

# KNOW YOURSELF: UNDERSTANDING YOUR INNER SELF (نفس)

*UNDERSTAND YOUR INNER SELF AND CHANGE YOUR LIFE*



**BY SHAIKH MIR ASEDULLAH QUADRI**

# **KNOW YOURSELF: UNDERSTANDING YOUR INNER SELF**

(نفس)

Written By

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# 1. PREFACE

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الحمد لله رب العالمين، والصلاة والسلام على  
سيدنا محمد وعلى آله وصحبه أجمعين

Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) knows about Himself and about His creatures. Together, this is known as Allah's (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) knowledge. To differentiate between Allah's (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) Knowledge about Himself and about His creatures, we say Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) knows about Himself and Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) is aware of His creatures. We all existed in Allah's (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) knowledge as His awareness. Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) was aware about all His creations before their birth. For instance, Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) knew about the ocean, as ocean, a mountain as a mountain, a horse as a 'horse' and a human being as human being. When we say Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) knows about His creations, we mean he knows about our 'person' (Zaat - ذات), and our attributes (Sifaat - صفات) both.

**It is in Quran - وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ [And Allah knows about everything.] (An-Noor - 64).**

**How did we exist in Allah's (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) knowledge?**

One might be inclined to wonder how he/she existed in Allah's knowledge. Did we conform to any predefined state? And if so, then what was the matter of that state?

We existed in Allah's knowledge as 'Probate Architype' (Ain-e-Tabita - عين ثابتة).

## 1.1 WHAT IS PROBATE ARCHETYPE (عين ثابتة)?

A 'probate archetype' (عين ثابتة) can be described as a unit of description about every single creation of Allah. It can also be defined as an 'individual fact (ذات)' of every creature which existed in Allah's (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) knowledge.

When it was time for us to manifest in the external existence (in this world), our material body came into existence as per the requirements of this world. Then Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) associated a unique soul conforming to our fact (ذات) with it. When these two joined with our fact (person/innate - ذات), we came into existence.

Thus, our creation is predicated on the convergence of three major components, namely, (i) the 'human self' or 'person/innate' (ذات), the human body (جسم), and human soul (روح).

Human being has been addressed in the Quran with different names; like (i) Bani Adam (بنى آدم), (ii) Insaan (انسان), (iii) Bashar (بشر), and (iv) Nafs (نفس).

(i) It is in Quran - وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا النَّفْسَ الَّتِي حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ [And do not kill a person who Allah has forbidden.] (Al-Isra -33)

(ii) It is in Quran - وَإِذَا النُّفُوسُ رُوجَتْ [And when the people are joined.] (At-Takweer - 7).

On the day of Resurrection, all people will be joined in front of their Lord to answer for their deeds.

(iii) It is in Quran - اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ۚ لَيَجْمَعَنَّكُمْ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ ۗ وَمَنْ أَصْدَقُ مِنَ اللَّهِ حَدِيثًا [ Allah! There is no god but He; surely, you will all be gathered on the Day of Resurrection in which there is no doubt. And who is more truthful than Allah in statement? (An-Nisa - 87)

## 2. HUMAN INNER SELF (نفس)

The word human self (نفس) is used in Islamic literature in two connotations, as follows.

### 1.2 HUMAN BEING

In this connotation, human body, human self and human soul, all are included.

### 1.3 HUMAN INNER SELF OR CONSCIENCE

It is a non-corporeal self of the Human being. It has two subtleties or faculties, (a) mind, and (b) heart.

Human body has many external and internal organs. The two important internal organs human biological brain and human biological heart are associated with human non-corporeal faculties of mind and heart.

Human inner-self has many attributes, like (i) life, (ii) knowledge, (iii) hearing, (iv) speech (v) seeing, (vi) power, and (vii) intention. All these attributes work in close association with human body's organs like eyes, ears, etc.

In addition, human inner self is provided with two major attributes which are known as (i) virtue, and (ii) evil. These attributes are inherent in every single human being.

