

CHAPTER TWO

PURIFICATION OF HUMAN SOUL IN ISLAM AND ITS RELATION TO ETHICS AND SUFISM

2.1 Introduction

Human beings consist of two main parts: the physical body and the spiritual self. The latter consists of the *rūḥ* (i.e., the spirit), the *naḥs* (i.e., the self or the ego), the *‘aql* (i.e., the intellect) and *qalb* (i.e., the spiritual heart). Although all are important and need to be cared for, many people concentrate on their physical needs and give less attention to their spiritual ones. Abū Hurayrah reported that the Messenger of Allah (SAW) said: “Verily, Allah does not look to your bodies nor to your faces but He looks to your hearts and your deeds” (Hadith. Muslim. Kitāb Al-Bir wa Al-Ṣilah wa Al-Ādāb: Bāb Taḥrīm Ḍulm Al-Muslim: #2564). And in the story between Salmān and Abū Al-Dardā’ reported by Abū Juḥayfah, Salmān said to Abū Al-Dardā’: You owe a duty to your Lord, you owe a duty to your body; you owe a duty to your family; so you should give to everyone his due. Then, Abū Al-Dardā’ came to the Prophet (SAW) and reported the whole story and the Prophet said: “Salmān is right” (Hadith. Al-Bukhārī. Kitāb Al-Adab: Bāb Ṣun‘ Al-Ta‘ām wa Al-Takalluf li-Al-Ḍayf: #1968). These two Hadiths show the importance of taking care of one’s physical needs, but priority still goes to the spiritual aspects which are considered to be the starting point for rectifying one’s deeds.

In this thesis, the human soul is meant to refer to the *naḥs*. It is not concerned with the long debates held on the meaning and nature of the *rūḥ*. Allah (SWT) says in the Qur’an: “[Prophet], they ask you about the Spirit. Say, ‘The Spirit is part of my

Lord's domain. You have only been given a little knowledge''' (Al-Qur'an. Al-Isrā' 17:85)¹³.

This chapter focuses on the aspects and nature of the human soul from the Islamic perspective. It also touches upon the status of the soul in Islam. Then, it discusses the significance, goal and fruits of the purification of the soul in the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Further, it outlines the methodology of purifying the soul and sheds the light on the impediments to purification of the soul according to the Islamic perspective. Finally, it points out the relation between purification of the soul, spirituality and asceticism.

2.2 The Nature Of Human Soul (*Nafs*) From The Islamic Perspective

In many of its āyahs, the Qur'an calls upon people to observe the miracles and wisdom beyond the creation of humanity and the human soul. It provides many details on the description of the human soul and its state, being: righteous or deviant, good or evil, believer or non-believer, heavenly or earthly, etc. Indeed, Allah (SWT), the creator of this humanly soul, is the best of creators and the ever most knowledgeable regarding the soul, its strengths, weaknesses and its exact needs to live successfully. He says in the Qur'an, "We created man—We know what his soul whispers to him: We are closer to him than his jugular vein" (Al-Qur'an. Qāf 50:16)¹⁴. The Qur'an itself is a Book of guidance and for guidance and in it is the guidance. It is the Book, which addresses the human soul and guides it towards its tranquility and success in this life and the hereafter.

Islam, as a way of life, outlines a comprehensive model of the human being that incorporates the spiritual, psychological, emotional and social aspects. From its teachings we discover that at the core, we are spiritual beings who need to cultivate

and sustain a connection with our Creator. While philosophers, scientists and researchers throughout the ages have attempted to understand the true nature of humankind, we find that the most precise, detailed and comprehensive explanation of the human soul lies in the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Allah (SWT) knows us better than we know ourselves, and His knowledge encompasses much that we will never be able to grasp (Utz, 2011).

2.2.1 Aspects And Types Of Human Soul In The Qur'an And The Sunnah

According to Abdul-Raof (2004: 94), "The morphological mechanism of Arabic enables it to produce lexical items derived from the same root (theoretically over 200 words can be derived from the same root)." Linguistically, four forms are derived from the trilateral root *n-f-s*, occurring two hundred and ninety-eight (298) times in the Qur'an: once as the form V verb *tanaffasa*, once as the form VI verb *yatanāfas*, two hundred and ninety-five (295) times as the noun *nafs* and once as the form VI active participle *mutanāfisūn*. However, The Arabic word usually denotes a range of meanings depending on the context. For example, words derived from the trilateral root *n-f-s* denote meanings such as: to breathe, to aspire, those who compete or strive, a person, the soul (spirit) and oneself.

In the Qur'an, the soul (*nafs*) is mentioned in different situations and manners, accompanied with various verbs, nouns and adjectives. Studying all the Qur'anic āyahs, nouns, etc. that deal with the soul and its counterparts thoroughly gives a good understanding of the concept. Narrations of Hadith on the subject should be involved as well. However, this thesis will only touch upon some of the meanings and issues specified in the Qur'an and Hadith rather than going into prolonged details due to space limitations. According to Al-Aṣḥānī (2009: 818–819), *al-nafs* in the Qur'an

means the *rūḥ* as in: “As the angels stretch out their hands [to them], saying, ‘Give up your souls’” (Al-Qur’an. Al-An‘ām 6:93)¹⁵. It also refers to a person’s own self as in: “You know all that is within me, though I do not know what is within You” (Al-Qur’an. Al-Mā‘idah 5:116)¹⁶. Interestingly, the IV form of the root *n-f-s*, *munāfasah* (i.e., to compete for the good), means to struggle with one’s soul as a constant attempt to resemble the nobles and to reach them without the cause of any harm as in: “let those who strive, strive for this” (Al-Qur’an. Al-Muṭaffifīn 83:26)¹⁷.

Further, it is stated in the Qur’an in several places that the soul is held responsible and so it will be asked for its doings, either good or bad. For example, Allah says in the Qur’an: “We do not burden any soul with more than it can bear” (Al-Qur’an. Al-A‘rāf 7:42)¹⁸ and in addressing the Prophet Muḥammad (SAW): “You are accountable only for yourself” (Al-Qur’an. Al-Nisā’ 4:84)¹⁹. Commenting on the lateral āyah, Al-Sa‘dī (2002: 205) notes that every person should strive with his own *nafs* to comply with Allah’s commands in *jihād* of the *nafs* and in all other aspects of life and that no one has the authority upon the other, neither is one held responsible for the doings of others. The soul also earns whatever it strives for as in: “When every soul will be paid in full for what it has done, and they will not be wronged” (Al-Qur’an. Al-‘Imrān 3:25)²⁰ and in: “Every soul is held in pledge for its deeds” (Al-Qur’an. Al-Muddathir 74:38)²¹. Clearly, these two āyahs refer to the fact that every soul will be paid in full for what it has actually done (Ibn Kathīr, 1998: 8/281 & Al-Qurṭubī, 1964: 19/85).

If the soul is held responsible for all its actions and behaviour, then this means that it is the motivator for these actions and in it lies the thought, desires, emotions, willingness and abilities. The Qur’an states that in the soul lies the awareness of the good and the bad as in: “by the soul and how He formed it, and inspired it [to know]

its own rebellion and piety!” (Al-Qur’an. Al-Shams 91:7–8)²². The *nafs* also does the good or the bad as in: “On the Day when every soul finds all the good it has done present before it, it will wish all the bad it has done to be far, far away” (Al-Qur’an. Al-‘Imrān 3:30)²³ and in: “anything bad is [ultimately] from yourself” (Al-Qur’an. Al-Nisā’ 4:79)²⁴. According to Ibn ‘Abbās (Ibn Kathīr, 1998: 8/400), Allah (SWT) has set forth before every soul the good and the bad. In it is, as well, the grace of will and patience as in: “Content yourself with those who pray to their Lord morning and evening” (Al-Qur’an. Al-Kahf 18:28)²⁵. In the hereafter, the soul will be given the ability to speak, move and plead for itself as stated in: “On the Day when every soul will come pleading for itself” (Al-Qur’an. Al-Nahl 16:111)²⁶ and in: “Each person will arrive attended by an [angel] to drive him on and another to bear witness” (Al-Qur’an. Qāf 50:21)²⁷. These two āyahs indicate different abilities given to the soul in the hereafter as to be given the chance to argue for its actions in life. So, the soul ‘comes up,’ ‘struggles,’ ‘comes forth,’ etc. According to Ibn Kathīr (1998), every soul will argue for itself and no one argues on behalf of it (p. 4/522).

Emotions are also found in the human soul, such as the feelings of compassion and moral pain as in: “But [Prophet] are you going to worry yourself to death over them if they do not believe in this message?” (Al-Qur’an. Al-Kahf 18:6)²⁸ and in: “Perhaps, [O Muhammad], you would kill yourself with grief that they will not be believers” (Al-Qur’an. Al-Shu‘arā’ 26:3)²⁹. Other feelings are also stated in the Qur’an such as that of sadness as in: “[Prophet], do not waste your soul away with regret for them” (Al-Qur’an. Fāṭir 35:8)³⁰. Feelings of fear are mentioned as in: “Moses was inwardly alarmed” (Al-Qur’an. Ṭaha 20:67)³¹. Passion and tendency are mentioned in: “Some women of the city said, ‘The governor’s wife is trying to seduce her slave! Love for him consumes her heart! It is clear to us that she has gone astray’”

(Al-Qur'an. Yūsuf 12:30)³² and in: "These people merely follow guesswork and the whims of their souls" (Al-Qur'an. Al-Najm 53:23)³³ and in: "for anyone who feared the meeting with his Lord and restrained himself from base desires, Paradise will be home" (Al-Qur'an. Al-Nazi'āt 79:40–41)³⁴. Another type of feelings covered in the Qur'an is desires as in: "nor should they have cared about themselves more than him" (Al-Qur'an. Al-Tawbah 9:120)³⁵. Also, the soul tastes and enjoys food, drink and natural and moral beauty as in: "Dishes and goblets of gold will be passed around them with all that their souls desire and their eyes delight in" (Al-Qur'an. Al-Zukhruf 43:71)³⁶. The human soul may also feel the sense of fatigue and tiredness as in: "They carry your loads to lands you yourselves could not reach without great hardship—truly your Lord is kind and merciful" (Al-Qur'an. Al-Nahl 16:7)³⁷.

Further, the soul is either a believer or a disbeliever. Allah (SWT) says in the Qur'an: "No soul can believe except by God's will" (Al-Qur'an. Yūnus 10:100)³⁸. The soul may whisper, entice and lead to evil as in: "We created man—We know what his soul whispers to him: We are closer to him than his jugular vein" (Al-Qur'an. Qāf 50:16)³⁹. In: "my soul prompted me to do what I did" (Al-Qur'an. Ṭaha 20:96)⁴⁰ and in: "But his soul prompted him to kill his brother: he killed him and became one of the losers" (Al-Qur'an. Al-Mā'idah 5:30)⁴¹. It is also stated that the human soul carries in it greediness, as in the following two āyahs: "human souls are prone to selfishness" (Al-Qur'an. Al-Nisā' 4:128)⁴² and "those who are saved from their own souls' greed are truly successful" (Al-Qur'an. Al-Ḥashr 59:9)⁴³.

