

JQSS: (Journal Of Quranic and Social Studies)

ISSN: (e): 2790-5640 ISSN (p): 2790-5632

Volume: 5, Issue: 2, May-August 2025. P: 18-36

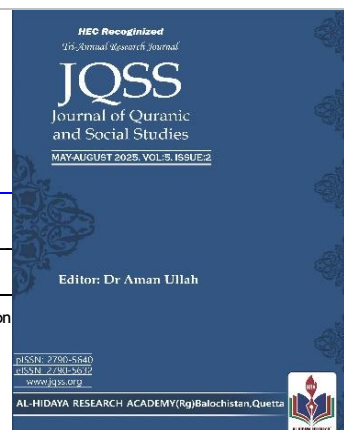
Open Access: <https://www.jqss.org/index.php/JQSS/article/view/178>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15570158>

Copyright: © The Authors Licensing: this work is licensed under a creative commons attribution



4.0 international license



Between Temptation and Tranquillity: The Quranic framework of Nafs

1. **Dr. Hafsa Ayaz Qureshi**

hafsa_ayyaz@fjwu.edu.pk

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5845-7391>

Lecturer, Department of Islamic Studies
Fatima Jinnah Women University,
Rawalpindi

2. **Dr. Sadia Mushtaq**

sadia.mushtaq@numspak.edu.pk

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0179-049X>

Assistant Professor, Department of
Psychology, National University of
Medical Sciences, Rawalpindi

How to Cite: Dr. Hafsa Ayaz Qureshi and Dr. Sadia Mushtaq (2025). Between Temptation and Tranquillity: The Quranic framework of Nafs, (JQSS) Journal of Quranic and Social Studies, 5(2), 18-36.

Abstract and



Publisher



HRA (AL-HIDAYA RESEARCH ACADEMY) (Rg)

Balochistan Quetta





Between Temptation and Tranquility: The Quranic framework of Nafs

Journal of Quranic
and Social Studies
18-36

© The Author (s) 2025

Volume:5, Issue:2, 2025

DOI:10.5281/zenodo.15570158

www.jqss.org

ISSN: E/ **2790-5640**

ISSN: P/ **2790-5632**

Dr. Hafsa Ayaz Qureshi

Lecturer, Department of Islamic Studies

Fatima Jinnah Women University, Rawalpindi

Dr. Sadia Mushtaq

Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology

National University of Medical Sciences, Rawalpindi



Abstract

The Quranic concept of Nafs offers a deeply insightful understanding of the human self, portraying it as the essence of individuality beyond the physical body. It represents the core of consciousness, moral judgment, and personal identity, playing a central role in the spiritual and ethical development of a person. This study explores how the Quran articulates the nature and evolution of the Nafs, highlighting its stages and function in the human struggle between base desires and higher virtues. Framed by two key research questions—how the Quran conceptualizes Nafs about moral development, and how this understanding contributes to contemporary views of self and transformation—the study aims to identify and analyze the stages of Nafs as presented in Islamic thought, and to examine its relevance to current discussions on identity and inner growth. Employing a qualitative approach based on thematic textual analysis, this study examines Quranic verses, classical tafsir works, and contemporary interpretations to provide a comprehensive understanding of the self, encompassing both its spiritual and psychological aspects. The findings aim to provide a fresh perspective on human development with the insight of divine revelation, emphasizing the Quran's unique contribution to understanding the journey of the self.

Keywords: Nafs, Quranic Psychology, Spiritual Development, Islamic Concept of Self, Moral Consciousness.

Corresponding Author Email:

hafsa_ayyaz@fjwu.edu.pk

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5845-7391>

sadia.mushtaq@numspak.edu.pk

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0179-049X>

Introduction

The essence of a person lies not in their physical body, but in their nafs, which refers to the inner self, personality, or character. In the Quran, the concept of human creation, development, and growth is presented in clear and straightforward language. It offers a distinct perspective on how individuals come into being and evolve. A human being is a combination of both physical matter and spiritual essence — the body and the soul. What makes humans unique is the delicate balance between these two contrasting elements.

The terms Nafs, Anfus, and Nufus are found frequently in the Quran—generally more than 250 times—often referring to the self or aspects of the inner self that are susceptible to sinful inclinations. ¹ However, according to Fu'ad al-Baqi in “Mu'jam al-Mufahras li Alfaz al-Qur'an al-Karim”, the term Nafs and its various forms are mentioned a total of 398 times across the Quran.²

It is estimated that nearly one out of every twenty verses in the Quran addresses the concept of Nafs. This highlights its importance as a central theme for understanding divine truths, the purpose behind the creation of the universe, and the relationship between human beings and Allah.

In the Quran, Nafs is often used to describe both the spiritual and physical dimensions of a human being. On a psychological level, it reflects a mixture of noble and base tendencies, the potential for both angelic and satanic influences.

Thus, Nafs cannot be classified strictly as physical or metaphysical. Rather, it is the inner drive that shapes a person's thoughts, actions, and interactions. It encompasses one's emotions, instincts, desires, experiences, inherited traits, and inner inclinations. It is through the Nafs that an individual's unique personality is formed, setting each person apart from others.

