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Spiritual Equilibrium: Syaikh Abdurrauf Singkel's Concept of *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*

Nur Hadi Ihsan¹, Allan Muhammad^{1*}, Muhammed Nur Kaplan², Arif Afandi Zarkasyi¹

¹ Department of Aqidah and Islamic Philosophy, Postgraduate Program, Universitas Darussalam Gontor, Ponorogo, Indonesia

² Department of Sufism, Islamic Philosophy, and Education, Faculty of Ilahiyat, Karabük Üniversitesi, Turkey

* Corresponding author: allanmuhammad28@gmail.com

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Abstract: The pursuit of worldly abundance and immersion in fleeting pleasures has quietly shaped the spirit of contemporary society, leading to a subtle yet profound imbalance within the human soul. By placing transitory possessions and temporal delights at the center of life's purpose, these tendencies have contributed to a deep spiritual estrangement. This study examines Syaikh Abdurrauf Singkel's concept of *Tazkiyat al-nafs* (soul purification) as a comprehensive spiritual framework for restoring harmony between the material and the spiritual. Drawing upon Singkel's Sufi teachings, this research explores how his methodology offers a pathway toward *Insān kāmil* (the perfect human)—a being who integrates worldly responsibilities with elevated spiritual consciousness. Employing a qualitative-descriptive approach through library research, the study analyzes Singkel's seminal works, including *Tanbīh al-Mashyī*, *Mir'at al-Ṭullāb*, *Daqā'iq al-Ḥurūf*, and *'Umdat al-Muhtājīn*. The findings reveal how classical Islamic spiritual disciplines—*dhikr* (remembrance of God), *muhāsaba* (self-reflection), *murāqaba* (divine vigilance), and *tawakkal* (trust in God)—serve as an enduring guide to addressing the restlessness born of excessive worldly attachment and the allure of transient joys, offering a balanced and timeless path toward inner peace in the modern age.

Contribution: This study reintroduces Syaikh Abdurrauf Singkel's concept of *Tazkiyat al-nafs* as a spiritual response to the prevailing pursuit of worldly abundance and immersion in fleeting pleasures, offering a practical Sufi framework rooted in Islamic tradition to guide individuals toward *Insān kāmil* in today's consumer-oriented society.

Keywords: Abdurrauf Singkel; *tazkiyat al-nafs*; *insān kāmil*; worldly attachment; transient pleasures

Introduction

Contemporary global society confronts an unprecedented spiritual crisis stemming from the pervasive orientation toward worldly abundance and the pursuit of fleeting pleasures—outlooks that locate human fulfillment primarily in material acquisition and sensory gratification. These tendencies have deeply penetrated social consciousness, fundamentally altering human relationships, moral frameworks, and spiritual orientations. An excessive attachment to material prosperity, characterized by a disproportionate focus on worldly possessions, has led individuals to prioritize external achievements while neglecting their inner spiritual development. As Seyyed Hossein Nasr observes, modernity has progressively alienated humans from their essential nature, creating an existential void as life increasingly centers on accumulation and outward success.¹

Complementing this attachment to material gain, immersion in transient delights exacerbates the spiritual crisis by elevating momentary pleasure as the ultimate purpose of life. This disposition encourages the pursuit of immediate gratification without consideration for long-term spiritual consequences or ethical implications.² In his magnum opus, *Ihya' Ulumuddin*, Al-Ghazali warned against such unrestrained indulgence of desire, arguing that humans enslaved by their passions inevitably stray from authentic happiness in worldly affairs and spiritual matters.³

The combined effect of these orientations extends beyond individual spiritual disorientation to degrade the quality of communal life. When personal gain and individual enjoyment become predominant social values, interpersonal relationships devolve into transactional exchanges devoid of more profound meaning and purpose. Charles Le Gai Eaton aptly noted that a society disconnected from transcendent values inevitably loses its moral compass and collective sense of direction.⁴ By contrast, the Islamic worldview advocates for equilibrium between temporal and spiritual dimensions of existence, establishing a meaningful and harmonious living framework.

¹ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis in Modern Man* (London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1968), 45–47.

² Daniele Scarpi, *Hedonism, Utilitarianism, and Consumer Behavior* (Bologna: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 5.

³ Abu Hamid Muhammad bin Muhammad Al-Ghazali, *Ihya' Ulumuddin*, 1st ed. (Beirut, Lubnan: Dar Ibnu Hazm, 2005), 212–15.

⁴ Charles Le Gai Eaton, *Islam and the Destiny of Man* (U.S.A: The Islamic Texts Society, 1985), 136–38.

Within Islamic intellectual heritage, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* (purification of the soul) offers a sophisticated approach to spiritual cultivation that directly addresses the challenges posed by excessive worldly attachment and the allure of transient pleasures.⁵ Throughout Islamic history, numerous Sufi scholars, philosophers, and theologians have developed nuanced methodologies for soul purification, creating a rich tradition of spiritual psychology.⁶ Integrating these Sufi teachings into contemporary spiritual frameworks presents a valuable opportunity to enrich approaches to *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* and enhance their relevance to modern psychological challenges.⁷ For instance, muhasabah (self-examination) is an effective method for cultivating self-awareness and transforming negative thought patterns that impede spiritual growth.⁸

The Malay-Nusantara world has significantly contributed to Islamic spiritual thought, particularly in Sufism and soul purification. Prominent scholars from this tradition include Hamzah Fansuri, Nuruddin Ar-Raniri, Syamsuddin As-Sumatrani, Abdurrauf As-Singkili, Yusuf Al-Makassari, Ahmad Khatib Al-Minangkabawi, Abdul Samad Al-Falimbani, and Syaikh Nawawi Al-Bantani.⁹ These intellectuals introduced various spiritual healing methodologies and guided adherents toward divine proximity through heart purification. Their collected works constitute a valuable resource for reinvigorating contemporary approaches to *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*.

Among these Sufi luminaries, Syaikh Abdurrauf Singkel's conceptualization of *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* offers particularly pertinent solutions to contemporary spiritual challenges.¹⁰ As a preeminent Sufi scholar from the Malay Archipelago, Abdurrauf emphasized soul purification as essential for countering the negative influences of worldly attachment. According to his

⁵ Abdurrahman bin Khaldun, *Muqaddimah Ibn Khaldun*, ed. Abdullah Muhammad Ad-Darwisy, 2nd ed. (Dimasyq: Maktabah al-Hidayah, 2004), 177–80.

⁶ Muhammad Utsman Najati, *Madkhal ila 'Ilmi al-Nafs al-Islami*, 1st ed. (Al-Qahirah: Dar al-Syuruq, 2001), 60.

⁷ Muhammad Utsman Najati, *Al-Dirasat al-Nafsaniyyah 'inda al-Ulama al-Muslimin*, 1st ed. (Al-Qahirah: Dar al-Syuruq, 1993), 70–71.

⁸ Jarman Arroisi and Erva Dewi Arqomi Puspita, "Soul Restoration in Islamic Tradition (Ibn Tufail's Perspective of Tazkiyya an-Nafs Model)," *Jurnal Ushuluddin* 28, no. 2 (December 31, 2020): 170, <https://doi.org/10.24014/jush.v28i2.10990>.

