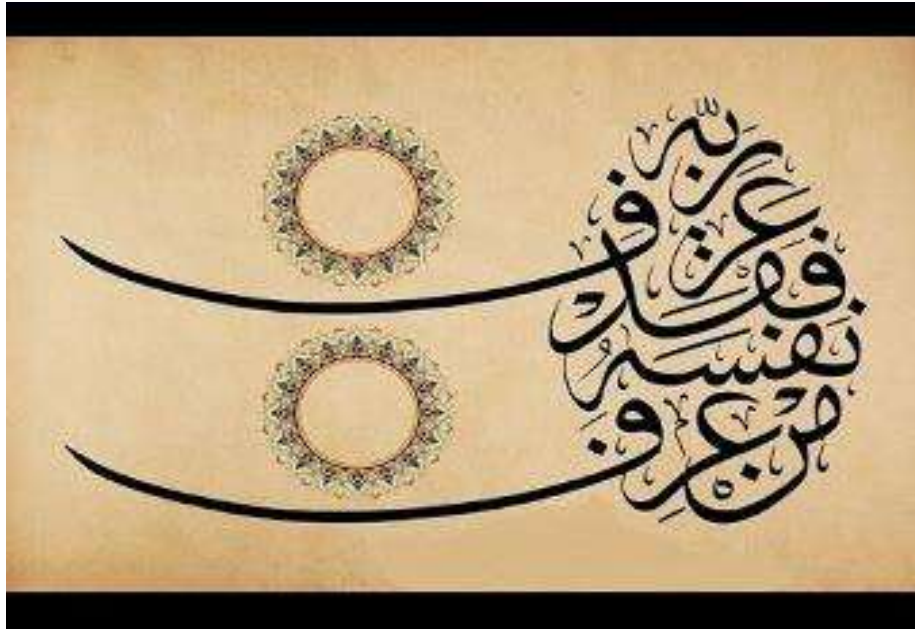




(Who Knows His Self Knows God)

What is Self (Nafs)?

Publishing Date: 17.05.2021

Nafs is one of the most basic and first-understood concepts of Sufism. For this reason, every sufi put forward an opinion on this issue. These views are basically the same. However, their expressions are different from each other. We can express the common view that prevails in all of them as follows: Nafs is condemned to behave of decency and the

servant is officer to be decent. Due to the creation of the nafs, he tries to attract his owner to the rebellion and opposition, but servant tries to turn him away from bad wishes and intimidate him. A person who releases the thread of his nafs becomes both a reason and a partner to his evil deeds.

Kuşeyri (ks) says the following about the nafs in his Treatise on the Science of Sufism:

In the dictionary, the self of something means its existence. According to Sufis, the self does not mean the body, but the bad qualities of the servant and the habits and deeds to be reproached.

The bad traits of the servant are of two types:

1) Sins earned by his own will. These are the decrees belonging to the self. These are things that are either forbidden by religion (haram) or reprehensible (makruh).

2) Habits to be reproached. It is possible to eliminate and clean these bad habits with continuous training. These are arrogance, wrath, grudge, envy, bad temper, intolerance etc. are bad habits such as. These are reproached and maligned habits.

The worst of the bad habits of the nafs is that it thinks such bad qualities are beautiful, considers itself valuable, and expects appreciation from others. This thought of the nafs has been considered as secret shirk.

While disciplining the soul, methods such as abandoning its desires and acting contrary to its wishes are more effective than methods such as hunger, thirst and insomnia that will weaken the ego.

Nafs is a spiritual being placed in a person's body as a place where bad habits will settle. If we think that the soul is a spiritual being that carries good morals in the body, we can think of the nafs as a spiritual being that carries bad habits on the contrary. The soul and nafs are

subtle (invisible) bodies just like angels and devils. Just as in our body the locale of vision is the eye, the locus of hearing is the ear, the locus of sniffing is the nose, in our spirituality, the locale of good habits is the soul, and the locale of bad habits is the nafs.

Levels of the Nafs

The Islamic Scholar Erzurumlu İbrahim Hakkı (ks) says the following about the self and its levels in his work named Marifetname:

According to Islamic scholars, human beings have two kinds of souls. The first of these is the animal, the other is the human spirit. A subtle substance called the animal spirit is a steam that carries life, emotion, movement and will in the body. This soul is called lustful self or animal self.