Understanding The Term “Nafs” And Its Interpretations In The Quran

In the Quran, the term Nafs is used in two distinct contexts. In one sense, it refers to the self or the individual as a whole. In another, it denotes a particular aspect of the self that is driven by desires and urges, often associated with one's inner cravings or impulses. This second interpretation is sometimes equated with what is commonly known as the ego.

a. “Nafs” as “Our own Self”

Several facets of this meaning are discussed as follows;

i. “Nafs” as “Divine Essence”

“...يُلْقِي الرُّوحَ مِنْ أَمْرِهِ...”³

“...He sends the Inspiration by His Command to any of His slaves He wills...”

ii. “Nafs” means “Man”

"...مَنْ قَتَلَ نَفْسًا بِغَيْرِ نَفْسٍ أَوْ فَسَادٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَكَأَنَّمَا قَتَلَ النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا وَمَنْ أَحْيَاهَا فَكَأَنَّمَا أَحْيَا النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا... 4"

"...if anyone killed a person not in retaliation of murder, or (and) to spread mischief in the land - it would be as if he killed all mankind, and if anyone saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of all mankind..."

iii. "Nafs" means "The Original Creation"

"...خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ... 5"

"...O mankind! Be dutiful to your Lord, Who created you from a single person (Adam)..."

iv. "Nafs" refers to "Persons themselves"

"...رَاوَدْتَنِي عَنْ نَفْسِي... 6"

"... It was she that sought to seduce me..."

b. "Nafs" as "Desires"

The soul encompasses emotions such as anger, passion, lust, and desire — traits often linked to what is known as the "carnal self." This form of Nafs is closely tied to the physical aspect of human existence. One could say that every person is composed of two fundamental elements: the physical body and the Nafs, while Allah has also placed within each individual a deeper, spiritual element known as the Ruh (spirit). When viewed as the source of desire, the Nafs include several core components:

i. "Nafs" means "The influential inner force of man (The lower desires)"

"...نَهَى النَّفْسَ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ 7"

"...restrained himself from impure evil desires, and lusts."

ii. "Nafs" means "Ruh"

"اللَّهُ يَتَوَفَّى الْأَنفُسَ حِينَ مَوْتِهَا... 8"

"It is Allah Who takes away the souls at the time of their death..."

Quran And Personality Development

When the soul reaches a state of inner peace and gains control over its desires, it is known as "Nafs al-Mutma'innah," meaning "the content soul." This level reflects a deep sense of tranquility and alignment with divine will. On the other hand, when the soul struggles internally and its peaceful nature is unsettled, it is described as "Nafs al-Lawwāmah," or "the self-reproaching soul," as it holds one accountable for neglecting spiritual and moral responsibilities. However, when the soul becomes overwhelmed by temptations and submits to evil inclinations, it is referred to as "Nafs al-Ammārah," the soul that commands wrongdoing.⁹

Ibn al-Qayyim describes three primary states of the Nafs, emphasizing that although the soul may experience various conditions, it remains a single entity. These states represent different levels of spiritual development. The first and lowest is “Nafs al-Ammārah,” the soul that incites evil. From there, it may evolve into “Nafs al-Lawwāmah,” the self-reproaching soul that begins to hold itself accountable. The highest and most refined state is “Nafs al-Mutma'innah,” the tranquil soul — which represents the ultimate stage of inner peace and spiritual fulfillment. 10

The “Nafs al-Lawwāmah,” or the self-reproaching soul, is characterized by its constant inner turmoil and restlessness. It is in a state of continual fluctuation — at times reflecting and remembering, then submitting or pulling away. It experiences love and hatred, joy and remorse, acceptance and rejection, obedience and defiance. This soul is always in motion, never settled in one condition for long.

The Nafs al-Lawwāmah is also associated with the soul of a true believer. It is said that on the Day of Judgment, this soul will reproach itself — reflecting on its actions with a sense of guilt or regret. Regardless of whether a person’s deeds were righteous or sinful, there will be a sense of falling short. Even in doing good, the soul will recognize its imperfections and missed opportunities, holding itself accountable for not fulfilling its duties to the fullest. 11

Sa'id Hawwa discusses the various states of the Nafs, one of which is Nafs al-Mutma'innah. This state represents a soul at peace, attained through the consistent practice of Allah's commands. In this state, the soul overcomes its desires and inclinations, finding tranquility in submission to divine guidance. 12 Allah says;

“يَا أَيُّهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ. ارْجِعِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً”¹³

“(It will be said to the pious): O (you) the one in (complete) rest and satisfaction! Come back to your Lord, Well-pleased (yourself) and well-pleasing unto Him!”

Conversely, when the soul fails to find peace and remains susceptible to its desires, it is known as “Nafs al-Lawwāmah”. In this state, the soul reprimands its owner for neglecting to follow Allah's commands, constantly holding them accountable for their shortcomings.

“وَلَا أُقْسِمُ بِالنَّفْسِ اللَّوَّامَةِ”¹⁴

“And I swear by the self-reproaching person (a believer).”

Furthermore, souls that succumb to their desires and are swayed by the whispers of the Devil are known as “Nafs al-Ammārah”. In the Quran, Allah recounts the story of the wife of Al-Aziz (often referred to as Zulaikha), who allowed her passions to lead her astray.

﴿...إِنَّ النَّفْسَ لَأَمَّارَةٌ بِالسُّوءِ...﴾ (Yusuf:53) “Verily the human self is inclined to evil.” 15

The Quran describes various states of the Nafs, each representing different aspects of the soul's development and condition.

a. **"Nafs al-Ammārah"**

The term used to describe the "soul" is *Ammārah* (أَمَارَة), which originates from the word *Amr* (أَمْر). Ibn Zakaiyah defines *Amr* as the act of "commanding someone to take action." Similarly, Isfahani explains that *Amr* involves "instructing someone to perform a task." I 6 Yusuf Ali, in his interpretation, explains that when Nafs is described as *Ammārah*, it refers to a soul that is inclined, driven, stubborn, and full of passion. I 7

Jurjani offers a more precise definition of the Commanding Soul, stating that:

"النفس الأمارة هي التي تميل إلى الطبيعة البدنية وتأمر بالذات والشهوات الحسية
وتجذب القلب إلى الجهة السفلية فهي مأوى الشرور ومنبع الأخلاق الذميمة" 18
"It is that which inclines towards the physical body and
commands for pleasures and sensual lusts attracting the
heart to the lower side, the abode of evil deeds and the
fountainhead of reprehensible morals."

