

In-depth Exploration of 'Tafakkur' Through the Spirit of Quranic Verses

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Abstract: This study aims to elucidate the multi-dimensional aspects of 'tafakkur' as depicted in the Quran, highlighting its implications for understanding the holistic integration of intellect and spirituality in Islamic teachings. Employing descriptive analytical methods, this study examines terms related to 'tafakkur' found in the Quran. The analysis identifies a rich framework of terms interconnected with 'tafakkur', demonstrating the Quran's comprehensive approach to employing intellect and reason. Notably, 'tafakkur' is depicted not just as a cognitive activity but as a spiritual and moral duty essential for the full realization of Tawhid. 'Tafakkur' significantly enriches the Islamic intellectual tradition, emphasizing that true understanding of divine unity requires active and profound contemplation. This study reaffirms the critical role of reasoned faith and intellectual freedom in Islam.

Keywords: *Tafakkur, Quranic Studies, Islamic Spirituality*

Abstrak: Studi ini bertujuan untuk menjelaskan aspek-aspek multidimensional dari 'tafakkur' sebagaimana digambarkan dalam Al-Quran, menyoroti implikasinya terhadap pemahaman integrasi holistik antara intelektualitas dan spiritualitas dalam ajaran Islam. Dengan menggunakan metode analisis deskriptif, studi ini mengkaji istilah-istilah terkait 'tafakkur' yang ditemukan dalam Al-Quran. Analisis mengidentifikasi kerangka kerja istilah yang saling terkait dengan 'tafakkur', menunjukkan pendekatan komprehensif Al-Quran dalam menggunakan intelektualitas dan rasionalitas. Secara khusus, 'tafakkur' digambarkan tidak hanya sebagai aktivitas kognitif tetapi sebagai kewajiban spiritual dan moral yang esensial untuk realisasi penuh Tawhid. 'Tafakkur' secara signifikan memperkaya tradisi intelektual Islam, menekankan bahwa pemahaman sejati tentang kesatuan ilahi memerlukan kontemplasi yang aktif dan mendalam. Studi ini menegaskan kembali peran penting keimanan yang berdasar alasan dan kebebasan intelektual dalam Islam.

Kata Kunci: *Tafakkur, Al-Quranic, Spirit Islam*

Introduction

The term '*tafakkur*' is frequently used in the Quran to signify the concept of thinking. This term is already well-known among Muslims, as it is often mentioned by Allah SWT in the Quran. Various studies have explored different dimensions related to *tafakkur*, encompassing aspects of psychology,¹ covid-19,² Sufism,³ and environmental issues.⁴ Despite this diversity, the author's research on *tafakkur* has posed several key questions: First, what is the Quran's perspective on the status of humans as beings capable of *tafakkur*? Second, to what extent are humans afforded the freedom to think? Third, what are the potential benefits of engaging in *tafakkur*?

One of the Quranic verses that emphasizes the high status of thinking (*tafakkur*) is Allah SWT's command in Surah Saba'/34: 46.

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَعِظُكُمْ بِوَاحِدَةٍ أَنْ تَقُومُوا لِلَّهِ مَشْنَىٰ وَفِرَادَىٰ ثُمَّ تَتَفَكَّرُوا مَا بِصَاحِبِكُمْ مِنْ جِنَّةٍ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ لَّكُمْ بَيْنَ يَدَيْ عَذَابٍ شَدِيدٍ

“Say, “I only advise you of one [thing] - that you stand for Allah, [seeking truth] in pairs and individually, and then give thought.” There is not in your companion any madness. He is only a warner to you before a severe punishment.”

Imam al-Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, in his exegesis 'Mafatih Al-Ghaib,' identifies two critical elements in the aforementioned verse: Firstly, the word '*wahidah*' (One), which signifies the concept of Tawhid; secondly, the word '*tatafakkaru*' (you think), indicating a command to engage in *tafakkur*. Tawhid, a core principle of Quranic teachings, and *tafakkur*, a means to comprehend and expand Tawhid principles in life, are intrinsically linked. Hence, one's understanding of Tawhid is incomplete without *tafakkur*.

