

# PURIFICATION OF SOUL THROUGH RECITATION AND CONTEMPLATION OF AL-QURAN: AN EDUCATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

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## Abstract

The Al-Qur'an, the holy book of Islam, is not only a source of religious guidance but also a powerful tool for spiritual purification. Its recitation (tilawah) and contemplation (tadabbur) offer a path to cleanse the heart, develop moral character, and transform behavior. From an educational perspective, engaging with the Qur'an helps shape the values, mindset, and emotional health of students seeking personal growth. The application al-quran as a center of knowledge is compatible for all levels of students, whether at the primary, secondary, and university levels.

**Keywords:** purification, soul, education, Qur'an

## 1. The Concept Of Purification Of Heart (Tazkiyah Al Nafs ) In Islam

In Islam, *tazkiyah al-nafs* refers to the purification of the heart from the darkness of polytheism to the light of *tawhīd*. It also involves cleansing the soul of blameworthy qualities such as arrogance, hatred, jealousy, and dishonesty. In addition, it cultivates praiseworthy qualities such as sincerity, patience, humility, and love for Allah, among others. The Qur'an serves as the ultimate and universal guidance in this life, constantly reminding students of the importance of self-improvement and consciousness of God

This is because the heart is the locus of tawhid recognition, the exaltation of Allah, and the center of all good and evil traits and acceptance of pious deeds on the side of Allah. Thus, Imam al-Ghazali mentioned that the legal ruling for purification of the soul in Islam is compulsory for all Muslims (Abd al -Qadir 1993). The word of tazkiyyah is mentioned many times in the al-quran. For example, Allah says

يَتْلُوا عَلَيْهِمْ ءَايَاتِكَ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

who will recite to them Your revelations, teach them the Book and wisdom, and purify them. Indeed, You 'alone' are the Almighty, All-Wise (Al-Quran, al-Baqarah :129)

يَتْلُوا عَلَيْكُمْ ءَايَاتِنَا وَيُزَكِّيكُمْ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُعَلِّمُكُم مَّا لَمْ تَكُونُوا تَعْلَمُونَ

reciting to you Our revelations, purifying you, teaching you the Book and wisdom, and teaching you what you never knew(Al-Quran, al-Baqarah :151)

...يَتْلُوا عَلَيْهِمْ ءَايَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ

reciting to them His revelations, purifying them, and teaching them the Book and wisdom (al-Quran, al -Jum'ah :2)

The Prophet , SAW said :

إن هذه القلوب تصدأ كما يصدأ الحديد إذا أصابه الماء قيل: يا رسول الله وما جلاؤها قال: كثرة ذكر الموت وتلاوة القرآن

Indeed, these hearts rust just as iron rusts when water touches it.” They said: “O Messenger of Allah, what is its polish (its cleansing)?” He replied: “Frequent remembrance of death and recitation of the Qur’an(al-Bayhaqi, Sha’b al Iman, Fasl Fi Idman Tilawah Al-Quran).

## 2. The Role of Recitation (Tilawah)

Reciting the Qur’an is an act of worship that connects the heart to the words of Allah. When al-Quran is recited with *tartil* (recited slowly, clearly, and in a well-arranged manner) and with proper tajwid (rules of pronunciation), it implies clarity, precision, and beautiful sequencing that enhances spiritual presence and focus. That such recitation helps to improve concentration and discipline, to instill a sense of peace and calm, and to create a habit of daily reflection. Through beautiful and rhythmic recitation, students alike begin to feel the emotional and spiritual impact of the Qur’an.

The Qur’an holds a unique and exalted position unlike any other book in human history. One of its most remarkable qualities is that simply reciting it brings reward, whether or not the reciter fully understands its meaning. This divine reward is not dependent on comprehension alone, but on sincere engagement and the devotional nature of its recitation of the words of Allah (al -Nazili n.d). Furthermore, the Qur’an encourages even those who struggle and face difficulty with its recitation so that they receive double reward. This demonstrates the Qur’an’s exceptional status. It is a book of mercy, guidance, and reward for effort, not just achievement (al-Rahimi 2006). The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said that