The essence called the human spirit is the Nefs-i Natika (Speaking Self). This nafs is named as Emmare, Levvame, Mülhime, Mutmainne, Râziye and Kamile. If the self does whatever the lustful self says and obeys it, acts in accordance with it in every way and is under its rule, it is called the nefs-i emmare. If the self calmly meets the orders given by the lustful nafs, it is devoted to Allah, but if it has a tendency to mortal lust, it is called levvame nefs. If this inclination disappears and shows steadfastness in the struggle with the lustful nafs and gains the ability to gain inspiration by returning to his inner realm, it is called Mülhima. If the lustful nafs is under the domination of the soul and reaches the position of ubudiyet (devotion) and its suffering has ceased, if it has completely silenced all of its lust, it is called Mutmainne. If he progressed from this position and disregarded all the positions and gave up all his wishes and became mortal (disappear), this is called Râziye. If this state finds the degree of perfection, becomes appreciated by Allah and becomes the lover of their hearts

with people, this is called Marziyya. If he has all the attributes of perfection and turns into the people for all people, this is called the Nafs-i Kâmile.

The self is a subtle creature that came into being with the soul being lowered into the body. Some scholars mean the self by the soul. But the self is an entity independent of the soul. While one of the children born from the marriage of soul and body is the self, the other is the heart. All praised spiritual and exalted adjectives are found in the heart. All the reproached adjectives are found in the nafs. However, since the self is a member of the soul and body family, there are also some praised attributes related to the survival and spirituality in himself.

Nafs is a friendly-faced enemy whose tricks and traps have no end. It is a great job to banish his evil and beat him. Nafs are more dangerous than enemies such as infidels and demons around man. For this reason, it is stated in a hadith, "Your greatest enemy is your self between your two sides."

Who Knows His Self Knows God

Whoever knows his self certainly knows Allah. Whoever knows his self will be close and happy to Allah, and those who do not know will be far from Him. He who knows his self knows the secrets of the realm and does not care this mortal realm and attains eternal salvation. Whoever knows his self is a virtuous person, whoever does not know is unaware of God.

In a sacred Hadith: *"O People! Whoever knows his self knows Me really. Whoever knows Me wants Me. He finds Me who wants Me and arrives his wishes. Then in his heart it does not live anything other than Me."*

He must be contented, chaste and righteous who knows his self, and throw away anything other than Allah from his heart. God Almighty commanded the Prophet David (pbuh), *"Know your self so that you may know Me"*. David asked, *"O Lord! How can I know my self and how can I know You?"* God replied to him, *"Know that your self is as weak, unable and mortal so that you may know that I am strong, mighty, and enduring, and that you may find Me with Me."*

Purifying of the Self

Allah Almighty has said: *"By the Self, and the proportion and order given to it; And its enlightenment as to its wrong and its right; Truly he succeeds that purifies it, and he fails that corrupts it!"* (The Sun, 91/7-10)

It is a great job to educate the self, to bring it to the righteousness, and to bring it to the level of absolute perfection of the attribute of emmârelik (commanding evil). In this respect, the perfection of human happiness is in the purifying of the self. The peak of being unhappy is being unaware of the self. For, it is said in the above verse that "one who cleanses his self from material and spiritual dirt finds salvations".

It is necessary to know the self in order to be able to discipline and purify. In order to know the self, it is necessary to know God. In a hadith, *"Whoever knows his self knows his Lord"* is stated. In this sense, the knowing is the beginning of every happiness. For this, the discipline of the self must reach a perfect level. Without this perfect discipline the real knowledge that requires knowing God cannot be reached.

According to the sufis, the self is a copy of the heart, which is its source, and a pleasant vapor. This is also called the animal spirit. It is the source of all reproached adjectives. For this reason, Almighty Allah said, *"Because the self intensely commands evil"* (Yusuf, 12/53).

Nafs has spread to all parts and organs of the human body. Animals also have nafs. All the selves of animals are related to their bodies and forms. However, there is a distinct feature in the human self that cannot be found in other animal selves. This feature is its survivability feature. This is a taste given to the human self in the realm of survival. After the self is separated from the body, whether it is in Paradise or in Hell, this feature will always remain. That is why it is stated that "*they will remain there forever*". There is no such thing for animals' selves. There is no taste in them from the realm of survival. They disappear when they are separated from their bodies.

The adjective of survival, which has a taste in the human self, is of two types: The first is the survival of God that has always existed and will exist. The second is the survival of the spirits, angelic and hereafter realms that did not exist before, but exist with the survival of God and will continue to exist from now on. This survival was created by Allah when it was not there before, and it will remain forever.

The human self has tasted from these two types of survival. The survival that man received from God was when Adam's dough was tired. This eternal survival is one of the most beautiful qualities that God Almighty placed the soil on which he was created. The survival tasted by the souls emerged after the union of the soul and body with the function of "*I breathed My soul into it*" (Hijr, 15/29).

In the body of the child who comes to the world, the self is formed as well as the soul. When the child reaches puberty, he reaches his own perfection with him. Thus, the self reaches the power to fulfill the duties deemed necessary by the shari'ah.