Like other species in the animal kingdom, human beings are also required to eat and reproduce. Like animals, humans are strongly territorial and have the inclination to dominate each other.

When the attribute of evil dominates in human inner self, we say it is evil Nafs. When virtue dominates, we say it is Virtuous Nafs.

There are three distinct states of 'Human inner self', **(i)** the Animal Self (Nafs-e-Ammara - النَّفْسُ لَأْمَارَةٌ), **(ii)** the Moral or Reproaching Self (Nafs-e-Lawwama - النَّفْسُ اللَّوَامَةُ), and **(iii)** the Satisfied Self (Nafs-e-Mutma'inna - النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ). All these states have been described in Quran.

### 1.3.1 NAFS-E-AMMARA - (النَّفْسُ لَأْمَارَةٌ)

In this state a human is inclined towards his/her basic (animal) nature. Based on these inclinations, he/she gets involved in pleasures that are harmful for him/her and human society. Behaviors such as irrationality, selfishness, lust and criminal activities take complete hold. People who possess Nafs-e-Ammara become toxic for their family and society.

**It is in Quran** - إِنَّ النَّفْسَ لَأْمَارَةٌ بِالسُّوءِ - [ Certainly (man's) inner self is inclined to command (him to do) evil.] **(Yusuf - 53).**

### 1.3.2 NAFS-E-LAWWAMA (النَّفْسُ اللَّوَّامَةُ)

In this state a human becomes reproachful or conscious about his/her sins. This is the state of a 'believing Muslim'. He/she resists evil deeds and seeks forgiveness of Allah. The realization of the negative effects of his/her wrong doings dawns upon the person. One enters a cycle of erring, regretting and seeking forgiveness and undergoes a massive battle within himself/herself between good and bad.

**It is in Quran - وَلَا أَقْسِمُ بِالنَّفْسِ اللَّوَّامَةِ - [ And I swear by the reproaching Self.] (Al-Qiyaama - 2)**

### 1.3.3 NAFS-E-MUTMA'INNA - (النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ)

After extensive training and purification under a Shaikh of Ihsan, when all faculties of a seeker get subordinated to Sharia, he/she finds a way towards Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ). Now, whatever movement is there, it is 'towards Allah' (الى الله) and 'with Allah' (مع الله). When a person reaches this state, he/she gets associated with the following divine command.

**It is in Quran - يَا أَيُّهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ - ارْجِعِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً - [ (The righteous would be told), 'O Satisfied Self', return to your Lord, well pleased (with Him) and well pleasing (to Him), 'join My (honored) servants!, and enter My Paradise.' ] (Al-Fajr - 27-28).**

Some scholars point towards 7 state of the Nafs, (i) Nafs-e-Ammara, (ii) Nafs-e-Lawwama, (iii) Nafs-e-Mulhama (النفس الملهمة) (the inspired Nafs), (iv) Nafs-e-Radiyya (النفس الراضية) (the pleased Nafs) (v) Nafs-e-Mardiyya (النفس المرضية) (fulfilling or pleasing Nafs), (vi) Nafs-e-Safiyya wal Kamila (النفس الصافية والكاملة) (the purified and complete Nafs), (vii) Nafs-e-Mutma'inna (Satisfied Nafs).

They mention following Quranic verse and say that Nafs-e-Mulhama (the inspired Nafs) is mentioned in it.

**It is in Quran** - فَأَلْهَمَهَا فُجُورَهَا وَتَقْوَاهَا [ (The human) was given awareness of its (inner-self's) evil and its virtue.] (**Ash-Shams - 8**).

And they mention the following Quranic verse and say that Nafs-e-Radiyya (the pleased Nafs) and Nafs-e-Mardiyya (pleasing Nafs) have been mentioned in it.

**It is in Quran** - ارْجِعِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً [ Return to your Lord, well pleased (with Him) and well pleasing (to Him).] (**Al-Fajr - 28**).