Imam Razi mentions that actions such as betrayal, adultery, and the pursuit of pleasures are part of the inherent nature of the Commanding Soul (*Nafs al-Ammārah*). I 9 The *Nafs al-Ammārah* is a soul that is inclined towards evil, and if not controlled, it leads to one's downfall. This type of soul seeks fulfillment in base, worldly desires. The term *Nafs al-Ammārah*, or the commanding self, is mentioned in the Quran, where Allah refers to it in Surah Yusuf;

"...إِنَّ النَّفْسَ لَأَمَّارَةٌ بِالسُّوءِ..." 20

"Verily, the (human) self is inclined to evil..."

Prophet Yusuf (A.S) acknowledged that he does not claim to be free from blame, as no soul can be deemed pure without the protection of Divine Mercy. All souls have an inherent inclination towards evil, and if not guided, the nafs will inevitably lead one astray. 21

Sabuni suggests that in this ayah, Prophet Yusuf's attitude towards his nafs is one of humility. He aimed to cultivate and purify his nafs, protecting them from arrogance and pride. 22 This ayah from the Quran regarding the *Nafs al-Ammārah* recounts the trial faced by Prophet Yusuf (A.S) when the wife of the king attempted to seduce him. Although the temptation was strong, Yusuf (A.S) acknowledged that his soul was inclined towards such behavior. However, he was able to resist it solely due to the mercy and protection of Allah.

This type of Nafs gives rise to hedonism, an excessive pursuit of material possessions, greed, cruelty, envy, and a thirst for power and control. It is referred to as the commanding soul, *Nafs al-Ammārah Bisu*, as described in the Quran. 23 This aspect of the self encompasses a person's fundamental traits, including physical desires and tendencies toward harmful behavior. While these undesirable traits are present in

everyone, many individuals can manage them without much difficulty. However, when these traits are provoked, they can lead to inner turmoil and mental distress.

The commanding or passionate aspect of the soul often drives human beings toward sinful behavior. This part of the soul, linked to its earthly and animalistic nature, is primarily concerned with survival. It constantly yearns for things that sustain the physical body and gratify the desires of the lower self.

The intrinsic nature of the commanding soul in the Quran

In five different ayats, the Quran illustrates the intrinsic evil of the Commanding Soul.

- **Dark suggestions.** Allah states;

"...نَعْلَمُ مَا تُوسْوِسُ بِهِ نَفْسُهُ..."²⁴

"...We know what his self whispers to him..."

The Quran describes Satan's malevolent temptations using the same verb. 'Dark suggestions' is another term used to describe the Commanding Souls. Human's Nafs implies that people can do both good and bad things.²⁵

- **Source of Man's Evil Desires.**

The second example is important because it attributes man's wicked inclinations to the Commanding Soul. In particular, Sura An-Naziat's ayah 40 informs us that paradise is only accessible to those who control their souls from pursuing lower wants.

"...نَهَى النَّفْسَ عَنِ الْهَوَى..."²⁶

"...restrained himself from impure evil desires, and lusts."

According to the commentary of al-Jalālayn, the term "soul" in this context refers specifically to the *nafs al-ammārah* (the Commanding Soul). More precisely, the expression *نَهَى النَّفْسَ* is interpreted as an allusion to restraining the inciting nature of the *nafs al-ammārah*.²⁷

Man must thwart the soul's bad inclinations since Allah detests them, according to Imam At-Tabari. Allah abhors the evil will of the Commanding Soul. Man must therefore constantly repress it.²⁸

- **Soul innate evil.**

The Qur'an recounts how the brothers of Prophet Yusuf (A.S) lied to their father, telling him that his youngest son had passed away.

"قَالُوا يَا أَبَانَا إِنَّا ذَهَبْنَا نَسْتَبِقُ وَتَرَكْنَا يُوسُفَ عِنْدَ مَتَاعِنَا فَكَلَّهَ الْذِّبُ وَمَا أَنْتَ بِمُؤْمِنٍ
بِنَا وَلَوْ كُنَّا صَادِقِينَ. وَجَاءُوا عَلَى قَمِيصِهِ بِدَمٍ كَذِبٍ قَالَ بَلْ سَوَّلَتْ لَكُمْ أَنْفُسُكُمْ
أَمْرًا ... " ²⁹

"They said: O our father! We went racing with one another and left Yusuf (Yusuf (A.S)) by our belongings and a wolf devoured him, but you will never believe us even when we speak the truth. And they brought his shirt stained with false blood. He said: Nay, but yourselves have made up a tale..."

The Quranic passage implicates the brothers' souls for justifying their lie to Ya'qūb (A.S), claiming that a wolf had taken Yūsuf (A.S). This wicked act of deceit is depicted as a consequence of the pernicious nature of the nafs al-ammārah, which drives individuals toward unethical actions.³⁰

➤ **Soul lust.** In Surah Tâ-Hâ

"قَالَ بَصُرْتُ بِمَا لَمْ يَبْصُرُوا بِهِ فَقَبَضْتُ قَبْضَةً مِّنْ أَثَرِ الرَّسُولِ فَنَبَذْتُهَا وَكَذَلِكَ سَوَّلَتْ لِي نَفْسِي" ³¹

"(Samiri) said: I saw what they saw not, so I took a handful (of dust) from the hoof print of the messenger [Jibrael's (Gabriel) horse] and threw it [into the fire in which were put the ornaments of the Fir'aun's (Pharaoh) people, or into the calf]. Thus my inner self suggested to me."

The text portrays Samiri as attributing his actions to the influence of his own soul, which urged him to cast a small amount of dirt into the cauldron, thereby leading the Israelites into idol worship. According to al-Rāzī, there is no explanation for Samiri's idolatrous behavior except that he blindly followed the desires of his soul.³²

➤ **Proactive nature.** Commanding Soul's evil in human history is expressed as

"فَطَوَّعَتْ لَهُ نَفْسُهُ قَتْلَ أَخِيهِ فَقَتَلَهُ..." ³³

"So the Nafs (self) of the other (latter one) encouraged him and made fair-seeming to him the murder of his brother; he murdered him..."