The Qur'an delineates three categories for the human soul. Each of these types represents a phase change within the human being. Each type incorporates a wide range within itself and the spiritual practices, the ritual requirements, the contemplative aspects and the ethical imperatives to change the inner state of the soul

(*nafs*). Each individual experiences these states as a result of his/her intentions, motives, thoughts, will, deeds and the degree of their relationship with the Creator (SWT). The first type of the soul is the lowest, called the commanding soul or the soul inclined to evil (*al-nafs al-ammārah bissū*), which is prone to evil and, if not checked and controlled will lead to perdition. The state of this type of soul is mentioned in the Qur'an in: "I do not pretend to be blameless, for man's very soul incites him to evil unless my Lord shows mercy: He is most forgiving, most merciful" (Al-Qur'an. Yūsuf 12:53)⁴⁴. According to Picken (2011), "This verse alludes to the lowest level of the human soul, which not only encourages the performance of evil but also exerts effort to make such actions acceptable and appealing" (p. 135). On the other hand, the verse indicates that in order to lessen the impact of this type of soul and keep it under one's control, a person needs two things: Allah's help and guidance and a humanly sincere effort.

In fact, the soul consists of a conglomeration of wants, desires, impulses, habits, fears, angers, appetites, tendencies and an ego that constructs a self image that it then seeks to protect and maintain any way it can even by distorting the true nature of the realities around it. This is the commanding soul, but it is not one which commands but rather it is a *nafs* which is commanded by this host of impulses and desires. It wanders distracted or seeks out satisfaction of its wants and justifies its behavior to itself so that it can continue doing what it does. At this stage the person is like a kingdom in chaos where the citizens are habits, desires, fears, moods, impulses, and egoism. And all of which are clamouring for attention and satisfaction while the *nafs* is a slave to them pulled this way and that in response to their demands. Thus, it is worthy to note that the exaggerative form '*ammārah*' is used to describe this type of soul, as it literally means "constantly urging, always demanding, inciting and instigating"

(Wehr, n.d.: 27) as if this type of soul is always commanding toward evil. This is clearly shown in the Qur'anic context where the soul is described as enticing (*sawwalat*), subjecting (*tawwa'at*) and tempting (*tuwaswis*) in verses 20:96, 12:18, 5:30 and 50:16 respectively.

Interestingly, Picken (2011: 135) refers to the intrinsic link and relationship between the behaviour of the soul and the role of Satan in influencing its behaviour. Seemingly, that the Satan seduces and suggests actions and thoughts to the soul, and the soul, due to its self-serving outlook, pursues such deeds. Such a relationship may be deduced from the description of the Qur'an for Satan's characteristics. Thus, Satan is described in the Qur'an as enticing (*sawwalat*), tempting (*tuwaswis*) and misguiding (*yudil*) in verses 47:25, 114:3–4, 5:30 and 4:60 respectively. Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyyah (n.d.: 642–643), as well, comments to this effect:

As for the soul inclined to evil, Satan is its associate and companion; he makes promises to it and awakens its desires, casting falsehood into it, commanding it to evil and making it appear appealing in a form that it will find acceptable and condone, with a variety of provisions and falsehood, false hopes and destructive appetites. The Satan seeks aid against the soul by using its desires and wishes, and through him every evil enters it.

However, the Qur'an clearly states that the power, dominance and plot of the Satan is powerless and weak upon the believers: "He has no power over those who believe and trust in their Lord; his power is only over those who ally themselves with him and those who, because of him, join partners with God" (Al-Qur'an. Al-Naḥl 16:99–100)⁴⁵; "Satan's strategies are truly weak" (Al-Qur'an. Al-Nisā' 4:76)⁴⁶. According to Al-Sa'dī (2002), a plot is to take invisible routes to harm the enemy. However, the Satan, no matter how great his plot is, is extremely weak (p. 202). Moreover, Al-

Jurjānī (n.d.) defines the commanding soul as “The one that inclines to the bodily nature, ordering [the pursuit of] physical pleasures and appetites, attracting the heart to base levels; as such, it is the abode of every evil and the source of blame-worthy characteristics” (p. 204). Thus, in this type of soul, the limits set by Allah (SWT) are usually made secondary when compared to the fulfillment of its desires and own needs. Thus, the performance of forbidden acts is frequent and the farthest outcomes of this state are sin and iniquity.

The second type of the human soul mentioned in the Qur’an is known as the blaming or self-reproaching soul (*al-naḥs al-lawwāmah*). This type of soul is the one that Allah (SWT) has sworn by, as stated in: “and by the self-reproaching soul!” (Al-Qur’an. Al-Qiyāmah 75:2)⁴⁷, which indicates its good status. When the famous exegete, Mujāhid (d. 104/722), was asked regarding this āyah he replied, “This is the soul that blames itself for what has passed and feels regret; it blames itself for the evil it has committed as to why it did it and with regard to doing good, as to why it did not do more” (quoted in; Al-Qurṭubī, 1964: 19/93). Thus, at this level an inner struggle takes place within the self, the person has become aware of a higher, deeper reality and struggles to centre their consciousness so that they do not move erratically from impulse to impulse but so that all action and thought is fed through an aware, conscious centre that struggles to manage and control the self. At this level, the soul is conscious of its own imperfections and of evil, and resists it. The soul asks for Allah’s grace and pardon after repentance and tries to amend as it hopes to reach salvation.

Further, as the individual struggles to replace his wrongdoings with good actions, the reproachful soul takes over. Abū Hurayrah reported that the Prophet (SAW) said: “One speaks a word displeasing to Allah without considering it of any importance, and for this reason he will sink down into Hell” (Hadith. Al-Bukhārī.

Kitāb Al-Riqāq: Bāb Ḥifẓ Al-Lisān: #6478). Al-Ḥasan Al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728), a great Muslim scholar of the past said: “We do not see the believer except that he blames himself; [asking himself] ‘what did I intend by my speech? What did I intend by my eating? What did I intend by my thought?’ Whereas the shameless reprobate continues step by step, without sanctioning his soul” (Al-Rāzī, 1999: 30/720).

Moreover, Picken (2011: 136–137) lists in his book on *Spiritual Purification in Islam* a number of different views of Muslim scholars concerning the adjective describing this type of soul (i.e., *al-lawwāmah*). He states four variant views. The first view suggests that this adjective is derived from the Arabic verbal noun ‘*al-talawwum*’ meaning shifting repeatedly. Thus, the soul in this state according to this view is categorized by its changeability, fickleness, capriciousness, inconsistency, changing from one state to another, never truly reaching equilibrium. The second view thinks that this adjective is actually derived from the term ‘*lawm*’ meaning blame, which suggests that the soul blames itself or alternatively is blame-worthy. The third view considers this type of soul to refer to both the sinner and the righteous person in the sense that the righteous person blames his soul for the committing of the sin or the neglect of an act of obedience. In a separate fourth view, this form of blaming is said to take place on the Day of Judgement, where every soul will blame itself for its deeds in the worldly life. Commenting on these variant views, Al-Jawziyyah (n.d.) states:

All these statements are true and do not contradict one another, as the soul may be described as such, in the sense that it has been termed ‘self-reproaching.’

However, self-reproach is of two types: self-reproach that is blameworthy, by which is meant the soul that is ignorant and tyrannical and which has been censured by God and His angels. [The second type is] self-reproach that is not

blameworthy, which is the soul that continues to reproach its owner regarding the owner's deficiencies in God's obedience despite the owner's best efforts..." (p. 639).

The third type of the human soul is the highest level, called the tranquil soul (*al-nafs al-muṭma'innah*). Allah (SWT) says in the Qur'an: "[But] you, soul at peace: return to your Lord well pleased and well pleasing; go in among My servants; and into My Garden" (Al-Qur'an. Al-Fajr 89: 27–30)⁴⁸. Mujāhid is quoted commenting on this āyah that the tranquil soul is the one "that is satisfied with the decree of God; it knows that what does not befall it was not destined to do so and what does befall it was destined to do so" (quoted in; Al-Qurṭubī, 1964: 20/57). Thus, this soul is the most purified of wrongdoing and is the most worthy of Allah's acceptance. With this soul an individual is not envious or jealous and has no animosity in his heart towards others, but instead is at peace. This soul is tranquil as it rests on the certitude of Allah. It is calm and awaits the promise of Allah; its owner is content with everything and has arrived at such a stage of certainty that it is almost as if it can see the will of Allah in all aspects of life. It waits for its time of departure from this relative, physical world into the everlasting reality of life after death without fear. It submits itself to the will of Allah contentedly never dissatisfied or complaining, and with its faith never wavering. According to Al-jawziyyah (n.d.):

If the *nafs* became at ease from doubt to certainty; from ignorance to knowledge; from heedlessness to remembrance; from deception to repentance; from ostentation to sincerity; from deceit to truthfulness; from being incapable to being competent; from the tyranny of conceit to the submissiveness of humility; from arrogance to modesty and from laxity to action, then the soul has achieved tranquillity. (p. 631)

To sum up, each of these stages of the *nafs* signifies a phase change within the human being. In other words, the *nafs* is a single entity, although its state may change from the commanding soul, to the blaming one, to the tranquil, which is the final aim of perfection.

In the Sunnah, the soul is not given less attention than that found in the Qur'an. Many Hadiths that talk about the soul from its various aspects can be found. For example, the following Hadiths refer to the importance of striving oneself and to control it so that it performs the good and keeps away from evil. It is related on the authority of 'Abdullah Ibn 'Amr that the Prophet (SAW) used to seek refuge with Allah from four things from which was a "soul that is never satisfied"⁷⁴ (Hadith. Al-Nasā'ī. Sunan Al-Nasā'ī. Kitāb Al-Isti'āthah: Bāb Al-Isti'āthah min Qalbin la Yakhsha': #5442). Also, Faḍālah Ibn 'Ubayd narrated that he heard the Messenger of Allah (SAW) saying: "The Mujāhid is one who strives against his own soul" (Hadith. Al-Tirmidhī. Kitāb Fada'il Al-Jihad: Bāb Mā Jā'a fī Faḍl man māta Murābiṭā: #1621) and Abū Hurayrah narrated that Allah's Messenger (SAW) said: "The strong person is not the one who overcomes the people by his strength, but the strong one is the one who controls himself while in anger" (Hadith. Al-Bukhārī. Kitāb Al-Adab: Bāb Al-Ḥadhar min Al-Ghaḍab: #6114).

Furthermore, the greediness, pride and ego of the soul is stated in the Hadith, as well, as narrated by Ibn Abbās that he heard the Messenger of Allah (SAW) saying: "If there were for the son of Adam a valley full of riches, he would long to possess another one like it" (Hadith. Muslim. Kitāb Al-Zakah: Bāb law anna libn Ādama Wādiyayni la-ibtaghā Thālithan: #1049) and 'Abdullah Ibn 'Umar reported that the Prophet (SAW) said: "If anyone behaves insolently or walks with an arrogant manner,

⁷⁴ Hadith Ṣaḥīḥ (Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Nasā'ī: #5457).

he will meet Allah Almighty covered with His anger”⁷⁵ (Hadith. Al-Bukhārī. *Al-Adab Al-Mufrad*. Bāb Al-Kibr: #549). Also, on more than one, the Prophet (SAW) asks Allah (SWT) to grant him refuge from the evilness of the soul. Some Hadiths focus on the contentment and self-esteem of oneself as in the Hadith narrated from Abū Hurayrah that the Prophet (SAW) said, “Richness does not mean having a great amount of property, but richness is selfcontentment” (Hadith. Al-Bukhārī. Kitāb Al-Riqāq: Bāb Al-Ghinā Ghinā Al-Nafs: #6446). Al-Qurtubī (quoted in; Ibn Hajar, 2001: 277) comments on this Hadith saying:

The meaning of the Hadith is that richness that is beneficial, great and praiseworthy is richness of the soul (*ghinā al-nafs*); this means that if a person’s soul is content, it refrains from desires, is enhanced and becomes superior, attaining respectability, prestige, honour and praise, which is more than the wealth that is acquired by someone who has poverty of the soul (*faqīr al-nafs*) due to his greed, as this embroils him in contemptible matters and despicable acts due to his base aspirations and his miserliness. [Such a person is] continuously condemned by people, his position being diminished [in their sight], thus becoming the lowest of the low. As for the person who is described as having richness of the soul (*ghinā al-nafs*), he is content with what God has provided him, he does not seek an increase that is more than his need, nor is he insistent or demanding in his request; indeed he is satisfied with what God has ordained for him.

