

CONCEPTUALIZING AL-TADABBUR AS A GUIDE
FOR READING AND STUDYING THE QURAN: AN
ANALYTICAL STUDY

BY

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ABSTRACT

The thesis aims to survey and analyze the concept of *tadabbur* within classical and contemporary *tafsīr* literature, developing a comprehensive framework for engaging deeply with the Quran's meanings and messages. The research objectives include distinguishing between *tafsīr* and *tadabbur*, extracting the methodology of the Prophet ﷺ, His Companions, and early Islamic scholars, and formulating a practical methodology that the average Muslim can use for Quranic reflection. The study employs a comprehensive analysis of classical and contemporary *tafsīr* literature to understand the evolving definitions and interpretations of *tadabbur*. It involves content analysis of Quranic verses, aḥādīth, and historical reports focusing on the Prophet's methodology and the practices of early Muslims. The analysis covers spirituality, intellectual preparation, and practical implementation. The research identifies various methods used in the Quran to encourage *tadabbur* and elucidates the significance of deep reflection in understanding the divine message. The study provides a clear and structured methodology for engaging in *tadabbur*, highlighting the importance of intellectual, emotional, and spiritual connection with the Quran. It also outlines practical applications of *tadabbur*, demonstrating how it can enhance one's intellectual and spiritual engagement with the Quran. The study recommends developing educational programs and resources that promote the practice of *tadabbur* among Muslims. It suggests integrating the framework into Quranic studies curricula to encourage deep reflection and understanding of the Quran. Additionally, the research advocates for further scholarly work to refine and expand the framework of *tadabbur*, making it more accessible and practical for diverse Muslim communities. The thesis is expected to contribute significantly to the field of Quranic studies by providing a robust framework for *tadabbur* that is both accessible and practical. It aims to bridge the gap between traditional exegesis and contemporary needs, facilitating a deeper connection with the Quran for average Muslims. The research also aspires to enhance Muslims' intellectual and spiritual engagement with the Quran, promoting a holistic understanding of its teachings.

ملخص البحث

تهدف هذه الأطروحة إلى دراسة وتحليل مفهوم التدبر في التفسير التراثية والمعاصرة، وتطوير إطار شامل للتفاعل العميق مع معاني ورسائل القرآن الكريم. تتضمن أهداف البحث التمييز بين التفسير والتدبر، واستخلاص منهجية النبي ﷺ، وأصحابه، والعلماء المسلمين الأوائل، وصياغة منهجية عملية يمكن للمسلم العامي استخدامها للتفكير القرآني. يتضمن ذلك تحليل محتوى آيات القرآن الكريم والأحاديث والتقارير والآثار التي تركز على منهجية النبي ﷺ وممارسات المسلمين الأوائل. يغطي التحليل الجوانب الروحية والإعدادات الفكرية والتطبيق العملي.

تحدد الدراسة الأساليب المختلفة المستخدمة في القرآن لتشجيع التدبر وتوضح أهمية التأمل العميق في فهم الرسالة الإلهية. توفر الدراسة منهجية واضحة ومهيكلية للتفاعل مع التدبر، مسلطة الضوء على أهمية الاتصال الفكري والعاطفي والروحي مع القرآن الكريم. كما توضح التطبيقات العملية للتدبر، مما يظهر كيف يمكن أن يعزز التفاعل الفكري والروحي للفرد مع القرآن. توصي الدراسة بتطوير برامج تعليمية وموارد تشجع على ممارسة التدبر بين المسلمين.

تقترح دمج الإطار في مناهج الدراسات القرآنية لتشجيع التأمل العميق وفهم القرآن الكريم. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، يدعو البحث إلى مزيد من العمل الأكاديمي لتنقيح وتوسيع إطار التدبر، مما يجعله أكثر سهولة وعملياً لمختلف المجتمعات المسلمة. من المتوقع أن تسهم هذه الأطروحة بشكل كبير في مجال الدراسات القرآنية من خلال تقديم إطار قوي للتدبر يكون متاحاً وعملياً.

تهدف إلى سد الفجوة بين التفسير التقليدي واحتياجات العصر الحالي، مما يسهل الاتصال الأعمق مع القرآن للمسلمين العاديين. يسعى البحث أيضاً إلى تعزيز التفاعل الفكري والروحي للمسلمين مع القرآن، مما يعزز الفهم الشامل لتعاليمه.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation/thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

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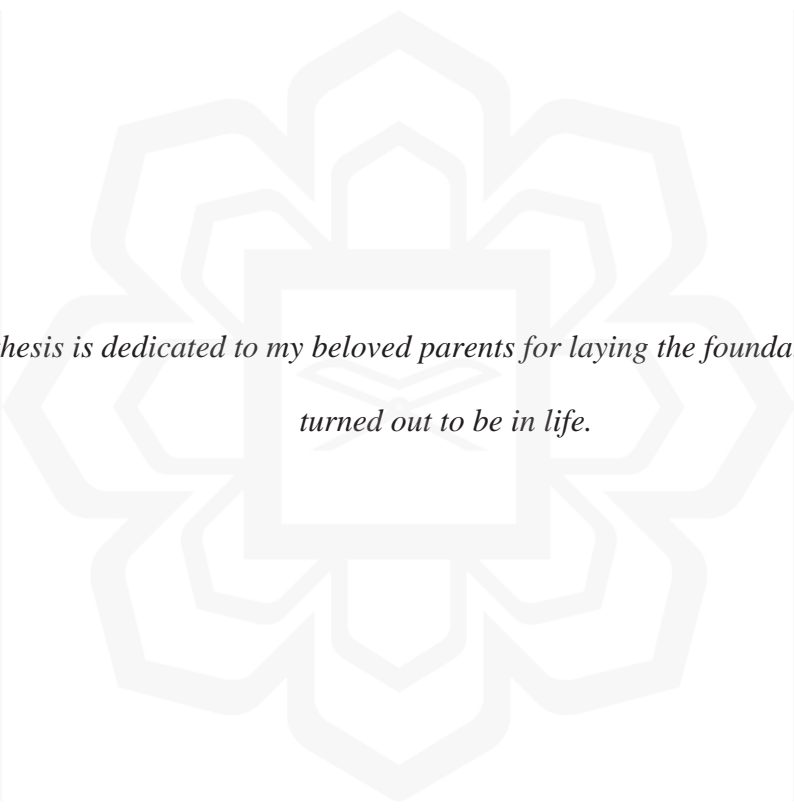
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*This thesis is dedicated to my beloved parents for laying the foundation of what I
turned out to be in life.*

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CHAPTER ONE

FRAMING THE STUDY

1.1 BACKGROUND

The Quran is the single greatest miracle given to the Prophet ﷺ. It has been termed the “everlasting miracle” because its miraculous nature can be felt and experienced till this day. Part of the miraculous nature of the Quran is linguistic, the beauty, eloquence, power, and coherence of its words. The words of the Quran are extremely powerful, profound, deep, and awe-inspiring. The words of the Quran are so powerful, awe-inspiring, deep and heavy in meaning that if they were to be revealed on a mountain it would crumble and turn into dust. As Allah ﷻ says,

لَوْ أَنْزَلْنَا هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ عَلَىٰ جَبَلٍ لَّرَأَيْتَهُ خَاشِعًا مُّتَصَدِّعًا مِّنْ خَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ ۚ وَتِلْكَ الْأَمْثَالُ لِنَضْرِبُهَا لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

“Had we sent down this Quran to a mountain, you would have seen it humbled, bursting apart out of awe for Allah.”¹

In this verse, Allah ﷻ is using very powerful and descriptive imagery. A mountain is the largest and strongest naturally occurring physical structure. It is a symbol of ultimate power and strength. A mountain is considered to be indestructible and unconquerable. Allah ﷻ is telling humanity that if these words were revealed to a mountain, it would be humbled and turned into particles of dust from the power and weight of Allah’s speech. If the words of Allah ﷻ can cause a mountain to humble itself, crumble and break apart into fine particles of dust out of fear and reverence, imagine the effect it can have on the human heart.

History has witnessed the transformative power of these words upon the human heart. These words, when recited to the Companions, elevated them from nomadic tribesmen to rulers on the thrones of the Roman and Persian Empires. They lifted them from ignorance to knowledge, from disgrace to honor, and from darkness to light.² Such

¹ Quran 59: 21

² al-Kāndehlawī, *Ḥayāt al-Ṣaḥābah*, 1:8-9

was their power that even the staunchest enemies of Islam would secretly listen to Prophet ﷺ reciting them at night. These words compelled the disbelievers of Makkah to prostrate and transformed 'Umar from an enraged would-be assassin into one of the Prophet's most devoted followers. Upon the revelation of verses prohibiting alcohol, the streets of Madinah were immediately flooded with discarded alcohol. But this transformative effect is not seen in Muslim communities in the modern era.

Without a doubt the Quran is the most important book in the life of a Muslim. That is because the Quran is not simply a book; it is the divine speech of Allah ﷻ -- His words revealed to the Prophet ﷺ. It is the last and final revelation sent for the guidance of humanity for all times and all places. It is the primary source of beliefs, rituals, ethics, morals, principles, and laws in Islam. The entire life of a Muslim revolves around the teachings of the Quran.

The relationship of a believer with the Quran is guided through love and reverence. True love and reverence for the Quran is expressed through reading it, understanding its message, and applying it to one's life. It is used as a source of guidance to navigate through the world and live a life that is pleasing to Allah ﷻ. It is literally a manual for life that is used to build a path towards the Divine. It is supposed to be an inspiration, encouragement, and tool used to deal with the challenges of life. It contains guidance for every single aspect of a person's life: theological, spiritual, individual, communal, economic, and political.

The Quran is first and foremost a Divine book of guidance. As a matter of fact, if one were to give a one-word summary of the entire message of the Quran it would be guidance. Allah ﷻ describes it as

هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ

“...a guidance for mankind.”³

It provides guidance for all of humanity regardless of their race, color, language, ethnicity, age, socio-economic status, and religion as long as they approach it with an open heart and mind. Allah ﷻ also describes it as

³ Quran 2:185

“a guidance for the people of Allah-consciousness.”⁴

It is those who are mindful, conscious, and aware of their Lord and Creator who will benefit most from the guidance of the Quran. It contains guidance for every single sphere of human life and activity. In the Quran, Allah ﷻ provides a detailed explanation of what humanity needs in terms of guidance and success both in this life and the hereafter. It contains solutions, both direct and indirect, for the problems faced by humanity. Allah ﷻ says,

لَقَدْ كَانَ فِي قَصَصِهِمْ عِبْرَةٌ لِأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ ۗ مَا كَانَ حَدِيثًا يُفْتَرَىٰ وَلَكِن تَصْدِيقَ
الَّذِي بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَتَفْصِيلَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ

“This revelation is no fabrication: it is a confirmation of the truth of what was sent before it; an explanation of everything; a guide and a blessing for those who believe.”⁵

It should be treated as a personal guidebook: a roadmap towards faith, practice, morality, ethics, Allah-consciousness, obedience worship, paradise, and essentially the Divine. One should take the time to read, reflect, and ponder over the meanings of the verses and then internalize their message through practice.

وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْآنَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِنْ مُّذَكِّرٍ

“We have made it easy to learn lessons from the Quran: will anyone take heed?”⁶

However, in order to do so, one must have an understanding of the Quran and its message. They must have an active and engaging relationship with the words of Allah ﷻ. For the vast majority of Muslims living in America, as well as Muslims in different parts of the world, that can be very challenging. It is difficult to do so for a number of different reasons. Most Muslims do not know the Arabic language and therefore have to rely on translations that cannot fully capture the eloquence, power, beauty, and miraculous nature of Allah’s ﷻ divine words. When reading through a

⁴ Quran 2:2

⁵ Quran 12:111

⁶ Quran 54:17

translation that is devoid of context, background, explanations, and commentary, it is hard to engage with the Quran on a spiritual and intellectual level. Perhaps an even greater challenge than getting people to reflect upon the message and guidance of the Quran is to get them to recite it on a regular and consistent basis.

In addition to that, modernity has proven to be a great challenge to various religious traditions and communities particularly the Revealed Faiths of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. In the modern secular world, religion should have no influence in the public sphere. Public displays of religious practices and religion in general are viewed with hostility. As a result of this secularization of society, within the Muslim community there are a number of shifts in the way people view certain ideas, concepts, values, morals, ethics, and accepted religious tenets and practices. One of those shifts is how the Quran is viewed. Although Muslims believe in the Quran and recognize it as the uncreated speech of Allah ﷻ, they live in the midst of an alternative – and very powerful – intellectual, social, and moral paradigm that constantly imposes itself seeking to mold their views, judgments, and personalities in its own image.

As a result of this, the Quran is, consciously or subconsciously, relegated to the realm of the devotional. The Quran is honored, loved, and respected as a Divine book that is used for devotional practices and a source of blessings in one's life. It is recited in prayer, at weddings, funerals, special occasions, and perhaps ritually on a regular basis, but its influence doesn't extend into and permeate a person's life. It is not seen as a practical and relevant guidebook that can answer today's religious, social, economic, and political problems. According to al-Qurṭubī, this is a type of abandonment of the Quran that the Prophet ﷺ will complain about on the Day of Judgment.⁷

وَقَالَ الرَّسُولُ يَا رَبِّ إِنَّ قَوْمِي اتَّخَذُوا هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ مَهْجُورًا

“The Messenger has cried, ‘O my Lord! My people have indeed taken this Quran as something to be neglected.’”⁸

Commenting on this verse, ibn Taymiyah writes, “Whoever doesn't recite the Quran has neglected it. Whoever recites the Quran but doesn't reflect upon it has

⁷ Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi‘ li Ahkām al-Quran*, 15:405

⁸ Quran 25:30

neglected it. And whoever recites the Quran, reflects upon it, but doesn't act upon it has neglected it.”⁹

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Neglect of the Quran and its guidance is one of the greatest crises affecting the Muslim world today and its consequences are far reaching. The entire Muslim world is facing several challenges and difficulties: religious, social, political, and economic. These challenges and difficulties are multi-faceted, complex, and nuanced. However, the root cause can be traced back to neglecting the message and guidance of the Quran. The Prophet ﷺ said, “Surely Allah elevates some nations through the Quran, and through it He disgraces others.”¹⁰ Allah ﷻ elevates, honors, and grants power, influence, and authority to any community or nation that recites the Quran, reflects upon its meanings, and implements its guidance. If a community neglects and abandons the message of the Quran, then Allah ﷻ humiliates, disgraces, and lowers them.

One of the ways of changing the current situation is by creating an intellectual movement dedicated to reviving the Muslim communities' relationship with the Quran. This can partially be achieved by developing and encouraging a structured methodology for reading and studying the Quran, particularly for those who do not know the Arabic Language. There are several contemporary works on *al-tadabbur* in the Arabic Language; however, there is a dearth of literature on the subject in English. There is a common level of literacy regarding the Quran that every Muslim should have. Part of that base level of literacy is having a proper understanding of what exactly the Quran is: its history, preservation, compilation, subject matter, and themes. More important than that is having a proper framework and methodology for reflecting upon the meanings of the Quran in a meaningful and impactful manner. Through this study, I will fill a void in the English language by developing a comprehensive framework and methodology for engaging with the Quran intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually to serve as a template for those inspired by Allah's ﷻ rhetorical question,

⁹ al-Mallāh, *Fath al-Rahmān fī Bayān Hijr al-Quran*, 295

¹⁰ Muslim, *k. al-ṣalāh al-musāfirīn wa qaṣriha*, *b. faḍl man yaqūmu bi al-quran...*, 817

وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْآنَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِنْ مُدْكِرٍ

“We have made it easy to learn lessons from the Quran: will anyone take heed?”¹¹

The primary objective of reciting the Quran is to think, ponder, and reflect on its meanings; to engage in *al-tadabbur*. This deep reflection upon Allah’s words leads towards internal and external reformation through impacting one’s beliefs, thoughts, speech, and behavior. As Allah ﷻ says,

كَتَبْنَا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ مُبَارَكٌ لِيَدَّبَّرُوا آيَاتِهِ وَلِيَتَذَكَّرَ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

“[This is] a blessed Book which We have revealed to you, [O Muhammad], that they might reflect upon its verses and that those of understanding would be reminded.”¹²

Similarly, Allah ﷻ asks rhetorically,

أَفَلَا يَتَذَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ أَمْ عَلَى قُلُوبٍ أَقْفَاهَا

“Do they not then reflect on the Quran? Or are there locks upon their hearts?”¹³

Allah ﷻ encourages humanity to engage in the act of *tadabbur* or reflection. Believers are supposed to engage with the Quran intellectually, allow it to affect their hearts, and implement its guidance into their daily lives. *al-Tadabbur* involves engaging with the Quran intellectually, physically, and spiritually, mind, body, and soul. However, in order to do so, one must have an actual understanding of the apparent and direct meanings of the Quran and its message. The only way to contemplate and reflect over its words and meanings is to know what those words and meanings are, and that is learned through reading *Tafsīr* literature. *Tafsīr* - quranic exegesis - is a highly developed discipline with principles and rules used by scholars who have certain qualifications to explain and interpret verses of the Quran¹⁴. These principles and rules are used to explain, interpret, and extract lessons, rulings, and reminders from the Quran. Reflection upon the meanings of the Quran is only possible when someone

¹¹ Quran 54:17

¹² Quran 38:29

¹³ Quran 47:24

¹⁴ The similarities and differences between *tadabbur* and *tafsīr* will be explored in detail in Chapter Four of this research paper.

understands the general meanings of verses and chapters, which is detailed in the works of *tafsīr*. Gaining a general understanding of the meanings of the Quran can be achieved by reading a selected work of *tafsīr*, which will then allow one to engage in deep reflection.

Engaging in *tafsīr*, quranic exegesis, is reserved for specialists trained in the field. *Tadabbur*, on the other hand, is more general and is an act that should be engaged in by the average person and the scholar alike. The question comes to mind, what exactly is *tadabbur*? How has this word and its application been understood throughout history, from the earliest generations of Islam until today? How is it different from *tafsīr*? What are the guidelines, principles, qualifications, and framework required to engage in *tadabbur*? What are some practical applications of *tadabbur*? How does one engage in *tadabbur*?

In recent times there have been a number of publications - books, booklets, and articles - written on this topic in the Arabic Language. For example, there is a work entitled *Muqarrar Tadabbur al-Quran al-Karīm lī al-Dirāsāt al-‘Ulyā* (*Curriculum for Reflection upon the Noble Quran for Graduate Studies*) developed by a team of scholars under Dr. Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-‘Uwajjī.¹⁵ This is a fairly large volume that presents the entire topic of *al-tadabbur* in a very methodical manner as an entire curriculum. There are also several booklets such as *Fann al-Tadabbur fī al-Quran al-Karīm*¹⁶ by Dr. al-‘Uwaid, *min Ajli Tadabbur al-Quran (For the Sake of Reflecting upon the Quran)*¹⁷ by al-Sunaydī, and *al-Khulāṣah fī Tadabbur al-Quran al-Karīm (the Summary of Reflection Upon the Noble Quran)*¹⁸ by Dr. al-Sabt. There is still a great deal of work that can be done to develop *tadabbur* into a discipline on its own in terms of having a proper framework, principles, guidelines, methodology, and rules. The focus of this research project is to provide a comprehensive framework and methodology for the concept of *tadabbur* and engaging in it for the English-speaking audience. While Quranic verses offer profound insights and guidance, translating these

¹⁵ al-‘Uwajjī, Muhammad. *Muqarrar Tadabbur al-Quran al-Karīm lī al-Dirāsāt al-‘Ulyā*. Makkah: Dār Taibah al-Khaḍrā’, 2016

¹⁶ al-‘Uwaid, ‘Iṣām. *Fann al-Tadabbur fī al-Quran al-Karīm*. Saudi Arabia: Wojooh Publishing and Distribution House, 2009

¹⁷ al-Sunaydī, *min Ajli Tadabbur al-Quran*. Saudi Arabia: Majallah al-Bayān, 2007

¹⁸ al-Sabt, Khālīd ibn ‘Uthmān, *al-Khulāṣah fī Tadabbur al-Quran al-Karīm*. Saudi Arabia: Markaz al-Tadabbur, 2016

teachings into tangible actions within the complexities of modern life presents a significant hurdle. Additionally, the diversity of interpretations and the subjective nature of reflection can lead to varying understandings among individuals and communities. This framework and methodology will effectively navigate the process of reflection, ensuring that it remains authentic to the Quranic message while addressing the evolving needs and challenges of society.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How have classical and contemporary exegetes (*mufasssīrūn*) and researchers defined and understood the word *al-tadabbur*? Has the meaning or understanding of the word evolved and developed over time?
2. What are the various methods, both explicit and implicit, Allah ﷻ uses throughout the Quran to encourage *al-tadabbur* and why are they significant?
3. Why is *tadabbur* so important and how is it related to *tafsīr*?
4. What are the guidelines, principles, qualifications, framework, and methodology required to engage in *tadabbur*?
5. What are some practical applications of *tadabbur* and will it help the average Muslim connect with the Quran intellectually, spiritually, and emotionally?

1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

1. To explore the meaning and evolution of *al-tadabbur* in classical and contemporary *tafsīr* literature, aiming to establish a framework for deeper Quranic engagement, highlighting its call for profound reflection on Allah's message.
2. Analyze the different ways Allah ﷻ uses to encourage *al-tadabbur*.
3. To strengthen the framework by analyzing and differentiating between *al-Tafsīr* and *al-Tadabbur*, as *al-Tafsīr* is a specialized field of study requiring expertise, whereas *al-Tadabbur* is general.

4. Extracting the methodology of the Prophet ﷺ, the Companions, and the early generations of Muslims through primary and secondary sources as a foundation for a framework of *al-tadabbur*.
5. To develop a framework and methodology that can be used by the average Muslim to engage in *al-tadabbur* of verses and passages of the Quran.

1.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A structured framework and clear methodology for *al-tadabbur* is needed to assist the common Muslim engage with the Quran intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually. The concept of *tadabbur* will be explored within the broad framework of *tafsīr*, which is usually translated as quranic exegesis. Exegesis is defined as a critical explanation or interpretation of a text, especially of scripture. Classical scholars define *tafsīr* as the science by which the Quran is understood, its meanings are explained, and its rulings and wisdoms are derived.¹⁹ al-Zarqānī defines it as a branch of knowledge that explores various aspects of the noble Quran; its revelation, transmission, recitation, words, associated meanings, and rulings.”²⁰ It is a branch of knowledge in which the meanings of the Quran are explained, and its injunctions, instructions, guidance, wisdoms, lessons, and morals are described openly and clearly.

There have been hundreds of *tafsīr* works authored throughout history varying in length, breadth, depth, complexity, and focus. Traditionally, scholars of *tafsīr* would approach the Quran analytically chapter by chapter verse by verse. Mustansir Mir terms this approach to Quranic exegesis atomism.²¹ It is also known as analytical *tafsīr*. Exegetes would analyze, explain, and interpret each verse with discussions focused on language, grammar, morphology, rhetoric, jurisprudence, ḥadīth, theology, virtues and ethics, lessons, morals, reminders, and personal reflections. Oftentimes, authors would focus their attention on one aspect. For example, some would focus on the linguistic aspect and others would focus on the legal aspect. Some would even address multiple

¹⁹ al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān fī ‘Ulūm al-Quran*, 864

²⁰ al-Zarqānī, *Manāhil al-‘Irfān fī ‘Ulūm al-Quran*, 1:471

²¹ Mustansir Mir, *Coherence in the Quran* (Indianapolis, American Trust Publication, 1986), p.1

aspects. Some works of *tafsīr* are extremely long, filling up multiple volumes, while others may be short and brief.

A more contemporary approach to *tafsīr*, although not entirely new, that has been adopted by many scholars recently is thematic *tafsīr*, or *al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍūʿī*. Thematic *tafsīr* focuses on various themes, concepts, and ideas and how they are presented and understood in various verses and passages throughout the Quran. For example, a scholar may want to explore the theme of mercy (*rahmah*) or justice (*ʿadl*) and will analyze how it is discussed in various verses, passages, and chapters of the Quran. After explaining and analyzing the verses that address the particular theme, they will present a coherent Quranic perspective or narrative. Another aspect of thematic *tafsīr* is to look at and analyze the major themes of a particular *sūrah* and explore how they are connected to each other and how they fit into the general themes of the entire Quran. Thematic *tafsīr* also explores the idea of coherence in the Quran. The verses of *suwar* (plural of *sūrah*) are not placed in a random sequence; rather they are organized in a manner that forms a coherent whole. Several scholars, both classical and contemporary, argue that the Quran is endowed with a coherence that is not only remarkable in itself but is integral to the meaning and interpretation of the Quran. The term they use to describe this remarkable and inherent coherence is *nazm*, which can be translated as structure or organization.

This research explored the concept of *tadabbur* within the framework of both analytical *tafsīr* and thematic *tafsīr*.

1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Through a qualitative study and analysis that employs the inductive and analytical methods of selected verses from the Quran, *aḥādīth* of the Prophet ﷺ, the practice and teachings of the Companions and early generations of Muslims, *Tafsīr* literature, and writings of classical and contemporary scholars this research aims to develop a structured framework and clear methodology for *al-tadabbur*, deep reflection on the Quran's messages. This structured framework and methodology can then be used by the common Muslim to reflect deeply upon verses and passages of the Quran allowing them to engage with it intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually.

The study will initially focus on four verses in the Quran as a primary source where Allah ﷻ directly encourages deep reflection upon the Quran:

.i أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ ۚ وَلَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ غَيْرِ اللَّهِ لَوَجَدُوا فِيهِ اخْتِلَافًا كَثِيرًا

4:82 - “Do they not then reflect on the Quran? Had it been from anyone other than Allah, they would have certainly found in it many inconsistencies.”²²

.ii أَفَلَمْ يَدَّبَّرُوا الْقَوْلَ أَمْ جَاءَهُمْ مَا لَمْ يَأْتِ آبَاءَهُمُ الْأَوَّلِينَ

23:68 - “Is it because they have never contemplated the Word ‘of Allah’? Or ‘because’ there has come to them something that did not come to their forefathers?”²³

.iii كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ مُبَارَكٌ لِيَدَّبَّرُوا آيَاتِهِ ۚ وَلِيَتَذَكَّرَ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

38:29 - “‘This is’ a blessed Book which We have revealed to you ‘O Prophet’ so that they may contemplate its verses, and people of reason may be mindful.”²⁴

.iv أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ أَمْ عَلَى قُلُوبٍ أَقْفَاهَا

47:24 - “Do they not then reflect on the Quran? Or are there locks upon their hearts?”²⁵

I have selected these four verses because through them Allah , ﷻ directly or indirectly, encourages humanity in general, and believers in particular, to reflect upon the Quran. The word that Allah ﷻ uses in these verses is *tadabbara*, to reflect, and its derivatives. I believe the selection of this particular verb and its derivatives is significant and aim to uncover some of the reasons why this particular word is used.

I will study and analyze what the Scholars of *Tafsīr*, both classical and contemporary, have written regarding these verses focusing on their understanding of the concept of *al-tadbbur* through the lens of exegesis. I will look at works of *Tafsīr* in historical order to trace how the understanding of the concept developed and evolved over time. The following works of *Tafsīr* will be used as secondary sources: *Jāmi‘ al-Bayān ‘an Ta’wīl Āyy al-Quran* by al-Ṭabarī, *Ma‘ālim al-Tanzīl* by al-Baghawī, *al-*

²² Quran 4:82

²³ Quran 23:68

²⁴ Quran 38:29

²⁵ Quran 47:24

Jāmi' lī Ahkām al-Quran by al-Qurtubī, *Tafsīr al-Quran al-'Azīm* by ibn Kathīr, al-Ālūsī's *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī fī Tafsīr al-Quran al-'Azīm wa al-Sab' al-Mathānī*, ibn 'Āshūr's *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, Usmānī's *Ma'āriful Quran*, and Quṭb's *fī Zilāl al-Quran*.

Each of these works is an important and unique contribution to the field of *Tafsīr*. al-Ṭabarī's *Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl Āyy al-Quran* is one of the earliest works of *Tafsīr* focused on exegesis based on narrations from the Prophet ﷺ, his Companions, their students, and the Arabic Language. He also discusses the different recitations of a verse and quotes lines of classical poetry to clarify the meanings of difficult words. al-Baghawī's *Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl* focuses on the vocabular of the verses as well as explaining them through various narrations. al-Qurtubī's *al-Jāmi' lī Ahkām al-Quran* focuses on the legal rulings that can be derived from the Quran. He also explains the verses in detail highlighting the meanings of difficult words and explaining the eloquence and beauty of Allah's words. ibn Kathīr's *Tafsīr al-Quran al-'Azīm* focuses on narrations that explain the meanings, context, and lessons of the verses. Scholars describe it as an abridged and summarized version of *Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl Āyy al-Quran*. al-Ālūsī's *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī fī Tafsīr al-Quran al-'Azīm wa al-Sab' al-Mathānī* is a comprehensive work with exhaustive discussions on language, syntax, recitations, rhetoric, jurisprudence, creed, scholastics, philosophy, astronomy, mysticism, and related narrations. ibn 'Āshūr's *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr* is a contemporary works with exhaustive discussions on language, syntax, grammar, and morphology. Usmānī's *Ma'āriful Quran* is a contemporary synthesis of classical works presented in an accessible manner. It includes discussions and analysis of the Quran found in classical works of *Tafsīr* and answers contemporary questions and issues in a logical and scholarly manner. Syed Quṭb's *fī Zilāl al-Quran* is a contemporary commentary on the Quran and is very different from the scholastic works of *Tafsīr*. He shares his personal thoughts and insights regarding the meanings of verses in the light of classical interpretations.

I will then examine and analyze reports from a hermeneutical lens found in the major collections of *ḥadīth*, primarily the Six Books, that either describe or allude to the Prophet's ﷺ methodology for reflecting upon the Quran. The Six Books - *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, *Jāmi' al-Tirmidhī*, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, *Sunan al-Nasā'ī*, and *Sunan ibn Mājah* - are considered to be the six canonical books of *ḥadīth* and are

accepted among scholars of *ḥadīth* as being authoritative and representative of the vast corpus of *ḥadīth*. I will also explore reports from the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ and the first three generations of Muslims (*salaf*) found in books of *ḥadīth* and biographical works that describe their approach to reciting and studying the Quran. I will use these narrations and reports to extract the Prophetic methodology of engaging in *al-tadabbur* through content analysis. I will then use this methodology to construct a structured and clear methodology for the common Muslim to engage with the Quran through deep reflection. Through content analysis I will look at broad themes and factors that will assist in deep reflection upon the meanings of the Quran including: 1) Spirituality, 2) Etiquette with the Quran, 3) Intellectual Preparation, and 4) Practical Implementation. Spirituality will look at factors such as seeking forgiveness for one's past sins, repentance, cleansing the heart of spiritual ailments, and seeking refuge with Allah ﷻ from Satan. Etiquette with the Quran refers to the formalities associated with reciting the Quran mentioned in several *aḥādīth* such as sitting in a humble posture, facing the *qiblah*, removing distractions, and using the *miswāk* (toothstick). Intellectual preparation includes factors that help one focus and develop the right mindset.

1.7 LITERATURE REVIEW

According to my research and to the best of my limited knowledge, there aren't independent titles on this topic that were authored by classical scholars of the Quran. Rather, the topic is discussed in varying details throughout classical and modern works of *Tafsīr* while explaining verses that encourage engaging in *tadabbur*. Dr. al-ʿAṭawī in his paper “Maḥūm al-Tadabbur ʿind al-Lughawiyyīn (The Concept of al-Tadabbur According to Linguists)” suggests that the reason for this is that, throughout history, scholars were more concerned with practical application rather than theorizing.²⁶ This would be an interesting question to investigate and research; why didn't classical scholars' author independent works dealing with the concept of *tadabbur*? Discussions on *tadabbur* with varying details can be found in classical and contemporary works of *Tafsīr* such as *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān ʿan Taʾwīl Āy al-Quran* by al-Ṭabarī, *Maʿālim al-Tanzīl* by al-Baghawī, *al-Jāmiʿ lī Aḥkā al-Quran* by al-Qurṭubī, *Tafsīr al-Quran al-ʿAẓīm* by

²⁶ al-ʿAṭawī, ʿUwaid. “Maḥūm al-Tadabbur ʿind al-Lughawiyyīn”. *Maḥūm al-Tadabbur Tahrīr wa Taʾwīl*. Riyadh: Markaz Tadabbur lī al-istishārāt, 2013

ibn Kathīr, al-Ālūsī's *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī fī Tafsīr al-Quran al-'Aẓīm wa al-Sab' al-Mathānī*, ibn 'Āshūr's *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, Usmānī's *Ma'ārif al-Quran*, and Quṭb's *fī Zilāl al-Quran* under 4:82, 23:68, 38:29, and 47:24. In these works of *Tafsīr*, the authors give general definitions and descriptions of what *tadabbur* is. They don't mention how one is supposed to engage in *tadabbur* or provide a structured methodology for doing so.

Tadabbur, as a genre of literature or a separate discipline within Quranic Studies, is relatively new. Currently, there are a few research centers that have resources dedicated to producing works on this topic. For example, there is a Center for *Tadabbur* as part of the Quranic Studies Department at the Muhammad ibn Saud University in Riyadh. They have organized conferences and seminars encouraging the development and codification of *tadabbur* as a sub-discipline within Quranic Studies. They organized a conference inviting specialists in *Tafsīr* and Quranic Studies to present and defend papers on the topic of *tadabbur*. They published the articles and papers from this conference in a book entitled *Maḥmūd al-Tadabbur Taḥrīr wa Ta'sīl*. This work contains excellent articles on the meanings of *tadabbur* linguistically and technically, how to engage in *tadabbur*, the meaning of *tadabbur* according to the exegetes, and the principles of *tadabbur*. The journal consists of six papers and discussions from experts regarding them:

- i. *Sabīl Tadabbur Kitāb Allah* (How to Reflect on the Book of Allah)²⁷
- ii. *Maḥmūd al-Tadabbur 'inda al-Lughawīyyīn* (The Concept of *Tadabbur* according to the Linguists)²⁸
- iii. *Taḥrīr Ma'na al-Tadabbur 'inda al-Mufasssīrīn* (Explaining the Meaning of *Tadabbur* According to the Exegetes)²⁹
- iv. *Maḥmūd Tadabbur al-Quran* (The Concept of *Tadabbur* al-Quran)³⁰

²⁷ al-'Āyid, *Sabīl Tadabbur Kitāb Allah, Maḥmūd al-Tadabbur Taḥrīr wa Ta'sīl*, 9-13

²⁸ al-'Aṭawī, *Maḥmūd al-Tadabbur 'inda al-Lughawīyyīn, Maḥmūd al-Tadabbur Taḥrīr wa Ta'sīl*, 15-35

²⁹ al-Wahbī, *Taḥrīr Ma'na al-Tadabbur 'inda al-Mufasssīrīn, Maḥmūd al-Tadabbur Taḥrīr wa Ta'sīl*, 87-118

³⁰ al-Ṭayyār, *Maḥmūd Tadabbur al-Quran, Maḥmūd al-Tadabbur Taḥrīr wa Ta'sīl*, 69-85

- v. *Maḥmūm al-Tadabbur - Taḥrīr wa Ta'ṣīl* (The Concept of *al-Tadabbur* - Explaining and Establishing Principles)³¹
- vi. *Maḥmūm al-Tadabbur fī Ḍaw' al-Quran wa al-Sunnah wa al-Āthār* (The Concept of *al-Tadabbur* in the light of the Quran and Sunnah)³²

The Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University also publishes a journal on Quranic Studies that has several papers and articles on the concept of *al-Tadabbur*. In the May 2011 issue, there is a paper entitled “Tadabbur al-Quran al-Karīm: Maḥmūmuḥu, Asālībuhū, Asbābuhū, Āthārahū” by Dr. Fahd ibn Muḥrab al-Wahbī.³³ al-Wahbī briefly explores the meaning of *al-tadabbur* both linguistically and technically, how the Quran invites towards reflection and contemplation, factors that assist in reflection and contemplation upon the Quran, and the benefits of reflection upon the Quran. He defines *al-tadabbur* as “reflection upon the Quran with the purpose of deriving lessons, reminders, and insight.” This is a very broad and general definition that can lead to potential issues in terms of application. The rest of the paper provides a framework for how to develop the skill of *tadabbur* and some of the benefits of reflection and pondering upon the meanings of the Quran.

Despite the utility of Wahbī’s paper, this thesis provides a comprehensive and practical framework for engaging in *tadabbur*, integrating both classical and contemporary insights. Unlike the broad definitions and general discussions of *tadabbur* found in al-Wahbī’s paper, this research offers detailed guidelines, principles, and a structured methodology. It explores the methodology

Dr. Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī wrote a book entitled *Kayf Nata'āmal ma'ā al-Quran al-‘Azīm* (How do We Interact with the Quran?)³⁴ with the intention of providing Muslims with a methodology of how to build and establish a strong relationship with the Quran. al-Qaraḍāwī dedicates an entire chapter to the concept of *al-tadabbur*. He also briefly mentions the linguistic and technical definition of *al-tadabbur* and mentions several verses from the Quran, *aḥādīth* of the Prophet ﷺ and narrations from the

³¹ al-Sabt, *Maḥmūm al-Tadabbur - Taḥrīr wa Ta'ṣīl*, *Maḥmūm al-Tadabbur Taḥrīr wa Ta'ṣīl*, 153-173

³² al-Rabī‘ah, *Maḥmūm al-Tadabbur fī Ḍaw' al-Quran wa al-Sunnah wa al-Āthār*, *Maḥmūm al-Tadabbur Taḥrīr wa Ta'ṣīl*, 175-210

³³ al-Wahbī, Fahd. “Tadabbur al-Quran al-Karīm: Maḥmūmuḥu, Asālībuhū, Asbābuhū, Āthārahū.” *Quranic Studies Journal*, vol. 8, 2011, p. 429-467.

³⁴ al-Qaraḍāwī, *Kayf Nata'āmal ma'ā al-Quran al-‘Azīm*, p. 169-181

Companions and scholars encouraging reflection and contemplation upon the Quran. He also mentions internal and external factors that help one develop a strong relationship with the Quran that will lead towards beneficial reflection. This chapter is a starting point that can be used to help develop a detailed framework and methodology for reflecting upon the Quran. This thesis goes beyond an introductory approach by offering a comprehensive and detailed framework for engaging in *tadabbur*. It includes extensive guidelines, principles, and a structured methodology designed for practical use by average Muslims, making it more thorough and actionable.

Dr. ‘Iṣām ibn Ṣāliḥ al-‘Uwaid has a concise yet instructive book entitled *Fann al-Tadabbur fī al-Quran al-Karīm*.³⁵ It is essentially a booklet written as an introduction to the art or skill of *tadabbur*. The purpose of the book is more as a reminder and exhortation for Muslims to engage with the Quran and build an intimate relationship with it intellectually, spiritually, and emotionally. He has divided the booklet into stages. The first stage is to recognize with absolute certainty that a person with the Quran “is alive and without it dead, is seeing and without it blind, guided and without it is astray.” The second stage is to realize that the Quran is addressed to the spiritual heart, which is considered to be the center of faith and understanding. In the third stage he highlights how one should approach and recite the Quran. The fourth stage is a methodology of how to study the Quran and the fifth and final stage is how one should benefit from the works of Quranic Exegesis. This thesis goes beyond a reminder and exhortation and explores the concept of *tadabbur* through classical and contemporary works. It provides a functional and practical definition of *tadabbur*, analyzes the reflection of the Prophet ,ﷺ his Companions, and the *Tābi ‘ūn*, and provides a framework and methodology that can be used to enhance engagement with the Quran.

Sulaymān ibn ‘Umar al-Sunaydī has a small booklet entitled *min Ajli Tadabbur al-Quran (For the Sake of Reflecting upon the Quran)*³⁶ that he authored to encourage students of different levels to reflect upon the Quran. This is a very concise, direct, and beneficial read that mentions the definition of *tadabbur*, its importance and value, how to engage in *tadabbur*, and some examples. It also has a section of questions and

³⁵ al-‘Uwaid, ‘Iṣām. *Fann al-Tadabbur fī al-Quran al-Karīm*. Saudi Arabia: Wojooh Publishing and Distribution House, 2009

³⁶ al-Sunaydī, *min Ajli Tadabbur al-Quran*. Saudi Arabia: Majallah al-Bayān, 2007

answers directed to students of the Quran. Because this is not an academic work it lacks citations of sources.

al-Sunaydī has a longer work entitled *Tadabbur al-Quran (Reflecting Upon the Quran)*³⁷ in which he explores several topics related to *tadabbur*. He starts by first defining the term linguistically and technically and then divides the book into eight broad topics: 1) the importance of *tadabbur*, 2) factors that have been legislated in order to reflect upon the Quran and be impacted by it, 3) factors that are dependent upon deep reflection and understanding of the Quran, 4) factors that prevent reflection, 5) stages of reflection, 6) a recitor's relationship with the Quran, 7) ways to reflect upon the Quran, and 8) examples. This is an important work that has compiled information from primary and secondary sources that are designed to help individuals engage in *tadabbur*.

Another work that briefly touches on the concept of *al-tadabbur* is Dr. Musā'id ibn Sulaymān al-Ṭayyār's *Maḥmūm al-Tafsīr wa al-Ta'wīl wa al-Istinbāt wa al-Tadabbur wa al-Mufasssīr (The Concepts of Exegesis, Interpretation, Derivation, Reflection, and Exegete)*.³⁸ These are all technical terms that refer to different aspects of Quranic Studies and its various disciplines. In this work, Dr. al-Ṭayyār defines each of these terms with comprehensive definitions that allow one to recognize the differences between them. He has a chapter dedicated to *al-tadabbur*, its linguistic and technical definitions, and how it is different from and related to *al-tafsīr*.

Markaz al-Tadabbur (the Center of Tadabbur) in Saudi Arabia has published a series of books entitled *li Yaddabbarū Āyātihi Ḥaṣād 'Ām min al-Tadabbur (So they May Reflect: a General Harvest from Tadabbur)* that compiles several scholar's and student's reflections upon certain verses and passages of the Quran. This is a work that shows the results of scholars and students of the Quran engaging in *tadabbur*. It compiles the lessons, benefits, and guidance that individuals have extracted from certain chapters and verses of the Quran after engaging in reflection. However, it doesn't provide a methodology or structure for doing so.

³⁷ al-Sunaydī, *Tadabbur al-Quran*. Saudi Arabia: Majallah al-Bayān, 2002

³⁸ al-Ṭayyār, Musā'id ibn Sulaimān. *Maḥmūm al-Tafsīr wa al-Ta'wīl wa al-Istinbāt wa al-Tadabbur wa al-Mufasssīr*. Saudi Arabia: Dār ibn al-Jawzī, 1433

Dr. Khālid ibn ‘Uthmān al-Sabt’s *al-Khulāṣah fī Tadabbur al-Quran al-Karīm (the Summary of Reflection Upon the Noble Quran)*³⁹ provides an introduction and summary of the concept of *tadabbur*. al-Sabt starts the work by first defining *al-tadabbur* both linguistically and technically and explaining its relationship to related terms such as *tafsīr*, *ta’wīl*, *bayān*, *istinbāṭ*, *fahm*, and *tafakkur*. He then goes on to describe the importance of *tadabbur* and a number of its outcomes. He also attempts to develop a framework for *tadabbur* by highlighting its integrals (*arkān*) and pre-conditions (*shurūṭ*). This work provides a rudimentary framework for *tadabbur* that can be expanded upon.

Dr. Asmā’ bint Rāshid al-Ruwayshid, the only female author that I came across with a work on *tadabbur*, has a book entitle *Hākadha ‘Āshū ma’ al-Quran: Qaṣaṣ wa Mawāqif (This is How they Lived with the Quran - Stories and Incidents)*⁴⁰. Through this book the author presents stories and incidents from the lives of the Prophet ﷺ, his Companions, pious scholars of the past, and contemporary scholars that highlight their relationship with their Quran and their deep understanding of its message. It essentially presents the outcome and consequence of engaging in *tadabbur*. She presents a very simple and comprehensive definition of *tadabbur* writing that it is “reflection and thought upon the speech of Allah ﷻ in order to understand it, recognize its meanings, wisdoms, and intended meanings.”

The most comprehensive work on the topic that I came across is *Muqarrar Tadabbur al-Quran al-Karīm lī al-Dirāsāt al-‘Ulyā (Curriculum for Reflection upon the Noble Quran for Graduate Studies)* developed by a team of scholars under Dr. Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-‘Uwaijī.⁴¹ This is a fairly large volume that presents the entire topic of *al-tadabbur* in a very methodical manner as an entire curriculum. The book is organized according to four units and each unit has standards with several sections. Unit One covers the concept of *al-tadabbur*, its legal ruling within Islam, its benefits, and objectives. There’s a detailed discussion regarding both the linguistic and technical definitions of the word and how it is different from related words such as

³⁹ al-Sabt, Khālid ibn ‘Uthmān, *al-Khulāṣah fī Tadabbur al-Quran al-Karīm*. Saudi Arabia: Markaz al-Tadabbur, 2016

⁴⁰ al-Ruwayshid, Asmā’ bint Rāshid. *Hākadha ‘Āshū ma’ al-Quran: Qaṣaṣ wa Mawāqif*. Saudi Arabia: Markaz al-Tadabbur, 2011

⁴¹ al-‘Uwaijī, Muhammad. *Muqarrar Tadabbur al-Quran al-Karīm lī al-Dirāsāt al-‘Ulyā*. Makkah: Dār Ṭaibah al-Khadrā’, 2016

istinbāṭ (derivation), *tafsīr* (exegesis), and *ta'wīl* (interpretation). The author highlights five different linguistic connotations of the word and then presents several different technical definitions as well. Unit Two outlines a methodology for engaging in *al-tadabbur* including its different levels and stages as well as its practical application. The author discusses several factors that help an individual connect with the Quran intellectually and emotionally that would lead to a deeper level of reflection. Unit 3 discusses the Prophetic methodology for reflecting upon the meanings of the Quran and mentions some examples. Unit 4 highlights some common barriers that prevent one from engaging in *tadabbur* and common mistakes that people make when reflecting upon the Quran. Overall, this is an excellent resource and starting point for anyone who wants to develop a comprehensive study of *al-tadabbur* and develop guidelines for practical application to one's recitation of the Quran.

After reading through these works, it seems like the current library of books and works on *al-tadabbur* fall into three categories or genres: 1) *tafsīr*, 2) exploratory works, and 3) personal reflections. The *tafsīr* literature discusses the definition of *al-tadabbur* through an exegetical lens. In the exploratory works, authors discuss the meanings of *al-tadabbur*, its importance, factors that facilitate it, and barriers that prevent it. The personal reflections are collections of the authors own personal *tadabbur* upon select verses and chapters of the Quran; essentially the end result or outcome of deeply reflecting upon the verses of the Quran.

The literature review highlights several significant differences and gaps between this thesis and the existing works on the concept of *al-tadabbur*. Classical *tafsīr* works by scholars such as al-Ṭabarī, al-Baghawī, al-Qurṭubī, and ibn Kathīr provide general definitions and descriptions of *tadabbur* while explaining relevant verses. However, they lack a structured methodology for engaging in *tadabbur*. This thesis goes beyond these works by offering detailed guidelines and a structured methodology for practical application. Contemporary efforts from research centers like the Muhammad ibn Saud University and the Center for *Tadabbur* focus on linguistic and technical definitions and the principles of *tadabbur* but often do not provide comprehensive practical frameworks. This thesis integrates both classical and contemporary insights to develop a practical and thorough framework for *tadabbur*.

Publications from conferences organized by the Center for Tadabbur, such as *Maḥmūm al-Tadabbur Taḥrīr wa Ta'ṣīl*, provide scholarly articles discussing various aspects of *tadabbur* but lack a cohesive, practical methodology for everyday use by Muslims. This thesis fills this gap by offering a practical and structured methodology designed for average Muslims. Specific works, such as Dr. Fahd ibn Mubrak al-Wahbī's paper, provide broad definitions and general frameworks but do not delve into detailed guidelines for practical implementation. This thesis addresses this by offering a thorough framework with actionable steps.

Introductory works, like Dr. Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī's *Kayf Nata'āmal ma'ā al-Quran al-'Azīm* and Dr. 'Iṣām ibn Ṣāliḥ al-'Uwaid's *Fann al-Tadabbur fī al-Quran al-Karīm*, provide initial approaches and exhortations to engage with the Quran. This thesis goes beyond exhortation by providing detailed, practical, and step-by-step guidelines suitable for both scholars and laypersons. Concise guides, such as Sulaymān ibn 'Umar al-Sunaydī's *min Ajli Tadabbur al-Quran*, are designed for students without citations, whereas this thesis offers an academically rigorous and structured approach, supported by extensive references.

Exploratory works, like Dr. Musā'id ibn Sulaymān al-Ṭayyār's *Maḥmūm al-Tafsīr wa al-Ta'wīl wa al-Istinbāṭ wa al-Tadabbur wa al-Mufasssīr*, explore various Quranic terms and their meanings but do not offer a detailed methodology for *tadabbur*. This thesis distinguishes itself by being deeply researched, with a structured approach and comprehensive academic rigor. Collections of personal reflections, such as those compiled by Markaz al-Tadabbur, focus on the outcomes of *tadabbur* but do not provide a method for achieving such reflections. This thesis bridges this gap by detailing the process and providing tools for practical engagement.

The *Muqarrar Tadabbur al-Quran al-Karīm lī al-Dirāsāt al-'Ulyā* developed by Dr. Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz al-'Uwajjī is comprehensive but designed for graduate studies. This thesis, while equally comprehensive, is designed for broader accessibility and practical use by the general Muslim populace.

In summary, this thesis addresses the gaps identified in the literature by offering a comprehensive, academically rigorous, and practically applicable framework for engaging in *tadabbur*. It integrates classical and contemporary insights, providing

detailed guidelines, principles, and a structured methodology, making it a unique and valuable contribution to Quranic studies.

1.8 IMPORTANCE

The importance of deeply reflecting upon the words of Allah ﷻ and engaging with them can be understood from its numerous benefits in terms of belief, practice, intellectual development, and moral and ethical refinement.

First, Renews and Strengthens Belief - According to the Islamic worldview, *īmān*, faith, is not an abstract concept or some intangible reality that can't be seen or touched. It is not some sort of emotion or feeling. Rather, a believer's faith is something that is living and organic; it can be felt, seen, and experienced. Everything a believer says and does as human beings should represent this faith. They affirm this faith with their hearts, profess this firm, deeply rooted belief with their tongues, and express it through their actions.

