



The Concept of Ijtihad in Islamic Modernism: A Study of Jamaluddin Al-Afghani's Thought

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Abstract : *This study aims to explore the concept of ijtihad in Jamaluddin al-Afghani's thought and reflect on this concept in a contemporary context. The research method used is qualitative with a descriptive-analytical approach, which relies on a literature review of works related to al-Afghani's thought, particularly regarding ijtihad and Islamic modernism. The analysis was conducted critically by examining how al-Afghani viewed ijtihad as an inclusive, rational, and dynamic instrument of renewal in facing the problems of the Muslim community. The results of the study show that al-Afghani's concept of ijtihad is not a new fiqh construction, but rather a paradigmatic critique that demands Muslims to continue to explore and understand the Qur'an and Sunnah rationally and openly, without being trapped in rigid sectarian dogma. This ijtihad became the foundation of the Pan-Islamism movement, which emphasized unity among Muslims through shared views and solidarity based on authentic Islamic teachings. Furthermore, according to al Afghani, ijtihad is part of Islamic modernism, which rejects absolutism in understanding and encourages dialogue between groups in order to produce relevant and solution oriented understandings. The relevance of this concept is very important in the modern era, especially amid the rise of claims of truth without a strong scientific basis, which have the potential to divide the ummah. By emphasizing rationality, inclusiveness, and the dynamics of understanding, al-Afghani's ijtihad can be a stepping stone to revive the spirit of scientific and dialogical inquiry, strengthen unity, and keep Islam relevant and progressive in facing the challenges of the times.*

Keywords: Ijtihad, Islamic Modernism, Jamaluddin Al-Afghani.

INTRODUCTION

Ijtihad is an important effort in Islamic tradition that aims to explore and delve into the meaning of nash, namely the Qur'an and Hadith, to produce new understandings that are relevant to the problems faced by Muslims (Azahra et al., 2025). This approach is not the creation of new laws that contradict God's laws, but rather the adjustment and interpretation of God's laws that already exist in the nash to suit different contexts and regions (Somantri et al., 2024) . Genealogically, the call for ijtihad reemerged in the 19th century as a response to a situation in which Muslims experienced stagnation of thought due to blind taqlid, or uncritical

adherence to the opinions of certain groups or scholars who were considered sacred. This condition led to fragmentation and division among Muslims, as each group felt that their truth was absolute and idolized their views (Amri, 2019). Therefore, *ijtihad* became an urgent need to restore the dynamics of Islamic thought in order to respond to the challenges of the times and overcome these divisions (Syaripuddin et al., 2024).

The drive for *ijtihad* is part of modernization in the Islamic world, known as the era of Islamic renewal. This era marks the second revival of Muslims after the Umayyad Abbasid era in facing the challenges of modernity with a spirit of rational and progressive renewal. One of the pioneers of this renewal movement was Jamaluddin al-Afghani. He initiated a rational *ijtihad* movement that sought to understand *nahs* critically and scientifically in order to produce a more solution-oriented understanding of the problems faced by Muslims at that time. Al-Afghani emphasized the importance of rationality and scientific thinking in the *ijtihad* process to revive Islamic intellectualism and overcome the decline of Muslims in the era of colonialism and Western modernity (Ansharuddin, 2017).

So far, research on Jamaluddin al-Afghani has mostly focused on the pan-Islamism movement he pioneered, namely the effort to unite Muslims politically to fight Western colonialism. Currently, many scientific publications in Indonesia have attempted to develop the idea of Pan-Islamism in a specific context. For example, research from (Jumrotun & Roza, 2024), (Khafidz et al., 2024) and (A. A. Zahra et al., 2025), all explore Al-Afghani's concept of Islamic education for implementation in the Indonesian educational context. Meanwhile, (Yasin et al., 2024) attempts to examine the position and relevance of Jamaluddin Al-Afghani's political thought to moderate thought in Indonesia. Furthermore, research from (N. Zahra & Fatimah, 2023) attempts to understand the concept of Pan Islamism according to Jamaluddin Al-Afghani's thoughts in the development of political parties in Indonesia. However, the aspect of the concept of *ijtihad*, which is the main foundation of his thoughts, has not been explored in depth. In fact, *ijtihad* is an important instrument in Al-Afghani's thinking to respond to the challenges of the times and build intellectual and social renewal among Muslims. More critical and comprehensive research on Al-Afghani's concept of *ijtihad* is needed to understand his contribution in the context of Islamic modernism and the renewal of Islamic thought.