They do not mention any Quranic verse for Nafs-e-Safiyya wal Kamila ( النفس الصافية ) (the purified and complete Nafs). However, Islamic scholar Fakhraddin Ar-Razi in his Tafseer referred to the following verse and said the verse can be described as an indication of Nafs-e-Safiyya wal Kamila.

**It is in Quran** - وَإِذَا سَمِعُوا مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَى الرَّسُولِ تَرَىٰ أَعْيُنُهُمْ تَفِيضُ مِنَ الدَّمْعِ [And when they listen to what has been revealed to the Apostle ( صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم ), you can see their eyes brim over with tears at the truth which they recognize, and say: "O Lord, we believe; include us among those who bear witness .] (**Al-Ma'ida - 83**)

It is obvious that Nafs-e-Mutma'inna - (النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ) includes all the Nufoos, (i) Nafs-e-Mulhama (the inspired Nafs), (ii) Nafs-e-Radiyya (the pleased Nafs), (iii) Nafs-e-Mardiyya (pleasing Nafs) and (iv) Nafs-e-Safiyya wal Kamila (النفس الصافية والكاملة) (the purified and complete Nafs) mentioned by the scholars.

### 3. NAFS-E-AMMARA - (النَّفْسَ لِأَمَّارَةً)

Prophet Mohammad (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) described the purification of Nafs-e-Ammara as a major Jihad for Muslims.

**It is in Hadith** - The Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) said, the Mujahid is the one who strives against his self, in obedience to Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ). (Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah, Ibn Hibban, Tabarani, Hakim, etc.)

**It is in Quran** - إِنَّ النَّفْسَ لِأَمَّارَةٌ بِالسُّوءِ - [ Certainly Nafs-e-Ammara is inclined to command (man to do) evil.] (Yusuf - 53).

The attributes of Nafs-e-Ammara are its sicknesses which need to be treated to make it healthier. After treatment, it transforms into Nafs-e-Lawwama (the conscious Nafs). Nafs-e-Lawwama is the state of a Muslim, the person of Sahih Iman because, whenever a wrongdoing is committed, the person of Sahih Iman supplicates Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) for forgiveness.

When the Nafs is fully recovered from its ailments, it becomes Nafs-e-Mutma'inna (satisfied or healthy Nafs).

#### 1.4 HOW CAN WE TREAT THE SICKNESSES OF NAFS-E-AMMARA?

To control our thought process is the first step in the treatment of Nafs-e-Ammara. An evil thought may lead a person to evil and a virtuous thought may lead him to do virtuous deed. This is the reason we teach people to learn to control their thought process.

A consideration or a prompting in the mind is a thought that comes and goes. All such thoughts are not subject to scrutiny. However, if a person determines or intends to do something, his determination is subject to scrutiny. Like, if a person was determined to do a good thing, but could not do it for some unavoidable reason, a virtue is written for him. If the person intends to do an evil thing, attempted it, but could not carry it in view of some outside hurdle, an evil is written for him.

Many useless thoughts come to peoples' minds and keep them busy all the time. These thoughts do not allow them to focus on important issues in their lives.

There are some evil thoughts that increase the dopamine level in human brain. Over a period, these thoughts occur again and again in the human mind. They are known as evil promptings/considerations (Wasawis). After certain time, they become addiction, and permanent source of nagging. Once a thing becomes an addiction, it is very difficult to stay away from it.

There are certain habits which also become an addiction, like wine, intoxicants, watching pornography, laziness, etc. All such habits come under sinful acts.

Dopamine is a chemical located in the brain that is closely related to emotions. It carries signals between nerve cells (neurons) in the brain as a neurotransmitter. It is responsible for the feelings of excitement about getting a reward or doing something that you love. The emotion of lust is closely related to dopamine. It is the chemical that signifies enjoyment and resulting in happiness.