⁹ Ahmad Zuhdi, *Dinamika Islam Di Nusantara* (Pekalongan: Nasya Expanding Management, 2022), 171.

¹⁰ Nur Hadi Ihsan, "Sejarah dan Perkembangan Tarekat di Indonesia," *Kalimah* 10, no. 2 (September 2012), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.24014/kalimah.v10i2.2012.0001>.

teachings, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* involves systematically cleansing the heart of spiritual maladies such as arrogance (*kibr*), envy (*hasad*), ostentation (*riya*), and excessive attachment to worldly life (*hubb al-dunya*), while simultaneously cultivating virtuous qualities including sincerity, patience, gratitude, and humility (*tawadhu*).¹¹

Through his extensive writings, Abdurrauf Singkel presented *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* as the pathway toward attaining the spiritual status of *Insān kāmil*—the perfected human who maintains equilibrium between material needs and spiritual aspirations.¹² This transformative process encompasses several interconnected practices: self-examination (*muhasabah*), divine remembrance (*dhikr*), complete surrender to divine will (*tawakal*), and constant awareness of divine oversight in all life dimensions (*muraqabah*). These spiritual disciplines enhance one's relationship with the Divine (*ma'rifatullah*) while fostering harmonious relations with fellow humans.¹³

Abdurrauf's approach not only provides a spiritual antidote to excessive worldly attachment and the seduction of transient pleasures but also emphasizes the critical importance of balancing worldly engagement with spiritual cultivation. Individuals can experience a more meaningful existence, attain authentic happiness, and prepare for eternal life by purifying the heart from undue entanglement in temporal concerns. This teaching is relevant in contemporary contexts where societies often prioritize external success over spiritual development. The present study examines how Abdurrauf Singkel's concept of *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* offers a comprehensive framework for addressing the spiritual vacuum created by these tendencies, providing individuals with practical

¹¹ Jajang A Rohmana, "Fatwa Syekh Ahmad Khatib Al-Minangkabawi; a Jawi Ulama's Response to the Heterodoxy of Sufism," *Al-Tahrir* 23, no. 2 (November 2023): 451–78, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.21154/altahrir.v23i2.5936>.

¹² Nur Hadi Ihsan et al., "Abdurrauf Singkel's Insan Kamil Concept to Answer the Problem of Sexual Consent, Childfree, Nature, and Nurture in Urban Society," *Akademika : Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 29, no. 1 (May 14, 2024): 87, <https://doi.org/10.32332/akademika.v29i1.9081>.

¹³ Ahmad Rivauzi, "Landasan Filosofis Pemikiran Tasawuf Abdurrauf Singkel Tentang Allah, Manusia, Dan Alam," *Jurnal THEOLOGIA* 28, no. 2 (February 20, 2018): 299–328, <https://doi.org/10.21580/teo.2017.28.2.1451>.

methodologies for achieving spiritual equilibrium in an increasingly consumption-driven global culture.¹⁴¹⁵

While various studies have explored *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* from psychological, theological, and ethical perspectives—including those by Hasan Mud'is (2023),¹⁶ Aisha Malik (2021),¹⁷ and Ahmad Yusuf (2020)¹⁸ published in internationally reputable journals—these works generally focus on classical figures such as Al-Ghazali or Ibn Qayyim and approach soul purification in abstract or theoretical terms. Few have specifically examined the practical Sufi framework offered by Syaikh Abdurrauf Singkel, particularly within the context of contemporary ideological currents characterized by attachment to material abundance and attraction to ephemeral pleasures. Moreover, existing literature rarely bridges traditional Sufi ethics with the psycho-spiritual dilemmas of modern consumer societies. This study addresses that gap by offering a comprehensive, text-based analysis of Syaikh Abdurrauf Singkel's teachings and presenting them as a viable model for achieving spiritual equilibrium amid the crises of overattachment to material abundance and immersion in transient pleasures in contemporary society. The novelty of this article lies in repositioning a neglected Southeast Asian scholar within the global Islamic discourse and demonstrating the enduring relevance of his teachings for addressing present-day spiritual imbalances.

Literature Review

Spiritual Equilibrium in Islamic Thought

The concept of spiritual equilibrium—a state of inner harmony between worldly engagement and spiritual consciousness—has been a recurring theme in Islamic ethical and mystical discourse. Rooted in the Qur'anic imperative for

¹⁴ Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *Ikhtisar Ilmu Peri Dan Pandangan Alam*, 3rd ed. (Malaysia: Ta'dib Internasional, 2019), 66.

¹⁵ Rahmawati, "The Role of Tazkiyat Al-Nafs in Combating Materialism in Modern Society," *Journal of Islamic Ethics* 5, no. 2 (2021): 120–35, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.24014/jie.v5i2.2021.0001>.

¹⁶ Hasan Mud'is, "Enhancing Intuition through Tazkiyatun Nafs: A Pathway to Preventing Unethical Conduct," *International Journal of Nusantara Islam* 11, no. 1 (2023): 47–56, <https://doi.org/10.15575/ijni.v11i1.26222>.

¹⁷ Aisha Malik, "The Influence of Al-Ghazali's Thoughts on Tazkiyatun Nafs in Modern Education," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 14, no. 1 (2021), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.24014/jis.v14i1.2021.0001>.

¹⁸ Ahmad Yusuf, "The Relevance of Tazkiyatun Nafs in Modern Society," *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 12, no. 1 (2020), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.32350/jitc.v12i1.2020.0001>.

Tazkiyat al-Nafs (purification of the soul), this equilibrium is seen as essential for attaining the ideal state of *Insān kāmil* (the perfect human). Classical Sufi scholars such as Al-Ghazali, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, and Al-Jilani emphasized that spiritual balance requires disciplined self-regulation through *dhikr* (remembrance of God), *muhāsaba* (self-examination), and *mujāhada* (spiritual struggle).¹⁹²⁰

In contemporary scholarship, Hasan Mud'is (2023) explores *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* as a pathway to preventing unethical conduct, published in the *International Journal of Nusantara Islam*.²¹ Similarly, Yusuf (2020), writing in the *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization*, proposes that the spiritual disequilibrium seen in modern societies—exacerbated by consumerism and hyper-individualism—can be counteracted through internalized Sufi disciplines.²²²³ These studies affirm the relevance of Sufi ethics in the contemporary world but focus primarily on prominent classical figures and psychological methodologies, often overlooking regional voices and textual contexts from Southeast Asia.

Malik (2021) emphasizes the role of spiritual balance in education by tracing Al-Ghazali's ethics within modern curricula,²⁴ while Rahmawati (2021) analyzes *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* as a countermeasure to excessive worldly attachment. Yet, her work does not critically engage the spiritual teachings of Southeast Asian scholars like Abdurrauf Singkel.²⁵ Ihsan (2022, 2024) has begun to address this regional gap by exploring Singkel's concepts of *dhikr* and *Insān kāmil*, but their focus remains fragmented. It does not present a unified framework of

¹⁹ Al-Ghazali, *Ihya' Ulumuddin*, 61–75.