Thus, the outstanding quality of those who acquire richness of their souls is their satisfaction with Allah (SWT), which is one of the most outstanding qualities of the

⁷⁵ Hadith Ṣaḥīḥ (*Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Adab Al-Mufrad*: #427).

tranquil soul. In a similar manner, eradicating the soul of such poverty and adorning it with richness is a major goal of soul purification (Picken, 2011: 148).

Also, the Sunnah has paid great attention to self building. For instance, the Hadith narrated by 'Ā'ishah that the Prophet (SAW) said: "None of you should say: 'My soul has become evil,' but he should say: 'My soul has become remorseless'" (Hadith. Al-Bukhārī. Kitāb Al-Adab: Bāb lā Yaquḥ Khabuṭhat Nafsi: #6179), it indicates an important psychological aspect, which could be placed under one's self-esteem as the conversation mentioned in the Hadith is an individual's internal dialogue. It directs people to be careful with their lexical choices and to choose more respectful words even though when addressing themselves. That is because the soul is influenced positively or negatively by inner speech. Other Hadiths direct people not to introduce themselves to situations where their souls might be humiliated or downgraded as in the Hadith narrated from Ḥudhayfah that the Messenger of Allah (SAW) said: "It is not for the believer to humiliate himself." They said: How does he humiliate himself? He said: "By taking on a trial which he can not bear"⁷⁶ (Hadith. Al-Tirmidhī. *Sunan Al-Tirmidhī*. Kitāb Al-Fitan: Bāb 67: #2254) and in the Hadith narrated from 'Ā'idh Ibn 'Amr that a man came to the prophet (SAW) and asked him and He gave him, and when he placed his foot on the threshold the Messenger of Allah said: "If you knew how bad begging is, no one would go to anyone else and ask him for anything"⁷⁷ (Hadith. Al-Nasā'ī: #2586). This Hadith also urges people to depend on their own selves and work hard instead of relying on others.

Similar to what is stated in the Qur'an, the body of Hadith also refers to the necessity of having control over the soul's desires. Shaddād Ibn Aws reported that the

⁷⁶ Hadith Ḥasan Gharīb (Al-Tirmidhī: #2254).

⁷⁷ Hadith Ḥasan (*Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Nasā'ī*: #2586).

Prophet (SAW) said: “A wise man is the one who calls himself to account (and refrains from doing evil deeds) and does noble deeds to benefit him after death; and the foolish person is the one who subdues himself to his temptations and desires and seeks from Allah the fulfillment of his vain desires”⁷⁸ (Hadith. Al-Tirmidhī. *Sunan Al-Tirmidhī*. Kitāb Şifat Al-Qiyāmah: Bāb 25: #2459). This Hadith also emphasizes the importance of the accountability of one’s self. Thus, desires that are not accompanied with practical efforts are useless since Allah (SWT) grants His rewards on good deeds rather than mere eagerness and desires which are not supported by good actions.

It can be deduced from the previous Qur’anic āyahs and Hadiths that the human soul is the one, which is responsible for a person’s behaviour (Al-Lubānī, 2009: 27). It is the one, which reflects the nature of a person’s behaviour, attitudes and desires in accordance to his beliefs and structure of mind. For example, a Muslim would, due to the faith he holds in his mind and soul, behave in a manner that he believes it complies with the good manners and values that are set by His Creator (SWT), which influences the state of his soul being tranquil, fearful of Allah and righteous with its own self and the others. Therefore, the human soul is the field where emotions and desires emerge. It is the center for people’s happiness and misery, simplicity and complexity and safety and psychological disorders (Al-Lubānī, 2009: 26–29). In other words, the essence of a person is the soul and not the physical body. Thus, personality or behavior is associated with the soul. It also indicates that the state of the human soul is changeable and the level at which it keeps constant depends on each person’s individual choices and efforts as referred to in the Qur’an: “God does not change the condition of a people [for the worse] unless they change what is in themselves” (Al-Qur’an. Al-Ra’d 13:11)⁴⁹.

⁷⁸ Hadith Ḥasan (Al-Tirmidhī: #2459).

2.2.2 The Status Of Human Soul In Islam

To point out the status of human soul in Islam we need to consider the status of humanity in the first place as any status given to the soul in Islam is actually based on the status given to the humans. Allah (SWT) created all of humanity, has granted humans a higher status that has not been granted for any other creatures. He (SWT) says in the Qur'an: "We have honoured the children of Adam and carried them by land and sea; We have provided good sustenance for them and favoured them specially above many of those We have created" (Al-Qur'an. Al-Isrā' 17:70)⁵⁰. In this āyah, four main blessings to humans are mentioned. The first is Allah's honour to humanity. This honour is manifested in many aspects of a human's life. It can be seen in the fine creation of people, "We create man in the finest state" (Al-Qur'an. Al-Tīn 95:4)⁵¹; in the earthly-heavenly nature of humans that incredibly combines between the beauty of life and the purity of spirit and in the skills and qualifications given for them to innovate, create and lead the world. It is also reflected in Allah's subjection of everything in the world to humans: "He has subjected all that is in the heavens and the earth for your benefit" (Al-Qur'an. Al-Jāthiyah 45:13)⁵², and in the majestic and welcoming festival made for their first existence (Ādam's creation). Allah has paved the way to all the people to know Him (through His creations) and reach Him (through dū'ā'), which is also part of Allah's honour bestowed upon humans, He (SWT) says in: "[Prophet], if My servants ask you about Me, I am near. I respond to those who call Me" (Al-Qur'an. Al-Baqarah 2:186)⁵³. Allah's honour to humans appears also in their free will as Allah (SWT) has given humans freedom to choose their ideological beliefs, unlike animals. He (SWT) says in the Qur'an in: "There is no compulsion in religion: true guidance has become distinct from error" (Al-Qur'an. Al-Baqarah 2:256)⁵⁴. This free will is based on the notion of being held responsible for all one's

choices and decisions. The second blessing granted to humans according to the previous āyah is Allah's subjection of the entire universe for the service of humans. He (SWT) has made the land and sea subservient to humans. In other words, every means humans have created or may create in the future to ease their transitions and way of life is being made subservient for them in the first place for their own benefit. The third blessing from Allah (SWT) to humans is that He provided them with many good things. This means that anything is considered good is provided for them. Be it good food, good clothing, good views, etc. And the fourth is Allah's preference of humans over many of His creations. This preference is reflected in selecting humans to be His vicegerents on earth, "[Prophet], when your Lord told the angels, 'I am putting a successor on earth'" (Al-Qur'an. Al-Baqarah 2:30)⁵⁵. According to Al-Rāghib Al-Aṣḥānī (2009), "The word *khalīfah* (i.e., successor) means to take place on behalf of another due to his absence, death, incapability or as an honour for the successor. And for this last meaning Allah (SWT) has granted Muslims succession upon the earth" (p. 294). Therefore, the humans were honoured above the other creations of Allah by being given the trust to be the successors of this world: "We offered the Trust to the heavens, the earth, and the mountains, yet they refused to undertake it and were afraid of it, mankind undertook it" (Al-Qur'an. Al-Aḥzāb 33:72)⁵⁶. The previous āyah shows that the honour to hold such responsibility was offered to other greater creations than humans, such as the heavens and the earth, but they all refused to accept it and feared it. Given this great opportunity, Allah has acquainted humans with all the abilities and aptitudes to succeed in their mission. They are qualified at all levels: the physical, spiritual and mental creation. Due to this great mission, Allah has subjected everything in this universe to humans, He (SWT) says in the Qur'an: "It was He who created all that is on the earth for you" (Al-

Qur'an. Al-Baqarah 2:29) and in: "It is He who has made the earth manageable for you" (Al-Qur'an. Al-Mulk 67:15)⁵⁷. In the following āyah: "When We told the angels, 'Bow down before Adam,' they all bowed. But not Iblis" (Al-Qur'an. Al-Baqarah 2:34)⁵⁸ Allah ordered the angels to prostrate before Ādam as an indication of honour and preference. It also indicates that humans, who are represented by Ādam, are the dominant and primary leaders of this earth. Humans were preferred over many creations also because of their minds, with which they can plan, think, analyze and perform many other mental activities. According to Ghaurī (2009): "Man is the circlet of the universe and the super most creatures of Allah among all other types of creatures. He is a well-blended spectacular piece of spirit and matter. The perceptible body is envoy of matter, whereas the spirit represents the luminous feature of the soul. The soul directly descends from the order of Allah. So by boosting and strengthening his spiritual attributes, the man may directly be linked and joined with the forces of his Creator; Allah the Almighty. This makes him distinctive among all other creatures of the universe" (p. 301).

Moreover, in his book '*Purification of the Soul*,' Zarabozo (2002: 110) lists four major characteristics that distinguish humans from other creations on this earth. The first is a sound, natural disposition that is ready and capable to be directed to the belief in Allah (SWT). Secondly, the ability to comprehend and understand matters via the mind and intelligence that Allah (SWT) has bestowed on humans. Third is the free will to decide between the path of goodness and the path of evil, as well as a limited free will to enact that choice that he has made. And the fourth characteristic is the responsibility for the choices he has made, which is a necessary result of being given free will and ability.

Out of this granted honor and respect for the human soul, be it a believer or a non-believer, an Arab or a non-Arab, a black or white, came the humanly dealing of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) with his people and even his opponents. For example, Sahl Ibn Hunayf and Qays Ibn Sa'd reported that a funeral passed by the Messenger of Allah (SAW) and he stood up. It was said to him: "It is a Jew." The Prophet (SAW) said: "Was he not a soul?" (Hadith. Al-Bukhārī. Kitāb Al-Janā'iz: Bāb man Qāma li-Janāzati Yahūdiyy: #1312). This Hadith clearly shows the pure and true respect one should hold for the human soul. And the Prophet (SAW) is the best exemplar and model for practicing Allah's religion in the right way. He chose to stand for the funeral although he knew but nothing about it (its religion, race, colour, etc.) just because it was merely a human soul and that Allah has granted it a special honour and respect over other creatures. The Prophet (SAW) summarized his stand from all people in another Hadith narrated by Abū Hurayrah who said: I heard the Messenger of Allah (SAW) saying: "My example and the example of the people is that of a man who made a fire, and when it lighted what was around it, Moths and other insects started falling into the fire. The man tried (his best) to prevent them (from falling in the fire), but they overpowered him and rushed into the fire." The Prophet added: "Now, similarly, I take hold of the knots at your waist (belts) to prevent you from falling into the fire, but you insist on falling into it" (Hadith. Al-Bukhārī. Kitāb Al-Riqāq: Bāb Al-Intihā' 'an Al-Ma'āsī: #6483). A human being is comprised of a body and soul, matter and spirit. It is the unique balance between the two contrasts that makes humans what they are, the highest creation.