Every time you do something, whether it is watching tv, eating food, playing games, etc., your brain releases chemicals that dictate how you feel towards that specific action. Your brains then categorize these events as good or bad based upon what chemical is released. When something tastes good, or feels good, dopamine is released which encourages you to seek that action again and again. Dopamine plays a huge role in your decision making; particularly those acts that give immediate gratification. The craving for dopamine is so strong that it can overcome your body's defense mechanism. This is the reason why a drug addict will continue to use drugs even at the expense of his own health.

There are certain deeds with which the dopamine level shoots up in mind like the desire to have sex. Another dopamine booster is the desire to have acceptance in society and people respect you and make you a leader/Shaiikh. The bigger the acceptance, the bigger is the increase in dopamine level. Many scholars of Muslim sects suffer from this. As their followers increase, they get more gratification. And they think that they are doing a virtuous deed by spreading the wrongful beliefs of their sect(s). Dopamine is the key element which is mistaken as virtue by many people. Muslim sects like Tablighi Jamaat's enthusiasm in going in Jama 'at is nothing but the dopamine increase in their minds. Members of these groups are accepted by their followers as virtuous people and are respected. The more respect they receive, their

desire to go in Jamaat's increases. They think that they are doing a great virtue by spreading the beliefs of their sects among people.

Salafism was started in the middle of 18<sup>th</sup> century by Ibn Abdul Wahab. Deobandism was started by Qasim Nanotvi, Rasheed Ahmed Gangohi, Ashraf Ali Thanvi and others in the middle of 19<sup>th</sup> century. Followers of these groups should know that if they were on the right path of Islam, Allah's (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) help would have come to them long time ago. Where are the results of their missionary efforts?

## 4. TYPES OF THOUGHTS

There are 4 types of thoughts that come to our minds.

### 1.5 SATANIC

These thoughts prompt a person towards disbelief in Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) and His Apostle (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم). These lead people to develop fearlessness from Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) and His Apostle (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم). Following these thoughts, the person ends up as polytheist or atheist.

### 1.6 NAFS-E-AMMARA

These thoughts lead a person to eat, drink, involve in lustful and wasteful activities. Following these thoughts, a person does not care what he is doing is halal or haram, harmful to the body or sinful activity.

### 1.7 ANGELIC

These thoughts differentiate between Halal and Haram, virtue and evil. These thoughts scare a person away from the evil and teaches how to restrain and follow the sharia.

## 1.8 ALLAH'S (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) LEADS

These enriches a person in witnessing Allah's (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) signs in the Cosmos and help him walk on the right path of Islam.

## 5. **HOW DO WE DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN THOUGHTS?**

As we have described above, it is easy to know if the thought is coming from Satan or Nafs or it is an angelic thought.

## 1.9 HOW DO WE RECOGNIZE IF IT IS A LEAD FROM ALLAH (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ)?

We often come across situations where we do not know how to deal with them, what actions will help us in achieving success especially when there are multiple ways in doing them. In such scenarios, we should turn our attention towards Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) and seek His assistance in deciding a course of action. For instance, should you apply for a certain job or not, should you travel to a place this week or delay it.

The best way to recognize if the lead (thought) is coming from our Nafs or from Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ), is -

1. Take a quiet minute for yourself, and turn your attention towards Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ)
2. Become neutral towards the situation/scenario/problem
3. Say to yourself; it may be harmful for me or it may be good for me, I do not know. Let me wait for the lead from my Lord
4. And put the situation/scenario/problem at the back of your mind and carry on with your daily chores
5. A strong thought will come to your mind to do it at a certain time.
6. Do not act on it immediately. Wait a little more.
7. If it is from Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ), it will come again, and again.
8. Then say bismillah and act on it.

Since you have tried to act upon the lead of your Lord, you are not responsible for its outcome. If it is positive, Al-Hamdulillah. If it happens that you feel stress in doing it,

Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) will protect you from its ill effects and you will eventually come out successful. With regular practice, a time will come when you will easily recognize what is coming from Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) and what is coming from your Nafs even in routine halal actions. Practice it, you will In Sha Allah be successful in both the worlds.

