Shaytān*, *Dhikr Al-Mawt*, *Al-'umr wa Al-Shayb*, *Kalām Al-Layālī wa Al-Ayyām*, *Al-Muḥtaḍirīn*, *Al-Maraḍ wa Al-Kaffarāt*, *Al-Faraj ba'd Al-Shiddah*, *Al-Awliyā'*, *Al-Jū'*, *Al-Riqqah wa Al-Bukā'*, *Al-'uzlah wa Al-Infirād*, *Al-Ham wa Al-Huzn*, *Al-Tawāḍu' wa Al-Khumūl*, *Al-Tawbah*, *Al-Ṣabr wa Al-Thawāb 'alayh*, *Qīṣar Al-Amal*, *Al-Qanā'ah wa Al-Ta'affuf*, *Muḥasabat Al-Nafs wa Al-Izrā' 'alayhā*, *Al-Ṣamt wa Ādāb Al-Lisān* and *Makārim Al-Akhlāq*.

Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā's methodology is not limited to the mere compilation of books, but his introduction to each topic and his focus on certain narrations, as well as, his use of a variety of narrations, sayings, aphorisms and poems to convey the

intended message are also involved. Furthermore, although he composed a book on good morals (*Makārim Al-Akhlāq*), due to the vastness of the topic he wrote many other books that are categorized under it. For example, on page (27), Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā clearly states his own view on composing this book. He says that all the manners mentioned in this book, are from the Prophetic teachings. He intends by writing it in a book to benefit the Muslims so that the one on the right track keeps steadfast and the delinquent one wakes up from his inattentiveness and negligence to correct the direction of his route. He finally says that it is said that there is not a single good manner or behaviour but linked to religion. He stated a Hadith that links between faith and good manners: The Messenger of Allah was asked who is the most honourable among people? He said: “The ones most mindful of Allah” (n.d.: 18). Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā carries on to mention different forms of good manners. He talked about forgiveness being a characteristic of the noble people (p. 28); about modesty and that it is part of faith (p. 35), decency and covering up other people’s faults when addressing people (p. 36). He spoke about the virtue of truth and that a believer can only be truthful (pp. 45–46). Being brave and fearless in battles and in upholding rights is also part of good manners (pp. 59–61, 63).

In another book (*Al-‘Uzlah wa Al-Infirād*), Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā introduced the merits and limits of solitude and privacy. He focused in more than one place on the correct understanding of solitude and the main idea behind practicing it. For example, he started his book with a Hadith on trials occurring in the future. One of the companions asked for the solution on such days and the Prophet (SAW) said among his answer to “stay home” (1997: 48). Moreover, in *Al-Ṣabr wa Al-Thawāb ‘Alayh*, Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā mentioned narrations referring to different kinds of patience as it covers a wide range of related topics. For example, he stated a narration that

categorizes patience into four types: longing and eagerness, compassion, asceticism and expectation (1997: 25). Thus, eagerness for paradise protects from falling into the desires of the soul. Compassion from hellfire keeps the Muslim away from the forbidden. Asceticism allows the Muslim to bear the trials and hardships of life. Expectation of death urges the Muslim to head towards doing good deeds.

Furthermore, in his book *Al-Tawāḍu' wa Al-Khumūl*, Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā stated several narrations that refer to anonymous people having their supplication to Allah answered. Those narrations do not necessarily mean that any anonymous individual is answered by Allah, but it means that there are many individuals whose appearances do not show any sign of excessive worship. However, Allah knows best about what is in their heart, the strength of their faith and the worship they do away from people's observation (n.d.: 97–115). He points to two types of disliked clothing: clothing of fame, which causes people to look up to that person when he appears and lousy clothing in which the religion of the individual is insulted and humiliated (pp. 127–128).

Contentment and abstinence are among the noble morals that should be sought by Muslims, and that is why it was a topic within Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā's books. In *Al-Qanā'ah wa Al-Ta'affuf*, he stated a Hadith in which the Prophet (SAW) considers asking people unlawful except in three cases: A man whose wealth has been destroyed by some calamity, so he asks until he gets enough to keep him going, then he refrains from asking, a man who undertakes a financial responsibility, and asks for help until he pays off whatever needs to be paid and a man concerning whom three wise men from his own people swear by Allah that it is permissible for so-and-so to ask for help, so he asks until he has enough to be independent of means, then he refrains from

asking (1993: 25). Also, it is permissible to accept money or any other forms of help from others as long as they are doing it without being asked (pp. 20–21, 28–29, 30).

Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā also wrote a book that is closely related to the purification of the soul: *Muḥasabat Al-Nafs wa Al-Izrāʾ ʿAlayhā*. In this book, he focused on self-accountability, which works as a significant tool in helping individuals not to trespass Allah's limits. He mentions ʿUmar Ibn Al-Khaṭṭāb's advice to every Muslim to take a step forward and call himself into account before it is too late and self-accountability becomes of no use (1986: 29–30). Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā also mentioned topics that are involved in the process of self-accountability such as: castigation of the soul (pp. 46–53), having control over one's soul (p. 61) and *jihād* of the *nafs* (pp. 61–63).