2.3 Purification Of The Human Soul In Islam

Islam is distinguished by its perfect spiritual and social package of life. It is a well integrated system of beliefs, moral values and actions. Purity of intention occupies the fundamental place for all actions. Islam asks its followers to evaluate their intentions while performing any action, major or minor, material or spiritual. If the intention is to seek the pleasure of the Lord, and the Sunnah of the Prophet (SAW), it is sufficient to become worth accepting. The same has been elaborated in the following hadith: “The reward of deeds depends upon the intentions, and every person will be rewarded according to what he has intended” (Hadith. Al-Bukhārī. Kitāb Bad’ Al-Wahy: Bāb Kayfa kāna Bad’ Al-Wahy ‘Ilā Rasūlillah: #1). Therefore, it can be concluded that Islam’s fundamental theme is to demand from the mankind to purify their intentions and thinking processes in order to manifest good deeds in line with the desire of their Lord. This is the only way to achieve success here and salvation in the life hereafter. However, this does not mean that any form of deviation from the society is permissible. A person has to involve himself enthusiastically with a full sense of commitment and active participation in various social aspects of life (Ghauri, 2009: 303).

Like the term *nafs*, in order for the term *tazkiyah* to be determined, it needs to be examined at three levels: linguistics, the Qur’an and the Sunnah. Purification of the soul is referred to in Arabic as *tazkiyah*. Literally, the term *tazkiyah* is considered a verbal noun of the form II verbal conjugation *zakkā*, the root of this verb being *zāy kāf yā*. It is linked to the form I of the verb *zakā* and, therefore, denotes similar meanings. Linguistically, seven forms are derived from the trilateral root *z-k-w*, occurring fifty-nine (59) times in the Qur’an: once as the form verb *zakā*, twelve times as the form verb *zakkā*, eight times as the form verb *tazakkā*, four times as the noun *azkā*, thirty-

two (32) times as the noun *zakāt*, once as the adjective *zakiī* and once as the noun *zakiyyah*.

Literally, the term *tazkiyah* encompasses four meanings: one is to purify, the other is to improve and develop towards the height of perfection, righteousness (Q 18:81) and compliment (Q 53:32). However, the Arabic word usually denotes a range of meanings depending on the context. For example, Qur'anic words derived from the trilateral root *z-k-w* denote meanings such as: to purify, to grow (in goodness) or increase and *zakāh* (the giving of alms to the poor and needy). It may as well refer to the meaning of reform when it is used in conjunction with a person. It is also worth noting that the adjective derived from the verb *zakiyyun* means righteous or pious (Picken, 2011: 123–124). Technically, it conveys the sense of checking oneself from erroneous tendencies and beliefs and turning them to the path of virtue and piety.

At the conceptual level, purification involves three aspects. First, purification is actually answering the call of Allah (SWT). That is, the path of virtue is the straight path, which humans should stick to. And those who stick to the path of virtue are answering the call of Allah (SWT): “Believers, respond to God and His Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life. Know that God comes between a man and his heart, and that you will be gathered to Him” (Al-Qur’an. Al-Anfāl 8:24)⁵⁹. On the other hand, those who ignore the call of Allah (SWT) and turn away from it will end up following the wrong path that leads them to perdition. Renouncing materialism is another aspect of purifying the soul. It means to give priority to the afterlife while not neglecting the needs of this life. In other words, it is one major way of purification through getting rid of attachment to the materialistic life by giving out one’s own money for the sake of Allah (SWT), for example. Moreover, vigilance against Satan is a very important aspect. Satan is an enemy of humans: “Satan is your enemy—so treat

him as an enemy—and invites his followers only to enter the blazing fire” (Al-Qur’an. Fāṭir 35:6)⁶⁰. Thus, those who want to stay pure must be vigilant against Satan’s influence. Indeed, Satan has no influence over people’s actions as pointed to in: “Satan’s strategies are truly weak” (Al-Qur’an. Al-Nisā’ 4:76)⁶¹ and in: “When everything has been decided, Satan will say, ‘God gave you a true promise. I too made promises but they were false ones: I had no power over you except to call you, and you responded to my call, so do not blame me; blame yourselves” (Al-Qur’an. Ibrāhīm 14:22)⁶².

Allah (SWT) has sent His Messengers and Prophets (SAW) to remind people of Allah and call them to His worship, as well as to purify their souls. It is education, reminders and purification that are most important among the Prophets’ mission to the oneness of Allah (SWT): “Our Lord, make a messenger of their own rise up from among them, to recite Your revelations to them, teach them the Scripture and wisdom, and purify them” (Al-Qur’an. Al-Baqarah 2:129)⁶³. The command to purify our hearts from sins was an essential Islamic teaching ever since the early stages of the revelation in Mecca. Allah (SWT) says: “the Day when neither wealth nor children can help, when the only one who will be saved is the one who comes before God with a heart devoted to Him” (Al-Qur’an. Al-Shu‘arā’ 26:88–89)⁶⁴. This indicates the necessity of purifying the soul from spiritual sins such as greed, malice, envy, arrogance and worldliness and adorning the soul with spiritual virtues such as generosity, compassion, benevolence, humility and asceticism. Moreover, purification of the soul was one of the first commands with which Moses (SAW) was sent to Pharaoh: “Go to Pharaoh, for he has exceeded all bounds, and ask him, Do you want to purify yourself [of sin]?” (Al-Qur’an. Al-Nāzi‘āt 79:17–18)⁶⁵. Purity of heart is also one of the defining characteristics of Ibrāhīm (SAW), Allah says: “Abraham was of

the same faith: he came to his Lord with a devoted heart” (Al-Qur’an. Al-Şaffāt 37:83–84)⁶⁶.

Indeed, the success of a person has been linked with the purity of his soul: “The one who purifies his soul succeeds, and the one who corrupts it fails” (Al-Qur’an. Al-Shams 91:9–10)⁶⁷. Ibn Kathīr (2016) comments on this āyah saying that purification of the soul is cleansing the soul from its evil characteristics and moral dirt and waste, reducing its bad habits and developing good habits and characteristics. According to Al-Imām Al-Ghazālī (*Tazkiyat al-naḥs*, 2008: para. 3), purifying the soul is educating [the heart and the soul], thus, any nation without education possesses no good. Technically, it means completing the perfection of one’s soul by cutting down its desires and allowing its noble characteristics to evolve.

2.3.1 Significance, Goal And Fruits Of Purification In The Qur’an And The Sunnah

2.3.1.1 Significance Of Purification

Many āyahs in the Qur’an that deal with the soul and the significance of purifying it are found. The Holy Qur’an outlines four major objectives of the Prophet’s (SAW) mission, of which purification of the soul is one: “God has been truly gracious to the believers in sending them a Messenger from among their own, to recite His revelations to them, to make them grow in purity, and to teach them the Scripture and wisdom” (Al-Qur’an. Āl-‘Imrān 3:164)⁶⁸. Prophet Ibrāhīm (AS) supplicated to Allah (SWT) at the completion of the *Ka’bah* to send a Prophet and worshipper: “Our Lord, make a messenger of their own rise up from among them, to recite Your revelations to them, teach them the Scripture and wisdom, and purify them: You are the Mighty, the Wise” (The Qur’an. Al-Baqarah 2:129). The

supplication was granted approval, but with a significant amendment. The aforementioned objectives of the Prophet's (SAW) mission are the very same that Prophet Ibrāhīm (SAW) has specified in his supplication, only that the order of the 'purification of the soul' was promoted prior to imparting of 'the Book' and 'wisdom.' This was dissimilar to the sequence of Prophet Ibrahim's prayer where the purification of the soul was occupying the tale. The change in positioning of the word 'purification' conveys a considerable meaning. The mere fact that the word was positioned higher in numbering indicates priority and the extreme importance of purifying one's inner soul of the filth of evil desires. In his article 'Purification of soul in Islamic perspective,' Ghaurī (2009: 313–319) gives a prolonged analysis of the amended sequence. Recitation of the Qur'an prepares the receivers to thoughtful listening to the Prophet (SAW) and increases the state of conviction of the believers, which helps them to comprehend more and more. It also purifies and cleans the hearts when they get rusted. Ghaurī concludes that the soul is the place of conviction, which needs to be purified for full-fledged flourishing and nourishing of the seed of conviction. Such purpose is achieved with the help of recitation of the Qur'an, which is one of the primary roles assigned to the Prophet (SAW). The second objective, which is purification of the soul, is placed right after recitation to point out to the aim of cleaning the ready soil of the heart for making it tidy. So, after softening the hearts and increasing the state of conviction through the help of recitation, the Prophet (SAW) cleans the soul and purifies it. By this, he trims and cuts the unwanted habits and undesirable characteristics and replaces it with the righteous ones. Thus, the process of trimming and purification is one of the essential tasks appointed to the Prophet (SAW) by Allah (SWT). After all this, the sheet of mind and heart is ready now to receive and comprehend the knowledge, which is represented in *teaching of*

the Book. Then, the imparting of wisdom, which refers to the ability to utilize and apply the knowledge appropriately, which would come as a natural sequence to the three preceding objectives assigned by the Prophet (SAW). Thus, “The knowledge shall never be useful neither by lacking in its prerequisite, i.e. (Tazkiah) nor without qualifying as how, when and where to utilize and apply it, i.e. (Al-Hikmah)” (Ghaurī, 2009: 317). After analyzing each of the objectives, Ghaurī (2009: 319) concludes that the package of all four assignments of the Prophet (SAW) involves four essential aspects. Each one is inevitable for all others in such a way that none can become meaningful and practical without the rest of the components. However, purification of the soul dominates the list as a matter of fact that the heart of the Prophet (SAW) was washed and cleaned four times with the water of *Zamzam* (Hadith. Muslim. Kitāb Al-‘Imān: Bāb Al-‘Isra’ bi-Rasulillah: #162). Indeed, it is worth noting that the Messenger of Allah (SAW) was reported (by Zayd Ibn Arqam) to say among his supplications to Allah (SWT): “O Allah! Grant me the sense of piety and purify my soul as You are the Best to purify it” (Hadith. Muslim. Kitāb Al-Dhikr wa Al-Du‘ā’ wa Al-Tawbah wa Al-Istighfār: #2722). This, clearly indicates the importance of purifying one’s soul.

Similarly, Muḥammad Qutūb (1993) is quoted commenting on the powerful and unlimited ability of the soul:

... And Islam, very significantly offers a package to groom the soul, because it is the religion of nature. As a matter of fact, the spiritual abilities of a person are the most forceful and powerful to connect itself with the facts of the universe and its creator. The ability of material body is limited because of its physical parameters, and the limits of senses. The ability of rationale and reason (to think and mind), of course greater than the material body, but

factually speaking, it also has its limitations with reference to time and space, start and end, so it is destined to the ultimate end. The ability of soul and spirit is the only force, in the body of a human being, which is beyond limits and restrictions, beyond space and time, without concept of beginning and end, so it is endless and immortal. This is the only ability, which has the force to connect itself to realities and facts, which are beyond the range of senses and rationale. This is the only power, which can connect to the eternal one, i.e. connection with Allah the almighty. (pp. 1/41–42)

Ghaurī (2009: 323) comments on this saying that being the essential force of Allah (SWT), the spiritual force has its jurisdiction and domain throughout the universe as it has the ability to access any place.