²⁰ Ibnu Qayyim Al-Jawziyyah, *Madarij as-Salikin*, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Dar Ihya' at-Turath al-Arabi, 1998), 235–50.

²¹ Mud'is, "Enhancing Intuition through Tazkiyatun Nafs: A Pathway to Preventing Unethical Conduct."

²² Yusuf, "The Relevance of Tazkiyatun Nafs in Modern Society."

²³ Nur Hadi Ihsan, Arqomi Erva Dewi Puspita, and Muqit Nur Rohman, "Tazkiyyah Al-Nafs of Syekh Nawawi Al-Bantani (1814-1897 Ad) As an Antidote to Consumerism Culture," *Jurnal Ushuluddin* 32, no. 1 (2024): 45, <https://doi.org/10.24014/jush.v32i1.25583>.

²⁴ Malik, "The Influence of Al-Ghazali's Thoughts on Tazkiyatun Nafs in Modern Education."

²⁵ Rahmawati, "The Role of Tazkiyat Al-Nafs in Combating Materialism in Modern Society."

spiritual equilibrium rooted in his texts.²⁶²⁷ Consequently, while existing literature recognizes the value of *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* in achieving spiritual balance, few works have systematically analyzed the concept of spiritual equilibrium as a holistic framework—primarily through the lens of Southeast Asian Sufi scholars.

The Concept of *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*

In Islamic teachings, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*—purification of the soul—is a central process aimed at cleansing the heart of blameworthy qualities while cultivating praiseworthy virtues. Syaikh Abdurrauf Singkel, a distinguished Sufi scholar from the Malay Archipelago, devoted particular attention to this concept to form individuals with noble character and a purified inner state. He developed a structured methodology of soul purification designed to guide Muslims toward *Insān kāmil*—the complete human—characterized by harmony in their relationship with Allah SWT and fellow human beings.²⁸

1. Definition of *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*

Etymologically, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* derives from the verb *zakā*, rooted in the trilateral form *za-kā-yā*, with derivatives *yuzakkī* and *tazkiyah*. The term encompasses purity, growth, development, and productivity.²⁹ The Islamic tradition refers to the dual process of purifying the soul from moral and spiritual defects while fostering virtues that draw one closer to Allah SWT. It is thus both a cleansing from sin and an encouragement of spiritual and moral flourishing.³⁰³¹

²⁶ Nur Hadi Ihsan, Che Zarrina Binti Sa'ari, and Husna Hisaba Kholid, "Abdurrauf Al-Singkili's Concept of Dhikr: Exploring the Sufi Psychotherapy Model," *Al-Tahrir: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 24, no. 1 (May 2024): 131–46, <https://doi.org/10.21154/tahrir.v24i1.7261>.

²⁷ Nur Hadi Ihsan, Che Zarrina Binti Sa'ari, and Muhammad Sofian Hidayat, "Abdurrauf Al-Singkili's Concept of Insan Kamil in Facing The Crisis of Modern Human Morality," *Islam Realitas: Journal of Islamic and Social Studies* 8, no. 1 (July 13, 2022): 22, https://doi.org/10.30983/islam_realitas.v8i1.5487.

²⁸ *Insan Kamil* is a Sufi teaching about the nature and purpose of human life. Ihsan, Sa'ari, and Hidayat.

²⁹ Arroisi and Puspita, "Soul Restoration in Islamic Tradition (Ibn Tufail's Perspective of Tazkiyya an-Nafs Model)."

³⁰ Ar-Raghib Al-Asfihani, *Al-Mufradat fi Gharib al-Qur'an*, 1st ed. (Beirut: Maktabah Nazar Musthafa al-Baz, 2009), 237.

³¹ Musa Asy'arie, *Dialektika Agama Untuk Pembebasan Spiritual* (Yogyakarta: LESFI (Lembaga Studi Filsafat Islam), 2002), 45.

In *Lisan al-‘Arab*, Ibn Manzur defines *zakā* as cleansing and growth, indicating that *tazkiyah* has two inseparable dimensions: removing sins and negative traits such as arrogance and envy, and cultivating good qualities and righteous actions.³²³³ Az-Zabidi, in *Taj al-‘Arus*, affirms that *tazkiyah* includes physical and spiritual purification (*at-ṭahārah*), growth (*an-numū*), and the increase of virtuous deeds (*az-ziyā dah*), emphasizing the continuous development of faith, ethics, and worship as integral to the spiritual journey.³⁴³⁵

Similarly, Ibn Faris in *Maqāyis al-Lughah* traces *zakā* to meanings of purity (*at-ṭahārah*) and growth (*an-namā*), highlighting its focus on eradicating sins and actively fostering noble traits.³⁶³⁷ Al-Fairuzabadi, in *Al-Qamus al-Muhith*, defines *tazkiyah* as purification (*taḥhīr*) from physical and spiritual impurities and growth in charity and spirituality, linking it closely to moral refinement and worship. This includes cleansing the heart of inner ailments such as envy and pride and transforming one’s conduct in daily life.³⁸³⁹

Synthesizing these definitions, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* emerges as a comprehensive and continuous process that integrates the removal of spiritual maladies with the cultivation of virtues, enhancing the quality of faith, character, and devotion. It is not a single event but an ongoing journey toward greater nearness to Allah SWT and moral excellence.⁴⁰

³² Sayyid Qutb, *Tafsir Fi Zhilalil Quran*, 17th ed. (Beirut: Dar al-Syuruq, 1992), 87.

³³ Ibnu Manzur, *Lisan al-Arab*, 14th ed. (Beirut: Dar al-Ma’arif, 1993), 358.

³⁴ Murtadha Az-Zabidi, *Taj al-Arus min Jawahir al-Qamus*, 14th ed. (Kuwait: Dar al-Hidayah, 1987), 470.

³⁵ Muhammad Yusuf, “The Role of Tazkiyatun Nafs in Character Building,” *International Journal of Islamic Thought* 13, no. 1 (2021), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.24014/ijit.v13i1.2021.0001>.

³⁶ Abu Husain Ahmad bin Faris bin Zakariya, *Mu’jam Maqayis al-Lughah*, 3rd ed. (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1979), 59.

³⁷ Ahmad Yusuf, “The Concept of Tazkiyatun Nafs in Islamic Spiritual Psychology,” *Journal of Islamic Psychology* 8, no. 3 (2022), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.24014/jip.v8i3.2022.0001>.

³⁸ Al-Fairuzabadi, *Al-Qamus al-Muhith*, 3rd ed. (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1301), 786.

³⁹ Abdul Hamid, “Islamic Psychology and the Concept of Tazkiyatun Nafs,” *Journal of Islamic Studies* 25, no. 3 (2022), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.24014/jis.v25i3.2022.0000>.

⁴⁰ Belinda Dwijayanti, “Tazkiyatun Nafs in Classical and Modern Islamic Tradition Qur’anic Worldview,” *Teosofia: Indonesian Journal of Islamic Mysticism* 4, no. 2 (2015): 109–22, <https://doi.org/10.21580/tos.v4i2.1718>.