5.3.2.3 Worship And Social Dealings [*al-ʿibādah wa al-muʿāmalāt*]

This third basis of Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā's methodology deals with physical actions and dealings with people as a natural human interaction. Thus, the effect of worship on individuals and its impact on the process of purification has been discussed earlier in chapter three. Hence, human interaction is a must for living people, as within this social interaction people earn their livings, help and learn from each other and interact socially. But these interaction and dealings cannot be left to happen haphazardly; otherwise it will end up in negative results. Due to this, Islam has organized those dealings and placed manners and ethics for every detailed social interaction, be it, related matter that are of finance, family, politics or friendship. Hence, Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā composed about nine books concerning *ʿibādah* and *muʿāmalāt*: *Al-Tahajjud wa Qiyām Al-Layl*, *Al-Amr bi Al-Maʿrūf wa Al-Nahī ʿan Al-Munkar*, *Kitāb Al-ʿIyāl*, *Qaḍāʾ Al-Ḥawāʾij*, *Mudārāt Al-Nās*, *Iṣṭināʾ Al-Maʿrūf*, *Iṣlāh Al-Māl*, *Al-Ikhwān* and *Al-Uqūbāt*.

In his book *Al-Tahajjud wa Qiyām Al-Layl*, Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā stated a Hadith related by Bilāl that the Prophet (SAW) said: “Hold fast to night prayer, for it is the practice of the righteous before you, and indeed it is a means of nearness to Allah, a means of prevention from sin, an expiation of bad deeds, and a barrier for the body against disease” (n.d.: 27). This great Hadith lists five magnificent benefits for the Muslim when performing night prayer. And each one of the five helps in the process of purifying the soul. Moreover, He provided other narrations stating that night prayer could be a reason for entering paradise peacefully (p. 30) and that it acts as a light in front of its performer on the Day of Judgment (p. 35).

In another book (*Kitāb Al-‘Iyāl*), Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā focused on the whole family unit. He chose to start with the financial matters being part of the children’s rights and pointing out the responsibility of the father to secure a good living for his children: “It is sufficient sin for a man that he neglects him whom he maintains” (1997: 97–99). He also referred to social standards, such as priority in the following Hadith: “The best charity is that which is practiced by a wealthy person. And start giving first to your dependents” (pp. 99–9101). Furthermore, in his book *Qaḍā’ Al-Ḥawā’ij*, he referred to the reward of doing good to others and that it is considered as a charity and it prevents from having an evil ending in life, “Good works protect from evil fates. Charity in secret extinguishes the wrath of the Lord, maintaining family ties increases life span, and every good deed is a form of charity. The people of good in this world are the people of good in the Hereafter, and the people of evil in this world are the people of evil in the Hereafter. And the first to enter Paradise are the people of good” (1993: 10–13). He also pointed out the necessity of thanking people after receiving help or good treatment from them. The Prophet (SAW) said: “He who does not thank people is not thankful to Allah” (pp. 60–62).

In another book (*Al-Ikhwān*), Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā shed light on the significance and status of brotherhood. Then, he gives examples of intimacy among brothers and the rights of each brother upon the other. He started the book with a significant Hadith that points out that the most cemented bond of faith is love for Allah and hate for Allah (1988: 35). Furthermore, those in love for Allah are among the Muslims who taste the sweetness of faith (p. 61). Thus, it is this type of love that nurtures the society and benefits the Ummah. Further, Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā mentioned in his book *Iṣṭināʿ Al-Maʿrūf*, that he who does good by way of relieving the hardship of another person, easing the burden of one who is indebted and concealing the faults of a Muslim, Allah (SWT) will relieve from him one of the hardships of the Day of Resurrection. Allah (SWT) will also make it easy for him in this worldly life and in the hereafter and will conceal his faults in the world and in the hereafter. Allah helps His slave as long as he helps his brother (2002: 24–25). Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā also devoted a whole section to narrations that discuss laughter and those with joyful personalities (pp. 37–46). It could be because he wanted to convey a message that being joyful toward others rather than being gloomy is actually considered a kind of good deed. It spreads happiness and gives some relief to people when they are upset or in a bad mood. Thus, doing good is among the reasons for social interaction, harmony and mercy among people and a cause for receiving Allah's mercy and blessings.

5.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, the creativity of Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā in purifying the soul through his works was established. Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā used many creative techniques in his writings, which enhanced their benefit and helped to convey the messages in a more effective way. This chapter also outlined the general methods and techniques Ibn Abī

Al-Dunyā used throughout his works. It also focused on the methodology he used in addressing the topic of purifying the soul through his works. The analysis of his works revealed three principals or basics upon which Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā relied for his method, namely, faith, morals, worship and social dealings. These basics also represent Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā's view of the process of purification of the soul from all its aspects.

