THREE TYPES OF NAFS

There are three principal stages of *nafs* in Sufistic Wisdom, also mentioned in different verses of the Quran. The Sufis call them "stages" in the process of development, refinement and mastery of the *nafs*.[[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nafs#cite_note-IdriesShah-7) [[8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nafs#cite_note-Frager1-8) **Oh Content Soul!**

**Return unto your Lord pleased with him and He pleased with you.**

**Enter amongst My servants**

**and enter into My gardens**

**The inciting *nafs* (*an-nafs al-ʾammārah*)**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Nafs&action=edit&section=4" \o "Edit section: The inciting nafs (an-nafs al-ʾammārah))]

In its primitive stage the *nafs* incites us to commit evil; this is the *nafs* as the lower self, the base instincts.[[9]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nafs#cite_note-Schimmel_1975-9)[[10]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nafs#cite_note-10) In the eponymous [Sura](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sura" \o "Sura) of the Quran, [Yusuf](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_in_Islam) says "Yet I claim not that my *nafs* was innocent: Verily the *nafs* incites to evil."[[Quran](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quran)[12:53](https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A2002.02.0006%3Asura%3D12%3Averse%3D53)] Islam emphasizes the importance of fighting the inciting *nafs* in Quran[[11]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nafs" \l "cite_note-ahadess.com-11) as well as in [hadith](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hadith). One [tradition](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hadith) holds that [Muhammad](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muhammad) said after returning from a war, "We now return from the small struggle ([Jihad Asghar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jihad#Lesser_Jihad_.28Jihad_bil_Saif.29)) to the big struggle ([Jihad Akbar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jihad#Greater_Jihad))". His companions asked, "O [prophet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prophet) of [God](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/God), what is the big struggle?" He replied, "The struggle against *nafs*."[[12]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nafs#cite_note-Kabbani-12)

This stage is generally divided into the levels *al nafs al-hayawaniyya* and *al nafs al-iblissiyya*. *Al nafs al-hayawaniyya* ("the animal state") describes the self, which runs after material possessesion, sensual desires and animalistic pleasures. *Al nafs al-iblissiyya* is even lower than the animal state, because the self seeks to replace God in the love for itself.[[13]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nafs#cite_note-13)

The Quran enjoins the faithful "to hinder the *nafs* from [lust](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lust)",[[Quran](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quran)[79:40](https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A2002.02.0006%3Asura%3D79%3Averse%3D40)] and another [traditional narration](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hadith) warns that "the worst enemy you have is [the *nafs*] between your sides."[[14]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nafs#cite_note-Nicholson_1914-14) [Rumi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rumi) warns of the *nafs* in its guise of religious hypocrisy, saying "the *nafs* has a [rosary](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rosary) and a [Koran](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Koran) in its right hand, and a [scimitar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scimitar) and dagger in the sleeve."[[15]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nafs#cite_note-Nicholson_1990-15)

Animal imagery is often used to describe the *nafs*. A popular image is a donkey or unruly horse that must be trained and broken so that eventually it will bear its rider to the goal.[[16]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nafs#cite_note-Nicholson_1911-16) [Rumi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rumi) compares the *nafs* to a camel that the hero [Majnun](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Majnun" \o "Majnun), representing the intellect (['Aql](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%27Aql)), strains to turn in the direction of the dwelling-place of his beloved.[[15]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nafs#cite_note-Nicholson_1990-15)

**The self-accusing *nafs* (*an-nafs al-luwwāmah*)**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Nafs&action=edit&section=5" \o "Edit section: The self-accusing nafs (an-nafs al-luwwāmah))]

In Sura al-[Qiyama](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qiyama" \o "Qiyama) the Quran mentions "the self-accusing *nafs*".[[Quran](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quran" \o "Quran)[75:2](https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A2002.02.0006%3Asura%3D75%3Averse%3D2)] This is the stage where "the [conscience](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conscience) is awakened and the self accuses one for listening to one’s ego. One repents and asks for [forgiveness](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forgiveness)."[[17]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nafs#cite_note-PathToSpiritualExcellence-17) Here the *nafs* is inspired by one’s heart, sees the results of one’s actions, agrees with one's brain, sees one's weaknesses, and aspires to perfection.

**The *nafs* at peace (*an-nafs al-muṭmaʾinnah*)**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Nafs&action=edit&section=6" \o "Edit section: The nafs at peace (an-nafs al-muṭmaʾinnah))]

In Sura al-[Fajr](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fajr" \o "Fajr) the Quran mentions "the *nafs* at peace".[[Quran](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quran)[89:27](https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A2002.02.0006%3Asura%3D89%3Averse%3D27)] This is the ideal stage of ego for Muslims. On this level one is firm in one’s faith and leaves bad manners behind.[[17]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nafs#cite_note-PathToSpiritualExcellence-17) The soul becomes tranquil, at peace.[[17]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nafs#cite_note-PathToSpiritualExcellence-17) At this stage, followers of Sufism have relieved themselves of all [materialism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Materialism) and worldly problems and are satisfied with the will of God.

**THREEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE NAFSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSS**

The soul is one, but depending on the actions of an individual it goes through different stages and can be characterised by any of the following three terms:

1. **Nafsun Ammarah.**

Every human being has *nafsun ammarah*; this soul always drives the body to sin and always compels the body to disobey Allah سبحانه وتعالى**.** It always sinks lower and lower and reduces a person to his whims, desires and passions. When a person can rise from that low state of *nafsun ammarah* to a higher state then he reaches a stage where his soul is *nafsun lawwamah*, the intermediary stage.

1. **Nafsun Lawwamah.**

This stage is not as lowly as *nafsun ammarah*. A person reaches a stage where there is both good and evil in him. At this stage, a person sins but then feels remorse. His*nafs* (soul) laments and rebukes him for sinning and displeasing Allah. This is a far greater stage than *nafsun ammara*. But we should not rest here and should try and attain the lofty rank of *nafsun mutma’innah.*

1. **Nafsun *Mutma’innah.***

This is the stage where a person is at peace and content with *dhikr* (remembrance of Allah). Despite the state a person may be in physically, either in terms of material possessions or the body, his heart will forever be in a state of peace and contentment. This will continue till death, if the person remains on course. It is at this stage when the angels will say to him, ‘*Oh Content Soul! Return unto your lord pleased with him and He pleased with you. Enter amongst my servants and enter into my gardens’* *[Surah al-Fajr, 27-30].*