Purification of the soul deals with the heart. Hearts cannot obtain their desires unless they are connected with their Lord. They cannot connect with their Lord unless they are pure, because Allah (SWT) is the Most Pure and the Most Perfect and only accepts what is pure. The purer the heart, the closer it will be to its Lord. It is only by purification of the soul that we can achieve our ambition of getting close to Him. Therefore, purification of the soul is mandatory for every Muslim to purify their hearts of spiritual diseases. Also, purification has the deep and core influence on the whole body to such extent that if it works in the right direction, the whole body follows it, and if it works otherwise, the whole body goes wrong. Moreover, Allah (SWT) took a covenant from all humans before they came to earth that they would worship Him and Him alone (Al-Qur'an. Al-A'rāf 7:172–173, Yāsin 36:60). Purification of the soul is fulfillment and return to the first covenant between humans and Allah. Allah received a covenant from all human souls before they were created that they would obey Allah. When humans commit sins they are breaking that

covenant. Purification as a process helps humans adhere to their part of the covenant. The main aim of purifying the soul is to attain success. On this level one is firm in one's faith and leaves bad manners behind. The soul becomes at peace. Allah (SWT) has promised Paradise for the believers, but with the condition that only those who have achieved *tazkiyah* and purified their hearts can enter: "Gardens of lasting bliss graced with flowing streams, and there they will stay. Such is the reward of those who purify themselves" (Al-Qur'an. Taha 20:76)⁶⁹. Thus, if a person succeeds to purify his soul and keeps away from the evil desires of the world, this helps him to attain the ultimate destination of eternal success of this world and the life of the hereafter too. Indeed, a person attains purification of the soul when he identifies or subordinates his own likes and dislikes with those of Allah's (SWT).

At the personal level, purification of the soul is the basis for development and improvement of the personality. Allah (SWT) created good and evil both and designated particular actions as virtuous or as evil. Then He left it to us to choose freely and do whatever we wanted. A good act can enhance the personality while an evil one would diminish our spiritual status. This is reflected in the following āyahs of the Qur'an that refers to the nature of the soul and to the most important feature of it, which is the soul's ability to perform good or bad based on every person's will to do so, "By the soul and how He formed it, and inspired it [to know] its own rebellion and piety!" (Al-Qur'an. Al-Shams 91:7-8)⁷⁰.

By the end, whoever purifies himself does so for his own benefit and for his own spiritual advancement and prosperity. Allah (SWT) says in the Qur'an: "whoever purifies himself does so for his own benefit" (Al-Qur'an. Fāṭir 35:18)⁷¹ and in: "Prosperous are those who purify themselves" (Al-Qur'an. Al-A'lā 87:14)⁷². But, however much we try to sanctify ourselves, in the final analysis, it is Allah (SWT)

who purifies whom He pleases: “[Prophet], have you considered those who claim purity for themselves? No! God purifies whoever He will: no one will be wronged by as much as the husk of a date stone” (Al-Qur’an. Al-Nisā’ 4:49)⁷³.

2.3.1.2 Goal And Fruits Of Purification

Before starting off in any path, it is very important for a person to understand the goal of that path. Doing so will help him to easily recognise the things that may hinder or stop his progress into the right path. Thus, the way to achieving his goal will be clearer and more steadfast. On the other hand, if a person chooses to set out on a noble path without having a clear idea about its goal, he may be easily led astray. In other words, he will lack that protective shield, which protects him from being misguided. Therefore, when a person is seeking the path of purification it is very important that he recognises the goal of his purification, otherwise the pursuit of the goal may end in a disaster.

Misunderstanding of the concept of purification becomes evident when people look for quick methods of becoming more spiritual. Purification is not accidental. It must be based on the good and sincere intention to please Allah (SWT) and draw near to Him. The process of purification can’t be sustained if done for any other reason. Furthermore, the most exalted, noble, and honored a human can be is by worshiping Allah (SWT). In reality, there is nothing greater or nobler than that. This is something that should be clear in every Muslim’s mind. The more he moves toward that goal, the happier he should become and the more honor he should feel by submitting himself to the only true God and Lord. Again, the goal is to become as complete and truthful a servant of Allah as one can be. Allah (SWT) explains that purpose in life in: “I created jinn and mankind only to worship Me” (Al-Qur’an. Al-Dhāriyāt 51:56)⁷⁴. The goal of

life is to worship and please Allah (SWT) thus, to receive His pleasure in return. However, this goal must move from the theoretical level to the real, applied one. In other words, everything else must be sacrificed for this goal. Indeed, this is the behaviour of a person who has a goal that is of extreme importance in his heart. Therefore, any other subgoals or short-term goals should be in agreement with the major goal (i.e., worshipping of Allah). Rather than that, it is not allowed to pursue those temporary goals that contradict with the person's ultimate goal in life (Zarabozo, 2002: 106). So, once the ultimate and only worthy goal of purification is identified, everything should be made subservient to that one goal. Zarabozo (2002: 106) gives an example for this, the story of Prophet Ibrāhīm and his son Ismā'il (SAW). As Prophet Ibrāhīm was asked to sacrifice his only son, a son that he had eagerly awaited for many years. His readiness to sacrifice his only son and his son's readiness to be sacrificed by his beloved father, was due to the fact that they both knew what their ultimate and only goal in life was. And when they obeyed the command of Allah (SWT) and fulfilled their utmost goal in life, they passed the hard test for their true purification of the heart and deserved Allah's blessings and reward: "Lord, grant me a righteous son, so We gave him the good news that he would have a patient son. When the boy was old enough to work with his father, Abraham said, 'My son, I have seen myself sacrificing you in a dream. What do you think?' He said, 'Father, do as you are commanded and, God willing, you will find me steadfast.' When they had both submitted to God, and he had laid his son down on the side of his face, we called out to him, 'Abraham, you have fulfilled the dream.' This is how We reward those who do good- it was a test to prove [their true characters]- we ransomed his son with a momentous sacrifice" (Al-Qur'an. Al-Şāffāt 37:100–107)⁷⁵.

Moreover, this ultimate goal should be applied with great awareness, which dictates a person's behaviour and actions on a daily basis. In addition, everything in this life should be based on and consistent with this goal. This means that the process of purifying the soul should be constant and everlasting. It is only by the realization of a person's ultimate and noble goal that the first step along the path of purification begins. However, if this realization does not exist, purification of the soul would be meaningless. Moreover, Iṣlāḥī (quoted in; Zarabozo, 2002: 112) notes that the "first condition [in the process of purification] is the sincere firm resolve to change and reform." However, this desire for change and reform would not take place without the realization of the utmost goal in this life. Hence, this realization must come first.

As stated earlier, the major and only goal of a person's life should be to worship Allah (SWT). Furthermore, Al-Maqrīzī points out (quoted in; Zarabozo, 2002: 117–118) that the proper form for worshipping Allah (SWT) requires four conditions. To determine what Allah (SWT) and His Messenger (SAW) love and are pleased with, to embody and enact upon those beloved aspects in one's own heart, to enact upon those aspects in one's speech and to enact upon those aspects in one's actions. Thus, it is worth noting that all these four aspects are required for the true worship of Allah (SWT) and that neglecting one or more of these conditions will result in a deficiency of one's true worship. In addition, the three conditions succeeding the first condition require from a person to incorporate in the process of purification of his soul. Indeed, if the soul is purified, it will be the driving force behind one's acts. The Prophet (SAW) said: "There is a piece of flesh in the body if it becomes good (reformed) the whole body becomes good but if it gets spoilt the whole body gets spoilt and that is the heart" (Hadith. Al-Bukhārī. Kitāb Al-ʿImān: Bāb Faḍl man Istabraʿa li-Dīnihi: Al-Nuʿmān Ibn Bashīr: #52).

Thus, from all of the above, it can be deduced that the goal of purification is actually linked with the ultimate goal of a person in life. So, purification of the soul is firstly sought in order to succeed in truly worshipping Allah (SWT) in the way He wants and pleases. Moreover, there are other minor objectives for the purification of the soul that lead to the only ultimate goal of purification. For instance, a person seeks tranquility of the heart, peace and good morals when he gets rid of all the diseases of the heart through purification of his soul. Overall, all the commands assigned by Allah (SWT) are extremely helpful tools that assist people to reach their definitive goal, which is to worship Allah (SWT) the way He wants and pleases and hence, enter His paradise to live happily ever after. But, these commands are not limited to the rewards in the hereafter. A person who obeys the commands of Allah (SWT) will not only be rewarded in the hereafter, but also throughout his life. The rewards in life are more than can be counted. For example, rewards in life can be in the form of tranquility, comfort of the heart, peace of mind, self-contentment, satisfaction, happiness, blessings in time, health and wealth, creativity, success, steadfastness, etc. Indeed, A soul that is strong and prepares itself with the remembrance of Allah (SWT), seeking forgiveness from Him and turning towards Allah, will be more ready to overcome the hurdles of life.

2.3.2 The Methodology And Impediments For Purifying The Soul In Islam

2.3.2.1 Methodology In Islam For The Purification Of The Soul

Islam offers a comprehensive approach to assist individuals in purifying their souls and reaching a level of complete peace, happiness and well-being. It places a great deal of importance on the soul. A recurring theme in the Qur'an and other

related literature is the human's inner struggle with himself. Allah (SWT) created good and evil both and designated particular actions as virtuous or as evil. Then He left it to people to choose freely and do whatever they wanted. A good act can enhance the personality while an evil one would diminish the spiritual status. The word *jihād*, which is often misunderstood by non-Muslims and some Muslims, addresses as well a person's struggle with the soul. Muslims are involved in a constant struggle with the soul, striving to achieve the ultimate goal of heaven. Their striving to improve the self is called the inner *jihād*, which aims at the ideal in achieving good and overcoming evil. The broader meaning of *jihād* may involve doing one's very best in Allah's cause. It includes several things such as sacrifice of wealth and talent, suppression of greed, carnal and other desires, fighting for defence of religion and all current evil forces, assisting the oppressed against the oppressor etc. Those who die while engaged in *jihād* are considered martyrs. Their bodies need not be washed as they are considered to have died in ceremonial purity. Al-Ghazālī (1998: 16) mentions three types of *jihād* among which is the *jihād* of the soul or the inner struggle of a Muslim. The companions of the Prophet (SAW) used to call their inner struggle with the commanding soul as the greater *jihād* to point out the necessity and importance of seeking purification constantly. This is due to the nature of the soul, which cannot be seen or faced directly on the contrary to the *jihād* with an apparent enemy. Also, the everlasting bond between the soul and a person raises the level of necessity to struggle for purification. As a result, if a Muslim travels the path of inner *jihād* (i.e., purification), Allah (SWT) will aid and guide him. As the Qur'an maintains: "But We shall be sure to guide to Our ways those who strive hard for Our cause: God is with those who do good" (Al-Qur'an. Al-ʿAnkabūt 29:69)⁷⁶. This illustrates that Allah (SWT) created the human soul with both evil and good inclinations, and endowed

man with the ability to distinguish between the two. Thus, the eternal success is achieved by choosing the good instead of evil and striving to make it prevail.

A person can do a lot to purify his soul. The Qur'an talks about humans who purified themselves and about human efforts toward purification: "But those who return to their Lord as believers with righteous deeds will be rewarded with the highest of ranks, Gardens of lasting bliss graced with flowing streams, and there they will stay. Such is the reward of those who purify themselves" (Al-Qur'an. Taha 20:75–76)⁷⁷. The Qur'an has described humans as clean, as manifested in the following two āyahs of the Qur'an: "And so they travelled on. Then, when they met a young boy and the man killed him, Moses said, 'How could you kill an innocent person? He has not killed anyone! What a terrible thing to do!'" (Al-Qur'an. Al-Kahf 18:74)⁷⁸ and "But he said, 'I am but a Mes-senger from your Lord, [come] to announce to you the gift of a pure son'" (Al-Qur'an. Maryam 19:19)⁷⁹. Purification of the soul may involve: correct and firm doctrine, fulfillment of the religious acts, avoiding the forbidden, being conscious of the creator and constant meditation about the creation. This is followed by personal development and improvement, which consists of a good character and behaviour, assertiveness and self-confidence. Sometimes, a person may not succeed alone. Living in a righteous community surrounded by others is necessary to motivate and encourage purification. Islam is a practical religion. Achievement of purity is through action. Good behaviour, avoiding bad behaviour and being strong and assertive in making correct choices is the practical way to purity.