Therefore, this study aims to explore the concept of *ijtihad* according to Jamaluddin al-Afghani in a more critical and in-depth manner. The research question raised in this study is how Al-Afghani's concept of *ijtihad* is relevant in the current era. This study will reflect on the relevance of this concept in the contemporary context, where Muslims still face the problems of group sacralization and fragmentation of thought. Thus, this study is expected to contribute to reviving the spirit of *ijtihad* as a solution to strengthen unity and the dynamics of Islamic thought today.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses qualitative research with a descriptive-analytical approach that aims to describe and analyze the concept of ijtihad in Jamaluddin al-Afghani's thought systematically and deeply. Data collection techniques were carried out through literature study, namely by collecting, reading, and recording various relevant literary sources, such as books, journals, articles, and scientific works discussing Al-Afghani's thought, particularly related to the concepts of ijtihad and Islamic modernism. The data obtained was then organized according to subject matter to facilitate analysis. In the analysis process, this study uses a descriptive method to provide a factual description and critical interpretation of the collected data. With this approach, the researcher will be able to comprehensively examine Al-Afghani's concept of ijtihad and relate it to its contemporary relevance in the context of the current dynamics of Islamic thought.

RESEARCH RESULTS and DISCUSSION

General Definition of Ijtihad

Etymologically, the word ijtihad comes from the Arabic root word "jahada," which means to strive hard or be earnest. Literally, ijtihad means exerting all one's abilities and energy in an endeavor, especially in the context of intellectual thought and research. In Islamic terminology, ijtihad is defined as the sincere effort of a scholar or mujtahid to explore and establish Sharia law that is not explicitly found in the Qur'an and Hadith (Arief, 2017). In other words, ijtihad is the process of deriving Islamic law through a deep understanding of the main sources of sharia using reason and specific methods. The genealogy of ijtihad in Islam dates back to the time of the Prophet Muhammad, when he gave his companions permission to use reason to resolve issues that were not directly addressed in the revelation (Lisalam & Saefullah, 2022). In fact, Muhid Rosyidi states in his research that the Prophet himself, under certain circumstances, also engaged in ijtihad (Rosyidi, 2016). After the Prophet's death, the practice of ijtihad developed more widely, especially during the era of the caliphs and great scholars such as Imam Syafi'i, who formulated the methodology of ushul fiqh as the scientific basis for ijtihad. Thus, ijtihad is not a new phenomenon, but an integral part of the dynamics of Islamic thought since its early history (Jafar, 2014).

Ijtihad plays a crucial role in ensuring the relevance of Islamic law to the various challenges that arise in every era and region. Every Muslim community faces different social, political, and cultural challenges and conditions, so not all issues can be found explicitly in the Qur'an and Hadith. Therefore, ijtihad acts as an instrument of renewal and adaptation of Islamic law so that it remains alive and applicable in the current context. Ijtihad enables Muslims to address new issues that previous generations never faced, such as modern technological, social, and economic issues. Thus, the urgency of ijtihad lies in its ability to provide dynamic and contextual solutions, ensuring that Islamic law does not become static and rigid, but continues to evolve according to the needs of the people (Jamrah, 2015).

It is important to understand that *ijtihad* is the result of human understanding of the *nash* (the texts of the Qur'an and Hadith), not the *nash* itself. This means that *ijtihad* is relative and can change according to the context of time, place, and the intellectual ability of the *mujtahid* who performs it. Due to its interpretive and contextual nature, *ijtihad* should not be considered absolute truth or something sacred. If *ijtihad* is sacralized and considered final, this is actually dangerous because it can hinder the dynamics of thought and cause stagnation and division among Muslims. In other words, *ijtihad* is in the realm of *dzanni* (relative, uncertain), while the *nash* is in the realm of *qhat'I* (certain, absolute, absolute) (Janah & Ummah, 2024). Given that the problems of life are constantly changing and evolving, *ijtihad* must continue to be practiced so that Islamic law remains relevant and capable of addressing the challenges of the times in a fair and wise manner. Thus, *ijtihad* is a continuous process that is open to revision in accordance with the changing realities of the Muslim community.