A believer's entire life is an expression of this faith; the way they worship their Creator, the way they deal with their parents and siblings, friends and relatives, co-workers and classmates. Faith is how they treat their husbands and wives, the way they treat their children. Faith is how they interact with others in society. It is how they earn their money and how they spend it. It is how they behave at work, on campus, in the gym, in public and in private. It is the lens through which they view the world and it is the source that drives their behavior. Revelation through the words of Allah, the Quran, and the guidance of His Prophet ﷺ inform how they understand the world.

The nature of *īmān* is very interesting; it is not static. A person's *īmān* fluctuates according to their own personal experiences, choices, and circumstances. Oftentimes, a person is in need of renewing and refreshing their faith. The Prophet ﷺ told his Companions, "Renew your faith." They said, "O Messenger of Allah, how do we renew our faith?" He ﷺ said, "Renew your faith by saying *lā ilāha illa Allah*."⁴² One of the most effective ways of renewing and strengthening one's faith is through the Quran. Allah ﷻ says in *Sūrah al-Anfāl* when describing the believers,

⁴² Haythamī, *Majma' al-Zawā'id*, 2:214

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَجِلَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَإِذَا تُلِيَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُهُ زَادَتْهُمْ
 إِيمَانًا وَعَلَىٰ رَحْمَةٍ رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ الَّذِينَ يُتِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ
 الْمُؤْمِنُونَ حَقًّا ۗ لَهُمْ دَرَجَاتٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ وَرِزْقٌ كَرِيمٌ

“True believers are those whose hearts tremble with awe when Allah is mentioned, whose faith increases when His revelations are recited to them, who put their trust in their Lord, who keep up the prayer and give to others out of what We provide for them. Those are the ones who truly believe. They have high standing with their Lord, forgiveness, and generous provision.”⁴³

Their faith increases when the Quran is recited to them because they listen to its message carefully, reflect upon its meanings, and let it influence their hearts and minds. When they listen to the Quran they are reminded about the existence, oneness, might, power, and glory of Allah ﷻ. They are also reminded of the reality of this world and the next, the Day of Judgment, accountability, reward and punishment, Paradise and Hell. It creates a desire within them to turn back to Allah ﷻ and try their best to obey His commandments and stay away from His prohibitions.

Second, it is a macro solution for problems facing the global Muslim community

- The word crisis is defined as a time of intense difficulty, trouble, or danger. Based on this definition, the Muslim Ummah has been and is currently experiencing several crises; political, economic, social, and religious. These crises are not simple; they are complex and multi-faceted with several factors affecting it. According to several Islamic authorities, the root cause of these issues is that Muslim communities no longer look towards the Quran for solutions to their social, political, and economic issues. They have adopted other ideologies and philosophies to tackle the issues they are faced with.

The Prophet ﷺ said, “Truly Allah ﷻ elevates nations through the Quran and through it He lowers others.”⁴⁴ This is a very powerful and deep statement of the Prophet ﷺ that speaks to the current realities of most Muslim communities across the globe. Allah ﷻ elevates nations through the Quran; He ﷻ gives them honor, respect, authority, power, and influence. This can only happen if a community understands the Quran and implements its guidance and message into their daily lives. Conversely, those

⁴³ Quran 8:2-4

⁴⁴ Muslim, k. *al-ṣalāh al-musāfirīn wa qaṣriha*, b. *faḍl man yaqūmu bi al-quran...*, 817

communities that neglect and ignore the Quran, Allah ﷻ humiliates, lowers, disgrace, and subjugates them. The Prophet ﷺ is providing the key to changing our political, social, and economic status. *al-Tadabbur* can play a major role in helping Muslim communities understand and implement the guidance of the Quran.

Third, Recognizing Allah - ﷻ Through deep reflection upon the meanings of the Quran a person is truly able to recognize their Lord and Creator. This is perhaps the most important outcome and benefit of *tadabbur*; connecting an individual to Allah ﷻ by strengthening their belief, certainty, love, reverence, awe, fear, appreciation, and gratitude. Allah ﷻ says,

إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاءُ

“It is those of His servants who have knowledge who stand in true awe of Allah.”⁴⁵

Muslim civilization is a civilization that is Allah-centered and deep reflection upon the meanings of the Quran facilitates centering people’s lives around Allah ﷻ.

Fourth, Creating a Culture of Quran - The Prophet ﷺ through his teachings and example helped create a culture of Quran among the Companions. He did so by highlighting the importance, significance, virtues, blessings, and rewards associated with reciting, studying, and teaching the Quran. The Prophet ﷺ said, “The best among you are those who learn the Quran and teach it.”⁴⁶ For every single letter of the Quran that is recited, a person is rewarded with a good deed that is multiplied by ten. “Whoever recites a letter from the book of Allāh, then for them is a good deed, and a good deed is multiplied by ten. I am not saying that *Alif lām mīm* is one letter, but *alif* is a letter, *lām* is a letter, and *mīm* is a letter.”⁴⁷ The Quran will intercede for its companion on the Day of Judgment. “Recite the Quran because it will come as an intercessor for its companion on the Day of Judgment.”⁴⁸

In another beautiful narration, the Prophet ﷺ highlights the blessings, rewards, and virtues associated with coming together as a community in the *masjid* to learn and

⁴⁵ Quran 35:28

⁴⁶ Bukhārī, *k. fadā'il al-qur'ān*, b. *khayrukum man ta'llama al-qur'ān wa 'allamahu*, 5027

⁴⁷ Tirmidhī, *k. fadā'il al-qur'ān 'an rasulillah*, ﷺ b. *mā jā'a fī man qara'a harf min kitāb Allah*, 2910. The narration is graded as ḥasan.

⁴⁸ Muslim, *k. salah al-musāfirīn*, b. *fadl qirā'ah al-qur'ān wa surah al-baqarah*, 804

study the Quran. The Prophet ﷺ said, “No people gather in one of the houses of Allah, reciting the Book of Allah and teaching it to one another except that tranquility will descend upon them, mercy will envelop them, the angels will surround them, and Allah will mention them to those who are with Him.”⁴⁹

Through the teachings and practice of the Prophet ﷺ a culture was created where the community was deeply connected with the words of Allah .ﷻ Some narrations mention that the streets of Madinah would be buzzing with the voices of people reciting the Quran during the time of *tahajjud* (voluntary night prayer). That is the type of culture that needs to be recreated among Muslim communities across the globe.

Fifth, Refining Character and Behavior - An integral part of any civilization is their character and behavior; how people speak, behave, and interact with others. The importance of *akhlāq*, or good character, in Islam can't be overstated. In today's society, when a person thinks of religion they think of rules and regulations, restrictions, and devotional acts of worship. Even Muslims are guilty of limiting Islam to devotional acts of worship. Generally, when a person hears the word Islam, automatically they think of praying, fasting, giving charity, and reading Quran. These devotional acts of worship are a fundamental part of Islam as way of life, but they aren't the only part. As a matter of fact, our success simply isn't in prayers, fasting, charity, or hajj. Rather, it is in good manners coupled with these acts of worship.

The Prophet ﷺ himself described perfecting good manners as the reason why he was sent as a Prophet. “I have only been sent to perfect good character.”⁵⁰ Through this statement the Prophet ﷺ explained that one of the primary objectives of his mission was to perfect good character. Interestingly, the acts of worship that have been prescribed in Islam help a person build good character.

Akhlāq isn't simply a few manners or qualities; rather, it is a group of praiseworthy characteristics and qualities that a person has. For example, generosity, forbearance, forgiveness, leniency, chastity, fairness, gentleness, humility, justice, mercy, kindness, honesty, and bravery. That is why when a person is polite and

⁴⁹ Muslim, *k. al-dhikr wa al-du'ā wa al-tawbah wa al-istighfār, b. faḍl al-ijtimā' 'alā tilāwah al-quran wa 'alā al-dhikr*, 2699

⁵⁰ Haythamī, *Majma' al-Zawā'id*, 9:18

respectful to others, humble and kind to the poor and needy, they are showing good character.

The Prophet ﷺ throughout his life stressed the importance of having good character both in speech and deed. The Prophet ﷺ said, “The believers most complete in faith are those who have the best character.”⁵¹ When asked about what deeds will lead people to Paradise, the Prophet ﷺ responded, “Allah-consciousness and good character.”⁵² When he was sending Mu‘ādh as a governor to Yemen he ﷺ reminded him, “and show good manners in your dealing with others.”⁵³

Not only did the Prophet ﷺ encourage others to have good character but he showed them how to do so as well practically. The Prophet ﷺ had the best character himself. Anything he said about character he practiced himself. Allah ﷻ addressed the Prophet ﷺ saying,

وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ

“And verily, you (Muḥammad) are on an exalted standard of character.”⁵⁴

Anything the Quran mentioned regarding character, the Prophet ﷺ embodied it. That is why when ‘Ā’ishah was asked about the character of the Prophet ﷺ, she said, “His character was the Quran.”⁵⁵ Literally, he was a walking and talking Quran.

Sixth, Further developing the library of Quranic Studies - Within the framework of Islam, knowledge is not static. With the passage of time, knowledge continues to grow, expand, develop, and be refined. Scholars of later generations build upon the legacy of scholars from previous generations. This work will be an addition to the expanding library of Quranic Studies.

⁵¹ Abū Dāwūd, *k. al-Sunnah, b. al-dalīl ‘alā ziyādah al-īmān wa nuqṣānihī*, 4682. The narration is graded as ṣaḥīḥ.

⁵² Tirmidhī, *k. Al-birr wa al-ṣilah ‘an rasūlillah*, ﷺ *b. Mā jā’a fī ḥusn al-khuluq*, 2004. The narration is graded as ṣaḥīḥ.

⁵³ Tirmidhī, *k. Al-birr wa al-ṣilah ‘an rasūlillah*, ﷺ *b. Mā jā’a fī mu’āsharah al-nās*, 1987. This narration is graded as ḥasan.

⁵⁴ Quran 68:4

⁵⁵ Bukhārī, *al-Adab al-Mufrad*, 308

1.9 CHAPTERIZATION

This research is organized into the following chapters:

Chapter 1: Framing the Study

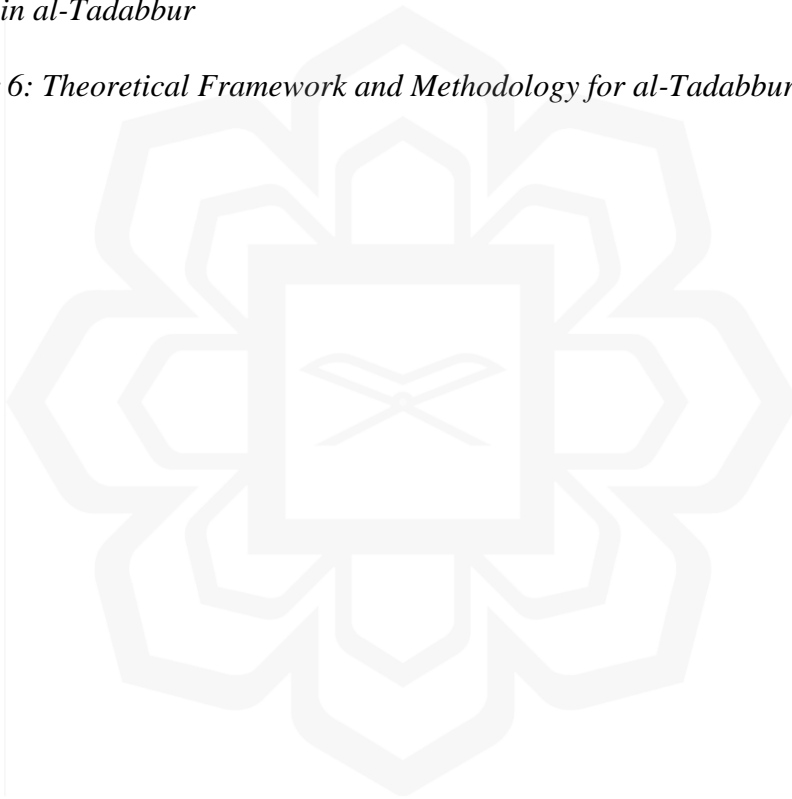
Chapter 2: Defining al-Tadabbur

Chapter 3: How the Quran Invites Individuals to Reflect upon the Quran

Chapter 4: Difference Between al-Tafsīr and al-Tadabbur

Chapter 5: How did the Prophet ,ﷺ His Companions (ra), and the Early Muslims Engage in al-Tadabbur

Chapter 6: Theoretical Framework and Methodology for al-Tadabbur



CHAPTER TWO

DEFINING AL-TADABBUR

2.1 PREFACE

Early scholars would often start their works by mentioning some introductory points regarding the subject matter. This tradition is still carried on in Islamic seminaries and universities throughout the world where the instructor will give a brief overview of the subject matter before going into greater detail. These preliminary remarks are termed *al-mabādi*, the fundamental concepts, which are the definition, subject matter, purpose, and objective of the discipline itself. These introductory remarks provide a very general overview allowing the researcher to approach the discipline with a basic understanding of what is going to be studied.

When writing about meanings and definitions, scholars within the Islamic tradition generally discuss the linguistic as well as the technical meaning of a concept. Words have linguistic definitions, but often because of coinage, usage, custom, and other factors, they take on different meanings. This chapter will explore both the linguistic and technical definition of the word *tadabbur*. It will also survey the definitions, descriptions, and explanations of the concept of *tadabbur* mentioned in both classical and contemporary works of Quranic exegesis. This will be followed by a brief analysis along with a proposed definition for *al-tadabbur* as a sub-discipline of Quranic Studies.

2.2 LINGUISTIC DEFINITION

Linguistically, the word *al-tadabbur* is a verbal noun (*maṣḍar*) derived from the root letters *dāl-bā-rā*, which convey several meanings: leaving, back, last part, end, tail, hind part, considering the outcomes and results of matters. All of these meanings revolve around the ideas of an outcome, consequence, result, the end of something, or the last part of something. ibn Fāris says, “*Dabr: al-dāl, al-bā, and al-rā*. The primary meaning

of these root letters revolves around one primary meaning, which is the end of something.”¹

Morphologically, *al-Tadabbur* is the verbal noun from the verb *tadabbara/yatadabbaru*, which is verb form V (*bāb al-tafa‘ul*). *Hans Wehr* defines *tadabbur* as “reflection, meditation (في on), thinking (في about); consideration, contemplation (في of); deliberation.”²

Lane writes in his entry on *dā-bā-rā* in his famous Lexicon, “تدبره: (T, M, Msb, K:) or he looked to what would, or might be its result: and تدبر فيه he thought, or meditated, upon it; (S;) [as also: تدبره:] Aktham Ibn-Seyfee said to his sons,

يَابَنِيَّ لَا تَتَدَبَّرُوا أَعْجَازَ أُمُورٍ قَدْ وَلَّتْ صُدُورُهَا

[O my sons, think not upon the ends of things whereof the beginnings have passed]: (T: [عَجَزُ:]) and in the Kur [iv. 84] it is said,

أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ

Will they, then, not consider the meanings of the Kur-án, and endeavour to obtain a clear knowledge of what is in it? (Bd:) and again, in the Kur [xxiii. 70],

أَفَلَمْ يَدَّبَّرُوا الْقَوْلَ

Have they, then, not thought upon, (TA,) and endeavoured to understand, (K, يَنْفَهُمُوا,) what has been said to them in the Kur-án? for تدبّر signifies the thinking, or meditating, upon [a thing], and endeavouring to understand [it]; syn. تَفَكَّرَ and تَفَهُمَ: (TA:) and تدبّره he looked into it, considered it, examined it, or studied it, repeatedly, in order to know it, or until he knew it. (Msb in art. امل.)³

al-Zujāj defines it as, “Considering the consequence of something.”⁴ al-Jurjānī says, “It is an expression that describes considering the consequences of affairs, and it is close [in meaning] to reflection [*tafakkur*], except that reflection is to direct the heart

¹ ibn Fāris, *Mu‘jam Maqāyīs al-Lughah*, 2:266

² Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, 313

³ Lane, *Lane’s Lexicon*, 850

⁴ al-Zujāj, *Zād al-Masīr*, 305

[mind] to consider the evidence, and tadabbur is to direct it towards the outcomes.”⁵ al-Khalīl says, “*al-Tadbīr* and *al-tadabbur* are to consider the consequences of matters.”⁶

Based on all of these definitions and meanings described by linguists, the linguistic meaning of *tadabbur* is to consider the outcome of things and to think about its consequences. It is also used to refer to reflection regarding the essence and reality of something, its particulars, and everything associated with it. The purpose behind the reflection and thinking is an attempt to understand.

2.3 TECHNICAL DEFINITION

When used within the context of the Quran specifically, and within Islamic Studies generally, the word *tadabbur* takes on a more specific and focused meaning. It is considered to be a technical term that conveys a very particular concept, which is deep reflection upon the meanings, message, and guidance of the Quran. al-Ṭayyār describes *tadabbur* as “using the mind to reflect upon the verses of the Quran in order to arrive at their meanings and to consider the precision, information, and knowledge contained within them along with their practical implementation. Therefore using the mind to reflect upon the verses of the Quran is the meaning of *al-tadabbur*.”⁷ He also says that *tadabbur* is an intellectual activity that results in feeling emotion and leads towards action.⁸ al-Wahbī defines it as “reflecting upon the Quran with the purpose of deriving advice, lessons, and insight.”⁹ *al-Tadabbur* is to engage with the words and meanings of the Quran intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually - mind, body, and soul - with the intention of extracting lessons, morals, reminders, and guidance that can be practically applied to one’s life.

Allah ﷻ directly addresses deep reflection upon the Quran in four verses:

⁵ al-Jurjānī, *al-Ta’rīfāt*, 54

⁶ al-Khalīl, *al-‘Ayn*, 8:33

⁷ al-Ṭayyār, “Mafhūm Tadabbur al-Quran” (77-78). *Mafhūm al-Tadabbur Tahṛīr wa Ta’šīl*. Riyadh: Markaz Tadabbur lī al-istishārāt, 2013

⁸ al-Ṭayyār, “Mafhūm Tadabbur al-Quran” (82). *Mafhūm al-Tadabbur Tahṛīr wa Ta’šīl*. Riyadh: Markaz Tadabbur lī al-istishārāt, 2013

⁹ al-Wahbī, Fahd. “Tadabbur al-Quran al-Karīm: Mafhūmuḥu, Asālībuhu, Asbābuhu, Āthāraḥu.” *Quranic Studies Journal*, vol. 8, 2011, p. 429-467.

i. أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ ۚ وَلَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ غَيْرِ اللَّهِ لَوَجَدُوا فِيهِ اخْتِلَافًا كَثِيرًا

4:82 - “Do they not then reflect on the Quran? Had it been from anyone other than Allah, they would have certainly found in it many inconsistencies.”¹⁰

ii. أَفَلَمْ يَدَّبَّرُوا الْقَوْلَ أَمْ جَاءَهُمْ مَا لَمْ يَأْتِ آبَاءَهُمُ الْأَوَّلِينَ

23:68 - “Is it because they have never contemplated the Word ‘of Allah’? Or ‘because’ there has come to them something that did not come to their forefathers?”¹¹

iii. كَتَبْنَا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ مُبَارَكٌ لِيَدَّبَّرُوا آيَاتِهِ ۚ وَلِيَتَذَكَّرَ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

38:29 - “‘This is’ a blessed Book which We have revealed to you ‘O Prophet’ so that they may contemplate its verses, and people of reason may be mindful.”¹²

iv. أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ أَمْ عَلَى قُلُوبٍ أَقْفَاهَا

47:24 - “Do they not then reflect on the Quran? Or are there locks upon their hearts?”¹³

Exegetes (*mufasssirūn*) have explained the concept of *tadabbur* through these verses in a number of different ways using various expressions and descriptions. Although the definitions may differ in wording, they are all describing the same essence and reality, deep reflection upon the meanings of the Quran. They were attempting to capture the reality of *tadabbur* in their own words. The following is a collection of the various ways in which the exegetes have explained *tadabbur* in these four verses through their works of *Tafsīr*. I will quote from the following works: *Jāmi‘ al-Bayān ‘an Ta’wīl Āyy al-Quran* by al-Ṭabarī, *Ma‘ālim al-Tanzīl* by al-Baghawī, *al-Jāmi‘ lī Ahkām al-Quran* by al-Qurṭubī, *Tafsīr al-Quran al-‘Azīm* by ibn Kathīr, al-Ālūsī’s *Rūḥ al-Ma‘ānī fī Tafsīr al-Quran al-‘Azīm wa al-Sab‘ al-Ṭahānī*, ibn ‘Āshūr’s *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, Usmānī’s¹⁴ *Ma‘ārif al-Quran*, and Quṭb’s *fī Zilāl al-Quran*.

¹⁰ Quran 4:82

¹¹ Quran 23:68

¹² Quran 38:29

¹³ Quran 47:24

¹⁴ Mufti Muhammad Shafi Usmani is the late Grand Mufti of Pakistan. He was born in 1897 in India and passed away in 1976 in Karachi, Pakistan. He was a traditionally trained scholar and jurisconsult known for his expertise in fiqh, ḥadīth, and tafsīr. He was also the founder and president of one of the

2.3.1 al-Ṭabarī

أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ ۚ وَلَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ غَيْرِ اللَّهِ لَوَجَدُوا فِيهِ اخْتِلَافًا
كَثِيرًا

“Do they not then reflect on the Quran? Had it been from anyone other than Allah, they would have certainly found in it many inconsistencies.”¹⁵

The explanation regarding the statement of Allah ﷻ “Do they not then reflect on the Quran? Had it been from anyone other than Allah, they would have certainly found in it many inconsistencies.” What He ﷻ means by his statement “Do they not then reflect on the Quran” is don’t those who scheme at night to do other than what you say O Muḥammad reflect upon the Book of Allah, so that they understand Allah’s proof against them in obeying you and following your command. [And to realize] that the revelation you have come to them with is from their Lord because of the consistency of its meanings, harmony of its rulings, internal corroboration of its truthfulness, and accuracy. If it were from anyone other than Allah its rulings would differ, its meanings would contradict each other, and there would be inconsistencies. Just as:

...From Qatādah: Allah’s statement “Do they not then reflect on the Quran? Had it been from anyone other than Allah, they would have certainly found in it many inconsistencies.” Meaning, Allah’s speech is not inconsistent, it is the truth and contains no falsehood; whereas, the speech of people is inconsistent.

...ibn Zayd said, “Surely the Quran does not belie itself, nor does it contradict itself. What people don’t understand is only from the deficiency of their own intellect and ignorance. He recited, “Had it been from anyone other than Allah, they would have certainly found in it many inconsistencies.” He said, “It is a right upon every believer to say, ‘Everything is from Allah,’ to believe in the ambiguous and to not use it for argumentation. If a person doesn’t understand something and they don’t know, they should say, ‘Whatever Allah said is the truth.’ He should know that Allah does not say

most well-known seminaries in Pakistan, Dār al-‘Ulūm Karachi. One of his most famous works is entitled *Ma‘rifat al-Quran*, a contemporary exegesis of the Quran based on classical sources, which has been translated to English.

¹⁵ Quran 4:82

something and then contradict it. It is necessary to believe in the truthfulness of what has come from Allah.”

...From al-Ḍaḥḥāk, Allah’s statement ‘Do they not then reflect on the Quran’ he said ‘reflect’ means to contemplate.¹⁶

أَفَلَمْ يَدَّبَّرُوا الْقَوْلَ أَمْ جَاءَهُمْ مِمَّا لَمْ يَأْتِ آبَاءَهُمُ الْأَوَّلِينَ

“Is it because they have never contemplated the Word [of Allah]? Or [because] there has come to them something that did not come to their forefathers?”¹⁷

Allah - His mention be elevated - is saying: don’t these polytheists reflect upon the revelation of Allah and His words so that they understand its lessons and warnings and recognize the proofs of Allah that He has established upon them? “Or ‘because’ there has come to them something that did not come to their forefathers?” He’s saying has something come to them that had not come to their forefathers before them and because of that they are too proud and have turned away? Surely messengers came before them and scripture was revealed to them. It is also possible that ‘or (*am*)’ here means ‘rather (*bal*)’. The meaning would then be: Is it because they have never contemplated the word [of Allah]? Rather, something has come to them that did not come to their forefathers, so they abandoned reflecting upon it and turned away from it. Something similar is mentioned by ibn ‘Abbās:

...From ibn ‘Abbās regarding Allah’s statement “Is it because they have never contemplated the Word [of Allah]? Or [because] there has come to them something that did not come to their forefathers?” He said, “By my life, surely what did not come to their forefathers came to them. However, if only that which didn’t come to their forefathers didn’t come to them as well.”¹⁸

كَتَبَ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ مُبَارَكٌ لِيَدَّبَّرُوا آيَاتِهِ وَلِيَتَذَكَّرَ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

¹⁶ Ṭabarī, *Jāmi‘ al-Bayān ‘an Ta’wīl Āy al-Quran*, 4:235

¹⁷ Quran 23:68

¹⁸ Ṭabarī, *Jāmi‘ al-Bayān ‘an Ta’wīl Āy al-Quran*, 10:54

“[This is] a blessed Book which We have revealed to you [O Prophet] so that they may contemplate its verses, and people of reason may be mindful.”¹⁹

And His statement “[This is] a blessed Book which We have revealed to you [O Prophet]” Allah - may His mention be elevated - says to His prophet Muḥammad ﷺ and this Quran “is a blessed Book which We have revealed to you” O Muḥammad “so that they may contemplate its verses.” He says: So that they may deeply reflect upon the proofs of Allah within it and the laws that He has legislated that will cause them to take heed and act upon it.

The Reciters have differed regarding how this should be recited. The majority of Reciters recite it ‘*li yaddabbarū*’ with a *yā*. Meaning, so that those whom you have been sent to - O Muḥammad - may reflect upon its verses. Abū Ja‘far and ‘Āṣim recite it ‘*li taddabbarū*’ with a *tā*. Meaning, so that you - O Muḥammad - and your followers may reflect upon its verses.²⁰

أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ أَمْ عَلَى قُلُوبٍ أَقْفَالُهَا

“Do they not then reflect on the Quran? Or are there locks upon their hearts?”²¹

The explanation regarding His ﷺ statement “Do they not then reflect on the Quran? Or are there locks upon their hearts?”

He - may His mention be elevated - says: Don’t these hypocrites reflect upon the lessons and warnings that Allah warns them within the verse of the Quran that He revealed upon His prophet ﷺ? And don’t they reflect upon His proofs that He had clearly explained to them in His revelation so that they can recognize the error that they are upon? “Or are there locks upon their hearts?” He says: Or has Allah placed a lock upon their hearts and so they don’t understand what Allah has revealed in His book in terms of warnings and lessons? The scholars of interpretation have said something similar regarding this.

...From Qatādah, His statement “Do they not then reflect on the Quran? Or are there locks upon their hearts?” If the people reflected upon it and understood it, by

¹⁹ Quran 38:29

²⁰ Ṭabarī, *Jāmi‘ al-Bayān ‘an Ta’wīl Āy al-Quran*, 12:186

²¹ Quran 47:24

Allah, they would find a barrier that would prevent them from disobeying Allah. However, they busied themselves with the ambiguous and were destroyed.

...From Khālid ibn Ma'dān who said, “Every human has four eyes: two in his head for this world and what will allow him to improve his life, and two in his heart for his dīn and what Allah has promised from the unseen. When Allah wills good for a person, He allows the eyes of his heart to see. And when Allah wills other than that, He takes their vision away. As Allah says, ‘Or are there locks upon their hearts?’”

2.3.2 al-Baghawī

أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ ۚ وَلَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ غَيْرِ اللَّهِ لَوَجَدُوا فِيهِ اخْتِلَافًا كَثِيرًا

“Do they not then reflect on the Quran? Had it been from anyone other than Allah, they would have certainly found in it many inconsistencies.”²²

Meaning, don't they reflect upon the Quran? *al-Tadabbur* is to consider the end of a matter, and the last part of every matter is its ending. “Had it been from anyone other than Allah, they would have certainly found in it many inconsistencies.” Meaning, several differences and contradictions, this was said by ibn 'Abbās. It is said, “They would have found in it - meaning in its relating the unseen regarding what has happened and what will happen - several contradictions. Don't they reflect upon this and recognize through the absence of any contradictions and inconsistencies and the truth of what He informs that this is the speech of Allah . ﷻ Because what comes from other than Allah ﷻ will have contradictions and inconsistencies.”²³

أَفَلَمْ يَدَّبَّرُوا الْقَوْلَ أَمْ جَاءَهُمْ مَا لَمْ يَأْتِ آبَاءَهُمُ الْأَوَّلِينَ

“Is it because they have never contemplated the Word [of Allah]? Or [because] there has come to them something that did not come to their forefathers?”²⁴

²² Quran 4:82

²³ Baghawī, *Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl*, 1:566

²⁴ Quran 23:68

“Is it because they have never contemplated” meaning, reflected [upon], “the Word [of Allah]” meaning, what has come to them from the speech [of Allah] and that is the Quran. [If they did] they would recognize what it contains in terms of evidence and proof of the Prophet’s truthfulness. “Or [because] there has come to them something that did not come to their forefathers” so they denied [it]. He means that We sent Messengers to their respective communities before them, just as We have sent Muḥammad ﷺ to them.²⁵

كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ مُبَارَكٌ لِيَدَّبَّرُوا آيَاتِهِ وَلِيَتَذَكَّرَ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

“[This is] a blessed Book which We have revealed to you [O Prophet] so that they may contemplate its verses, and people of reason may be mindful.”²⁶

“[This is] a Book which We have revealed to you [O Prophet]” meaning, We revealed this Book to you. “Blessed” meaning its good and benefit is plentiful. “So that they may contemplate” meaning, deeply reflect [upon] “its verses” and ponder upon them... al-Ḥasan said, “Deep reflection upon its verses is to closely follow them.” “May be mindful” take admonition. “People of reason”.²⁷

أَفَلَا يَتَذَكَّرُونَ الْفُرْعَانَ أَمْ عَلَى قُلُوبٍ أَقْفَالُهَا

“Do they not then reflect on the Quran? Or are there locks upon their hearts?”²⁸

“Do they not then reflect on the Quran? Or are there locks upon their hearts” and as a result they don’t understand the lessons and rulings of the Quran. “Am” means “bal”.

...Hishām ibn ‘Urwah narrated to us from his father who said, “The Messenger of Allah ﷺ recited “Do they not then reflect on the Quran? Or are there locks upon their hearts?’ A youth from the people of Yemen said, ‘There are locks upon our hearts until Allah is the one who will open them and remove them.’ ‘Umar held this youth in high esteem and employed him when he assumed the *khilāfah*.²⁹

²⁵ Baghawī, *Ma‘ālim al-Tanzīl*, 3:252

²⁶ Quran 38:29

²⁷ Baghawī, *Ma‘ālim al-Tanzīl*, 3:702

²⁸ Quran 47:24

²⁹ Baghawī, *Ma‘ālim al-Tanzīl*, 4:160

2.3.3 al-Qurṭubī

أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ ۚ وَلَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ غَيْرِ اللَّهِ لَوَجَدُوا فِيهِ اخْتِلَافًا كَثِيرًا

“Do they not then reflect on the Quran? Had it been from anyone other than Allah, they would have certainly found in it many inconsistencies.”³⁰

Allah criticizes the Hypocrites for refusing to reflect deeply upon the Quran and think about it and its meanings. I deeply reflected upon something means that I thought deeply about its consequences. “Don’t avoid each other” is [mentioned] in a *ḥadīth*, which literally means don’t turn your backs to each other. The nation went away conveys the meaning that their affair has come to an end. Planning means that a person organizes their affairs as if they are considering its possible outcomes. This verse and Allah’s statement “Do they not then reflect on the Quran? Or are there locks upon their hearts?” prove that deeply reflecting upon the Quran to understand its meanings is mandatory.³¹

أَفَلَمْ يَدَّبَّرُوا الْقَوْلَ أَمْ جَاءَهُمْ مِمَّا يَأْتِ آبَاءَهُمُ الْأَوَّلِينَ

“Is it because they have never contemplated the Word [of Allah]? Or [because] there has come to them something that did not come to their forefathers?”³²

His statement “Is it because they have never contemplated the Word” meaning, the Quran. This is similar to His statement, “Do they not then reflect on the Quran?” The Quran has been called “the Word” because they are being addressed with it.

“Or [because] there has come to them something that did not come to their forefathers” and as a result they reject it and turn away from it. It is said that “amm” means “bal”, meaning, something that didn’t come to their forefathers has definitely come to them and that is why they rejected it and didn’t deeply reflect upon it. This is the opinion of ibn ‘Abbās.³³

³⁰ Quran 4:82

³¹ Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi‘ lī Ahkām al-Quran*, 6:476-477

³² Quran 23:68

³³ Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi‘ lī Ahkām al-Quran*, 15:70

كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ مُبَارَكٌ لِيَدَّبَّرُوا آيَاتِهِ وَلِيَتَذَكَّرَ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

“[This is] a blessed Book which We have revealed to you [O Prophet] so that they may contemplate its verses, and people of reason may be mindful.”³⁴

His statement “[This is] a blessed Book] meaning We have revealed this blessed Book to you O Muḥammad “so that they may contemplate.” This is proof that it is mandatory to understand the meanings of the Quran. It is also proof that reciting the Quran in a deliberate measured pace is better than reciting it quickly. It is not possible to deeply reflect [upon verses] while reciting quickly as we have explained in al-Tadhkār. al-Ḥasan said, “Reflecting upon the verses of Allah means to follow them.”³⁵

أَفَلَا يَتَذَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ أَمْ عَلَى قُلُوبٍ أَقْفَالُهَا

“Do they not then reflect on the Quran? Or are there locks upon their hearts?”³⁶

His statement “Do then not then reflect on the Quran” meaning, try to understand it so that they will know what Allah has prepared for those that don’t turn away from Islam. “Or are there locks upon their hearts?” Meaning, rather there are locks upon [their] hearts that Allah has placed and that is why they don’t understand. This is a refutation of the positions of the *Qadariyyah* and the *Imāmiyyah*. It is mentioned in a *ḥadīth* that the Prophet ﷺ said, “Surely there are locks upon them similar to iron locks until Allah opens them.”... Locks in this context is a reference to the heart being devoid of faith; meaning, faith won’t enter their hearts and disbelief won’t leave them because Allah has placed a seal over them.³⁷

2.3.4 ibn Kathīr

أَفَلَا يَتَذَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ ۚ وَلَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ غَيْرِ اللَّهِ لَوَجَدُوا فِيهِ اخْتِلَافًا كَثِيرًا

³⁴ Quran 38:29

³⁵ Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi‘ lī Ahkām al-Quran*, 18:189

³⁶ Quran 47:24

³⁷ Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi‘ lī Ahkām al-Quran*, 19:275

“Do they not then reflect on the Quran? Had it been from anyone other than Allah, they would have certainly found in it many inconsistencies.”³⁸

Allah says, “Do they not then reflect on the Quran?” Allah instructs His servants to reflect upon the Quran and forbids them from ignoring it and ignoring its wise meanings and eloquent words. Allah informs them that there are no inconsistencies, contradictions, conflicting statements, or discrepancies in the Quran because it is a revelation from the All-Wise, Worthy of all praise. Therefore, the Quran is the truth coming from the Truth. This is why Allah said, “Do they not then reflect on the Quran? Or are there locks upon their hearts?”

Allah then said, “Had it been from anyone other than Allah,” meaning, had it been fraudulent and made up, as the ignorant idolaters and hypocrites assert in their hearts “they would have certainly found in it many inconsistencies.” Meaning, many discrepancies and inconsistencies. However, this Quran is free of shortcomings, and therefore, it is from Allah. Just as Allah describes those who are firmly grounded in knowledge as saying, “We believe in it, all of it is from our Lord.” Meaning, the *muhkam* (clear verses) and the *mutashābih* (ambiguous verses) are all true. They refer to the ambiguous to the clear and are thus guided. As for those whose heart is the disease of hypocrisy, they refer the clear verses to the ambiguous; thus, only gaining misguidance. That is why Allah praised those who have knowledge and criticized the wicked.

...From ‘Amr ibn Shu‘ayb, from his father, from his grandfather who said, “My brother and I were present in a gathering, which is more precious to me than red camels. My brother and I came and found that some of the leaders of the Companions of the Messenger of Allah were sitting close to a door of his. We did not like the idea of being separated from them, so we sat near the room. They then mentioned a verse and began disputing until they raised their voices. The Messenger of Allah was so angry that when he went out his face was red. He threw sand on them and said to them, ‘Behold, O people! This is how the nations before you were destroyed, because of their dispute with their Prophets and their contradicting parts of the Books with other parts. The Quran does not contradict itself. Rather, it testifies to the truth of itself. Therefore, whatever of

³⁸ Quran 4:82

it you have knowledge in, then implement it, and whatever you do not know of it, then refer it to those who have knowledge in it.”

...From ‘Amr ibn Shu‘ayb, from his father, from his grandfather who said, “The Messenger of Allah ﷺ came out to his Companions when they were disputing about the Divine Decree, and it was as if pomegranate seeds had burst on his face (i.e. turned red) because of anger. He said, ‘Have you been commanded to do this, or were you created for this purpose? You are using one part of the Quran against another part, and this is what led to the destruction of nations who came before you.’” ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Amr said, “I was never happy to have missed a gathering with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ as I was to have missed that gathering.”³⁹

أَفَلَمْ يَدَّبَّرُوا الْقَوْلَ أَمْ جَاءَهُمْ مَا لَمْ يَأْتِ آبَاءَهُمُ الْأَوَّلِينَ

“Is it because they have never contemplated the Word [of Allah]? Or [because] there has come to them something that did not come to their forefathers?”⁴⁰

Allah denounces the idolaters for not understanding the Quran or contemplating its meaning, and for turning away from it, even though they had been addressed specifically in this Book which Allah did not reveal to any Messenger more perfect and noble, and especially since no Book or warner had come to their forefathers who had died during the times of ignorance. What these people, upon whom the blessing had been bestowed, should have done, was to accept it and give thanks for it, and try to understand it and act in accordance with it night and day, as was done by the wise ones among them who became Muslim and followed the Messenger, may Allah be pleased with them.

Qatādah said, “Is it because they have never contemplated the Word [of Allah]? Because, by Allah, if the people had pondered the meaning and understood it properly, they would have found in the Quran a deterrent to disobeying Allah. But they only paid attention to the verses which are not entirely clear, and so they were destroyed because of that.”⁴¹

³⁹ ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Quran al-‘Azīm*, 4:172-173

⁴⁰ Quran 23:68

⁴¹ ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Quran al-‘Azīm*, 10:133-134

كَتَبَ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ مُبْرَكًا لِيَتَذَكَّرُوا آيَاتِهِ وَلِيَتَذَكَّرَ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

“[This is] a blessed Book which We have revealed to you [O Prophet] so that they may contemplate its verses, and people of reason may be mindful.”⁴²

Allah said, “[This is] a blessed Book which We have revealed to you [O Prophet] so that they may contemplate its verses, and people of reason may be mindful.” Meaning, the people of wisdom and reason. al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī said, “By Allah, reflecting upon the Quran is not achieved through preserving its letters and ignoring its limits. A person may say, ‘I recited the entire Quran,’ but the Quran is not seen in his character or actions.” Narrated by ibn abī Ḥātim.⁴³

أَفَلَا يَتَذَكَّرُونَ الْفُرْعَانَ أَمْ عَلَى قُلُوبٍ أَقْفَالُهَا

“Do they not then reflect on the Quran? Or are there locks upon their hearts?”⁴⁴

Commanding the people to reflect and ponder upon the Quran, and prohibiting them from turning away from it, Allah says, “Do they not then reflect on the Quran? Or are there locks upon their hearts?” Meaning, there indeed are locks upon some hearts, firmly closing them so that none of its meanings can reach them.

...Hishām ibn ‘Urwah narrated to us, from his father who said, “One day Allah's Messenger recited ‘Do they not then reflect on the Quran? Or are there locks upon their hearts?’ A young man from Yemen said, ‘Indeed, there are locks upon them -- until Allah opens them totally or slightly.’ After that ‘Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, always liked that young man, and kept that to himself until he became in charge, upon which he utilized him (as a consultant).”⁴⁵

⁴² 38:29

⁴³ ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Quran al-‘Azīm*, 12:87

⁴⁴ 47:24

⁴⁵ ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Quran al-‘Azīm*, 13:78

2.3.5 al-Ālūsī

أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ ۚ وَلَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ غَيْرِ اللَّهِ لَوَجَدُوا فِيهِ اخْتِلَافًا كَثِيرًا

“Do they not then reflect on the Quran? Had it been from anyone other than Allah, they would have certainly found in it many inconsistencies.”⁴⁶

“Do they not reflect on the Quran?” is perhaps the response to a question that arises from Allah making Himself a witness. It is as if it was said, “There’s no doubt regarding the testimony of Allah, but how is it known that what you mentioned is the testimony of Allah coming from him. Allah answers with His statement, “Do they not then reflect?” The original meaning of *al-tadabbur* is to think about the endings of matters and their outcomes. Then it was used for every type of reflection regarding the essence and reality of something, its particulars, and everything associated with it. The “*fā*” is for conjunction upon an inferred meaning, which is, do they doubt that what has been mentioned is the testimony of Allah and that is why they don’t reflect upon the Quran that this Prophet has brought. [If they reflect upon it] they will recognize that it is from Allah. If they do so it will be a very powerful proof.⁴⁷

أَفَلَمْ يَدَّبَّرُوا الْقَوْلَ أَمْ جَاءَهُمْ مِمَّا يَأْتِ آبَاءَهُمُ الْأَوَّلِينَ

“Is it because they have never contemplated the Word [of Allah]? Or [because] there has come to them something that did not come to their forefathers?”⁴⁸

They did what they did in terms of ignoring [the Quran], behaving arrogantly [towards it], and abandoning it. As a result, they did not reflect upon the Quran and recognize its miraculous nature. [They were unable to] recognize that it’s the truth from the Lord and believe in it... It is said that the meaning is: Do they not reflect upon the Quran, so that when they do reflect upon its verses and stories, they will fear a punishment similar to the one that befell those before them who rejected the truth? Or has some [promise] of safety come to them that did not come to their forefathers?⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Quran 4:82

⁴⁷ Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-Ma‘ānī*, 6:163

⁴⁸ Quran 23:68

⁴⁹ Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-Ma‘ānī*, 18:113-114

كَتَبْنَا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ مُبَارَكٌ لِيَدَّبَّرُوا آيَاتِهِ وَلِيَتَذَكَّرَ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

“[This is] a blessed Book which We have revealed to you [O Prophet] so that they may contemplate its verses, and people of reason may be mindful.”⁵⁰

“So that they may contemplate its verses” Meaning, We have revealed it [the Quran] so that they can deeply reflect upon its verses. Among them [its verses] is this one that expresses the secrets of creation and legislation. [Through reflection] they will recognize the lofty and correct meanings conveyed... This is being addressed to the Prophet ﷺ and the scholars of his nation.⁵¹

أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ أَمْ عَلَى قُلُوبٍ أَقْفَالُهَا

“Do they not then reflect on the Quran? Or are there locks upon their hearts?”⁵²

“Do they not then reflect on the Quran?” Meaning, they don’t pay attention to it and they don’t study it and what it contains in terms of lessons and warnings. [If they did so] they would not have fallen into destruction. “Or are there locks upon their hearts?” This is an example of the Quran not reaching their hearts and the matter not revealing itself to it.⁵³

2.3.6 ibn ‘Āshūr

أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ ۚ وَلَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ غَيْرِ اللَّهِ لَوَجَدُوا فِيهِ اخْتِلَافًا كَثِيرًا

“Do they not then reflect on the Quran? Had it been from anyone other than Allah, they would have certainly found in it many inconsistencies.”⁵⁴

Allah challenges them [the hypocrites] with the meanings of the Quran just as He challenged them with its words because of its eloquence and beauty. The Hypocrites doubted that the Quran was from Allah. That is way they outwardly displayed obedience

⁵⁰ Quran 38:29

⁵¹ Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-Ma‘ānī*, 23:267

⁵² Quran 47:24

⁵³ Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-Ma‘ānī*, 25:202

⁵⁴ 4:82

to what he [the Prophet ﷺ] commanded them with, but when they would leave the Prophet's gathering, they would oppose what he commanded them because of their lack of trust. They would create doubts and doubts when some sort of supposed contradiction became apparent to them. Allah commands them to properly reflect upon the Quran...

al-Tadabbur is derived from *al-dubur*, meaning the back. They derived a verb from *al-dubur* and said: *tadabbara* when someone considers the end of a matter of its outcome. It is from those verbs that are derived from non-derived nouns. *al-Tadabbur* is transitive in itself to the object that is being reflected upon. It is said: he reflected upon the matter.

The meaning of “reflecting upon the Quran” is they think about its meaning. That conveys two possible meanings: One of them is that they think about the detailed meanings of the verses based on their objectives that He guided the Muslims to. Meaning, reflection upon its details. The second meaning is to reflect upon the general meanings of the Quran through its eloquence and recognize that it is from Allah and that what he [the Prophet ﷺ] has brought is true. The context of this verse lends weight to interpreting it according to the first meaning. Meaning, if they contemplated the Quran and reflected upon its guidance, they would have achieved great good. They would not have remained upon their hypocrisy.⁵⁵

أَفَلَمْ يَدَّبَّرُوا الْقَوْلَ أَمْ جَاءَهُمْ مِمَّا لَمْ يَأْتِ آبَاءَهُمُ الْأَوَّلِينَ

“Is it because they have never contemplated the Word [of Allah]? Or [because] there has come to them something that did not come to their forefathers?”⁵⁶

...The first question regarding the absence of their reflection upon what is being recited to them from the Quran, and that is what is meant by “the Word”. Allah said, “Do they not then reflect upon the Quran?” *al-Tadabbur* is using the intellect to understand the indications and meanings of signs and proofs. It is derived from contemplating the outcome of an affair. Particularly, that which is not initially apparent at first thought...

⁵⁵ ibn ‘Āshūr, *al-Tahrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 4:199-200

⁵⁶ Quran 23:68

The meaning is that if they had deeply reflected upon the Quran they would have certainly known that it is the truth through its eloquence and truthful objectives. Their continued stubbornness is only because they didn't reflect upon it.⁵⁷

كَتَبْنَا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ مُبَارَكٌ لِيَدَّبَّرُوا آيَاتِهِ وَلِيَتَذَكَّرَ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

“[This is] a blessed Book which We have revealed to you [O Prophet] so that they may contemplate its verses, and people of reason may be mindful.”⁵⁸

...*al-Tadabbur* is deep contemplation and reflection through which a person recognizes the intended meanings. This happens in speech that is composed of a few words but conveys several layers of meaning that have been placed in it. Every time a person reflects upon it, new meanings are uncovered that weren't initially apparent.

[*al-Tadabbur*] means to closely follow the apparent meanings of words to know what they lead towards in terms of hidden meanings and appropriate explanations.⁵⁹

أَفَلَا يَتَذَكَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ أَمْ عَلَى قُلُوبٍ أَقْفَالُهَا

“Do they not then reflect on the Quran? Or are there locks upon their hearts?”⁶⁰

... *al-Tadabbur* is to understand the ending and outcoming of a matter. Meaning, what is inapparent from it and it is derived from the back of something.⁶¹

2.3.7 al-‘Uthmānī

أَفَلَا يَتَذَكَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ ۚ وَلَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ غَيْرِ اللَّهِ لَوَجَدُوا فِيهِ اخْتِلَافًا
كَثِيرًا...

⁵⁷ ibn ‘Āshūr, *al-Tahrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 18:71

⁵⁸ Quran 38:29

⁵⁹ ibn ‘Āshūr, *al-Tahrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 23:148-149

⁶⁰ Quran 47:24

⁶¹ ibn ‘Āshūr, *al-Tahrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 26:96

“Do they not then reflect on the Quran? Had it been from anyone other than Allah, they would have certainly found in it many inconsistencies.”⁶²

Verse 82 begins with “Do they not then reflect on the Quran?” Through this verse, Allah Almighty invites people to deliberate upon the Quran. Noteworthy here are a few points. First of all, the words used are: أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ (Do they not then reflect) and not أَفَلَا يَقْرَأُونَ (Do they not then recite). Obviously, there is a delicate hint being given through this verse which suggests that if they were to look at the Quran deeply, they would find no discrepancy in its words and meanings. This sense can come only through the use of the word تَدَبَّرُ [*tadabbur*] which means to ponder or deliberate. A plain recitation which is devoid of deliberation and deep thinking may lead one to start seeing contradictions which really do not exist there.

The second point which emerges from this verse is that the Quran itself demands that every human being should ponder over its meanings. Therefore, to suppose that pondering in the Quran is the exclusive domain of its highest and the ablest exponents (the *Imams* and *Mujtahids*) is not correct. However, it is also true that the levels of deliberation will be different in terms of the different levels of knowledge and understanding. The deliberation of the great exponents will deduce the solution of thousands of problems from every single verse, while the deliberation of a common scholar will reach only as far as the very comprehension of such problems and their solutions. When common people recite the Quran and deliberate in its meanings through the medium of its translation and explanation in their own language, this will impress upon their hearts the greatness of Allah Almighty, develop love for Him and implant there a concern for the life to come, the *Akhirah*. This is the master key to success. However, in order that common people stay safe from falling into doubts and misunderstandings, it is better that they should study the Quran, lesson by lesson, under the guidance of an *‘ālim*. If this cannot be done, take to the study of some authentic and reliable *tafsir* (commentary, exegesis). Should some doubt arise during the course of such study, the wiser course is not to go for a solution on the basis of personal opinion, instead of which, one should consult expert scholars.