Moreover, there are a number of preliminaries that pave the way for a good start in the process of purification. Such preliminaries may include acts like good intention, commitment, being true, surrendering to Allah (SWT) and sincere supplication to

Him. Good intentions are essential as people's desire for purification could not be accidental. Purification is a pro-active process, which should be based on good and sincere intentions to worship Allah (SWT) the way He pleases and to draw near to Him. If any other way than that is followed, the process of purification will not sustain. The process of purification can be difficult especially at the start. Thus, a continuing commitment is needed to be able to proceed forward on the long path of purification. On the other hand, the person undertaking purification should be true to his self, to others and to Allah (SWT). Being true to his self, means to understand and accept his self as it is with all the negatives and positives. The negatives can be suppressed while the positives can be enhanced. Being true to others is to speak and act according to the truth and never deceiving or giving wrong impressions. And being true to Allah (SWT) is exemplified in the following Qur'anic āyah: "There are men among the believers who honoured their pledge to God: some of them have fulfilled it by death, and some are still waiting. They have not changed in the least" (Al-Qur'an. Al-Aḥzāb 33:23)⁸⁰. Also, the thoughts, acts of commission and acts of omission of a person should all be for the sake of Allah (SWT). Indeed, a sincere supplication to Allah (SWT) is required as Allah is the One who grants purity to whom He wishes and He is the One whose aid and blessings are necessary for the process of purification to succeed.

Moreover, the foreground and background of purification, mentioned earlier in this chapter, refers to the method Allah (SWT) has set for this Ummah. In: "It is He who raised a mes-senger, among the people who had no Scripture, to recite His revelations to them, to make them grow spiritually and teach them the Scripture and wisdom—before that they were clearly astray" (Al-Qur'an. Al-Jumu'ah 62:2)⁸¹, purification of the soul has preceded the process of teaching and followed the phase of

faith and ideology. This order indicates the great importance of purification and suggests that a prerequisite for learning the Book and Wisdom is to be pure. Such method for purification of the soul is known by the scholars as ‘purification before beautification’ (Māḍī, 2008: 84–85). It means that a person must get rid of his bad traits and habits before acquiring good ones. This may simply be exemplified by the attempt of replacing a cup full of unclean water with a clean one. Thus, this may not be done without getting rid of the dirty water first to empty space for the clean one. The same happens when souls are filled with bad traits and habits, which leave the soul with the inability to receive the good ones. Ibn Qayyim (quoted in; Zarabozo, 2002: 393–394) derived this meaning from the following Hadith of the Messenger (SAW) that is narrated by Abū Hurayrah: “It is better for anyone of you that the inside of his body be filled with pus which may consume his body, than it be filled with poetry” (Hadith. Al-Bukhārī. Kitāb Al-Adab: Bāb ma Yukrah an yakuna Al-Ghālibu ‘ala Al-Insān Al-Shi‘r ḥatta yaṣuddahu ‘an Dhikrillahi wa Al-‘Ilmi wa Al-Qur’an: #6155). Ibn Qayyim noted:

In this Hadith, the Messenger of Allah (SAW) explained that the stomach (*jawf*) can be filled with poetry. Similarly then it could possibly be filled with misconceptions, doubts, imagination and assumptions for which there is no reality, knowledge that is not beneficial, stories, jokes and the like. [The true harm is that] if the *jawf* is filled with things of that nature, then when the realities of the Qur’an and knowledge come to it—and these are what perfect it and bring it happiness—they find no free space therein and no acceptance. Hence, they are repelled and forced out to some other place. Similarly, if sincere advice is given to a heart that is filled with its opposite, there is nothing therein to execute it, for it neither accepts it or not does the advice penetrate it.

Zarabozo (2002: 394) comments on this saying that if a person happens to have a combination of both factors the negative and positive, then they may constantly be cancelling each other, leaving the person with virtually no improvement. Thus, if the negative factors greatly outweigh the positive ones, the person may find himself slipping spiritually and may not understand why, since he has fulfilled some of the beneficial aspects. To solve this, those who intend to purify their souls should explicitly recognise the beneficial means and maximize their use while explicitly recognizing the negative factors and doing their best to remove them from their life.

According to Ibn Qayyim (2008), every person who heads for a goal will not be able to reach it without the presence of two powers: the first is the power of knowledge and the second is the power of action. Thus, the power of knowledge is like a big torch light in one's hand, who is walking in the middle of the darkest night. The torch helps to reveal the milestones of the road and show the impediments. On the other hand, the power of action represents the actual and physical progress of a person towards his goal (pp. 397–399). However, some people may suffer from imbalance of these two powers. That is, either of the two powers may outstand the other (Ibn Qayyim, 2008: 400–402). For example, one may have the power of knowledge superior to his power of action, which causes him to remain in the field of theory rather than applying the knowledge he has whenever it is due. On the other hand, a person may have much more focus on practice rather than knowledge, which weakens the power of knowledge and leaves him confused about what is right and what is wrong, why and when it should be done. Either of the two powers when weakened or neglected to the extent of being effectless would result in an unstable state of a person that may lead to forbidden acts. This clearly indicates the importance of applying both of the methods, the theoretical and the practical, to achieve one's aim. In the case of

soul purification, a person who intends to purify his soul needs to acquire a sound knowledge about his soul, its aspects, ups and downs, etc. He also needs to know all the things that please Allah (SWT), His commandments and the teachings of the Prophet (SAW). At the practical level, those who look forward to purifying their souls should strive and do their best to achieve their goal.

Therefore, sound and useful knowledge is one of the primary means to purify the soul. Thus, any knowledge that brings a person closer to Allah (SWT), increases his consciousness of Allah (SWT) and guides him to do good deeds is considered useful knowledge. The Prophet (SAW) used to supplicate to Allah (SWT) saying: “O Allah! I seek refuge in You from the knowledge that is not useful, from a heart that does not fear (You), from a soul that is not satisfied and from a supplication that is not answered” (Hadith. Muslim. Kitāb Al-Dhikr wa Al-Du‘ā’ wa Al-Tawbah wa Al-Istighfār: #2722). Ibn Rajab Al-Hanbalī (2008) said: “A sign of the people of knowledge is that they are humble, they hate reverence and people’s high remarks of them, they do not look down on people, they are always seeking the Hereafter taking from this world only what they need, and they are constantly worshipping Allah. The more knowledge they have, the more fearful, the more humble, and the more submissive to Allah they become.” Allah (SWT) says: “It is those of His servants who have knowledge who stand in true awe of God” (Al-Qur’an. Fāṭir 35:28)⁸². Moreover, some of the effects of useful knowledge in purifying the soul are: correct and firm belief, fulfillment of acts of worship, avoiding the forbidden, being conscious of the Creator (SWT) and constant meditation about the creation of Allah (SWT). So, people should all help one another to acquire useful knowledge through learning and teaching. This way, soul purification is collective and continuous until one meets Allah (SWT). Also, according to the theory of Ibn Qayyim (2008), it could be said

that purification of the soul is based upon two principles: pure faith and righteous actions. This is manifested in the Qur'an in: "Those who believe and do righteous deeds: joy awaits these, and their final homecoming will be excellent" (Al-Qur'an. Al-Ra'd 13:29)⁸³. However, a corruption in belief or actions corrupts the soul and deprives its purity.

Furthermore, the methods prescribed by Islam for attaining purity and transparency of the soul are exemplified in the three levels of faith: *Islam*, *Imān* and *Ihsān* (Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: 60). These levels craft the conformity of actions with the soul very smoothly. At the level of Islam, which includes testifying that none has the right to be worshipped but Allah (SWT), and that Muḥammad (SAW) is the Messenger of Allah; observing prayers, paying *Zakāh*, observing fasting of Ramaḍān and performing pilgrimage to the House of Allah, the first steps for purification are being made. Indeed, these five pillars of Islam form the very foundation of the entire edifice of Islam and the groundwork for the entire system of the purification of the soul. A pure and sincere belief in Allah accompanied by a solely worship and a belief in the Messenger (SAW) He has sent, is the basic and most important step, which paves the way for the soul to accept purification and to get involved in its process. Thus, this belief may not take its place without sincere love and a true love requires obedience: "Say, 'If you love God, follow me, and God will love you and forgive you your sins'" (Al-Qur'an. Al-Imrān 3:31)⁸⁴. Furthermore, prayer have the essential trait as it is the worship that links Muslims with their Creator (SWT) at least five times daily. If performed correctly, a prayer helps in purifying the soul and stops a person from committing immoral actions: "prayer restrains outrageous and unacceptable behaviour" (Al-Qur'an. Al-Ankabūt 29:45)⁸⁵. Al-Rāzzī (quoted in; Zarabozo, 2002: 214) "Notes that the first step on the path of purification is the eradication of false

beliefs from one's heart which is followed by knowing and having the correct beliefs about Allah, and thus remembering and mentioning Allah properly. This is to be followed by then submitting to and worshipping Allah properly." According to Zarabozo (2002), the importance of the prayers for the purification of the soul is captured in the beneficial outcomes of prayers (p. 217). It is also related on the authority of Abū Hurayrah that he heard the Messenger of Allah (SAW) who said: "If there was a river at the door of anyone of you and he took a bath in it five times a day would you notice any dirt on him? They said, 'Not a trace of dirt would be left.' The Prophet (SAW) added, 'That is the example of the five prayers with which Allah blots out (annuls) evil deeds'" (Hadith. Al-Bukhārī. Kitāb Mawāqīt Al-Ṣalah: Bāb Al-Ṣalawāt Al-Khams Kaffārah: #528). In this Hadith, the Prophet (SAW) points out to His companions the purifying effect of the prayers. Alike, paying the *Zakāh* holds important ramifications for the purification of the soul. Notably, the word *Zakāh* is derived from the same root that the word purification (*tazkiyah*) is derived from. It helps people to purify their souls from greediness and frees their hearts from materialism. Allah (SWT) says in the Qur'an: "Take, [O, Muhammad], from their wealth a charity by which you purify them"⁷⁹ (Al-Qur'an. Al-Tawbah 9:103)⁸⁶. Giving away wealth cleanses the giver from the disease of covetousness, which is a negative human attribute. Moreover, fasting is the *zakāh* of the body. The term *zakāh* here refers to both the biological and metaphorical meaning of purification. That is, fasting cleans the body of excessive nutrients that are harmful. It also helps in controlling one's appetite. On the other hand, it helps build up endurance and self-control, which helps to clean the person from sins. Zarabozo (2002: 243) notes that it

⁷⁹ Translation based on Al-Mehri, A. B. 2010. *The Qur'ān: With Surah Introductions and Appendices, Saheeh International*. United Kingdom: Birmingham.

is the purified soul that has control over its desires and actions. Hence, an important key to such control is *taqwā*. Thus, *taqwā* is one of the major results of performing fasting properly. Another of the five pillars of Islam is the pilgrimage to the House of Allah. It is a very comprehensive and potentially a very spiritually moving rite. Going for pilgrimage is indeed one of the most helpful obligatory acts for purifying one's soul. The whole of the journey, its details and conditions would push a person forward to purify himself. When a pilgrim sets out for Ḥajj, he dissociates himself from his residence and home, near and dear ones to please His Lord and show obedience. He suffers privation and undertakes hardship of the journey. In Ḥajj, one trains himself to be completely forgetful of the material comforts, pomp and show of worldly life. In short, he is commanded to abandon everything for the sake of Allah (SWT). This is the comprehensive system to carry out the perfect sense of purification of soul with the help of a complete package. Of such purified frame of mind and feelings will be developed through actual implementation of these traits of the pillars of Islam.