The Islamic Modernist Movement

The modernist movement in the context of Islam is synonymous with the era of renewal that emerged in the 19th century. Islamic modernism is understood as an effort to renew religious thought and understanding that is considered no longer relevant to the conditions of the times. This movement demanded a review of religious teachings and practices in order to respond to the problems faced by Muslims at that time. Islamic modernism is not merely a formal change, but a profound renewal that emphasizes rationality, criticism, and adaptation to the developments of the times without abandoning the basic principles of Islam. Figures such as Jamaluddin al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh became pioneers of this movement, emphasizing the importance of *ijtihad* and renewal of thought so that Islam remains relevant and able to play a role in the modern world (Hakim et al., 2023).

The main factor that triggered the emergence of the idea of renewal in Islam was the decline of Muslims in various areas of life, such as economics, politics, socio-culture, science, and religious conditions themselves. Internally, Muslims experienced stagnation due to blind imitation and group divisions that resulted in a loss of critical and scientific spirit. Certain groups were sacralized, causing social and religious fragmentation. In addition, the practice of power abuse that harmed the lower classes further exacerbated the condition of the people. Externally, Western colonization has become a major pressure with territorial invasion and political domination, as well as the spread of secularism and materialism, which completely separate religion from social life. These conditions have forced Muslims to reflect and renew themselves in order to survive and rise up to face the challenges of the times (Tarigan et al., 2023).

Based on these conditions, a movement for renewal became necessary, prioritizing *ijtihad*, or reinterpretation of religious texts to produce solutions to the problems faced by the community. Rationality began to be applied in

understanding Islamic teachings, so that Muslims were no longer trapped in blind imitation that limited their thinking. The Islamic modernism movement encourages unity among the ummah in fighting common enemies, especially colonialism and Western domination, while building a dynamic intellectual and spiritual awareness. Thus, Islamic modernism has become an important milestone in the revival of the Muslim ummah in the modern era, integrating Islamic values with the demands of the times (Tarigan et al., 2023).

Sketsa Biografis Al-Afghani

Jamaluddin al-Afghani, whose real name was Sayyid Muhammad bin Safdar al Husayn, was born in 1838 in Asadabad, which is geographically disputed between Afghanistan and Persia (now Iran). He died on March 9, 1897, in Istanbul, Ottoman Empire (now Turkey) (Hasan, 1996). Al-Afghani is known as an Islamic reformer and political activist who played an important role in the Islamic reform movement in the 19th century. His early education included mastery of Islamic sciences such as tafsir, hadith, tasawuf, as well as philosophy and Arabic and Persian languages. He also studied modern science and European philosophy, which broadened his horizons. In the political movement, al-Afghani actively opposed Western colonialism and Muslim absolutism, and initiated the Pan Islamism movement, which aimed to unite Muslims politically and socially. He founded several organizations and published important journals such as al-Urwatul Wutsqa with his student Muhammad Abduh, which became a medium for the struggle for renewal and anti colonialism (Saputra, 2018).

The internal background of the Muslim community, which was experiencing decline, was one of the main factors that prompted al-Afghani to develop his Islamic reform project. At that time, Muslims faced intellectual stagnation due to the dominance of blind imitation and group fragmentation, which led to a loss of critical and scientific spirit. Certain groups were sanctified, causing divisions and weakening solidarity among Muslims. In addition, practices of power abuse that harmed the lower classes further exacerbated the social and religious conditions of Muslims. Al-Afghani saw that Muslims no longer relied on science and rationality, but rather on blind loyalty to certain groups or scholars, making intellectual renewal urgently necessary to restore the glory and strength of the Muslim community (Bistara, 2021).