⁶² Quran 4:82

No group or individual holds monopoly on the exegesis and explication of Qur'an and Sunnah, but there are conditions for it: The verse under reference tells us that everyone has the right to ponder in the Quran. But, as we have said earlier, the levels of تَدَبَّرَ [tadabbur] (deliberation) are different. Each one is governed by a separate rule. Let us take the serious deliberation of a great exponent, the 'tadabbur' of a master *mujtahid*. Through this methodology, solutions to problems are deduced from the Holy Quran at the highest level. For this purpose, it is necessary that one who is pondering in the Quran, should first acquaint himself with the basic rules employed in such deduction in order that the results he achieves are correct and sound. In case, he fails to arm himself with the basic postulates to begin with, or in case, his education and training in this discipline remain faulty; and in case, he does not ultimately possess the qualifications and conditions that must be found in a *mujtahid* exponent, then, it is obvious that he would come up with the wrong set of results. Now, this is a situation in which better-equipped scholars may challenge and contradict them, something they would be doing rightfully.⁶³

أَفَلَمْ يَدَّبَّرُوا الْقَوْلَ أَمْ جَاءَهُمْ مِمَّا لَمْ يَأْتِ آبَاءَهُمُ الْأَوَّلِينَ

“Is it because they have never contemplated the Word [of Allah]? Or [because] there has come to them something that did not come to their forefathers?”⁶⁴

The verses 68, 69 and 70 mention five reasons which might possibly have prevented the unbelievers from accepting the faith brought by the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and also give a rebuttal of each of these causes. Thus, on the one hand all the arguments advanced by the infidels for not accepting the true faith have been demolished, and on the other hand there are compelling grounds and irrefutable evidence which should convince any right-minded person of his error and persuade him to accept the message brought by the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Their persistence in their unbelief is, therefore, the result of their unreasoning hatred towards and blind prejudice against the Holy Prophet ﷺ to which a reference has been made in the latter part of the verse (Instead, the fact is that he has come to them with truth, but it is the truth that most of them dislike - 23:70). In other words, there being no valid and rational ground for repudiating the mission of

⁶³ 'Uthmānī, *Ma 'āriful Quran*, 2:514-516

⁶⁴ Quran 23:68

the Holy Prophet ﷺ their opposition may be explained by their dislike of truth and their unwillingness to pay heed to its message. This, no doubt, is due to their love for undisputed power and their reluctance to share it with anyone else.⁶⁵

كَتَبْنَا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ مُبَارَكٌ لِيَدَّبَّرُوا آيَاتِهِ وَلِيَتَذَكَّرَ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

“[This is] a blessed Book which We have revealed to you [O Prophet] so that they may contemplate its verses, and people of reason may be mindful.”⁶⁶

Surprisingly, Mufti Shafi‘ (r) does not comment on this verse.

أَفَلَا يَتَذَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ أَمْ عَلَى قُلُوبٍ أَقْفَالُهَا

“Do they not then reflect on the Quran? Or are there locks upon their hearts?”⁶⁷

أَفَلَا يَتَذَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ أَمْ عَلَى قُلُوبٍ أَقْفَالُهَا (or do they have locks on their hearts? - 47:24) The meaning of this phrase is synonymous with similar phrases in other verses of the Qur'an where words like *khatm* or *tab'* |"[Allah] has set a seal [on their hearts] have been used to describe how the disbelievers refuse to employ their hearts for the comprehension of truth, as a natural consequence their capacities to distinguish right from wrong have become atrophied. Carelessly, committing sins all the time is the main cause of this. Allah forbids!

2.3.8 Syed Qutb

أَفَلَا يَتَذَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ ۚ وَلَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ غَيْرِ اللَّهِ لَوَجَدُوا فِيهِ اخْتِلَافًا كَثِيرًا

“Do they not then reflect on the Quran? Had it been from anyone other than Allah, they would have certainly found in it many inconsistencies.”⁶⁸

At this point, the Quran offers them a proposition that indicates Allah’s highest possible regard for man, his intelligence and insight, bestowed upon him by Allah

⁶⁵ ‘Uthmānī, *Ma‘āriful Quran*, 6:325-326

⁶⁶ Quran 38:29

⁶⁷ Quran 47:24

⁶⁸ Quran 4:82

Himself. It invites them to judge the Quran by their own intelligence and intellectual appreciation. It points out the proper approach to adopt and identifies the key aspect by which they can judge the Quran. When they do this, they will have ample, irrefutable evidence that the Quran originates with Allah Almighty: “Will they not, then, try to understand the Quran? Had it issued from any but Allah, they would surely have found in it many an inner contradiction!” (Verse 82)

This invitation to reflect on the Quran and consider it carefully is particularly significant. Full and absolute harmony and integrity is an unmistakable feature of the Quran. It is a feature that allows different people and generations to benefit by the Quran according to, and within, their respective aptitudes, education, experience and piety.

This verse addresses all people and all generations, every one of whom is capable of appreciating as much of the harmony and congruity of the Quran as their ability, education, experience and piety allow. The first generation of Muslims were being addressed with ideas they understood and were able to verify within their own existing intellectual environment.

The harmony and consistency of the Quran are clear methods of expression and literary style. In human expression and language, one comes across various levels of excellence, power, lucidity and brilliance, as well as constant fluctuation in mood. This is clearly apparent when we examine the works of any literary personality, thinker, artist, politician or military commander, etc. Variation and inconsistency are inherent features of human expression and behavior.

The opposite is true of the Quranic literary style. It is harmonious and consistent. The surpassing excellence of the language of the Quran maintains the same scope and level of perfection throughout without any of the fluctuations or alterations known in human language. The Quran carries the stamp of its origin, reflects the fact that it comes from Allah and points to the Creator who is not affected by changes and conditions.

Perfect consistency and harmony are also manifested in the message of the Quran and the system it outlines. It is a message of education and enlightenment for human souls and societies. It is a system of organization and discipline for individual and collective human activity in all walks of life throughout history. It is a message for the guidance of human understanding itself and for the harnessing of all human faculties

for the enhancement of that understanding. It is a system for coordinating and harmonizing human beings of all societies, generations and phases and the world in which they exist, between man's life here and in the hereafter. It also regulates the countless ramifications and consequences of that relationship in the life of every individual and the life of mankind as a whole.

The difference between Divine and human proficiency is evident enough with respect to linguistic and artistic expression; it is even more evident in relation to thought, regulation and law-making. Human theories and doctrines remain typically human, influenced by partial vision and transient conditions as well as a lack of understanding of the inherent contradictions that may exist. This is bound to lead, sooner or later, to conflict within the various elements of any theory or doctrine. It could also cause damage to certain aspects of the human personality which had been ignored. Numerous deficiencies and paradoxes emerge as a result of limited human understanding and ignorance of what the future holds, in addition to man's inadequate comprehension of the present. The Quranic approach is totally different, being comprehensive and perfect, with firm, solid and universal foundations and criteria that allow perpetual motion and progress.

Examination of these aspects may not be available to everyone or to every generation, and it is certain that people will appreciate them at varying levels of understanding, each generation making its contribution in one or more fields of knowledge or experience. However, beyond all these human differences, a universally agreed repertoire of understanding and knowledge accumulates. The essence of such knowledge accumulation is that the language of the Quran is not the product of any human being. Human literary excellence is one thing, and the Quran is a totally different thing. It is a perfectly made piece of consistent, coherent and homogeneous composition, even though people may differ greatly in their understanding of the extent of such harmony.

In these verses Allah refers that sceptic group, and everyone else besides, to the results of their own reflection. Indeed, He invites all people in all generations to judge the Quran, on the basis of their common understanding. This is sufficient to reaffirm the fact that the Quran can only be from Allah. It could not have originated from anyone else.

It may be useful at this point to reflect very briefly on the role of human comprehension with respect to this particular point, and with respect to religion as a whole. The honor Allah has granted to human beings in this context ought not to tempt man to become arrogant or exceed safe boundaries. If he does, then he will go too far astray.

These Quranic exhortations, and their scope, are so often misunderstood. Some Muslim intellectuals, past and present, go so far as to grant the human mind the privilege of the final word in the interpretation of religious rules and principles, elevating man's judgement to that of Allah Almighty, or giving man an overriding authority over Allah's legislation.

The truth is rather different. The human intellect is a great faculty, so highly respected by Allah Almighty that He made it the means by which man recognizes Islam as being an Allah-given religion. Certain phenomena are easy to comprehend, and they are, by themselves, sufficient evidence that Islam originates with Allah Almighty. Once man understands this profound truth, the same rationale leads him to accept Islam in its totality, regardless of whether or not he is able to identify or recognize the hidden purpose of its individual rules. Since it originates from Allah, it has a definite purpose. Furthermore, the human mind does not stand rival to Allah. It is certainly not qualified to judge Allah's wisdom, because its capacity for comprehension remains limited. It cannot look at any question from all angles, neither for a single moment nor for the rest of time.

On the other hand, Allah's legislation proceeds from an all-encompassing view and no judgement on it, or on any of its established rulings, should be entrusted to the human intellect. The most that the human mind can aspire to achieve is to comprehend the Divine message and how it applies to different situations. It cannot determine its purpose and the wisdom behind it. That a Divine rule serves the interests of the community is an undoubted fact, because it emanates from Allah. It is when no revealed text is available, with respect to new issues, that the human mind may exercise judgement. We have already pointed out that reference must initially be made to Allah and His Messenger. In addition to trying to understand the text, this is the other area for the application of human powers of deduction and reasoning, or *ijtihad*. The human intellect is not to be used to determine the purpose of Divine statements and rulings but

its greatest arena, which is a vast arena indeed, is the understanding of the laws of nature and life and the pursuit of excellence in the material world.

We must give the human intellect the credit and reverence Allah has granted it, within its sphere of excellence, and not more than that. When we exaggerate its importance, we are liable to lose direction and proceed without guidance.⁶⁹

أَفَلَمْ يَدَّبَّرُوا الْقَوْلَ أَمْ جَاءَهُمْ مَا لَمْ يَأْتِ آبَاءَهُمُ الْأَوَّلِينَ

“Is it because they have never contemplated the Word [of Allah]? Or [because] there has come to them something that did not come to their forefathers?”⁷⁰

The message Muhammad, Allah’s Messenger, preached could not be rejected by anyone who looks at it carefully, using his reason. It is a model of beauty, perfection, consistency and attraction. It fits with human nature, addresses people’s minds and hearts, outlines a course to elevate human life, and lays down a fine constitution to follow and a perfect code of justice. It also includes what answers the needs of human nature and what helps its development and advancement. “Have they, then, never tried to understand this word (of Allah)?” (Verse 68) This is, then, the secret behind their attitude.

“Or has there come to them something that never came to their forefathers of old?” (Verse 68) If so, it would have been strange for them and for their forefathers that a messenger came to call on them to believe in Allah’s oneness. But the history of divine messages proves that messengers followed one another, and all of them preached the same message advocated by Muhammad, Allah’s last Messenger.⁷¹

كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ مُبَارَكٌ لِيَدَّبَّرُوا آيَاتِهِ وَلِيَتَذَكَّرَ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

“[This is] a blessed Book which We have revealed to you [O Prophet] so that they may contemplate its verses, and people of reason may be mindful.”⁷²

Syed Qutb does not comment on this verse.

⁶⁹ Qutb, *In the Shade of the Quran*, 3:205-207

⁷⁰ Quran 23:68

⁷¹ Qutb, *In the Shade of the Quran*, 12:182-183

⁷² Quran 38:29

أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ أَمْ عَلَى قُلُوبٍ أَقْفَاهُآ

“Do they not then reflect on the Quran? Or are there locks upon their hearts?”⁷³

Having made this direct address, the sūrah then speaks about them, rather than to them, showing what happens should matters reach the point they have been warned against: “It is such as these whom Allah rejects, leaving them deaf and blind. Will they not, then, try to understand the Quran? Or are there locks on their hearts?” (verses 23-24) “It is such as these” who persist with hypocrisy until they finally discard all pretence of belief in Islam who are the ones whom Allah rejects. He leaves them deprived of guidance, “deaf and blind.” They have not lost their hearing or their eyesight, but they have put these faculties to no use. Alternatively, they have deliberately stopped themselves from understanding what they hear and see. Thus, their faculties no longer function.

A rhetorical question is then asked: “Will they not, then, try to understand the Quran?” (verse 24) When people try to understand the Quran, they see things in full clarity. They see the light. Their hearts and feelings enjoy new vigor, and their souls are full of life “Or are there locks on their hearts?” When hearts are thus locked, they are deprived of the light the Quran spreads; they are in complete darkness.⁷⁴

2.4 BRIEF ANALYSIS OF THE EXEGETES’ UNDERSTANDING OF TADABBUR

The objective of quoting the above works is to demonstrate how exegetes throughout history understood, explained, and described the concept of *tadabbur*. As can be seen from the above passages, exegetes have explained the concept of *tadabbur* through these verses in a number of different ways using various expressions and descriptions. Although the explanations may differ in wording, they all describe the same essence and reality; deep reflection upon the meanings of the Quran that leads towards some sort of end or goal. They were attempting to capture the reality of *tadabbur* in their own words. A unique observation is that the explanation of *tadabbur* expanded over time.

⁷³ Quran 47:24

⁷⁴ Qutb, *In the Shade of the Quran*, 15:422

The earlier exegetes described *tadabbur* in a simple manner focusing on the idea of reflecting upon the meanings of Allah’s speech. The later exegetes, such as ibn ‘Āshūr, al-‘Uthmānī, and Syed Quṭb, spent more time describing the reality and importance of *tadabbur*.

A common thread that ties all of their explanations together is deep reflection that leads toward an intellectual and practical end or a goal. *Tadabbur* is not meant to be merely an intellectual exercise; rather, it is something that results in influencing, driving, and shaping beliefs, practices, and behavior. al-Ṭabarī mentions reflection that leads to understanding Allah’s proofs, realizing the truth, understanding lessons, and warnings. In the context of believers, he mentions that *tadabbur* “will cause them to take heed and act upon it” and “prevent them from disobeying Allah.” According to al-Ṭabarī, *tadabbur* should lead towards an opening of the mind and a reformation of one’s character and behavior. al-Baghawī connects *tadabbur* to implementing the guidance of the Quran. He quotes al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī who said, “Deep reflection upon its verses is to closely follow them.” ibn Kathīr records another narration from al-Ḥasan that highlights a connection between *tadabbur* and character. al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī said, “By Allah, reflecting upon the Quran is not achieved through preserving its letters and ignoring its limits. A person may say, ‘I recited the entire Quran,’ but the Quran is not seen in his character or actions.” *Tadabbur* is not meant to be a passive activity. It is an active intellectual engagement with the meanings of Allah’s speech that will lead towards reformation.

Another conclusion from the above passages is that the exegetes were of the view that *tadabbur*, at some level, is mandatory upon everyone to engage in; it is not exclusive to scholars or exegetes. al-‘Uthmānī was the most explicit regarding the need for humanity, not just Muslims, to engage in *tadabbur*. He writes, “...The Quran itself demands that every human being should ponder over its meanings. Therefore, to suppose that pondering in the Quran is the exclusive domain of its highest and the ablest exponents (the *Imāms* and *Mujtahids*) is not correct.” He does acknowledge that the level of *tadabbur* will vary depending on the skills, expertise, and level of understanding of each individual. The *tadabbur* of a common Muslim or a non-believer will be very different than that of a trained jurist. *Tadabbur* should also be built upon a proper understanding of the meanings of the Quran.

Based on the linguistic definition of *tadabbur* and the explanations and descriptions of the exegetes regarding the concept of *tadabbur*, I propose the following definition: *al-Tadabbur* is to reflect on the words and meanings of the Quran and engage with them intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually - mind, body, and soul - with the intention of extracting lessons, morals, reminders, and guidance that can be practically applied to one's life.

2.5 SUMMARY AND INSIGHTS

Chapter 2 of the thesis explores the intricate concept of *tadabbur*, which refers to deep reflection and contemplation upon the Quran. The chapter begins by presenting various verses from the Quran that emphasize the importance of understanding and reflecting on its teachings. The central theme is that *tadabbur* is not merely a superficial engagement with the text but involves a profound comprehension that influences one's beliefs, actions, and behaviors. The Quran repeatedly calls on its readers to ponder over its verses, presenting this reflection as a means to unlock the spiritual and intellectual potential within individuals, enabling them to grasp the divine messages fully. The concept of *tadabbur* is contrasted with superficial reading or recitation, stressing that the former requires active and thoughtful engagement with the text.

The chapter provides a detailed analysis of how various Islamic scholars (exegetes) have interpreted the concept of *tadabbur* throughout history. Early exegetes, like al-Ṭabarī, emphasized a straightforward understanding of the term, focusing on the need to reflect on the meanings of Allah's speech. al-Ṭabarī's interpretations suggest that *tadabbur* leads to understanding Allah's proofs, realizing the truth, and heeding lessons and warnings. For believers, it is a means to take heed and act upon the divine guidance, thus preventing disobedience to Allah. Later scholars, such as ibn 'Āshūr, al-'Uthmānī, and Syed Qutb, expanded on these initial interpretations. They provided more nuanced explanations, describing *tadabbur* as a deep intellectual exercise that goes beyond mere understanding to influence and shape a person's character and behavior. For instance, al-'Uthmānī emphasized that *tadabbur* involves looking beyond the surface meanings of the Quranic text to uncover deeper insights and appropriate

explanations. This deeper reflection is seen as a way to unlock new meanings and understandings that were not initially apparent.

The chapter also discusses the role of human intellect in understanding the Quran. It acknowledges the high regard in which Allah holds human intellect, as it is through this faculty that individuals can recognize Islam as a divine religion. However, it cautions against overestimating the capacity of human intellect. While the intellect is essential for comprehending the divine message, it is limited and cannot fully grasp the ultimate wisdom behind Allah's legislation. The chapter argues that human intellect should be used to understand and apply the divine message rather than judge its purpose or wisdom. This perspective is rooted in the belief that Allah's legislation emanates from an all-encompassing view that transcends human understanding. Thus, while human reasoning and deduction (*ijtihad*) are crucial in applying the teachings of the Quran to new situations, they must be grounded in the divine guidance provided by Allah and His Messenger.

The chapter offers several new insights into the concept of *tadabbur* and its implications for contemporary Islamic thought and practice. First, it traces the evolution of the interpretation of *tadabbur*, showing how later scholars built on and expanded the ideas of their predecessors. This historical perspective highlights the dynamic nature of Islamic scholarship and the ongoing relevance of *tadabbur* in contemporary times. Second, the chapter emphasizes that *tadabbur* is not just an intellectual exercise but has practical implications for one's behavior and character. This insight underscores the transformative potential of deep reflection on the Quran, suggesting that it can lead to personal and societal reform. Third, the discussion on the role of human intellect provides a balanced view of its importance and limitations. This insight is particularly relevant in the modern context, where there is often a tension between reason and revelation. The chapter suggests that a harmonious relationship between the two can lead to a deeper understanding and application of Islamic teachings.

In conclusion, Chapter 2 provides a comprehensive examination of the concept of *tadabbur*, highlighting its significance in Islamic thought and practice. By analyzing the interpretations of various scholars and discussing the role of human intellect, the chapter offers valuable insights into how Muslims can engage deeply with the Quran to unlock its full potential.

CHAPTER THREE

HOW THE QURAN INVITES INDIVIDUALS TO REFLECT UPON THE QURAN AND ITS IMPORTANCE

3.1 PREFACE

One of the main objectives behind the Quran's revelation is for people to reflect upon its message in order to recognize, acknowledge, understand, and accept certain truths and realities about the cosmos and life. Allah ﷻ says,

كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ مُبَارَكٌ لِيَدَّبَّرُوا آيَاتِهِ وَلِيَتَذَكَّرَ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

“This is’ a blessed Book which We have revealed to you ‘O Prophet’ so that they may contemplate its verses, and people of reason may be mindful.”⁷⁵

Based on this verse, I argue that the main objective behind reading, memorizing, and studying the Quran is *tadabbur* or deep reflection. In several places throughout the Quran, Allah ﷻ invites individuals to engage in deep reflection upon the message of His divine speech using different styles, methods, language, and techniques. Sometimes the invitation to reflect and ponder is direct and sometimes it is indirect. Sometimes the invitation to reflect is explicit and sometimes it is implicit. These various styles, methods, and techniques are used to stir people's hearts and minds encouraging them to think deeply and derive advice, lessons, reminders, morals, guidance, and insight.

The Quran mentions stories of past prophets and messengers, communities, nations, parables, encourages understanding (*ta'qqul*), being mindful (*tadhakkur*), reflection (*tafakkur*), Allah-consciousness (*taqwā*), faith (*īmān*), insight (*ru'yah* and *ibṣār*), drawing lessons (*i'tibār*), observation (*nazr*), and attentive listening (*samā'*) in order to drive and enhance engagement with Allah's words through *tadabbur*. The following is a partial analysis of how many times the Quran invites towards understanding, being mindful, reflection, and Allah-consciousness that leads towards *tadabbur*. Allah ﷻ encourages the audience of the Quran to use their minds and intellect

⁷⁵ Quran 38:29

to reflect upon the meanings and message of what they are reciting and listening to. The chapter ends with a discussion on why reflecting upon the Quran is so important.

3.2 ENCOURAGEMENT TO ENGAGE IN TADABBUR

3.2.1 *al-Ta'qqul* - Understanding

The word *ta'qqul* is a verbal noun (*maṣḍar*) derived from the verb *ta'qqala/yata'qqalu*, which means to be or become reasonable, sensible, rational, intelligent, judicious, prudent, wise; to comprehend, and grasp.⁷⁶ The root letters *'ayn-qāf-lām* carry the meanings of intellect and reason. That is why the word *'aql* is translated as reason, understanding, comprehension, mind, intellect, and intelligence.

Allah ﷻ rhetorically asks, “Do you not understand” in thirteen places throughout the Quran:

١ . أَتَأْمُرُونَ النَّاسَ بِالْبِرِّ وَتَنْسَوْنَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ تَتْلُونَ الْكِتَابَ ۗ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ

Do you preach righteousness and fail to practice it yourselves, although you read the Scripture? Do you not understand? (2:44)

٢ . وَإِذَا لَقُوا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا قَالُوا ءَامَنَّا وَإِذَا خَلَا بِبَعْضِهِمْ إِلَىٰ بَعْضٍ قَالُوا أَتُحَدِّثُوهُمْ

بِمَا فَتَحَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمْ لِيُحَاجُّوكُم بِهِ عِنْدَ رَبِّكُمْ ۗ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ

When they meet the believers they say, ‘We believe.’ But in private they say ‘to each other’, ‘Will you disclose to the believers the knowledge Allah has revealed to you, so that they may use it against you before your Lord? Do you not understand?’ (2:76)

٣ . يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لِمَ تُحَاجُّونَ فِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمَا أُنزِلَتِ التَّوْرَةُ وَالْإِنْجِيلُ إِلَّا مِنْ

بَعْدِهِ ۗ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ

O People of the Book! Why do you argue about Abraham, while the Torah and the Gospel were not revealed until long after him? Do you not understand? (3:65)

⁷⁶ Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, 737

٤. وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا لَعِبٌ وَهَوًى وَلِلْآخِرَةِ خَيْرٌ لِلَّذِينَ يَتَّقُونَ ۗ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ۗ

This worldly life is no more than play and amusement, but far better is the 'eternal' Home of the Hereafter for those mindful 'of Allah'. Will you not then understand? (6:32)

٥. فَخَلَفَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ خَلْفٌ وَرثُوا الْكِتَابَ يَأْخُذُونَ عَرَضَ هَذَا الْأَدْنَىٰ وَيَقُولُونَ سَيُغْفَرُ لَنَا وَإِنْ يَأْتِهِمْ عَرَضٌ مِثْلُهُ يَأْخُذُوهُ ۗ أَلَمْ يُؤْخَذْ عَلَيْهِمْ مِيثَاقُ الْكِتَابِ أَنْ لَا يَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْحَقَّ وَدَرَسُوا مَا فِيهِ ۗ وَاللَّذَارِ الْآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ لِلَّذِينَ يَتَّقُونَ ۗ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ۗ

Then they were succeeded by other generations who inherited the Scripture. They indulged in unlawful gains, claiming, 'We will be forgiven 'after all'.' And if similar gain came their way, they would seize it. Was a covenant not taken from them in the Scripture that they would not say anything about Allah except the truth? And they were already well-versed in its teachings. But the 'eternal' Home of the Hereafter is far better for those mindful 'of Allah'. Will you not then understand? (7:169)

٦. قُلْ لَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا تَلَوْتُهُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَا أَدْرَبْتُكُمْ بِهِ ۗ فَقَدْ لَبِثْتُ فِيكُمْ عُمُرًا مِّن قَبْلِهِ ۗ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ۗ

Say, 'Had Allah willed, I would not have recited it to you, nor would He have made it known to you. I had lived my whole life among you before this 'revelation'. Do you not understand?' (10:16)

٧. يَقُومُ لَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا ۗ إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى الَّذِي فَطَرَنِي ۗ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ۗ

O my people! I do not ask you for any reward for this 'message'. My reward is only from the One Who created me. Will you not then understand? (11:51)

٨. وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ إِلَّا رِجَالًا نُوحِي إِلَيْهِمْ مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْقُرَىٰ ۗ أَفَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ۗ وَلِلَّذِينَ خَيْرٌ لِلَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا ۗ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ۗ

We only sent before you 'O Prophet' men inspired by Us from among the people of each society. Have the deniers not traveled through the land to see what was the end of those 'destroyed' before them? And surely the 'eternal' Home of the Hereafter is far better for those mindful 'of Allah'. Will you not then understand? (12:109)

۹. لَقَدْ أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكُمْ كِتَابًا فِيهِ ذِكْرُكُمْ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ

We have surely revealed to you a Book, in which there is glory for you. Will you not then understand? (21:10)

۱۰. أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ۖ أَمْ لَكُمْ وَلِيمًا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ

Shame on you and whatever you worship instead of Allah! Do you not have any sense? (21:67)

۱۱. وَهُوَ الَّذِي يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ وَلَهُ اخْتِلَافُ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ

And He is the One Who gives life and causes death, and to Him belongs the alternation of the day and night. Will you not then understand? (23:80)

۱۲. وَمَا أوتَيْتُمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَمَتَّعُ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا وَزَيَّنَّا لَهَا ۖ وَمَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَى ۖ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ

Whatever 'pleasure' you have been given is no more than 'a fleeting' enjoyment and adornment of this worldly life. But what is with Allah is far better and more lasting. Will you not then understand? (28:60)

۱۳. وَإِنَّكُمْ لَتَمُرُّونَ عَلَيْهِمْ مُصْبِحِينَ وَبِالْآيَاتِ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ

You 'Meccans' certainly pass by their ruins day and night. Will you not then understand? (37:137-138)

A rhetorical question is an inquiry that ends in a question mark but is asked for effect rather than to elicit an answer. It's often used in persuasive writing but is also common in everyday conversation. Depending on the context of the rhetorical question, its purpose may be to emphasize a point, prompt the audience to consider a topic, or lend intrigue to an argument. The answer to a rhetorical question is usually very obvious

or the opposite, meaning it can't be easily discerned.⁷⁷ In these verses, Allah ﷻ is asking the audience, “Will you not then understand?”, as a means of encouraging them to reflect upon the message and truth that is being conveyed. Although the statement is phrased as a rhetorical question, it is understood as an implicit command or instruction to use one’s mind and rational faculties to understand what is being said. Allah ﷻ is directly telling the audience to use their rational faculties to process what they are hearing.

Allah says, “So that you may understand” in eight places:

١. فَقُلْنَا أَضْرِبُوهُ بَعْضُهَا ۖ كَذَلِكَ يُخَيِّئُ اللَّهُ الْمَوْتَىٰ وَيُرِيكُمْ ءَايَاتِهِ ۗ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ ۙ

So, We instructed, “Strike the dead body with a piece of the cow.” This is how ‘easily’ Allah brings the dead to life, showing you His signs so that you may understand. (2:73)

٢. كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ ءَايَاتِهِ ۗ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ ۙ

This is how Allah makes His revelations clear to you, so perhaps you will understand. (2:242)

٣. قُلْ تَعَالَوْا أَنزَلْ مَا حَرَّمَ رَبِّيَ عَلَيْكُمْ ۖ أَلَّا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ ۚ شَيْئًا ۚ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا ۚ

وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ ۚ إِنَّهُنَّ أَمْوَالٌ مِّنْ إِمْلَاقٍ ۚ نَّحْنُ نَرْزُقُكُمْ وَإِيَّاهُمْ ۚ وَلَا تَقْرَبُوا الْفَوَاحِشَ مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَّنَ ۚ وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا النَّفْسَ الَّتِي حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ ۚ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ ۗ ذَٰلِكُمْ وَصَّلَاةٌ مِّنْ رَبِّكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ ۙ

Say, ‘O Prophet, ’ ‘Come! Let me recite to you what your Lord has forbidden to you: do not associate others with Him ‘in worship’. ‘Do not fail to’ honor your parents. Do not kill your children for fear of poverty. We provide for you and for them. Do not come near indecencies, openly or secretly. Do not take a ‘human’ life—made sacred by Allah—except with ‘legal’ right. This is what He has commanded you, so perhaps you will understand.’ (6:151)

٤. إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ قُرْءَانًا عَرَبِيًّا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ ۙ

Indeed, We have sent it down as an Arabic Quran so that you may understand. (12:2)

⁷⁷ <https://www.grammarly.com/blog/rhetorical-question/>

٥. لَيْسَ عَلَى الْأَعْمَى حَرْجٌ وَلَا عَلَى الْأَعْرَجِ حَرْجٌ وَلَا عَلَى الْمَرِيضِ حَرْجٌ وَلَا عَلَى أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَنْ تَأْكُلُوا مِنْ بُيُوتِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ آبَائِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ إِخْوَانِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ أَخَوَاتِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ أَعْمَامِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ عَمَّاتِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ أَخْوَالِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ خَالَاتِكُمْ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتُمْ مَفَاتِحَهُ أَوْ صَدِيقِكُمْ ۗ لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ تَأْكُلُوا جَمِيعًا أَوْ أَشْتَاتًا ۚ فَإِذَا دَخَلْتُمْ بُيُوتًا فَسَلِّمُوا عَلَى أَنْفُسِكُمْ تَحِيَّةً مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ مُبْرَكَةً طَيِّبَةً ۚ كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ

There is no restriction on the blind, or the disabled, or the sick. Nor on yourselves if you eat from your homes, or the homes of your fathers, or your mothers, or your brothers, or your sisters, or your paternal uncles, or your paternal aunts, or your maternal uncles, or your maternal aunts, or from the homes in your trust, or 'the homes of' your friends. There is no blame on you for eating together or separately. However, when you enter houses, greet one another with a greeting 'of peace' from Allah, blessed and good. This is how Allah makes His revelations clear to you, so perhaps you will understand. (24:61)

٦. هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ عَلَقَةٍ ثُمَّ يُخْرِجُكُمْ طِفْلًا ثُمَّ لِتَبْلُغُوا أَشُدَّكُمْ ثُمَّ لِتَكُونُوا شُيُوخًا ۚ وَمِنْكُمْ مَّنْ يَمُوتُ مِنْ قَبْلِ ۗ وَلِتَبْلُغُوا أَجَلًا مُّسَدَّدًا وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ

He is the One Who created you from dust, then from a sperm-drop, then 'developed you into' a clinging clot 'of blood', then He brings you forth as infants, so that you may reach your prime, and become old—though some of you 'may' die sooner—reaching an appointed time, so perhaps you may understand 'Allah's power'. (40:67)

٧. إِنَّا جَعَلْنَاهُ قُرْءَانًا عَرَبِيًّا لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ

Certainly, We have made it a Quran in Arabic so perhaps you will understand. (43:3)

٨. أَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يُحْيِي الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا ۚ قَدْ بَيَّنَّا لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ

Know that Allah revives the earth after its death. We have certainly made the signs clear for you so perhaps you will understand. (57:17)

In these verses, Allah ﷻ is explicitly mentioning the underlying reason for mentioning certain truths, realities, instructions, and guidance “So that you may

understand.” This is an indirect method of encouraging the audience to use their mind and rational faculty to deeply reflect and ponder on what is being said.

Allah ﷻ says, “... for people who understand” in eight places.

١. إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَالْفُلْكِ الَّتِي تَجْرِي فِي الْبَحْرِ بِمَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مِنْ مَّاءٍ فَأَحْيَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا وَبَثَّ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ دَابَّةٍ وَتَصْرِيفِ الرِّيْحِ وَالسَّحَابِ الْمُسَخَّرِ بَيْنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ

Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth; the alternation of the day and the night; the ships that sail the sea for the benefit of humanity; the rain sent down by Allah from the skies, reviving the earth after its death; the scattering of all kinds of creatures throughout; the shifting of the winds; and the clouds drifting between the heavens and the earth—‘in all of this’ are surely signs for people of understanding. (2:164)

٢. وَفِي الْأَرْضِ قِطْعٌ مُتَّجِرَاتٌ وَجَنَّاتٌ مِنْ أَعْنَابٍ وَزَرْعٌ وَنَخِيلٌ صِنْوَانٌ وَعَدْوٌ صِنْوَانٌ يُسْقَى بِمَاءٍ وَاحِدٍ وَنُفِضِلُ بَعْضَهَا عَلَى بَعْضٍ فِي الْأَكْلِ ۗ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ

And on the earth there are ‘different’ neighboring tracts, gardens of grapevines, ‘various’ crops, palm trees—some stemming from the same root, others standing alone. They are all irrigated with the same water, yet We make some taste better than others. Surely in this are signs for those who understand. (13:4)

٣. وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمْ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ ۗ وَالنُّجُومَ مُسَخَّرَاتٌ بِأَمْرِهِ ۗ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ

And He has subjected for your benefit the day and the night, the sun and the moon. And the stars have been subjected by His command. Surely in this are signs for those who understand. (16:12)

٤. وَمِن ثَمَرَاتِ النَّخِيلِ وَالْأَعْنَابِ تَتَّخِذُونَ مِنْهُ سَكَرًا وَرِزْقًا حَسَنًا ۗ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ

And from the fruits of palm trees and grapevines you derive intoxicants¹ as well as wholesome provision. Surely in this is a sign for those who understand. (16:67)

٥. وَلَقَدْ تَرَكْنَا مِنْهَا آيَةً بَيِّنَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ

And We did leave some of its ruins as a clear lesson for people of understanding. (29:35)

٦. وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ ۚ يُرِيكُمُ الْبَرْقَ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا وَيُنزِلُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَيُحْيِي بِهِ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا ۗ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ

And one of His signs is that He shows you lightning, inspiring 'you with' hope and fear. And He sends down rain from the sky, reviving the earth after its death. Surely in this are signs for people who understand. (30:24)

٧. ضَرَبَ لَكُم مَّثَلًا مِّنْ أَنفُسِكُمْ ۗ هَلْ لَّكُم مِّن مَّا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ مِّن شُرَكَاءَ فِي مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ فَأَنتُمْ فِيهِ سَوَاءٌ تَخَافُوهُمْ كَخِيفَتِكُمْ أَنفُسَكُمْ ۗ كَذَلِكَ نُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ

He sets forth for you an example 'drawn' from your own lives: would you allow some of those 'bondspeople' in your possession to be your equal partners in whatever 'wealth' We have provided you, keeping them in mind as you are mindful of your peers?¹ This is how We make the signs clear for people who understand. (30:28)

٨. وَأَخْتَلَفِ اللَّيْلُ وَالنَّهَارُ وَمَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مِنْ رِزْقٍ فَأَحْيَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا وَتَصْرِيفِ الرِّيحِ ۗ آيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ

And 'in' the alternation of the day and the night, the provision¹ sent down from the skies by Allah—reviving the earth after its death—and the shifting of the winds, are signs for people of understanding. (45:5)

In these verses, Allah ﷻ mentions truths and realities that serve as lessons and signs for people who understand; people who use their minds and rational faculties to deeply reflect upon what is being said. A common thread that ties these verses together is that Allah ﷻ is drawing the audience's attention to various signs - *āyāt* - of His existence, oneness, might, power, glory, and magnificence. *Āyāt* is the plural of *āyah*, which literally means sign, mark, wonder, miracle, or marvel. A sign is used to provide directions, instructions, and guidance. The entire universe is full of signs that guide humanity and point them toward the existence and oneness of Allah ﷻ. Sometimes Allah ﷻ draws humanity's attention to the sky above their heads, sometimes to the land beneath their feet, sometimes to the wonders that surround them, and sometimes to the wonders within them. All of these amazing creations and wonders are signs for people who understand.

3.2.2 *al-Tadhakkur* - Being Mindful

Tadhakkur is a verbal noun (*maṣḍar*) from the verb *tadhakkara/yatadhakkaru*, which means to remember, bear in mind, or think of something.⁷⁸ The root letters *dhāl-kāf-rā'* convey the meanings of recollection and remembrance. The verb *dhakara* can be translated as to remember, bear in mind, think; keep in mind; recall, or recollect.

Allah ﷻ asks rhetorically, “Will you not then be mindful” in seven places throughout the Quran:

١. إِنَّ رَبُّكُمْ اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ فِيْ سِتَّةِ اَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اَسْتَوٰى عَلٰى الْعَرْشِ يُدَبِّرُ الْاَمْرَ ۗ مَا مِنْ شَفِيعٍ اِلَّا مِنْۢ بَعْدِ اِذْنِهٖ ۗ ذٰلِكُمْ اللّٰهُ رَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوْهُ ۗ اَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُوْنَ

Surely your Lord is Allah Who created the heavens and the earth in six Days, then established Himself on the Throne, conducting every affair. None can intercede except by His permission. That is Allah—your Lord, so worship Him 'alone'. Will you not then be mindful? (10:3)

⁷⁸ Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, 358

٢. مَثَلُ الْفَرِيقَيْنِ كَالْأَعْمَى وَالْأَصْمَى وَالْبَصِيرِ وَالسَّمِيعِ ۗ هَلْ يَسْتَوِيَانِ مَثَلًا ۗ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ

The example of these two parties is that of the blind and the deaf, compared to the seeing and the hearing. Can the two be equal? Will you not then be mindful? (11:24)

٣. وَيَقُولُ مَنْ يَنْصُرُنِي مِنَ اللَّهِ إِنْ طَرَدْتُهُمْ ۗ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ

O my people! Who would protect me from Allah if I were to dismiss them? Will you not then be mindful? (11:30)

٤. أَفَمَنْ يَخْلُقُ كَمَنْ لَا يَخْلُقُ ۗ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ

Can the One Who creates be equal to those who do not? Will you not then be mindful? (16:17)

٥. قُلْ لِمَنِ الْأَرْضُ وَمَنْ فِيهَا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ سَيَقُولُونَ لِلَّهِ ۗ قُلْ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ

Ask 'them, O Prophet', 'To whom belong the earth and all those on it, if you 'really' know?' They will reply, 'To Allah!' Say, 'Why are you not then mindful?' (23:84-85)

٦. أَصْطَفَى الْبَنَاتِ عَلَى الْبَنِينَ مَا لَكُمْ كَيْفَ تَحْكُمُونَ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ

Has He chosen daughters over sons? What is the matter with you? How do you judge? Will you not then be mindful? (37:153-155)

٧. أَفَرَأَيْتَ مَنْ اتَّخَذَ إِلَهَهُ هَوَاهُ وَأَضَلَّهُ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ وَخَتَمَ عَلَىٰ سَمْعِهِ وَقَفَىٰ عَلَيْهِ وَجَعَلَ عَلَىٰ بَصَرِهِ غِشَاوَةً فَمَنْ يَهْدِيهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ اللَّهِ ۗ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ

Have you seen 'O Prophet' those who have taken their own desires as their Allah? 'And so' Allah left them to stray knowingly, sealed their hearing and hearts, and placed a cover on their sight. Who then can guide them after Allah? Will you 'all' not then be mindful? (45:23)

“Will you not then be mindful” is a rhetorical device that is designed to engage the audience intellectually leading them towards deep personal reflection.

Allah ﷻ says, “So perhaps they will be mindful” in seven places:

١. وَلَا تَنْكِحُوا الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ حَتَّىٰ يُؤْمِنَ ۚ وَلَا مِمَّنْ مُؤْمِنَةٌ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ مُّشْرِكَةٍ وَلَا أَعْجَبَتْكُمْ ۗ
 وَلَا تُنْكِحُوا الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ حَتَّىٰ يُؤْمِنُوا ۗ وَلَعَبْدٌ مُّؤْمِنٌ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ مُّشْرِكٍ وَلَا أَعْجَبَكُمْ ۗ
 أُولَٰئِكَ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى النَّارِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَدْعُو إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ وَالْمَغْفِرَةِ بِإِذْنِهِ ۗ وَبَيِّنَآءِآيَاتِهِ
 لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ

Do not marry polytheistic women until they believe; for a believing slave-woman is better than a free polytheist, even though she may look pleasant to you. And do not marry your women to polytheistic men until they believe, for a believing slave-man is better than a free polytheist, even though he may look pleasant to you. They invite 'you' to the Fire while Allah invites 'you' to Paradise and forgiveness by His grace. He makes His revelations clear to the people so perhaps they will be mindful. (2:221)

٢. أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا كَلِمَةً طَيِّبَةً كَشَجَرَةٍ طَيِّبَةٍ أَصْلُهَا ثَابِتٌ وَفَرْعُهَا فِي
 السَّمَآءِ تُؤْتِي أُكْلَهَا كُلَّ حِينٍ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهَا ۗ وَيَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ
 يَتَذَكَّرُونَ

Do you not see how Allah compares a good word to a good tree? Its root is firm and its branches reach the sky, 'always' yielding its fruit in every season by the Will of its Lord. This is how Allah sets forth parables for the people, so perhaps they will be mindful. (14:24-25)

٣. وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا أَهْلَكْنَا الْقُرُونَ الْأُولَىٰ بَصَائِرَ لِلنَّاسِ
 وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لَّعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ

Indeed, We gave Moses the Scripture—after destroying earlier nations—as an insight for the people, a guide, and mercy so perhaps they would be mindful. (28:43)

٤. وَمَا كُنْتَ بِجَانِبِ الطُّورِ إِذْ نَادَيْنَا وَلَكِنْ رَحْمَةً مِّن رَّبِّكَ لِتُنذِرَ قَوْمًا مَّا أَتَتْهُمْ مِّن
 نَّذِيرٍ مِّن قَبْلِكَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ

And you were not at the side of Mount Tûr when We called out 'to Moses'. But 'you have been sent' as a mercy from your Lord to warn a people to whom no warner has come before you, so perhaps they may be mindful. (28:46)

٥. وَلَقَدْ وَصَّلْنَا لَهُمُ الْقَوْلَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ

Indeed, We have steadily delivered the Word 'of Allah' to the people so they may be mindful. (28:51)

٦. وَلَقَدْ ضَرَبْنَا لِلنَّاسِ فِي هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ مِنْ كُلِّ مَثَلٍ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ

We have certainly set forth every 'kind of' lesson for people in this Quran, so perhaps they will be mindful. (39:27)

٧. فَأَيَّمَا يَسَّرْنَاهُ بِلِسَانِكَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ

Indeed, We have made this 'Quran' easy in your own language 'O Prophet' so perhaps they will be mindful. (44:58)

In these verses, Allah ﷻ is explicitly mentioning the wisdom, reasoning, and rationale behind the message being conveyed, “so they may be mindful.”

Allah ﷻ says, “So perhaps you will be mindful” in six places:

١. وَلَا تَقْرَبُوا مَالَ الْيَتِيمِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ حَتَّىٰ يَبْلُغَ أَشُدَّهُ ۖ وَأَوْفُوا بِالْكَفِيلِ
وَالْمِيزَانَ بِالْقِسْطِ ۖ لَا تَكْلِفُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا ۖ وَإِذَا قُلْتُمْ فَاعْدِلُوا وَلَوْ كَانَ ذَا
قُرْبَىٰ ۖ وَبِعَهْدِ اللَّهِ أَوْفُوا ۚ ذَلِكُمْ وَصَلَّيْنَاكُمْ بِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَذَكَّرُونَ

And do not come near the wealth of the orphan—unless intending to enhance it—until they attain maturity. Give full measure and weigh with justice. We never require of any soul more than what it can afford. Whenever you speak, maintain justice—even regarding a close relative. And fulfill your covenant with Allah. This is what He has commanded you, so perhaps you will be mindful. (6:152)

٢. وَهُوَ الَّذِي يُرْسِلُ الرِّيحَ بُشْرًا بَيْنَ يَدَيْ رَحْمَتِهِ ۖ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَقْلَتِ سَحَابًا تَغَايَلَا
سُفْنَهُ لِبَلَدٍ مَيْتٍ فَأَنْزَلْنَا بِهِ الْمَاءَ فَأَخْرَجْنَا بِهِ مِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ ۚ كَذَلِكَ نُخْرِجُ
الْمَوْتَىٰ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَذَكَّرُونَ

He is the One Who sends the winds ushering in His mercy. When they bear heavy clouds, We drive them to a lifeless land and then cause rain to fall, producing every type of fruit. Similarly, We will bring the dead to life, so perhaps you will be mindful. (7:57)

٣. إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ وَإِيتَاءِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَيَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ
وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَالْبَغْيِ ۗ يَعِظُكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ ۗ

Indeed, Allah commands justice, grace, as well as courtesy to close relatives. He forbids indecency, wickedness, and aggression. He instructs you so perhaps you will be mindful. (16:90)

٤. سُورَةٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهَا وَفَرَضْنَاهَا وَأَنْزَلْنَا فِيهَا آيَاتٍ بَيِّنَاتٍ لَّعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ ۗ

‘This is’ a sûrah which We have revealed and made ‘its rulings’ obligatory and revealed in it clear commandments so that you may be mindful. (24:1)

٥. يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَدْخُلُوا بُيُوتًا غَيْرَ بُيُوتِكُمْ حَتَّىٰ تَسْتَأْذِنُوا وَتُسَلِّمُوا عَلَىٰ
أَهْلِهَا ۗ ذَٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ ۗ

O believers! Do not enter any house other than your own until you have asked for permission and greeted its occupants. This is best for you, so perhaps you will be mindful. (24:27)

٦. وَمِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقْنَا زَوْجَيْنِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ ۗ

And We created pairs of all things so perhaps you would be mindful. (51:49)

3.2.3 *al-Tafakkur* - Reflection

al-Tafakkur is also a verbal noun, a *maṣḍar*, derived from the verb *tafakkara/yatafakkaru*, which means to reflect, meditate, ponder, contemplate, consider, or think.⁷⁹ *al-Tafakkur* is translated as thinking, reflection, contemplation, and consideration. It is a process of using one’s rational faculties to process information and knowledge that is acquired through various means. *Tafakkur* is very closely associated with the act of *tadabbur*.

Allah ﷻ asks, “Will you not then reflect” once:

⁷⁹ Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, 848

١. قُلْ لَا أَقُولُ لَكُمْ عِنْدِي خَزَائِنُ اللَّهِ وَلَا أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ وَلَا أَقُولُ لَكُمْ إِنِّي مَلَكٌ ۚ
 إِنِّ أَتَّبِعُ إِلَّا مَا يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ ۚ قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الْأَعْمَىٰ وَالْبَصِيرُ ۚ أَفَلَا تَتَفَكَّرُونَ ۚ

Say, 'O Prophet, ' 'I do not say to you that I possess Allah's treasures or know the unseen, nor do I claim to be an angel. I only follow what is revealed to me.' Say, 'Are those blind 'to the truth' equal to those who can see? Will you not then reflect?' (6:50)

In this verse, Allah ﷻ is instructing the Prophet ﷺ how to respond to the various false claims and objections of the idolaters of Makkah. In their efforts to oppose the Prophet ﷺ and prevent people from accepting his message, they would accuse him of being a magician, fortune-teller, poet, and imposter. Allah ﷻ is telling the Prophet ﷺ to respond to these false and baseless claims by explaining that he is not claiming anything extraordinary. He is not claiming to have control or access to the treasures of Allah ﷻ so that he can do with them as he pleases. He is not claiming to have knowledge of the unseen, nor is he claiming to be an Angel. Allah ﷻ tells him to say, "I only follow what is revealed to me." I am a Messenger of Allah and a Prophet, and I only follow what Allah ﷻ reveals to me. Allah ﷻ then tells him to pose a rhetorical question, "Are those blind 'to the truth' equal to those who can see?" Meaning, is a person who is blind to the truth equal to someone who sees the truth and accepts it? Will you not then reflect on the signs all around you? This is a direct call for people to engage with the Quran and use their minds to deeply reflect upon the truth.

Allah ﷻ says, "So perhaps they will reflect" in two places:

٢. وَلَوْ شِئْنَا لَرَفَعْنَاهُ بِهَا وَلَكِنَّهُ أَخْلَدَ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ ۚ فَمَثَلُهُ كَمَثَلِ الْكَلْبِ
 إِن تَحْمِلْ عَلَيْهِ يَلْهَثْ أَوْ تَتْرِكْهُ يَلْهَثْ ۚ ذَلِكَ مَثَلُ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا ۚ
 فَأَقْصِصْ الْقِصَصَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ۚ

If We had willed, We would have elevated him with Our signs, but he clung to this life—following his evil desires. His example is that of a dog: if you chase it away, it pants, and if you leave it, it 'still' pants. This is the example of the people who deny Our signs. So, narrate 'to them' stories 'of the past', so perhaps they will reflect. (7:176)

٢. بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالزُّبُرِ ۚ وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ۚ

‘We sent them’ with clear proofs and divine Books. And We have sent down to you ‘O Prophet’ the Reminder, so that you may explain to people what has been revealed for them, and perhaps they will reflect. (16:44)

In these verses, Allah ﷻ explicitly mentions the objective and purpose behind the message that is being conveyed; so perhaps they will reflect. Perhaps people will intellectually and emotionally engage with the message through deep reflection and derive important reminders, lessons, and guidance.

Allah ﷻ says, “For a people who reflect” in seven places:

١. إِنَّمَا مَثَلُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا كَمَاءٍ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ فَاخْتَلَطَ بِهِ نَبَاتُ الْأَرْضِ مِمَّا يَأْكُلُ النَّاسُ وَالْأَنْعَامُ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَخَذَتِ الْأَرْضُ زُخْرُفَهَا وَازَّيَّنَتْ وَظَنَّ أَهْلُهَا أَنَّهُمْ قَادِرُونَ عَلَيْهَا أَتَاهَا أَمْرُنَا لَيْلًا أَوْ نَهَارًا فَجَعَلْنَاهَا حَصِيدًا كَأَن لَّمْ تَغْنَبِ بِالْأَمْسِ ؕ كَذَٰلِكَ نُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

The life of this world is just like rain We send down from the sky, producing a mixture of plants which humans and animals consume. Then just as the earth looks its best, perfectly beautified, and its people think they have full control over it, there comes to it Our command by night or by day, so We mow it down as if it never flourished yesterday! This is how We make the signs clear for people who reflect. (10:24)

٢. وَهُوَ الَّذِي مَدَّ الْأَرْضَ وَجَعَلَ فِيهَا رُوسِيَ وَأَنْهَارًا ۗ وَمِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ جَعَلَ فِيهَا رُوحَيْنِ ۗ إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

And He is the One Who spread out the earth and placed firm mountains and rivers upon it, and created fruits of every kind in pairs. He covers the day with night. Surely in this are signs for those who reflect. (13:3)

٣. يُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِهِ الرَّزْعَ وَالزَّيْتُونَ وَالنَّخِيلَ وَالْأَعْنَابَ وَمِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ ۗ إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

With it He produces for you ‘various’ crops, olives, palm trees, grapevines, and every type of fruit. Surely in this is a sign for those who reflect. (16:11)

٤. ثُمَّ كُلِي مِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ فَاسْلُكِي سُبُلَ رَبِّكِ ذُلُلًا ۗ يَخْرُجُ مِنْ بَطُونِهَا شَرَابٌ
مُخْتَلِفٌ أَلْوَانُهُ فِيهِ شِفَاءٌ لِلنَّاسِ ۗ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

And feed from 'the flower of' any fruit 'you please' and follow the ways your Lord has made easy for you." From their bellies comes forth liquid of varying colors, in which there is healing for people. Surely in this is a sign for those who reflect. (16:69)

٥. وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا لِتَسْكُنُوا إِلَيْهَا وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ مَوَدَّةً
وَرَحْمَةً ۗ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

And one of His signs is that He created for you spouses from among yourselves so that you may find comfort in them. And He has placed between you compassion and mercy. Surely in this are signs for people who reflect. (30:21)

٦. اللَّهُ يَتَوَفَّى الْأَنْفُسَ حِينَ مَوْتِهَا وَالَّتِي لَمْ تَمُتْ فِي مَنَامِهَا ۗ فَيُمْسِكُ الَّتِي قَضَىٰ
عَلَيْهَا الْمَوْتَ وَيُرْسِلُ الْأُخْرَىٰ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ۗ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ
يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

'It is' Allah 'Who' calls back the souls 'of people' upon their death as well as 'the souls' of the living during their sleep. Then He keeps those for whom He has ordained death and releases the others until 'their' appointed time. Surely in this are signs for people who reflect. (39:42)

٧. وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمْ مَّا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا مِّنْهُ ۗ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ
لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

He 'also' subjected for you whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth—all by His grace. Surely in this are signs for people who reflect. (45:13)

In all of these verses, Allah ﷻ is mentioning various signs that guide a person toward recognizing, acknowledging, and accepting His divine existence, oneness, might, power, and glory. The purpose of mentioning these various signs is for people to engage in deep reflection and thought so that they can arrive at the truth.