There are two personal attributes of the self. All other reproached adjectives emerge from these two essentials. These two attributes are desire and wrath. These two adjectives have the characteristics of four elements (earth, water, air, fire). Desire is inclined downward as it is

mentioned in the verse "*I swear by the descending star*" (The Star, 53/1). This downward inclination and desire is characteristic of water and soil. Wrath is in the characteristics of height, arrogance and tyranny. This is the attribute of fire and air. The foundation of Hell consists of these two attributes. Other ranks of Hell multiply from these two attributes. Desire and wrath are necessarily present in the self. These adjectives actually have useful sides. While the adjective Desire takes the things necessary for the self, the adjective Wrath keeps the nafs away from harmful things. Thus, the self is disciplined by maintaining its existence in the realm of world.

However, it should be paid attention to the balance of these two adjectives. Because the lack of these two attributes causes the deficiency of the self and the body, and the excess causes the lack of reason and faith. These two adjectives should be on sobriety and balance in the upbringing of the self. The measure of this is to comply with Sharia law. If the laws of Sharia are followed, both belief and mind will progress, and each will be used in their own field as ordered by the Shari'ah. In this case, the way of Godliness (taqwa) would be preferred, to obey God instead of permission. Shariah and taqwa are scales that keep all attributes in balance. Thus, animallike adjectives are kept in balance.

Being balanced means that he receives the useful things that will be useful for his own work in the amount of necessity in the time of need. If it turns towards more than need, greed occurs; if it tends to it before the time of need, ambition occurs. If his inclination is towards later stages of his life it is longing, if this orientation is towards worthless things, it reveals the state of lowness and inferiority. If the self's inclination is towards high and delicious things, its lust increases and if it is in the direction of hiding and accumulating it, stinginess will occur. These are some kind of waste. Waste is wrong. It is stated that "*Allah*

does not like those who waste" (The Cattle, 6/141). Avoiding spending for fear of falling into poverty also means cowardice. If the balance of the adjective desire moves towards the deficiency side from the characteristics that it was created, unreliability appears in it with its femininity features.

If the attribute of wrath is more than moderate, bad temper, arrogance, enmity, anger, selfishness, bullying, haste, lying, self-righteousness, boasting, arrogance and rebellion will occur. If wrath is not cleansed of them, hatred will occur in it. If the attribute of wrath is missing from what it should be, this time there will be lack of care and effort, lethargy, humiliation and helplessness.

If desire and wrath are both excessive at the same time, envy will arise. Because, when the adjective desire is high, he wants something he sees in a person to be in himself. On the other hand, if his attribute of wrath is high, he does not want that thing to happen to someone else. This is an expression of envy.

All insignificant attributes are the source of the levels of torment in Hell. Because if these attributes invade the self and overcome it, the self causes various evil deeds such as corruption, evil, killing, plundering and persecution.

When the angels looked at the body of Adam (pbuh) created from the earth, seeing these attributes of the soul, they said, "*Will you create someone who will commit mischief and shed blood there?*" (Baqara, 2/30). The Almighty God answered them, "*I certainly know what you do not know.*" Indeed, the angels did not know that the evil attributes of the self would be transformed into divine, spiritual and angelic attributes that were praised by the elixir of the Shari'ah.

The elixir of shari'ah and godliness keeps the attributes of desire and wrath balanced in the nafs and prevents them from doing anything

other than sharia. Thus, charity, generosity, courage and humility emerge in the soul. Thus, the self rises to the position of mutmainne and so the soul becomes enlightened.

The Ascetic of the Self and Soul

Necmeddîn-i Dâye (ks) writes the following statements about the ascendant of the self in his work named *Mirsâdü'l - İbâd*.

The self ascends to the Most High by passing through the lofty and low ranges and ranks with the spirit mount. He is entitled to be addressed to the verse "*Return to your Lord as He is pleased with you, and You are pleased with Him!*" (Fajr, 89/28).

If it were not for desire, nobody would have found a way to go to Allah. Desire and wrath are like two vultures trapping the self with the adjective Nimrod. Whenever the nimrod adjective nafs rides these two vultures, the vultures turn their faces higher as they feed at high altitudes. Thus, they raise the nimrod adjective self from below to higher positions. Similarly, when these two attributes, desire and wrath, prevail the self when they hear the flavor of the "Return" speech, they leave the vile things and turn their faces to glory. Because their main purpose is not the realm of animal pleasure, but to be close to God. When desire turns to lofties, it turns into love and affection. When wrath turns his face to lofty, it becomes effort and favor. If the self turns towards Allah with love and affection, it will no longer stand in any position and will not compliment anything other than Him. These two tools are the best means to reach God.