External factors also greatly determined the course of al-Afghani's thinking, especially Western colonization, which colonized Islamic territories and spread secularism and materialism. This colonization was not only in the form of political and military domination, but also attacked the cultural, social, and religious aspects of Muslims. The West completely separated religion from social life, causing Muslims to lose their footing and direction in facing modernity. Al-Afghani strongly opposed colonialism and secularist ideas that eroded Islamic values. He believed that the revival of Muslims could only be achieved through

unity and a renewal of thought that integrated Islamic values with advances in modern science and technology (Bistara, 2021).

All of al-Afghani's ideas and thoughts were inseparable from his extensive and dynamic personal journey, during which he traveled to many countries such as India, Egypt, Istanbul, and Europe to deepen his knowledge and spread the ideas of Islamic renewal. This journey gave him broad insights into various fields of science, ranging from philosophy and exact sciences to social and political sciences. These experiences shaped his critical and strategic thinking in facing the challenges of the Muslim community. With his multidisciplinary background and international experience, al-Afghani was able to formulate a rational *ijtihad* approach that became the foundation of the modern Islamic reform movement. He also succeeded in inspiring the next generation to continue the struggle for reform and unity among Muslims (Nasution, 1975).

Al-Afghani's Concept of Ijtihad

Inclusivity and Dynamization of Religious Understanding

Jamaluddin al-Afghani, in his framework of *ijtihad*, strongly emphasized the inclusiveness and dynamism of religious understanding as the main foundation of Islamic renewal. Inclusiveness here means that religious understanding among Islamic groups must be open, that is, not only accepting one understanding, but also adopting and using different perspectives and points of view in constructing an understanding of Islam. This open attitude is important so that Islamic thought does not become rigid and exclusive, relying only on a single interpretation. Al-Afghani rejected blind imitation and invited Muslims to engage in dialogue and integrate various views so that Islamic understanding would become richer, more relevant, and capable of responding to the challenges of the times (Mårtensson, 2008). Thus, inclusivity in *ijtihad* opens space for constructive and complementary diversity of thought within the framework of Islam.

This foundation of inclusivity is reinforced by al-Afghani's view that Islam is dynamic. However, it is important to emphasize that the dynamism referred to here is not a change to Islam as an absolute and perfect revelation as contained in the Qur'an and Hadith. What is dynamic is human understanding of these texts. Because humans have different backgrounds, contexts, and perspectives, their understanding of Islamic teachings must be believed to be relative and flexible according to the context of time and place. Islam as a religion is absolute and unchanging, but the way humans understand it is something profane and always open to review. This view places Islam in a sacred position, while *ijtihad* is a dynamic human interpretation that is open to improvement (Maryam, 2014).

Based on these inclusive and dynamic principles, according to al-Afghani, *ijtihad* must be carried out through deliberation and collectively. Every Islamic group is expected to engage in dialogue and deliberation, or *Jam'iyyah*, to jointly solve the problems of the ummah (Yasin et al., 2024). This deliberation becomes a democratic mechanism that allows various views and opinions to be

communicated openly , resulting in decisions that are more fair and solution-oriented. Thus, *ijtihad* is not only an individual activity, but also a collective process that prioritizes inclusiveness and dynamic thinking as the key to sustainable Islamic renewal.

Therefore, al-Afghani ultimately encouraged efforts to overthrow the barriers between sects that had become sacralized and a source of division among Muslims. This can be seen in one of his major works, a magazine entitled *Al-Urwah Al-Wustqā Wa Al-Tawrah Al Tahrīriyah Al-Kubra*, in which Al-Afghani expressed his ideas rejecting exclusivity and dogmatism, such as considering one school of thought or a particular understanding as the absolute truth. Al-Afghani invited Muslims to be open to diversity of interpretation and to respect differences (Afghani, 1958). This principle aims to erode sectarianism, which hinders unity and progress among Muslims. Through inclusiveness, each school of thought is no longer viewed as a separate and sacred entity, but rather as part of the intellectual treasure trove of Islam that can complement one another. This dynamic understanding enables constructive dialogue between schools of thought, so that Muslims can unite in facing the challenges of the times without getting caught up in harmful internal conflicts. Thus, this principle becomes an important foundation in building a stronger and more progressive solidarity and unity among Muslims.