Allah ﷻ says, "So perhaps you will reflect" in two places:

١. يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْخَمْرِ وَالْمَيْسِرِ ۖ قُلْ فِيهِمَا إِثْمٌ كَبِيرٌ وَمَنْفَعٌ لِلنَّاسِ وَإِثْمُهُمَا أَكْبَرُ
 مِنْ نَفْعِهِمَا ۚ وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ مَاذَا يُنْفِقُونَ قُلِ الْعَفْوَ ۗ كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ
 لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَفَكَّرُونَ

They ask you 'O Prophet' about intoxicants and gambling. Say, 'There is great evil in both, as well as some benefit for people—but the evil outweighs the benefit.' They 'also' ask you 'O Prophet' what they should donate. Say, 'Whatever you can spare.' This is how Allah makes His revelations clear to you 'believers', so perhaps you may reflect. (2:219)

٢. أَيَوَدُّ أَحَدُكُمْ أَنْ تَكُونَ لَهُ جَنَّةٌ مِّنْ نَّجِيلٍ وَأَعْنَابٍ تَجْرَى مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ لَهُ
 فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ وَأَصَابَهُ الْكِبَرُ وَلَهُ ذُرِّيَةٌ ضَعْفَاءٌ فَأَصَابَهَا إِعْصَابٌ فِيهِ نَارٌ
 فَاحْتَرَقَتْ ۗ كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَفَكَّرُونَ

Would any of you wish to have a garden with palm trees, grapevines, and all kinds of fruits with rivers flowing underneath and as they grow very old with dependent children, a fiery whirlwind hits the garden, burning it all up? This is how Allah makes His revelations clear to you, so perhaps you will reflect. (2:266)

3.2.4 *al-Taqwā* - Allah-Consciousness

Oftentimes *taqwā* is translated as fear; however, this translation does not capture the true essence and meaning of the word. Fear is only one aspect or part of *taqwā*. Linguistically, *taqwā* is defined as forbearance, fear, or abstinence. It is derived from the verb *waqā/yaqī*, which means to protect or prevent; to make a shield or barrier between oneself and what they fear for protection.

In the context of the Quran and Sunnah, it refers to being mindful, conscious, and aware of Allah. Being conscious and aware that Allah is the All-Knowing, All-Seeing, and All-Hearing and that everything a person says or does is being recorded. It means being aware of the fact that there is a Day of Judgment and on that Day a person will be held accountable for whatever they have said or done. This consciousness then drives a person's behavior and motivates them to try their best to obey the

commandments of Allah ﷻ and stay away from His prohibitions. Practically speaking, scholars define taqwa as obeying the commands of Allah ﷻ and staying away from His prohibitions.

Allah-Consciousness, being aware of Allah ﷻ, is one of the greatest and most important qualities that a person is supposed to develop and nurture within themselves. It is described as a comprehensive trait that gathers all forms of good and protects one from all types of harm. It is one of the most essential aspects of a person's relationship with Allah ﷻ and is considered to be the catalyst behind everything a person does. There are numerous verses of the Quran and aḥādīth of the Prophet ﷺ that speak about the virtue and value of taqwā.

Allah ﷻ asks “Will you not then be mindful of Allah” in five places throughout the Quran:

١. وَإِلَىٰ عَادٍ أَخَاهُمْ هُودًا ۖ قَالَ يَقَوْمِ أَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنِّ إِلَهِ غَيْرِهِ ۚ أَفَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ۚ

And to the people of ‘Ād We sent their brother Hūd. He said, ‘O my people! Worship Allah—you have no other Allah except Him. Will you not then fear Him?’ (7:65)

٢. قُلْ مَنْ يَرْزُقُكُمْ مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ أَمَّن يَمْلِكُ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَمَنْ يُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَمِيتِ وَيُخْرِجُ الْمَمِيتَ مِنَ الْحَيِّ وَمَنْ يُدَبِّرُ الْأَمْرَ ۚ فَسَيَقُولُونَ اللَّهُ ۚ فَقُلْ أَفَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ۚ

Ask ‘them, O Prophet’, ‘Who provides for you from heaven and earth? Who owns ‘your’ hearing and sight? Who brings forth the living from the dead and the dead from the living? And who conducts every affair?’ They will ‘surely’ say, ‘Allah.’ Say, ‘Will you not then fear ‘Him’?’ (10:31)

٣. وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ ۖ فَقَالَ يَقَوْمِ أَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنِّ إِلَهِ غَيْرِهِ ۚ أَفَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ۚ

Indeed, We sent Noah to his people. He declared, ‘O my people! Worship Allah ‘alone’. You have no Allah other than Him. Will you not then fear ‘Him’?’ (23:23)

٤ . ثُمَّ أَنْشَأْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ قَرْنًا ءَاخَرِينَ فَأَرْسَلْنَا فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِنْهُمْ أَنْ اْعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرُهُ ؕ أَفَلَا تَتَّقُونَ

Then We raised another generation after them, and sent to them a messenger from among themselves, 'declaring,' 'Worship Allah 'alone'. You have no Allah other than Him. Will you not then fear 'Him'?' (23:31-32)

٥ . قُلْ مَنْ رَبُّ السَّمٰوٰتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ سَيَقُولُونَ لِلّٰهِ ؕ قُلْ أَفَلَا تَتَّقُونَ

'And' ask 'them', 'Who is the Lord of the seven heavens and the Lord of the Mighty Throne?' They will reply, 'Allah.' Say, 'Will you not then fear 'Him'?' (23:86-87)

Allah ﷻ says, "So perhaps they may be mindful of Allah" in five places:

١ . أُحِلَّ لَكُمْ لَيْلَةَ الصِّيَامِ الرَّفَثُ إِلَىٰ نِسَائِكُمْ ؕ هُنَّ لِيَاسٍ لَّكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لِيَاسٍ لَهُنَّ ؕ عَلِمَ اللَّهُ أَنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ تَخْتَانُونَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَعَفَا عَنْكُمْ ؕ فَالَّذِينَ بَشَرُوا هُنَّ وَأَبْتَغُوا مَا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ ؕ وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا حَتَّىٰ يَبْيِّنَ لَكُمْ الْخَيْطُ الْأَبْيَضُ مِنَ الْخَيْطِ الْأَسْوَدِ مِنَ الْفَجْرِ ؕ ثُمَّ أَتَمُّوا الصِّيَامَ إِلَىٰ اللَّيْلِ ؕ وَلَا تُبَشِّرُوهُنَّ وَأَنْتُمْ عَاكِفُونَ فِي الْمَسَاجِدِ ؕ تِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ فَلَا تَقْرُبُوهَا ؕ كَذَٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لِّلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ

It has been made permissible for you to be intimate with your wives during the nights preceding the fast. Your spouses are a garment for you as you are for them. Allah knows that you were deceiving yourselves. So He has accepted your repentance and pardoned you. So now you may be intimate with them and seek what Allah has prescribed for you. 'You may' eat and drink until you see the light of dawn breaking the darkness of night, then complete the fast until nightfall. Do not be intimate with your spouses while you are meditating in the mosques. These are the limits set by Allah, so do not exceed them. This is how Allah makes His revelations clear to people, so they may become mindful 'of Him'. (2:187)

٢ . وَأَنْذِرْ بِهِ الَّذِينَ يَخَافُونَ أَنْ يُحْشَرُوا إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ ؕ لَيْسَ لَهُمْ مِنْ دُونِهِ وَلِيٌّ وَلَا شَفِيعٌ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ

Warn with this 'Quran' those who are awed by the prospect of being gathered before their Lord—when they will have no protector or intercessor besides Him—so perhaps they will be mindful 'of Him'. (6:51)

٣. وَمَا عَلَى الَّذِينَ يَتَّقُونَ مِنْ حِسَابِهِمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ وَلَكِنْ ذِكْرًا لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ

Those mindful 'of Allah' will not be accountable for those 'who ridicule it' whatsoever—their duty is to advise, so perhaps the ridiculers will abstain. (6:69)

٤. وَإِذْ قَالَتْ أُمَّةٌ مِّنْهُمْ لِمَ تَعِظُونَ قَوْمًا لَّا اللَّهُ مُهْلِكُهُمْ أَوْ مُعَذِّبُهُمْ عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا ۗ قَالُوا مَعذِرَةٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ

When some of 'the righteous among' them questioned 'their fellow Sabbath-keepers', 'Why do you 'bother to' warn those 'Sabbath-breakers' who will either be destroyed or severely punished by Allah?' They replied, 'Just to be free from your Lord's blame, and so perhaps they may abstain.' (7:164)

٥. وَكَذَلِكَ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا وَصَرَّفْنَا فِيهِ مِنَ الْوَعِيدِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ أَوْ يُحْدِثُ لَهُمْ ذِكْرًا

And so We have sent it down as an Arabic Quran and varied the warnings in it, so perhaps they will shun evil or it may cause them to be mindful. (20:113)

Allah ﷻ says, "So perhaps you may be mindful of Allah" in six places:

١. يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

O humanity! Worship your Lord, Who created you and those before you, so that you may become mindful 'of Him'. (2:21)

٢. وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَكُمْ وَرَفَعْنَا فَوْقَكُمُ الطُّورَ خُذُوا مَا آتَيْنَاكُمْ بِقُوَّةٍ وَاذْكُرُوا مَا فِيهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

And 'remember' when We took a covenant from you and raised the mountain above you 'saying', 'Hold firmly to that 'Scripture' which We have given you and observe its teachings so perhaps you will become mindful 'of Allah'.' (2:63)

٣. وَلَكُمْ فِي الْقِصَاصِ حَيَوةٌ يَا أُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

There is 'security of' life for you in 'the law of' retaliation, O people of reason, so that you may become mindful 'of Allah'. (2:179)

٤. يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

O believers! Fasting is prescribed for you—as it was for those before you¹—so perhaps you will become mindful 'of Allah'. (2:183)

٥. وَأَنَّ هَذَا صِرَاطِي مُسْتَقِيمًا فَاتَّبِعُوهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا السُّبُلَ فَتَفَرَّقَ بِكُمْ عَن سَبِيلِهِ ۚ ذَٰلِكُمْ وَصَّاكُم بِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

Indeed, that is My Path—perfectly straight. So, follow it and do not follow other ways, for they will lead you away from His Way. This is what He has commanded you, so perhaps you will be conscious 'of Allah'. (6:153)

٦. وَإِذْ نَفَخْنَا الْجَبَلَ فَوْقَهُمْ كَأَنَّهُ ظُلَّةٌ وَظَنُّوا أَنَّهُ وَاقِعٌ بِهِمْ خُذُوا مَا ءَاتَيْنَاكُم بِقُوَّةٍ وَادْكُرُوا مَا فِيهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

And 'remember' when We raised the mountain over them as if it were a cloud and they thought it would fall on them. 'We said,' 'Hold firmly to that 'Scripture' which We have given you and observe its teachings so perhaps you will become mindful 'of Allah'.' (7:171)

3.2.5 *al-I'tibār* - Drawing Lessons

al-I'tibār is a verbal noun derived from the verb *i'tabara/ya'tabiru*, which means to learn a lesson, to learn, to take an example, or to consider. *al-I'tibār* is translated as drawing lessons, reflection, and contemplation. *Ibrah* is a related word that shares the same root letters, which means example or lesson. Allah ﷻ mentions stories of past nations, prophets, and messengers or certain truths and realities and then asks the audience to draw lessons from them.

Allah ﷻ informs us about certain 'ibar, lessons, in six places throughout the

Quran:

١. قَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ آيَةٌ فِي فِئَتَيْنِ الْتَقَتَا ۖ فِئَةٌ تُقَاتِلُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَأُخْرَىٰ كَافِرَةٌ يَرَوْنَهُمْ مِثْلِهِمْ رَأَىٰ الْعَيْنِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يُؤَيِّدُ بِنَصَرِهِ ۗ مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۗ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَعِبْرَةً لِّأُولِي الْأَبْصَارِ

Indeed, there was a sign for you in the two armies that met in battle — one fighting for the cause of Allah and the other in denial. The believers saw their enemy twice their number. But Allah supports with His victory whoever He wills. Surely in this is a lesson for people of insight. (3:13)

٢. لَقَدْ كَانَ فِي قَصَصِهِمْ عِبْرَةٌ لِّأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ ۗ مَا كَانَ حَدِيثًا يُفْتَرَىٰ وَلَكِن تَصْدِيقَ الَّذِي بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَتَفْصِيلَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ

In their stories there is truly a lesson for people of reason. This message cannot be a fabrication, rather 'it is' a confirmation of previous revelation, a detailed explanation of all things, a guide, and a mercy for people of faith. (12:111)

٣. وَإِنَّ لَكُمْ فِي الْأَنْعَامِ لَعِبْرَةً ۗ نُسْقِيكُمْ مِمَّا فِي بُطُونِهِمْ مِنْ بَيْنِ فَرْثٍ وَدَمٍ لَبَنًا خَالِصًا سَائِغًا لِلشَّارِبِينَ

And there is certainly a lesson for you in cattle: We give you to drink of what is in their bellies, from between digested food and blood: pure milk, pleasant to drink. (16:66)

٤. وَإِنَّ لَكُمْ فِي الْأَنْعَامِ لَعِبْرَةً ۗ نُسْقِيكُمْ مِمَّا فِي بُطُونِهَا وَلَكُمْ فِيهَا مَنفَعٌ كَثِيرٌ وَمِنْهَا تَأْكُلُونَ

And there is certainly a lesson for you in cattle, from whose bellies We give you 'milk' to drink, and in them are many other benefits for you, and from them you may eat. (23:21)

٥. يُقَلِّبُ اللَّهُ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ ۗ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَعِبْرَةً لِّأُولِي الْأَبْصَارِ

Allah alternates the day and night. Surely in this is a lesson for people of insight. (24:44)

٦. إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَعِبْرَةً لِّمَن يَخْشَى ۚ

After mentioning the punishment of Fir‘awn Allah ﷻ says,
“Surely in this is a lesson for whoever stands in awe of ‘Allah’.”
(79:26)

Allah ﷻ explicitly instructs the people of insight to draw lessons in one verse:

١. هُوَ الَّذِي أَخْرَجَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ لِأَوَّلِ الْحَشْرِ ۗ مَا ظَنَنْتُمْ أَنْ يَخْرُجُوا ۗ وَظَنُّوا أَنَّهُمْ مَانِعَتُهُمْ حُصُونُهُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ فَأَتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَمْ يَحْتَسِبُوا ۗ وَقَدَفَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمُ الرُّعْبَ ۗ يُخْرِبُونَ بُيُوتَهُمْ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ وَأَيْدِي الْمُؤْمِنِينَ فَاعْتَبِرُوا يَا أُولِيَ الْأَبْصَارِ

He is the One Who expelled the disbelievers of the People of the Book from their homes for ‘their’ first banishment ‘ever’. You never thought they would go. And they thought their strongholds would put them out of Allah’s reach. But ‘the decree of’ Allah came upon them from where they never expected. And He cast horror into their hearts so they destroyed their houses with their own hands and the hands of the believers. So, take a lesson ‘from this’, O people of insight! (59:2)

3.2.6 *al-Nazr* - Observation

In several verses throughout the Quran, Allah ﷻ instructs the audience of the Quran to observe what is around them in order to draw lessons and reminders. The verb *nazara/yanzuru* means to consider, contemplate, observe, or examine.

Allah instructs people to observe in 8 places:

١. أَوَلَمْ يَنْظُرُوا فِي مَلَكُوتِ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَمَا خَلَقَ اللّٰهُ مِنْ شَيْءٍ وَّ اَنْ عَسٰى اَنْ يَكُوْنَ قَدْ اَقْتَرَبَ اَجَلُهُمْ فَبِاٰى حٰدِثٍ بَعْدَهُۥ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ

Have they ever reflected on the wonders of the heavens and the earth, and everything Allah has created, and that perhaps their end is near? So what message after this ‘Quran’ would they believe in? (7:185)

٢. وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ إِلَّا رِجَالًا نُوحِيَ إِلَيْهِمْ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْقُرَى ۗ أَفَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ۗ وَلَدَارُ الْآخِرَةِ خَيْرٌ لِلَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا ۗ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ

We only sent before you 'O Prophet' men inspired by Us from among the people of each society. Have the deniers not travelled through the land to see what was the end of those 'destroyed' before them? And surely the 'eternal' Home of the Hereafter is far better for those mindful 'of Allah'. Will you not then understand? (12:109)

٣. أَوَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ۗ كَانُوا أَشَدَّ مِنْهُمْ قُوَّةً وَأَنَارُوا الْأَرْضَ وَعَمَرُوهَا أَكْثَرَ مِمَّا عَمَرُوهَا وَجَاءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ ۗ فَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيَظْلِمَهُمْ وَلَكِنْ كَانُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ

Have they not travelled throughout the land to see what was the end of those 'destroyed' before them? They were far superior in might; they cultivated the land and developed it more than these 'Meccans' ever have. Their messengers came to them with clear proofs. Allah would have never wronged them, but it was they who wronged themselves. (30:9)

٤. أَوَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ وَكَانُوا أَشَدَّ مِنْهُمْ قُوَّةً ۗ وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُعْجِزَهُ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَلَا فِي الْأَرْضِ ۗ إِنَّهُ كَانَ عَلِيمًا قَدِيرًا

Have they not travelled throughout the land to see what was the end of those 'destroyed' before them? They were far superior in might. But there is nothing that can escape Allah in the heavens or the earth. He is certainly All-Knowing, Most Capable. (35:44)

٥. أَوَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ كَانُوا مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ۗ كَانُوا هُمْ أَشَدَّ مِنْهُمْ قُوَّةً وَءَانَارًا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَأَخَذَهُمُ اللَّهُ بِذُنُوبِهِمْ وَمَا كَانَ لَهُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ مِنْ وَاقٍ

Have they not travelled throughout the land to see what was the end of those 'destroyed' before them? They were far superior in might and 'richer in' monuments throughout the land. But Allah seized them for their sins, and they had no protector from Allah. (40:21)

٦. أَفَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ۚ كَانُوا أَكْثَرَ مِنْهُمْ وَأَشَدَّ قُوَّةً وَأَثَارًا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَمَا أُغْنَى عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ

Have they not travelled throughout the land to see what was the end of those who were 'destroyed' before them? They were far superior in might and 'richer in' monuments throughout the land, but their 'worldly' gains were of no benefit to them. (40:82)

٧. أَفَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ۚ دَمَّرَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ ۚ وَلِلْكَافِرِينَ أَمْثَلُهَا

Have they not travelled throughout the land to see what was the end of those before them? Allah annihilated them, and a similar fate awaits the disbelievers. (47:10)

٨. أَفَلَمْ يَنْظُرُوا إِلَى السَّمَاءِ فَوْقَهُمْ كَيْفَ بَنَيْنَاهَا وَزَيَّنَّاهَا وَمَا لَهَا مِنْ فُرُوجٍ

Have they not then looked at the sky above them: how We built it and adorned it 'with stars', leaving it flawless? (50:6)

3.3 DIFFERENT STYLES OF INVITING TOWARDS *TADABBUR*

Allah ﷻ uses different styles and techniques to invite the audience of the Quran toward deep reflection upon the Quran. After analyzing the Quran, one can conclude that the Allah ﷻ employs five distinct methods:

1. Direct invitation to reflect upon the general message of the Quran
2. Addressing people of intelligence and understanding
3. Giving examples and using parables
4. Concluding verses in a manner that leads to reflection
5. Relating stories and narratives in order to derive lessons, reminders, and morals

3.3.1 Direct Invitation to Reflect upon the General Message of the Quran

As mentioned in Chapter One, Allah ﷻ directly encourages deep reflection upon the Quran by using the verb tadabbara in four verses:

١. أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ ۚ وَلَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ غَيْرِ اللَّهِ لَوَجَدُوا فِيهِ اخْتِلَافًا كَثِيرًا

4:82 - Do they not then reflect on the Quran? Had it been from anyone other than Allah, they would have certainly found in it many inconsistencies.

٢. أَفَلَمْ يَدَّبَّرُوا الْقَوْلَ أَمْ جَاءَهُمْ مَا لَمْ يَأْتِ آبَاءَهُمُ الْأَوَّلِينَ

23:68 - Is it because they have never contemplated the Word of Allah? Or because there has come to them something that did not come to their forefathers?

٣. كَتَبْنَا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ مُبَارَكٌ لِيَدَّبَّرُوا آيَاتِهِ ۚ وَلِيَتَذَكَّرَ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

38:29 - 'This is' a blessed Book which We have revealed to you 'O Prophet' so that they may contemplate its verses, and people of reason may be mindful.

٤. أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ أَمْ عَلَى قُلُوبٍ أَقْفَالُهَا

47:24 - Do they not then reflect on the Quran? Or are there locks upon their hearts?

In these verses, Allah ﷻ is explicitly and directly inviting the audience - both believers and non-believers - to engage in deep reflection upon the message of the Quran. In 38:29 Allah ﷻ clarifies that the main objective and purpose behind sending down the Quran is reflection and being mindful.

3.3.2 Addressing People of Intelligence and Understanding

There are several verses in the Quran that are addressed to people of intelligence and understanding, Ūl al-nuhā. They are being encouraged to use their minds, intellect, and sound reason to engage with the Quranic text and be guided with it toward belief and morality. For example, Allah ﷻ says:

١. إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالْأَنْبِيَاءِ وَالنَّهَارِ لَكَايِتٍ لِّأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ

Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the day and night there are signs for people of reason. (3:190)

٢. لَقَدْ كَانَ فِي قَصَصِهِمْ عِبْرَةٌ لِّأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ ۗ مَا كَانَ حَدِيثًا يُفْتَرَىٰ وَلَكِن تَصْدِيقَ
الَّذِي بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَتَفْصِيلَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ

In their stories, there is truly a lesson for people of reason. This message cannot be a fabrication, rather 'it is' a confirmation of previous revelation, a detailed explanation of all things, a guide, and a mercy for people of faith. (12:111)

٣. الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ مَهْدًا وَسَلَكَ لَكُمْ فِيهَا سُبُلًا وَأَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً
فَأَخْرَجْنَا بِهِ أَزْوَاجًا مِّن نَّبَاتٍ شَتَّىٰ كُلُوا وَارْعَوْا أَنْعَامَكُمْ ۗ إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَكَايِتٍ
لِّأُولِي النَّهْيِ

'He is the One' Who has laid out the earth for 'all of' you, and set in it pathways for you, and sends down rain from the sky, causing various types of plants to grow, 'so' eat and graze your cattle. Surely in this are signs for people of sound judgment. (20:53-54) Commenting on this verse al-Ṭabarī says, "In what has been described in this verse of your Lord's power and great might are signs; meaning, clear proofs and signs that indicate towards the oneness of your Lord and that there is no deity for you beside Him."⁸⁰

٤. أَفَلَمْ يَهْدِ لَهُمْ كَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا قَبْلَهُم مِّنَ الْقُرُونِ يَمْشُونَ فِي مَسْجِدِهِمْ ۗ إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ
لَكَايِتٍ لِّأُولِي النَّهْيِ

Is it not yet clear to them how many peoples We destroyed before them, whose ruins they still pass by? Surely in this are signs for people of sound judgment. (20:128) al-Ṭabarī commenting on this verse writes, "Allah mentions that these signs are specifically for the people of sound judgment because they are the people of deep reflection and learning lessons."⁸¹

⁸⁰ Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, 16:87

⁸¹ Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, 16:87

3.3.3 Examples and Parables

A parable is defined as a short allegorical story designed to illustrate or teach some truth, religious principle, or moral lesson. The word used for parable in Arabic is *mathal*, which is translated as an example, metaphor, or allegory. Allah ﷻ uses parables throughout the Quran to illustrate or teach some truth, religious principle, or moral lesson. Allah ﷻ says in Sūrah al-Zumar,

وَلَقَدْ ضَرَبْنَا لِلنَّاسِ فِي هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ مِنْ كُلِّ مَثَلٍ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ

“And We have certainly presented for the people in this Qur'an from every [kind of] example - that they might remember.”⁸²

Allah ﷻ has given parables regarding faith, disbelief, beneficial knowledge, hypocrisy, spending in the way of Allah ﷻ, encouraging good and discouraging evil, and clarifying the life of this world and the next.

For example, Allah ﷻ says in Sūrah Ibrāhīm,

أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا كَلِمَةً طَيِّبَةً كَشَجَرَةٍ طَيِّبَةٍ أَصْلُهَا ثَابِتٌ وَفَرْعُهَا فِي السَّمَاءِ تُؤْتِي أَكْثَرَهَا كُلَّ حِينٍ بِأُذُنٍ رَجَاءٍ وَيَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ

“Do you not see how Allah makes comparisons (strikes parables)? A good word is like a good tree whose root is firm and whose branches are high in the sky, yielding constant fruit by its Lord's leave. Allah makes such comparisons (strikes such parables) for people so that they may reflect.”⁸³

In this verse Allah ﷻ is providing a parable to explain and clarify the concept of faith. Allah compares faith to a date palm. The “good word” is understood to be the declaration of faith, “there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah and Muḥammad is the messenger of Allah.” The roots of this statement are firmly planted in a believer's heart, the trunk of the tree is the declaration itself, and the branches high in the sky are

⁸² Quran 39:27

⁸³ Quran 14:24-25

the various actions and statements that are a result of one's faith. Allah ﷻ explains faith, which is an abstract concept, by comparing it to a tree.

Regarding the purpose of these parables Allah ﷻ says:

۱. وَيَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ

Allah makes such comparisons (strikes such parables) for people so that they may reflect. (14:24)

۲. وَتِلْكَ الْأَمْثَالُ نَضْرِبُهَا لِلنَّاسِ وَمَا يَعْقِلُهَا إِلَّا الْعَالِمُونَ

These are the parables We set forth for humanity, but none will understand them except the people of knowledge. (29:43)

۳. لَوْ أَنْزَلْنَا هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ عَلَى جَبَلٍ لَرَأَيْنَاهُ خَشِيعًا مُتَصَدِّعًا مِّنْ خَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ ۗ وَتِلْكَ

الْأَمْثَالُ نَضْرِبُهَا لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

We set forth such comparisons for people, 'so' perhaps they may reflect. (59:21)

3.3.4 Concluding Verses with an Invitation to Deep Reflection

Allah ﷻ concludes several verses of the Quran with direct and indirect invitations towards deep reflection and thought upon what is being mentioned and highlighted. The following are a number of explicit examples:

۱. يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْخَمْرِ وَالْمَيْسِرِ ۖ قُلْ فِيهِمَا إِثْمٌ كَبِيرٌ وَمَنْفَعَةٌ لِلنَّاسِ وَإِثْمُهُمَا أَكْبَرُ مِنْ نَّفْعِهِمَا ۗ وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ مَاذَا يُنْفِقُونَ ۗ قُلِ الْعَفْوَ ۗ كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَفَكَّرُونَ

They ask you 'O Prophet' about intoxicants and gambling. Say, 'There is great evil in both, as well as some benefit for people—but the evil outweighs the benefit.' They 'also' ask you 'O Prophet' what they should donate. Say, 'Whatever you can spare.' This is

how Allah makes His revelations clear to you 'believers', so perhaps you may reflect. (2:219)

۲. وَلَا تُنكِحُوا الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ حَتَّىٰ يُؤْمِنَ ۚ وَلَا مِمَّنْ مُؤْمِنَةٌ حَيْرٌ مِّنْ مُّشْرِكَةٍ وَلَا أَعْجَبَتْكُمْ ۚ
وَلَا تُنكِحُوا الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ حَتَّىٰ يُؤْمِنُوا ۚ وَلَعَبْدٌ مُّؤْمِنٌ حَيْرٌ مِّنْ مُّشْرِكٍ وَلَا أَعْجَبَكُمْ ۚ
أُولَٰئِكَ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى النَّارِ ۖ وَاللّٰهُ يَدْعُو إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ وَالْمَغْفِرَةِ بِإِذْنِهِ ۖ وَيُبَيِّنُ آيَاتِهِ
لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ

Do not marry polytheistic women until they believe; for a believing slave- woman is better than a free polytheist, even though she may look pleasant to you. And do not marry your women to polytheistic men until they believe, for a believing slave-man is better than a free polytheist, even though he may look pleasant to you. They invite 'you' to the Fire while Allah invites 'you' to Paradise and forgiveness by His grace.¹ He makes His revelations clear to the people so perhaps they will be mindful. (2:221)

۳. أَيَوَدُّ أَحَدُكُمْ أَن تَكُونَ لَهُ جَنَّةٌ مِّن نَّجِيلٍ وَأَعْنَابٍ بِحَرِيِّ مِّن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ لَهُ فِيهَا مِنْ
كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ وَأَصَابَهُ الْكِبَرُ وَلَهُ ذُرِّيَّةٌ ضِعْفًا فَأَصَابَهَا إِعْصَابٌ فِيهِ نَارٌ فَاحْتَرَقَتْ ۚ
كَذَٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَفَكَّرُونَ

Would any of you wish to have a garden with palm trees, grapevines, and all kinds of fruits with rivers flowing underneath and as they grow very old with dependent children, a fiery whirlwind hits the garden, burning it all up? This is how Allah makes His revelations clear to you, so perhaps you will reflect. (2:266)

۴. قُلْ هُوَ الْقَادِرُ عَلَىٰ أَن يَبْعَثَ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابًا مِّن فَوْقِكُمْ أَوْ مِن تَحْتِ أَرْجُلِكُمْ أَوْ
يَلْبِسَكُمْ شِيْعًا وَيُذِيقَ بَعْضَكُم بَأْسَ بَعْضٍ ۗ ۚ أَنْظُرْ كَيْفَ نُصَرِّفُ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ
يَفْقَهُونَ

Say, 'He 'alone' has the power to unleash upon you a torment from above or below you or split you into 'conflicting' factions and make you taste the violence of one another.' See how We vary the signs, so perhaps they will comprehend. (6:65)

٥. وَلَوْ شِئْنَا لَرَفَعْنَاهُ بِهَا وَلَكِنَّهُ أَخْلَدَ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ ۖ فَمَثَلُهُ كَمَثَلِ الْكَلْبِ إِنْ تَحْمِلَ عَلَيْهِ يَلْهَثُ أَوْ تَتْرَكُهُ يَلْهَثُ ۖ ذَلِكَ مَثَلُ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا ۖ فَاقْصُصِ الْقَصَصَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

If We had willed, We would have elevated him with Our signs, but he clung to this life—following his evil desires. His example is that of a dog: if you chase it away, it pants, and if you leave it, it ‘still’ pants. This is the example of the people who deny Our signs. So narrate ‘to them’ stories ‘of the past’, so perhaps they will reflect. (7:176)

٦. أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا كَلِمَةً طَيِّبَةً كَشَجَرَةٍ طَيِّبَةٍ أَصْلُهَا ثَابِتٌ وَفَرْعُهَا فِي السَّمَاءِ تُؤْتِي أَكْثَرَهَا كُلَّ حِينٍ بِأَذْنِ رَبِّهَا ۗ وَيَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ

Do you not see how Allah compares a good word to a good tree? Its root is firm and its branches reach the sky, ‘always’ yielding its fruit in every season by the Will of its Lord. This is how Allah sets forth parables for the people, so perhaps they will be mindful. (14:24-25)

٧. وَكَذَلِكَ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا وَصَرَّفْنَا فِيهِ مِنَ الْوَعِيدِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ أَوْ يُحْدِثُ لَهُمْ ذِكْرًا

And so We have sent it down as an Arabic Quran and varied the warnings in it, so perhaps they will shun evil or it may cause them to be mindful. (20:113)

٨. أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ ۗ بَلْ هُوَ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ لِتُنذِرَ قَوْمًا مَّا أَتَاهُمْ مِنْ نَذِيرٍ مِمَّنْ قَبْلِكَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَهْتَدُونَ

Or do they say, ‘He has fabricated it!’? No! It is the truth from your Lord in order for you to warn a people to whom no warner has come before you, so they may be ‘rightly’ guided. (32:3)

٩. وَلَقَدْ ضَرَبْنَا لِلنَّاسِ فِي هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ مِنْ كُلِّ مَثَلٍ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا غَيْرَ ذِي عِوَجٍ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ

We have certainly set forth every ‘kind of’ lesson for people in this Quran, so perhaps they will be mindful. It is ‘a Quran ‘revealed’ in Arabic without any crookedness, so perhaps they will be conscious ‘of Allah’. (39:27-28)

١٠ . فَأَيَّمَا يَسَّرْنَاهُ بِلِسَانِكَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ

Indeed, We have made this 'Quran' easy in your own language 'O Prophet' so perhaps they will be mindful. (44:58)

The above is a sample of verses that demonstrate how Allah ﷻ invites the audience to engage with His message intellectually through deep reflection and thought.

3.3.5 Relating Stories and Narratives

Throughout the Quran, Allah relates a number of different stories and events that occurred in the past. The purpose of these narratives is not to simply provide information or relate historical facts. Rather, the purpose is for the reader or listener to think, reflect, and derive practical morals, lessons, reminders, and guidance. As Allah ﷻ says,

لَقَدْ كَانَ فِي قَصَصِهِمْ عِبْرَةٌ لِأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ ۗ مَا كَانَ حَدِيثًا يُفْتَرَىٰ وَلَكِن تَصَدِيقَ
الَّذِي بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَتَفْصِيلَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ

“There was certainly in their stories a lesson for those of understanding. Never was the Quran a narration invented, but a confirmation of what was before it and a detailed explanation of all things and guidance and mercy for a people who believe.”⁸⁴

Allah ﷻ also says,

ذَٰلِكَ مَثَلُ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا ۗ فَافْضُصْ الْقِصَصَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ سَاءَ مَثَلًا
الْقَوْمِ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَأَنْفُسَهُمْ كَانُوا يَظْلِمُونَ

“This is the example of the people who deny Our signs. So narrate 'to them' stories 'of the past', so perhaps they will reflect. What an evil example of those who denied Our signs! They 'only' wronged their own souls.”⁸⁵

The stories of the Quran are not entertainment or simple historical facts. The Quran narrates stories and events of the past through the perspective of guidance. That

⁸⁴ Quran 12:111

⁸⁵ Quran 7:176-177

is one of the reasons why Allah ﷻ has not related a complete story in chronological order, from beginning to end, with all its details. The only exception to this, and it's a partial exception, is the narrative of the Prophet Yūsuf mentioned in Sūrah Yūsuf. Allah ﷻ only relates those parts of the story that are relevant and related to guidance.

In Sūrah Hūd, Allah ﷻ says,

وَكُلًّا نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الرُّسُلِ مَا نُثَبِّتُ بِهِ فُؤَادَكَ ۚ وَجَاءَكَ فِي هَذِهِ الْحَقُّ
وَمَوْعِظَةٌ وَذِكْرٌ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ

“We narrate to you such stories from the events of the Messengers as We strengthen your heart therewith. And in these (stories) there has come to you the truth, a good counsel, and a reminder to those who believe.”⁸⁶

Another purpose of Quranic stories is to console, comfort, support, and provide inspiration to the Prophet ﷺ and his followers.

When talking about past stories, the Quran focuses primarily on the Prophets and Messengers. It has mentioned the stories of twenty-five Prophets with varying levels of detail from Adam until the last and final Messenger Muḥammad ﷺ. The Quran also mentions the stories of certain individuals and past nations. For example, Allah ﷻ relates the story of the people of the cave⁸⁷, the people of the ditch⁸⁸, and the people of the town⁸⁹. Oftentimes these stories are mentioned to console, comfort and reassure the Prophet ﷺ in response to the mockery, ridicule, and opposition he faced from his own people. Again, the purpose of these stories is not simply to provide historical information or a history lesson. The purpose is to derive moral lessons and general advice for daily life. There are treasures of wisdom hidden in these accounts.

These stories also serve to prove that Muḥammad ﷺ was truthful in his claim to prophethood. The Prophet ﷺ was unlettered; he did not know how to read or write. He had not kept the company of anyone who could teach him these stories. Yet he was still able to accurately narrate the stories of past prophets and nations. This is proof that the

⁸⁶ Quran 11:120

⁸⁷ Quran, 18

⁸⁸ Quran, 85

⁸⁹ Quran, 36

words he was reciting were revelation from Allah. The fact that he couldn't read or write is one of the greatest proofs that the Quran was revealed to him. Allah ﷻ says,

وَمَا كُنْتَ تَتْلُوا مِنْ قَبْلِهِ مِنْ كِتَابٍ وَلَا تَخُطُّهُ بِيَمِينِكَ إِذًا لَأَزْتَابَ الْمُبْطِلُونَ

“You ‘O Prophet’ could not read any writing ‘even’ before this ‘revelation’, nor could you write at all. Otherwise, the people of falsehood would have been suspicious.”⁹⁰

If the Prophet ﷺ would have known how to read and write, then people may have doubted his claim of Prophethood. Since he was unlettered, and that was well-known, then there was no doubt whatsoever. He could not have authored the Quran.

3.4 THE IMPORTANCE OF *AL-TADABBUR*

As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, and as is clear from the partial analysis presented above, one of the main objectives, if not the main objective, behind the Quran's revelation is for people to reflect upon its message in order to recognize, acknowledge, understand, and accept absolute truths. The importance, value, and significance of *tadabbur* can be understood from the various benefits it leads to and produces in the life of an individual. The benefits of *tadabbur* are varied; theological, practical, spiritual, and educational. All of these benefits underline why *tadabbur* is essential to one's engagement with the Quran.

3.4.1 Renewing and Increasing Faith

At the beginning of Sūrah al-Anfāl, Allah ﷻ provides a detailed description of the people of faith who have acknowledged and accepted the truth. One of their qualities or characteristics is that when the Quran is recited to them their faith increases. Allah ﷻ says,

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَجِلَّتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَإِذَا تُلِيَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُهُ زَادَتْهُمْ إِيمَانًا وَعَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ

⁹⁰ Quran 29:48

“The ‘true’ believers are only those whose hearts tremble at the remembrance of Allah, whose faith increases when His revelations are recited to them, and who put their trust in their Lord.”⁹¹

Faith, *īmān*, is described by theologians as a fascinating and unique reality. Linguistically the word إيمان is derived from the verb أمن \ يأمن, which means to be safe or feel safe. Later the word إيمان started being used to convey the meaning of تصديق, which means belief or faith. The reason or the relationship between the two meanings is that a person who is believed is now safe or protected from being rejected or called a liar. The primary linguistic meaning given for *īmān* is belief or faith, which is submission specifically through the heart.

Technically, throughout history scholars have defined *īmān* according to their own personal theological and religious context. Although the wording of the definitions may differ, they are describing the same reality. Some scholars, specifically the scholastic theologians, define *īmān* as believing everything that is necessarily known from the teachings of the Prophet A simpler version of this definition is to believe ﷺ⁹² everything that is necessarily known to be a part of the religion.⁹³

Another more comprehensive definition developed a little later on. It describes *īmān* as a complex reality made up of three primary components: 1) belief in the heart, 2) declaration with the tongue, and 3) actions with the limb. According to this definition, the root of *īmān* is the firm unshakeable belief in one’s heart in the existence and oneness of Allah ﷻ and all of the articles of faith. A person then declares this faith with the tongue through the testimony of faith, by saying, “I bear witness that there is no deity worthy of worship except for Allah, and I bear witness that Muḥammad ﷺ is His servant and messenger.” This faith then expresses itself through a person’s behavior and speech. According to the scholars of ḥadīth, a unique feature of faith is that it increases and decreases; it is not static. Faith is cyclical and can have highs and lows.

One of the ways of renewing and increasing faith is through the recitation of the Quran and reflection on its meanings. Reciting the Quran and listening to it with

⁹¹ Quran 8:2

⁹² التَّصْدِيقُ بِمَا عَلِمَ مُحَمَّدٌ النَّبِيُّ ﷺ بِهِ ضَرُورَةً، تَفْصِيلاً فِيمَا عَلِمَ تَفْصِيلاً وَإِجْمَالاً فِيمَا عَلِمَ إِجْمَالاً

⁹³ تَصْدِيقُ مَا عَلِمَ مِنَ الدِّينِ بِالضَّرُورَةِ

reflection with the intention of receiving guidance and acting upon it is one of the best ways of strengthening faith. When the verses of Allah ﷻ are recited to them, they reflect on them and it increases their faith. Reflection on Allah’s words has a direct impact on a person’s heart strengthening and fortifying their faith. *Tadabbur* is an act that involves the heart and mind. When a person pays close attention to what is being recited they may uncover a new meaning they were unaware of, be reminded about something they had forgotten, develop a desire in the heart to do good and work for Paradise or feel a sense of fear that will prevent them from disobedience. All of this leads to a renewal and increase of faith. Allah ﷻ says,

وَإِذَا مَا أَنْزَلْنَا سُورَةً فَمِنْهُمْ مَن يَقُولُ أَيُّكُمْ زَادَتْهُ هَذِهِ إِيمَانًا فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا فَزَادَتْهُمْ إِيمَانًا وَهُمْ يَسْتَبْشِرُونَ

“Whenever a sūrah is revealed, some of them ask ‘mockingly’, ‘Which of you has this increased in faith?’ As for the believers, it has increased them in faith, and they rejoice.”⁹⁴

3.4.2 Responding to Allah’s Invitation to *Tadabbur*

As demonstrated throughout this chapter, Allah ﷻ invites individuals, both believers and non-believers, to reflect on the meanings of the Quran. Anyone who engages in reflection upon Allah’s speech is responding to His invitation to do so. Allah ﷻ says in Sūrah al-Qamar,

وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْءَانَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِنْ مُدَكِّرٍ

“And We have certainly made the Quran easy to remember. So is there anyone who will be mindful?”⁹⁵

Allah ﷻ has made the Quran easy in several different ways. It is easy to read and recite. Muslims across the globe whose native tongue is not Arabic learn how to recite the Quran in Arabic from a very young age. Oftentimes, they are able to read the Quran fluently and proficiently with precision and correct pronunciation without understanding a single word. The Quran is easy to memorize. Hundreds of thousands,

⁹⁴ Quran 9:124

⁹⁵ Quran 54:17

if not millions, of Muslims from various backgrounds and ethnicities have memorized the Quran cover to cover. Most importantly, the Quran has been made easy to understand. That is one of the reasons why Allah ﷻ ends the verse by posing the rhetorical question, “So is there anyone who will be mindful?” Is there anyone who will reflect on the meanings of the Quran so that they can take heed of the lessons and reminders it contains? This is an indirect way of instructing people to reflect on the words and meanings of the Quran.

Allah ﷻ criticizes previous nations and communities that may have recited and preserved the words of their scripture but did not reflect on it. Allah ﷻ says in Sūrah al-Baqarah,

وَمِنْهُمْ أُمِّيُونَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا أَمَانِيٍّ وَإِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا يَظُنُّونَ

“Some of them are uneducated and know the Scripture only through wishful thinking. They rely on guesswork.”⁹⁶

ibn ‘Āshūr comments, “It is said that *al-amānī* (translated as wishful thinking) is recitation. Meaning, they only know the words of scripture that they memorize and study, but they don’t understand any of the meanings. This is the custom of misguided nations; they limit themselves to quickly reading scripture without understanding.”⁹⁷

The polytheists of Makkah heard the Quran directly from the Prophet ﷺ on several occasions and were amazed and mesmerized by its beauty, power, and eloquence. Despite that, they didn’t accept the Quran as Allah’s divine words, follow its guidance, or benefit from its light because they turned away from it in arrogance and pride. They refused to reflect on its meanings and take heed of its guidance and warnings. Allah ﷻ says,

فَدَكَانَتْ ءَايَاتِي تُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْكُمْ فَكُنْتُمْ عَلَىٰٰٓ أَعْقَابِكُمْ تَنْكِبُونَ مُسْتَكْبِرِينَ بِهِ سَلِيمًا
تَهَجَّرُونَ أَفَلَمْ يَدَّبَّرُوا الْقَوْلَ أَمْ جَاءَهُمْ مَا لَمْ يَأْتِ ءَابَاءَهُمُ الْأَوَّلِينَ

“Indeed, My revelations were recited to you, but you used to back away ‘in disgust’, boasting of the Sacred House, and babbling ‘nonsense about the Quran’ by night. Is it because they have never

⁹⁶ Quran 2:78

⁹⁷ ibn ‘Āshūr, *al-Tahrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 1:358

contemplated the Word 'of Allah'? Or 'because' there has come to them something that did not come to their forefathers?"⁹⁸

The believers and the hypocrites would sit in the same gathering next to each other in the presence of the Prophet ﷺ, witnessing the Quran being revealed upon the heart of the Prophet ﷺ and listening to him recite it, but would have vastly different reactions to it. The recitation of the Quran would strengthen and increase the faith of the believers and would increase the hypocrites in sickness and opposition. Allah ﷻ says,

وَإِذَا مَا أَنْزَلَتْ سُورَةً فَمِنْهُمْ مَن يَفُوقُ أَيُّكُمْ زَادَتْهُ هَلْدَيْهٖٓ إِيمَٰنًا ۗ فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ ءَآمَنُوا فَرَزَادَتْهُمْ إِيمَٰنًا وَهُمْ يَسْتَبْشِرُونَ ۖ وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ فَزَادَتْهُمْ رِجْسًا إِلَىٰ رِجْسِهِمْ وَمَاتُوا وَهُمْ كَافِرُونَ ۗ

“Whenever a sūrah is revealed, some of them ask ‘mockingly’, ‘Which of you has this increased in faith?’ As for the believers, it has increased them in faith and they rejoice. But as for those with sickness in their hearts, it has increased them only in wickedness upon their wickedness, and they die as disbelievers.”⁹⁹

3.4.3 Recognition of Allah ﷻ and His Divine Commands

One of the greatest benefits and wisdoms of *tadabbur* is that it leads towards a deeper recognition of the existence, oneness, might, power, glory, and magnificence of Allah ﷻ. Reflection on the Quran allows one to understand and connect with Allah ﷻ through His divine names and attributes. In Sūrah al-Ḥaṣhr, Allah ﷻ describes Himself saying,

هُوَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ۚ عَلِيمٌ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ ۚ هُوَ الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ ۚ هُوَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمَلِكُ الْقُدُّوسُ السَّلَامُ الْمُؤْمِنُ الْمُهَيَّمِنُ الْعَزِيزُ الْجَبَّارُ الْمُتَكَبِّرُ ۚ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ۚ هُوَ اللَّهُ الْخَلِيقُ الْبَارِئُ الْمُصَوِّرُ ۚ لَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ ۚ يُسَبِّحُ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ۚ

⁹⁸ Quran 23:66-68

⁹⁹ Quran 9:124-125

“He is Allah—there is no Allah ‘worthy of worship’ except Him: Knower of the seen and unseen. He is the Most Compassionate, Most Merciful. He is Allah—there is no Allah except Him: The King, the Most Holy, the All-Perfect, the Source of Serenity, the Watcher ‘of all’, the Almighty, the Supreme in Might, the Majestic. Glorified is Allah far above what they associate with Him ‘in worship’! He is Allah: the Creator, the Inventor, the Shaper. He ‘alone’ has the Most Beautiful Names. Whatever is in the heavens and the earth ‘constantly’ glorifies Him. And He is the Almighty, All-Wise.”¹⁰⁰

Through reflection, a person becomes aware of the divine commands of Allah ﷻ that regulate human conduct and behavior leading towards success in this life and the next. The Quran can be thought of as a guidebook for life, the instruction manual given to man in order to teach him how to live life according to the rule of Allah. In this context, the Quran is a book of law containing both commandments and prohibitions. The verses that talk about law are known as *Āyāt al-Aḥkām*, or legal verses. There are approximately three hundred and fifty verses that deal with laws. The commandments found in the Quran can be divided into two broad categories: devotional matters (*‘ibādāt*) and civil transactions (*mu‘āmalāt*). Devotional matters are rules that regulate the relationship between man and Creator, and civil transactions are concerned with man and his fellow humans.

There are verses that give basic guidelines for devotional matters such as purification, prayer, fasting, charity, ḥajj, and sacrifice. These are also classified as obligations to Allah ﷻ. The detailed rulings for these acts of worship are found in the Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ.

The verses talking about civil transactions discuss a wide range of subjects including marriage, divorce, paternity, inheritance, and family law. There are commandments applying to facets of commercial law such as sale, lease, and loan. There are verses that address issues related to criminal law such as murder, highway robbery, theft, drinking, adultery, and slanderous accusation. Other verses deal with matters related to civil law: justice, equality, evidence, consultation, personal rights, and freedoms.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Quran 59:22-24

¹⁰¹ Kamali, Hashim, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence*, 30

Although the Quran does contain some detailed legal rulings, most legal verses deal with broader principles and concepts. These verses provide general guidelines on every topic of Islamic Law. The details then come in the form of the actions, statements, and tacit approvals of the Prophet ﷺ¹⁰².

