

Qiyamullail and Psychospiritual Healing in Islam: A Classical Salaf Approach

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Abstract

Qiyamullail, or night vigil prayer, is a devotional act consistently observed by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the early generations of Muslims (Salaf) as a core spiritual discipline. In Islamic discourse, this practice is often emphasised for its legal status, merits, and spiritual rewards. However, its psychospiritual value, particularly in promoting emotional stability and inner well-being, remains insufficiently addressed. In light of the growing prevalence of mental health disorders and spiritual disconnection in the modern age, there is an urgent need to explore the therapeutic role of sunnah-based practices such as Qiyamullail. This study aims to examine Qiyamullail as a form of Islamic psychospiritual therapy by analysing the experiential reflections of the Salaf and the spiritual insights derived from relevant hadith texts. Using a qualitative methodology through content analysis, the research draws upon classical narrations, works of early scholars, and scholarly interpretations within the disciplines of fiqh al hadith and tazkiyat al nafs. The findings suggest that Qiyamullail functions not only as a supererogatory act of worship but also as a deeply transformative spiritual practice that can ease emotional unrest and enhance inner resilience in the face of life's challenges. The study recommends the recognition of Qiyamullail as a model of Islamic self therapy and its inclusion in soul development and mental health intervention frameworks rooted in Islamic values. Further research may focus on measuring the psychological benefits of Qiyamullail through fieldwork or experimental studies in contemporary contexts.

Keywords: Qiyamullail, Salaf, Psychospiritual Therapy, Sunnah, Hadith

Introduction

Background of Study

Qiyamullail refers to the act of enlivening the night, or part of it, with devotional practices such as voluntary prayers, remembrance of God (dhikr), recitation of the Quran, seeking forgiveness, invoking blessings upon the Prophet, and other similar acts of worship. The night

period begins at sunset and ends at dawn, while the portion that involves rising from sleep to pray is commonly known as tahajjud. In Islamic tradition, Qiyamullail holds a special status not only as a physical act of worship but also as a profound spiritual exercise. It plays a significant role in purifying the heart, strengthening the spiritual bond with Allah, and cultivating inner strength to endure the trials of life.

The early generations of Muslims, known as the Salaf, including the companions of the Prophet, the successors, and the generation that followed, consistently practised Qiyamullail as a form of spiritual discipline. For them, it was not merely a ritual but a means of renewing intentions, fortifying the heart, and developing personal integrity. The stillness of the night was regarded as a sacred opportunity to isolate oneself with God in silent supplication, tears, and heartfelt confessions, away from worldly distractions. These deeply introspective experiences reveal the psychospiritual dimension of Qiyamullail, which has often been overlooked in contemporary scholarly discussions.

While existing literature tends to focus on the legal rulings, merits, and ritualistic aspects of Qiyamullail, its function as a psychospiritual intervention for healing the soul and promoting self therapy remains underexamined within Islamic discourse. In today's context, where psychological stress, spiritual emptiness, and emotional distress are increasingly prevalent, there is a pressing need to reframe Qiyamullail as a therapeutic tool for mental and emotional well-being, grounded in Islamic spirituality.

This study therefore aims to explore Qiyamullail as a form of Islamic psychospiritual therapy, drawing upon the practices and understandings of the Salaf scholars. It further seeks to uncover the spiritual and emotional dimensions embedded in the practice of Qiyamullail, both from Islamic and scientific perspectives. By analysing textual sources, narrations, and the commentaries of classical scholars, this study aspires to reintroduce Qiyamullail not only as a vertical act of worship directed towards God, but also as a powerful form of self therapy capable of addressing inner restlessness and emotional turmoil.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative approach as it is most appropriate for exploring the deeper meanings, spiritual values, and psychospiritual implications embedded within the practice of Qiyamullail, particularly in light of the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the early Muslim scholars. A qualitative framework allows the researcher to examine the inner emotional and spiritual elements of Qiyamullail and to understand its function as a form of self therapy in addressing emotional unrest and fostering personal development among Muslims.

Documentary analysis serves as the primary method for data collection. The main sources consist of authentic hadiths that record the Prophet's nightly routines and his gentle approach to awakening for prayer. These include his practices of remembrance, use of the siwak, recitation of specific verses, and prolonged night prayers performed in solitude. These narrations are drawn from major hadith compilations and are further contextualised through classical hadith commentaries to uncover their wisdom, meanings, and the interpretive insights of early scholars.

Secondary sources include classical and contemporary works in the fields of fiqh al hadith, purification of the soul, Islamic psychology, and spiritual care. These encompass journal articles, academic theses, and reference books that discuss the relationship between night worship and the formation of spiritual character, inner calmness, and soul refinement. These materials were accessed through both physical libraries and digital academic databases such as Scopus, JSTOR, and Google Scholar.