The narrative illustrates that Qābīl was driven by his own soul to commit the murder of his brother Hābīl. Numerous Islamic scholars interpret this account as a reference to the assertive influence of the nafs al-ammārah (the Commanding Soul), which is viewed as the instigator of the first act of homicide in human history. They emphasize that Qābīl's soul did not passively lead him to the act, but rather exerted a forceful and deliberate influence, compelling him toward the crime.³⁴

Shaytan, according to Imam Baghawi, is an ally of "Nafs-e-Ammārah Bissû." He adds lies while promising it enormous profits and benefits. In terms of evil, he invites and encourages man to act in that way. He keeps him going by giving him hope after hope, and he tricks the soul so that it will accept and value it.³⁵

"Nafs-e-Ammārah" is the one with a sick heart or soul. As long as the heart is not mended, Nafs's function will remain unchanged. Finally, the nafs will be sealed after being blind. At this point, the self is seen as perfect, whereas other people's souls are seen as flawed. It got its name from its constant requests and recurrent urges to satisfy its requirements. Thus, it expects something else after obtaining one thing, and so on.

This stage is generally separated into two levels: "Nafs al-Hayawaniyya" and "Nafs al-Iblissiyya." The self that pursues material ownership, sensual cravings, and animalistic

pleasures is described in "Nafs al-Hayawaniyya." Even below the animal condition, where self-love replaces Allah, is "Nafs al-Iblissiyya."³⁶

For "Nafs al-Hawaniyya," right and wrong, justice and injustice, and legality and illegality are all worthless. The joys of money and ornamentation have drowned it. In it, the soul's defining characteristics are immorality, lewdness, and a lack of humanity. Religion is hated and only cares about itself. Completeness, humility, gratitude, honor, and good manners are all concepts it lacks. "Nafs al-Iblissiyya" is just as magnificent and powerful as Allah. The Pharaoh proclaimed, "I am your lord supreme."

There are many instances of "Nafs-e-Ammārah," such as conceitedness, inflexibility of the heart, and the tyranny of animals, as well as lying, cheating, dishonesty, gossip, jealousy, unwarranted self-aggrandizement, resentment, clinging to things that belong to others, dissatisfaction, frequent complaining, and a lack of gratitude.

b. **"Nafs-e-Lawwāmah"**

The degree of conscience and moral concern is the next level, known as "Nafs -e-Lawwāmah." All people have it in their nature, which makes them regret their oppression and deeds. This remorse comes from the self-accusing soul's rebuke and blame. Quran states;

"...بِالنَّفْسِ اللَّوَّامَةِ" ³⁷

"And I do call to witness the self-reproaching spirit: (Eschew evil)."

Jurgani defines "Nafs al-Lawwāmah" as

"النفس اللوامة هي التي تنورت بنور القلب قدر ما تنهت به عن سنة الغفلة كلما صدرت عنها سيئة بحكم جبلتها الظلمانية أخذت تلوم نفسها وتتوب عنها" ³⁸

Ibn Arabi asserted, "Nafs -e-Lawwāmah" often berates itself and questions how it could have carried out such horrible deeds even though it knew that every soul receives full restitution for its actions.³⁹

Like a superego, this entity refers to a person's conscience or moral compass. The "Nafs-e-Ammrah" of a person chastises them and makes them feel bad if they comply. The person is then left to choose between changing their behavior and continuing down the hazardous path.

"Nafs -e-Lawwamah" is the first, significant stage in psycho-spiritual development. It serves as a kind of internal compass for people, guiding them in the proper direction and warning them when they go off course. It has two extremes: the constructive tendency of "Ruh" and "Aql," which pushes towards Allah, and the negative tendency of "Nafs-e-Ammarah," which turns away from Allah. He asks for forgiveness of sin.

In reference to the ayah described above, Ibn Kathir cited Imam Ḥasan al-Baṣrī. As a matter of fact, we feel that every believer places the guilt on himself. He writes, asking himself, "Verily, by Allah, we think that every believer blames himself. What did I

mean by what I said?" What was I going to eat? What did I mean when I spoke to myself?⁴⁰

Furthermore, according to Imam Rāzī, every person—sinful and obedient—will hold his Nafs accountable in the afterlife. The statement "You see the believer blaming his Nafs; however, the uneducated are seen to be happy with his current position" was cited by Imam Rāzī from Hasan Basri. The self-accusing soul is a higher blessing from Allah that aims to keep man on the right path. The self is born into the world in its primordial state (the self-accusing soul).

"وَنَفْسٍ وَمَا سَوَّاهَا. فَأَلْهَمَهَا فُجُورَهَا وَتَقْوَاهَا"⁴¹

"And by Nafs (Adam or a person or a soul, etc.), and Him Who perfected him in proportion; Then He showed him what is wrong for him and what is right for him."

A contrasting view was held by Ibn Kathir, who claimed that the sinner did not feel bad about continuing to do evil.⁴² Nonetheless, Sa'id bin Jubayr said of the same ayah, "He criticizes himself in good and bad." Mujahid captures the same sentiment: "He feels guilty for the good things he missed and holds himself responsible for them."⁴³

"Nafs al-Lawwamah" is a soul that is keenly aware of evil and fights it, repents and seeks Allah's pardon and favor, and attempts to make amends in order to gain salvation.

"Nafs al-Lawwamah" is among the most striking interpretations of it, according to Maududi. According to him, "Nafs al-Lawwamah" regrets acting immorally, thinking immorally, and wanting evil. The concept of the "self-reproaching soul" highlights the reality of resurrection. On that day, man would be judged for his deeds and judged whether they were good or wicked.⁴⁴

One could consider "Nafs al-Lawwamah" to be proof of life after death. Because of this, people strive to prevent punishment and evil while rewarding good behavior. One could consider this innate tendency to be a micro-scale court, similar to that of humans.⁴⁵

At this stage, the ego accuses the conscience of listening to the desires, and the conscience is aroused. The act of requesting forgiveness is known as repentance. We are headed toward perfection if we follow our hearts, pay attention to our actions, concur with our thoughts, and acknowledge our shortcomings. It has apprehended what the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) said,

((كُلُّ بَيِّ آدَمَ خَطَّاءٌ، وَخَيْرُ الْخَطَّائِينَ التَّوَّابُونَ))⁴⁶

"All humans are prone to sin and the best sinners are those who repent."