It is important to remember that the Quran is not a legal document even though it contains laws. The vast majority of verses deal with theology, morality, and guidance. The Quran contains verses that regulate social behavior by encouraging kindness, sympathy, compassion, care, forgiveness, love, mercy, patience, forbearance, steadfastness, courage, and generosity. Therefore, the Quran provides a complete moral, ethical, and legal code for life.

Allah ﷻ describes the Quran as a detailed explanation of every single thing.

هُوَآلَاءِ ؕ وَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ تِبْيَانًا لِّكُلِّ شَيْءٍ ؕ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً وَبُشْرَىٰ لِّلْمُسْلِمِينَ

“We have revealed to you the Book as an explanation of all things, a guide, a mercy, and good news for those who ‘fully’ submit.”¹⁰³

ibn Mas‘ūd said, “In the Quran, Allah ﷻ has explained every type of knowledge and everything.”¹⁰⁴ Mujāhid said, “Every lawful and unlawful thing.”¹⁰⁵ ibn Kathīr comments, “The Quran contains all kinds of beneficial knowledge, such as reports of what happened in the past, information about what is yet to come, what is lawful and unlawful, and what people need to know about their worldly affairs, their religion, their livelihood in this world, and their destiny in the Hereafter.”¹⁰⁶

3.4.4 Practical Application

Anyone who recites the Quran and reflects on its meanings will notice that the Quran invites towards belief, action, practical application, self-development, refinement of character, and spiritual reformation. This can be understood from the following verses.

¹⁰² Ibid, 30

¹⁰³ Quran 16:89

¹⁰⁴ al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi‘ al-Bayān*, 17:279

¹⁰⁵ ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Quran al-‘Azīm*, 4:594

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 4:594

وَلَوْ أَنَّا كَتَبْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ أَنْ اقْتُلُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ أَوْ اخْرَجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِكُمْ مَا فَعَلُوهُ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا
 مِّنْهُمْ ۗ وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ فَعَلُوا مَا يُوعَظُونَ بِهِ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُمْ وَأَشَدَّ تَثْبِيثًا وَإِذَا لَأَتَيْنَهُمْ مِّن
 لَّدُنَّا أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا وَهَدَيْنَاهُمْ صِرَاطًا مُسْتَقِيمًا

“If We had commanded them to sacrifice themselves or abandon their homes, none would have obeyed except for a few. Had they done what they were advised to do, it would have certainly been far better for them and more reassuring, and We would have granted them a great reward by Our grace and guided them to the Straight Path.”¹⁰⁷

This verse explicitly encourages people to act upon what they have been advised to do. Acting upon the guidance and instructions of Allah ﷻ is beneficial for human beings, a source of great reward, and guidance to the Straight Path.

There is a culture in many Muslim societies of reading and memorizing the Quran as a ritual and devotional practice. The Quran is recited and memorized as an act of worship to acquire rewards and blessings. Without a doubt, this is commendable and definitely a source of reward. The Prophet ﷺ said, “Whoever recites a letter from the Book of Allah will receive a reward, and a reward is multiplied by ten. I’m not saying that *alif-lām-mīm* is one letter, but *alif* is a letter, *lām* is a letter, and *mīm* is a letter.”¹⁰⁸ However, that is not the main purpose or objective behind reciting the Quran. The main purpose is to reflect upon its meanings and apply its guidance to one’s daily life. al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī remarked, “By Allah! A person does not reflect on the Quran by preserving its letters and neglecting its rulings. Someone may say, ‘I read the entire Quran and didn’t miss a single letter.’ By Allah, he has missed every letter because no effect of the Quran is seen in his character or deeds.”¹⁰⁹

This is an important quote showing that the earlier generation of Muslims understood that the purpose of reciting the Quran is to reflect and act. Allah ﷻ says in Sūrah al-Baqarah,

¹⁰⁷ Quran 4:66-68

¹⁰⁸ Tirmidhī, *k. thawāb al-Quran ‘an Rasūlillah, b. mā jā’a fī man qara’a ḥarfān min al-Quran mā lahu min al-ajar*, 2910. This narration is graded as ḥasan.

¹⁰⁹ ibn al-Mubārak, *al-Zuhd wa al-Raqā’iq*, 6:610

الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَتْلُونَهُ حَقَّ تِلَاوَتِهِ أُولَٰئِكَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ ۗ وَمَن يَكْفُرْ بِهِ ۗ
فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ

“Those to whom We have given the Book, and they recite it observing the rights of its recitation - they are the ones who believe in it. And those who disbelieve in it, they are the losers.”¹¹⁰

ibn Mas‘ūd said, “By the One in whose hand is my soul! The rights of its recitation or to consider its lawful as lawful and its unlawful as unlawful and to recite it just as Allah revealed it.”¹¹¹

Although Allah ﷻ describes the Quran as easy to remember, He ﷻ also describes it as a weighty or heavy revelation. It requires people of strength, resolve, and determination to carry it and implement it. That is one of the reasons why Allah ﷻ tells the Prophet ﷺ,

إِنَّا سُنُقِي عَلَيْكَ قَوْلًا ثَقِيلًا

“For We will soon send upon you a weighty revelation.”¹¹²

The Prophet ﷺ fulfilled the responsibility of carrying this heavy weight in the most complete way possible. He ﷺ was a physical manifestation of the teachings and guidance of the Quran. His life was built upon the beliefs, morals, values, and principles mentioned in the Quran. That is why when his wife ‘Ā’ishah was asked about his character she replied, “His character was the Quran.”¹¹³ The Prophet ﷺ had the noblest character and manners; he was extremely kind, gentle, caring, friendly, affable, generous, compassionate, patient, forbearing, forgiving, brave, humble, and simple. He dealt with people in the most beautiful way possible. Allah ﷻ praises him in the Quran saying,

وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ

“And you are surely on an excellent standard of character.”¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ Quran 2:121

¹¹¹ al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi‘ al-Bayān*, 2:567

¹¹² Quran 73:5

¹¹³ Bukhārī, *al-Adab al-Mufrad*, 14:308

¹¹⁴ Quran 68:4

The Companions followed in his footsteps and were described as copies of the Quran walking in the streets of Madinah. That is because they fulfilled the rights of the Quran through recitation, reflection, understanding, and application.

There are a number of reports from several Companions of the Prophet ﷺ that describe their methodology for learning and memorizing the Quran. The Companions would learn ten verses at a time from the Prophet ﷺ focusing on understanding them and applying them in their daily lives. Once they understood the verses and acted upon them, they would learn the next ten verses. The Companions would say, “We acquired knowledge and practice.”¹¹⁵ ibn ‘Umar remarked, “The noble Companions of the Prophet ﷺ from the earliest generation of Islam would only have a few chapters of the Quran memorized, but they were gifted with acting upon the Quran. In the later generations, the child and the blind recite the Quran but have not been gifted with acting upon it.”¹¹⁶

3.4.5 Repentance and Returning to Allah ﷻ

Reflecting on the speech of Allah ﷻ is a catalyst for people to repent and return to their Lord and Creator. The words of Allah ﷻ have a unique effect on the heart of a believer, pulling on its emotional strings, and creating a desire to reform oneself. Allah ﷻ says in Sūrah al-Zumar,

اللَّهُ نَزَلَ أَحْسَنَ الْحَدِيثِ كِتَابًا مُتَشَابِهًا مَثَابًا تَفْشَعُرُ مِنْهُ جُلُودُ الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ
ثُمَّ تَلِينُ جُلُودُهُمْ وَقُلُوبُهُمْ إِلَىٰ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ هُدَىٰ اللَّهِ يَهْدِي بِهِ ۚ مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۚ وَمَنْ
يُضَلِّلِ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ هَادٍ

“It is Allah Who has sent down the best message—a Book of perfect consistency and repeated lessons—which causes the skin and hearts of those who fear their Lord to tremble, then their skin and hearts soften at the mention of ‘the mercy of’ Allah. That is the guidance of Allah, through which He guides whoever He wills. But whoever Allah leaves to stray will be left with no guide.”¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ ibn Abī Shaybah, *Muṣannaḥ*, 6:117

¹¹⁶ Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi‘ lī Ahkām al-Quran*, 1:51

¹¹⁷ Quran 39:23

In this verse, Allah ﷻ is describing the effect the Quran has on a believer's heart. First, Allah ﷻ describes the Quran as the best message, which can be understood as the most beautiful discourse, revelation, and divine scripture sent to mankind. "A Book of perfect consistency and repeated lessons - which causes the skin and hearts of those who fear their Lord to tremble, then their skin and hearts soften at the mention of the mercy of Allah." Allah's speech creates goosebumps and causes hearts to shake out of a sense of fear, reverence, respect, awe, and wonder. At other times, the words of Allah ﷻ create a profound and deep sense of peace, contentment, comfort, and serenity. Allah ﷻ says,

الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَتَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوبُهُمْ بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ

"Those who believe and whose hearts find comfort in the remembrance of Allah. Surely in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find comfort."¹¹⁸

There are several reports regarding Companions of the Prophet ﷺ and scholars of the past who were deeply impacted by the words of Allah ﷻ leading to their repentance. al-Fuḍayl ibn 'Iyāḍ is a well-known scholar of the second century. Before becoming a scholar, he was the leader of a group of bandits that would raid caravans and rob travelers. According to a few reports, he changed his life after hearing someone recite 57:16. al-Qurtubī narrates that al-Fuḍayl was in love with a woman and had set a date with her to meet at night. As he was on his way to meet this woman, he overheard someone reciting,

أَلَمْ يَأْنِ لِلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا أَنْ تَخْشَعَ قُلُوبُهُمْ لِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَمَا نَزَلَ مِنَ الْحَقِّ وَلَا يَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَطَالَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْأَمَدُ فَقَسَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَكَثِيرٌ مِنْهُمْ فَاسِقُونَ

"Has the time not yet come for believers' hearts to be humbled at the remembrance of Allah and what has been revealed of the truth, and not be like those given the Scripture before—'those' who were spoiled for so long that their hearts became hardened. And many of them are 'still' rebellious."¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ Quran 13:28

¹¹⁹ Quran 57:16

As soon as he heard these words he stopped in his tracks and said, “Definitely. By Allah! The time has come.”¹²⁰

3.4.6 Guidance and its Results

Among the greatest benefits of engaging in *tadabbur* is acquiring guidance and its fruits. The Quran is primarily a book of guidance. Allah ﷻ describes the Quran as a guide for mankind.¹²¹ It is a guide for every single human being regardless of race, culture, ethnicity, and religion. More specifically it is a guide for the Allah-conscious.¹²² The Quran contains guidance for every single aspect of human life. It contains a detailed explanation of what humanity needs in terms of guidance and success both in this life and the next. Believers are encouraged to treat the Quran as a personal guidebook; a roadmap towards faith, practice, morality, ethics, Allah-consciousness, obedience, worship, paradise, and essentially the Divine. Everything that is mentioned in the Quran is done so for the guidance of humanity. The stories and parables, commands and prohibitions, signs in the universe and the human body, and everything else mentioned is for guidance. The way to extract and acquire this divine guidance is through deep reflection. That is why Allah ﷻ encourages reflection explicitly and implicitly throughout the Quran.

al-Nawawī writes, “At the beginning and during recitation, one’s state should be that of humility and reflection. There is boundless evidence for this - very well-known and too obvious to be mentioned here. [This state] is the sought-after objective, through which breasts are opened and hearts illuminated.”¹²³ The state of humility and reflection leads towards guidance and illumination, which is one of the main objectives behind the Quran’s revelation. Allah ﷻ says in Sūrah Ibrāhīm,

أَلَمْ يَكْتُبْ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ لِتُخْرِجَ النَّاسَ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ
الْعَزِيزِ الْحَمِيدِ

¹²⁰ Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi‘ li Ahkām al-Quran*, 20:255

¹²¹ Quran 2:185

¹²² Quran 2:2

¹²³ Nawawī, *al-Tibyān fī Ādāb Hamalah al-Quran*, 81

“Alif-Lām-Ra. ‘This is’ a Book which We have revealed to you ‘O Prophet’ so that you may lead people out of darkness and into light, by the Will of their Lord, to the Path of the Almighty, the Praiseworthy.”¹²⁴

Allah ﷻ also says,

يَأْهَلِ الْكِتَابِ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولُنَا يُبَيِّنُ لَكُمْ كَثِيرًا مِمَّا كُنْتُمْ تُخْفُونَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَيَعْفُو عَنْ كَثِيرٍ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ نُورٌ وَكِتَابٌ مُبِينٌ يَهْدِي بِهِ اللَّهُ مَنِ اتَّبَعَ رِضْوَانَهُ سُبُلَ السَّلَامِ وَيُخْرِجُهُم مِّنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ بِإِذْنِهِ وَيَهْدِيهِمْ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ

“There certainly has come to you from Allah a light and a clear Book through which Allah guides those who seek His pleasure to the ways of peace, brings them out of darkness and into light by His Will, and guides them to the Straight Path.”¹²⁵

ibn ‘Abbās said, “Whoever recites the Quran and follows what is in it, Allah ﷻ will guide them away from error, and protect them on the Day of Judgment from a difficult accounting. For anyone who follows the Quran, Allah ﷻ guarantees that they will not go astray in this life nor suffer in the next.”¹²⁶ As Allah ﷻ says in Sūrah ṬāHā,

قَالَ أَهْبِطَا مِنْهَا جَمِيعًا بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ فَإِمَّا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ مِنِّي هُدًى فَمَنِ اتَّبَعَ هُدَايَ فَلَا يَضِلُّ وَلَا يَشْقَى

“Allah said, “Descend, both of you, from here together ‘with Satan’ as enemies to each other. Then when guidance comes to you from Me, whoever follows My guidance will neither go astray ‘in this life’ nor suffer ‘in the next’.”¹²⁷

The guidance being referred to in the verse is in the form of prophets, messengers, and scriptures. Not only did Allah send down guidance in the form of books, but he also sent instructors to teach those books. Allah has blessed us with guidance and practical examples - in the lives of prophets and messengers - of how to use it. Whoever follows this guidance by accepting it, believing in it, and most

¹²⁴ Quran 14:1

¹²⁵ Quran 5:15-16

¹²⁶ Qurtubī, *al-Jāmi‘ lī Ahkām al-Quran*, 9:1

¹²⁷ Quran 20:123

importantly acting upon it, will not go astray nor suffer. They will not go astray in the life of this world, and they will not suffer in the world to come.

Engaging in *tadabbur* is a means of acquiring Allah’s divine mercy. Allah ﷻ says in Sūrah al-A‘rāf,

وَإِذَا قُرِئَ الْقُرْآنُ فَاسْتَمِعُوا لَهُ وَأَنْصِتُوا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ

“When the Quran is recited, listen to it attentively and be silent, so you may be shown mercy.”¹²⁸

In this verse, Allah ﷻ is instructing the audience to listen attentively and be silent when the Quran is being recited. The purpose of listening attentively and remaining silent is so one can concentrate, focus, and reflect on what is being recited. This engagement with the Quran results in receiving Allah’s divine mercy. Allah’s mercy is special and unique; it is not like human mercy. Human mercy is finite and limited, whereas, the mercy of Allah ﷻ is infinite and limitless. Allah ﷻ says,

وَرَحْمَتِي وَسِعَتْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ

“My mercy encompasses everything.”¹²⁹

The Prophet ﷺ said, “Allah created mercy in one hundred parts and He retained with Him ninety-nine parts, and He has sent down upon the earth one part, and it is because of this one part that there is mutual love among the creation so much so that the animal lifts up its hoof from its young one, fearing that it might harm it.”¹³⁰

Acquiring guidance and mercy through reflection leads to unimaginable blessings in one’s life. Allah ﷻ describes the Quran as being blessed. He ﷻ says,

كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ مُبَارَكٌ لِيَدَّبَّرُوا آيَاتِهِ ۖ وَلِيَتَذَكَّرَ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

“This is” a blessed Book which We have revealed to you ‘O Prophet’ so that they may contemplate its verses, and people of reason may be mindful.”¹³¹ Allah ﷻ also says,

¹²⁸ Quran 7:204

¹²⁹ Quran 7:156

¹³⁰ Muslim, *k. al-tawbah, b. fī sa‘ah raḥmatillāh*, 2752

¹³¹ Quran 38:29

وَهَذَا ذِكْرٌ مُّبَارَكٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ ۗ أَفَأَنْتُمْ لَهُ مُنْكَرُونَ

“And this ‘Quran’ is a blessed reminder which We have revealed. Will you ‘pagans’ then deny it?”¹³²

The Quran is blessed in every way possible; its words, meanings, instructions, guidance, commands, prohibitions, stories, and parables. Its recitation, memorization, and study is a source of immense blessings in a person’s life. The Prophet ﷺ said, “Whoever recites a letter from the Book of Allah receives a reward and a reward is multiplied by ten. I’m not saying the alif-lām-mīm is a letter, but alif is a letter, lām is a letter, and mīm is a letter.”¹³³

3.4.7 A Spiritual and Intellectual Cure

Throughout the Quran, Allah ﷻ makes it clear that the Quran is a cure for spiritual ailments. It is a cure that treats false and corrupt beliefs, attitude, mindset, behavior, character, spiritual diseases, and other internal ailments. It is a cure for disbelief, hypocrisy, hatred, enmity, arrogance, pride, love of material things, jealousy, envy, and ostentation. Allah ﷻ says,

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَاءَتْكُمْ مَوْعِظَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَشِفَاءٌ لِّمَا فِي الصُّدُورِ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةٌ
لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ

“O humanity! Indeed, there has come to you a warning from your Lord, a cure for what is in the hearts, a guide, and a mercy for the believers.”¹³⁴

وَنُنزِّلُ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ مَا هُوَ شِفَاءٌ وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ۗ وَلَا يَزِيدُ الظَّالِمِينَ إِلَّا خَسَارًا ٨٢

“We send down the Quran as a healing and mercy for the believers, but it only increases the wrongdoers in loss.”¹³⁵

¹³² Quran 21:50

¹³³ Tirmidhī, *k. thawāb al-quran ‘an rasūlillāh, b. mā jā’a fī man qara’a ḥarfān min kitābillāh mā lahu min al-ajar*, 2910. This narration is graded as ḥasan.

¹³⁴ Quran 10:57

¹³⁵ Quran 17:82

وَلَوْ جَعَلْنَاهُ قُرْءَانًا أَعْجَمِيًّا لَقَالُوا لَوْلَا فُصِّلَتْ آيَاتُهُ ۖ ءَأَعْجَمِيٌّ وَعَرَبِيٌّ ۗ قُلْ هُوَ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا هُدًى وَشِفَاءٌ ۖ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ فِي آذَانِهِمْ وَقْرٌ وَهُوَ عَلَيْهِمْ عَمًى ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ يُنَادُونَ مِنْ مَّكَانٍ بَعِيدٍ

“Had We revealed it as a non-Arabic Quran, they would have certainly argued, “If only its verses were made clear ‘in our language’. What! A non-Arabic revelation for an Arab audience!” Say, ‘O Prophet,’ “It is a guide and a healing to the believers. As for those who disbelieve, there is deafness in their ears and blindness to it ‘in their hearts’. It is as if they are being called from a faraway place.”¹³⁶

In all of these verses Allah ﷻ refers to the Quran as a *shifā*, or a cure. Most exegetes explain this as a spiritual cure that serves as treatment for intellectual doubts and various diseases of the heart. When a person engages with the Quran and reflects on its message, it will lead toward clarity and certainty. It will also help cleanse and polish a person’s heart helping it overcome spiritual diseases that cause it to become polluted and dirty. A man once said to al-Ḥasan, “O Abū Sa‘īd, I complain to you about the hardness of my heart.” He said, “Soften it with the remembrance of Allah.”¹³⁷

According to several authorities - such as, ibn Kathīr¹³⁸, al-Qurṭubī¹³⁹, al-Ghazālī, and al-Nawawī - the Quran is also a form of physical cure for certain ailments and diseases. Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī narrated, “Some of the Companions of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ came across a tribe of Bedouins that did not entertain them, nor behave hospitably with them. Their leader became ill, and they came to us saying, 'Do you have any medicine?' We said, 'Yes. But you did not entertain us nor have us as guests so we will not do anything until you give us something [in return for the treatment].' Then they gave some sheep. He said, 'So a man from us began reciting the Opening of the Book (Sūrah al-Fātiḥah) and he was cured. So when we came to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ we mentioned [the incident] to him. He ﷺ said, 'How did you know it [al-Fātiḥah] was *ruqyah* (quranic healing)?' And he did not mention any prohibition against it, and he

¹³⁶ Quran 41:44

¹³⁷ Farid, *The Purification of the Soul*, 38

¹³⁸ ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Quran al-‘Azīm*, 1:151-152

¹³⁹ Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi‘ lī Ahkām al-Quran*, 1:174

said, 'Eat and assign me a share among you from the (sheep).''¹⁴⁰ In this narration, a Companion of the Prophet ﷺ used recitation of the Quran as a cure or medicine for a physical ailment.

al-Ghazālī writes, “The Quran is a healing for the hearts, a light for the souls, and a guidance for the minds. It is the source of all knowledge and the foundation of all wisdom. It is a cure for every ailment and a remedy for every disease.”¹⁴¹ ibn al-Qayyim writes, “The entire Quran is a cure; it is a cure for hearts from ignorance, doubt, and uncertainty. Allah ﷻ has not sent down a more comprehensive and beneficial medicine to remove any ailment than the Quran.”¹⁴² Similarly, al-Nawawī says, “The Quran is a healing for what is in the chests (hearts) from diseases and it is a guidance and mercy for the believers. Allah has made it a cure for the hearts, a light for the eyes, and a mercy for the souls of the believers. It is a means of seeking the pleasure of Allah and attaining success in the Hereafter.”¹⁴³ ibn al-Qayyim also writes, “If a person uses the healing with al-Fātiḥah properly, he would see some great effects in the process of healing. I resided in Makkah for a period where I was stricken with some illness but was unable to find a doctor or medicine. I simply treated myself with al-Fātiḥah, and witnessed some amazing effects. I offered this treatment to anyone who suffered pain, and most of them were cured within a short period of time.”¹⁴⁴

For the Quran to serve as a cure, both spiritual and physical, it requires a person to engage in deep reflection. “All the illnesses of the heart result from desires and doubt, and the Quran is a cure for both. It has enough clear signs and proofs to distinguish between truth and falsehood, and thus it cures the diseases of doubt which ruin knowledge, understanding and perception, by enabling a person to see things as they are. Whoever studies the Quran, and allows it to be absorbed by his heart, will recognize truth and falsehood and will be able to distinguish between them, just as he is able to distinguish between night and day. As for curing the diseases that arise from desires, it

¹⁴⁰ Tirmidhī, *k. al-ṭibb ‘an rasūlillah, b. mā jā’a fī akdh al-ajr ‘alā al-ta’wīdh*, 2064. This narration is graded as ṣaḥīḥ.

¹⁴¹ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’ Ulūm al-Dīn*, 1:35

¹⁴² ibn al-Qayyim, *al-Dā’a wa al-Dawā’a*, 22

¹⁴³ al-Nawawī, *al-Adhkār*, 3

¹⁴⁴ ibn al-Qayyim, *al-Dā’a wa al-Dawā’a*, 22

is because it contains wisdom and good counsel. This recommends avoiding worldly gains and inspires a yearning for the hereafter.”¹⁴⁵

3.4.8 Contentment in the World and a Desire for the Hereafter

A person who reflects on the message of the Quran naturally develops a desire to meet his Lord and Creator. It creates a sense of hope leading to a person looking forward to forgiveness, grace, pardon, mercy, and reward. As a result of their desire to meet Allah ﷻ and earn eternal bliss and happiness, they are able to detach their hearts from the life of this world. They understand with certainty that material possessions are temporary and that reward in the Hereafter is eternal.

One of the most powerful and constant reminders throughout the Quran is that the life of this world is temporary. It is not going to last forever. In several places throughout the Quran, Allah ﷻ reminds humanity about the reality of the life of this world. This world is temporary and fleeting and will eventually come to an end. The life to come, the life of the hereafter, is a life of eternity. Allah ﷻ says,

يَا قَوْمِ إِنَّمَا هَذِهِ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا مَتَاعٌ وَإِنَّ الْآخِرَةَ هِيَ دَارُ الْقَرَارِ

“My people, the life of this world is only a brief enjoyment; it is the Hereafter that is the lasting home.”¹⁴⁶

قُلْ مَتَاعُ الدُّنْيَا قَلِيلٌ وَالْآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ لِّمَنِ اتَّقَى

“Say, The enjoyment of this world is little, and the Hereafter is better for he who fears Allah.”¹⁴⁷

بَلْ تُؤْتَوْنَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا * وَالْآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَى

“But you prefer the worldly life, while the Hereafter is better and more enduring.”¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ Farid, *The Purification of the Soul*, 40

¹⁴⁶ Quran 40:39

¹⁴⁷ Quran 4:77

¹⁴⁸ Quran 87:16-17

وَمَا هَـٰذِهِ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا هُـٰوَ وَلَعِبٍ ۖ وَإِنَّ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ لَهِيَ الْحَيَوَانُ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ

“And this worldly life is not but diversion and amusement. And indeed, the home of the Hereafter - that is the [eternal] life, if only they knew.”¹⁴⁹

وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا لَعِبٌ وَهُوَ ۖ وَلِلْآخِرَةِ خَيْرٌ لِلَّذِينَ يَتَّقُونَ ۖ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ

“And the worldly life is not but amusement and diversion; but the home of the Hereafter is best for those who fear Allah, so will you not reason?”¹⁵⁰

The Quran constantly reminds humanity not to be fooled, tricked, and deceived by the life of this world.

وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا مَتَاعُ الْعُرُورِ

“And what is the life of this world except the enjoyment of delusion?”¹⁵¹

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ ۖ فَلَا تَغُرَّنَّكُمُ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا ۖ وَلَا يَغُرَّنَّكُم بِاللَّهِ الْعُرُورُ

“O mankind, indeed the promise of Allah is truth, so let not the worldly life delude you and be not deceived about Allah by the Deceiver.”¹⁵²

One of the most consuming and powerful diseases of the heart is love of the world. Ḥasan al-Baṣrī said, “Love of the world is the origin of every sin.”¹⁵³ If a person were to get to the root cause of every single sin they will find that it is the love of this world. The word “*dunya*” literally translates as the world. It shares the same root letters as the verb *dana/yadnu*, which means to be near or to be close. It can also mean to be low or lowly. This world is called the *dunya* because of its nearness or because of its lowliness. It signifies the enjoyments, blessings or good of the present world or life; worldly blessings or prosperity. The term is used to refer to temporal things or material possessions, earthly things or concerns. It is not just the world and everything it

¹⁴⁹ Quran 29:64

¹⁵⁰ Quran 6:32

¹⁵¹ Quran 3:185

¹⁵² Quran 35:5

¹⁵³ Suyūfī, *al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaghīr*, 3646

contains. Rather, it is everything that pleases the self and does not lead to merit in the life to come. This can include wealth, property, material possessions, clothes, shoes, jewelry, televisions, cell phones, tablets, watches, cars, homes, food and drink, sex, sports, and anything else that may take a person away from remembrance of the life to come. Anything in this world that distracts a person from their true purpose in life can be classified as *dunya*. The Quran and Sunnah encourage faithful believers to limit indulgence in worldly pleasures and pursuits.

Allah ﷻ says in Sūrah al-Kahf,

الْمَالُ وَالْبَنُونَ زِينَةُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ۗ وَالْبَاقِيَاتُ الصَّالِحَاتُ خَيْرٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ ثَوَابًا وَخَيْرٌ
أَمَلًا

“Wealth and children are the adornment of this worldly life, but the everlasting good deeds are far better with your Lord in reward and in hope.”¹⁵⁴

The word “*zīnah*” means beauty, adornment, and decoration. Wealth and children have been made attractive and beautiful for; they capture one’s attention. Allah ﷻ says something similar in Sūrah Āl ‘Imrān,

زُيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ حُبُّ الشَّهَوَاتِ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ وَالْبَنِينَ وَالْقَنَاطِيرِ الْمُقَنْطَرَةِ مِنَ الذَّهَبِ
وَالْفِضَّةِ وَالْخَيْلِ الْمُسَوَّمَةِ وَالْأَنْعَامِ وَالْحَرْثِ ۗ ذَلِكَ مَتَاعُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ۗ وَاللَّهُ عِنْدَهُ
حُسْنُ الْمَآبِ

“Made to seem fair unto mankind is the love of passions, among them women, children, hoarded heaps of gold and silver, horses of mark, cattle and tillage. Those are the enjoyments of the life of this world. And Allah, with Him is the beautiful return.”¹⁵⁵

Allah ﷻ also says,

إِنَّمَا أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَأَوْلَادُكُمْ فِتْنَةٌ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عِنْدَهُ أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ

“Your wealth and your children are only a test for you. There is great reward with Allah.”¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ Quran 18:46

¹⁵⁵ Quran 3:14

¹⁵⁶ Quran 64:15

Regarding wealth and children Allah also says,

إِنَّمَا أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَأَوْلَادُكُمْ فِتْنَةٌ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عِنْدَهُ أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ

“O believers! Indeed, some of your spouses and children are enemies to you, so beware of them.”¹⁵⁷

Allah ﷻ describes wealth and children as the adornment of the life of this world, a test, and enemies. This only holds true when they become a distraction and interfere with one’s true purpose in life.

It’s important to note that this isn’t a bad thing in and of itself. Islam doesn’t prevent people from enjoying these things. As a matter of fact, they have been praised elsewhere in the Quran and Ḥadīth. That is why the Sharī‘ah provides the correct guidelines and ways in which to enjoy them. They should never take one away or prevent one from fulfilling their true purpose in life, which is to worship Allah .ﷻ The Quran reminds that just like anything else in this world they too will one day cease to exist. Humanity shouldn’t be fooled, deceived, and tricked by them as well. They shouldn’t place all of their hopes, expectations, wants, and wishes in the finite.

Rather they should focus on what is everlasting; those things that will benefit them in this world and more importantly in the next. “And the everlasting good deeds are of far greater merit in your Lord’s sight, and a far better source of hope.” “The everlasting good deeds” include every single good deed; whether they’re big or small. This includes all acts of worship such as praying, fasting, giving charity, supplication, and dhikr. It includes being kind to one’s families, parents, children, relatives, friends, and neighbors. All of these things “are of far greater merit in your Lord’s sight, and a far better source of hope” because their consequences are everlasting. ibn ‘Abbās mentions that the “everlasting good deeds” are the five daily prayers or any righteous statement or action. He also said they are to say *subḥānAllah, alḥamdulillah, lā ilāha illa Allah* and *Allahu Akbar*.¹⁵⁸ al-Imām Mālik records a narration that mentions they are “a slave's saying Allah is greater (*Allah Akbar*) and Glory be to Allah (*subḥanallah*) and Praise be to Allah (*al-ḥamd lillah*) and There is no Allah but Allah and there is no power and no strength except by Allah (*lā ilāha illa Allah wa la ḥawla wa la quwwatah*

¹⁵⁷ Quran 64:12

¹⁵⁸ Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi‘ fī Ahkām al-Quran*, 13:292

illa bi Allah).¹⁵⁹ Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said, “Increase the everlasting virtues.” It was said, “What are they, O Messenger of Allah ﷺ?” He said, al-Takbīr, al-tahlīl, al-tasbīḥ, al-tahmīd, and *lā ḥawla wa la quwwatah illa bi Allah*.¹⁶⁰ Abū Dardā’a narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said, “I advise you to say *subḥānallah*, *al-ḥamd lillah*, *lā ilāha illa Allah*, *Allah akbar* and *lā ḥawla wa lā quwwatah illa billah*. They shed sins like a tree sheds its leaves.”¹⁶¹ Anas narrates that the Prophet ﷺ passed by a tree with dry leaves, so he struck it with his staff, making the leaves fall. Then he said, “Indeed, all praise is due to Allah, (*al-ḥamdulillāh*), glory to Allah (*subḥān Allah*), none has the right to be worshipped but Allah (*lā Ilāha Illa Allah*), and Allah is the greatest (*Allah akbar*) cause the sins to fall from the worshipper, just as the leaves of this tree fall.”¹⁶² ‘Alī said, “Wealth and children are the harvest of the world, and righteous deeds are the harvest of the hereafter. And Allah has gathered both for some people.”

All of these things - righteous deeds, statements, acts of worship and obedience - are more valuable than any material possession. And the rationale behind it is simple and straightforward, “And the everlasting good deeds are of far greater merit in your Lord’s sight, and a far better source of hope.”

al-Ghazālī said, “The believer should always keep the Day of Judgment and the Hereafter in mind, for this will motivate them to do good deeds and avoid sins.”¹⁶³ ibn Qudāmah writing on the same theme says, “The wise person is one who remembers the Hereafter constantly and prepares for it diligently, knowing that this world is only a temporary abode.”¹⁶⁴ ibn al-Qayyim writes, “The efforts of a believer are connected to the hereafter. Everything in this world causes them to remember the hereafter. When they see the darkness of night they remember the darkness of the grave. When they see pain they remember punishment, when they hear a frightening sound, they remember the sounding of the trumpet. When they see people sleeping, they remember death in the graves. When they experience a joy they remember Paradise. Therefore, their efforts

¹⁵⁹ Mālik, *al-Muwaṭṭa*, k. *al-Quran*, 25

¹⁶⁰ Aḥmad, *Musnad*, 11731

¹⁶¹ ibn Mājah, k. *al-adab*, b. *faḍl al-tasbīḥ*, 3813. This particular narration is classified as being weak, but there are other authentic narrations that support its meaning.

¹⁶² Tirmidhī, k. *al-da‘wāt ‘an rasūlillah*, 3533. This narration is graded as ḥasan.

¹⁶³ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, 9:542

¹⁶⁴ ibn Qudāmah, *Mukhtaṣar Minhāj al-Qāsidīn*, 469

are connected to what is there, and that preoccupies them from focusing on what is here.”¹⁶⁵

Reflecting upon the message of the Quran allows a person to internalize these truths and realities, leading towards contentment. The process of contentment in this world starts with being content and pleased with Allah , ﷻ His messenger, and His way of life that He has chosen for humanity. Once a person acquires that level of contentment, they will be content with what Allah ﷻ has provided them with materially in the world. The Prophet ﷺ said, “One who is pleased with Allah ﷻ as their Lord, Islam as their way of life, and Muḥammad ﷺ as the Messenger has tasted the sweetness of faith.”¹⁶⁶ Allah ﷻ says,

يَأْتِيهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ أَرْجِعِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً فَادْخُلِي فِي عِبَادِي
وَأَدْخُلِي جَنَّاتِي

“Allah will say to the righteous, ‘O tranquil soul! Return to your Lord, well pleased [with Him] and well-pleasing [to Him]. So join My servants, and enter My Paradise.’”¹⁶⁷

3.4.9 Character Refinement

Reflecting on the message of the Quran and engaging with its guidance helps one reform and refine their character, speech, and behavior. The importance of *akhlāq*, or good character, in Islam can’t be overstated. In today’s society, when a person thinks of religion they think of rules and regulations, restrictions, and devotional acts of worship. Generally, when a person hears the word Islam, automatically they think of praying, fasting, giving charity, and reading Quran. These devotional acts of worship are a fundamental part of Islam as way of life, but they aren’t the only part. As a matter of fact, our success simply isn’t in prayers, fasting, charity, or hajj. Rather, it is in good manners coupled with these acts of worship.

The Prophet ﷺ himself described perfecting good manners as the reason why he

¹⁶⁵ ibn al-Qayyim, *Ṣayd al-Khāṭir*, 315

¹⁶⁶ Muslim, *k. al-īmān*, *b. dhāq ṭa’im al-īmān*, 12

¹⁶⁷ 89:27-30

was sent as a Prophet. “I have only been sent to perfect good character.”¹⁶⁸ Through this statement, the Prophet ﷺ explained that one of the primary objectives of his mission was to perfect good character. Interestingly, the acts of worship that have been prescribed in Islam help a person build good character.

Akhlāq isn’t simply a few manners or qualities; rather, it is a group of praiseworthy characteristics and qualities that a person has. For example, generosity, forbearance, forgiveness, leniency, chastity, fairness, gentleness, humility, justice, mercy, kindness, honesty, and bravery. That is why when a person is polite and respectful to others, humble and kind to the poor and needy, they are showing good character.

The Prophet ﷺ throughout his life stressed the importance of having good character both in speech and deed. The Prophet ﷺ said, “The believers most complete in faith are those who have the best character.”¹⁶⁹ When asked about what deeds will lead people to Paradise, the Prophet ﷺ responded, “Allah-consciousness and good character.”¹⁷⁰ When he was sending Mu‘ādh as a governor to Yemen he ﷺ reminded him, “and show good manners in your dealing with others.”¹⁷¹

Not only did the Prophet ﷺ encourage others to have good character but he showed them how to as well practically. The Prophet ﷺ had the best character himself. Anything he said about character he practiced himself. Allah ﷻ addressed the Prophet ﷺ saying,

وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ

“And verily, you (Muḥammad) are on an exalted standard of character.”¹⁷²

Anything the Quran mentioned regarding character, the Prophet ﷺ embodied it. That is why when ‘Āishah was asked about the character of the Prophet ﷺ, she said,

¹⁶⁸ Haythamī, *Majma‘ al-Zawā‘id*, 9:18

¹⁶⁹ Abū Dāwūd, *k. al-Sunnah, b. al-dalīl ‘alā ziyādah al-īmān wa nuṣṣānihī*, 4682. This narration is graded as ḥasan.

¹⁷⁰ Tirmidhī, *k. Al-birr wa al-ṣilah ‘an rasūlillah*, ﷺb. *Mā jā’a fī ḥusn al-khuluq*, 2004. This narration is graded as ṣaḥīḥ.

¹⁷¹ Tirmidhī, *k. Al-birr wa al-ṣilah ‘an rasūlillah*, ﷺb. *Mā jā’a fī mu‘āsharah al-nās*, 1987. This narration is graded as ḥasan.

¹⁷² Quran 68:4

“His character was the Quran.”¹⁷³ Literally, he was a walking and talking Quran. Anyone who engages deeply with the Quran will be influenced by its message, leading toward character development and refinement.

3.4.10 Awakening and Reformation

History has witnessed the transformative power of the Quran upon the human heart. Reflecting upon the Quran and engaging with its theological, moral, and practical guidance has been the cause of individuals and communities changing their lives. The message of the Quran served as a catalyst for a great awakening and reformation within the lives of the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ. As soon as they heard the words of the Quran, they realized that they were not the words of a human being. They realized and felt the divine and miraculous nature of Allah’s speech.

An example of this is the story of how ‘Umar came into the fold of Islam. The opening verses of Sūrah ṬāHā touched his heart, completely changing his mindset and attitude towards the Prophet ﷺ and his message. He had initially set out to assassinate the Prophet ﷺ, but instead, after listening to the first few verses of Sūrah ṬāHā, he accepted Islam. His acceptance of Islam was a response to the Prophet’s ﷺ supplication. ibn ‘Umar narrates that the Prophet ﷺ supplicated, “O Allah! Give strength to Islam through the more beloved of the following to you; ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb or Abū Jahl ibn Hishām.” ibn ‘Umar continued, “And the most beloved of them to Him was ‘Umar.”¹⁷⁴

One day, ‘Umar ibn Khaṭṭāb set out with sword in hand fully determined to kill the Prophet ﷺ. Nu‘aym ibn ‘Abd Allah¹⁷⁵ met him on the way and asked, “Where are you going O ‘Umar?” He said, “I want to kill Muḥammad who has divided the Quraysh, vilified their faith, taken them away from their belief, and belittled their idols.” Nu‘aym said, “By Allah O ‘Umar! You are deceiving yourself. If you kill Muḥammad, do you really think that his clan Banū ‘Abd Munāf will spare you and let you go freely? If you have any sense, take care of your own sister and her husband because they both have

¹⁷³ Bukhārī, *al-Adab al-Mufrad*, 308

¹⁷⁴ Tirmidhī, *k. al-manāqib ‘an rasūlillah, b. manāqib ‘Umar*, 3681. This narration is graded as ḥasan.

¹⁷⁵ Another narration mentions that the Companion who met ‘Umar was Sa’d ibn abī Waqqās.

become Muslims and have accepted the religion of Muḥammad ﷺ” This news shocked and angered ‘Umar and he immediately headed toward his sister’s home. It just so happened that as he was approaching her home, Khabbāb ibn al-Aratt was teaching her and her husband the opening verses of Sūrah ṬāHā from some parchments.

When they heard ‘Umar approaching, Khabbāb hid and ‘Umar’s sister, Fāṭimah, hid the parchments on which the Quran was written. ‘Umar had heard them reciting something and asked what it was. He asked, “What was that whispering I heard coming from you?” They said it was nothing and that they were just conversing among themselves. He said, “I have been told that both of you have followed Muḥammad and his religion.” His brother-in-law responded, “Perhaps the truth is another way of life.” This angered ‘Umar and he physically assaulted his brother-in-law, Sa‘īd in Zaid. His sister tried to intervene, and, in his anger, he struck her causing her to bleed.

She then said defiantly, “Alright. Now you listen! It is true that we have become Muslims and we believe in Allah ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ so do whatever you want.” When ‘Umar saw that his sister was bleeding he felt a great sense of remorse and sorrow. He calmed down and asked her to show him what they were reading. Before she gave him the parchments, she had him bathe and purify himself. He read the first few verses and said, “How beautiful and noble is this speech!”

When Khabbāb heard this he came out and said, “O ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb. Allah is very merciful and it’s my belief that He has chosen you in response to the wish of the Prophet ﷺ. I heard him making the following supplication yesterday, ‘O Allah! Strengthen Islam through Abū al-Ḥakam ibn Hishām (Abū Jahl) or ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb.’ By Allah O ‘Umar! This is your chance. ‘Umar then went to the Prophet ﷺ at Dār al-Arqam and accepted Islam.”¹⁷⁶

ibn al-Qayyim wrote, “There is nothing more beneficial and salvific for a servant of Allah, in this life and the next, than pondering the Quran, meditating on it for long periods of time, concentrating one’s thoughts on the meanings of its verses.”¹⁷⁷ ibn al-Qayyim emphasizes that there is nothing more beneficial for a servant of Allah, in this life and the next, than deeply contemplating the Quran. Meditating on its verses

¹⁷⁶ ibn Hishām, *al-Sīrah al-Nabawiyyah*, 1:272

¹⁷⁷ ibn al-Qayyim, *Ranks of the Divine Seekers*, 40-42

enlightens the soul about the essence of good and evil, their causes and consequences, and the paths leading to each. This reflection grants profound knowledge, strengthens faith, and reveals the realities of this world and the Hereafter. It educates about Allah's justice and grace, the soul's nature, the righteous path to Paradise, and the misguidance leading to Hell. By pondering the Quran, one gains clarity, discernment, and a heart filled with strength and joy, fundamentally transforming their interactions with others.¹⁷⁸

There are similar ideas expressed by scholars throughout history. al-Rāzī said, "Pondering the Quran is the foundation of all knowledge, for it contains the wisdom and guidance of Allah. It is a treasure trove of knowledge that can never be exhausted."¹⁷⁹

3.5 SUMMARY AND INSIGHTS

Chapter 3 of the thesis focuses on the Quran's invitation to believers to reflect upon its message, with the central aim being to facilitate a profound understanding and internalization of its teachings. This deep reflection, termed *tadabbur*, is portrayed as a critical process for individuals to comprehend, acknowledge, and embrace the divine truths regarding existence and life as conveyed in the Quran.

The concept of *tadabbur* is extensively examined, highlighting its significance in the Quran. *Tadabbur* involves a deep and thoughtful contemplation of the Quranic verses, aimed at uncovering their meanings, implications, and purposes. This reflective practice is both an intellectual and spiritual endeavor, enhancing one's faith and comprehension of the divine message. The Quran employs various methods, including direct injunctions, rhetorical questions, and parables, to invite believers to engage in *tadabbur*. These methods serve to stimulate different aspects of human cognition and spirituality, thereby fostering a holistic understanding of the Quranic teachings.

The chapter elucidates the multiple benefits derived from engaging in *tadabbur*. Firstly, reflection on the Quranic verses leads to an augmentation of faith, as

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, 40-42

¹⁷⁹ al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, 1:21

exemplified in Sūrah al-Anfāl, where believers experience a surge in faith upon hearing the Quran. Secondly, *tadabbur* deepens theological understanding, reinforcing the believer's knowledge and certainty in their faith. Thirdly, the practice of *tadabbur* provides pragmatic guidance for everyday life, aiding individuals in making decisions that align with divine wisdom. Fourthly, engaging deeply with the Quran fosters spiritual growth and strengthens one's relationship with Allah. Lastly, *tadabbur* is inherently educational, encouraging critical thinking, analysis, and comprehension of complex theological concepts.

The term *al-tafakkur*, translated as reflection or contemplation, is explored as another significant concept in the Quran. It entails the use of rational faculties to process knowledge and understand the signs of Allah ﷻ in the universe and within oneself. *Tafakkur* is closely related to *tadabbur*, with both involving deep reflection and contemplation on the divine message. The Quran's emphasis on *ta' aqqul*, or rational understanding, is highlighted, underscoring the importance of intellectual engagement and reasoning in comprehending the divine message. *Ta' aqqul* encourages believers to seek knowledge and understanding through contemplation and study, thus promoting a rational approach to faith.

al-Tadhakkur, or remembrance, is another key concept discussed in the chapter. It involves actively recalling and internalizing the teachings of the Quran. Remembrance is not limited to mere memorization but extends to applying Quranic teachings in daily life. The Quran frequently exhorts believers to remember Allah ﷻ and His messages as a means to maintain spiritual connection and guidance.

The chapter emphasizes that the Quran's call to reflection is a comprehensive approach integrating cognitive, spiritual, and practical dimensions of an individual's life. It provides an in-depth analysis of how various Quranic terms related to reflection (*tafakkur*, *ta' aqqul*, *tadhakkur*) collectively form a robust framework for engaging with the divine message. The terms explored in this chapter can be arranged in an ascending order that lead toward the main objective of *tadabbur*.

- 1) *al-Tadhakkur* (Being Mindful) - Being mindful implies recalling information and experiences from one's memory. It involves actively recalling and internalizing the teachings of the Quran. It is not merely about

memorization but about continuously keeping the divine messages in mind and applying them in daily life. This practice fosters a spiritual connection and guidance, as the Quran frequently reminds believers to remember Allah and His teachings to maintain a strong spiritual bond and live a life aligned with divine principles.

- 2) *al-Ru'yah and al-Ibṣār* (Insight) - *al-Ru'yah* refers to vision or sight, encompassing both physical seeing and metaphorical understanding. It signifies the ability to perceive the signs of Allah ﷻ in the world around us, encouraging believers to observe and contemplate the natural phenomena and events as manifestations of divine wisdom. *al-Ibṣār*, insight, goes beyond mere physical sight to include a deeper level of understanding and awareness. *al-Ibṣār* involves recognizing the deeper meanings and implications of what is perceived, leading to a more profound comprehension of the divine message and the truths of existence.
- 3) *al-Tafakkur* (Reflection) - Reflection involves using one's rational faculties to think deeply about the signs of Allah present in the universe, nature, and within oneself.
- 4) *al-Ta'aqqul* (Understanding) - *al-Ta'aqqul* emphasizes the importance of thoughtful analysis and reflection on the Quranic verses to deepen one's understanding of theological concepts and divine wisdom. It is a call to use reason and intellect to interpret and apply the Quranic guidance in everyday life, fostering a more informed and reflective approach to faith and spirituality.
- 5) *al-I'tibār* (Drawing Lessons) - *al-I'tibār* refers to the act of drawing lessons or taking heed from experiences, events, and stories. In the Quranic context, it involves reflecting on the narratives and signs presented in the Quran to extract moral and spiritual lessons.

Engaging in all five of these activities leads to *tadabbur*. The examination of different methods and styles used by the Quran to invite reflection demonstrates the depth and versatility of Quranic discourse, tailored to diverse audiences and cognitive styles. The discussion on the benefits of *tadabbur* underscores its transformative potential, suggesting that deep engagement with the Quran can lead to significant personal and communal development.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TAFSĪR, TADABBUR, AND RELATED CONCEPTS

4.1 PREFACE

Scholars of the Quran describe it as an ocean without a shore. This is a metaphorical expression often used by scholars to describe the vastness and depth of the Quran's teachings, wisdom, and knowledge. It emphasizes that the Quran contains an inexhaustible wealth of guidance, insights, and lessons that one can continue to explore without reaching its limits. "It does not become worn out by repetition and its wonders do not come to an end."¹ Since the time of the Quran's revelation until today, Muslim scholars have examined, studied, and analyzed the Book of Allah ﷻ in several ways, leaving behind a vibrant and exhaustive literary and scholarly heritage. Despite all of the amazing work that has been done to uncover the meanings and wisdom of the Quran, it remains an ocean that calls devotees of every era to delve into its depths to extract new pearls and treasures.

Understanding the Quran is the main objective behind the development and codification of several interconnected disciplines. "The ongoing evolution of these disciplines necessitated that topics related to the Qur'an's text and context be compiled under the designated field of Qur'anic Studies (*Ulūm al-Qur'ān*). In this way, Qur'anic Studies emerged as a synthesis of various disciplines rather than an independent area of study. The disciplinary diversity of the field naturally generated many sub-disciplines and sub-genres engaged with the vastness of the Book. *Ulūm al-Quran* is, therefore, an umbrella term for various disciplines and areas of studies related to the Quran's meaning, oral and written history, and rendition."² In simpler terms, *Ulūm al-Quran* (Quranic Studies) is a branch of study that gathers all of the various disciplines associated with the study of the Quran.

¹ Tirmidhī, *k. faḍā'il al-quran 'an rasūl Allah*, 3153. This narration is graded as ḍa'īf,

² Wahb, Yousef. "An Introduction to 'Ulum al-Qur'an: The Field of Qur'anic Studies." Yaqeen Institute for Islamic Research, 30 Mar. 2022, <https://yaqeeninstitute.org/read/paper/an-introduction-to-ulum-al-quran-the-field-of-quranic-studies>.

Within the field of Quranic Studies, *tafsīr* is considered to be of central importance. It is the key to unlocking how to properly and methodically understand the Quran and practically implement its guidance. It is also a prerequisite for engaging in deep reflection on the Quran's meanings. "*Tafsīr* is by far the most exhaustive intellectual enterprise given its critical object of uncovering the intended meanings behind Allah's words. It relies on exegetical principles; lexical, grammatical, and rhetorical explanations; Prophetic traditions; circumstances and settings of revelation; variant readings; and abrogation."³ The only way to effectively contemplate and deeply reflect upon the words of Allah ﷻ and their meanings - to engage in *tadabbur* - is to know what those words and meanings are. The Quran is a treasure chest full of wisdom and guidance and the key to unlocking the treasure is *tafsīr*.