The core principle of Tawhid—that God is the Singular source of all life—transcends mere acknowledgment and embodies a worldview that must be perpetually

¹ Dewi Hayati Nufus, Sururin Sururin, and Akhmad Sodik, “Tafakkur: A Contemplation of Students' Spiritual and Emotional Intelligence (in The Perspective of Sufism & Transpersonal Psychology),” *DAYAH: Journal of Islamic Education* 6, no. 2 (July 10, 2023): 264, <https://doi.org/10.22373/jjie.v6i2.18957>.

² Indriya Indriya, “Konsep Tafakkur Dalam Alquran Dalam Menyikapi Coronavirus Covid-19,” *SALAM: Jurnal Sosial Dan Budaya Syar-I* 7, no. 3 (March 18, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.15408/sjsbs.v7i3.15050>.

³ Akila Mamat et al., “Literature Review on Concept of Tafakkur in Islamic Mysticism,” *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* 9, no. 4 (April 3, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarbss/v9-i4/5816>.

⁴ Noor Shakirah Mat Akhir and Muhammad Azizan Sabjan, “Tafakkur as the Spiritual Mechanism for Environment Conservation,” *Journal of Religious and Theological Information* 14, no. 1–2 (April 3, 2015): 1–12, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10477845.2015.1035195>.

actualized in every Muslim's life. Thus, *tafakkur* is an integral recommendation within the principle of Tawhid, as without it, the teachings of Tawhid cannot be effectively understood or implemented.

Interestingly, the verse was revealed to the Arabs living in a harsh desert environment, preoccupied with survival and basic needs in a primitive setting. Despite these conditions, Allah SWT instructed them to engage in *tafakkur*. This underscores that *tafakkur* is always applicable, irrespective of time, place, or situation, making it a compelling subject for study through the lens of Quranic verses, approached through descriptive analytical methods based on relevant sources.”

Discussion

Terminology of *Tafakkur*

In the Quran, the concept of 'thinking' is expressed using various terms, such as understanding, comprehending, remembering, and contemplating. Each term relates to the notion of thinking but emphasizes a different aspect.⁵ Specifically, the term '*aql*, directly associated with thinking, is derived from the Arabic '*aqala - ya'qilu - 'aqlan*. In Arabic, words that share similar functions and meanings to '*aql* include *dabbara* (contemplating), *faqih* (understanding), *fahima* (comprehending), *nazara* (observing with one's own eyes, reasoning, observation), *zakara* (remembering), *fakkara* (thinking deeply), and '*alima* (understanding clearly). There are also other terms such as *Al-qalb*, *fu'ād*, *al-lubb*, *an-nuhā*, *al-abṣār*, and *al-ḥijr*, which functionally and meaningfully align with the aforementioned terms.

Research using 'mu'jam and Arabic dictionaries shows that the term *tafakkur*, originating from the root *tafakkara* and its derivatives, appears 18 times in the Quran—13 times in verses from al-Makkiyyah and 5 times in al-Madaniyyah verses.⁶ According to Ahmad Warson Munawwir⁷ *tafakkur* is the masdar form of *tafakkara*, *yatafakkaru*,

⁵ Alias Azhar, "Scientific Thinking in Islamic Thought: Concept and Its Importance," *International Journal of Nusantara Islam* 5, no. 1 (February 28, 2017): 13–22, <https://doi.org/10.15575/ijni.v5i1.1218>; Noraini Junoh et al., "Islamic Critical Thinking: An Analysis of Its Significance Based on The Al-Quran and Scholarly Views," *Abqari Journal* 25, no. 1 (September 27, 2021): 33–48, <https://doi.org/10.33102/abqari.vol24no2.377>.

⁶ Muhammad Fuad Abd. Baqi, *Al-Mu'jam Al-Mufahras Lil Alfadz Al-Qur'an Al-Karim*, Cet. 1 (Kairo: Dar al-Hadis, 1987), 667.