The self is always alternating between obedience and disobedience. At the same time, it is cognizant and resists, yet it is also reckless. This is the first stage of self-salvation and the first step toward accomplishment and self-purification.

c. **“Nafs-e-Mutma’inna”**

"Nafs-e-mutma'inna" is an aspect of oneself that brings tranquility to it. Accepting the world as it is leads to calmness. This aspect of the self provides contentment and a feeling of inner peace. "Nafs-e-mutma'inna" is defined as;

"النفـس المطمئنة هـي الـتي تنورها بنور القلب حتى انخلعت عن صفاتها الذميمة و
تخلقت بالأخلاق الحميدة" ⁴⁷

"Nafs-e-mutma'inna" is associated with excellent deeds and is illuminated by the divine presence. "Mutma'innats" are the souls of righteousness.

When the righteous join their legacy and are welcomed with a sense of freedom from all things—struggle and passion, sorrow and disappointment, suffering and doubts—a state of complete contentment awaits them. The soul achieves total contentment in this condition.

An ayah of surah al-Fajr proclaims “The Nafs at peace”.⁴⁸ This is the ideal ego stage for Muslims. When someone is at this stage, they are unwavering in their convictions and abandon rude behavior. The soul is content with who it is. At this stage, one is satisfied with Allah's will and set free from all materialistic and worldly worries.

Nafs experience tranquility as a result of Allah's certainty. Through self-reporting, resistance, perseverance, and commitment, "The Secure Self" has gained access to the pathways, strategies, and tools of safety and recovery. These endeavors produce verifiable evidence that Allah is the one Creator. Because He is the only God or Lord, He is the origin and the source of everything. Additionally, Allah is kind and giving in all that he does. He is aware of what is best for him.

Trust in Allah is fostered by this conviction. It encourages faith in His goodness and grace. A person's self-confidence rises when he recognizes that Allah's plans are superior and last longer than his own or others'. It accomplishes complete reliance in its Lord in this way; Allah is the most skilled of Sustainers and Guardians, and only He knows the best path to proceed.

Because of this, the self feels secure and doesn't want to think about anything but what it has learned to trust—that is, its Lord Allah.

About “Nafs-e-Mutma’inna”, Ibn Abbas (R.A), a greatest mufassir said; “It is the tranquil and believing soul.” Al-Qatadah said, “It is the soul of the believer, made calm by what Allah has promised.” Its possessor is satisfied with his understanding of Allah's Names and Attributes, His words about Himself and His Messenger (S.A.W), and His words regarding what awaits the soul after death, including the Day of Qiyamah, the soul's departure, and life in the hereafter. Because of his unwavering confidence in Allah and the fact that he is never sad or grumbling, he submits to Allah with contentment. He does not take pride in his accomplishments or let misfortune depress him because he is aware that these things were predestined long before he was born...⁴⁹

The self has reached the pinnacle of development and has discovered the paths that lead to peace and love for Allah. Increased dedication and the real and honest

fulfillment of its promises in all its facets—especially in interpersonal relationships and conduct prior to worship—are what perfect it. Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) said;

"أَكْمَلُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِيمَانًا أَحْسَنُهُمْ خُلُقًا..."⁵⁰

"The most complete of the believers in faith is the one with the best character among them..."

Two terms "Serenity and Stability" are used to describe this state of affairs in the Nafs;

"يَا أَيُّهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ. ارْجِعِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً."⁵¹

"(It will be said to the pious): O (you) the one in (complete) rest and satisfaction! Come back to your Lord, Well-pleased (yourself) and well-pleasing unto Him!"

Regarding the Tranquil soul, Mujahid commented, "It is the soul that is satisfied with the decree of Allah; it knows that what does not befall it was not destined to do so, and what does befall it was destined to do so". Likewise, *Hasan al-Basri* elucidates, "If Allah, the Mighty, and Exalted, wishes to seize the Nafs, it is contented with Allah and Allah is satisfied with it. As such, He commands its soul to be seized, enters it into paradise, and makes it of His righteous devotees". Also, Qatadah commented saying, "It is the believer whose soul became assured regarding what Allah has promised."⁵²

According to Mufti Shafi Usmani, al-nafs al-muṭma'innah refers to the soul of a true believer. This state of inner peace and contentment arises from constant remembrance of and obedience to Allah. In contrast, neglecting these spiritual practices leads to inner turmoil and restlessness.⁵³

The purification of the soul is achieved through consistent spiritual discipline and the avoidance of immoral traits and wrongful actions. In this refined state, the soul naturally inclines toward obedience and the remembrance of Allah, as if adherence to the Shariah has become inherent to its disposition. The individual derives deep satisfaction from fulfilling divine commands, and in turn, earns the pleasure of the Lord. At this stage, the self's capacity for repentance surpasses the mere effort and devotion typically required to attain it. Once it attains a sense of spiritual security in the presence of Allah, the soul becomes engaged with higher spiritual stations such as hope, fear, and unwavering faith. In this elevated condition, the tranquil soul maintains a constant state of remembrance—both verbally and internally—remaining ever mindful of Allah.

"تَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوبُهُمْ بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ"⁵⁴...

"...whose hearts find rest in the remembrance of Allah, Verily, in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest"

Self-fulfillment is achieved in this way. The light of consciousness begins to glow in the heart. Strengthening and refining of "The Secure Self" begins to take over as the ego weakens and gives way to a more refined, transparent, and lightened heart. The cravings for immortality and sovereignty are fully obscured and returned to their real owner, Allah.