Ultimately, this study seeks to reconstruct the understanding of Qiyamullail as a form of Islamic psychospiritual intervention rooted in revelation and the legacy of the Salaf. It also proposes that Qiyamullail be considered a viable spiritual alternative for emotional healing and mental well-being within contemporary Muslim societies.

Findings and Discussions

The Concept of Qiyamullail

Qiyamullail, or night vigil prayer, is a voluntary act of worship that involves rising at night for the sole purpose of devoting oneself to Allah. It is not a newly introduced ritual but one deeply rooted in the lives of the prophets, righteous individuals, and early scholars since ancient times. Within Islamic spirituality, it has long been regarded as a symbol of sincere love, humility, and submission to the Divine. Numerous prophetic traditions emphasise the virtues and remarkable effects of Qiyamullail in a Muslim's life.

First, Qiyamullail is a pathway to Paradise. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, as narrated by Abdullah bin Salam in a hadith reported by al-Tirmidhi: "O people, spread peace, feed others, and pray at night while people are asleep, and you will enter Paradise in peace."

Second, Qiyamullail draws a person closer to Allah, serves as a means of spiritual purification, and acts as a shield against sin and illness. In another narration from Bilal, the Prophet said: "Practice Qiyamullail, for it was the habit of the righteous before you. It brings you closer to your Lord, serves as an expiation for sins, prevents wrongdoing, and expels disease from the body." (al-Tirmidhi, 1998).

Third, Qiyamullail is a time when prayers and repentance are accepted. As narrated by Abu Hurayrah in a hadith reported by al-Bukhari: "Our Lord descends every night to the lowest heaven during the last third of the night and says: Who is calling upon Me so I may answer him? Who is asking from Me so I may give him? Who is seeking My forgiveness so I may forgive him?"

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) remains the highest role model for Muslims in every aspect of worship. As the final Messenger, he exemplified the most effective means of drawing nearer to Allah through both obligatory and voluntary acts of devotion. His acts of worship were not only demonstrations of perfect obedience, but also practical models of sincere, consistent spiritual practice.

Ibn Qayyim (1994) stated that when the Prophet rose from sleep, he would begin by using the siwak, engaging in dhikr, performing ablution, and praying two light units of prayer. This practice is affirmed in a narration by Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her), recorded by

Muslim: "When the Messenger of Allah rose for prayer at night, he would begin his prayer with two light rak'ahs."

According to a narration from Ibn Abbas (Muslim, 1/221), the Prophet would awaken at the end of the night, step outside, gaze at the sky, and recite verses from Surah Ali Imran (3:190–191). He would then return home, perform ablution, pray, rest briefly, and then repeat the cycle. His night prayers were known for their length and depth of concentration. Despite his many responsibilities, he never neglected this practice. Aishah reported: "Do not ask about how beautiful and lengthy the prayer of the Prophet was."

Al-Nawawi (1972) explained that this expression denotes the perfection of his night prayer in both form and substance. Ibn Mas'ud even remarked that he nearly gave up praying behind the Prophet due to the length of the qiyam (Muslim, n.d.), while Hudhayfah reported that in one rak'ah, the Prophet recited Surah al-Baqarah, Ali Imran, and al-Nisa', and his bowing and prostration were of similar duration (Muslim, n.d.).

The Prophet also advised against idle conversation after the 'Isha prayer to preserve one's readiness for Qiyamullail. According to a hadith by Abu Barzah al-Aslami (al-Bukhari, 2001), the Prophet prohibited sleeping before 'Isha and engaging in conversation afterwards. Ibn Hajar (1959) interpreted this as a preventive measure against negligence that could lead to missing the night prayer.

When Aishah asked why the Prophet exerted himself in night worship despite having all his sins forgiven, he replied: "Should I not be a grateful servant?" (al-Bukhari, 2001)

This highlights the importance of following his example, especially for those who are in constant need of repentance and Divine mercy.