Furthermore, the level of Imān is higher in rank as it deals with the unseen and, hence, requires a deeper faith. It involves the belief in Allah (SWT), His angels, His Books, His Messengers and the Last Day and in preordainment (destiny) along with its bad and good consequences. Believing in Allah (SWT) actually puts the person on the beginning of the path of soul purification. As it is very important that the first step being made on the path of purification is to cleanse oneself of the clear, major, encompassing form of *shirk*, wherein one recognises an actual partner with Allah (SWT). Another fundamental belief for the process of purification is the belief in the angels. The believer knows that there are at all times, two angels by both of his sides that would write down whatever good or bad he does. However, the belief in the angels goes even beyond this. A believer should believe in all the angels that were

mentioned by Allah (SWT) and the Prophet (SAW), as well as the angels, the noble creatures, that participated with the Prophet (SAW) and His companions in some of the battles: “Your Lord revealed to the angels: ‘I am with you: give the believers firmness” (Al-Qur’an. Al-Anfāl 8:12)⁸⁷. Knowing this and holding the belief in it would give the believer the encouragement to perform the good and, hence, helps in the process of purification. Moreover, the significance of the belief in the Books of Allah (SWT) and His Messengers (SAW) for the purification of one’s soul is directly related to the person’s belief in Allah (SWT). All the Prophets preceding the Prophet Muḥammad (SAW) and the Books that were sent with them, all of them were sent to promote the same message, which is the Oneness of Allah (SWT). This is best manifested in the following two Hadiths and Qur’anic āyah: ‘Amr Ibn Shu‘ayb narrated from his father, from his grandfather, that the Prophet said: “The best of what I and the Prophets before me have said is: None has the right to be worshipped but Allah, alone, without partner, to Him belongs all that exists, and to Him belongs the praise, and He is powerful over all things”⁸⁰ (Hadith. Al-Tirmidhī. *Sunan Al-Tirmidhī*. Kitāb Al-Da‘awāt: Bāb fī Du‘ā’ Yawmi ‘Arafah: #3585), Abū Hurayrah narrated that Allah’s Messenger (SAW) said: “The prophets are brothers in faith; their mothers are different, but their religion is one” (Hadith. Al-Bukhārī. Kitāb Aḥādīth Al-Anbiyā’: Bāb wadhkur fī-lKitāb Maryama idh Intabadhat min Ahlihā: #3443), and Allah says: “So [you believers], say, ‘We believe in God and in what was sent down to us and what was sent down to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and what was given to Moses, Jesus, and all the prophets by their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and we devote ourselves to Him’” (Al-Qur’an. Al-Baqarah 2:136)⁸⁸. The belief in the hereafter is another essential and extremely beneficial

⁸⁰ Hadith Ḥasan Gharīb (Al-Tirmidhī: #3585).

aspect to the purification of the soul. It is the belief, which informs the soul that there is a purpose to his creation and that, in the end, he will meet his Creator (SWT) and he shall be asked for all that he has done in life. Thus, “a strong belief in the hereafter develops a strong moral consciousness, keeping the person from committing sins and giving him a strong internal force to help him keep his desires in check” (Zarabozo, 2002: 191). Furthermore, the belief in the preordainment has a very positive influence on the soul and its purification. It includes the belief that Allah (SWT) is the only One that has complete control over life, death, sustenance, harm and benefits. Understanding this will lead the believer to trust in Allah (SWT) alone. Hence, there is no need to fear anyone or anything other than Allah (SWT). Realizing this fact can be a source of great good. There is no need for despair or sorrow as all can be good: Ṣuhayb reported that Allah’s Messenger (SAW) said: “Strange are the affairs of a believer, for there is good in every affair of his and this is not the case with anyone else except in the case of a believer for if he has an occasion to feel delight, he thanks (God), thus there is a good for him in it, and if he gets into trouble and shows resignation (and endures it patiently), there is a good for him in it” (Hadith. Muslim. Kitāb Al-Zuhd wa Al-Raqā’iq: Bāb Al-Mu’min Amruhu Kulluhu Khayr: #2999).

The third and final level of faith that directly influences the process of purification of the soul, is the level of *Iḥsān*. To attain this high level of faith, the believer is required to worship Allah (SWT) as if he is seeing Him; and although he does not see Him (SWT), He sees him: “Excellence is to worship Allah as if you see Him, for although you do not see Him yet He certainly sees you” (Hadith. Muslim. Kitāb Al-‘Imān: Bāb Al-‘Imān ma huwa wa Bayanu Khiṣālih: #9). Ibn Rajab (2008: 103–104) comments on this Hadith, saying: “The explanation of excellence in the Prophet’s saying that you worship Allah as if you see Him indicates that the servant

worships Allah in this manner, which is consciousness of His immanence and that he is in front of Him as if he sees Him. This requires reverence, fear, veneration, and glorification...and also requires sincerity in worship and the effort to make it excellent, complete, and perfect.” *Ihsān* is considered the highest level of faith a believer may reach. Thus, when a believer worships Allah (SWT) according to this concept of pretending to see Allah (SWT), and as a matter of fact this is not applicable, so it is Allah (SWT) who sees the believer. This everlasting supervision creates inside the believer the fear of committing sins and, on the other hand, it encourages him to perform all the good. Further, this concept leads the believer to, not only become good and perform the good within himself and within his community, but it shapes him to be good any time and anywhere and without the need for laws and punishments to put a stop to his wrong doings. Hence, this level brings the believer to the ever highest level of purification of the soul. Therefore, *Ihsān* is the highest level of righteousness and faith a Muslim can achieve in Islam. It is the state of being when a Muslim perfects his worship of Allah (SWT) and his good character towards people. As according to Al-Sa’dī (2002) who says that “Excellence has two types: excellence in worship of the Creator and excellence towards the creation itself.” However, Muslims should not be content simply to perform the minimum requirements of Islam, but rather they should strive toward spiritual perfection. Allah (SWT) has made this lofty goal achievable for anyone who is willing to work for it. Hence, to reach the level of *Ihsān*, the believer must go through the other two levels of faith in order. A skip or disorder in one of these three levels is useless and will not achieve the benefits of each level. True and sincere efforts should be made in each level to pass through it to the other.

To sum up, every virtue, in order to be acquired and achieved requires a person to go through certain steps: to gain the needed knowledge and to understand that knowledge and absorb it correctly. This is, to keep remembering and to push the inner self in order for that virtue to become a habitual manner. In other words, it is summed up by the theory of the two powers set earlier by Ibn Qayyim (2008: 397–399). It is also reflected in Ibn Taymiyyah's (quoted in; Picken, 2011: 150) notion of the process of purification as he says:

As such, monotheism (*tawḥīd*) and faith (*īmān*) are the greatest things through which the soul (*al-nafs*) is purified (*tatazakkā*), whereas polytheism (*shirk*) is the greatest thing which defiles it. It is also purified through righteous deeds and acts of charity and all of this is what has been mentioned by the predecessors.

In addition, the person undertaking purification must be true to himself, to others, and to Allah (SWT). All human efforts for purifying the soul should always be accompanied by supplication for Allah's intervention without which a person's effort will bear no fruit. Allah (SWT) says: "[Prophet], have you considered those who claim purity for themselves? No! God purifies whoever He will: no one will be wronged by as much as the husk of a date stone" (Al-Qur'an. Al-Nisā' 4:49)⁸⁹. Therefore, it is Allah (SWT) Who bestows purification over whom He wishes in the first place. On the other hand, it is incorrect for a human to make no effort and passively expect Allah (SWT) to intervene. Humans must play their role before expecting Allah's help. Revelations are a guide for purification. One usually needs a map to go travel in life. Life is an unknown territory, an uncharted ocean. The map is charted by revelations that describe a model of purity to be emulated. The Qur'an is that map. The Qur'an describes in detail and brings to life the experiences of Prophets

(AS) and other righteous persons whose purity of heart is a model for others to follow. It also describes the future models of success in the hereafter that is another model and incentive to the good. In short, a person does not have to deprive himself of specific foods or dress in special clothing. He does not even have to climb into a cave or sit in meditation for hours. Spirituality is built into the very fabric of Islamic beliefs and practices. And, indeed, it is shown in the trilogy of receiving purification from Allah (SWT), performing the teachings of the Prophet (SAW) and putting personal sincere and continuous efforts for purifying the soul:

This nature of *tazkiyah* makes it a perpetual striving and a continuous struggle without any break or a period of rest. In this journey there is no turn or stage which may be mistaken for the last lap of the journey the destination where one may sojourn a while or become permanently at ease. At every stage in this striving one goes on looking for greater excellence and higher standards and nowhere his eyes can come to rest on any degree of excellence. With the greater polish of the deeds, the morals and the exterior and the inner self, the fineness of morals and the exterior and the inner self, the fineness of tastes, the degree of sensibility and keenness of eye-sight also progresses by leaps and bounds, with the result that no sooner has one washed the old stains off his raiment some more stains come in sight to be cleansed. (quoted in; Picken, 2011: 151–152)

2.3.2.2 Impediments To Spiritual Purification

Purification of the soul is a long, pro-active, and uphill task. It is not an easy esoteric rite or overnight formula. Misunderstanding of purification manifests when people look for quick methods of becoming better. Some may visit graves of the

righteous, some may repeat certain supplications for a given number of times. Yet others subject themselves to physical suffering in the hopes that it will lead to spiritual purity. All of these are forms of escapism from facing the real challenges of purification. However, achieving purification of the soul is not something impossible or far-fetched for those who put sincere efforts and strive for their goal along with Allah's (SWT) blessings and aid. But, as pointed out earlier, the process of purification of the soul is a long process and the path leading to it is not too easy. Barriers and problems may occur in the middle of the person's path to purification. Hence, it is very helpful for those who seek to purify their souls to have, in advance, a sufficient knowledge of the impediments and obstacles that may interrupt their long journey towards purification.