Returning to the Qur'an and Sunnah

Furthermore, Al-Afghani called for a return to the Qur'an and Sunnah as the basis for *ijtihad*. This was an important call echoed by Jamaluddin al-Afghani in response to the stagnation of Islamic understanding, which had largely stopped at the rigid practice of certain schools of thought. Al-Afghani saw that Muslims of his time were trapped in blind imitation that stifled intellectual creativity and *ijtihad*, resulting in a narrow understanding of religion that was unable to respond to the challenges of the times. By calling back to the primary sources of Islamic teachings, namely the Qur'an and Sunnah, al-Afghani wanted to return the ummah to pure and authentic teachings as a foundation for renewal and liberation from the shackles of restrictive sectarian dogma. This call is also an effort to unite Muslims who are divided due to sectarian fanaticism and rigid differences in interpretation (Syahuri, 2021).

By returning to the Qur'an and Sunnah, Muslims can break through the sectarian barriers that have been obstacles to unity and progress. Because the Qur'an and Sunnah are sacred and universal sources, understanding based on them has the potential to overcome fragmentation and sectarian fanaticism (Syahuri, 2021). This approach opens up space for broader and more inclusive dialogue and *ijtihad*, so that Muslims can work together to find solutions to common problems without getting caught up in exclusive sectarian debates. Thus, returning to these primary sources is key to building unity and strength among Muslims in facing the challenges of the times.

However, it is important to emphasize that al-Afghani's concept of returning to the Qur'an and Sunnah is highly progressive, rather than regressive or

puritanical. Returning in this context means making efforts to explore, re-examine, and reinterpret the religious texts strictly and critically in order to produce a more relevant and solution-oriented understanding of contemporary issues. In this way, Islam will always feel alive, relevant, and able to adapt to the times without losing the essence of its teachings. This approach makes *ijtihad* a dynamic and continuous process, ensuring that Islam remains a moral and intellectual force in the lives of its followers.

Islamic Rationalism

Furthermore, Jamaluddin al-Afghani highly valued the use of rationality or reason in understanding religious texts, as expressed in his magnum opus *Al-Radd 'ala Dahriyyīn*. This was influenced by his experience of studying and observing the progress of the West, which had achieved rapid advancement in various fields by optimizing the use of reason and critical thinking. Al-Afghani even recommended that Muslims learn from the West in the context of using reason in order to catch up and improve the condition of Muslims who were experiencing decline. However, he emphasized that the understanding of texts must be done rationally as long as it does not negate the sacred and majestic dimensions of these texts. According to al-Afghani, rationality does not mean rejecting revelation, but rather interpreting revelation with a scientific and logical approach so that Islamic teachings remain relevant and can answer the questions of the times (Hawi, 2017).

One of the important results of Jamaluddin al-Afghani's use of rationality is his progressive view in understanding the concept of destiny (*qadha* and *qadar*), which is outlined in his work entitled *Rasāil fi al-Falsafah wa al-'Irfān*. In this work, he explains that unlike the fatalistic understanding that was common among Muslims of his time, which viewed destiny as an absolute determination that made humans passive and resigned to fate, al-Afghani emphasized that destiny must be understood as a dynamic law of cause and effect. According to him, everything that happens in this world follows causality, in which human will and effort are an important link in the process. Thus, destiny is not a reason to not try or be fatalistic, but rather a basis for humans to strive earnestly while remaining aware of the power of Allah the All-Wise (Afghani, 2000). Al-Afghani also criticized the Sufi understanding that considers *fana* and *baqa* as attitudes of isolating oneself from the world; for him, belief in destiny should encourage Muslims to actively struggle and improve social conditions. This rational understanding of destiny revives a spirit of optimism and courage in facing life's challenges, while maintaining a balance between faith in divine decree and human responsibility to strive (Noorthaibah, 2015). With this approach, al-Afghani succeeded in reconstructing Islamic theological thought to make it more relevant and capable of motivating Muslims to rise up and play an active role in social and political change.