It is not possible for the soul to rise to this position alone. However, when the soul met the earth and its marriage with the elements (that is, its entry into the human body), the self child was born. There are two characteristics of the self, namely lust and wrath. Lust is very

ignorant, and wrath is very cruel. These two qualities were achieved by the help of Allah, who saved the self and soul from destruction. The tempting of the order of "return to your Lord" attracted the self to the sublime world and God. Spirit was a smart rider. When he reached the known position, he wanted to pull the reins and stop. But the self, who was very ignorant and very cruel, possessed of desire and wrath, struck himself into the fire of the candle of the Unity like a mad butterfly. Leaving his metaphorical presence, he wrapped his arm around the neck of the reunion oil lamp. Thus the oil lamp transformed his metaphorical presence, which is a butterfly, into his true presence of lamp. Like a perfect butterfly, he reaches the light of the candle. Thus, the truth "*who knows his self knows God, too*" emerges. That is, whoever recognizes his self as a butterfly knows that his lamp is Allah Almighty.

Your Self Become a Mirror

Only human beings bear the burden of the trust of knowing God. For this reason, only human wanted to be given all attributes in terms of form and truth, a mirror that shows the unity of divine divinity among beings. What is expressed in the hadith "*Allah created Adam in His own image*" indicates this meaning. The essence of the human self is the heart. The heart is a mirror and both realms are its sheath. All attributes of Allah become apparent through this mirror so that "*We will show them Our signs both in the horizons and in their own selves*" (Fussilat, 41/53).

A person who has the ability to be a mirror reaches the level of perfection by being educated. In this case, he observes all the attributes of God in himself. Then he perceives that everything created is actually for himself. So he reaches the truth "*He who knows himself*

knows his Lord". Thus, he understands well which secret gives him miracle and superiority.

In order for the human self to be a pure mirror, it must travel a long way. This is possible by studying a course in which the trio of sharia, sect and truth takes place. This journey happens gradually and step by step. This road carries many dangers. In one hadith, *"People are like mines of gold and silver"* is stated. This means that the desired goal should be achieved by taking out the mineral within the human being in a beautiful way and by training step by step until it reaches the level of being a mirror.

Views of Ibn Arabi (ks)

Ibn Arabi expresses the following views on this subject in his work titled *Fütûhâtı Mekkiyye*.

According to Ibn Arabi, what is known only in the sight of Allah comes into existence and the servant gets his wish only after he wishes.

The holy Hadith: *"O People! I created the things for you, and you for Myself."*

Since man has life, he must acquire the attributes of perfection that are created for him. Because God created man in His own image in terms of spirit, body and self with perfection.

Allah created the "universal soul" without anything. He addressed him as follows: *"You are my servant and I am your Lord. I gave you my own names and attributes. Consequently, the person who saw you saw Me, who obeyed you obeyed Me, who knew you knew Me, and who did not know you did not know Me either. As those who are below you are subject to you, as are you are subject to Me. Therefore, you are My dress, you are My veil, you are My curtain."*

Allah takes out the self for the soul from itself. Nafs is obtained through derivation. Spirit said:

- This is a part of me and I am whole of it. Just as I am from You (God), You are not from me.

Spirit said:

- My God! I talked through You. You have undoubtedly disciplined me, kept the secret of helping and disciplining from me, and separated its knowledge only for yourself. Conceal my help from the self so that it will not know me as I do not know You.

Thereupon, God created the quality of acceptance and need in the self, and made the mind the vizier to the holy soul.

Then the soul turned to the nafs and said to him:

- Who am I?

Nafs answered:

- You are my Lord! My survival depends on you as my life depends on you.

God has created the power of desire in front of the soul and the power of lust in front of the mind and made lust the vizier of desire. He has created the ability to accept everything that comes to self in general. Thus, the self was found between two powerful lords (spirit and desire), each of whom has the lofty vizier. These viziers are lust and mind. Each of the two lords constantly calls the self to itself. In reality, all are from Allah, "*All things are from Allah*" (The Women, 4/78). In another verse, "*We help these and those from the bestow of your Lord.*" (The Night, 17/20) is stated. For this reason, the self has become a place of metamorphosis and purification. "*Allah has inspired good and evil to him (the self).*" (Shams, 91/8) It was stated before this verse, "I swear by the self and the One who arranged it" (Shams, 91/7). If the

self responds to the call of desire, metamorphosis occurs, if it responds to the inviter of the soul, purification occurs in terms of religion and unification.

When the spirit sees that it shouts but no one responds to it, it says:

- Who is blocking my property from responding to my invitation?

The vizier (mind) says:

- In front of you is a ruler named desire, who has a strong authority, to whom it is obeyed. His blessings are in advance. The world belongs to him, with all its ornaments. He opened his own rank to the self, invited him, and the self responded and accepted to this invitation.

Thereupon, the soul turns to Allah with complaint, so his servitude has been fixed. This was what Allah wanted.

For your comments and criticisms: oryanmh@gmail.com

[Home Page](#)

[Articles](#)