Tafsīr - quranic exegesis - is a highly developed discipline with principles and rules used by scholars who have certain qualifications to explain and interpret verses of the Quran. These principles and rules are used to explain, interpret, and extract lessons, rulings, and reminders from the Quran. Reflection upon the meanings of the Quran is only possible when someone understands the general meanings of verses and chapters, which are detailed in the works of *tafsīr*. Gaining a general understanding of the meanings of the Quran can be achieved by reading a selected work of *tafsīr*, which will then allow one to engage in deep reflection. Engaging in *tafsīr*, quranic exegesis, is reserved for specialists trained in the field. *Tadabbur*, on the other hand, is more general and is an act that should be engaged in by the non-scholar and the scholar alike. In this chapter, I will explore the relationship between *tafsīr* and *tadabbur* by first defining and describing *tafsīr* and then exploring how they are interconnected.

4.2 DEFINITION OF *TAFSĪR*

Linguistically, *tafsīr* is a verbal noun from the verb *fassara* (فَسَّرَ), which means to explain, expound, make clear, or interpret. The word *tafsīr* means "the explanation or interpretation of something." It is derived from the root letters *fā - sīn - rā*, which convey the meanings of explaining, uncovering, and clarifying. According to another

³ Ibid

opinion⁴, the word *fasara* is a transposition from the word *safara*, which means to expose or to uncover. A woman who uncovers her face is called a *sāfirah* and the act of uncovering her face is called *sufūr*. However, this is considered to be a weaker position according to most scholars of tafsīr. al-Ālūsī said, “The opinion that it is a transposition from *al-safar* is an opinion through which a face can’t be exposed,”⁵ which is a metaphorical way of expressing its weakness.

As a discipline of study within Quranic Studies, the word *tafsīr* is usually translated as exegesis, which is defined as a critical explanation or interpretation of a text, especially of scripture. Classical scholars define *tafsīr* as the science by which the Quran is understood, its meanings are explained, and its rulings and wisdoms are derived.⁶ It is a branch of knowledge in which the meanings of the Quran are explained and its injunctions, instructions, guidance, wisdoms, lessons, and morals are described openly and clearly. al-Zarqānī defines it as a branch of knowledge that explores various aspects of the noble Quran; its revelation, transmission, recitation, words, associated meanings, and rulings.⁷ al-Ṭayyār defines *tafsīr* simply as explaining or uncovering the intended meanings of Allah’s speech.⁸ This last definition identified by al-Ṭayyār is the most precise as it captures the primary function and purpose of *tafsīr*, which is to uncover and explain the meanings of the Quran. Any information that aids in uncovering or explaining the intended meanings of the Quran is classified as *tafsīr*. *Tafsīr* is one of the most exhaustive Islamic disciplines because its primary objective is to uncover the intended meanings of Allah’s words. It relies on exegetical principles; lexical, grammatical, and rhetorical explanations; Prophetic traditions, circumstances and settings of revelation; variant readings; and abrogation.⁹

There have been hundreds of *tafsīr* works authored throughout history varying in length, breadth, depth, complexity, and focus. Traditionally, scholars of *tafsīr* would approach the Quran analytically chapter by chapter verse by verse. Mustansir Mir terms this approach to Quranic exegesis atomism.¹⁰ It is also known as analytical *tafsīr*. They

⁴ Zarkashī, *al-Burhān fī ‘Ulūm al-Quran*, 2:147

⁵ Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-Ma‘ānī*, 1:4

⁶ al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān fī ‘Ulūm al-Quran*, 864

⁷ al-Zarqānī, *Manāhil al-‘Irfān fī ‘Ulūm al-Quran*, 1:471

⁸ Ṭayyār, *Maḥmūm al-Tafsīr wa al-Ta’wīl wa al-Istinbāṭ wa al-Tadabbur wa al-Mufasssīr*, 54

⁹ Wahb, Yousef, *An Introduction to ‘Ulum al-Qur’an: the Field of Qur’anic Studies*, Yaqeen

¹⁰ Mustansir Mir, *Coherence in the Quran* (Indianapolis, American Trust Publication, 1986), p.1

would analyze, explain, and interpret each verse with discussions focused on language, grammar, morphology, rhetoric, jurisprudence, ḥadīth, theology, virtues and ethics, lessons, morals, reminders, and personal reflections. Oftentimes, authors would focus their attention on one aspect. For example, some would focus on the linguistic aspect and others would focus on the legal aspect. Some would even address multiple aspects. Some works of *tafsīr* are extremely long, filling up multiple volumes, while others may be short and brief. The main objective of *tafsīr* works is to uncover the intended meanings of Allah’s speech.

al-Imām al-Suyūṭī captured the importance of *tafsīr* beautifully when he wrote, “(The science of *tafsīr*) is the most honorable of all sciences for three reasons. The first reason is with respect to its topic. It deals with the Speech of Allah, which contains every kind of wisdom and virtue. It contains pronouncements about what has passed, reports of what will happen, and judgments concerning what happens between people. Its wonders never cease. The second reason is with respect to its goal. Its goal is to lead mankind to the firm handhold of Allah and to true happiness that does not end. The third reason is with respect to the great need for this science. Every aspect of this religion and this world in the near or distant future is in need of the sciences of the Sharī‘ah and knowledge of the religion. This knowledge can only be obtained by understanding the book of Allah.”¹¹ al-Suyūṭī mentions three reasons why he considers *tafsīr* to be the most honorable of all sciences within the field of Islamic Studies; its topic, goal, and need. This same sentiment has been expressed by several other scholars throughout history, particularly by the exegetes in the introductions to their works. I would also argue that *tafsīr* is the most important discipline within Islamic Studies because it gives direct access to understanding and engaging with the most important and primary source of Islam, the Quran. *Tafsīr* is a widely used tool that helps scholars understand the meanings and message of the Quran.

¹¹ al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān fī ‘Ulūm al-Qur’ān*, 867-868

4.3 SOURCES OF *TAFSĪR*

Part of the responsibility of the Prophet ﷺ was to recite the Quran to his community and to explain its meanings. The Prophet ﷺ would teach them both the words and meanings of the Quran. As Allāh ﷻ says in Surah Āli-‘Imrān,

لَقَدْ مَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذْ بَعَثَ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِّنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ يَتْلُوا عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ
وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَإِن كَانُوا مِن قَبْلُ لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ

“Certainly did Allah confer [great] favor upon the believers when He sent among them a Messenger from themselves, reciting to them His verses and purifying them and teaching them the Book and wisdom, although they had been before in manifest error.”¹²

Similarly Allah ﷻ says,

بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالزُّبُرِ وَأَنزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

“[We sent them] with clear proofs and written ordinances. And We revealed to you the message that you may make clear to the people what was sent down to them and that they might give thought.”¹³

So the Prophet ﷺ not only taught the words of the Quran to his people but he also explained their meanings in detail.

The Companions had a unique advantage in terms of understanding the Quran. During the life of the Prophet ﷺ they witnessed the revelation of the Quran with their own eyes. They were aware of the background, circumstances, reasons, and events surrounding revelation. The Arabic of the Quran was their native language. They understood the usage of words, their connotations, and various nuances of meanings. If any of the Companions faced some difficulty in understanding the Quran, they would simply turn to the Prophet ﷺ. Thus, as long as the Prophet ﷺ graced this world with his noble presence, understanding and interpreting the Quran did not pose much of a problem.¹⁴

¹² Quran 3:164

¹³ Quran 16: 44

¹⁴ Qadhi, *An Introduction to the Sciences of the Quran*, 306-309

After the Prophet ﷺ left this world, his Companions, who learned the Quran and its meanings directly from him, took on the responsibility of explaining the Quran. They taught the Quran to their students, the generation known as the Successors, who then taught it to their students using the same methodology employed by their teachers, the Companions.

However, as time passed, it became necessary that a proper way of interpreting and understanding the Quran also be preserved so that the Quran would not become a playground for people's own ideas, philosophies, worldviews, and desires. It was necessary so that people could not interpret the Quran as they pleased. The Quran is divinely protected, and part of that divine protection is to ensure that the original meanings and intent are preserved as well.

It is for this reason that a proper methodology for interpreting the Quran was developed through the first three or four generations of Islam. al-Imām al-Suyūṭī summarized this methodology saying, “The scholars have said: Whoever wishes to interpret the Quran, he should first turn to the Quran itself. This is because what has been narrated briefly in one place might be explained in detail in another place, and what is summarized in one place might be explained in another... If he has done that then he turns to the Sunnah, for it is the explainer of the Quran and its clarifier. al-Imām al-Shāfī said, ‘All that the Prophet ﷺ said is based on his understanding of the Quran.’ And Allah said, ‘Verily We have revealed to you the book in truth so that you may judge between mankind by that which Allah has shown you.’ And the Prophet ﷺ said, ‘Indeed, I have been given the Quran and something similar to it,’ meaning the Sunnah. If he does not find it in the Sunnah, he turns to the statements of the Companions for they are the most knowledgeable of it since they witnessed the circumstances and situations the Quran was revealed in and since they were blessed with complete understanding, true knowledge, and pious actions.’¹⁵

Scholars have expounded on this and listed out seven primary sources of *tafsīr*: 1) the Quran, 2) Sunnah, 3) narrations of Companions, 4) narrations of Successors, 5) Arabic language and poetry, 6) Judeo-Christian traditions, and 7) personal interpretation. Each of these is discussed below in detail.

¹⁵ al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān fī ‘ulūm al-qur’ān*

4.3.1 *Tafsīr* of the Quran by the Quran

A well-known statement among the scholars of *tafsīr* is, “*al-Quran yufassiru ba‘duhu ba‘dan*,” meaning the Quran explains itself. The primary source of *tafsīr* is the Quran itself, which in Arabic is referred to as “*tafsīr al-Quran bī al-Quran*”. The term translates as “exegesis of the Quran through the Quran.” Dr. Sohaib Saeed refers to this as intra-qur’anic exegesis.¹⁶ It is to interpret a particular verse by referring to its surrounding verses or others in the whole scripture. ibn Kathīr writes, “If one should ask concerning the best methods (*aḥsan ṭuruq*) of exegesis, then the answer is that the most correct (*aṣaḥḥ*) method is for the Quran to be explained using the Quran; what is left unclear in one place has been explained in another, and what has been made brief in one place has been expanded in another. If you do not find such, then make recourse to the Sunnah, for it explains and clarifies the Quran...”¹⁷ Sometimes Allah ﷻ will mention something briefly and provide the details somewhere else. Sometimes a question will be asked and then answered. Sometimes a story is mentioned briefly and its details are mentioned later on.

For example, Allah ﷻ says in Sūrah al-Fātiḥah,

أَهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ

“Guide us to the straight path, the path of those you have blessed.”¹⁸

The question arises, who are those that Allah ﷻ has blessed? Who exactly is He referring to in the verse? Allāh ﷻ answers the question in Sūrah al-Nisā:

وَمَنْ يُطِعِ اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَالصِّدِّيقِينَ
وَالشُّهَدَاءِ وَالصَّالِحِينَ وَحَسُنَ أُولَٰئِكَ رَفِيقًا

“and whoever obeys Allah and His messenger, they will be in the company of those whom Allah has blessed, of the Prophets, and the truthful followers, and the martyrs, and the pious.”¹⁹

Another example is when Allah ﷻ says in Sūrah al-Baqarah,

¹⁶ Saeed, Sohaib. “Tafsīr Al-Qur’ān Bi’l-Qur’ān (Intra-Qur’anic Exegesis).” The Handbook of Qur’anic Hermeneutics, 2023.

¹⁷ ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Quran al-‘Azīm*, 1:26

¹⁸ Quran 1: 7

¹⁹ Quran 4: 69

فَتَلَقَّى آدَامُ مِنْ رَبِّهِ كَلِمَاتٍ فَتَابَ عَلَيْهِ ۗ إِنَّهُ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ

“Then Adam received from His Lord words, and He accepted his repentance.”²⁰

The question comes to mind, what were these words of repentance? Allah ﷻ mentions them in Sūrah al-‘Arāf,

قَالَا رَبَّنَا ظَلَمْنَا أَنفُسَنَا وَإِن لَّمْ تَغْفِرْ لَنَا وَتَرْحَمْنَا لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ

“They said, ‘Our Lord! We have wronged ourselves. If you do not forgive us and have mercy on us, we will be of the lost.’”²¹

Sometimes Allah ﷻ directs the reader to another passage in the Quran, or tells the reader that the subject has been mentioned elsewhere. For example, Allah ﷻ says,

وَعَلَى الَّذِينَ هَادُوا حَرَّمْنَا مَا قَصَصْنَا عَلَيْكَ مِنْ قَبْلُ ۗ وَمَا ظَلَمْنَاهُمْ وَلَكِنْ كَانُوا
أَنفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ

“To the Jews, We have forbidden what We related to you before. We did not wrong them, but it was they who wronged themselves.”²²

In this verse, Allah ﷻ is informing the audience that there were certain things that He prohibited for the Jews, which He ﷻ mentioned before. We find these prohibitions mentioned in 6:146,

وَعَلَى الَّذِينَ هَادُوا حَرَّمْنَا كُلَّ ذِي ظُفْرٍ ۗ وَمِنَ الْبَقَرِ وَالْغَنَمِ حَرَّمْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ شُحُومَهُمَا ۗ
إِلَّا مَا حَمَلَتْ ظُهُورُهُمَا أَوْ الْحَوَايَا أَوْ مَا اخْتَلَطَ بِعَظْمٍ ۗ ذَلِكَ جَزَيْنَاهُمْ بِبِعْثِهِمْ ۗ وَإِنَّا
لَصَادِقُونَ

“For those who are Jewish, We forbade every animal with undivided hoofs and the fat of oxen and sheep except what is joined to their backs or intestines or mixed with bone. In this way We rewarded them for their violations. And We are certainly truthful.” In another verse, Allah ﷻ says,

²⁰ Quran 2: 37

²¹ Quran 7: 23

²² Quran 16:118

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا ءَأَوْفُوا بِٱلْعُقُودِ ؕ أُحِلَّت لَكُمْ بَهِيمَةٌ ءَٱلْأَنْعَامِ ءِإِلَّا مَا يُنْتَلَىٰ عَلَيْكُمْ
 عُيْرَ مَحَلِّيِ الصَّيْدِ وَٱنْتُمْ حُرْمٌ ؕ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ يَحْكُمُ مَا يُرِيدُ

“O believers! Honor your obligations. All grazing livestock has been made lawful to you—except what is hereby announced to you and hunting while on pilgrimage. Indeed, Allah commands what He wills.”²³ A few verses later, the exceptions are mentioned,

حُرِّمَتْ عَلَيْكُمُ ٱلْمَيْتَةُ وَٱلدَّمُ وَٱلْحُنَازِيرُ وَمَا ءُهِلَّ لِغَيْرِ ٱللَّهِ بِهِ ؕ وَٱلْمُنْحَنِفَةُ
 وَٱلْمَوْفُودَةُ وَٱلْمُتَرَدِّيَةُ وَٱلنَّطِيحَةُ وَمَا ءَكَلَ ٱلسَّبْعُ ءِإِلَّا مَا ذَكَّيْتُمْ وَمَا ذُبِحَ عَلَى ٱلنُّصُبِ
 وَأَن تَسْتَقْسِمُوا بِٱلْءَزْلَمِ ؕ ذَٰلِكُمْ فِسْقٌ ؕ

“Forbidden to you are carrion, blood, and swine; what is slaughtered in the name of any other than Allah; what is killed by strangling, beating, a fall, or by being gored to death; what is partly eaten by a predator unless you slaughter it; and what is sacrificed on altars. You are also forbidden to draw lots for decisions. This is all evil.”²⁴

Intra-quranic exegesis requires one to be familiar with several sub-topics explored within the field of Quranic Studies. For example, one should be well-acquainted with; the causes of revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*), the classification of verses and chapters in *makkī* and *madanī*, the idea of abrogation (*naskh*) and which verses are abrogators (*nāsikh*) and which verses are abrogated (*mansūkh*), the various modes of recitation (*qirā'āt*), and the different categories of words and phrases in terms of shades of meanings (specific, general, restricted, unrestricted, literal, and figurative).

The Quran was not revealed in a vacuum. In order to understand the message of a verse or surah, it is important to understand its context. The Prophet ﷺ spent a very difficult thirteen years in Makkah. People who knew him as the most honest and trustworthy now called him a liar, a forger, a sorcerer, a magician, and even a mad man. He was seen as a direct threat to the status quo. The people who initially accepted Islam were generally weak and poor, and faced persecution at the hands of the Quraysh. After migration, the Muslims gained strength, power, and influence. The issues they dealt with in Madinah were very different from the issues they dealt with in Makkah. That is

²³ Quran 5:1

²⁴ Quran 5:3

why there is a noticeable difference in themes and subject matter of revelation before and after migration. This difference in themes and subject matter forms the basis of classifying revelation into *Makki* and *Madani*. Makkan revelation is anything that was revealed before the migration of the Prophet ﷺ from Makkah to Madinah whereas Madani revelation is anything that was revealed after migration. It is a classification based on the time of revelation with migration serving as the determining factor. Having knowledge of whether a verse or sūrah is *Makki* or *Madani* provides that context. It gives a framework on how to approach and understand the subject matter and themes of the sūrah. In addition to providing context this knowledge assists in understanding the concept of abrogation. It also gives insight into the life of the Prophet, his companions, and the issues and problems they came across in the various stages of the *sīrah*.

The Quran was revealed in portions over a period of twenty-three years. Sometimes a single verse would be revealed. Other times a set of verses, or even an entire sūrah were revealed. Often the revelation would come in response to a certain situation, event, problem, or question posed to the Prophet ﷺ. That situation, event, problem, or question is known as the *Sabab al-Nuzūl*, or the cause of revelation. It has been defined as the background for the revelation -- the event, occurrence, or question that was the direct cause of revelation of a verse or sūrah. Having knowledge of the causes of revelation plays a major role in providing a proper understanding of the meaning of a verse. That is why, historically, scholars have always given importance to studying the narrations that mention a cause of revelation and even compiled those narrations into books. Knowing the cause of revelation plays an important role in shaping a proper understanding of a verse. As a matter of fact, it is safe to say that some verses cannot be understood properly without knowing why it was revealed. al-Wāḥidi wrote, “It is not possible to know the explanation of a verse without being aware of its story and how it was revealed.”²⁵

The entire Sharī‘ah was not revealed all at once. Part of the divine wisdom of Allah ﷻ was to reveal the laws of Islam gradually so that it would be easy for people to accept and act upon them. That is why there are some things that may have been permissible or recommended in the earlier days of Islam that were later on made

²⁵ Qadhi, *An Introduction to the Sciences of the Quran*, 107-119

impermissible or disliked. Lifting a particular ruling and replacing it with another is known as *naskh*. Allah ﷻ may enforce a law that is relevant for a certain time and place. Then, in His infinite wisdom, He repeals that law and replaces it with a new one. The abrogated ruling is called *mansūkh* and the abrogating ruling is called *nāsikh*. This process is known as *naskh*. The knowledge of abrogation including which verses have been abrogated and which verses did the abrogation is extremely important for having a proper understanding of the rulings of the Quran. There is no way for a person to interpret or understand the Quran without having knowledge of abrogation.²⁶

4.3.2 *Tafsīr* of the Quran by Sunnah

The second source of *tafsīr* is the normative practice of the Prophet ﷺ or his sunnah. The Prophet ﷺ was a walking example of the Quran; he personified its message through his speech, actions, behavior, character, and morals. It is impossible to have a proper understanding of the Quran without the practical example of the Prophet ﷺ. The Sunnah is necessary for having a correct and complete understanding of the Quran.²⁷

One of the primary responsibilities of the Prophet ﷺ as the last and final messenger was to explain and clarify the meanings of the Quran. As Allah ﷻ says,

وَالزُّبُرِ ۖ وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

“And we revealed to you the message that you may make clear to the people what was sent down to them and that they might give thought.”²⁸

This verse makes it clear that the Prophet ﷺ was given the responsibility of teaching the meanings of the Quran. When he would teach the companions how to read the actual words of the Quran, he taught them the meanings as well.

Sometimes the Prophet ﷺ would mention the explanation of a particular verse, then mention the verse that he was referring to with his explanation. Abū Hurairah narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “When Allah loves a slave He calls, ‘O

²⁶ Ibid, 235-248

²⁷ Azami, *Studies in Hadith Methodology and Literature*, 5-8

²⁸ Quran 16: 44

Jibrīl! Indeed, I love so-and-so, so love him.” He said: "So he calls out in the heavens. Then love for him descends among the people of the earth. That is the saying of Allah: ‘Verily, those who believe and work deeds of righteousness, the Most Gracious will grant love for them,’ (19:96) And when Allah hates a slave He calls out, ‘O Jibrīl! Indeed I hate so-and-so.’ So he calls out in the heavens. Then hatred for him descends upon the earth.”²⁹

Sometimes the Companions would find a verse difficult to understand so he would explain it to them. For example, when the verse

الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَهُمْ لَيْسُوا بِمُتَّبِعِينَ

“They who believe and do not mix their belief with injustice”³⁰

was revealed, the Companions found it difficult to understand. So they came to the Prophet ﷺ and asked, “O Messenger of Allah, who among us does not do injustice to themselves?” The Prophet ﷺ replied, “It is not that. It is referring to shirk. Have you not heard what Luqmān said to his son while advising him,

وَإِذْ قَالَ لُقْمَانُ لِابْنِهِ وَهُوَ يَعِظُهُ يَا بُنَيَّ لَا تُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّ الشِّرْكَ لَظُلْمٌ عَظِيمٌ

“O my son, do not associate [anything] with Allah. Indeed, association [with him] is great injustice.”³¹

There are many more examples of the Prophet ﷺ explaining the meanings of the Quran to his companions. What is important to keep in mind is that he ﷺ was sent as a teacher. If Allah ﷻ wanted, He could have simply revealed the Quran to the people of Quraysh as a book of guidance and expect them to accept it, read it, and act upon it themselves. Instead, He chose to send the Prophet ﷺ as a teacher along with it. His entire essence was the embodiment of the teachings of the Quran. That is why when ‘Ā’ishah was asked about his character she replied, “His character was the Quran.”

²⁹ Tirmidhī, *k. tafsīr al-qur’ān ‘an rasūlillah*, 3161. This narration is graded as ṣaḥīḥ.

³⁰ Quran 6:82

³¹ Bukhārī, *k. ahādīth al-anbiyā’*, b. *qawl allah wattakhadha Allāhu ibrahīma khalīla*, 3360

4.3.3 *Tafsīr* of the Quran by the Narrations of the Companions

The third source of *tafsīr* is narrations from the companions of the Prophet ﷺ. The Companions are considered to be the best generation of people to walk on the face of this Earth after the prophets and messengers. As the Prophet ﷺ said, “The best of generations is my generation. Then the one after it and the one after it.”³² They were chosen by Allah ﷻ to be the companions of the Prophet ﷺ and to spread Islam. Both Allah and His messenger testified to their character and religious knowledge. Allah ﷻ says,

مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷻ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ أَشِدَّاءُ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ رُحَمَاءُ بَيْنَهُمْ ﷻ تَرَاهُمْ رُكَّعًا سُجَّدًا
يَبْتَغُونَ فَضْلًا مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانًا ﷻ سِيمَاهُمْ فِي وُجُوهِهِمْ مِّنْ أَثَرِ السُّجُودِ ﷻ ذَلِكَ مَثَلُهُمْ
فِي التَّوْرَةِ ﷻ وَمَثَلُهُمْ فِي الْإِنْجِيلِ كَزَرْعٍ أَخْرَجَ شَطْئَهُ ﷻ فَكَارَهُ ﷻ فَاسْتَغْلَظَ ﷻ فَاسْتَوَى ﷻ عَلَى
سُوْقِهِ ﷻ يُعْجَبُ الزَّرْعَ لِيَغِيظَ بِهِمُ الْكُفَّارَ ﷻ وَعَدَّ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ
مِنْهُمْ مَّغْفِرَةً وَأَجْرًا عَظِيمًا

“Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. And those with him are firm with the disbelievers and compassionate with one another. You see them bowing and prostrating ‘in prayer’, seeking Allah’s bounty and pleasure. The sign ‘of brightness can be seen’ on their faces from the trace of prostrating ‘in prayer’.”³³

Allah ﷻ also says regarding them,

وَالسَّابِقُونَ السَّابِقُونَ ﷻ أُولَئِكَ مِنِ الْمُتَّقِينَ ﷻ وَالَّذِينَ تَبِعُوا ﷻ بِإِحْسَانٍ ﷻ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ
عَنْهُمْ ﷻ وَرَضُوا ﷻ عَنْهُ ﷻ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ ﷻ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا ﷻ أَبَدًا ﷻ ذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ
الْعَظِيمُ

“As for the foremost—the first of the Emigrants and the Helpers—and those who follow them in goodness, Allah is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him. And He has prepared for them Gardens under which rivers flow, to stay there for ever and ever. That is the ultimate triumph.”³⁴

³² Bukhārī, *k. al-riqāq, b. mā yuhadharu min zaharah al-dunya wa al-tanāfusi fiha*, 6429

³³ Quran 48:29

³⁴ Quran 9:100

Their narrations are considered to be a source of *tafsīr* for several reasons. The Quran was revealed to their community. They witnessed the revelation of the Quran first-hand and understood the circumstances in which it was revealed. They understood what problems it was addressing as well as who it was addressing. Oftentimes, verses were revealed in response to problems they dealt with personally. In addition, the Quran was revealed in their native language. They were familiar with how the language functioned, the meanings of words, and various nuances.³⁵

They would search for the explanation of words and verses in the Quran, the Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ and oftentimes the language itself. They would see how the word was used, what it meant in different contexts, and what connotations it carried. For example, ‘Alī explained that the words “and by the roof raised high”³⁶ refer to the sky. As proof, he recited the verse, “And We made the sky a protected ceiling, but they, from its signs, are turning away.”³⁷ This is an example of how a companion would use the Quran to explain the Quran.

There were a number of Companions who were well-known for their in-depth knowledge and understanding of the Quran. al-Imām al-Suyūfī wrote, “There are ten who were famous for their knowledge of *tafsīr* amongst the Companions: the four *Khulafā’ al-Rāshidūn* (the Rightly Guided Caliphs), ‘Abdullah ibn Mas‘ūd, ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Abbās, Ubayy ibn Ka‘b, Zaid ibn Thābit, Abū Mūsa al-Ash‘arī, and ‘Abdullah ibn Zubair.”³⁸ ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Abbās was considered to be the most knowledgeable when it came to the interpretation of the Quran. ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar said, “ibn ‘Abbās is the most knowledgeable of this Ummah concerning the revelation given to Muḥammad.”³⁹

4.3.4 *Tafsīr* of the Quran by the Narrations of the Successors

The fourth source of *tafsīr* is the narrations of the *tābi‘ūn*, the students of the Companions. The Successors learned the Quran directly from the Companions of the

³⁵ Qadhi, *An Introduction to the Sciences of the Quran*, 306-308

³⁶ Quran 52: 5

³⁷ al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, 18:27

³⁸ al-Suyūfī, *al-Itqān fī ‘Ulūm al-Qur’ān*, 892

³⁹ Ibid, 893

Prophet ﷺ. They are included in the statement of the Prophet ﷺ, “The best of generations is my generation. Then the one after it and the one after it.”⁴⁰

There were a number of luminaries among them who were known for their in-depth knowledge and understanding of the Quran. For example, Qatādah said, “There is not a single verse in the Quran except that I have heard something about it.”⁴¹ Similarly, Mujāhid is quoted to have said, “I recited the Quran to ibn ‘Abbas three times, and in each recitation, I stopped at every verse asking him about its tafsīr.”⁴²

The Successors had developed a certain methodology for interpreting and explaining the Quran built upon the methodology of their teachers, the Companions. Their primary source for explaining the meanings of the Quran was the Quran itself. If they could not find the explanation in the Quran, they would turn to the Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ. If they could not find it there, they would look to the narrations of the Companions. If they still could not find it, then they would look to the language itself and use their own intellect to arrive at a proper conclusion.⁴³

4.3.5 *Tafsīr* of the Quran through the Arabic Language

Another important source of *tafsīr* is the Arabic language itself. In several places throughout the Quran, Allah ﷻ reminds the listener that He has revealed the Quran in the Arabic language. Allah ﷻ says in Sūrah Yūsuf,

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ قُرْءَانًا عَرَبِيًّا لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ

“Indeed, We have sent it down as an Arabic Quran that you might understand.”⁴⁴

In Sūrah al-Zumar, Allah ﷻ says,

قُرْءَانًا عَرَبِيًّا غَيْرَ ذِي عِوَجٍ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ

⁴⁰ Bukhārī, *k. al-riqāq, b. mā yuhadharu min zaharah al-dunya wa al-tanāfusi fiha*, 6429

⁴¹ al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān fī ‘Ulūm al-Quran*, 897

⁴² Ibid, 897

⁴³ al-Ṭayyār, *al-Taḥrīr fī Uṣūl al-Tafsīr*, 97-98

⁴⁴ Quran 12: 2

“[It is] an Arabic Quran, without any deviance that they might become righteous.”⁴⁵ Similarly, in Sūrah Fuṣṣilat Allah ﷻ says,

كُتِبَ فُصِّلَتْ آيَاتُهُ قُرْءَانًا عَرَبِيًّا لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ

“A Book whose verses have been detailed, an Arabic Quran for a people who know.”⁴⁶

Since the Quran has been revealed in Arabic, the language itself is considered to be a source of interpretation.

In order to have a complete and accurate understanding of the Quran, it is necessary for one to have a mastery of the language itself. It is impossible to properly understand the Quran without knowledge of the language. As a matter of fact, the scholars of the past were very severe in their attitudes towards those who attempted to interpret the Quran without learning Arabic. For example, al-Imām Mālik said, “If any person is brought to me, having interpreted the Quran while he is ignorant of Arabic, I will make an example of him.”⁴⁷ Similarly, Mujāhid said, “It is impermissible for any person who believes in Allah and the last day to speak concerning the book of Allah if he is not knowledgeable of the dialects of the Arabs.”⁴⁸

A deep understanding of the language aids in understanding some of the difficult or rare words that are used in the Quran. It also aids in understanding the usage and connotation of certain words. Sometimes the Quran may use a certain expression or phrase that can only be understood through the usage of the language at the time that it was revealed.

Oftentimes, the meanings and connotations of words are understood properly and holistically by exploring how they were used in pre-Islamic Arabic poetry and Arabic poetry that was produced during the time of the Prophet ﷺ. That is why lines and couplets of poetry are quoted in books of *tafsīr* to explain the meanings or connotations of words and expressions used in the Quran. ibn ‘Abbās said, “If you ask me about the rare words in the language, then seek it in poetry, for poetry is the recordings of the Arabs,” and he said, “Poetry is the recordings of the Arabs. Therefore,

⁴⁵ Quran 39:28

⁴⁶ Quran 41: 3

⁴⁷ Zarkashī, *al-Burhān fī ‘Ulūm al-Quran*, 2:160

⁴⁸ Zarkashī, *al-Burhān fī ‘Ulūm al-Quran*, 2:293

if a word of the Quran, that was revealed in the language of the Arabs, is obscure to them, they return to their recordings, and take the meanings from it.”⁴⁹

It is narrated that once ‘Umar was with other Companions in a gathering and he asked them the meaning of the verse, “Or that He will not destroy them gradually? But your Lord is truly Ever Gracious, Most Merciful.”⁵⁰ An old man from the tribe of Hudhayl stood up and said, “This is from our dialect. *Takhawwuf* means suffering loss gradually.” ‘Umar asked him, “Is this something that the Arabs know from their poetry?” He answered, “Yes,” and recited the following line of poetry, “Her saddle abraded (*takhawwuf*) from a long and high hump, As when a piece of skin used for smoothing arrows has abraded (*takhawwuf*) from the back of a tree.” ‘Umar remarked, “Stick to the recordings, and you will not be misled.” When asked, “What are the recordings?” He said, “The poetry of pre-Islamic times. Therein is the explanation of your Book, and the meanings of your words.”⁵¹

The scholars of *tafsīr* concluded that it is essential to have a vast and exhaustive knowledge of the Arabic language and poetry to properly understand certain words and phrases of the Quran. It is important to note that the language and poetry are used to obtain linguistic meanings and interpretations of difficult, obscure, or ambiguous words. The language and poetry will not be used to derive theological or legal conclusions and rulings.

4.3.6 *Tafsīr* of the Quran through *Isrā’īliyāt*

Another source of *tafsīr* is Judaica, or *Isrā’īliyāt*, which are narratives and reports that have reached us through Jewish and Christian tradition and sources. These narrations are mostly found in Judaeo-Christian sources such as the Torah, the Bible, and the Talmud. The early exegetes of the Quran would preserve and compile various reports and traditions from identifiable sources. There were a number of Companions of the Prophet ﷺ who were Jews or Christians before accepting Islam. When they would come across certain narratives of past prophets and messengers or nations in the Quran, they

⁴⁹ Zarkashī, *al-Burhān fī ‘Ulūm al-Quran*, 2:294

⁵⁰ Quran 16:47

⁵¹ Dhahabī, *Siyar A ‘lām al-Nubalā’*, 20

would share information and details regarding them that they had learned from their Jewish and Christian sources. Some of these details and narrations found their way into books of *tafsīr*.⁵²

Taqi Usmani writes, “These very details found their way into the books of *tafsīr* under the name of *Isrā’īliyyāt*. ibn Kathīr, who is one of the authentic research scholars, has written that there are three kinds of *Isrā’īliyyāt*:

1. Narrations the truth of which is proved from evidences in the Quran and Sunnah. For example, the drowning of Pharaoh and the ascent of Mūsa onto Mount Ṭūr (Sinai).
2. Narrations the falsity of which is proved from evidences in the Quran and Sunnah. For example, it appears in Judaic narrations that Sulaymān had become (Allah forbid) an apostate in his later years. Its refutation is clearly given in the Quran, where it is said, “It was not Sulaymān who became an infidel, but the devils did become infidels.” (2:102) To cite yet another example, it finds mention in Judaic narrations that (Allah forbid) Dāwūd committed adultery with the wife of his general (Uriah), or that having him killed through all sorts of contrivances, ended up marrying his wife. This too is a blatant lie, and taking such narrations to be false is imperative.
3. Narrations regarding which the Quran, the Sunnah, and the Sharī‘ah are silent. In regards to such narrations, the prophetic teaching is to observe silence and neither confirm nor falsify. There is, however, a difference of opinion among scholars whether or not reporting such narrations is permissible. ibn Kathīr has given a decisive ruling that reporting them is permissible but doing so is useless because they cannot be taken to be authentic.”⁵³

4.3.7 *Tafsīr* of the Quran through Personal Interpretation

The seventh source of *tafsīr* is through deliberation (*ijtihād*) and deduction (*istinbāt*) -- when a qualified scholar uses their own personal understanding or opinion to arrive at

⁵² al-Ṭayyār, *al-Tahrīr fī Uṣūl al-Tafsīr*, 149-152

⁵³ Usmani, *Maa’arif al-Quran*, 1:41-42

the meaning of a verse. Sometimes, there may not be a narration from the Prophet ﷺ or the Companions regarding a particular verse. So, a scholar may use his own understanding and opinion to come up with a plausible explanation.

When a commentator explains a verse using his own interpretation, it has to be based upon sound knowledge and conform to the general teachings of the Quran and Sunnah. It cannot be based on a person's desires to make the Quran conform to their personal perspectives or opinions regarding certain issues. A person has to have the proper prerequisites in order to do so.

This source of *tafsīr* is not an open license for people to interpret the Quran according to their own flawed understandings or views. There are severe warnings against those who interpret the Quran without proper knowledge. The Prophet ﷺ said, "Whoever says anything about the Quran with his own personal opinion should prepare his seat in the Fire."⁵⁴ In another narration, the Prophet ﷺ said, "Whoever says anything about the Quran with his own personal opinion, and is right, is still mistaken."⁵⁵

There are two types of *ra'y*; one that is rooted in knowledge and is derived from the general teachings and guidance of the Quran and Sunnah, and the other is based upon personal or foreign influences that are not rooted in the teachings of the Quran and Sunnah. The division of *ra'y* into these two categories is found in the Quran, the Sunnah, and the statements of Companions. The first type of *ra'y*, which is based on knowledge is permissible and considered to be a legitimate source of *tafsīr*, while the second type of *ra'y*, which is not based on knowledge, is prohibited.⁵⁶

The following verses and aḥādīth are used by scholars to prove that *ra'y* based on knowledge is permissible and encouraged:

1. Allah ﷻ says,

أَفَلَا يَتَذَكَّرُونَ الْفُرْعَانَ أَمْ عَلَى قُلُوبٍ أَقْفَاهَا

⁵⁴ Tirmidhī, *k. Tafsīr al-Quran 'an Rasūl Allah, b. mā jā'a fī alladhi yufassir al-quran bī ra'yihī*, 2950. Al-Tirmidhī grades the ḥadīth as ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ.

⁵⁵ Tirmidhī, *k. Tafsīr al-Quran 'an Rasūl Allah, b. mā jā'a fī alladhi yufassir al-quran bī ra'yihī*, 2952. This narration is graded as ḍa'īf.

⁵⁶ al-Ṭayyār, *al-Tahrīr fī Uṣūl al-Tafsīr*, 207-208

“Do they not then reflect on the Quran? Or are there locks upon their hearts?”⁵⁷ Through this verse, Allah ﷻ is encouraging people to reflect on the meanings of the Quran. There are certain meanings, interpretations, conclusions, lessons, and reminders that can only be obtained after reflection, which is a type of *ra'y*.

2. Allah ﷻ says,

كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ مُبَارَكٌ لِيَدَّبَّرُوا آيَاتِهِ وَلِيَتَذَكَّرَ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

“This is a blessed Book which We have revealed to you ‘O Prophet’ so that they may contemplate its verses, and people of reason may be mindful.”⁵⁸ Again, Allah ﷻ is encouraging believers to reflect and contemplate on the verses of the Quran that will lead to discovering meanings.

3. Allah ﷻ says,

بِهِمْ وَلَوْ رَدُّوهُ إِلَى الرَّسُولِ وَإِلَى أُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْهُمْ لَعَلِمَهُ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَنْبِطُونَهُ مِنْهُمْ

“Had they referred it to the Messenger or their authorities, those with sound judgment among them would have validated it.”⁵⁹ This verse highlights that there are individuals - in our context scholars - who are qualified to extract some knowledge and understanding that others might not be able to.

4. The Prophet ﷺ supplicated for ibn ‘Abbās saying, “O Allah! Grant him interpretation.”⁶⁰ This supplication indicates that there are meanings of the Quran that are not obvious to everyone. That is why the Prophet ﷺ asked Allah ﷻ to grant ibn ‘Abbās understanding and knowledge of those meanings.

⁵⁷ Quran 47:24

⁵⁸ Quran 38:29

⁵⁹ Quran 4:83

⁶⁰ ibn Mājah, *k. al-muqaddimah, b. faql ibn ‘Abbās*, 166. This narration is graded as *ṣaḥīḥ*.

5. The Companions, the *Tābi 'ūn*, the *Tab ' al-Tābi 'īn*, and the generations that came after until the modern era have used knowledge based *ra'y* to interpret the Quran.

There are also a few verses and narrations that are used as evidence to highlight the prohibition of *ra'y* based on personal desires and opinions not rooted in knowledge. The following are a few examples:

1. Allah ﷻ says,

قُلْ إِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ رَبِّيَ الْفَوَاحِشَ مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَّنَ ۖ وَالْإِثْمَ وَالْبَغْيَ بِغَيْرِ أَحْقٍ وَأَنْ
تُشْرِكُوا بِاللَّهِ مَا لَمْ يُنَزَّلْ بِهِ سُلْطَانًا ۚ وَأَنْ تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

“Say, ‘My Lord has only forbidden open and secret indecencies, sinfulness, unjust aggression, associating ‘others’ with Allah ‘in worship’—a practice He has never authorized—and attributing to Allah what you do not know.’”⁶¹ Allah ﷻ explicitly prohibits one from speaking about Allah ﷻ without knowledge.

2. Allah ﷻ says,

وَلَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ ۚ إِنَّ السَّمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ وَالْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُولَٰئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ
مَسْئُولًا

“Do not follow what you have no ‘sure’ knowledge of. Indeed, all will be called to account for ‘their’ hearing, sight, and intellect.” Again, Allah ﷻ discourages from acting and speaking without knowledge.

3. There are several narrations from Companions and scholars of the past demonstrating their caution and fear of interpreting the Quran without knowledge. Abū Bakr said, “What earth would support me, which sky would shelter me, if I said something regarding the Book of Allah that I don’t know?”⁶²

al-Imām al-Suyūfī mentions fifteen disciplines a person must master in order to be qualified to interpret the Quran. They are:

1. knowledge of the Arabic language and its vocabulary

⁶¹ Quran 7:33

⁶² al-Rūmī, *Uṣūl al-Taḥsīn wa Manāhijuhu*, 82

2. knowledge of Arabic grammar (naḥwu)
3. knowledge of Arabic morphology (ṣarf)
4. knowledge of Arabic words and word structure (ishtiqaq)
5. knowledge of Arabic rhetoric
6. eloquence
7. manners of oratory
8. the knowledge of Qirā'āt
9. the knowledge of the principles of fiqh (uṣūl al-fiqh)
10. the knowledge of fiqh
11. the knowledge of asbāb al-nuzūl
12. the knowledge of nāsikh and mansūkh
13. the knowledge of ḥadīth
14. knowledge of 'Ulūm al-Quran
15. divine endowment⁶³

Based on the criteria mentioned by al-Imām al-Suyūfī, *tafsīr* is not a simple affair. It requires a great deal of expertise, skills, and knowledge. It requires an individual to invest a lot of time and energy in studying various subjects and disciplines. Commenting on the Quran is a specialized art that should only be done by those with the requisite qualifications.

4.4 TYPES OF *TAFSĪR*

Among the different branches of Islamic Studies, *tafsīr* carries a unique and distinguished position. It is considered to be one of the most important and noble branches of knowledge because it aids in understanding the book of Allah ﷻ by clarifying and explaining its meanings. In addition to being the most important and noble branch of study, it is perhaps also one of the most difficult to write about. *Tafsīr* is a discipline that requires a deep knowledge of all the other Islamic Sciences.

Because of its importance, it has been given special attention throughout Islamic history. There have been several significant works of *tafsīr* produced in which the

⁶³ al-Suyūfī, *al-Itqān fī 'Ulūm al-Quran*, 877-879

authors try their best to explain the meanings, lessons, wisdoms, reminders, rulings, beauty, language, and eloquence of the Quran. Oftentimes authors would focus their attention on one aspect. For example, some would focus on the linguistic aspect and others would focus on the legal aspect. Some would even address multiple aspects. Some works of *tafsīr* are extremely long filling up multiple volumes while others may be short and brief. There are hundreds if not thousands of works on *tafsīr* that can fill up an entire library.

ibn ‘Abbās said, “*Tafsīr* is divided into four types: a type that the Arabs know by their language, a type which no one can be excused from not knowing, a type which the scholars are aware of, and a type which none can know except for Allah.”⁶⁴ The first type of *tafsīr* mentioned by ibn ‘Abbās refers to what the Arabs know because of their language. The Arabs had knowledge of Arabic vocabulary, grammar, and rhetoric that allowed them to directly understand most of the Quran. The second type of *tafsīr* highlighted by ibn ‘Abbās is *tafsīr* that everyone should be familiar with. This refers to understanding the basic principles and teachings of Islam such as the oneness of Allah ,^{*} prophethood, life after death, accountability, judgment, reward, punishment, Paradise, Hell, morals, virtues, and ethics. The third type is *tafsīr* that is known to the scholars. This refers to *tafsīr* that requires knowledge of various disciplines within Islamic Studies that allow one to interpret and engage with the Quran on a deeper level. As for the fourth type of *tafsīr*, this is referring to knowledge that is known only to Allah .^{*}

Scholars of *tafsīr* have used different approaches and methodologies when interpreting and explaining the Quran. After analyzing the various works of *tafsīr*, they can be divided into three broad categories. It is important to note that when a *tafsīr* is placed in a particular category, that doesn’t mean that everything in that work is based on that one particular methodology; rather, it is the general or overall methodology of the book. The categories are.

1. *Tafsīr* based on Narrations (*al-Tafsīr bī al-Ma’thūr*)
2. *Tafsīr* based on Personal Opinion (*al-Tafsīr bī al-Ra’y*)
3. *Tafsīr* based on Inner Meanings (*al-Tafsīr al-Ishārī*)

⁶⁴ al-Zarkashī, *al-Burhān fī ‘Ulūm al-Quran*, 2:164

4.4.1 *Tafsīr* Based on Narrations

This category is known as *Tafsīr bi al-Ma'thūr*, or exegesis based on narrations. The meanings of the Quran are explained and clarified using narrations from the Prophet ,ﷺ his Companions, the *Tābi'ūn*, and the *Tab' al-Tābi'īn*. This method of *tafsīr* consists of interpreting and explaining the Quran with other parts of the Quran, by the words, deeds, and approvals of the Prophet ,ﷺ and the explanations of the earliest Muslim authorities, who are known as the *salaf*. The *salaf* is a term used to refer to the first three generations of Muslims; the Companions, the *Tābi'ūn*, and the *Tab' al-Tābi'īn*. Their explanations and interpretations are considered to be authoritative because they are included in the statement of the Prophet ,ﷺ “The best of generations is my generation. Then the one after it and the one after it.”⁶⁵

Some of the more well-known and important works in this genre are: *Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl Āy al-Quran* by al-Ṭabarī (310), *Tafsīr al-Quran al-'Azīm* by ibn abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī (327), *Baḥr al-'Ulūm* by Abū Layth al-Samarqandī (375), *al-Kashf wa al-Bayān 'an Tafsīr al-Quran* by Abū Ishāq al-Tha'labī (427), *Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl* by al-Baghawī (516), *al-Muḥarrar al-Wajīz fī Tafsīr al-Kitāb al-'Azīz* by ibn 'Aṭīyyah al-Andalūsī (546), *Tafsīr al-Quran al-'Azīm* by ibn Kathīr (774), *al-Durr al-Manthūr fī al-Tafsīr bi al-Ma'thūr* by al-Suyūṭī (911), and *Aḍwā' al-Bayān fī Ḍāḥ al-Quran bi al-Quran* by Muḥammad Amīn al-Shinqīṭī (1393).

4.4.2 *Tafsīr* Based on Personal Opinion

In Arabic, this genre of *tafsīr* is called *Tafsīr bi al-Ra'y*, or exegesis based on personal opinion. It is very important to note what is meant by personal opinion, *ra'y*, is a scholar's conclusions and understandings that are based upon sound knowledge and conform to the general teachings of the Quran and Sunnah. They arrive at these conclusions after exploring the lexical, grammatical, and rhetorical explanations; Prophetic traditions, circumstances and settings of revelation; variant readings; and abrogation. In addition to intra-quranic exegesis, and exegesis based on narrations, these

⁶⁵ Bukhārī, *k. al-riqāq, b. mā yuḥadharu min zaharah al-dunya wa al-tanāfusi fiha*, 6429

works include the *ijtihād* of the author in explaining certain words, phrases, verses, and rulings of the Quran.

Some of the more well-known and important works in this genre are: *Mafātīh al-Ghayb* by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (606), *Anwār al-Tanzīl wa Asrār al-Ta'wīl* by al-Bayḍāwī (691), *Madārik al-Tanzīl wa Ḥaqā'iq al-Ta'wīl* by al-Nasafī (701), *Lubāb al-Ta'wīl fī Ma'ānī al-Tanzīl* by al-Khāzin (741), *al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ* by Abū Ḥayyān (745), *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* by Jalāl al-Dīn al-Maḥallī (864) and his student Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (977), *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī fī Tafsīr al-Quran al-'Aẓīm wa al-Sab' al-Mathānī* by al-Ālūsī (1270), and *Tafsīr al-Kalām al-Mannān* by al-Sa'dī (1376).

A more contemporary approach to *tafsīr*, although not entirely new, that has been adopted by many scholars recently is thematic *tafsīr*, or *al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī*. Thematic *tafsīr* focuses on various themes, concepts, and ideas and how they are presented and understood in various verses and passages throughout the Quran. For example, a scholar may want to explore the theme of mercy (*rahmah*) or justice (*'adl*) and will analyze how it is discussed in various verses, passages, and chapters of the Quran. After explaining and analyzing the verses that address the particular theme, they will present a coherent Quranic perspective or narrative. Another aspect of thematic *tafsīr* is to look at and analyze the major themes of a particular sūrah and explore how they are connected to each other and how they fit into the general themes of the entire Quran. Thematic *tafsīr* also explores the idea of coherence in the Quran. The verses of *suwar* (plural of sūrah) are not placed in a random sequence; rather they are organized in a manner that forms a coherent whole. Several scholars, both classical and contemporary, argue that the Quran is endowed with a coherence that is not only remarkable in itself but is integral to the meaning and interpretation of the Quran.⁶⁶ The term they use to describe this remarkable and inherent coherence is *nazm*, which can be translated as structure or organization.

Since Thematic *tafsīr* as an independent sub-discipline is relatively new, it is difficult to find a definition or description that is unanimously accepted by all scholars of the Quran. Some scholars consider it to be a type of *tafsīr*, others would include it within general Quranic Studies, and some others argue that it is an aspect of personal

⁶⁶ Muntasir Mir, *Coherence in the Quran* (Indianapolis, American Trust Publication, 1986), p.3

reflection (*al-tadabbur*). I incline towards it being a sub-discipline of *tafsīr* that is still being researched, explored, and refined. It is a method that can be used to further clarify and explain the meanings of the Quran, helping one understand its main themes, lessons, and guidance. There is a lot of overlap between thematic *tafsīr* and other aspects of quranic studies in general, and *tafsīr* specifically, such as *‘ilm al-munāsabah* (correlation between verses and chapters) and *tafsīr al-quran bī al-quran* (intertextual exegesis).

It is also important to note that thematic *tafsīr*, in all its variations, is an attempt by scholars and researchers to understand the themes, structure, and coherence of the Quran based on their own efforts and reflections. The conclusions, ideas, and structures are not definitive; they are speculative by nature based on *ijtihād*. The *ijtihād* is built upon the exegesis of the Quran that follows principles and a particular methodology developed by scholars of the Quran. In other words, thematic *tafsīr* is dependent upon classical *tafsīr* as it requires one to understand the text of the Quran before identifying and extracting themes. The conclusions of scholars and researchers through the lens of thematic *tafsīr* can be used as a potential source for further understanding, explaining, and interpreting the Quran. By attempting to understand the themes of a *sūrah* and its organization, qualified scholars may be able to uncover additional meanings that may help them interpret a *sūrah* and view the Quran from a more macro perspective. Thematic *tafsīr* is one tool in an entire toolbox of methods that can help scholars and students gain a deeper understanding of the Quran.