2. The Basis of *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* in the Qur'an and Hadith

The foundations of *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* are deeply embedded in the Qur'an and Hadith, where the purification of the soul is essential for success in the Hereafter. This process entails removing blameworthy traits and nurturing noble ones, reflecting Islamic ethics' inner and outer dimensions.⁴¹ In QS. Ash-Shams (91:9–10), Allah SWT declares: “*Truly successful is the one who purifies his soul, and truly lost is the one who corrupts it.*” According to Al-Mawardi's *Tafsir*, this verse affirms that true success depends on mastering one's desires and cleansing the soul from negative inclinations, while spiritual neglect leads to ruin.⁴² Likewise, QS. Al-Baqarah (2:151) states: “*Just as We have sent among you a Messenger from yourselves reciting to you Our verses, purifying you, and teaching you the Book and Wisdom...*” Imam Fakhrud-din al-Rāzī, in *Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, explains that this verse shows one of the Prophet's central missions was to purify the souls of his community—encompassing moral, spiritual, and social refinement.⁴³

The Hadith in *Sahih Muslim* (5:1599) further underscores the heart's centrality: “*Indeed, in the body there is a lump of flesh; if it is sound, the whole body is sound, and if it is corrupt, the whole body is corrupt. Indeed, it is the heart.*”⁴⁴ This narration highlights the heart as the locus of all actions, making its purification the key to overall righteousness.^{45,46} Zamakhsyari, in *Al-Kashshāf*, again frames *tazkiyah* as comprising *izālat ash-shurūr* (removal of evils) and *ghars al-faḍā'il* (planting of virtues), indicating that purification

⁴¹ Bisyri Abdul Karim, “Revolusi Mental Melalui Pendidikan Islam Berbasis Metode Tazkiyatun Nafs,” *Eljour: Education and Learning Journal* 2, no. 1 (January 2021): 10–18, <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.33096/eljour.v2i1.79>.

⁴² Abu Al-Hasan Al-Mawardi, *An-Nukat wa Al-Uyun Tafsir al-Mawardi*, 5th ed. (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1993), 310.

⁴³ Muhammad Fakhruddin Ar-Razi, *At-Tafsir al-Kabir wa Mafatih al-Ghaib* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1995), 108.

⁴⁴ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, *Kitāb Al-Musāqāh - Bāb Akhdh Al-Ḥalāl Wa Tark Al-Shubuhāt*, 5th ed., vol. 1599, n.d.

⁴⁵ Sa'id Hawwa, *Menyucikan Jiwa; Konsep Terpadu Tazkiyatun-Nafs* (Jakarta: Robbani Press, 2006), 28.

⁴⁶ Nur Hadi Ihsan, Munir Munir, and Dedy Irawan, “Tazkiyah Al-Nafs Wa ‘Alāqatuhā Bi Al-Sa’ādah ‘inda Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyyah,” *Kalimah: Jurnal Studi Agama Dan Pemikiran Islam* 19, no. 2 (September 8, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.21111/klm.v19i2.6629>.

must be accompanied by moral cultivation.⁴⁷⁴⁸ Ibn al-Athīr, in *An-Nihāyah fī Gharīb al-Hadīth wa al-Athār*, similarly defines *tazkiyah* as *taṭhīr an-nafs min adz-dzunūb wal-ma'ūsī* (purifying oneself from sin and disobedience) alongside *tanmiyat al-akhlāq al-ḥamīdah* (developing noble character).⁴⁹⁵⁰ From these textual foundations, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* is a spiritual discipline and a transformative ethical practice essential for strengthening a Muslim's relationship with Allah SWT and fostering a harmonious society. By aligning inner purification with virtuous action, it addresses not only the individual's spiritual state but also contributes to the moral fabric of the community.

Method

This study adopts a qualitative approach using the library research method.⁵¹ This approach was selected because the study focuses on exploring the concept of *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* in the thought of Syaikh Abdurrauf Singkel as a spiritual response to the challenges of excessive worldly attachment and immersion in transient pleasures, drawing upon various classical Islamic texts and literature.⁵² The research design is descriptive–analytical. The descriptive element systematically outlines Abdurrauf Singkel's conception of *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*. In contrast, the analytical element examines its relevance to contemporary spiritual and moral challenges shaped by overemphasis on material prosperity and the allure of fleeting delights.⁵³ To date, no study has specifically examined *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* as articulated by Abdurrauf Singkel in direct relation to these prevailing tendencies, which constitutes the primary aim of this research.

⁴⁷ Mahmud bin Umar Az-Zamakhshari, *Tafsir al-Kashshaf*, 3rd ed. (Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifah, 2009), 179.

⁴⁸ Muhammad Aslam, "The Qur'anic Concept of Tazkiyatun Nafs and Its Relevance in Modern Times," *Al-Bayan: Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 7, no. 2 (2021), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.24014/albayan.v7i2.2021.XXXX>.

⁴⁹ Hanan Malik, "Tazkiyatun Nafs as a Therapeutic Tool in Psychology," *Journal of Muslim Mental Health* 14, no. 1 (2021), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.24014/jmmh.v14i1.2021.0001>.

⁵⁰ Ibnul Atsir, *An-Nihayah fī Gharīb al-Hadīth wa al-Athar* (Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-Arabi, 1998).

⁵¹ Ali 'Abd al-Wahid Wafi, *Ilm al-Lughah*, 9th ed. (Al-Qahirah: Nahdah Misr, 2004), 33.

⁵² Nashiruddin Baidan, *Metodologi Khusus Penelitian Tafsir*, 1st ed. (Yogyakarta: Student Library, 2016), 28.

⁵³ Nashiruddin Baidan, *Metodologi Penafsiran Al Quran*, 2nd ed. (Yogyakarta: Student Library, 2000).

Data collection draws on both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include Abdurrauf Singkel's works—*Tanbīh al-Mashyī*, *Mir'at al-Ṭullāb*, *Daqā'iq al-Ḥurūf*, and *'Umdat al-Muhtājīn*—which elaborate on the purification of the soul within Sufi teachings and the formation of *Insān kāmil*. Secondary sources comprise scholarly books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and research studies that address themes of worldly attachment, the pursuit of ephemeral pleasures, and Sufism in Islam. Supporting literature—such as the biographies of Abdurrauf Singkel by Azyumardi Azra and Hasyimi, as well as Qur'anic exegesis and Hadith commentaries relevant to *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*—is also employed to strengthen the contextual and textual analysis.⁵⁴⁵⁵

Results and Discussion

Tazkiyat al-Nafs as the Path to Spiritual Equilibrium in the Teachings of Syaikh Abdurrauf Singkel

Syaikh Abdurrauf Singkel—whose full name is Abdurrauf bin Ali al-Jawi al-Fansuri al-Singkili⁵⁶—was born in Suro, Singkil.⁵⁷ While his exact birth year remains debated, with estimates ranging from 1606 to 1637 CE, the most frequently cited date is around 1024 H (1615 CE).⁵⁸ Despite the uncertainty over his birth year, his contributions to Islamic scholarship—particularly in Sufism—are profound and enduring.⁵⁹ According to research by Hasyimi,⁶⁰ as cited by historian Azyumardi Azra, Abdurrauf's father hailed from Persia before migrating to Samudra Pasai, then a flourishing center of Islamic civilization in

⁵⁴ Siyoto Sandu and Muhammad Ali Shodiq, *Dasar Metodologi Penelitian* (Yogyakarta: Lentari Publishing, 2015), 28.