⁷ A. Warson Munawwir, *Kamus Al-Munawwir, Arab-Indonesia Terlengkap*, Edisi Kedu (Surabaya: Pustaka Progressif, 1997).

tafakkuran, originating from the root word *fakkara*, which means to think.⁸ It is observed that *tafakkur* appears more frequently during the Meccan period than during the Medinan period. This distinction is significant as during the foundational period of religious principles, particularly on matters of faith in Mecca, the Quran encouraged humans to engage in *tafakkur* (thinking) to strengthen the faith of new Muslims and to fortify their resolve against pressures from the disbelievers of Mecca.

Specifically, here are the verses from al-Makkiyyah derived from the root word *tafakkara*, totaling 13 verses: (1) Q.S. Al-Muddatsir/74: 18 with the term *fakkara*; (2) Q.S. Saba'/34: 46 with the term *tatafakkarū*; (3) Q.S. Al-An'am/6: 50 with the term *tatafakkarūn*; (4) Q.S. Al-A'raf/7: 184 with the term *yatafakkaru*; (5) Q.S. Al-Rum/30: 8 with the term *yatafakkaru*; (6) Q.S. Al-A'raf/7: 176 with the term *yatafakkarūn*; (7) Q.S. Yunus/10: 24 with the term *yatafakkarūn*; (8) Q.S. Al-Nahl/16: 11 with the term *yatafakkarūn*; (9) Q.S. Al-Nahl/16: 44 with the term *yatafakkarūn*; (10) Q.S. Al-Nahl/16: 69 with the term *yatafakkarūn*; (11) Q.S. Al-Rum/30: 21 with the term *yatafakkarūn*; (12) Q.S. Al-Zumar/39: 42 with the term *yatafakkarūn*; and Q.S. Al-Jatsiah/45: 13 with the term *yatafakkarūn*. The five verses in Al-Madaniyyah are: (1) Q.S. Al-Baqarah/2: 219 with the term *tatafakkarūn*; (2) Q.S. Al-Baqarah/2: 266 with the term *tatafakkarun*; (3) Q.S. Ali 'Imran/3: 191 with the term *yatafakkarūn*; (4) Q.S. Al-Ra'd/13: 3 with the term *tatafakkarūn*; and (5) Q.S. Al-Hasyr/59: 21 with the term *yatafakkarūn*.

Al-Ragib al-Asfahani in his book *al-Mufradāt fī Gharīb Alqurān* relays various opinions from Arab literary figures and concludes that *al-fikr* results from the transformation of the word *al-fark*, meaning to rub. The form *al-fark* is used for concrete objects, whereas *al-fikr* is applied to abstract concepts and objects of thought. *Al-fikr*, therefore, denotes a deep exploration to uncover the essence of a subject.⁹

In the Quran, understanding the command to think also involves two other closely related terms: *'aqlun* (intellect) and *qalbun* (heart). There are 49 verses discussing the use of intellect, namely *'aqlū* 1 verse, *ta'qilūn* 24 verses, *na'qilu* 1 verse, *ya'qilu* 1 verse, and *ya'qilūn* 22 verses. The interaction between *'aqlun* (intellect) and *qalbun* (heart) is crucial in the process of thinking, as these are the innate capacities prepared to make humans capable of thought. Without the use of *'aqlun* (intellect) and *qalbun* (heart), it

⁸ Munawwir, 1068.

⁹ Ar-Raghib Al-Ashfahani, *Al-Mufradat Fi Gharibil Quran* (Jawa Barat: Pustaka Khazanah Fawa'id, 2017).

would be impossible for humans to engage in *tafakkur*. Thus, the Quran frequently emphasizes the significance of these potentials.