قال رسول الله ﷺ: الَّذِي يَقْرَأُ الْقُرْآنَ وَهُوَ مُبَاهِرٌ بِهِ مَعَ السَّفَرَةِ الْكِرَامِ الْبَرَّةِ، وَالَّذِي يَقْرَأُ الْقُرْآنَ وَيَتَتَعْتَعُ فِيهِ وَهُوَ عَلَيْهِ شَاقٌّ لَهُ أَجْرَانِ

The one who recites the Qur’an fluently will be with the noble and righteous angels, while the one who recites it with difficulty, struggling through it, will receive a double reward (Muslim, Sahih Muslim, Bab Fadl Al-Mahir Bi Al-Quran)

## 3. The Power Of Contemplation (Tadabbur)

*Tadabbur*, contemplation on the meanings of the Qur’an, is essential for true understanding. Without contemplation, recitation can become a mechanical act without depth or transformation. *Tadabbur* encourages the students to think about the purpose of the verses, relate the message to daily life, and apply the teachings to improve behavior and character. For example, when reading verses about justice, compassion, or patience, students are encouraged to reflect on how they can practice these values in school, at home, or with their friends, or by referring to its deeper meaning from authentic classical and contemporary commentaries of the Quran, such as *Tafsir al-Tabari*, *Tafsir al-Qurtubi*, *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, *Tafsir al-Manar* , *Al-Tahrir wa'l-Tanwir* and others.

#### 4. Combination Of Recitation And Contemplation Of The Quran

When recitation and contemplation are combined, the result is that both contribute to a deeper and more meaningful spiritual experience. The sound of the Qur'an touches the heart, while its meanings transform the mind. This dual approach activates both emotional and intellectual engagement, strengthens the bond with the Qur'an, and encourages inner change that leads to improved behavior. This combination is powerful in education, where it can guide students to become not only better learners but also better individuals—spiritually aware, morally grounded, and emotionally mature.

To achieve the full effectiveness of purification and to gain the beneficial impact of the Qur'an, its engagement must be approached with certain spiritual conditions. Imam Al-Ghazali outlines ten inner dimensions of spiritual growth and Qur'anic reflection, each of which plays a crucial role in deepening one's connection with the Divine. These dimensions are briefly explained below (al-Ghazali 1995).

Summary Table 10 Inner Dimensions of Spiritual Growth and Qur'anic Reflection

no	Arabic Term	English Translation	Explanation
1	أصل الكلام ( <i>Asl al-Kalām</i> )	The Origin of Speech	Recognizing that the Qur'an is the divine speech of Allah, not just words.
2	التعظيم ( <i>Al-Ta'dhīm</i> )	Reverence / Magnification	Feeling deep respect and awe for Allah and His words.
3	حضور القلب ( <i>Ḥuḍūr al-Qalb</i> )	Presence of the Heart	Being mentally and emotionally focused during prayer or recitation.
4	التدبر ( <i>Tadabbur</i> )	Contemplation / Reflection	Thinking deeply about the meanings of the Qur'an.
5	التخلي عن الموانع ( <i>Al-Takhallī 'an Mawānī'</i> )	Removal of Obstacles	Clearing the heart from distractions, sins, or worldly thoughts.
6	الفهم ( <i>Al-Fahm</i> )	Understanding	Comprehending the meanings and purpose of the verses.
7	التخصيص ( <i>Al-Takhṣīṣ</i> )	Personalization	Applying the message of the Qur'an to oneself personally.
8	التأثر ( <i>Al-Ta'athur</i> )	Emotional Impact	Allowing the words of Allah to move your heart and emotions.
9	التراقي ( <i>Al-Taraqqī</i> )	Spiritual Ascension	Rising spiritually by connecting more deeply with the Qur'an and Allah.
10	التبري ( <i>Al-Tabarrī</i> )	Renouncing the possession of goodness and more to admit the weakness	Realizing one's weakness and fully relying on Allah's mercy and guidance.

## 5. The Role Of Recitation And Contemplation Of The Qur'an Across Different Student Levels

The Qur'an holds a central place in Islamic education, not only as a divine text to be memorized and recited, but also as a source of deep reflection and spiritual growth. At each stage of a student's development—whether in primary, secondary, or university education—the practices of recitation (tilawah) and contemplation (tadabbur) play vital roles in shaping their character, intellect, and emotional well-being. These two practices enhance the student's maturity, supporting their journey of both academic and personal development.