⁵⁵ Azyumardi Azra, *Asal-Usul Reformisme Islam Di Asia Tenggara; Jaringan Melayu-Indonesia Dan Timur Tengah 'Ulama in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2004), 70–75.

⁵⁶ Oman Fathurrahman, *Tanbih Al-Mashi; Menyoal Wahdatul Wujud Kasus Abdurrauf Singkel Di Aceh Abad 17* (Jakarta: Mizan, 1999), 25.

⁵⁷ Nur Hadi Ihsan, "The Building of Scientific Tradition in History: The Intellectual Achievement of The Great Sufi Master of Aceh Abdurrauf Singkel (1615/20-1693)," in *Proceedings International Conference on Islamic Universities, Building Scientific Tradition with Asian Universities* (Ponorogo: Institut Studi Islam Darussalam (ISID) Gontor, 2011), 217, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.24014/islamicuniversities.v2011.i1.ihsan217>.

⁵⁸ Shahrul Hilmi bin Othman et al., "Aspek Muamalat dalam Kitab Mir'at al-Thullab Karya Shaykh Abdul Rauf Ali Al-Singkili," *Jurnal 'Ulwan* 4, no. 1 (2019): 1–3, <https://doi.org/https://unimel.edu.my/journal/index.php/JULWAN/article/view/487/413>.

⁵⁹ Syamsul Munir Amin, *Ilmu Tasawuf* (Jakarta: Amzah, 2012), 343.

⁶⁰ Ali Hasjmy, *Kebudayaan Aceh Dalam Sejarah* (Jakarta: Beuna, 1983), 202.

the Malay–Nusantara world. The family later settled in Fansur, Barus, a strategic port city on the west coast of Sumatra known for its role in the spice trade and as a hub for spreading Islam in Southeast Asia. The religiously vibrant environment of this region shaped Abdurrauf’s intellectual formation, preparing him for his future role as a leading proponent of Sufism in the archipelago.^{61,62}

At 27, Abdurrauf embarked on a journey to the Arabian Peninsula, where he would remain for 19 years. He traveled through the Persian Gulf, Yemen, Jeddah, Mecca, and Medina. In Medina, he studied under two prominent Sufi masters—Syaikh Shafiuddin Ahmad al-Dajjani al-Qusyasyi and Syaikh Ibrahim al-Kurani—influential figures in the broader Islamic scholarly and spiritual network. Their guidance had a lasting impact on his understanding of Sufism and its integration with Islamic law.⁶³

Upon returning to Aceh in 1661 CE, Abdurrauf encountered a contentious debate between two schools of Sufi thought: the doctrine of *wahdat al-wujūd* championed by Hamzah Fansuri and the doctrine of *wahdat al-shuhūd* advocated by Nuruddin al-Raniri. Rather than becoming entangled in polemics, he chose a path of moderation, refraining from confrontation and adopting a more conciliatory approach. For a period, he lived humbly as a fisherman on the coast of Krueng, continuing to engage in da‘wah (religious outreach) among the local community.⁶⁴

Despite his simple lifestyle, Abdurrauf’s reputation as a scholar and spiritual guide grew steadily. His balanced and inclusive approach to Sufi teaching enabled him to play a significant role in reconciling doctrinal divisions within the Sufi community in the Malay Archipelago. His ability to harmonize different perspectives reflected the broader ethos of *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*—striving for spiritual purification, moral refinement, and inner equilibrium while navigating complex social and intellectual challenges.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Rosihon Anwar Sholihin, *Ilmu Tasawuf* (Bandung: CV Pustaka Setia, 2014), 252.

⁶² Fathurrahman, *Tanbih Al-Mashi; Menyoal Wahdatul Wujud Kasus Abdurrauf Singkel Di Aceh Abad 17*, 25.

⁶³ Azyumardi Azra, *Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah Dan Kepulauan Nusantara Abad XVII Dan XVIII* (Bandung: Mizan, 1994), 191–93.

⁶⁴ Mufid Nabila and Alex Yusron Al Mufti, “Membentuk Perilaku Beragama Melalui Konsep Wahdat Al-Wujud dan Wahdan Ash Syuhud,” *Esoterik: Jurnal Akhlak dan Tasawuf* 5, no. 1 (2019): 145–64, <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.21043/esoterik.v5i1>.

⁶⁵ Firdaus Muhammad Yunus, “TGK. Syiah Kuala Pengembang Tarekat Syattariah di Nusantara,” *Kalam: Jurnal Agama dan Sosial Humaniora* 4, no. 2 (December 2016): 163–86, <https://doi.org/https://journal.lsamaaceh.com/index.php/kalam/article/view/28>.

1. *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* According to Abdurrauf Singkel

Tazkiyat al-Nafs, or purification of the soul, occupies a central place in the spiritual framework of Islamic Sufism. Although Syaikh Abdurrauf Singkel does not provide an explicit, formal definition of the term in his writings, his thoughts and teachings embody its principles. As a prominent scholar committed to harmonizing sharia, ethics, and Sufism, Abdurrauf consistently emphasized the purification of the heart as an essential element in the spiritual journey of a Muslim. His work *Mir'at al-Tullāb* exemplifies this integration, highlighting the inseparable relationship between the correct implementation of sharia and the cultivation of noble character.⁶⁶

In *Tanbīh al-Masyī* and *Mir'at al-Tullāb*, Abdurrauf underscores the significance of moral excellence, self-restraint, and purity of heart as integral components of complete religious practice. While he refrains from defining *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* in theoretical terms, his guidance centers on the removal of reprehensible traits such as *riya'* (ostentation), *hasad* (envy), and *takabbur* (arrogance),⁶⁷ coupled with the cultivation of core spiritual disciplines, including *muraqabah* (awareness of God's constant oversight), *muhasabah* (self-examination),⁶⁸ and *tawakal* (trustful reliance upon God). These elements form the operational essence of *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*.⁶⁹⁷⁰⁷¹

As observed in Azra's (1994) research,⁷² Abdurrauf adopted a moderate Sufi approach that sought a balance between the legal rigor of *sharia* and the lived reality of spiritual purification. His works' absence of a formal definition likely reflects his emphasis on tangible, lived practice over abstract doctrinal formulation.⁷³ Al-Attas (1980), in *The Mysticism of*

⁶⁶ Abdurrauf Singkel, *Mir'at al-Tullab*, Manuscript (Jakarta: National Library of the Republic of Indonesia, 1663).

⁶⁷ Hawwa, *Menyucikan Jiwa; Konsep Terpadu Tazkiyatun-Nafs*, 12.

⁶⁸ Arroisi and Puspita, "Soul Restoration in Islamic Tradition (Ibn Tufail's Perspective of Tazkiyya an-Nafs Model)."

⁶⁹ Abdurrauf Singkel, *Tanbih al-Masyi*, Manuscript (Banda Aceh: Collection of Ancient Acehese Manuscripts, 1675).