Terms Related to *Tafakkur*

In the Quran, there are numerous terms associated with the activity of thinking (*tafakkur*). These terms can be categorized into two groups:

1. Terms related to the tools used for thinking

- 1) ***Al-'aql* (العقل):** The term that clearly and directly points to the tool used for *tafakkur* is *al-'aql* (mind). The word *al-'aql* is the masdar form of the verb *'aqala* (عقل), i.e., *'aqala - ya'qilu - 'aqlan*, meaning mind or intellect.¹⁰ *Al-'aql* also conveys the meanings of *al-hijr* (الحجر) or *al-nuhā* (النحي), which denote intelligence.¹¹ The verb *'aqala* means to bind or captivate, thus a person using their intellect is someone who captivates or restrains their desires.¹² The word *'aql* appears 49 times in the Quran, all in verb form. It appears once in the past tense, while the remaining instances (48 times) are in the present tense, often linked with the plural marker *wau*, as in the forms *ta'qilūn* or *ya'qilūn*. The verb *ta'qilūn* recurs 24 times and *ya'qilūn* 22 times, while *'aqalū*, *na'qilu*, and *ya'qilu* each appear once.¹³
- 2) ***Al-qalb* (القلب):** *Al-qalb* derives from *qalaba*, meaning to change, shift, or turn. Its plural form is *qulūb*, meaning hearts.¹⁴ According to Imam Al-Ghazali, *Al-qalb* has two meanings: physically, as a clump of flesh in the chest containing life-sustaining blood, often referred to as the heart; and metaphorically, as the essence of a person capable of understanding and wisdom.¹⁵
- 3) ***Fu'ād*:** Besides *al-'aql* (intellect) and *Al-qalb* (heart), another term directed towards the tool used in *tafakkur* is *fu'ād*, whose plural is *af'idah*. Linguistically, *fu'ād* also means heart. In the Quran, intellect as a thinking tool is sometimes referred to by *fu'ād*, both in singular and plural forms. This term is part of the triad of primary instruments for acquiring knowledge, which are *as-sam'u* (hearing), *al-basharu* (sight), and *fu'ād* (heart), as referenced in Q.S. Al-Isra'/17:36. Instances using the

¹⁰ Munawwir, *Kamus Al-Munawwir, Arab-Indonesia Terlengkap*, 597.

¹¹ Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Mukarram ibn Manzūr, *Lisān Al-'Arab, Jilid VI* (Beirut: Dār al-Hadīš, 2003), 371.

¹² Manzūr, 371.

¹³ Yūsuf Qaraḍāwī, *Al-'Aql Wa Al-'Ilmu Fi Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm. Terj. Abdul Hayyi Al-Kattani, Dkk.*, Cet. Ke-1 (Kairo: Maktabah Wahbah, 1996), 19.

¹⁴ Manzūr, *Lisān Al-'Arab, Jilid VI*, 179.

¹⁵ Abu Hamid Al-Gazali, *Ihya' Ulum Ad-Din, Jilid I* (Singapura: Sulaiman Mar'i, n.d.), 3–4.

word *af'idah* are observable in Q.S. An-Nahl/16:78. Linguistically, *fu'ād* derives from *fa'ada*, *yaf'adu*, *fa'dan*, which in the al-Munawwir dictionary means "to strike the heart" or "to affect the heart".¹⁶ Fundamentally, *al-fu'ād* shares meanings with *Al-qalb*, yet, as noted by al-Raghib al-Asfahani, *fu'ād* here connotes something glowing or illuminating. This term is primarily employed to describe a vessel of stable knowledge and consciousness.¹⁷ In the Qur'an, *fu'ād* is mentioned 16 times in various formulations: three times as *fu'ād*, twice as *fu'ādaka*, eight times as *af'idah*, and three times as *af'idatahum*.¹⁸ The combined mention of *sam'u* (hearing), *abṣār* (vision), and *af'idah* (hearts) occurs in several surahs, totaling seven times. In certain contexts, within the Qur'an, *Al-qalb* is used interchangeably with *fu'ād*, as seen in Q.S. Al-Baqarah/2:7.