The Prophet's companions (Sahabah) were equally devoted in emulating his nightly practices. They cherished every aspect of his life and were willing to sacrifice wealth, time, and even life itself to preserve and transmit his teachings. Their commitment to Qiyamullail was profound. Anas bin Malik reported that the Prophet once noticed a rope tied between two pillars and was told it belonged to Zainab, who used it to support herself when tired during prayer. The Prophet said: "Remove it. Pray as long as you feel active, and when you are tired, sit down." (al-Bukhari, 2001)

Even during travel, companions like Ibn Abbas maintained their night prayers. Ibn Abi Mulaykah narrated that he accompanied Ibn Abbas from Mecca to Medina and witnessed him awaken in the middle of the night, reciting the Quran with deep reflection and tears (al-Dhahabi, 1985). Many companions encouraged their families to engage in night prayer. According to Ibn Kathir (1986), Abu Hurayrah would wake his wife and daughter to perform Qiyamullail. Umar ibn al-Khattab, as narrated by Malik (2004) from Zayd ibn Aslam, would awaken his household in the final portion of the night, urging them: "Prayer, prayer!"

The generation of the Tabi'in, although they never met the Prophet, displayed immense devotion to his sunnah. They emulated both his worship and character. Talaq bin Habib, a student of Ibn Abbas and Anas, was known to recite from Surah al-Baqarah to al-Ankabut in a single rak'ah until he felt physical pain (Abu Nu'aym, 1974; al-Dhahabi, 1985).

This dedication continued with the great Imams. Abu Hanifah was reported to have performed Fajr with the same ablution used for 'Isha for forty years and once recited the entire Quran in a single rak'ah (al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, 2002). Imam al-Shafi'i divided his night into three parts: writing, praying, and sleeping (Abu Nu'aym, 1974). Other Salaf figures such as al-Awza'i were renowned for their night vigils and weeping in prayer (Ibn Asakir, 1995). Waki', according to his students, recited one third of the Quran each night and then engaged in istighfar until dawn (al-Mizzi, 1980).

The Concept of Islamic Psychospirituality

The term "psychology" originates from the Greek words psyche, meaning soul, and logos, meaning knowledge. Therefore, psychology is generally understood as the study of the human soul (Badri 2018). In Arabic, the commonly used term for the soul is ruh, which also carries meanings such as life force or wind (Shahril Nizam et al 2023). From a technical perspective, psychology refers to the scientific study of human nature, particularly from psychological and social dimensions.

Historically, Muslim scholars were among the earliest to engage in the study of the human psyche. Among the most influential figures in this field was Imam al Ghazali, who explored inner dimensions of the soul in depth in his seminal work *Ihya' Ulum al Din*. Other notable scholars include al Farabi who discussed the intellect in *Risalah fi al Aql*, Ibn Sina in *al Shifa'*, Ibn al Jawzi in *al Tibb al Ruhani*, and Ibn al Qayyim in *al Tibb al Nabawi* (Afiq Abd Razak and Syukri 2020). These early writings emphasised the philosophy of the soul, human behaviour, and the spiritual refinement process known as *tazkiyyah al nafs*, which aims to bring individuals closer to Allah.

According to Kamus Dewan (1998), the word "spiritual" refers to matters of inner life, the unseen self, and personal values. In the Islamic tradition, the psychospiritual approach represents the integration of psychological understanding and spiritual awareness based on the foundation of absolute monotheism. As noted by Zahid (2019), the strength of Islamic psychospirituality lies in its foundation of belief in Allah as the ultimate source of healing. It centres on the purification of the soul as the essential pathway to achieving lasting inner peace and true happiness.

Unlike secular psychological models which often prioritise cognitive and behavioural factors, Islamic psychology places greater emphasis on spiritual dimensions. Its goal is to cultivate a noble and balanced personality guided by the Quran and the teachings of the Prophet. It also holds that the purpose of human life is to worship Allah and to live under His divine pleasure and guidance (Othman 2011).

Thus, Islamic psychospirituality is not merely a theoretical discipline. It offers a holistic therapeutic framework that brings together the physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects of the Muslim individual. This approach provides a meaningful response to the increasing spiritual distress and emotional imbalance witnessed in contemporary society.

Qiyamullail as an Islamic Psychospiritual Practice

Qiyamullail is not only a spiritual act of worship but also offers profound effects on an individual's psychological stability. In night prayer, a servant of Allah engages in intimate and

undisturbed communication with the Divine in a tranquil setting. This unique environment fosters deep submission, inner focus, and mindfulness (Fairuzdzah et al 2016). This aligns with the Quranic verse: “Indeed, in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest.” (Surah al Ra'd 13:28).

In modern life, where individuals are often burdened with work stress, social responsibilities, and internal conflicts, the imbalance between personal needs and actual capacity frequently leads to psychological pressure. This stress not only disrupts emotional stability but also negatively affects physical health, increasing the risk of chronic illnesses such as heart disease and cancer (Sahib 2015). Scientific findings have even linked stress to accelerated cancer cell growth and higher metastasis rates (Solleh 2006).