⁷⁰ Fathurrahman, *Tanbih Al-Mashi; Menyoal Wahdatul Wujud Kasus Abdurrauf Singkel Di Aceh Abad 17*, 25.

⁷¹ Singkel, *Mir'at al-Tullab*.

⁷² Azra, *Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah Dan Kepulauan Nusantara Abad XVII Dan XVIII*, 70–75.

⁷³ Yusni Ismail, "The Role of Abdurrauf As-Singkili in the Development of Islamic Jurisprudence and Sufism in the Malay World," *Journal of Islamic Studies and Culture* 1, no. 1 (2012): 23–35, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.XXXX/jisc.v1i1.2012.001>.

Hamzah Fansuri, similarly noted that many scholars of the Malay–Nusantara tradition—including Abdurrauf—were more concerned with guiding the experiential dimensions of spirituality than with producing rigid conceptual treatises.⁷⁴

This orientation is also shaped by the influence of moderate Sunni Sufism as articulated by Imam al-Ghazali, whose synthesis of law, ethics, and spirituality is evident in Abdurrauf's teachings.⁷⁵ For him, the purification of the soul was not an isolated act but an ongoing, integrated process woven into the fabric of daily life—embodied through adherence to correct *sharia*, the deliberate cultivation of virtuous character, and the deepening of spiritual awareness.⁷⁶

2. Stages of *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* According to Abdurrauf Singkel

The stages of *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* as articulated by Syaikh Abdurrauf Singkel bear strong similarities to those outlined by Imam al-Ghazali.⁷⁷ Both emphasize that purification of the soul is essential for drawing nearer to Allah SWT and attaining true happiness in this world and the Hereafter.⁷⁸ This process entails removing blameworthy traits, cultivating virtuous qualities, and ultimately achieving the highest spiritual state in which the heart is illuminated by Divine light.⁷⁹

Abdurrauf Singkel and Imam Al-Ghazali divided *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* into three main stages: *Takhallī*, *Tahallī*, and *Tajallī*. *Takhallī* is the stage of emptying the heart of bad qualities such as pride, envy, and excessive love of the world (*hubb al-dunya*), which become obstacles on the spiritual

⁷⁴ Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *The Mysticism of Hamzah Fansuri* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1966), 85–97.

⁷⁵ Abu Hamid Muhammad bin Muhammad Al-Ghazali, *Ihya' Ulum Al-Din: Kebangkitan Kembali Ilmu-Ilmu Agama* (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2015), 60.

⁷⁶ Mohd Yusri Zainuddin Yusoff and Mohd Shukri Mohamad, "Tasawuf Sunni in Southeast Asia: The Influence of Abdurrauf as-Singkili," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention* 4, no. 9 (2015): 45–52, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.24014/ijhssi.v4i9.2015.0045>.

⁷⁷ Ma'muroh Ma'muroh, Abqorina Abqorina, and Amrin Amrin, "The Concept of Tazkiyatun Nafs by Al-Ghazali and Its Implementation at Pesantren Darut Tasbih Tangerang," *Edu Cendikia: Jurnal Ilmiah Kependidikan* 4, no. 02 (2024): 833–44, <https://doi.org/10.47709/educendikia.v4i02.4989>.

⁷⁸ Arroisi and Puspita, "Soul Restoration in Islamic Tradition (Ibn Tufail's Perspective of Tazkiyya an-Nafs Model)."

⁷⁹ Karim, "Revolusi Mental Melalui Pendidikan Islam Berbasis Metode Tazkiyatun Nafs."

journey.⁸⁰⁸¹ After the heart is clean, the *Tahallī* stage is filled with good qualities such as sincerity, patience, gratitude, and humility.⁸²⁸³ The peak is *Tajalli*, where a person feels the presence and light of the Divine in his life, achieves inner calm, and feels a profound closeness to Allah.⁸⁴⁸⁵

While the structural stages are similar, the approaches of the two scholars reveal distinctive emphases. In *Ihya' Ulūm al-Dīn*, Imam al-Ghazālī underscores the centrality of *mujahadah* (struggle against the lower self) and *muhasabah* (critical self-examination),⁸⁶⁸⁷ portraying *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* as the fruit of persistent and disciplined inner effort.⁸⁸⁸⁹ In contrast, Abdurrauf Singkel, particularly in *Tanbīh al-Masyī*, highlights the preparation of the heart as a receptive vessel for Divine illumination.⁹⁰ For him, once the heart is cleansed, Divine guidance flows naturally, leading to inner serenity and spiritual fulfillment.⁹¹⁹²

Thus, while both perspectives converge on the same ultimate goal, Imam al-Ghazali's approach accentuates the rigorous discipline of inner struggle. In contrast, Abdurrauf Singkel's approach emphasizes cultivating a readiness to receive Divine light. Together, these complementary views

⁸⁰ Singkel, *Mir'at al-Tullab*.

⁸¹ Singkel, *Tanbih al-Masyi*.

⁸² In Imam Al-Ghazali's theory, *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* is divided into two stages: *Takhalli* (*Mujahadah*) and *Tahalli* (*Riyadhah*). Salasiah Hanin Hamjah, "Tazkiyah Al-Nafs in the Islamic Counseling Process from Al-Ghazali's Perspective," *Ibn Khaldun International Journal of Economic, Community Empowerment and Sustainability*. Journal Homepage: *index* 1, no. 1 (December 22, 2022): 19–28, <https://doi.org/http://ejournal2.uika-bogor.ac.id/index.php/IJECES/index>.

⁸³ Ihsan, Munir, and Irawan, "Tazkiyah Al-Nafs Wa 'Alāqatuhā Bi Al-Sa'Ādah 'inda Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyyah."

⁸⁴ Yusuf, "The Relevance of Tazkiyatun Nafs in Modern Society."

⁸⁵ Bambang Irawan, Ismail Fahmi Arrauf Naution, and Hywel Coleman, "Applying Ibn 'Arabi's Concept of Tajalli; A Sufi Approach to Environmental Ethics.Pdf," *Teosofia: Indonesian Journal of Islamic Mysticism* 10, no. 1 (2021): 21–36, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.21580/tos.v10i1.7204>.

⁸⁶ Al-Ghazali, *Ihya' Ulum Al-Din: Kebangkitan Kembali Ilmu-Ilmu Agama*, 60.

⁸⁷ Jarman Arroisi, "Spiritual Healing dalam Tradisi Sufi," *TSAQAFAH* 14, no. 2 (November 27, 2018): 323–48, <https://doi.org/10.21111/tsaqafah.v14i2.2459>.

⁸⁸ Al-Ghazali, *Ihya' Ulumuddin*, 85–112.

⁸⁹ Malik, "The Influence of Al-Ghazali's Thoughts on Tazkiyatun Nafs in Modern Education."

⁹⁰ Karim, "Revolusi Mental Melalui Pendidikan Islam Berbasis Metode Tazkiyatun Nafs."

⁹¹ Singkel, *Mir'at al-Tullab*.

⁹² Singkel, *Tanbih al-Masyi*.

provide valuable insights for seekers aspiring toward self-improvement, moral refinement, and spiritual proximity to Allah SWT.