- 4) **Lubb:** Within the Qur'an, the term *'aql* is occasionally referred to by another term, *lubb*. This term appears within the phrase *ulū al-albāb*, indicating a synonymy with *al-'aql*, *Al-qalb*, and *fu'ād*. The mention of *lubb* occurs 16 times¹⁹ across 10 surahs of the Qur'an, with nine appearances in Meccan surahs (*makiyyah*) and seven in Medinan surahs (*madaniyyah*). Among the Medinan mentions, four are in the form of a call (*nidā'*), specifically in Q.S. al-Baqarah/2:179, 197; Q.S. al-Mā'idah/5:100; and Q.S. at-Ṭalāq/65:10-11. The term *Albāb* is the plural form of *lubb*, translating literally to intellect and heart. *Lubb* essentially signifies the essence or the core, reflecting the critical components within a human. The verb form, *labuba*, means to become wise or intelligent.²⁰ *Lubb* denotes an intellect that is pure or devoid of impurities or flaws.²¹ In Tafsir al-Mishbah, M. Quraish Shihab²² explains that *al-Albāb* represents the essence of something. For example, a nut has a shell that encases its content, termed *lub*. Hence, *ulu al-Albāb* refers to those possessing a pure intellect, unobscured by any shell, i.e., the fog of ideas that could engender confusion in thought.

¹⁶ Munawwir, *Kamus Al-Munawwir, Arab-Indonesia Terlengkap*, 1029.

¹⁷ Al-Raghib Al-Isfahānī and Abū al-Qāsim al-Ḥusain ibn Muḥammad, *Mu'jam Mufradat Alfaz Al-Qur'an* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2013), 383.

¹⁸ Muhammad Fu'ad Abdul-Baqi, *Mu'jam Al-Mufahras Li Alfaz Al-Qur'an Al-Karim* (Semarang, 1981), 510.

¹⁹ Qaradāwi, *Al-'Aql Wa Al-'Ilmu Fi Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm. Terj. Abdul Hayyi Al-Kattani, Dkk.*, 30.

²⁰ Munawwir, *Kamus Al-Munawwir, Arab-Indonesia Terlengkap*, 1247.

²¹ Al-Isfahānī and Muḥammad, *Mu'jam Mufradat Alfaz Al-Qur'an*, 466.

²² M. Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Mishbah, Volume 3* (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2001), 197.

- 5) *Al-Abṣār, an-nuhā, and al-ḥijr*: Alongside the terms *al-'aql*, *Al-qalbu*, *fu'ād*, and *lubb*, the Qur'an occasionally employs other expressions to describe 'aql, including *al-abṣār*, *an-nuhā*, and *al-ḥijr*. *Al-Abṣār* is the plural of *baṣar*, signifying vision, understanding, eyes. Its verb *baṣara-yabṣuru-baṣaran* denotes knowing, understanding, seeing.²³ In the Qur'an, *al-Abṣār* refers to 'aql, used within the phrase *ulū al-Abṣār*, indicating those who are rational or possess insight,²⁴ mentioned in various chapters including *Āli Imrān/3:13*, *an-Nūr/24:44*, *ṣad/38:45*, and *al-Ḥasyr/59:2*. *An-nuhā* is the plural of *nuhyah*, another term for mind or intellect, originating from the verb *nahā-yanhā-nahyan*, meaning to forbid or prevent.²⁵ This term is so named because the intellect prevents one from undertaking inappropriate actions and is also known as "binding intellect," restraining individuals from engaging in unworthy deeds.²⁶ This term is mentioned in the Qur'an twice, both in surat *Tāhā*. Lastly, *al-ḥijr*, derived from *hajara - yahjuru - ḥajran*, means to prevent or forbid. *Al-ḥijr* is also referred to as intellect, as it enables individuals to restrain themselves from following base desires.²⁷ This term appears in surat *al-Fajr*, verse 5.

هَلْ فِي ذَلِكَ قَسَمٌ لِّذِي حِجْرٍ

"Is there [not] in [all] that an oath [sufficient] for one of perception?"

2. Terms Related to the Activity of Thinking

There are several terms in the Qur'an that can be categorized under this theme, including:

- 1) *Al-Ra'yu* (الرأي): The term *al-Ra'yu* (الرأي) or *al-Rāyah* (الرأية) is derived from *ra'a* (رأى), which means to see and think. According to the *Munjid* dictionary, *ra'a* (رأى) implies looking with the eyes accompanied by thought. On the other hand, *al-Rāyah* (الرأية) indicates the activity of knowing, whether through the senses, imagination, thought, or feelings. *Al-Ra'yu* also conveys the concept of reaching a specific conclusion between two matters.²⁸ Thus, knowledge about something imperceptible does not fall into the category of opinion (*al-Ra'yu*). The term *al-Ra'yu*, which

²³ Munawwir, *Kamus Al-Munawwir, Arab-Indonesia Terlengkap*, 87.