The highest level of “Nafs” that is “Nafs-e-Mutmainnah”, is manifested in the following ways:

- “Nafs-e-Mulhamah” : Inspiration to piety and Taqwa
- “Nafs-e-Radhiyah”: Being Appreciative
- “Nafs-e-Mardiyah”: Being appreciated by Allah
- “Nafs Kamilah”: Perfection⁵⁵

Nafs to be flawless and perfect, must have eliminated all negative traits and acquired all positive ones.

➤ **“Nafs-e-Mulhamah”**

This level comes between “Nafs-e-Lawammah” and “Nafs-e-Mutmainnah”. It is the stage of actions a man has to perform. A man listens to his conscience ever more persistently while being unsundered. Man’s ego motivates them to achieve excellent things once he has identified his limitations and established goals for themselves. When one thinks of anything wonderful, it’s crucial to act on it right away.

فَالْهَمَّهَا فُجُورَهَا وَتَقْوَاهَا⁵⁶

“Then He showed him what is wrong for him and what is right for him”

At the time of man’s creation, Almighty Allah had injected a divine spark into man. This divine spark is what allows a person to distinguish between good and bad.

Allah gave humans the intellect to recognize Him as their Lord, as well as the physical potency to serve Him. As a result, man is obligated to worship Him alone. He has been given the ability to do good and refrain from sins and also the ability to sin. Allah has taken the oath;

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا⁵⁷

“Indeed he succeeds who purifies his self (i.e. obeys and performs all that Allah ordered, by following the true Faith of Islamic Monotheism and by doing righteous good deeds).”

It is up to the man to ponder and recognize the Great power of Allah and make efforts to adorn his spirit with healthy habits and cleanse it of evil character. ⁵⁸

Also, at other place,

وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَيَخْشَ اللَّهَ وَيَتَّقْهُ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْفَائِزُونَ⁵⁹

“And whosoever obeys Allah and His Messenger (SAW), fears Allah, and keeps his duty (to Him), such are the successful ones”

➤ **“Nafs-e-Radiyyah”**

By acquiring a sense of satisfaction and acceptance, one might enhance one’s spiritual tranquility. As a result, there is a strong sense of contentment and a complete

acceptance of Islam. It is stated on the authority of Hadhrat Abbas (R.A) that Prophet (S.A.W) said,

”ذاق طعم الإيمان من رضى بالله ربا وبالإسلام ديناً وبمحمد رسولا“⁶⁰

“The one who is contented with Allah as his Lord, Islam as his religion, and Muhammad as his prophet has truly tasted the flavor of faith.”

This type of Rida is frequently associated with the devotee's faith. Awakening "the Secure Self," the heart's illumination spreads throughout the body, transforming the ego's sensual pleasures into a yearning for Allah, as described in the Quran and Prophet Muhammad's (S.A.W) sayings. Nafs Ar-Radiyyah desires solely to be content with its Lord.

At this level, the self is patient if tired, thankful if given something, accept if deprived, and if it has been wronged, forgive it. It has now developed into a self with a sound heart. It swings back and forth in all states; among trust, relegation, contentment, and finally submission to Allah. This personality is characterized by a persistent sense of joy, gratitude, and thankfulness, regardless of what happens.

➤ “Nafs al-Mardiyyah”

At this stage, man has found serenity. The individual is kind, patient to others, and well-mannered. The Creator finds, in the perfect man, the qualities that He bestowed on him when He created him.

”أَرْجِعْ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً“⁶¹

“Come back to your Lord, Well-pleased (yourself) and well-pleasing unto Him!”

The devout spirit will not only be delighted with what it receives, but it also enjoy the greatest pleasure, achieved when he knows that Allah is pleased with him. At this stage the self is not only content with its Lord it is also gratified by Him.

”...رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ...“⁶²

“...Allah Well-Pleased with them, and they with Him...”

The heart is completely enlightened at this level. The heart progresses from quality attributes to a heart that is completely in love with Allah, always oriented toward Him, and saturated with modesty toward Him in all circumstances.

”مَنْ خَشِيَ الرَّحْمَنَ الْغَيْبَ وَجَاءَ بِقَلْبٍ مُنِيبٍ“

أَدْخُلُوهَا بِسَلَامٍ ذَلِكَ يَوْمُ الْخُلُودِ. لَهُمْ مَا يَشَاءُونَ فِيهَا وَلَدَيْنَا مَزِيدٌ“⁶³

“Who feared the Most Beneficent (Allah) in the Ghaib (unseen): (i.e. in this worldly life before seeing and meeting Him), and brought a heart turned in repentance (to Him - and free from every kind of polytheism), Enter you therein in peace and security; this is a Day of eternal life! There they

will have all that they desire, and We have more (for them, i.e. a glance at the All-Mighty, All-Majestic)."

➤ **"Nafs As-Safiyah"**

At this level, one is following traits of the ideal man, who has entirely submitted to Allah and is driven by Him. Individual is completely in harmony with Allah's Will.⁶⁴ They are not drawn to this world, nor are they drawn to the next. All they care about is attachment with Allah, hearing from Him, and being close to Him, because they consider it a punishment to detachment from Allah even for a second.

Conclusion

Quran states that the human self can be understood as existing in different states depending on its moral and spiritual condition. These states include the commanding soul (Nafs Al-Ammārah Bi Al-Sū'), which inclines toward evil; the self-reproaching soul (Nafs Al-Lawwāmah), which is conscious of its shortcomings; and the tranquil soul (Nafs Al-Muṭma'innah), which has attained inner peace. These represent the developmental stages of the soul, reflecting its potential for transformation and moral refinement. The Islamic concept of the soul is inherently dynamic, closely linked with the heart (Qalb), the intellect ('aql), and the spirit (rūḥ), all of which contribute to the soul's vitality and capacity for growth.