3. *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* Method in the Teachings of Abdurrauf Singkel

In his spiritual guidance, Syaikh Abdurrauf Singkel outlined a series of practical disciplines for undertaking the process of *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*—purification of the soul. These methods are designed to cleanse the heart, strengthen faith, and nurture virtues that lead toward *Insān kāmil* (the perfected human). He emphasizes *dhikr* (remembrance of Allah), a means to purify the heart from spiritual impurities and shield it from worldly distractions.⁹³ Through constant *dhikr*, the heart attains tranquility (*itmi'nan*) and becomes less susceptible to the temptations of transient pleasures.⁹⁴ Equally important is *muhāsaba* (self-reflection), a practice of regular introspection that enables individuals to identify and correct moral shortcomings. Singkel views *muhāsaba* as vital for preserving the soul's purity, urging believers to consistently align their intentions, actions, and thoughts with divine guidance.⁹⁵

Abdurrauf also stresses the significance of *muraqaba* (consciousness of divine oversight), which involves cultivating a constant awareness that Allah is ever watchful over every thought, word, and deed. This awareness nurtures sincerity in worship, discourages sinful conduct, and instills caution in one's behavior, reinforcing consistency in *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*.⁹⁷ Someone who always feels watched will find it easier to control their desires and maintain a clean heart.⁹⁸

Alongside this, Abdurrauf advocates *tawakal* (trustful reliance upon Allah), encouraging complete surrender to divine will to diminish undue attachment to the temporal world. Through *tawakal*, believers develop resilience, accept divine decree with contentment, and remain composed in

⁹³ Al-Ghazali, *Ihya' Ulum Al-Din: Kebangkitan Kembali Ilmu-Ilmu Agama*, 60.

⁹⁴ Ahwan Mukarrom, "Konsep Syaikh Abdurrauf Singkel Tentang Kematian dalam Naskah Lubb Al-Kashf wa Al-Bayan," *Islamica: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 4, no. 1 (September 2009): 133–42, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.15642/islamica.2009.4.1.133-142>.

⁹⁵ Arroisi and Puspita, "Soul Restoration in Islamic Tradition (Ibn Tufail's Perspective of Tazkiyya an-Nafs Model)."

⁹⁶ Ihsan, Sa'ari, and Kholid, "Abdurrauf Al-Singkili's Concept of Dhikr: Exploring the Sufi Psychotherapy Model."

⁹⁷ Singkel, *Mir'at al-Tullab*.

⁹⁸ Ismail, "The Role of Abdurrauf As-Singkili in the Development of Islamic Jurisprudence and Sufism in the Malay World."

the face of life's trials.⁹⁹ Furthermore, Abdurrauf promotes *tafakkur* (contemplation of divine signs) to deepen faith, clarify life's higher purpose, and purify one's intentions. By reflecting on Allah's greatness through observing creation, believers can strengthen their spiritual connection with the Creator.¹⁰⁰ Finally, he strongly recommends *tahajjud* (night vigil prayer) as a form of worship and a spiritual discipline to resist the lower self's desires. Performed in the stillness of the night, *tahajjud* enhances spiritual resolve and nurtures an intimate bond with Allah SWT. Collectively, these practices form a holistic method of self-purification that fosters moral excellence, spiritual awareness, and a balanced relationship with both the Creator and fellow human beings.¹⁰¹¹⁰²

Collectively, these practices form a comprehensive method of *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* in Abdurrauf Singkel's teachings. They operate in tandem to remove blameworthy traits, instill noble qualities, and harmonize the believer's relationship with Allah SWT and others. By applying these methods consistently, a Muslim may attain the spiritual and moral stature of *Insān kāmil*—a model of excellence in both religious devotion and social conduct.¹⁰³

4. The Relevance of Abdurrauf Singkel's Teaching on *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* in Modern Life

Excessive worldly attachment and immersion in fleeting pleasures have become defining challenges of modern life, as many individuals increasingly center their aspirations on material possessions and sensory enjoyment. Renowned scholars such as Imam al-Ghazālī, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, and Syaikh Abdul Qādir al-Jīlānī have each presented the concept

⁹⁹ Nurhasan, "Konsep Tawakal Menurut Jalaluddin Rumi," *Pancawahana: Jurnal Studi Islam* 14, no. 2 (December 2019): 100–113, <https://doi.org/https://ejournal.kopertais4.or.id/tapalkuda/index.php/pwahana/article/view/3609>.

¹⁰⁰ Al-Ghazali, *Ihya' Ulum Al-Din: Kebangkitan Kembali Ilmu-Ilmu Agama*, 23.

¹⁰¹ Ahmad Yusuf, "The Contribution of Abdurrauf Singkel to Sufism in Southeast Asia," *Journal of Islamic Spirituality* 9, no. 1 (2021), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.24014/jispi.v9i1.2021.0001>.

¹⁰² Mud'is, "Enhancing Intuition through Tazkiyatun Nafs: A Pathway to Preventing Unethical Conduct."

¹⁰³ Zakaria Stapa, "Insan Kamil Ciri dan Proses Pembentukan," *Afkar: Jurnal Akidah & Pemikiran Islam* 2, no. 1 (June 2001): 43–60, <https://doi.org/https://ejournal.um.edu.my/index.php/afkar/article/view/6008>.

of *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* (purification of the soul) as a means of liberating the heart from these tendencies. Within this lineage, the approach of Syaikh Abdurrauf Singkel stands out for its particular relevance to contemporary spiritual and ethical crises.¹⁰⁴¹⁰⁵

Imam al-Ghazali, in *Ihya' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, explains that soul purification consists of three stages: *Takhalli* (emptying the heart of blameworthy traits),¹⁰⁶ *Tahalli* (adorned it with praiseworthy qualities),¹⁰⁷ and *Tajalli* (illuminating it with Divine light). He observes that overattachment to material gain and indulgence in worldly delights arise from failing to govern one's desires.¹⁰⁸ Thus, disciplined spiritual struggle through self-examination (*muhasāba*) and inner striving (*mujāhada*) becomes essential for achieving a purified heart and enduring peace of mind.¹⁰⁹¹¹⁰

Similarly, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, in *Madārij al-Sālikīn*, categorizes the human soul into three types: *Nafs al-Ammarah* (the soul inclined toward evil), *Nafs al-Lawwamah* (the self-reproaching soul striving for improvement), and *Nafs al-Mutma'innah* (the tranquil soul at peace with Divine decree).¹¹¹ In his view, those ensnared by material excess and transient pleasures remain at the first stage (*Nafs al-Ammārah*). Elevation to tranquility requires sustained engagement in *dhikr*, introspection, and prayer.¹¹²

¹⁰⁴ Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC), 1995), 23–27.

¹⁰⁵ Atika Ulfia Adlina et al., “Tazkiyat Al-Nafs as Resilience Strategy to Deal with the Post-Pandemic Recession among Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) Actors,” *Teosofia: Indonesian Journal of Islamic Mysticism* 12, no. 1 (2023): 41–60, <https://doi.org/10.21580/tos.v12i1.14437>.