The rationality developed by al-Afghani was also intended to affirm the existence of a distinctive Islamic rationality that differed from the Western

rationality brought by colonization. He realized that the West not only colonized physically, but also spread the doctrine of materialism as part of its colonial agenda. Materialism is a belief that places matter and the physical world as the only absolute reality, thereby eliminating the divine and spiritual dimensions of human life. This ideology seeks to separate religion from social life and rejects the existence of God as the source of morality and meaning in life. Al Afghani strongly opposed materialism because he saw it as destroying the religious and humanitarian values that are at the core of Islamic civilization (Afghani, 1902).

In distinguishing between Western materialism and the Islamic rationalism promoted by al-Afghani, there are four important aspects, namely method, purpose, the idea of unity, and the idea of morality. First, the method of Islamic rationalism prioritizes reason combined with revelation and religious tradition, while materialism relies only on empiricism and secular reasoning. Second, the goal of Islamic rationalism is to seek comprehensive truth, including spiritual and moral dimensions, while materialism focuses only on material and worldly aspects. Third, the idea of unity in Islamic rationalism emphasizes solidarity among people based on universal religious values, in contrast to materialism, which tends to be individualistic and secular. Fourth, the idea of morality in Islamic rationalism is rooted in the teachings of an absolute God, while materialism rejects the existence of transcendent morality and replaces it with pragmatic ethics. Thus, according to al-Afghani, Islamic rationalism is a critical and scientific approach that maintains faith and spiritual values as the foundation of life (Asrul, 2019).

Ijtihad in the Framework of Pan-Islamism

Pan-Islamism, in Jamaluddin al-Afghani's view, is an idea of political renewal that emphasizes the unity of spirit and politics among Muslims throughout the world. Al Afghani taught that Muslims must unite not by merging Islamic kingdoms into one country, but by having a common outlook on life, namely opposing Western colonialism and freeing themselves from foreign slavery. This movement affirms the international solidarity of Muslims and calls on them to return to the pure teachings of Islam as the foundation for unity. Pan-Islamism also contains aspects of internal reform, whereby Muslims must cleanse themselves of errors and religious confusion, and scholars must take the lead in confronting modern currents of thought. With this spirit, al-Afghani hoped that Muslims could unite in a dynamic and authentic unity of vision and belief based on the Qur'an and Hadith.

Within the framework of Pan-Islamism, the concept of ijtihad developed by al Afghani holds a strategic position as an instrument of intellectual renewal that enables Muslims to overcome divisions and intellectual stagnation. Ijtihad is a way to rediscover Islamic teachings in a rational and contextual manner, so as to produce a relevant and solution-oriented understanding of contemporary problems. With inclusive and dynamic ijtihad, Muslims are expected to be able to

bridge differences between schools of thought and groups, and build a unity of views that forms the foundation of unity in Pan-Islamism. Therefore, *ijtihad* is not only a matter of *fiqh* law, but also a strategic effort to strengthen the solidarity of the *ummah* and the political and social awakening of Muslims in the face of the challenges of colonialism and modernity.

Critical Reflection

Based on the explanation of Jamaluddin al-Afghani's conceptualization of *ijtihad*, it can be seen that al-Afghani was not a *fukaha* or *fiqh* expert who then created his own *fiqh* construction. Instead, he acted more as a paradigmatic critic who proposed the idea of the need for new *ijtihad* that must continue to be pursued by Muslims. Al-Afghani saw *ijtihad* as a dynamic and open process of intellectual renewal, not merely a technical activity in the realm of Islamic law. He emphasized that Muslims must continue to reflect deeply on Islamic values by re-examining the Qur'an and Sunnah in a rational and critical manner in order to respond to the challenges of the times. Thus, according to al-Afghani, *ijtihad* is a collective and continuous effort that transcends the boundaries of old schools of thought and traditions in order to revive the spirit of renewal in Islam.