For an individual to effectively cope with life's challenges, both personality and spiritual well-being must be nurtured. A strong personality is often characterized by a deep-rooted sense of religion and faith, which fosters tolerance and resilience in various circumstances. However, when individuals experience emotional distress such as disappointment, anger, or pain, their inner stability can be disrupted, leading them to distance themselves from religious practice. Faith—embodied through religious teachings—plays a crucial role in the moral and spiritual development of the human soul. It enables individuals to exercise control over their thoughts, emotions, attitudes, and behaviors. Without this guiding influence, individuals may be driven to engage in harmful actions, potentially resulting in personal regret and spiritual turmoil.

References

- 1 Jane Dammen McAuliffe, *The Encyclopedia of The Quran*, (Netherlands: Brill, 2001) s.v. "Soul."
- 2 Fuad 'Abd Al Baqi, *Al-Mu jam al-Mufahras li 'l-Qur'an al-Azim*, s.v. "نفس." <https://archive.org/details/AlMujamAlMufahrasLiAlfazhAlQuran>
- 3 Ghafir: 15
- 4 Al-Mâ'idah: 32
- 5 An-Nisâ': 1
- 6 Al-Mu'minûn: 26
- 7 An-Nâzi'ât: 40
- 8 Az-Zumar: 42
- 9 Al-Ghazali, *Ihya Ulum al-Din (Revival of Religious Learning)*, trans. Fazal Karem, vol. 3 (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, n.d.), 8–9.

- 10 Ibn al Qayyim, Madarij as-Salikîn Baeenna Manzil Iyyaka Na'Budu Wa Iyyaka Nasta'în (Cairo:Al-Hay'ah al-Misriyah al-'Ammah lil-Kitāb, 1980), vol. 1, 308.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Sa'id Hawwa, Tarbiyatun nar Ruhiyah, (Cairo: Dar al- Salam, 2009), 32.
- 13 Al-Fajr: 27-28
- 14 Al-Qiyamah: 2
- 15 Hawwa, Tarbiyatun nar Ruhiyah, 35.
- 16 Ragib Isfahani, Mufradat fi ghariab ul Quran, s.v. "أمر."
- <https://archive.org/details/MufradatalQuran-Raghib/mode/2up>
- 17 Abdullah Yousaf Ali, The Meaning of the Holy Quran (Amana Publications; Arab, 2008), 564
- 18 Jurjani, At-Tareefat (Beruit: Dar-ul-Kitab al Arabi), Vol. 1, 252
- 19 Imam Razi, Mafateeh Al-Ghayb (Beruit: Dar-ul-Fikr, 1981), vol. 9, 125.
- 20 Yûsuf: 53
- 21 Imam Razi, Mafateeh Al-Ghayb, vol 9, 125.
- 22 Muhammad Ali As-Sabuni, Safwat at-Tafasir (Cairo: Dar as-Sabuni, 1996), vol. 2, 52
- 23 Faridi Shahidullah, The inner aspects of faith (Karachi: Mahfil-e-Zauqia, 1986), 55-56
- 24 Qaf: 16
- 25 Ibn Kathir, Tafseer Ibn Kathir, Abridged by a group of scholars under the supervision of Shaykh Safiur Rahman al Mubarikpuri (Riyadh: Darus salam Publisher, 2000) Vol .6, 319
- 26 An-Nâzi'ât: 40
- 27 Jalalud-din Mahalli and Jalaludin Suyuti, Tafsir Al-Jalalayn, trans. Feras Hamza (Jordan: Royal aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2007), 550.
- 28 Al-Tabari, Jam i' Al-Bayan 'an taweel ay al-Quran (Riyad: Dar 'Aalim al-Kutub, n.d) Vol. 24, 98.
- 29 Yûsuf: 17-18
- 30 Isfahani, Al-Mufradat, Vol. 1, 30.
- 31 Tâ-Hâ: 96
- 32 Imam Razi, Mafateeh-al-Ghayb, Vol .11, 97.
- 33 Al-Mâ'idah: 30
- 34 Imam Razi, Mafateeh-al-Ghayb, Vol. 6, 164.
- 35 Al-Farra Al-Baghawi, Tafseer-e-Baghawi, trans. Saud Kashmiri and et.al (Pakistan: Idarah Taleefat Ashrafiyah, 1436H), vol. 2, 35
- 36 Mahmoud Mostafa, The Attributes and Names of the ranks and stations of nafs in its striving and elevation," <https://www.scribd.com/document/47573445/7-Stations-of-the-Nafs-self>

- 37 Al-Qiyamah:2
38 Jurjani, At-Tareefat (Beruit: Dar-ul-Kitab al Arabi), Vol. I, 243.
39 Ibn-e-Arabi, Tafsir al Quran al Karim (Dar al-Kutub Al-Ilmiyah, 1981), 357.
40 Ibn Kathir, Tafseer Ibn Kathir, Vol. 10, 262.
41 Ash-Shams:7-8
42 Ibn Kathir, Tafseer Ibn Kathir, vol. 10, 262.
43 Ibid
44 Syed Abu A'la Maududi, The meaning of the Quran (Tafhim ul Quran), trans. Ch. Muhammad Akbar (Lahore: Islamic Publications, n.d), Vol. 6, 162.
45 Ibid, 141
46 Muhammad bin yazid Majah, Sunan Ibn Majah (Dar ul Haya Al-Kutub, n.d)
, Book: Zuhd, Chapter: Repentance, Hadith 4251
47 Jurjani, At-Tareefat, Vol. I, 243
48 Al-Fajr:27
49 At-Tabri, Jami Al-Bayan 'an Taweel ay al-Quran (Riyadh: Dar 'Aalim al-Kutub, n.d.) Vol. 24 , 398
50 Abu Esa At-Tirmidhee, Jami At-Tirmidhi (Saudia Arabia: Wadharat ash-shaun Al-Islamiyyah wa ad-dawah wal irshad, 2000) , The Book on suckling, Chapter: What has been related about a woman's rights over her husband, Hadith 1162
51 Al-Fajr:27-28
52 Imam Razi, Mafateeh Al-Ghayb, Vol. 30, 160-1
53 Mufti Muhammad Shafi Usmani, Ma'arif-ul-Quran, trans. Maulana Ahmed Khalil Aziz (Karachi: Maktaba-e-Dar-ul-uloom), Vol. 8, 788.
54 Ar-Rad:28
55 Idries Shah, The Sufis (London: The Idrees Shah Foundation, 2015), 445
56 Ash-Shams:8
57 Ash: Shams:9
58 Mufti Muhammad Ashiq Ellahi, Anwar ul Bayan (Karachi; Dar-ul-Ishaat, 2005), trans. Mufti Afzal Hussain Elyas, Vol. 10, 404.
59 An-Nûr:52
60 Imam Muslim, Sahih Muslim, Book of Faith, Chapter: Evidence that the one who is content with Allah as his Lord, Islam as his religion, and Muhammad (S.A.W) as his prophet, then is a believer, even if he commits major sins, Hadith 58/54
61 Al-Fajr:28
62 Al-Baiyinah:8
63 Qaf:33-35