### 1. Primary School Students (Ages 6–12)

At the primary level, the focus is on laying the foundations of Qur'anic literacy and love for learning. Students begin by learning basic Tajwid and correct pronunciation, which helps them recite short surahs with clarity and respect. At this stage, children often develop an emotional connection to the sound and rhythm of the Qur'an, which nurtures a love for the Book from an early age.

Contemplation at this age is kept simple and age-appropriate. Teachers and parents introduce basic meanings of verses, such as the mercy of Allah or the importance of kindness to others. Through stories of the prophets, children learn to distinguish right from wrong and are encouraged to ask questions and use their imagination. The impact of this stage is crucial, as it helps build a positive emotional bond with the Qur'an, enhances listening and concentration skills, and introduces basic moral values.

### 2. Secondary School Students (Ages 13–17)

In the teenage years, students are capable of deeper understanding and moral reasoning. Qur'anic recitation now includes improving fluency and expression, with more attention given to the rules of Tajwid and the beauty of recitation. Students are often motivated to refine their skills and may begin participating in school Qur'an competitions or group recitations.

Tadabbur becomes even more meaningful at this stage. Educators can guide students to explore themes in the Qur'an, such as justice, patience, honesty, and humility, and connect these lessons to real-life situations they face at school or in social settings. Reflective practices such as journaling or group discussions can help students process and personalize what they learn. These experiences support teens as they navigate identity and personal challenges, and help build empathy, emotional self-awareness, and spiritual maturity.

### 3. University Students (Ages 18+)

At the university level, students are typically prepared for critical thinking, deep reflection, and personal transformation. Their Qur'anic recitation often reaches a level of mastery, with not only excellent Tajwid but also emotional expression that enhances their connection to the text. Many students may also take on leadership roles, such as leading prayers or teaching younger students.

Contemplation of the Qur'an in this stage includes philosophical, ethical, and social reflection. They can refer to and critically discuss the meanings of the Qur'an using various authentic classical commentaries, as mentioned previously. Students are encouraged to apply Qur'anic teachings to their life decisions, emotional challenges, academic stress, career choices, and relationships. Topics such as Tazkiyah (purification of the soul), justice, and leadership become especially relevant. The Qur'an becomes not just a book to read, but a source of life purpose and personal clarity. It provides spiritual strength and guidance during

a time when many students face high pressure and begin to shape their futures.

Summary Table

Level	Recitation Focus	Contemplation Focus	Spiritual Impact
Primary	Basic tajwid, memorization, rhythm	Simple meanings, stories, and emotional connection	Love for Qur'an, basic morals, and curiosity
Secondary	Fluency, expression, and tajwid rules	Themes, real-life links, and reflection exercises	Identity shaping, empathy, and moral thinking
University	Mastery, teaching, and leading prayers	Deep reflection, purpose, and ethical applications	Self-purification, leadership, and life vision

Engagement with the Qur'an through recitation and contemplation offers profound educational benefits that extend beyond religious learning. From an educational perspective, these practices play a significant role in shaping a student's critical thinking, emotional intelligence, and moral character. When students actively recite and reflect upon the meanings of the Qur'an, they are encouraged to ask meaningful questions, understand complex moral teachings, and apply divine guidance in their daily lives.

Qur'anic engagement helps to strengthen moral and ethical values, guiding students toward honesty, patience, kindness, and justice. At the same time, it builds emotional intelligence by teaching empathy, humility, and self-control—values deeply rooted in Islamic teachings. Furthermore, this connection with the Qur'an promotes self-awareness and inner peace, giving students a spiritual foundation that helps them navigate personal and academic challenges. Through this holistic development, students become not only knowledgeable but also spiritually grounded and emotionally mature.

To make this learning meaningful and accessible, educators can adopt various practical methods. One effective approach is to include daily Qur'an reflection sessions in the classroom, where students read and contemplate a few verses and share their insights. Teachers can also combine memorization with discussion, helping students understand the meanings behind the verses they are learning. This method transforms memorization into a spiritual and intellectual experience, rather than a purely mechanical task.