## 6. HOW DO WE ELIMINATE WASTEFUL THOUGHTS?

Sufi Shuyookh of Ihsan have devised many methods to get rid of wasteful considerations. They ask their Murideen to keep their eyes on the ground while walking in the street or market. If you look around, particularly on the faces of women, evil thoughts may occur in your mind.

Certain people have the habit of imaginary flights of fancies. One should think of an integrated schedule of deeds and plan of action for the following few days. If a consideration about this schedule comes again, it should be told that this issue has already been decided; why this useless thought has come again? If a new idea comes to mind, welcome it and implement it in the schedule of actions.

After long practice of restricting oneself from seeing hither and thither, the mind gets settled on one point and whatever you see, you will see it with the 'eye of precision'. With the eye of precision, one can see the signs of Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) spread in the Cosmos.

**It is in Quran** - سَنُرِيهِمْ آيَاتِنَا فِي الْأَفَاقِ وَفِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ [Soon will We let signs manifest themselves (bringing about a change in their lives) both outward and in ward.] (**Fussilat - 53**)

Whenever a lousy thought comes to your mind, say 'Astaghfirullah' (استغفر الله), and pray Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) to rid you of it. You can also recite - قُلْ كُلُّ مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ - [ Say, everything is from Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ).] (**An-Nisa - 78**). When you turn towards Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ), the evil thought runs away from you. Recitation of this Quranic verse also helps in the reduction of considerations. إِنْ يَشَأْ يُذْهِبْكُمْ وَيَأْتِ بِخَلْقٍ جَدِيدٍ - وَمَا ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ بِعَزِيزٍ [Should He like it, He can make you die out and replace you by a new set of people]. (**Ibrahim - 19-20**).

If a consideration comes for achieving something in a specific way, convert it into a supplication and turn towards Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) saying that 'I need this thing and I want to seek it this way. Kindly bestow upon me this thing and guide me in achieving it. This way all your imaginations will turn into supplications. Supplication is an imperative ordained by Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ).

**It is in Quran** - اُدْعُونِي اَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ [ You pray and I will give you.]  
(Ghaffir - 60).

Since supplication is the primary form of worship, Satan will never allow it to continue and these considerations will stop abruptly. The objective of Satan is to refrain you from mindfulness of Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) and see that you spend your life in wasteful activities. Once you turn the consideration into a supplication, Satan will get irritated and will leave you alone and will contemplate another way to deviate you from Allah's (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) mindfulness.

When you get excessive evil considerations, change your state, meaning, if you are sitting, stand, and if you are standing, start walking or sit down. The principle behind this prevention is change in movement.

**It is in Quran** - فَفِرُّوا إِلَى اللَّهِ [ So flee to Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ).] (Adh-Dhariyaat - 50).

Who can misguide you? Never think that even if you try, it is not possible to rid the mind of wasteful thoughts. If you try and seek the assistance of Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ), be sure, In Sha Allah you will be protected.

**It is in Quran** - وَالَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا [ The people who strive in our way, We show and put them on the right path.] (Al-Ankaboot - 69).

The control on your thought process will save you from evil deeds like (i) lying, (ii) backbiting, (iii) slander, (iv) Jealousy, (v) hatred, (vi) greed, (vii) pride, (viii) hypocrisy, (ix) flattery, (x) ingratitude, (xi) stinginess, (xii) deception, (xiii) laziness, (xiv) fearlessness from Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ), (xv), show off, (xvi) anger, (xvii) seeking fame, (xviii) disrespect of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم), Sufi Shuyookh and religions elders, (xix) reliance on people, (xx) Self worship, (xxi) impatience, etc.

Once you control the thoughts, it will help you in the development of positive emotions which may result in virtuous deeds and soon you will enter to the phase of Nafs-e-Lawwama (النَّفْسِ اللّوَّامَةِ) which is the preferred status of a 'believing Muslim'.

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