There are three primary enemies and causes of destruction and misguidance for the path of purification of the soul. The first and most common one is the desires of the ego. Also known as the hidden lust. This is the most dangerous of the enemies for through its existence the other two enemies exist and without it there is no existence to the inner enemies of the soul. This enemy is inside the very essence of the human being, i.e. in his soul, and is inspired to transgression. The transgression of the soul is contained in its desires and its desires mean its lust for immortality and sovereignty (boundless greed and covetousness). This enemy is the main cause of the self-oppression of humanity. This oppression leads to either denial, polytheism or to misguidance, disobedience, and sins. There is no remedy for these two desires except through constantly reminding the soul of its mortality and the certainty of death: "I do not pretend to be blameless, for man's very soul incites him to evil unless my Lord shows mercy" (Al-Qur'an. Yūsuf 12:53)⁹⁰. Also, the desires for the ornaments of the world are considered as well among the impediments for the purification of the soul. It

is the second enemy but it is outside of the human being's essence. It is the weapon of *Satan* that he displays before the lustful eyes of the ego's desire. Thus he makes it like a mirror that attracts the soul and seduces it so that it stirs and moves toward inequity and attachment to its desires and the love of the material world that leads it to drown in the world's false and perishing ocean. The remedy for this desire is to become aware and certain of the fleeting nature of this world and of the necessity of losing one's attachment to it. It is to know that the world is a temporary abode and a place of trial and test. The desires of the world are five as explained in the Quran: "The love of desirable things is made alluring for men- women, children, gold and silver treasures piled up high, horses with fine markings, livestock, and farmland- these may be the joys of this life". (Al-Qur'an. Al-Imrān 3:14)⁹¹. Furthermore, Satan is the third enemy. He is also external to the human being's essence. His role is to seduce, mislead, and make beautiful all that is false and forbidden and repugnant in this world in order to cause the soul to become attached to these things through its desires. He has no means other than to embellish and tempt the ego and no weapon except to energize and stir the two inner desires of the ego, the 'me' and 'greed' so that the human being will inflate himself and in turn increase his separation. In this way *Satan* leads the human being to either denial, polytheism or to disobedience and sins. There is no remedy or prevention for this other than the constant remembrance and seeking refuge in Allah (SWT) and in putting one's trust in Him: "Satan is your enemy—so treat him as an enemy—and invites his followers only to enter the blazing fire" (Al-Qur'an. Fāṭir 35:6)⁹². Thus, the ascent or descent of the soul depends on the degree of remedy and protection from these three enemies. So the soul either ascends to the station of 'the most beautiful station,' or it may descend to the station of 'the lowest of the low.'

2.4 Purification Of The Soul And Its Relation To Sufism

In relation to the purification of the soul, is the term ‘Islamic mysticism’ or what is known as ‘Sufism.’ Two main terms are usually used to describe Sufism, namely: spirituality and mysticism. Thus, it is important to shed some light on these two terms, which in one way or another are linked to the main theme of this research.

2.4.1 Purification Of The Soul And Its Relation To Spirituality

According to Picken (2011: 216), spirituality can be understood through contrasting it with the physical, material and external, being primarily an internal quest. Others consider spirituality as the very core of religion through religious and mystical experiences. Furthermore, spirituality “has often been described as an attempt to grow in sensitivity to the self, to others, to non-human creation and to God, or as an exploration into what is involved in becoming human; a quest for full humanity” (Picken, 2011: 216).

However, Al-Mawdūdī (2010) comments on the body-soul conflict that has been taking place among philosophers and Muslim scholars. He claims that the idea that has influenced most the climate of philosophical and religious thought is that body and soul are mutually controversial and can develop only at each other’s expense. Thus, this has inevitably led the world to be divided into spiritual and secular. Those who chose to be secular were contended that they may not meet the demands of spirituality and, therefore, led highly material and hedonistic lives. Due to this, all fields of worldly activity, whether social, political, economic or cultural, were deprived of the light of spirituality. The result of this all was injustice and oppression. On the contrary, those who desired to follow the path of spiritual excellence came to see themselves as ‘noble outcasts’ from the world (Al-Mawdūdī, 2010). They thought

that it was not possible for spiritual growth to be harmonious with a normal life. They believed that physical self-denial and mortification of the flesh were necessary for the development and perfection of the spirit. Thus, they invented spiritual exercises and ascetic practices that killed physical desires and dulled the body's senses. Moreover, they considered forests, mountains and other solitary places as ideal for spiritual development, since the hustle and bustle of life would interfere with their meditation. In short, they could not conceive of spiritual development except through withdrawal from the world. This conflict of body and soul resulted in the evolution of two different ideals for the perfection of human. The first was that man should be surrounded by all possible material comforts and regard himself as nothing but an animal. The other was that the senses should be not only subdued and conquered but extra-sensory powers awakened and the limitations of the sensory world done away with. With these new conquests individuals would be able to hear distant voices like powerful wireless sets, see remote objects as one does with a telescope and develop powers through which the mere touch of their hand or a passing glance would heal the un-healable. Therefore, spiritual development should not take "the form of a man turning away from his workshop and retreating into a corner" (Al-Mawdūdī, 2010: para. 7). Instead, a person should live and work in it and give the best account of himself that he can.

On the other hand, Islam rejects and condemns the ascetic view of life and proposes a set of methods and processes for the spiritual development of individuals, not outside this life, but inside of it: On the authority of Anas Ibn Mālik that the Messenger of Allah (SAW) used to say: "Do not impose austerities on yourselves so that austerities will be imposed on you, for people have imposed austerities on themselves and Allah imposed austerities on them. Their survivors are to be found in

cells and monasteries. (Then he quoted from the Qur'an:) 'Monasticism, they invented it; we did not prescribe it for them'⁸¹ (Hadith. Abū Dāwūd. *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*. Kitāb Al-Adab: Bāb fī Al-Ḥasad: #4904). Hence, the real place for the development of spirituality is in the midst of life and not in solitary places. Therefore, it is the duty of individuals to use all the powers which have been given in accordance with the Divine will. He should utilize to the fullest extent all the faculties and potentialities bestowed upon him for seeking Allah's approval. This means, all his efforts should be directed towards regulating the affairs of this world in the way in which Allah (SWT) wants them to be regulated. The better an individual does this, with a sense of responsibility, obedience and humility and with the object of seeking the pleasure of Allah (SWT), the nearer he will be to Allah. In Islam, spiritual development is synonymous with nearness to Allah. Similarly, a person will not be able to get near to Allah if he is disobedient. Thus, distance from Allah signifies, in Islam, the spiritual fall and decay of an individual.

As stated above, the understanding of spirituality in Islam is unlike the secular understanding. It is the constant reference to Allah (SWT) and ensuring that everything a man does is in accordance with Allah's pleasure. This consciousness is not static it is dynamic. The level of this consciousness depends on how close the Muslim is with his Creator (SWT). This relationship is established and strengthened by following a unique spiritual programme prescribed by Allah (SWT). The spiritual programme works as an effective mean to change the negative traits and habits of the Muslim. Some of these activities include remembrance of Allah (SWT), prayer, giving charity, fasting, reflecting on creation, meditation, reading and reflecting upon the Qur'an and daily supplications. The Prophet (SAW) emphasized on developing a

⁸¹ Hadith Ḥasan li-Ghayrih (Shu'ayb Al-Arnā'ūt: #4904).

good character by engaging a constant practice of prayer, meditation, remembrance of Allah and other activities as these actions change the heart and thereby bring one closer to Allah: “Verily in the body there is a piece of flesh. If it is sound, the whole body is sound. If it is corrupt, the whole body is corrupt. Verily, it is the heart” (Hadith. Al-Bukhārī. Kitāb Al-‘Imān: Bāb Faḍl man Istabra’a li-Dīnihi: Al-Nu‘mān Ibn Bashīr: #52).

2.4.2 Purification Of The Soul And Its Relation To Islamic Mysticism

The origin of Islamic mysticism or so-called ‘Sufism’ was not clearly specified by historians. Thus, there are many suggestions from which the term was coined and used later on. Some (Ibn Taymiyyah, 2007: 73) assert that the term Sufism came from wearing woolen garments (known in Arabic as *ṣūf*). Others believe that it is derived from the Arabic term *ṣafā*’ (i.e., purity of the soul) while some claim that it is related to *Ahl Al-Ṣuffah* (i.e., people of the bench), the poor people who gathered around the Mosque of Prophet Muḥammad (SAW). Moreover, Al-Kalābādhi (n.d.: 21) provides some explanations for the term Sufism that are related to the notion of asceticism and purification of the soul. For example, he relates that Bishr Ibn Al-Ḥārith says that a Sufi is the one whose heart is purified towards Allah (SWT). Others say that a Sufi is the one whose deeds are purely performed for the sake of Allah and hence, Allah would grant him His honour. According to these definitions, it is clear that Sufism or Islamic mysticism looks into the soul and into the possible paths for its purification. It seeks to strive against the immoral conducts and to replace it with the good ones such as asceticism, patience, faithfulness, truthfulness, forbearance, etc.

Furthermore, it is not known when exactly the term ‘Sufism’ was coined. According to ‘Āmir Ṣabrī (1997: 10), the term did not come to usage before the first

century A.H. However, this does not mean that Sufism comes from non-Islamic roots. Islamic mysticism was actually found since the early stages of Islam. And the Prophet (SAW) was the perfect model that taught the companions the righteous and pure way of soul purification. It was related that the Prophet (SAW) used to offer night prayers till his feet became swollen and when he was asked as to why he does so while Allah (SWT) Has forgiven him, his faults of the past and those to follow, He (SAW) said: “Should I not be a thankful slave?” (Hadith. Al-Bukhārī. Kitāb Al-Tafsīr: Bāb Qiyām Al-Nabi ḥattā Tarima Qadamah: #4836). Also, there are many Hadiths that encourage Muslims not to lean toward the worldly life and work harder for the hereafter. At the same time, life should not be neglected as Allah says in the Qur’an: “Seek the life to come by means of what God has granted you, but do not neglect your rightful share in this world” (Al-Qur’an. Al-Qaṣaṣ 28:77)⁹³. Keeping a balanced life that joins together the worldly and the hereafter is an essential aspect of Islam. In relation to this, Yaḥyā Ibn Mu’ādh says (quoted in; Ibn Al-Jawzī, 2012): “I will not ask you to abandon life, but I will ask you to abandon sins. That is, giving up life is a grace while giving up sins is obligatory. You are more in need to perform the obligations than to acquire righteous deeds” (p. 748).

According to Ibn Khaldūn (quoted in; ‘Āmir, 1997: 10), Sufism was more apparent after the second century (A.H.), when people tended to neglect spirituality and head towards materialism. As a result, some Muslims chose to renounce materialism and focus on mysticism. Renouncing materialism, known as *zuhd* in Arabic, means giving priority to the afterlife. Preferring the material world is severely condemned by the Qur’an. The hereafter is better than the material world. However, *zuhd* has been misunderstood by many throughout the centuries. It does not mean withdrawal from life and making no contribution to the building of a material

civilization. Neither does it mean refusing to enjoy the bounties that Allah (SWT) put on earth for the benefit of humans. Living like a hermit may not be the total or only meaning of *zuhd*. *Zuhd* means belittling materialism and having a correct relation to material goods as things to be used by humans in the fulfillment of their duties to Allah (SWT) and not as masters who control human behavior. Furthermore, A person may own a lot of money and material goods, but he knows that in front of Allah (SWT) they are worth very little. He will not be intoxicated by nor worship material goods. He will have a higher scale of values that he refers to. His maximum pleasure will not be attained by material possessions. *Zuhd* also means not selling eternal values for the sake of temporary material advantage on earth; such a trade is indeed a losing trade. A human should live on earth as a stranger or a traveler in the knowledge that the life in the hereafter is eternal and that all the time spent on earth should be used to prepare for the hereafter. Thus, this refers to the true and righteous mysticism that Islam calls Muslims to and which the Prophet (SAW) and His companions and their followers have practiced.

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, an overall view of the soul, its aspects and status was made. Then, it shed light on the process of purification from the perspective of Islam. It discussed the significance, goal and fruits of purification from Qur'anic and Hadith perspectives. It also highlighted the methodology proposed by Islam for the purification of the soul and the impediments for that purification. Finally, it gave a brief glance to the relationship between purification of the soul and Sufism. In the next chapter, contributions of Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā on the topic of purifying the *nafs* at the individual level are studied. The study and analysis will rely mainly on the books of Ibn Abī Al-

Dunyā involving thirty-six books, which are classified into five main categories according to the theory of *purification and beautification*: *‘ibādah* (worship), *al-munjiyāt* (the deliverers), *al-muhlikāt* (the fatalities), *al-munabbihāt* (the stimulants) and *al-mubashshirāt* (the glad tidings).