Another impactful strategy is the use of personal journaling, where students write about what they learned from a verse, how it applies to their lives, or how it made them feel. This not only strengthens comprehension but also fosters a personal connection with the text. Additionally, group discussions on Qur'anic themes such as justice, forgiveness, or patience allow students to explore Islamic values in a collaborative and respectful environment. Through dialogue, they gain diverse perspectives and learn how to apply Qur'anic teachings to real-world situations.

Ultimately, the integration of recitation and contemplation in education allows students to develop spiritual awareness, reflective thinking, and a deep emotional bond with the Qur'an. It nurtures individuals who not only possess knowledge but also have the wisdom and character to live by it. By applying these practices, educators play a critical role in forming well-rounded students who grow into ethical, thoughtful, and spiritually connected members of society.

Summary Table: Educational Benefits and Applications of Qur'anic Engagement

Aspect	Summary Explanation	Educational Impact
Critical Thinking Development	Recitation and reflection encourage students to analyze meanings, ask questions, and explore deeper lessons	Enhancing reasoning skills, comprehension, and intellectual curiosity.
Strengthening Moral & Ethical Values	Qur'anic teachings guide learners toward honesty, patience, justice, humility, and kindness.	Building strong moral character and ethical decision-making.
Emotional Intelligence	The Qur'an teaches empathy, humility, gratitude, and self-control	Helping students to manage emotions, building compassion, and developing resilience.
Spiritual Awareness & Inner Peace	Reflecting on Qur'anic verses nurtures tranquility and connection to Allah.	Encouraging calmness, self-awareness, and spiritual grounding in academic life.
Holistic Personal Development	Engagement with the Qur'an supports cognitive, emotional, spiritual, and moral growth.	Forming balanced, mature, and responsible individuals

Summary Table: Practical Applications for Teachers

Teaching Strategy	How It Works	Benefits for Students
Daily Qur'an Reflection Sessions	Students recite a few verses and share insights.	Encourages daily discipline, deep thinking, and spiritual growth
Memorization with Meaning Discussion	Verses are memorized along with explanation and reflection.	Transforms memorization into meaningful understanding and application.
Personal Qur'anic Journaling	Students write reflections, feelings, lessons, or applications of verses.	Improves comprehension, emotional expression, and personal connection to the Qur'an.
Group Discussions on Qur'anic Themes	Students explore topics like justice, forgiveness, patience, and compassion.	Promotes collaboration, respect, and real-world application of Qur'anic values
Integrating Qur'anic Values in Daily Lessons	Teachers relate class topics to Qur'anic ethics and principles	Reinforces moral learning across subjects and strengthens character

## 6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the Qur'an is not merely a religious text for ritual practice—it is a comprehensive guide for the purification of the soul and the holistic development of human beings. Its dual pillars of recitation (*tilāwah*) and contemplation (*tadabbur*) offer a timeless path to inner transformation, ethical growth, and intellectual enlightenment. As shown

through various educational stages—from primary to university level—engaging with the Qur'an cultivates not only knowledge, but also emotional intelligence, moral awareness, and spiritual resilience.

The concept of *Tazkiyah al-Nafs*, or purification of the heart, lies at the core of this process. It reflects Islam's deep recognition that true success begins within: through cleansing the heart of negative traits and cultivating sincerity, humility, and a strong connection with Allah. Scholars such as Imam al-Ghazali have emphasized that this spiritual purification is obligatory, not optional, for every Muslim because the heart is the seat of belief, intention, and divine acceptance.

Incorporating Qur'anic engagement into modern education is not only possible but essential. Whether through daily reflections, memorization with meaning, journaling, or group discussions, Islamic teachers have powerful tools to nurture students into balanced individuals—academically capable, emotionally mature, and spiritually aware. This integrated model ensures that the Qur'an remains not only a book to be recited but a living source of wisdom that guides students in all aspects of their lives.

Ultimately, an education that combines knowledge with soul purification through the Qur'an produces individuals who are not just successful in the worldly sense but also grounded in faith, compassion, and purpose. Such an education is the foundation of a strong, ethical, and God-conscious generation.

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