Night prayers, such as tahajjud, serve as a form of spiritual meditation and relaxation that reduces stress hormones like adrenaline and cortisol, while increasing mood-enhancing hormones such as endorphins and enkephalins (Cahyono 2011). When performed with sincerity and presence of heart, night prayer restores hormonal balance in the body, thus enhancing emotional resilience. This reinforces the understanding that prayer is not only a ritual act but also a form of psychological therapy that soothes emotional burdens and inner unrest (Aziz 2011).

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) emphasised the nearness of a servant to Allah during prostration, saying: “The closest a servant comes to his Lord is when he is in prostration, so increase your supplication.” (Hadith reported by Muslim).

In another narration, the Prophet specifically mentioned the benefits of tahajjud in erasing sins, calming the soul, and preventing illness (al Tirmidhi 1998). Modern scientific studies also indicate a direct relationship between high levels of faith and emotional well-being. Individuals with strong spiritual convictions are generally more optimistic, calm, and less vulnerable to mental health challenges. The decrease in cortisol levels during night worship reflects the close link between faith, psychology, and biological stability (Fairuzdzah et al 2016).

Research by Dr Fidelma O’Leary, a neuroscientist at St Edwards University, revealed that during prostration, blood flows to parts of the brain that are not normally reached in standard positions. This enhanced circulation is beneficial in reducing the risk of headaches, stabilising blood pressure, and supporting brain function (Mujahidah Rapi 2015, Aziz 2011). The transition from prostration to a sitting or standing posture also naturally facilitates healthy cardiac circulation, which strengthens both neurological and cardiovascular systems and boosts overall immunity.

From an Islamic perspective, Qiyamullail functions as a means of spiritual and psychological healing. It involves elements of spiritual meditation and physical relaxation, including focus, mental detachment from worldly concerns, and the release of muscular and nervous tension through calm physical movements. These aspects position Qiyamullail as an effective stress-coping strategy with positive implications for physical health and mental tranquility (Retno Anggraini and Wahyudi Widada 2020).

In Islam, true psychological well-being begins with a purified heart. A sound heart inclines towards righteousness and spirituality, while a corrupted heart is drawn to worldly desires and impulses. When a person performs tahajjud with sincerity and spiritual awareness, their heart is cleansed from inner diseases such as arrogance, vanity, and heedlessness (Muhyidin 2013). A spiritually healthy heart, in turn, nurtures consistent devotion and resilience in facing life's trials.

The Sufi scholar Yahya bin Muadh al Razi (2009) outlined five highly effective methods for attaining spiritual calmness:

1. Reflective recitation of the Quran
2. Avoiding excessive food intake
3. Consistent practice of night prayer
4. Humble supplication during the pre dawn hours
5. Maintaining the company of righteous individuals

These methods strengthen one's connection with Allah, expand the heart, fortify the soul, and provide inner peace. They also contribute to healing spiritual ailments and nurturing emotional balance (Ummi Latifah 2016).

Within the framework of tasawwuf and soul purification, Qiyamullail plays a crucial role in maintaining heart health. Scholars categorise the heart into three states (Haidar Putra 2009):

1. **Qalb sahih (sound heart):** A heart that is spiritually alive and guided by divine light
2. **Qalb marid (diseased heart):** A heart struggling with doubt, temptation, and inclination towards sin
3. **Qalb mayyit (dead heart):** A heart that is spiritually unresponsive and distant from worship and obedience

Consistent performance of night prayer can revive a weak heart, purify a corrupted heart, and strengthen a sound heart. Ibn Qayyim al Jawzi regarded this act as a core treatment for the soul, asserting that firm belief is the foundation of spiritual healing according to the Prophetic model (Retno Anggraini and Wahyudi Widada 2020).

Moreover, distancing oneself from worldly distractions during the night and seeking solitude with Allah through Qiyamullail represents a spiritual form of isolation aligned with Islamic therapeutic principles. Modern studies affirm that such reflective solitude reduces stress and enhances emotional positivity (Dzulfaidhi et al 2024).

In essence, Qiyamullail as an Islamic therapeutic practice offers more than spiritual benefits. It contributes to emotional balance, heart purification, and comprehensive mental well-being, positioning it as a highly relevant and impactful psychospiritual therapy in the life of a contemporary Muslim.

Qiyamullail as Soul Therapy Among The Salaf

For the early generations of Muslims, Qiyamullail was not merely a recommended voluntary act. It was a central spiritual discipline. The scholars of the Salaf regarded it as a powerful means for purifying the soul, strengthening faith, and attaining inner peace. This practice protected them from heedlessness and emotional distress, while nurturing a profound connection with Allah. In their tradition, Qiyamullail reflected spiritual perseverance and

served as a psychospiritual therapy that shaped a God conscious character and sustained emotional and spiritual balance in daily life.