²⁴ Ibnu Kaṣīr, *Tafsir Al-Qur'ān Al-'Azīm* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 2009), 320.

²⁵ Munawwir, *Kamus Al-Munawwir, Arab-Indonesia Terlengkap*, 1471.

²⁶ Qaradāwī, *Al-'Aql Wa Al-'Ilmu Fi Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm. Terj. Abdul Hayyi Al-Kattani, Dkk.*, 38.

²⁷ Munawwir, *Kamus Al-Munawwir, Arab-Indonesia Terlengkap*, 238.

²⁸ Louis Ma'luf, *Al Munjid Fi Al Lughah Wa Al A'lam* (Beirut: Dar al Misriq, 2007), 243.

encompasses both sensory and heartfelt perception, is exemplified in Q.S. al-An'am/6:76-77.

- 2) **Adh-Dhikru (الذِّكْر):** *Adh-Dhikru* (الذِّكْر) is the infinitive form of the verb *dhakara* (ذَكَرَ), meaning to mention or remember.²⁹ Mentioning is done with the tongue, and remembering with the heart. Ar-Raghib al-Asfahani distinguishes *dhikr* into two types: *dhikr bi Al-qalb* (thinking with the heart) and *dhikr bi al-lisan* (remembering with the tongue). He further emphasizes that each implies a process of recalling what has been forgotten and remembering to comprehend new knowledge or ideas.³⁰ According to Yusuf al-Qardhawi,³¹ *tadhakkur* represents the highest function of the intellect, while *dhākirah* (memory) is the repository for knowledge and information used by humans as needed. A person without memory has effectively lost themselves, as they lack recollection of their identity and life history. The distinction between *tafakkur* and *tadhakkur* is that *tafakkur* is conducted to generate new knowledge, whereas *tadhakkur* is performed to revisit previously acquired information and knowledge.
- 3) **As-Sam'u (السمع):** Linguistically, *as-sam'u* means hearing with the ears, but in Qur'anic studies, it also signifies the activity of listening with understanding and obedience. The basic sense of hearing is mentioned in Q.S. al-Maidah/5:42. Meanwhile, *as-sam'u* that encompasses understanding and obedience is exemplified in Q.S. al-Baqarah/2:285.
- 4) **Al-Basharu (البصر):** The term *al-basharu* (البصر) is derived from *başara - yabşuru - başaran*, which means to know, understand, and see. From *başara* comes *başar*, whose plural form, *al-Abşār*, denotes vision, understanding, and eyes.³² In the Qur'an, *al-Abşār* signifies 'aql, featured in the expression *ulū al-Abşār*, indicating those who are rational or possess understanding,³³ found in places such as Q.S. Āli Imrān/3:13, Q.S. al-Nūr/24:44, Q.S. şad/38:45, and Q.S. al-Ḥasyr/59:2.
- 5) **Ad-Dabbaru (الدبر):** *Ad-Dabbaru* (الدبر) is derived from *dabbara* (دبر), meaning the back. Opposite to *ad-dabbaru* (الدبر) is *al-qubulu* (القبل), meaning the front. *Ad-Dabbaru* signifies examining the rear aspect of something, while *tadabbara al-amra*

²⁹ Munawwir, *Kamus Al-Munawwir, Arab-Indonesia Terlengkap*, 448.

³⁰ Al-Ashfahani, *Al-Mufradat Fi Gharibil Quran*.

³¹ Qaradāwi, *Al-'Aql Wa Al-'Ilmu Fi Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm. Terj. Abdul Hayyi Al-Kattani, Dkk.*, 66.

³² Munawwir, *Kamus Al-Munawwir, Arab-Indonesia Terlengkap*, 87.

³³ Kaşīr, *Tafsir Al-Qur'ān Al-'Aẓīm*, 320.