- 64 Shaykh Adil Al-Haqqani, *The Path to Spiritual Excellence* (America: Islamic Supreme Council of America, 2004), 103.

Bibliography

1. Al-Quran
2. Abdullah Yousaf Ali, *The Meaning of the Holy Quran* (Amana Publications; Arab, 2008).
3. Abu Esa At-Tirmidhee, *Jami At-Tirmidhi* (Saudi Arabia: Wadharat ash-shaun Al-Islamiyyah wa ad-dawah wal irshad, 2000)
4. Al-Farra Al-Baghawi, *Tafseer-e-Baghawi*, trans. Saud Kashmiri et al. (Pakistan: Idarah Taleefat Ashrafiyah, 1436H), vol. 2.
5. Al-Ghazali, *Ihya Ulum al-Din* (Revival of Religious Learning), trans. Fazal Kareem, vol. 3 (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, n.d.).
6. Al-Tabari, *Jam i' Al-Bayan 'an Taweel Ay Al-Quran* (Riyad: Dar 'Aalim al-Kutub, n.d.), Vol. 24.
7. Faridi Shahidullah, *The Inner Aspects of Faith* (Karachi: Mahfil-e-Zauqia, 1986).
8. Fuad 'Abd Al Baqi, *Al-Mu jam al-Mufahras li 'I-Qur'an al-Azim*, s.v.
9. "نفس"
<https://archive.org/details/AlMujamAlMufahrasLiAlfazhAlQuran>.
10. Hawwa, Sa'id, *Tarbiyatun nar Ruhîyah* (Cairo: Dar al-Salam, 2009).
11. Ibn al Qayyim, *Madarij as-Salikîn Baeenna Manzil Iyyaka Na'Budu Wa Iyyaka Nasta'În* (Cairo: Al-Hay'ah al-Misriyah al-'Āmmah lil-Kitāb, 1980), vol. 1.
12. Ibn Kathir, *Tafseer Ibn Kathir*, Abridged by a group of scholars under the supervision of Shaykh Safiur Rahman al Mubarikpuri (Riyadh: Darus Salam Publisher, 2000), Vol. 6.
13. Ibn-e-Arabi, *Tafsir al Quran al Karim* (Dar al-Kutub Al-Ilmiyah, 1981).
14. Idries Shah, *The Sufis* (London: The Idrees Shah Foundation, 2015).
15. 64 Imam Muslim An-Nisaburi, *Sahih Muslim* (Dar-ut-Taibah, 2008).
16. Imam Razi, *Mafateeh Al-Ghayb* (Beirut: Dar-ul-Fikr, 1981), vol. 9
17. Jalalud-din Mahalli and Jalaludin Suyuti, *Tafsir Al-Jalalayn*, trans. Feras Hamza (Jordan: Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2007), 550.
18. Jane Dammen McAuliffe, *The Encyclopedia of The Quran* (Netherlands: Brill, 2001), s.v. "Soul."
19. Jurjani, *At-Tareefat* (Beirut: Dar-ul-Kitab al Arabi), Vol. 1.
20. Mahmoud Mostafa, *The Attributes and Names of the Ranks and Stations of Nafs in its Striving and Elevation*, <https://www.scribd.com/document/47573445/7-Stations-of-the-Nafs-self>.

21. Mufti Muhammad Ashiq Ellahi, *Anwar ul Bayan* (Karachi: Dar-ul-Ishaat, 2005), trans. Mufti Afzal Hussain Elyas, Vol. 10.
22. Mufti Muhammad Shafi Usmani, *Ma'arif-ul-Quran*, trans. Maulana Ahmed Khalil Aziz (Karachi: Maktaba-e-Dar-ul-uloom), Vol. 8.
23. Muhammad Ali As-Sabuni, *Safwat at-Tafasir* (Cairo: Dar as-Sabuni, 1996), vol. 2.
24. Muhammad bin Yazid Majah, *Sunan Ibn Majah* (Dar ul Haya Al-Kutub, n.d.)
25. Ragib Isfahani, *Mufradat fi Gharib ul Quran*, s.v. "أمر" <https://archive.org/details/MufradatalQuran-Raghib/mode/2up>.
26. Sa'id Hawwa, *Tarbiyatun nar Ruhiah*, (Cairo: Dar al-Salam, 2009).
27. Shaykh Adil Al-Haqqani, *The Path to Spiritual Excellence* (America: Islamic Supreme Council of America, 2004).
28. Syed Abu A'la Maududi, *The Meaning of the Quran* (Tafhim ul Quran), trans. Ch. Muhammad Akbar (Lahore: Islamic Publications, n.d.), Vol. 6.