After surveying and analyzing various definitions of *al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū‘i*, it seems like a comprehensive description would be the following: Thematic *tafsīr* is an aspect of Quranic exegesis that focuses on gathering all of the verses that explicitly or implicitly speak about a particular theme, concept, or idea in order to present a unified Quranic perspective. It can also focus on explaining themes, concepts, and ideas found within a particular chapter (*sūrah*) and how they come together as a unified whole. The themes are used to demonstrate the coherence between the verses and passages of a *sūrah*. They are also used to show the unified content and coherence of the Quran as a whole.

Thematic *tafsīr* is a unique aspect of Quranic exegesis that focuses on themes, concepts, and ideas conveyed in the Quran instead of a word-by-word or verse-by-verse

analysis. For example, the opening verses⁶⁷ of *Sūrah Maryam* briefly mention the story of Zakariyyā and his son Yaḥyā. A classical analytical exegesis, such as ibn Kathīr, explores the meanings verse by verse, explaining and clarifying the meanings of the words and sentences. A scholar using thematic *tafsīr* will identify that one of the main themes of the passage is Allah’s divine mercy. They will then describe how that divine mercy is expressed and manifested throughout the story. Based on the description of thematic *tafsīr* mentioned above, there are two distinct approaches or types of thematic *tafsīr*:

1. One of the approaches is to gather all of the verses that explicitly or implicitly speak about a particular theme, concept, or idea in order to present a unified Quranic perspective. For example, a scholar may explore the theme of “Women in the Quran”, “Mercy in the Quran”, “Guidance in the Quran”, or “Society in the Quran” by explaining and analyzing all of the relevant verses that address these themes and ideas. After explaining and analyzing all of the relevant verses, the scholar will present the theme through a Quranic lens. This is a very beneficial method of explaining verses that help make the Quran relevant to the issues we may be facing as individuals and society.
2. Another approach is to analyze the major themes, concepts, and ideas found within a particular *sūrah* and present how they come together as a unified whole. The scholar or researcher will analyze the entire *sūrah* in order to extract its principle themes, objectives, and subject matter. Then they will summarize each section of the *sūrah* tying them to the principle themes and objectives. They will also demonstrate how each of these parts are related to each other and how the beginning and end of the *sūrah* are tied to each other. They may also show how the various *suwar* of the Quran are connected to each other or the correlation between them.

This approach to thematic *tafsīr* “focuses on the organic unity of each *sūrah* (chapter) highlighting the logic or inherent reasoning that courses through the *sūrah* and unifies its various components and images.”⁶⁸ This particular approach is built on the

⁶⁷ Quran 19:1-15

⁶⁸ al-Ghazālī, *A Thematic Commentary on the Qur’an*, vii

premise that each *sūrah* has a unique thematic coherence and unity. “This character is defined by a main subject or a theme of interrelated topics which together form the body of the *sūrah*’s subject matter. Once the central subject or theme is identified, the jigsaw pieces come together, enunciating how the rest of the surah falls into line with or can be related to, that theme.”⁶⁹ Regarding this approach, Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad writes, “...It does seem that each and every chapter of the Quran has a theme that runs through it. These ‘underlying themes’ seem to invisibly hold the individual verses of a *sūrah* together, somewhat like the string (‘*nazhm*’ in Arabic) of a pearl necklace holds the pearls together and makes them into a single necklace. The themes seem to relate to - and underlie - every single verse in that *sūrah*. They seem to help to explain not only what the *sūrah* is about in general but why one verse or passage follows the next. They seem to show a remarkable - indeed miraculous - and underlying unified content and coherence to every *sūrah* in the Quran... The themes seem to not only show the unified content and coherence of every *sūrah*, but of the Quran as a whole.”⁷⁰ There is a lot of overlap between this approach to thematic tafsīr and what is known as *‘ilm al-munāsabah*, which is also a sub-discipline of *tafsīr*.

Thematic *tafsīr* is a unique tool for diving into the depths of the Quran to help the Muslim community understand their Creator’s message. It provides readers with a macro view of the Quran that helps them understand the core message, ideas, themes, concepts, teachings, and coherence of the Quran. As mentioned earlier, the primary objective of the Quran is for the audience to think, ponder, and reflect upon the meanings of the Quran; to engage in *tadabbur* or deep reflection. This deep reflection upon Allah’s words leads toward internal and external reformation by impacting one’s beliefs, thoughts, speech, and behavior. For the vast majority of Muslims, this deep reflection can be very challenging. One of those challenges is not being familiar with the overarching themes and ideas of the Quran. The average Muslim should have a foundational understanding of the Quran, its history, preservation, compilation, subject matter, and themes. Thematic *tafsīr* is a tool that can be used to help develop this foundational understanding.

⁶⁹ al-Ghazālī, *A Thematic Commentary on the Qur’an*, viii

⁷⁰ Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad, *A Tentative Guide to the Themes of the Surahs of the Qur’an* (United States, Turath Publishing and White Thread Press, 2018), 18

Another benefit of thematic *tafsīr* is that it highlights and demonstrates the inherent cohesiveness of the Quran. To an unfamiliar observer, the Quran may seem unstructured and unorganized. The Quran is not a regular book; it does not follow the format or structure of known genres of literature. It is not structured or organized like a novel, textbook, or any other type of fictional or non-fictional writing. The chapters, or *suwar*, of the Quran are not organized topically, thematically, or chronologically. For example, all of the verses dealing with guidance are not gathered under one chapter. The Quran has its own unique structure and format. Thematic *tafsīr* helps uncover and understand that structure, organization, and cohesion.

Thematic *tafsīr* also helps make the Quran relevant to our daily lives making its message, guidance, and instructions relatable and practical. In *Sūrah Yūsuf*, Allāh ﷻ describes the Quran as, “Never was the Quran a narration invented, but a confirmation of what was before it and a detailed explanation of all things and guidance and mercy for a people who believe.”⁷¹ The Quran confirms and reaffirms what is mentioned in the scriptures that came before it. Allah ﷻ Himself says that the Quran is a detailed explanation of every single thing. It is a detailed explanation of everything we as human beings need to navigate through the challenges of this world allowing us to attain real success in this life and salvation in the next. Ibn Mas‘ūd said, “Whoever wants knowledge then let them turn to the Quran.”⁷² al-Imām al-Shāfi‘ī said, “Nothing happens to anyone with respect to their religion except that there is guidance for it in the book of Allah.”⁷³ Once he said, “Ask me about anything and I will tell you about it from the book of Allāh.”⁷⁴ That is why ibn ‘Abbās would say that if I lost my camel’s rope, I would find it in the book of Allāh.⁷⁵ Meaning that he would look towards the Quran for answers to all of his problems, both big and small. Similarly, we should turn towards the guidance of the Quran searching for answers that will shape our approach to life and all its challenges.

As human beings, we deal with questions, issues, problems, situations, and challenges every single day. The Quran contains solutions, answers, and guidance to all

⁷¹ Quran 12: 111

⁷²al-Bayhaqī, *Shu‘ab al-Īmān*, 1960

⁷³ al-Suyūfī, *al-Itqān fī ‘Ulūm al-Quran*, 759

⁷⁴ al-Suyūfī, *al-Itqān fī ‘Ulūm al-Quran*, 759

⁷⁵ al-Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-Ma‘ānī*, 14:98

of life's problems and challenges. Even when it comes to contemporary social, political, and economic issues, we can find guidance in the Quran. For example, currently, we are dealing with racism, prejudice, various types of abuse, inflation, the one percent, sexual freedom, and a host of other issues. What does the Quran say about racism and prejudice? Justice? Equality? Gender? Sexuality? Domestic abuse? Sexual abuse? Parenting? Thematic *tafsīr* helps us identify a Quranic framework for approaching and understanding these contemporary social issues.

4.4.3 *Tafsīr* Based on Inner Meanings

In Arabic, this genre of *tafsīr* is termed *Tafsīr al-Ishārī*, or exegesis based on inner meanings. According to the authors of these works, each verse of the Quran has an apparent surface-level meaning and a deeper hidden or inner meaning that is understood by a few. In these works, authors explore these deeper hidden or inner meanings. Oftentimes, these inner meanings are based on the understanding and reflections of the author. From this perspective, *tafsīr al-ishārī* can be understood as a type or category of *tafsīr bī al-ra'y*.⁷⁶

According to scholars of the Quran, this type of exegesis is permissible as long as it meets the following conditions⁷⁷:

1. The inner meanings are not used as the basis for deriving theology or fiqh
2. The inner meaning does not contradict and is not in conflict with the apparent meaning
3. The inner meaning is not considered to be the primary meaning
4. The inner meaning does not contradict the established and well-known teaching of Islam
5. The inner meaning has a basis for it in the Sharī'ah
6. There is no presumption that belief in the inner meaning is necessary

⁷⁶ Qadhi, *An Introduction to the Sciences of the Quran*, 335-337

⁷⁷ Qadhi, *An Introduction to the Sciences of the Quran*, 335

4.5 DIFFERENCE BETWEEN *TADABBUR*, *TAFSĪR*, AND OTHER RELATED TERMS

Tafsīr and *tadabbur* are two terms that are used within the realm of Islamic studies, particularly in the context of Quranic exegesis. It is very important to understand that *tafsīr* and *tadabbur* are two different undertakings. In chapter 2, I defined *tadabbur* as “to engage with the words and meanings of the Quran intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually - mind, body, and soul - with the intention of extracting lessons, morals, reminders, and guidance that can be practically applied to one’s life.” After exploring, discussing, and analyzing the definitions of *tafsīr* and *tadabbur*, it becomes clear that they are two distinct, yet interconnected activities. The reality and essence (*māhiyyah*) of both activities are different. To further clarify the difference, it is worth revisiting the definition of both. *Tafsīr* is explaining and uncovering the intended meanings of Allah’s divine speech. al-Zarqānī defined it as “A discipline that explores the Noble Quran from the perspective of its meanings as intended by Allah, as much as human capability allows.”⁷⁸ Any discussion or research that aids in uncovering or explaining the intended meanings of the Quran is classified as *tafsīr*. In simpler words, *tafsīr* is explaining and uncovering the intended meanings of Allah’s speech. *Tadabbur*, on the other hand, is to reflect on the words and meanings of the Quran and engage with them intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually - mind, body, and soul - with the intention of extracting lessons, morals, reminders, and guidance that can be practically applied to one’s life. *Tafsīr* is to uncover the meanings of the Quran, while *tadabbur* is to reflect on those meanings.

Since *tafsīr* and *tadabbur* are different activities, they have distinct methods and approaches. *Tafsīr* involves a systematic and analytical approach to explaining and interpreting Quranic verses, using tools such as language, grammar, syntax, and exegetical principles. It relies upon the sources discussed above. *Tadabbur*, on the other hand, relies on personal reflection, intuition, spiritual, and moral insight. *Tadabbur* requires one to understand the meanings of the Quran along with reflection, contemplation, and introspection. For example, *tafsīr* will explain and clarify the meaning of Allah’s words,

⁷⁸ al-Zarqānī, *Manāhil al-‘Irfān fī ‘Ulūm al-Quran*, 2:3

فِيهَا ۖ وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ

“And He is with you wherever you are.”⁷⁹

It will explain the meanings according to the language, grammar, syntax, exegetical principles, and theology. *Tadabbur* would then be a personal reflection on the meaning where they contemplate the meanings of Allah’s omnipresence and the implications of that for their daily life.

Another difference is that *tafsīr*, quranic exegesis, is reserved for specialists in the field of Quranic studies. *Tadabbur*, on the other hand, is more general and is an act that should be engaged in by the non-scholar and scholar alike. *Tafsīr* is a specialized discipline that should only be done by scholars who have the requisite qualifications. It is reserved for scholars who have a deep understanding of the Arabic language, various interconnected fields of Islamic Studies, and the principles of exegesis. A *mufassir* is a scholar of quranic exegesis who is trained in Islamic Studies and exegetical principles that gives them the ability to explain and clarify the meanings of the Quran. A *mutadabbir* is anyone who then reflects on those meanings in order to derive lessons and reminders. *Tadabbur* is a more personal and experiential activity focusing on the spiritual and moral lessons that can be understood from the meanings of the Quran. Regarding *tadabbur*, Sohaib Saeed writes, “It is not about ‘What does the Quran mean’ but rather ‘What does this mean to me? What does it mean for me?’ Reflection is to start at the surface of the ayah and then dive deeper. At the same time, it means diving into our own selves. In both directions, we are going to discover realities that we might even have known before but needed to appreciate and remember.”⁸⁰ Based on this, it can be said that every *mufassir* or scholar engages in *tadabbur*, but not everyone who engages in *tadabbur* is a *mufassir* or a scholar.

Tafsīr is the doorway or the means that leads toward *tadabbur*. It is not possible to reflect on the meanings of the Quran without first knowing them. As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, the only way to effectively contemplate and deeply reflect upon the words of Allah ﷻ and their meanings - to engage in *tadabbur* - is to know what those words and meanings are. The relationship between *tafsīr* and *tadabbur* is one of

⁷⁹ Quran 57:4

⁸⁰ Saeed, Sohaib, <https://quranreflect.com/posts/17418>

talāzum, they go together. *Tafsīr* is to uncover the intended meanings and *tadabbur* is to reflect on them; *tafsīr* is the means and *tadabbur* is the goal. *Tadabbur* can be done after acquiring a simple general understanding of the verse. Wahb writes, “Since *tadabbur* involves deep reflection, and since reflection is a matter of deepening our understanding, developing a baseline understanding is necessary. This is easily done by consulting a reliable book of *tafsīr* (exegesis).”⁸¹

There is also a slight difference in terms of the scope and depth of both *tafsīr* and *tadabbur*. *Tafsīr* aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of each verse. It often includes detailed discussions of language, grammar, syntax, causes of revelation, *sīrah*, theology, related *ḥadīth*, and jurisprudence. *Tadabbur* may focus on a specific verse or theme and aims to provide a deeper understanding of their spiritual and moral implications.

An example from the Quran will help underline and clarify the difference and overlap between both activities. Allah ﷻ says in Sūrah al-Fātiḥah,

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

“All praise is for Allah, Lord of the worlds.”⁸²

This is the translation of verse 1 of Sūrah al-Fātiḥah according to Mustafa Khattab in his translation of the meanings of the Quran entitled *The Clear Quran*. A translation is essentially *tafsīr* as it is explaining and uncovering the surface-level meanings of the Quran. al-Baghawī writes in his exegesis regarding this verse:

(All praise is for Allah) It is phrased as an informative sentence. He is informing [us] that the one who is entitled to praise is Allah .ﷻ It is also teaching creation [how to praise Him]. The implied meaning is, ‘Say all praise is for Allah.’ *al-Ḥamd* can mean expressing gratitude for a favor and it can also mean praising someone for praiseworthy qualities. It is said, ‘I praised so and so for the favors he has done for me and I praised him for his knowledge and bravery.’ Gratitude is only in response to a favor. *al-Ḥamd* (praise) is more general than gratitude because one doesn’t say I thanked so and so for his knowledge. Everyone who praises expresses gratitude, but not everyone who

⁸¹ Wahb, Yousef, <https://yaqeeninstitute.org/read/paper/keys-to-tadabbur-how-to-reflect-deeply-on-the-quran>

⁸² Quran 1:1

expresses gratitude praises. It is also said that praise is done verbally with the tongue and gratitude is done practically with the limbs. Allah says, ‘And say, ‘All praise is for Allah, Who has never had ‘any’ offspring; nor does He have a partner in ‘governing’ the kingdom; nor is He pathetic, needing a protector. And revere Him immensely.’ He also says, ‘‘We ordered:’ ‘Work gratefully, O family of David!’ ‘Only’ a few of My servants are ‘truly’ grateful.’

His statement (for Allah) the definite article “*lām*” is for entitlement. It is said the house belongs to Zaid.

His statement (Lord of the worlds) Lord can mean owner. The owner of the house is called lord of the house. The expression lord of the thing is used when a person owns it. It can also mean nurturing and reform. It is said that so and so cultivated the land when they nurture and till it. That person is also a lord. Allah is the owner of the worlds and their nurturer. The creation cannot be called lord with the definite article. They are called the lord of something, when the word lord is annexed to another noun.

(The worlds) is the plural of the word *‘ālam*, which has no singular form. The scholars have disagreed regarding the meaning of *‘ālamīn*. Ibn ‘Abbās (ra) says it refers to the jinn and mankind because they are legally responsible with Allah’s address. Allah says, ‘So that he may be a warner to the whole world.’ Qatādah, Mujāhid, and al-Ḥasan said it is referring to all of creation. Allah said, ‘Pharaoh asked, ‘And who is the Lord of all worlds?’’ Moses replied, ‘[He is] the Lord of the heavens and the earth and everything in between, if only you had sure faith.’

al-Baghawī is engaging in exegesis; he is explaining and uncovering the meanings of the words by analyzing them linguistically, grammatically, and rhetorically. He is following the principles and rules of tafsīr that were developed and refined over time that are used to explain and interpret the Quran. A similar approach and explanation of the meanings can be found with varying details in other works of tafsīr such as *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*, *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, and *Tafsīr ibn Kathīr*.

Tadabbur requires one to be familiar with these meanings that are explained by the exegetes and then reflect on them in order to derive spiritual and moral lessons and reminders. A person engaging in *tadabbur* of “All praise is for Allah Lord of the worlds” may ask questions such as: Why does Allah ﷻ use the word praise (*ḥamd*) instead of

thanks (*shukr*)? Why am I praising Allah ﷻ? What am I grateful for? What blessings do I enjoy? What is my relationship with Allah ﷻ? Who is Allah ﷻ? Why does Allah introduce Himself as Lord of the worlds? How do I benefit from Allah as my Lord? How does my Lord take care of me? What are some instances in my life where I experienced the Lord of the worlds taking care of me? *Tadabbur* is a more intuitive and reflective process, allowing the reader to draw their own insights and connections. It allows one to derive practical lessons and relevant guidance from the Quran.

To summarize, *tafsīr* aims to uncover the meaning and significance of the Quranic text, while *tadabbur* aims to derive practical and spiritual lessons and guidance from it. *Tafsīr* is a scholarly and systematic approach to interpreting and explaining the Quran, while *tadabbur* is a more personal and experiential approach. There may be some overlap between *tafsīr* and *tadabbur*, but they represent different approaches to studying and understanding the Quran, each with their own strengths and purposes. *Tafsīr* focuses more on the technical and analytical aspects of interpreting and explaining the Quranic verses, while *tadabbur* emphasizes the spiritual and personal dimensions of Quranic understanding. Both approaches are important in understanding the Quran and its message, and they complement each other to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the text.

4.5.1 *Istinbāt* and *Tadabbur*

Another closely related and interconnected activity or concept to *tadabbur* is *istinbāt*, which is usually translated as deduction, inference, or extraction. It is derived from the root letters *nūn* - *bā* - *ṭā*, which convey the meanings of depth or profundity. Linguistically, *istinbāt* is a verbal noun derived from the verb *istanbaṭa/yastanbiṭu*, which means to discover, derive, extract, deduce, or infer. Oftentimes it is used to convey the meaning of extracting something hidden or obscure.⁸³ Allah ﷻ says,

⁸³ Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, 939

وَإِذَا جَاءَهُمْ أَمْرٌ مِّنَ الْأَمْنِ أَوْ الْخَوْفِ أَذَاعُوا بِهِ وَلَوْ رَدُّوهُ إِلَى الرَّسُولِ وَإِلَىٰ أُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْهُمْ لَعَلِمَهُ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَنْبِطُونَهُ مِنْهُمْ وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ لَاتَّبَعْتُمُ الشَّيْطَانَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا

“When news concerning peace or fear comes to them, they go about spreading it. Had they referred it to the Messenger and to those having authority among them, the truth of the matter would have come to the knowledge of those of them who are able to investigate. But for Allah’s grace upon you and mercy, you would have followed Satan, save a few.”⁸⁴

Technically, *istinbāt* has been defined and described in different ways depending on what context and what field the term is being used in. For example within the field of *Fiqh*, Islamic Jurisprudence, it can be defined as extracting or deriving obscure and hidden meanings from texts of the Quran and Ḥadīth after exerting effort, reflection, and using various linguistic interpretative principles. It is to deduce or infer a somewhat hidden meaning from a given text.⁸⁵ It usually refers to the process of deriving legal rulings or conclusions from Islamic texts, specifically the Quran and Ḥadīth. Within the field of Islamic Jurisprudence, scholars use *istinbāt* to derive legal rulings from the Quran and Sunnah for various issues that are not explicitly mentioned in the primary sources. Jurists will use a variety of hermeneutical tools and methods, such as analogy (*qiyās*) and independent reasoning (*ijtihād*), and linguistic rules of interpretation to derive a legal ruling that is inferred and derived from the textual sources.

Istinbāt is an important process and tool within Islamic Law, that allows jurists and scholars to address new and emerging issues that may not have been explicitly mentioned in the Quran and Ḥadīth. The process of *istinbāt* requires one to have a certain level of knowledge and expertise in Arabic, *Fiqh*, and *Uṣūl al-Fiqh*. Deriving legal rulings through *istinbāt* is an activity that is reserved for trained scholars and jurists who have the pre-requisite knowledge and skills to do so.

In addition to being used as a tool to derive legal rulings, *istinbāt* can also be used to derive general conclusions that are accessible to everyone such as points related

⁸⁴ Quran 4:83

⁸⁵ Kamali, *Shariah Law an Introduction*, 324

to ethics, manners, values, spirituality, and guidance. *Istinbāt* is not limited to deriving legal rulings. For example, a person can derive benefits related to certain manners and spirituality from the stories of the prophets and messengers or unique insights into spirituality from the various addresses to the Prophet ﷺ. It can also be used to derive historical, literary, or rhetorical insights from the Quran. It is a process that involves analyzing the language and context of Quranic verses to extract their meanings.

For example, al-Suyūṭī mentions a number of lessons and unique benefits that can be derived from the story of Mūsa with al-Khaḍīr mentioned in Sūrah al-Kahf. He writes that from this story we learn⁸⁶:

- i. There's nothing wrong with having a servant on a journey
- ii. It is recommended to travel to seek knowledge
- iii. A scholar should look to increase their knowledge
- iv. Taking provisions for a journey and that doesn't go against the concept of *tawakkul* (reliance upon Allah ﷻ)
- v. Attributing forgetfulness to oneself figuratively and as a way of displaying proper manners with Allah ﷻ
- vi. The humility of a student with his teacher, even though the teacher may be of a lower status
- vii. A scholar excusing themselves from teaching someone they know who won't be able to bear the weight of the knowledge
- viii. Relegating affairs to the will of Allah ﷻ
- ix. The one being followed can place conditions on the one following
- x. It is necessary to fulfill conditions
- xi. A person is not held accountable for forgetfulness
- xii. A stranger or traveler can ask for food and hospitality
- xiii. A good action should not be left out of fear of blame
- xiv. It is permissible to take wages or payment for work
- xv. A person can still be considered poor even if they own a ship or any other item that can be used to earn a living that is not sufficient
- xvi. Usurpation is unlawful

⁸⁶ Suyūṭī, *al-Iklīl fī Istinbāt al-Tanzīl*, 147

- xvii. It is permissible to destroy a portion of someone else's property or damage it in order to protect the rest
- xviii. If there is a conflict of two bad options, choose the lesser of the two
- xix. A child can be protected because of the righteousness of their parents

It becomes clear from the above discussion, that *istinbāt* is a process that can be used to derive legal, theological, ethical, moral, and social conclusions from the verses of the Quran. Legal and theological derivation is reserved for qualified and trained scholars; whereas, ethical, moral, and social conclusions can be drawn by anyone who understands the language and context of the Quran.

Istinbāt and *tadabbur* are two distinct, yet interrelated, concepts that aid in creating a deeper understanding of the Quran. *Istinbāt* is the process of using one's intellect and understanding to derive legal, theological, ethical, moral, and social conclusions from the Quran, while *tadabbur* refers to deep reflection and contemplation on the meaning and message of the Quran. *Tadabbur* is a means that leads towards the ability to engage in *istinbāt*. *Tadabbur* informs and guides the process of *istinbāt* by providing a deeper understanding of the Quranic message, while *istinbāt* helps provide practical guidance for applying Quranic teachings in daily life.

4.5.2 *Ta'wīl, Tafsīr, and Tadabbur*

Another concept that is related to both *tadabbur* and *tafsīr* is *ta'wīl*, which is usually translated as interpretation or explanation. *Ta'wīl* is derived from the root letters *hamzah-wāw-lām*, which convey the meaning of returning, reverting, or going back. *Ta'wīl* is a verbal noun derived from the verb *awwala/ya'awwilu*, which means to interpret or explain.⁸⁷ When a person does *ta'wīl* it is as if they are returning or returning to the intended meaning of the speaker.⁸⁸

There are three types of *ta'wīl*⁸⁹:

⁸⁷ Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, 34

⁸⁸ Qadhi, *An Introduction to the Sciences of the Quran*, 289

⁸⁹ Qadhi, *An Introduction to the Sciences of the Quran*, 289-290

1. To understand a word in light of one of its connotations, despite the fact that this connotation is not the primary intent of the word
2. To explain the intended meaning of the speaker, which is *tafsīr*
3. The actuality of the speech, meaning that which is said coming into existence and reality. For example, if a person says, “Muḥammad came” the *ta’wīl* of this statement would be Muḥammad actually coming.

All of these meanings and usages are found within the scholarly tradition.

Using the word *ta’wīl* as a synonym for *tafsīr* is common in the works of scholars throughout history. This usage is traced back to the time of the Prophet ﷺ himself. It is narrated that the Prophet ﷺ supplicated for ibn ‘Abbās saying, “O Allah! Grant him a deep understanding of religion and teach him *al-ta’wīl*.”⁹⁰ The word *ta’wīl* in this *du‘ā* is referring to *tafsīr*. al-Ṭabarī writes that what is meant by *ta’wīl* in this supplication is explaining the meanings of what Allah ﷻ has revealed to the Prophet ﷺ and the various verses of the Quran.⁹¹

Another example of this usage is found in the ḥadīth collection of Tirmidhī in a narration that explains the meanings of

وَأَنْفِقُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلَا تُلْقُوا بِأَيْدِيكُمْ إِلَى التَّهْلُكَةِ . وَأَحْسِنُوا . إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ
الْمُحْسِنِينَ

“Spend in the cause of Allah and do not let your own hands throw you into destruction ‘by withholding’. And do good, for Allah certainly loves the good-doers.”⁹²

Abū ‘Imrān al-Tujībī narrates: We were in a Roman city (Constantinople) when a large group of Romans came out to us. So about the same number or more of the Muslims went towards them. The commander of the people of Egypt was ‘Uqbah ibn ‘Āmir, and the leader of (our) group was Faḍālah ibn ‘Ubaid. One man from the Muslims reached the Roman line until he entered amidst them, so the people started screaming: ‘Glory be to Allah! He has thrown himself into destruction!’

⁹⁰ ibn Mājah, *k. al-muqaddimah*, *b. faḍl ibn ‘Abbās*, 166. This narration is graded as ṣaḥīḥ.

⁹¹ al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi‘ al-Bayān fī Ta’wīl Āyy al-Quran*, 1:80

⁹² Quran 2:195

Abū Ayyūb al-Anṣārī said, 'O people! You interpret this verse in this way, while this verse was only revealed about us, the people of the Anṣār, when Allah strengthened Islam, and increased its supporters. Some of us secretly said to each other, outside of the presence of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ 'Our wealth has been wasted, and Allah has strengthened Islam and increased its supporters, so if we tend to our wealth then what we lost of it shall be revitalized for us.' Allah ﷻ revealed to His Prophet ﷺ rebuking what we said, 'Spend in the cause of Allah and do not let your own hands throw you into destruction 'by withholding'.' The destruction was tending to wealth and not going out in the path of Allah.⁹³ In this narration, the word *ta'wīl* is used as a synonym for *tafsīr*.

al-Shāfi'ī throughout his work *al-Umm* uses the word *ta'wīl* to mean *tafsīr*. In several places he says, "And that - Allah knows best - is clear in the revelation and is not in need of explanation."⁹⁴ Perhaps the most famous figure to use *ta'wīl* to mean *tafsīr* is the famous exegete Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī in his *tafsīr Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl Āy al-Quran*.

Using the word *ta'wīl* to describe the actuality of the speech, meaning that which is said coming into existence and reality, is also common. In simpler words, it is used to mean interpretation. This usage is prevalent throughout the Quran. Allah ﷻ says:

۱ . وَكَذَلِكَ يَجْتَبِيكَ رَّبُّكَ وَيُعَلِّمُكَ مِنْ تَأْوِيلِ الْأَحَادِيثِ وَيُسَمِّي نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكَ وَعَلَىٰ آءِ
يَعْقُوبَ كَمَا أَتَمَّهَا عَلَىٰ أَبَوَيْكَ مِنْ قَبْلُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْحَاقَ ۚ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ

And so will your Lord choose you 'O Joseph', and teach you the interpretation of dreams, and perfect His favor upon you and the descendants of Jacob—"just" as He once perfected it upon your forefathers, Abraham and Isaac. Surely your Lord is All-Knowing, All-Wise.⁹⁵

⁹³ Tirmidhī, *k. al-tafsīr*, 2972. This narration is graded as ṣaḥīḥ.

⁹⁴ Shāfi'ī, *al-Umm*, 319

⁹⁵ Quran 12:6

٢. وَقَالَ الَّذِي اشْتَرَاهُ مِنْ مِصْرَ لِامْرَأَتِهِ أَكْرِمِي مَثْوَاهُ عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَنْفَعَنَا أَوْ نَتَّخِذَهُ
وَلَدًا ۗ وَكَذَلِكَ مَكَّنَّا لِيُوسُفَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلِنُعَلِّمَهُ ۗ مِن تَأْوِيلِ الْأَحَادِيثِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ
غَالِبٌ عَلَىٰ أَمْرِهِ ۗ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

The man from Egypt who bought him said to his wife, ‘Take good care of him, perhaps he may be useful to us or we may adopt him as a son.’ This is how We established Joseph in the land so that We might teach him the interpretation of dreams. Allah’s Will always prevails, but most people do not know.⁹⁶

٣. وَدَخَلَ مَعَهُ السِّجْنَ فَتَيَانٍ ۗ قَالَ أَحَدُهُمَا إِنِّي أَرَانِي أَعْصِرُ خَمْرًا ۗ وَقَالَ الْآخَرُ إِنِّي
أَرَانِي أُحْمَلُ فَوْقَ رَأْسِي خُبْرًا تَأْكُلُ الطَّيْرُ مِنْهُ ۗ نَبِّئْنَا بِتَأْوِيلِهِ ۗ إِنَّا نَرَاكَ مِنَ
الْمُحْسِنِينَ

And two other servants went to jail with Joseph. One of them said, ‘I dreamt I was pressing wine.’ The other said, ‘I dreamt I was carrying ‘some’ bread on my head, from which birds were eating.’ ‘Then both said,’ ‘Tell us their interpretation, for we surely see you as one of the good-doers.’⁹⁷

٤. قَالَ لَا يَأْتِيكُمَا طَعَامٌ تُرْزَقَانِهِ ۗ إِلَّا نَبَّأْتُكُمَا بِتَأْوِيلِهِ ۗ قَبْلَ أَنْ يَأْتِيَكُمَا ۗ ذَلِكُمَا مِمَّا
عَلَّمَنِي رَبِّي ۗ إِنِّي تَرَكْتُ مِلَّةَ قَوْمٍ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَهُمْ بِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ كَافِرُونَ

He said, ‘I can tell you what this means before any meal arrives: this is part of what my Lord has taught me. I reject the faith of those who disbelieve in Allah and deny the life to come...’⁹⁸

٥. قَالُوا أَضَعَتْ أَحْلَامَ ۗ وَمَا نَحْنُ بِتَأْوِيلِ الْأَحْلَامِ بِعَالِمِينَ

They replied, ‘These are confused visions and we do not know the interpretation of such dreams.’⁹⁹

٦. وَقَالَ الَّذِي نَجَا مِنْهُمَا وَادَّكَرَ بَعْدَ أُمَّةٍ أَنَا أُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِتَأْوِيلِهِ ۗ فَأَرْسَلُونِ

⁹⁶ Quran 12:21

⁹⁷ Quran 12:36

⁹⁸ Quran 12:37

⁹⁹ Quran 12:44

'Finally, ' the surviving ex-prisoner remembered 'Joseph' after a long time and said, 'I will tell you its interpretation, so send me forth 'to Joseph'.'¹⁰⁰

٧. وَرَفَعَ أَبُوتَيْهِ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ وَخَرُّوا لَهُ سُجَّدًا وَقَالَ يَا أَبَتِ هَذَا تَأْوِيلُ رُؤْيَايَ مِنْ قَبْلُ قَدْ جَعَلَهَا رَبِّي حَقًّا وَقَدْ أَحْسَنَ بِي إِذْ أَخْرَجَنِي مِنَ السِّجْنِ وَجَاءَ بِكُمْ مِنَ الْبَدْوِ مِنْ بَعْدِ أَنْ نَزَغَ الشَّيْطَانُ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَ إِخْوَتِي ۚ إِنَّ رَبِّي لَطِيفٌ لِمَا يَشَاءُ ۚ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ

Then he raised his parents to the throne, and they all fell down in prostration to Joseph, who then said, 'O my dear father! This is the interpretation of my old dream. My Lord has made it come true. He was truly kind to me when He freed me from prison and brought you all from the desert after Satan had ignited rivalry between me and my siblings. Indeed my Lord is subtle in fulfilling what He wills. Surely He 'alone' is the All-Knowing, All-Wise.'¹⁰¹

٨. رَبِّ قَدْ آتَيْتَنِي مِنَ الْمُلْكِ وَعَلَّمْتَنِي مِنْ تَأْوِيلِ الْأَحَادِيثِ ۚ فَاطِرَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ أَنْتَ وَلِيِّ فِ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ ۚ تَوَفَّنِي مُسْلِمًا وَأَلْحِقْنِي بِالصَّالِحِينَ

My Lord! You have surely granted me authority and taught me the interpretation of dreams. 'O' Originator of the heavens and the earth! You are my Guardian in this world and the Hereafter. Allow me to die as one who submits¹ and join me with the righteous.¹⁰²

٩. قَالَ هَذَا فِرَاقُ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنِكَ ۚ سَأُنَبِّئُكَ بِتَأْوِيلِ مَا لَمْ تَسْتَطِعْ عَلَيْهِ صَبْرًا

He replied, 'This is the parting of our ways. I will explain to you what you could not bear patiently.'¹⁰³

١٠. وَأَمَّا الْجِدَارُ فَكَانَ لِغُلَامَيْنِ يَتِيمَيْنِ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ وَكَانَ تَحْتَهُ كَنْزٌ لَهُمَا وَكَانَ أَبُوهُمَا صَالِحًا فَأَرَادَ رَبُّكَ أَنْ يَبْلُغَا أَشُدَّهُمَا وَيَسْتَخْرِجَا كَنْزَهُمَا رَحْمَةً مِّن رَّبِّكَ ۚ وَمَا فَعَلْتُهُ عَنْ أَمْرِي ۚ ذَلِكَ تَأْوِيلُ مَا لَمْ تَسْتَطِعْ عَلَيْهِ صَبْرًا

¹⁰⁰ Quran 12:45

¹⁰¹ Quran 12:100

¹⁰² Quran 12:101

¹⁰³ Quran 18:78

And as for the wall, it belonged to two orphan boys in the city, and under the wall was a treasure that belonged to them, and their father had been a righteous man. So your Lord willed that these children should come of age and retrieve their treasure, as a mercy from your Lord. I did not do it 'all' on my own. This is the explanation of what you could not bear patiently.¹⁰⁴

This same usage is found in several reports from the Prophet ﷺ and his Companions:

1. al-Bukhārī records the following ḥadīth under his explanation of Allah's statement, "Then glorify the praises of your Lord and seek His forgiveness, for certainly He is ever Accepting of Repentance." From 'Ā'ishah who said: the Messenger of Allah ﷺ often used to say when bowing and prostrating: Glory be to You, O Allah, and praise. O Allah forgive me, interpreting the Quran.¹⁰⁵
2. From ibn 'Umar: He used to pray in whatever direction his animal would turn and mention that is what the Prophet ﷺ used to do¹⁰⁶. That's how he interpreted the verse, "To Allah belong the east and the west, so wherever you turn you are facing 'towards' Allah. Surely Allah is All-Encompassing, All-Knowing."¹⁰⁷
3. From Ka'b al-Aḥbār: a man took off his sandals so he asked him, "Why did you take off your sandals? Perhaps you interpreted the verse, 'It is truly I. I am your Lord! So take off your sandals, for you are in the sacred valley of Ṭuwa."¹⁰⁸
4. Sufyān al-Thawrī narrates that Umm Walad al-Rabī' ibn Khuthaym said: When a beggar would come to him he would tell me to give him some sugar because al-Rabī' ibn Khuthaym loved sugar. Sufyān said that's how he understood and interpreted the verse, "You will never achieve righteousness

¹⁰⁴ Quran 18:82

¹⁰⁵ Bukhārī, *k. al-tafsīr*, 4968

¹⁰⁶ This is referring to performing voluntary prayers while riding on an animal.

¹⁰⁷ Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl Āyy al-Quran*, 2:530

¹⁰⁸ Mālik, *al-Muwatta'*, 48:17

until you donate some of what you cherish. And whatever you give is certainly well known to Allah.”¹⁰⁹

In all of the above verses from the Quran and narrations, the word *ta'wīl* is used to mean interpretation.

Within the field of *Uṣūl al-Fiqh* (Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence), *ta'wīl* has a more specific definition. It refers to selecting the intended meaning of a word that is a homonym. The technical word for homonym in Arabic is *mushtarak*. A word that is *mushtarak* is a word that has more than one meaning. It's a word that was coined for multiple meanings, and at the time of coinage, had more than one meaning. For example, the different Arab tribes may have used the word to mean different things. Some used it for one meaning, others for the other. Sometimes a word may have acquired a metaphorical meaning that became literal over time. For example, the word *'ayn* depending on the context can mean eye, spring, gold, sun, and spy. Similarly, the word *qur'* means *ṭuhr* (period of purity) or *ḥayḍ* (menstruation). Another example is the word “*jāriyah*”, which can mean a female slave or a ship. The word “*mushtarī*” means buyer and it's also the name of the planet Jupiter.¹¹⁰

When a word that is *mushtarak* is used in the Quran or ḥadīth, it can only refer to one of the possible meanings. The Lawgiver — Allah ﷻ or the Prophet ﷺ — don't intend more than one meaning for a word at any given time. The rule with respect to commands and prohibitions is that the Lawgiver doesn't intend to uphold more than one of the different meanings of a homonym at any given time. It can't convey both meanings at the same time; one of its meanings must be identified. It would not be feasible to say “go to the *'ayn*” and intend both a spring and the sun. Identifying which meaning is intended in the verse or the ḥadīth is the job of the *mujtahid*.

If a word that is *mushtarak* is found in a text, a verse of the Quran or a ḥadīth, then the *mujtahid* has to identify which meaning is intended. They will look at the context of the word, and how and why it is being used to determine the intended meaning. Once they have identified the intended meaning it must be acted upon. After

¹⁰⁹ Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi' lī Ahkām al-Quran*, 4:133

¹¹⁰ al-Shāshī, *Uṣūl al-Shāshī*, 36-40

the intended meaning of the word has been identified through *ta'wīl* based on evidence it's called *mu'awwal*.¹¹¹

When a word has two meanings, one literal and the other technical (legal), and it occurs in a legal context, then as a general rule the legal meaning will be given preference. For example, the words *ṣalāh*, *zakāh*, *ṣawm*, *hajj*, and *ṭalāq* all have both literal and legal meanings. If they occur in a legal context then obviously the legal meaning will be taken unless there's some type of proof indicating otherwise.¹¹²

Examples:

1. For example, Allah ﷻ says,

إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَمَلَائِكَتَهُ يُصَلُّونَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا صَلُّوا عَلَيْهِ وَسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا

“Surely, Allah and His angels send blessings to the Prophet. Believers, pray to Allah to bless him, and send your *salām* (prayers for protection) to him in abundance.”¹¹³ The linguistic meaning of the word *ṣalāh* is supplication and prayer. Its legal meaning is the ritual devotional prayer *al-ṣalāh*: a set of specific actions that starts with *takbīr* and end with *taslīm*. Here the context tells us that the linguistic meaning is intended.

2. Another example is where Allah ﷻ says,

وَالْمُطَلَّقَاتُ يَتَرَبَّصْنَ بِأَنْفُسِهِنَّ ثَلَاثَةَ قُرُوءٍ

“Divorced women remain in waiting for three periods.”¹¹⁴ The word “*qurū*”, which is the plural of “*qur*”, is a homonym. It can mean menstruation (*ḥayḍ*) and it can also mean the period of purity between two cycles (*tuhr*). Based on different evidences the Ḥanafīs interpret it to mean *ḥayḍ* and the Shāfi‘īs interpret it to mean *tuhr*.

3. al-Imām Abū Ḥanīfah mentioned that if a man said to his wife, “You are like my mother to me” then he would not be a *muzāhir*. *Zihār* in English is translated as injurious comparison or incestuous assimilation. *Zihār* is a

¹¹¹ Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence*, 120

¹¹² Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence*, 121

¹¹³ Quran 33:56

¹¹⁴ Quran 2:228

type of divorce which was common in pre-Islamic Arabia, but was made unlawful by Islam. It was a way for the husband to divorce his wife by selfishly saying to her, “You are like my mother.” This way she would not have conjugal rights, but at the same time she would still be bound to him like a slave. The reason why the above statement wouldn’t be considered *zihār* is because the expression is *mushtarak*; “like my mother” could be a term of respect or it could mean you’re impermissible for me like my mother. It will only count as *zihār* if the husband had the intention.

٤ . يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تَقْتُلُوا الصَّيْدَ وَأَنْتُمْ حُرْمٌ ۚ وَمَنْ قَتَلَهُ مِنْكُمْ مُتَعَمِّدًا فَجَزَاءٌ مِّثْلُ مَا قَتَلَ مِنَ النَّعَمِ يَحْكُمُ بِهِ ذَوَا عَدْلٍ مِّنكُمْ هَدْيًا بُلُغَ الْكَعْبَةِ أَوْ كَفَّرَهُ طَعَامَ مَسْكِينٍ أَوْ عَدْلٌ ذَٰلِكَ صِيَامًا لِّيَذُوقَ وَبَالَ أَمْرِهِ ۗ عَفَا اللَّهُ عَمَّا سَلَفَ ۚ وَمَنْ عَادَ فَيَنْتَقِمِ اللَّهُ مِنْهُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ ذُو انْتِقَامٍ

“Believers, do not kill game when you are in *Ihrām*. If someone from among you kills it deliberately, then compensation (will be required) from cattle “*mithl*” equal to what one has killed, according to the judgement of two just men from among you, as an offering due to reach the Ka‘bah, or an expiation.”¹¹⁵ This particular verse is talking about the penalty of killing game while in the state of *ihrām*. The issue that arises in this verse is that the word “*mithl*” (equal or similar) is *mushtarak*:

- i. it can mean a similar animal
- ii. or the monetary equivalent

According to the Ḥanafīs what is meant here is the monetary equivalent. So the penalty is assessed by evaluating the monetary value of the game where it was killed. Then with that monetary value he has a choice:

- i. purchase an animal to slaughter if it’s equivalent.
- ii. or purchase food equivalent to its value and give it as charity; each receiving ½ *ṣā‘* of wheat or a *ṣā‘* of dates/barely
- iii. or fast one day for every ½ *ṣā‘* of wheat or one day for every *ṣā‘* of barely

¹¹⁵ Quran 5:95

٥. فَإِنْ طَلَّقَهَا فَلَا تَحِلُّ لَهُ مِنْ بَعْدُ حَتَّى تَنْكِحَ زَوْجًا غَيْرَهُ ۚ

“If he divorces her, she shall no longer remain lawful for him unless she “*tankih*” marries (and consummates with) a man other than him.”¹¹⁶ The word “*nikāh*” is *mushtarak* between marriage and intercourse. In this verse the Ḥanafīs interpret the word to mean intercourse. This is because the phrase “*tankiḥa zawjan*” is used. “*Zawj*” (spouse), would only make sense in the context of intercourse and consummation, and cannot be used to say “until she marries her husband”. Either she’s not married to him, so he is not her husband at the time, or he is her husband, in which case the marriage already took place.

Keeping these various definitions of *ta’wīl* in mind, scholars have developed five main opinions regarding the difference between *tafsīr* and *ta’wīl*.¹¹⁷

1. They are synonyms. This is the opinion of several classical scholars including the ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī.
2. *Tafsīr* is used in explaining a word that conveys only one meaning, while *ta’wīl* is used in choosing one of the connotations of a words that conveys several different shades of meaning.
3. According to al-Māturīdī, *tafsīr* is when the explanation is based on certain knowledge, while *ta’wīl* is when the explanation and interpretation is based on personal reasoning (*ijtihād*).
4. al-Tha‘labī opined that *tafsīr* is the explanation of the literal meaning of the verse, while *ta’wīl* is explaining the intent behind the verse. For example, the *tafsīr* of “Verily your Lord is Ever Watchful” is that Allah is aware of everything that a person does. The *ta’wīl* of the verse is to warn humanity not to fall into sins or belittle the commands of Allah ﷻ.
5. *Tafsīr* is meant to give the meanings of individual words in a verse, whereas *ta’wīl* provides the meaning of the verse as a whole.

¹¹⁶ Quran 2:230

¹¹⁷ Qadhi, *An Introduction to the Sciences of the Quran*, 290

There is no standard, widespread, or accepted opinion regarding the differences between *tafsīr* and *ta'wīl*. Scholars and authors across history have used the terms in all of the ways mentioned above. In the modern era, there have been attempts to standardize terms and their definitions, but these standards cannot and should not be back projected on the usages of scholars in the past. This type of back projection will lead to gross misunderstandings and confusion. Most modern authors will differentiate between *tafsīr* and *ta'wīl* arguing that *tafsīr* is explaining the meaning or intent of a word or verse that has only one connotation, whereas *ta'wīl* is to select one of the possible connotations of a word or verse due to external factors.

Both *ta'wīl* and *tadabbur* are important tools for studying, analyzing, and understanding the Quran. Depending on which meaning of *ta'wīl* is being used there can be considerable overlap between the two. If we adopt the convention of most modern-day authors and scholars, then *tadabbur* is something that complements *ta'wīl*. *Ta'wīl* is required to understand and interpret one of the possible connotations or meanings of a word or verse. After understanding that meaning, a person can engage in *tadabbur*; deep reflection, contemplation, and thinking on the meaning in order to derive spiritual and moral benefit.

4.6 SUMMARY AND INSIGHTS

Chapter 4 of the thesis delves into the distinction and relationship between *tafsīr* (exegesis) and *tadabbur* (reflection) in Quranic studies. *Tafsīr* is the scholarly interpretation and explanation of the Quran, reserved for qualified scholars who have a profound understanding of Arabic and Islamic studies. This discipline involves uncovering the intended meanings of the Quranic text through linguistic, grammatical, historical, and contextual analysis. On the other hand, *tadabbur* is a more personal, reflective process that involves contemplating the spiritual and moral lessons of the Quranic verses. While *tafsīr* provides a comprehensive understanding of the text, *tadabbur* allows individuals to derive personal and practical insights from the Quran.

Tafsīr and *tadabbur* are inherently interconnected. *Tafsīr* serves as a foundation for *tadabbur*, as understanding the intended meanings of the Quranic verses is a prerequisite for meaningful reflection. The chapter emphasizes that *tafsīr* is the means,

and *tadabbur* is the goal; one cannot reflect on the Quran without first comprehending its meanings through *tafsīr*. Therefore, engaging in *tadabbur* requires consulting reliable *tafsīr* works to develop a baseline understanding of the verses.

The two disciplines differ in their scope and approach. *Tafsīr* aims to provide a detailed analysis of each verse, encompassing language, grammar, syntax, historical context, theology, and related ḥadīth. It involves a systematic and analytical approach to interpretation. *Tadabbur*, however, focuses on deriving deeper spiritual and moral implications from specific verses or themes. It is more intuitive and reflective, allowing individuals to draw personal insights and connections.

The chapter provides an example from Sūrah al-Fātiḥah to illustrate the difference and overlap between *tafsīr* and *tadabbur*. *Tafsīr* would explain the phrase "All praise is for Allah, Lord of the worlds" by analyzing the linguistic and contextual aspects. It would clarify why the term "praise" (*ḥamd*) is used instead of "thanks" (*shukr*) and discuss the comprehensive nature of praise in relation to Allah. *Tadabbur*, on the other hand, would involve reflecting on personal reasons for praising Allah, considering one's relationship with Him, and contemplating instances where one has experienced Allah's lordship in their life.

The chapter concludes by emphasizing that both *tafsīr* and *tadabbur* are essential for a comprehensive understanding of the Quran. *Tafsīr* provides the technical and analytical foundation, while *tadabbur* allows for personal and spiritual engagement with the text. Together, they enable individuals to uncover the intended meanings of the Quran and derive practical lessons and guidance for their lives. The importance of both activities highlights the dynamic and multifaceted nature of Quranic studies, bridging scholarly analysis and personal reflection to fully appreciate the depth and wisdom of the Quran.

New insights from the material include the integration of *tafsīr* and *tadabbur*, presenting a nuanced understanding of how they complement each other. Effective reflection (*tadabbur*) cannot occur without a foundational understanding provided by *tafsīr*, enriching the study and application of Quranic teachings. The emphasis on *ijtihād* and *istinbāṭ* as sources of *tafsīr* showcases the dynamic nature of Islamic scholarship, where personal interpretation is guided by rigorous methodological principles. This

balance ensures that personal insights remain grounded in established scholarly tradition.