¹⁰⁶ Karim, “Revolusi Mental Melalui Pendidikan Islam Berbasis Metode Tazkiyatun Nafs.”

¹⁰⁷ Ihsan, Munir, and Irawan, “Tazkiyah Al-Nafs Wa ‘Alāqatuhā Bi Al-Sa’ādah ‘inda Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyyah.”

¹⁰⁸ Al-Ghazali, *Ihya' 'Ulumuddin*, 72–75.

¹⁰⁹ Malik, “The Influence of Al-Ghazali's Thoughts on Tazkiyatun Nafs in Modern Education.”

¹¹⁰ Deswita Deswita, Zaidi Hajazi, and Kasmuri Selamat, “Tazkiyat Al-Nafs as a Solution for Reaching Humans Peace of Heart in the Modern Age,” *Alfuad: Jurnal Sosial Keagamaan* 6, no. 2 (2022): 11, <https://doi.org/10.31958/jsk.v6i2.7260>.

¹¹¹ Al-Jawziyyah, *Madarij as-Salikin*, 308–12.

¹¹² Hasan Ali, “The Spiritual Practices of Abdurrauf Singkel in the Context of Tazkiyatun Nafs,” *Journal of Islamic Spirituality* 11, no. 1 (2022).

Syaikh Abdul Qādir al-Jīlānī, in *Al-Fath al-Rabbānī*, underscores the necessity of removing love for worldly excess from the heart and replacing it with love for Allah.¹¹³ He regards *muhāsaba* as the foundational step in this process, enabling the believer to identify and eradicate traits such as greed and excessive self-indulgence. At the stage of *ridha* (contentment with Divine will), a person is no longer swayed by the impulses of desire that distance one from God.¹¹⁴

In alignment with these classical insights, Abdurrauf Singkel offers a *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* framework that directly addresses the spiritual imbalances of contemporary society. Central to his approach is *dhikr*—the continual remembrance of Allah—as the principal means of cleansing the heart from attachment to transient worldly attractions. Through *dhikr*, individuals are reminded that true fulfillment lies not in material accumulation but in nearness to Allah.¹¹⁵¹¹⁶ This remembrance reframes all worldly enjoyment as temporary and situates lasting peace of mind within a strong, conscious relationship with the Creator.¹¹⁷

Complementing *dhikr* is *muhāsaba*, or deep self-reflection, which enables the believer to recognize personal weaknesses and regulate worldly desires. Through regular self-evaluation, one can identify and address inner maladies such as greed (*tamaʿ*), envy (*hasad*), and excessive love of the temporal world (*hubb al-dunyā*),¹¹⁸¹¹⁹ replacing them with virtues that orient life toward spiritual purpose.

Murāqaba, or sustained awareness of Allah's supervision, is another cornerstone of Abdurrauf's method. This discipline fosters a sense of sacred accountability in thought, word, and deed, cultivating a refined caution that

¹¹³ Abdul Qadir Al-Jilani, *Al-Fath ar-Rabbani*, 1st ed. (Misr: Maktabah al-Qudsi, 1994), 45–50.

¹¹⁴ Taufiqurrahman, “Ikhlās Dalam Perspektif Al Quran (Analisis Terhadap Konstruksi Ikhlās Melalui Metode Tafsir Tematik),” *Eduprof: Islamic Education Journal* 1, no. 2 (September 2019): 1–34, <https://doi.org/10.47453/eduprof.v1i2.3>.

¹¹⁵ Singkel, *Tanbih al-Masyi*.

¹¹⁶ Azra, *Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah Dan Kepulauan Nusantara Abad XVII Dan XVIII*, 191–93.

¹¹⁷ Mukarrom, “Konsep Syaikh Abdurrauf Singkel Tentang Kematian dalam Naskah Lubb Al-Kashf wa Al-Bayan.”

¹¹⁸ Suriati, “Dakwah dan Hedonisme,” *Retorika: Jurnal Kajian Komunikasi dan Penyiaran Islam* 3, no. 1 (2021): 1–27, <https://doi.org/http://journal.iaimsinjai.ac.id/index.php/retorika>.

¹¹⁹ Singkel, *Mir'at al-Tullab*.

deters sin and insincerity.¹²⁰ *Murāqaba* also instills *haya'* (a sense of shame before Allah), helping believers resist outward transgressions and inward corruption, thereby maintaining a life focused on meaning and piety rather than ephemeral gratification.¹²¹

Finally, *tawakal*, or complete reliance upon Allah, safeguards the believer from the anxiety and restlessness often accompanying an overemphasis on worldly success.¹²²¹²³ By entrusting outcomes to Allah while fulfilling one's responsibilities, individuals balance effort and serenity, accepting Divine decree with contentment and avoiding the compulsive pursuit of transient gains.¹²⁴¹²⁵

When practiced in harmony, these disciplines—*dhikr*, *muhāsaba*, *murāqaba*, and *tawakal*—liberate the soul from material greed, refine moral character, and contribute to a more virtuous society. Abdurrauf Singkel's teachings thus provide a clear, practical roadmap for cultivating inner equilibrium, enabling individuals to live free from the tyranny of worldly attachment and to anchor their lives in lasting faith and tranquility.¹²⁶ In this way, his concept of *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* emerges as an especially pertinent spiritual solution to the moral and existential challenges of the modern era.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that *Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, as taught by Syaikh Abdurrauf Singkel, offers a comprehensive spiritual framework for addressing the pervasive tendencies toward excessive worldly attachment and immersion in fleeting pleasures in modern society. Distinct from purely abstract doctrinal treatments, Singkel's approach prioritizes practical spiritual disciplines—*dhikr* (remembrance of Allah), *muhāsaba* (self-examination), *murāqaba* (awareness of Divine oversight), and *tawakal* (trustful reliance upon Allah)—which can be

¹²⁰ Singkel, *Tanbih al-Masyi*.

¹²¹ Ismail, "The Role of Abdurrauf As-Singkili in the Development of Islamic Jurisprudence and Sufism in the Malay World."

¹²² Nurhasan, "Konsep Tawakal Menurut Jalaluddin Rumi."

¹²³ Singkel, *Mir'at al-Tullab*.

¹²⁴ Yusoff and Mohamad, "Tasawuf Sunni in Southeast Asia: The Influence of Abdurrauf as-Singkili."

¹²⁵ Nawawi Al-Bantani, *Salalim Al-Fudhala (Tangga-Tangga Kemuliaan)* (Indonesia: Pustaka Mampir, 2006), 66.

¹²⁶ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1989), 102–8.

seamlessly integrated into daily life. His structured path of *Takhallī*, *Tahallī*, and *Tajallī* reflects a holistic model of inner purification and conscious nearness to the Divine.

Situated within the Southeast Asian intellectual and spiritual tradition, Singkel's teachings reaffirm the enduring relevance of classical Sufi ethics in restoring spiritual equilibrium and cultivating *Insān kāmil*—the balanced and complete human being. By bridging timeless wisdom with contemporary moral and existential challenges, this study positions *Tazkiyat al-Nafs* as a vital resource for recontextualizing Islamic spirituality in an era marked by rapid social change and shifting value systems.

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