(تدبر الأمر) means to consider and reflect upon the consequences or outcomes.³⁴ *Tadabbara* implies thinking and deliberating the implications.³⁵ In *Lisān al-‘Arab*, it is described as “you contemplate something in your thoughts.” The same meaning is indicated by the verb form *dabbara*.³⁶ In the Qur'an, phrases derived from the root *da-ba-ra* appear in 44 verses. However, only four clearly pertain to the concept of reflecting or pondering, two using the phrase *yaddabbarū* and two using *yatadabbarūn*, found in Q.S. Al-Mu'minūn/23:68, Q.S. Šād/38:29, Q.S. An-Nisā'/4:82, and Q.S. Muhammad/47:24.

- 6) **An-Nazru (النظر):** The term *an-nazru* (النظر) is the infinitive form of the verb *naẓara* (نظر), which linguistically means to look, sometimes with the physical eyes and other times with the “eyes of the heart,” indicating activities such as reasoning, considering, reflecting, and investigating.³⁷ In the Qur'an, words derived from the letters *na-ẓa-ra* in various forms appear in 129 instances across 115 verses.³⁸ Al-Raghib explains that *an-nazru* (النظر) means directing one's sight or thoughts to perceive or observe something. The phrase *an-nazru ilā* (النظر الي) means to look with the eyes, while *an-nazru fī* (النظر في) means to think.³⁹ However, in the context of verses using the phrase *an-nazru ilā*, they generally imply thinking.

The Quranic Spirit Toward the Command to *Tafakkur*

Historically, the Quran was first revealed in the Cave of Hira. The earliest verses disclosed were from Surah Al-'Ala, verses 1-5. These initial verses demonstrate the Quran's effort to encourage humans to know Allah through the command 'iqla' (read).⁴⁰ Here, reading is not merely a recommendation but emphasized as a mandate. In the principles of *ushul fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), a command implies an obligatory action. The Quran uniquely begins the journey of knowing Allah through a process that includes reading, inherently involving thinking, whereas other religions and beliefs typically

³⁴ Munawwir, *Kamus Al-Munawwir, Arab-Indonesia Terlengkap*, 384–85.

³⁵ Munawwir, 384–85.

³⁶ Manzūr, *Lisān Al-‘Arab, Jilid VI*, 286.

³⁷ Ma'luf, *Al Munjid Fi Al Lughah Wa Al A'lam*, 817.

³⁸ Muhammad Fuad 'Abd Al-Baqi, *Al-Mu'jam Al-Mufahras Li Al-Fāz Al-Qurān Al-Karīm* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1999).

³⁹ Al-Ashfahani, *Al-Mufradat Fi Gharibil Quran*.

⁴⁰ Akhmad Makhfud, Abdul Khamid, and Ruwandi Ruwandi, “LITERACY VALUE OF SURAT AL-'ALAQ VERSES 1–5 IN TAFSIR AL-MISHBAH AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION IN MADRASAH,” *At-Tajdid: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pemikiran Islam* 5, no. 2 (January 3, 2022): 1, <https://doi.org/10.24127/att.v5i2.1758>.

originate from doctrinal aspects. Unlike other faiths, the Quran “challenges” humans to test the validity and truthfulness of God as detailed in Allah's words.

There are numerous verses that cater to the human intellect's need to be employed as effectively as possible.⁴¹ The significant portion and opportunity given to humans for thought indicate an initiative for analysis and scrutiny that everything considered starts from a critical stance. Here, being critical does not adopt a general philosophical concept that begins with doubt, but rather how information, teachings, and more are given room for discussion in the academic realm. It is undeniable that Islam has guaranteed freedom of thought.⁴² Nevertheless, the diverse human potentials must be free and independent; the most crucial aspect to cultivate in a person is to think, and certainly, nurturing thought requires freedom, meaning the absence of obstacles, barriers, or hindrances that impede the momentum of thinking.⁴³