Numerous narrations from the Salaf affirm this view. The following examples illustrate how Qiyamullail served as an effective form of soul healing:

1. Filling the inner void through remembrance of Allah

This narration reflects the belief that remembrance and supplication during the night address the spiritual emptiness that nothing but closeness to Allah can fill. Umar bin Dharr once observed that when the night embraced the devoted worshippers, and others remained heedless, he said: Those who worship during the night find peace in their solitude. They stand before Allah filled with hope and awe. Their hearts are illuminated by the light of devotion while their faces glow through the darkness. As the night fades, daylight shines upon them, and their faces reflect serenity. The night does not feel long to them because of their extended prayers and acts of worship. Two groups emerge: one distracted by the night, and one who denies themselves sleep and comfort to worship their Lord. So rise in the stillness of the night, for those who do so are more honoured than those who sleep. Verily, in the heart there is an emptiness that only the remembrance of Allah can fill. Many may stand in prayer, yet remain enveloped in arrogance, while others sleep in humility and are more beloved to Allah because they see their own shortcomings (al Asfahani 1974).

2. Qiyamullail as the true delight of the believer

This insight reveals that the joy of night worship surpasses all worldly pleasures. Muslim bin Yasar said:

No worldly pleasure ever tasted by those who indulge in material life compares to the sweetness of private communion with Allah the Most Majestic. (al Asfahani 1974). For the sincere believer, this intimacy with the Divine becomes a spiritual craving.

3. Purification of both the heart and the appearance

The benefits of Qiyamullail are not only spiritual but also reflected in one's outward appearance. Sa'id bin al Musayyib said: When a man rises at night to pray, Allah brightens his face. Those who see him are drawn to him even if they do not know him. Al Hasan al Basri also said: There is no beauty that equals the radiance on the faces of those who perform night prayers. They were alone with the Most Merciful, and He illuminated them with His light (al Asfahani 1974).

4. Qiyamullail as rest and spiritual discipline

Contrary to common perception, the Salaf described night worship as a source of peace, not exhaustion. When Hasan bin Abu Sinan was sick, someone asked him what he wished for. He replied: A long night that I can spend entirely in prayer. Sulaiman bin Tarhan noted that the eyes adjust to their routine. If accustomed to sleeping early, they crave sleep. If trained to worship, they long to remain awake. Ibn al Mubarak said:

When you hear the voices of those whispering to their Lord at night, know that one who claims to love Allah but sleeps through the night is not truthful. By Allah, their limbs bear the burden of fatigue during the day because of their devotion at night. (al Asfahani 1974).

These accounts show that for the Salaf, Qiyamullail was far more than a ritual. It was a consistent spiritual practice that nurtured healing, inner peace, and character refinement. It filled the spiritual void, brought tranquility, illuminated the face with divine light, and developed a disciplined and purposeful life.

In today's world, where emotional instability and spiritual confusion are on the rise, Qiyamullail must be revived as a relevant and impactful Islamic psychospiritual therapy. Rooted in the heritage of the best generation of this community, Qiyamullail offers a living example of how night worship can be a source of personal strength and healing.

Conclusion

This study finds that the practice of Qiyamullail in the Salaf tradition is not merely a ritualised voluntary act of worship, but a highly effective form of psychospiritual intervention. It plays a transformative role in fostering emotional stability, purifying the heart, and strengthening the relationship with Allah. Through the analysis of prophetic traditions and the sayings of early Muslim scholars, the study concludes that Qiyamullail contributes significantly to relieving inner anxiety, building inner strength, and offering a deeply rooted form of Islamic self therapy.

Elements such as the stillness of the night, sincere supplication, detachment from worldly distractions, and the cultivation of a structured devotional routine demonstrate that Qiyamullail offers a holistic approach to healing the soul and nurturing faith. The Salaf embraced this practice as the core of their spiritual life, finding true rest and pleasure not in sleep, but in prolonged standing before Allah. This reinforces the Islamic perspective that spiritual well-being is ultimately achieved through a sincere relationship with the Divine, rather than through modern psychological techniques alone.

Therefore, Qiyamullail should not be viewed merely as a solution to mental stress but as a foundation for sustained tranquility grounded in the principles of tawhid and soul purification. The study recommends that Qiyamullail be mainstreamed as a practical and accessible form of Islamic psychospiritual therapy for Muslims facing the demands and pressures of modern life.

Further research is encouraged to develop a more systematic framework for Qiyamullail therapy and to empirically measure its impact on mental and emotional well-being through fieldwork and experimental studies.

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