The *ijtihad* promoted by al-Afghani is part of the Islamic modernism movement that places the text as the main source for producing more solution-oriented and contextual understandings of the problems faced by the *ummah*. Within this framework, there is no rigid and dogmatic absolutism of understanding, but rather every understanding must be approached inclusively and dynamically. Al-Afghani invited Muslims to be open to various interpretations and engage in dialogue between different schools of thought so that *ijtihad* could produce solutions relevant to ever-changing social, political, and cultural conditions. This approach rejected the stagnation and sectarian fanaticism that had limited the intellectual creativity of Muslims, making *ijtihad* an important tool in the process of renewal and revival of modern Islam.

The relevance of al-Afghani's concept of *ijtihad* in the present era is very important, especially considering the large number of Islamic organizations with significant differences in characteristics. The difference is that in al-Afghani's time, *ijtihad* stopped because of the cult of understanding of a particular school of thought, whereas in the current context, it seems that everyone is conducting their own *ijtihad* without a strong basis. Every group, even at the individual level, has its own understanding of its own interpretation, resulting in the emergence of resistance to differences in opinion, which in turn causes division. According to the author, this is not the kind of *ijtihad* that al-Afghani wanted. Al-Afghani wanted *ijtihad* to give Muslims a collective consciousness, uniting them to solve the problems they face together. *Ijtihad* is a collective call to all Muslims, based on the principles of unity and shared feelings that encourage them to think of a solution together. Therefore, the differences in the results of *ijtihad* efforts today must be addressed openly and through dialogue: all *ijtihad* must be viewed as a

rich source of Islamic knowledge for solving various complex problems. Thus, differences are an inevitability that must be used as a foundation for unity. This is because the main reason for the encouragement of *ijtihad* put forward by al-Afghani was based on the motive of unity, rather than internal division.

Therefore, revisiting al-Afghani's concept of *ijtihad* is particularly important amid the phenomenon of the decline of expertise and the prevalence of self-righteous attitudes without a strong scientific basis. In this digital and fast-paced information age, many people claim to be right without adequate scientific and methodological foundations, which has the potential to cause conflict and fragmentation within the Muslim community. Al-Afghani's concept of *ijtihad*, which emphasizes rationality, inclusiveness, and dynamic understanding, can be a solution to restore scientific enthusiasm and critical dialogue within the community. By opening the door to *ijtihad* in a broad and collective manner, the Muslim community can strengthen unity and produce an adaptive understanding of contemporary challenges without losing the basic values of religion. Therefore, al-Afghani's intellectual legacy remains relevant as a foundation for building a progressive and competitive Islamic civilization in the future.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion that can be drawn is that Jamaluddin al-Afghani's concept of *ijtihad* is a paradigm of renewal that emphasizes the need for continuous efforts to explore and reinterpret the Qur'an and Sunnah in a rational, inclusive, and dynamic manner. Al-Afghani was not a *fuqaha* who constructed a new *fiqh*, but rather a thinker who criticized the stagnation of Islamic thought due to blind imitation and sectarian fanaticism that limited the scope of *ijtihad*. For him, *ijtihad* is a process of deep reflection that allows Muslims to adapt their understanding of sharia to the changing times and socio-political conditions. This *ijtihad* is also part of Islamic modernism that rejects absolutism in understanding, promoting an open and dynamic attitude in understanding religious texts. This approach encourages dialogue between schools of thought and groups, eroding the sectarian barriers that have hitherto hindered the unity of the *ummah*.

The relevance of al-Afghani's concept of *ijtihad* is particularly important in the current era, amid the phenomenon of the death of expertise and the proliferation of claims to truth without a strong scientific basis, which has the potential to cause conflict and fragmentation. Al-Afghani's thinking, which emphasizes rationality, inclusiveness, and dynamic understanding, can revive the spirit of scientific and dialogical *ijtihad*, strengthen the unity of the *ummah*, and produce an adaptive and progressive understanding of Islam without losing its sacred values. Thus, al-Afghani's intellectual legacy remains relevant as a foundation for the renewal and revival of the Muslim community in the present and future.

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