The terms “being religious” or “having belief,” resulting in conviction (*'itiqad*), carry connotations of being closed and wrapped.⁴⁴ The closure of human hearts and convictions can derive from two sources: sometimes from correct and free thought, and sometimes from incorrect habits, traditions, and puritanism. In this sense, belief can not only provide solutions for humans but, conversely, involves the closure and packaging of thought, which can be highly detrimental to both individuals and society.⁴⁵ Therefore, there exists a vertical, not horizontal, distinction between thinking and believing, as belief (faith) sometimes stems from thinking (thought) when faith is formed with proper evidence and logic, and sometimes due to fanatical attitudes and erroneous customs. Clearly, Islam will never accept a belief and conviction rooted in unfounded feelings, blind imitation, and pre-Islamic fanaticism.

Hence, the concept of blind imitation or following the thoughts and actions of others without prior consideration is forbidden in Islam. Such a stance diminishes the role of intellect as a significant gift from God to humanity. Through blind imitation, humans

⁴¹ Muhammad Waqar Raza, “Anatomy of the Intellect in the Quran: A Fresh Perspective,” *Al-Bayan: Journal of Qur'an and Hadith Studies* 20, no. 2 (2022): 182–216, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1163/22321969-12340113>.

⁴² Raghīb As-Sirjani, *Sumbangan Peradaban Islam Pada Dunia* (Jakarta: Pustaka Al-Kautsar, 2012), 103.

⁴³ Murtadha Muthahhari, *Peiramun-e Inqilâb-e Islâmi, Dengan Sedikit Perubahan*, Cetakan 16 (Intisyarat-e Shadra, n.d.), 7–8.

⁴⁴ Manzûr, *Lisân Al-'Arab, Jilid VI*.

⁴⁵ Muthahhari, *Peiramun-e Inqilâb-e Islâmi, Dengan Sedikit Perubahan*, 7–8.

would be incapable of forming civilizations and effecting change. The pre-Islamic societal mindset believed that their life successes depended on following their ancestors, which hindered contemplative activities. Thus, Allah sent Prophet Muhammad to encourage them to employ their intellect toward a civilized existence.

While Islam restricts thinking about the Divine essence in specific instances, broadly, it supports the freedom of thought. From an Islamic perspective, a Muslim not only has the right to think but is also expected to accept religious beliefs and principles (monotheism, justice, and the Day of Resurrection) through reasoning and argumentation. When encountering criticism internally, he has the right to present it to knowledgeable individuals so that his criticisms can be addressed. This is in contrast to Christianity, where certain topics are deemed off-limits and referred to as matters of faith, thus barring intellectual intervention.

In most verses, the Quran encourages humans to think, reason, and contemplate the universe. Humans are challenged with their intellectual capacity to discern what is beneficial and harmful to themselves. They are invited to break free from all shackles, captivities, misguidances, and deviations, enabling them to stride forward toward attaining perfection (Q.S. Fusshilat/41:53). “And on the earth are signs for those of assured faith; and in yourselves. Then do you not see?” (Q.S. Al-Dzariyat/51:20-21).

Conclusion

The Quranic emphasis on '*tafakkur*'—deep, reflective thinking—is a profound testament to the intrinsic value that Islam places on intellect and contemplation. This study has underscored that '*tafakkur*' is not merely a suggested activity but a divine command that deeply integrates with the fundamental Islamic principle of Tawhid. This highlights the inseparability of understanding God's unity and engaging in thoughtful reflection. The analysis of various terms related to thinking in the Quran reveals a rich tapestry of interconnected concepts that illustrate the complexity and depth of intellectual engagement encouraged by the Quran. These terms not only define the tools and activities of thinking but also reflect the holistic approach the Quran takes towards utilizing intellect and reason. This study shows that '*tafakkur*' transcends mere cognitive function, embedding itself as a spiritual and moral obligation. In conclusion, this exploration of '*tafakkur*' not only enriches our understanding of Islamic teachings on intellectual engagement but also calls for a renewed appreciation of how Islam encourages an active,

questioning, and reflective faith. This aligns with the broader Islamic ethos of enlightenment and liberation through knowledge, promoting a faith that is both deeply rooted in tradition and dynamically engaged with the world.”

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