CHAPTER FIVE

HOW DID THE PROPHET ﷺ, HIS COMPANIONS, AND THE EARLY MUSLIMS ENGAGE IN *AL-TADABBUR*

5.1 PREFACE

The relationship between a believer and the Messenger ﷺ is that of a student and teacher. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ is the most perfect example of a human being to walk on the face of this earth. Allah ﷻ says,

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَن كَانَ يَرْجُوا اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ
اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا

“Indeed, in the Messenger of Allah you have an excellent example for whoever has hope in Allah and the Last Day and remembers Allah often.”¹

Allah ﷻ describes the Prophet ﷺ as “*uswah ḥasanah*”, which can be translated as good example or excellent role model. The Prophet ﷺ is the ideal and perfect role model for believers to follow in every single aspect of their lives; personal, spiritual, religious, social, communal, economic, and political. The Prophet ﷺ was a physical manifestation of the teachings of the Quran; his life was built upon the beliefs, guidance, morals, values, and principles mentioned in the Quran. That is why when his wife ‘Ā’ishah was asked about his character she replied, “His character was the Quran.”² The Prophet ﷺ had the most noble character and manners; he was extremely kind, gentle, caring, friendly, affable, generous, compassionate, patient, forbearing, forgiving, brave, humble, and simple. He dealt with people in the most beautiful way possible. Allah ﷻ praises him in the Quran saying,

وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ

“And you are surely on an excellent standard of character.”³

¹ Quran 33:21

² Bukhārī, *al-Adab al-Mufrad*, 308

³ Quran 68:4

The foundation of the relationship with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is love, honor, respect, and reverence. The Prophet ﷺ said, “None of you truly believes until I am more beloved to them than their father, son, and all of mankind.”⁴ The way to build and develop this type of love is by learning about his life through studying his *sīrah* (biography), character, and physical appearance. It is also nurtured by following his Sunnah and sending abundant salutations upon him ﷺ.

When one studies the life of the Prophet ﷺ he will find great insight into how the Prophet ﷺ engaged with the Quran. There are certain incidents from his life and narrations regarding his practices with reciting the Quran that demonstrate, explicitly and implicitly, how he engaged in *tadabbur*. He ﷺ also created a culture and environment of engaging with the Quran that was passed on to future generations of Muslims. In this chapter, I will survey, explore, and analyze reports highlighting how the Prophet ﷺ, his Companions, and the early Muslims engaged in *tadabbur*.

5.2 TADABBUR OF THE PROPHET ﷺ

Within the framework of Islam, the spiritual heart plays a very important and significant role in a person’s faith, understanding, practice, and character. The Prophet ﷺ said, “Truly there is a piece of flesh in the body, if it is sound then the entire body will be sound. If it is corrupt, then the entire body will be corrupt. Indeed, it is the heart.”⁵ The heart being referred to in this ḥadīth is not the physical heart, the organ in the human body. Rather, what is being referred to here is the spiritual heart. The spiritual heart is the single most important part of the human body. That is where the seed of faith is planted, nurtured, and allowed to grow. The heart is the center of faith, understanding, thought, reflection, and contemplation. The heart is the engine that drives human behavior; both actions and statements. The heart is the general or the commander and the limbs are its soldiers. If the heart is pure then the eyes, ears, and tongue will also be pure. That is why there is so much importance placed on the concepts of spirituality and purification. *Tazkiyah* can be understood as the process and effort of adorning one’s character with praiseworthy qualities such as sincerity, patience, forbearance, *taqwā*,

⁴ Muslim, *k. al-īmān, b. wujūb maḥabbah al-rasūl ﷺ akthara min al-ahl wa al-walad wa al-wālid wa al-nās ajma’in wa iṭlāq ‘adam al-īmān ‘alā man lam yuḥibbahu hādhihi al-maḥabbah*, 44

⁵ Bukhārī, *k. al-īmān, b. faḍl man istabra’a lī dīnihi*, 52

simplicity, humility and generosity while also purifying one's heart from spiritual diseases such as hypocrisy, pride, envy, and jealousy.

Tazkiyah, which is understood as spirituality and purification of the heart, is an integral part of one's practice of Islam. Allah ﷻ describes it as one of the primary responsibilities of the Prophet ﷺ. Allah ﷻ says,

لَقَدْ مَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذْ بَعَثَ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِّنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ
وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَإِن كَانُوا مِن قَبْلُ لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ

“Allah has been truly gracious to the believers in sending them a Messenger from among their own, to recite His revelations to them, to make them grow in purity, and to teach them the Scripture and wisdom- before that they were clearly astray.”⁶

In this verse, Allah ﷻ describes four primary tasks and responsibilities of the Prophet ﷺ as a Prophet and Messenger:

1. To recite His revelations to them - The Prophet ﷺ was assigned the responsibility of reciting the Quran, the divine speech of Allah ﷻ, to his community. He would convey the words of Allah ﷻ as they were revealed to him to both believer and non-believers, to his Companions and his enemies, and to those he was calling toward the truth.
2. To make them grow in purity - The Prophet ﷺ was given the task of purifying the beliefs and character of his community. He would help purify their hearts by removing *shirk*, hypocrisy, and doubts and also purify their character through spiritual and ethical training and education.
3. To teach them the Scripture - Not only would the Prophet ﷺ recite Scripture to his community, but he would also teach it to them. He would explain its meanings in detail through his speech and behavior.
4. To teach them wisdom - According to most *tafsīr* authorities, wisdom here is referring to the Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ.

⁶ Quran 3:164

From this verse, we learn that one of the primary responsibilities of the Prophet ﷺ was “to make them grow in purity”, which is essentially *tazkiyah*. Human beings have both praiseworthy and blameworthy characteristics and qualities. Their responsibility is to cleanse their hearts from blameworthy qualities and adorn their hearts and character with praiseworthy qualities. A person should work on purifying their hearts from spiritual ailments and diseases such as hypocrisy, jealousy, greed, hatred, pride, arrogance, doubt, cowardice, miserliness, ostentation, and love of this world. They should be replaced with truthfulness, love, selflessness, humility, certainty, bravery, generosity, sincerity, and simplicity.

The spiritual heart plays a central role in a person’s life and the Quran was revealed upon the heart of the Prophet ﷺ. Divine revelation was sent down upon his heart from Allah ﷻ through the Angel Jibrīl. Allah ﷻ says,

وَإِنَّهُ لَنَزِيلُ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ نَزَلَ بِهِ الرُّوحُ الْأَمِينُ عَلَى قَلْبِكَ لِتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُنذِرِينَ
بِلِسَانٍ عَرَبِيٍّ مُبِينٍ

“Truly, this Quran has been sent down by the Lord of the Worlds: The Trustworthy Spirit brought it down to your heart [Prophet], so that you could bring warning in a clear Arabic tongue.”⁷

Allah ﷻ prepared the heart of the Prophet ﷺ to accept, understand, and internalize the message and guidance of the Quran. This preparation began before he came into this world and continued until that moment in the cave of *Hirā’a* where he received the first revelation from Allah ﷻ. From before birth, Allah ﷻ was nurturing and preparing his beloved Prophet ﷺ for this momentous moment and mission. Everything he experienced throughout his life until that point was uniquely decreed by Allah ﷻ to prepare, nurture, and train him to be the last and final prophet and messenger. Being a prophet requires spiritual, psychological, emotional, and physical training.

Through this divine training, the Prophet ﷺ developed into the greatest servant of Allah ﷻ. When reminding some of his Companions about the importance of balance and moderation in worship and devotional practices, the Prophet ﷺ said, “By Allah, I am the most Allah conscious among you and I fear Him most among you.”⁸ According

⁷ Quran 26:192-195

⁸ Muslim, *k. al-ṣiyām, b. anna al-qubla fī al-ṣawm laysat muḥarramah*, 1108

to the Muslim worldview, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is the most perfect example of a human being to walk on the face of this earth. Allah ﷻ praises him the Quran saying,

وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ

“And you are truly upon [the way] of outstanding character.”⁹

Allah ﷻ describes the Prophet ﷺ as a mercy for the worlds¹⁰ and an expression of that mercy was to convey and teach Allah’s message to mankind.

The Prophet ﷺ is the first student and teacher of the Quran. As the first student and teacher of the Quran, the Prophet ﷺ had the most knowledge and understanding of its meanings, guidance, lessons, reminders, commands, prohibitions, and message. He understood that one of the main objectives behind the revelation of the Quran is to reflect on its meanings in order to achieve internal and external reformation. As mentioned above, he was a physical manifestation of the Quran’s guidance. Through his mission and the message of the Quran, the Prophet ﷺ removed his community and the world from the darkness of ignorance and disbelief to the light of knowledge and faith.

آرء كِتَابٍ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ لِتُخْرِجَ النَّاسَ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ
الْعَزِيزِ الْحَمِيدِ

“Alif-Lām-Rā. ‘This is’ a Book which We have revealed to you ‘O Prophet’ so that you may lead people out of darkness and into light, by the Will of their Lord, to the Path of the Almighty, the Praiseworthy.”¹¹

One of the responsibilities of the Prophet ﷺ as a prophet and messenger was to recite the Quran to his community and warn them about the consequences of opposing and rejecting the truth. Allah ﷻ says,

أَتْلُو مَا أُوْحِيَ إِلَيْكَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ تَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ
وَالْمُنكَرِ ۗ وَلَذِكْرُ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَصْنَعُونَ

⁹ Quran 68:4

¹⁰ Quran 21:107

¹¹ Quran 14:1

“Recite what has been revealed to you of the Book and establish prayer.”¹² Allah ﷻ tells the Prophet ﷺ,

كَذَلِكَ أَرْسَلْنَاكَ فِي أُمَّةٍ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهَا أُمَمٌ لِيَتْلُوا عَلَيْهِمُ آيَاتِنَا وَلِيَذَّكَّرَ أُولَئِكَ
وَهُمْ يَكْفُرُونَ بِالرَّحْمَنِ ۗ قُلْ هُوَ رَبِّي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَإِلَيْهِ مَتَاب

“And so We have sent you ‘O Prophet’ to a community, like ‘We did with’ earlier communities, so that you may recite to them what We have revealed to you. Yet they deny the Most Compassionate.”¹³

In another verse Allah ﷻ says to the Prophet ﷺ,

وَكَذَلِكَ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لِيُنذِرَ أُمَّ الْقُرَىٰ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا وَتُنذِرَ يَوْمَ الْجُمُعِ لَا
رَيْبَ فِيهِ ۗ فَرِيقٌ فِي الْجَنَّةِ وَفَرِيقٌ فِي السَّعِيرِ

“And so We have revealed to you a Quran in Arabic, so you may warn the Mother of Cities and everyone around it, and warn of the Day of Gathering—about which there is no doubt—‘when’ a group will be in Paradise and another in the Blaze.”¹⁴

Several verses throughout the Quran make it clear that another primary responsibility of the Prophet ﷺ was to teach, explain, and clarify the meanings of the Quran to his community. Allah ﷻ revealed the Noble Quran as a book of guidance illuminating the path towards happiness and success both in this world and the next. Allah ﷻ gave the Quran to the Prophet ﷺ as an everlasting miracle, whose miraculous nature can be seen and experienced until the end of time. Along with the Quran, Allah ﷻ gave the Prophet ﷺ the Sunnah as a detailed explanation of what is in the Quran. Allah ﷻ says,

بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالزُّبُرِ ۗ وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

“And We revealed to you the message that you may make clear to the people what was sent down to them and that they might give thought.”¹⁵ Allah ﷻ also says,

¹² Quran 29:45

¹³ Quran 13:30

¹⁴ Quran 42:7

¹⁵ Quran 16:44

وَمَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا لِتُبَيِّنَ لَهُمُ الَّذِي اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ ۖ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ

“And We have not revealed to you the Book, [O Muḥammad], except for you to make clear to them that wherein they have differed and as guidance and mercy for a people who believe.”¹⁶

In these two verses and several others throughout the Quran, Allah ﷻ is explicitly stating that one of the responsibilities of the Prophet ﷺ was to explain the book of Allah. In other words, the Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ is a detailed explanation of what is mentioned by Allah ﷻ in the Quran.

In addition to his responsibilities, Allah ﷻ instructs the believers to follow in the footsteps of the Prophet ﷺ by heeding his advice, counsel, and instructions. Allah ﷻ says:

۱ . يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ ۚ فَإِنْ تَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ۚ ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلًا

O you who have believed, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you. And if you disagree over anything, refer it to Allah and the Messenger, if you should believe in Allah and the Last Day. That is the best [way] and best in result.¹⁷

۲ . مَنْ يُطِيعِ الرَّسُولَ فَقَدْ أَطَاعَ اللَّهَ ۗ وَمَنْ تَوَلَّىٰ فَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِيظًا

He who obeys the Messenger has obeyed Allah; but those who turn away - We have not sent you over them as a guardian.¹⁸

۳ . وَمَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ وَلَا لِمُؤْمِنَةٍ إِذَا قَضَىٰ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَمْرًا أَنْ يَكُونَ لَهُمُ الْخِيَرَةُ مِنْ أَمْرِهِمْ ۗ وَمَنْ يَعْصِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلَالًا مُّبِينًا

It is not for a believing man or a believing woman, when Allah and His Messenger have decided a matter, that they should

¹⁶ Quran 16:64

¹⁷ Quran 4:59

¹⁸ Quran 4:80

[thereafter] have any choice about their affair. And whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger has certainly strayed into clear error.¹⁹

٤ . وَمَا آتَاكُمُ الرَّسُولُ فَخُذُوهُ وَمَا نَهَاكُمْ عَنْهُ فَانْتَهُوا ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ

الْعِقَابِ

And whatever the Messenger has given you - take; and what he has forbidden you - refrain from. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is severe in penalty.²⁰

٥ . قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ

رَحِيمٌ

Say, [O Muḥammad], "If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you and forgive you your sins. And Allah is Forgiving and Merciful."²¹

It is important for Muslims to be aware of the state and condition of the Prophet ﷺ when he would recite the Quran so that they can follow his example and guidance.

5.2.1 *Tartīl al-Quran* (Reciting the Quran Slowly and Distinctly)

Tartīl is a term that comes from an Arabic root word meaning “to recite slowly and distinctly.” It is a *maṣḍar*, verbal noun, derived from the verb *rattala/yurattilu*, which means to articulate slowly, carefully, and precisely. It also means to recite in a melodious voice.²² It emphasizes a measured and deliberate pace, with clear articulation of each letter and word. Reciting with *tartīl* involves observing the rules of *tajwīd*. The goal of *tartīl* is to enhance the clarity and beauty of the recitation while preserving the meaning and message of the Quran. The Quran and Sunnah instruct believers to recite the Quran in a slow, distinct, and measured pace (*tartīl*) that allows one to pronounce each letter correctly while observing the rules of *tajwīd*. *Tajwīd* is a set of rules and principles that govern the correct pronunciation and recitation of the Quran. It is derived

¹⁹ Quran 33:36

²⁰ Quran 59:7

²¹ Quran 3:31

²² Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, 325

from the verb *jawwada/yujawwidu*, which means to beautify. *Tajwīd* allows one to recite every letter of the Quran from its proper point of articulation (*makhraj*) along with its attributes (*ṣifāt*). The way the Quran is recited and articulated is different than any other Arabic literature, whether it is prose or poetry. The Prophet ﷺ recited the Quran in a particular manner and passed it on to his Companions, who then passed it on to their students. This method and manner of recitation was passed on from generation to generation and continues to be in the modern era.

Allah ﷻ instructs the Prophet ﷺ to recite the Quran in a slow and measured pace saying,

وَرَتَّلِ الْقُرْآنَ تَرْتِيلاً

“Recite the Quran slowly and distinctly.”²³

This slow, distinct, and measured manner of recitation aids in reflecting on the deeper meanings of the Quran. al-Nawawī writes, “The Scholars said that reciting slowly is recommended for the sake of understanding. That is why it is recommended for a non-Arabic speaker who does not understand its meanings to recite slowly since this is closer to veneration and respect and has much more impact on the heart.”²⁴ al-Ghazālī, after asserting that *tartīl* is an independently praiseworthy act even in the absence of comprehension, said, “The non-Arabic speaker who cannot understand the Quran should still recite in a calm and measured way, because that is more reverent and respectful, and has a greater impact on the heart compared to [reciting in] jabber and haste.”²⁵

According to Allah’s instruction, the Prophet ﷺ would recite the Quran in a very slow, distinct, and measured manner. The Mother of the Believers Ḥafṣah said, “I never saw the Messenger of Allah ﷺ praying voluntary prayers sitting, until a year before his death, when he began to pray them sitting. He would recite the *sūrah* with a measured slowness so that it would seem to be longer than other *suwar* which were actually longer than it.”²⁶ Qatādah narrates that Anas was asked, “What was the recitation of the Prophet ﷺ like?” He said, “His recitation was measured and pronounced. Then [as an

²³ Quran 73:4

²⁴ Nawawī, *Etiquette with the Quran*, 46

²⁵ Ghazālī, *al-Iḥyā’*, 2:278

²⁶ Muslim, *k. ṣalāh al-musāfirīn wa qaṣriḥā*, b. *jawāz al-nāfilah qā’iman wa qa’idan...*, 733

example] he recited ‘*bī ism Allah al-rahmān al-rahīm*’ elongating ‘*bī ism Allah*’, and ‘*al-rahīm*’.”²⁷

Reciting and pronouncing each letter separately and properly aids in allowing one to listen to the words properly and gives them the opportunity to pause and reflect on their meanings. It also demonstrates respect and honor for Allah’s divine words that leads to greater intellectual, emotional, and spiritual engagement. *Tartīl*, slow measured recitation, is more conducive to reflecting on Allah’s words than quick hasty recitation. This is an observable reality when it comes to any type of speech and is even more true when it comes to the speech of Allah ﷺ.

5.2.2 *al-Tarassul fī al-Qirā’ah* (Reciting Slowly Intentionally)

Tartīl and *tarassul* are closely related to each other. *Tartīl* refers to reciting the Quran is a measured and deliberate pace while observing the rules of *tajwīd*. *Tarassul* is to recite in a slow manner intentionally allowing one to pause, reflect, and engage with the words and verses one is reciting. The Prophet ﷺ would recite in a deliberately slow pace so that he and others could pause and reflect on the beautiful, eloquent, and powerful words of Allah .ﷺ The Prophet’s recitation of the Quran is described as being beautiful, melodious, measured, paced, and intentionally slow. He recited the Quran with intonation, rhythm, clarity, and emotion.

Umm Salamah describes the Prophet’s recitation as being clear and distinct with each letter and word enunciated clearly.²⁸ Hudhaifah narrates that one night he prayed with the Messenger of Allah .ﷺ The Prophet ﷺ began his recitation with Sūrah al-Baqarah and he assumed that he would go into *rukū’* (the bowing position in prayer) after a hundred verses. The Prophet ﷺ continued to recite so he thought that the Prophet ﷺ would complete the sūrah in one unit and move on to *rukū’*. After completing al-Baqarah, he continued and began reciting al-Nisā’a and then Āl ‘Imrān. Hudhaifah describes the Prophet’s recitation as *mutarassilan*, deliberately slow, measured, and

²⁷ Bukhārī, *k. faḍāi’l al-Quran*, b. *madd al-qirā’ah*, 5046

²⁸ Tirmidhī, *k. abwāb faḍā’il al-quran*, b. *mā jā’a kayfa kāna qairā’ah al-nabiyy*, 2923. This narration is graded as ḥasan.

paced.²⁹ This deliberately slow, measure, and paced recitation allows the reciter and the listener time to understand the words and reflect on them.

The Prophet ﷺ was instructed by Allah ﷻ to recite the Quran in this slow and deliberate manner so that they could derive maximum benefit. Allah ﷻ says,

وَقُرْءَانًا فَرَقْنَاهُ لِتَقْرَأَهُ عَلَى النَّاسِ عَلَى مُكْثٍ وَنَزَّلْنَاهُ تَنْزِيلًا

“‘It is’ a Quran We have revealed in stages so that you may recite it to people at a deliberate pace. And We have sent it down in successive revelations.”³⁰

Allah ﷻ is telling the Prophet ﷺ to recite the Quran to people at a slow, deliberate, and careful pace because it is more effective for understanding and reflecting. As a result, the normal habit and practice of the Prophet ﷺ was to recite the Quran slowly and deliberately. It is not established that he completed the recitation of the Quran in a single night. ‘Ā’ishah says, according to her knowledge, the Prophet ﷺ never recited the entire Quran in a single night nor did he spend the entire night until dawn in prayer.³¹

The way and manner in which the Prophet ﷺ recited the Quran became a model for his Companions and subsequent generations of Muslims. They would avoid reciting the Quran quickly in a hasty manner that would disrupt and obscure the meaning. This can be understood from the following report narrated by Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī. He narrates that the Prophet ﷺ asked, “Is it difficult for you to recite one-third of the Quran during the night?” The Companions found that difficult and said, “Who among us has the ability to do so O Messenger of Allah?” The Prophet ﷺ said, “Sūrah al-Ikhlāṣ is equivalent to one-third of the Quran.”³² When the Prophet ﷺ encouraged them to recite one-third of the Quran in a single night, the Companions considered that to be something difficult, which shows that their recitation was slow and deliberate. If their recitation was fast and rushed, then reciting one-third of the Quran - 10 *juz*’ (parts) - is not difficult. A man once came to ibn Mas‘ūd and said, “I recited the *mufaṣṣal* (longer

²⁹ Muslim, *k. ṣalāh al-musāfirīn wa qaṣrihā*, b. *istiḥbāb taṭwīl al-qirā’ah fī ṣalāh al-layl*, 772

³⁰ Quran 17:106

³¹ Muslim, *k. ṣalāh al-musāfirīn wa qaṣrihā*, b. *jāmi’ ṣalāh al-layl wa man nāma ‘anhu*, 746

³² Bukhārī, *k. faḍā’il al-quran*, b. *faḍl qul huw Allah aḥad*, 5015

chapters of the Quran) at night in one unit.” ibn Mas‘ud said, “You must have recited hastily like the recitation of poetry.”³³

The Prophet ﷺ highlighted that reading too quickly prevents one from properly understanding the message and guidance of the Quran. He ﷺ said, “One who recites the Quran in less than three days does not understand.”³⁴ In another ḥadīth, the Prophet ﷺ said, “Recite the Quran in seven days and don’t [recite] more than that.”³⁵

As mentioned above, *tarassul* refers to reciting the Quran slowly and with contemplation. *Tadabbur* is the act of deeply reflecting and pondering over the meanings of the Quran. When combined, reciting slowly aids *tadabbur* in the following ways:

1. Understanding the words: When you recite slowly, you give yourself more time to process each word and its pronunciation. This helps in better understanding the text and its correct pronunciation, which is essential for comprehending the intended meanings.
2. Clarity of meaning: Slowing down allows you to grasp the meanings of the verses more clearly. By paying attention to the sequence of words and their grammatical structure, you can better understand the intended message.
3. Emotional connection: Reciting slowly enhances your emotional connection to the words of the Quran. As you immerse yourself in the recitation, you may experience a deeper emotional impact, which can aid in sincere reflection and contemplation.
4. Reflection on context: *Tadabbur* involves reflecting on the historical context and the circumstances surrounding the revelation of specific verses. Reciting slowly helps you to pause and consider the context more effectively, leading to a more comprehensive understanding of the verse's implications.

³³ Bukhārī, *k. al-athān, b. al-jam‘ bayn al-ṣūratayn fī al-rak‘ah*, 775

³⁴ Tirmidhī, *k. al-qirā‘āt, b. fī kam yukhtam al-quran*, 2949. This narration is graded as ṣaḥīḥ.

³⁵ Abū Dāwūd, *k. abwāb qirā‘ah al-quran wa taḥzībīhi, b. fī kam yuqra‘u al-quran*, 1388. This narration is graded as ṣaḥīḥ.

5. Contemplating the meanings: When you take your time while reciting, it allows you to contemplate the meanings of the verses more deeply. You can ponder over the wisdom, guidance, and moral lessons that the Quran offers.
6. Spiritual connection: Slower recitation can contribute to a heightened spiritual connection during the process of *tadabbur*. It allows you to be more mindful and present, fostering a deeper connection with the divine message.

Overall, the combination of *tarassul* (reciting slowly) and *tadabbur* (reflection) enhances the quality of your engagement with the Quran, leading to a more profound understanding and appreciation of its teachings and message.

5.2.3 Beautifying One's Voice with the Quran

The Prophet's ﷺ recitation of the Quran was known for its melodious and captivating tone and style. The Prophet ﷺ had a beautiful and powerful voice that would attract the attention of listeners and deeply impact their hearts. The beauty of his voice added to the profound impact and significance of the Quran. The Prophet ﷺ encouraged his Companions to beautify their voices when reciting the Quran. The Prophet ﷺ said, "Beautify your voices with the Quran."³⁶ The Prophet ﷺ also said, "Allah does not listen to anything as He listens to the recitation of the Quran by a Prophet who recites it in attractive audible sweet sounding voice."³⁷ 'Abd al-Jabbār ibn al-Ward narrated from ibn abī Mulaikah who said that 'Ubaydullah ibn Yazīd said that Abū Lubābah passed by us and we followed him till he entered his house, and we also entered it. There was a man in a rusty house and in shabby condition. I heard him say, "I heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say, 'The one who does not recite the Quran in a melodious voice is not from us.'" I ('Abd al-Jabbār) said to ibn abī Mulaikah: "Abū Muḥammad, what do you think if a person does not have a nice voice?" He said, "He should beautify his voice as much as possible."³⁸

The Prophet ﷺ used to enjoy listening to some of his Companions reciting the Quran who were known to have beautiful and melodious voices. He would encourage

³⁶ Abū Dāwūd, *k. al-witr, b. istiḥbāb al-tartīl fī al-qirā'ah*, 1468. This narration is graded as ṣaḥīḥ.

³⁷ Bukhārī, *k. al-tawḥīd, b. qawl al-nabiyy al-māhīr bī al-quran ma'a al-kirām al-bararah*, 7544

³⁸ Abū Dāwūd, *k. al-witr, b. istiḥbāb al-tartīl fī al-qirā'ah*, 1471. This narration is graded as ṣaḥīḥ.

others to learn the Quran from them and recite it to them. Once the Prophet ﷺ listened to Abū Mūsā reciting and praised him for his beautiful voice. He ﷺ said to him, “If you were to see me, as I was listening to your recitation (of the Quran) last night (you would have felt delighted). You are in fact endowed with a sweet melodious voice like that of Dāwūd himself.”³⁹ In another narration, ibn Mas‘ūd said to the Prophet ﷺ, “By Allah! O Messenger of Allah! If I had known that you were listening to my recitation I would have beautified my voice even more for you.”⁴⁰ The Prophet ﷺ advised his Companions to learn the Quran from ibn Mas‘ūd because of his beautiful voice and expert recitation. He ﷺ said, “Whoever would like to recite the Quran properly as it was revealed, they should recite it according to the recitation of ibn umm ‘Abd (ibn Mas‘ūd).”⁴¹

Reciting the Quran in a beautiful and melodious voice has a direct impact on the reciter and the listener. It captures one’s attention allowing one to listen more actively. This active listening allows one to focus and concentrate more on the meanings, leading to reflection. Reciting the Quran in a melodious voice can aid in tadabbur (reflection and contemplation) in several ways:

1. **Enhanced Focus:** A melodious voice can capture the listener's attention and maintain their focus. When reciting in a beautiful and captivating manner, it becomes easier for the listener to concentrate on the words and meanings being conveyed.
2. **Emotional Connection:** Melodious recitation has the power to evoke emotions and feelings within the listener. When the reciter expresses the verses with emotional depth, it can lead the listener to connect with the meanings at a more profound level, making it easier for them to ponder over the message.
3. **Aesthetic Appeal:** A pleasing and melodious recitation can create a sense of beauty and awe. This aesthetic appeal can draw the listener closer to the Quranic verses and make them more receptive to the underlying messages.

³⁹ Muslim, *k. ṣalāh al-musāfirīn wa qaṣrihā, b. istiḥbāb taḥsīn al-ṣawt bī al-quran*, 793

⁴⁰ al-Haythamī, *Majma‘ al-Zawā‘id*, 7:171

⁴¹ ibn Mājah, *k. al-muqaddimah, b. faḍl ‘abd allah ibn mas‘ūd*, 138

4. **Improved Memorization:** Melodious recitation often follows a rhythmic pattern, making the verses easier to remember. When the listener becomes familiar with the rhythm and flow, they may recall the verses more readily during their reflection and contemplation.
5. **Stress Reduction:** A melodious voice can have a soothing effect, reducing stress and promoting a calm state of mind. When the listener is relaxed and at ease, they can better engage in thoughtful contemplation without distractions.
6. **Facilitating Repetition:** Melodious recitation encourages repeated listening. As the listener hears the same verses again and again, it provides more opportunities for deep reflection and a deeper understanding of the verses' meanings.
7. **Resonance with the Heart:** Melodic recitation has a way of resonating with the hearts of the listeners. This resonance can create a profound impact on the listener, leading to a stronger connection with the Quranic message and promoting thoughtful contemplation.

It is important to note that while melodious recitation can enhance the experience of *tadabbur*, the essence of reflection lies in the sincere intent and effort to understand and apply the teachings of the Quran in one's life. The combination of a beautiful recitation and a genuine desire to contemplate its meanings can significantly enrich one's spiritual journey and understanding of the Quran.

5.2.4 Reciting Out Loud

The Prophet ﷺ encouraged his Companions to recite the Quran out loud in an audible manner. Reciting out loud has a direct and visible effect on the reciter and the listener leading them to pay closer attention. There are several aḥādīth indicating that it is recommended to recite out loud.

1. Abū Hurairah narrates that he heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ saying, “Allah does not listen attentively to anything the way He listens to a prophet with a beautiful voice audibly reciting the Quran in a melodious manner.”⁴²
2. Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī narrates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said to him, “You have been given a mizmār [exceptional sense of melody] from the family of Dāwūd. If you had only seen me while I was listening to your recitation yesterday.”⁴³
3. Faḍālah ibn ‘Ubayd stated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “Surely Allah listens more attentively to a man who has a beautiful voice [reciting] the Quran than an owner of a singing girl listens to his singing girl.”⁴⁴
4. Abū Mūsā stated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “I know the voices of a group of Ash‘arīs at night when they enter, and I know where they settled down because of their voices with the Quran at night, even if I did not see where they settled when they settled during the day.”⁴⁵
5. al-Barā’ ibn ‘Āzib narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “Beautify the Quran with your voices.”⁴⁶
6. ibn abī Dāwūd narrates that ‘Alī heard people reciting Quran in the mosque at midmorning and said, “Glad tidings to them: they are the people most beloved to the Messenger of Allah .”⁴⁷

There are several other narrations that discuss the merits and rewards of audible recitation. On the other hand, there are also a few narrations that encourage reciting the Quran in a hushed or lower voice. ‘Uqbah ibn ‘Āmir narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said, “One who publicly recites the Quran is like the one who gives voluntary charity in public. And one who conceals the Quran is like the one who gives voluntary charity in private.”⁴⁸

⁴² Bukhārī, *k. faḍā’il al-quran, b. man lam yataghanna bī al-quran*, 5023

⁴³ Muslim, *k. ṣalāh al-musāfirīn wa qaṣriha, b. istiḥbāb taḥsīn al-ṣawt bī al-quran*, 793

⁴⁴ ibn Mājah, *k. iqāmah al-ṣalāh wa al-sunnah fīha, b. fī ḥusn al-ṣawt bī al-quran*, 1340. This narration is graded as ḍa‘īf.

⁴⁵ Bukhārī, *k. al-maghāzī, b. ghazwah khaybar*, 4232

⁴⁶ Abū Dāwūd, *k. al-witr, b. istiḥbāb al-tartīl*, 1468. This narration is graded as ṣaḥīḥ.

⁴⁷ al-Nawawī, *Etiquette with the Quran*, 55

⁴⁸ Tirmidhī, *k. thawāb al-quran*, 2919. This narration is graded as ḥasan.

al-Ghazālī and other scholars have said that the way to reconcile these seemingly conflicting narrations and reports is that making one’s recitation secret or silent is further removed from ostentatious show and is this better for someone who fears it. If one does not fear ostentation in reciting audibly and raising the voice, then being audible and raising the voice is better, since there is more effort involved and its benefit extends to others who may hear it. And the benefit that extends to others is better than a personal benefit. Also, audible recitation awakens the heart of the reciter, gathers his attentiveness to thinking about what he reads, draws his hearing to it, repels sleep, and invigorates the mind. It rouses others who sleep or are inattentive and thus energizes them. Scholars have said that whenever one brings to mind all of these intentions, then being audible is better, and if these intentions are combined together then the reward is duly increased.⁴⁹ al-Nawawī summarises the discussion by saying, “...If one fears something offensive in reciting the Quran audibly, he should not make it audible; if one does not fear this, then it is recommended for him to make it audible. And if the recitation is from a group gathered together, it is emphatically recommended to raise the voice because of what we previously mentioned and because of the benefit it offers to others when doing so. And Allah knows best.”⁵⁰

Reciting out loud is a tool and method that can be used to enhance one’s engagement with the Quran. It can help aid tadabbur in the following ways:

1. **Auditory Engagement:** When you recite the Quran out loud, you engage multiple senses, particularly the sense of hearing. Hearing the words being pronounced helps reinforce the message, making it easier for your mind to focus on the content and meaning of the verses.
2. **Better Comprehension:** Reciting out loud can improve your comprehension of the verses. As you vocalize the words, you may notice the flow and structure of the sentences, leading to a clearer understanding of the intended message.

⁴⁹ Nawawī, *Etiquette with the Quran*, 54

⁵⁰ Nawawī, *Etiquette with the Quran*, 56-57

3. **Verbal Reinforcement:** Hearing yourself recite the Quran out loud acts as verbal reinforcement. This can aid in memory retention, making it easier to recall the verses later for further contemplation.
4. **Emotional Connection:** Reciting aloud can evoke emotions within you as you interact with the Quranic text. The emotional connection can deepen your reflection, allowing you to contemplate the verses with greater sincerity and passion.
5. **Mindful Recitation:** Reciting out loud encourages mindful recitation, meaning you are more present and attentive to the words being pronounced. This mindfulness fosters a deeper connection with the verses and enables you to reflect more effectively.
6. **Improved Pronunciation:** By reciting out loud, you can work on improving your pronunciation of Arabic words and recitation of the Quran. This can lead to a more accurate understanding of the meanings, preventing misinterpretations.
7. **Enhanced Concentration:** Speaking the verses out loud can prevent your mind from wandering or becoming distracted. It keeps you actively engaged with the Quranic text, facilitating a deeper level of contemplation.
8. **Expression of Gratitude:** When you recite the Quran out loud, it becomes an act of worship and an expression of gratitude for the divine guidance provided in the Quran. This attitude of gratitude can contribute to a more meaningful reflection on the verses' significance.

It's important to note that while reciting out loud can be beneficial for *tadabbur*, the quality of reflection ultimately depends on one's sincerity, intention, and effort to understand and apply the teachings of the Quran in your life. Whether someone recites silently or out loud, approaching the Quran with an open heart and a desire for guidance will lead to a deeper and more meaningful reflection on its verses.

5.2.5 Reciting for Long Periods of Time

Longer recitation provides the reciter with more time and opportunity to engage with Allah’s speech and reflect on it. The Prophet ﷺ would recite large portions of the Quran for long periods of time during his voluntary prayers. Hudhaifah narrates that one night he prayed *tahajjud* (the voluntary night prayer) with the Prophet ﷺ. The Prophet ﷺ started reciting Sūrah al-Baqarah and Hudhaifah thought to himself that the Prophet ﷺ would stop after one-hundred verses, but he continued. Then he thought that the Prophet ﷺ would complete the sūrah and then go into the bowing position, but he continued. The Prophet ﷺ then recited Āl ‘Imrān and al-Nisā’ and he recited at a slow and measured pace. Whenever he came across a verse that glorified Allah, he would pause and glorify Allah. When he passed by a verse of supplication, he would pause and supplicate. When he passed by a verse about seeking refuge, he would pause and seek refuge.⁵¹ From this narration, we learn that the Prophet ﷺ would stand in prayer for long periods of time reciting large portions of the Quran with mindfulness and concentration. He would focus and reflect on what he was reciting engaging in a conversation with the speech of Allah ﷻ.

ibn Mas‘ūd narrates that one night he prayed *tahajjud* with the Prophet ﷺ and he stood for so long that he thought about doing something wrong. Someone asked, “What did you think about doing?” ibn Mas‘ūd said, “I thought about sitting down and leaving the Prophet ﷺ standing alone.”⁵²

Abū Dharr narrates that the Prophet ﷺ spent the entire night in prayer repeating the following verse, “If You punish them, they belong to You after all. But if You forgive them, You are surely the Almighty, All-Wise.”⁵³ ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ (ra) narrates that the Prophet ﷺ recited the statement of Allah ﷻ regarding Ibrāhīm, “My Lord! They have caused many people to go astray. So whoever follows me is with me, and whoever disobeys me—then surely You are ‘still’ All-Forgiving, Most Merciful.” He then recited the statement of Allah ﷻ regarding ‘Īsā (as), “If You punish them, they belong to You after all. But if You forgive them, You are surely the Almighty, All-Wise.” He then raised his hands and said, “O Allah! My nation! My nation! And he

⁵¹ Muslim, *k. ṣalāh al-musāfirīn wa qaṣrihā*, b. *istiḥbāb taṭwīl al-qirā’ah fī ṣalāh al-layl*, 772

⁵² Bukhārī, *k. al-tahajjud*, b. *ṭūl al-qiyām fī ṣalāh al-layl*, 1135

⁵³ Aḥmad, *al-Musnad*, 5:156

began to weep. Allah ﷻ said, “O Jibrīl! Go to Muḥammad - and your Lord is the All-Knowing - and ask him what is making you cry.” Jibrīl came to the Prophet ﷺ and asked him. The Prophet ﷺ explained to him why he was crying. Allah ﷻ said, “O Jibrīl! Go to Muḥammad and tell him that We will please him with respect to his nation and not disappoint him.”⁵⁴

I argue that reciting the Quran for long periods of time is beneficial for the practice of *tadabbur* for several reasons; enhanced immersion, increased understanding, improved retention, connection with the Divine, and contextual exploration. When reciting the Quran for an extended period of time, a person has more opportunity to immerse themselves in the beauty and eloquence of Allah’s words. This helps create an environment that is conducive to deep reflection. Extended recitation allows the reciter to delve deeper into the meanings of the verses facilitating deeper reflection. Longer sessions of Quranic recitation help create a stronger and deeper connection with the words of Allah ﷻ. The more time one spends with Allah’s speech, the greater the sense of spirituality and proximity to the Divine. This emotional connection further enhances one’s ability to reflect on the Quran. *Tadabbur* involves contemplating the broader context of the verses, including their historical background and the circumstances in which they were revealed. Through long periods of recitation, a person has more time to explore the context, which can lead to more meaningful engagement.

5.2.6 Crying and Humility

The beautiful, eloquent, powerful, and profound words of Allah ﷻ would penetrate the heart of the Prophet ﷺ causing his eyes to flow with tears. This indicates that the Prophet ﷺ was fully engaged and immersed in the meanings of what he was reciting and listening to. There are several reports that highlight the Prophet’s emotions and how he would be visibly affected by the words of His Lord and Creator. ibn Mas‘ūd narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said, “Recite the Quran to me.” ibn Mas‘ūd [with a sense of humility] responded, “O Messenger of Allah! You want me to recite the Quran to you when it was revealed to you?” The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “I like to hear it from others.” ibn Mas‘ūd then recited Sūrah al-Nisā until he reached the verse, “What will they do

⁵⁴ Muslim, *k. al-īmān, b. du‘ā al-nabiyy lī ummatihī wa bukā’ihī shafaqatan ‘alayhim*, 202

when We bring a witness from each community, with you [Muḥammad] as a witness against these people?” The Prophet ﷺ said, “That’s enough for now.” ibn Mas‘ūd says, “I looked at him and his eyes were flowing with tears.”⁵⁵

‘Abdullah ibn al-Shikhhīr narrates that he saw the Prophet ﷺ praying and heard a sound from his chest, like the bubbling of a pot, from weeping.⁵⁶ This narration is describing the manner in which the Prophet ﷺ was crying while reciting the Quran during prayer. Whatever the Prophet ﷺ was reciting in this prayer was so powerful and emotive that it caused the Prophet ﷺ to weep audibly in a manner that produced a sound from his chest that is described as the bubbling of a pot. This narration highlights the deep emotional connection and devotion that the Prophet ﷺ had during his prayers. It indicates that his prayers were not merely mechanical or ritualistic acts, but rather heartfelt and profound expressions of his love, humility, and submission to Allah ﷻ. The sound of weeping or crying from the Prophet's chest suggests a profound level of spiritual and emotional engagement with his worship. It demonstrates his immense love for Allah ﷻ and the sincerity with which he approached his prayers. The bubbling sound, like that of a pot, can be understood metaphorically as the intensity of the emotions that were welling up within him during his prayer.

‘Ā’isha the beloved wife of the Prophet ﷺ narrates that she was asked regarding the most unique and amazing thing she saw from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. She replied that one night the Prophet ﷺ said, “O ‘Ā’ishah! Allow me to dedicate this night to my Lord.” She said, “By Allah, I love being close to you and love what makes you happy.” The Prophet ﷺ got up, purified himself, and began praying. He wept until his chest was wet [with tears]. He continued crying until his beard became wet. He then continued to cry until the floor became wet. Bilāl came to inform him about fajr prayer and when he saw him crying, he asked, “O Messenger of Allah! Why are you crying when Allah ﷻ has already forgiven you?” The Prophet ﷺ said, “Shall I not be a grateful servant? A verse was revealed to me today. Woe to the one who recites it and doesn’t reflect on it. ‘Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the day and night there are signs for people of reason.’”⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Muslim, *k. ṣalāh al-musāfirīn wa qaṣrihā*, *b. faḍl istimā‘ al-quran...*, 800

⁵⁶ al-Nasā’ī, *k. al-sahw*, *b. al-bukā fī al-ṣalāh*, 1214. This narration is graded as ṣaḥīḥ.

⁵⁷ ibn Ḥibbān, *k. al-tawbah*, *b. dhikr al-bayān bi anna al-mar’a...*, 620

The meanings of the Quran weighed heavily upon the Messenger of Allah ﷺ causing some of his hair to turn grey. One day Abū Bakr, the Prophet's father-in-law and best friend, noticed that some of his hair had turned grey. He remarked, "O Messenger of Allah! Your hair has become grey." The Prophet ﷺ said, "Hūd, al-Wāqī'ah, al-Mursalāt, 'Amma yatasā'alūn, and idha al-shams kuwwirat have cause my hair to turn grey."⁵⁸ The thread that ties all of these chapters of the Quran together is discussions and descriptions of the Day of Judgment.

5.2.7 Connecting Verses to Events

The Prophet ﷺ would often link and connect certain verses to events and incidents that took place within his life and the life of his companions. Linking events with verses leads to a deeper understanding of the application of the verse and a more profound engagement with the Quran. An example of this is a relatively long report narrated by Abū Hurairah.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ came out at an hour in which he would not usually come out, and at a time when he would not usually meet others. Abū Bakr came out to him and the Prophet ﷺ asked, "What brings you out, Abū Bakr?" He replied, "I have come out to meet the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and gaze upon his blessed face and greet him with the salutations of peace." A short moment later, 'Umar came out and the Prophet ﷺ asked him, "What brings you out, 'Umar?" He replied, "Hunger, O Messenger of Allah!" The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "I too am experiencing some of that."

They set out to the house of Abū al-Haytham al-Anṣārī, who was a man who owned many date palm trees and sheep, but who did not own any servants. They did not find him [home], so they asked his wife, "Where is your husband?" She said, "He went out to fetch us some fresh water." A short while later Abū al-Haytham returned with a water-skin filled with water. He placed it down and went to embrace the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and said, "May my father and mother be sacrificed for you!"

⁵⁸ Tirmidhī, *k. tafsīr al-quran 'an rasūlillah, b. wa min sūrah al-wāqī'ah*, 3297. This narration is graded as ṣaḥīḥ.

Then he escorted them to his orchard and laid out a carpet spread for them, and then he went over to a date palm tree and returned with a branch with a cluster of dates on it. He placed it in front of them. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “Will you not pick out for us some of its fresh dates?” Abū al-Haytham said, “O Messenger of Allah! I wished that you all would pick [or choose] from its ripe and unripe dates yourselves.” They began to eat [the dates] and drink from the water. He ﷺ then said, “By the One in whose Hand is my soul, all of these - cool shade, fine ripe dates, and cool water - are from the bounties that you will be asked about on the Day of Resurrection!”⁵⁹ The Prophet ﷺ was referring to Sūrah al-Takāthur where Allah ﷻ says, “Competition for more ‘gains’ diverts you ‘from Allah’, until you end up in ‘your’ graves. But no! You will soon come to know. Again, no! You will soon come to know. Indeed, if you were to know ‘your fate’ with certainty, ‘you would have acted differently’. ‘But’ you will surely see the Hellfire. Again, you will surely see it with the eye of certainty. Then, on that Day, you will definitely be questioned about ‘your worldly’ pleasures.”⁶⁰

Another example is when a group of extremely poor men from the tribe of Muḍar came to the Prophet ﷺ. Jarīr narrates, “While we were in the company of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ in the early hours of the morning, some people came (who) were barefoot, naked, wearing striped woolen clothes, or cloaks, with their swords hung (around their necks). Most of them, nay, all of them, belonged to the tribe of Muḍar. The color of the face of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ underwent a change when he saw them in poverty. He then entered (his house) and came out and commanded Bilāl (to pronounce the call for prayer). He pronounced the *adhān* and *iqāmah*, and he ﷺ observed prayer (along with his Companion). He ﷺ then addressed (them reciting verses of the Holy Qur'an): ‘O humanity! Be mindful of your Lord Who created you from a single soul’ to the end of the verse, ‘Surely Allah is ever Watchful over you.’ (He ﷺ then recited) a verse from Sūrah al-Ḥashr, ‘O believers! Be mindful of Allah and let every soul look to what ‘deeds’ it has sent forth for tomorrow. And fear Allah, ‘for’ certainly Allah is All-Aware of what you do.’ Then the audience began to compete with one another in giving charity. Some donated a dinar, others a dirham, still others clothes, some donated a ṣā‘ of wheat, some a ṣā‘ of dates; till he ﷺ said, ‘(Donate) even if it is

⁵⁹ Muslim, *k. al-ashribah, b. jawāz istitbā‘ih ghayrah ilā dār man yathiq bī riḍāhu bī dhālik...*, 2038

⁶⁰ Quran 102:1-8

half a date.’ Then a person from among the Anṣār came with a money bag which his hands could barely lift; in fact, they could not (lift). Then the people followed continuously, till I saw two heaps of eatables and clothes, and I saw the face of the Messenger ﷺ glistening like gold (on account of joy). The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, ‘He who sets a good precedent in Islam, there is a reward for him for this (act of goodness) and reward of that also who acted according to it subsequently, without any deduction from their rewards; and he who sets in Islam an evil precedent, there is upon him the burden of that, and the burden of him also who acted upon it subsequently, without any deduction from their burden.’”⁶¹

5.3 TADABBUR OF THE COMPANIONS

The Prophet ﷺ through his teachings and example helped create a culture of learning, reciting, memorizing, and reflecting on the Quran among his Companions. He did so by highlighting the importance, significance, virtues, blessings, and rewards associated with reciting, studying, and teaching the Quran. The Prophet ﷺ said, “The best among you are those who learn the Quran and teach it.”⁶² For every single letter of the Quran that is recited, a person is rewarded with a good deed that is multiplied by ten. “Whoever recites a letter from the book of Allāh, then for them is a good deed, and a good deed is multiplied by ten. I am not saying that *Alif lām mīm* is one letter, but *alif* is a letter, *lām* is a letter, and *mīm* is a letter.”⁶³ The Quran will intercede for its companion on the Day of Judgment. “Recite the Quran because it will come as an intercessor for its companion on the Day of Judgment.”⁶⁴

In another beautiful narration, the Prophet ﷺ highlights the blessings, rewards, and virtues associated with coming together as a community in the masjid to learn and study the Quran. The Prophet ﷺ said, “No people gather in one of the houses of Allah, reciting the Book of Allah and teaching it to one another except that tranquility will

⁶¹ Muslim, *k. al-zakāh*, *b. al-ḥath ‘alā al-ṣadaqah*, 1017

⁶² Bukhārī, *k. fadā’il al-qur’ān*, *b. khayrukum man ta’llama al-qur’ān wa ‘allamahu*, 5027

⁶³ Tirmidhī, *k. fadā’il al-qur’ān ‘an rasulillah*, 2910. This ḥadīth is graded as ḥasan.

⁶⁴ Muslim, *k. salah al-musāfirīn*, *b. fadl qirā’ah al-qur’ān wa surah al-baqarah*, 804

descend upon them, mercy will envelop them, the angels will surround them, and Allah will mention them to those who are with Him.”⁶⁵

Through the teachings and practice of the Prophet ﷺ a culture was created where the community was deeply connected with the words of Allah ﷻ. Some narrations mention that the streets of Madinah would be buzzing with the voices of people reciting the Quran during the time of tahajjud (voluntary night prayer).

Through the teachings and example of the Prophet ﷺ, the Companions developed a deep love for the Quran and understood its true value. They considered love for the Quran to be a sign of love for Allah ﷻ and His messenger ﷺ. Ibn Mas‘ūd said, “Whoever wants to know if they truly love Allah and His messenger should reflect; if they love the Quran, then they truly love Allah and His messenger.”⁶⁶ The Companions considered the Quran to be more valuable and precious than any material possession. It is narrated that when the land-tax (*kharāj*) from Iraq came to ‘Umar he went out with someone to examine the wealth. He started counting the camels and they were too many to count. ‘Umar remarked, “All praise is for Allah.” The other person said, “By Allah, this is from the grace and mercy of Allah.” ‘Umar responded, “That’s not true. This is not the grace and mercy of Allah ﷻ. Allah ﷻ says, ‘O humanity! Indeed, there has come to you a warning from your Lord, a cure for what is in the hearts, a guide, and a mercy for the believers. Say, ‘O Prophet,’ ‘In Allah’s grace and mercy let them rejoice. That is far better than whatever ‘wealth’ they amass.’ This [wealth] is what they amass.”⁶⁷ The Companions considered the Quran to be more valuable than any type of material wealth.

5.3.1 Faith Before Quran

The Companions learned about faith, internalized it, and allowed it to settle firmly in their hearts allowing them to approach the Quran with greater understanding and engagement. Makkan revelation - those verses and chapters that were revealed before the migration of the Prophet ﷺ from Makkah to Madinah - focused primarily on beliefs,

⁶⁵ Muslim, *k. al-dhikr wa al-du‘ā wa al-tawbah wa al-istighfār, b. faḍl al-ijtimā‘ ‘alā tilāwah al-quran wa ‘alā al-dhikr*, 2699

⁶⁶ Bayhaqī, *Shu‘ab al-Īmān*, 1861

⁶⁷ Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Quran al-‘Azīm*, 4:275

character, and spirituality. The objective of revelation during this time was to firmly establish faith within the hearts of the believers and to reform their character. Once *īmān* was firmly rooted in their hearts it became easy for them to accept the rules and regulations revealed by Allah ﷻ without any hesitation. As ‘Ā’ishah remarked, “The first revelations only mentioned Heaven and Hell (the basics of *Īmān*). Eventually, when the people were firm in their conviction of Islam, Allah revealed the *ḥalāl* and the *ḥarām*. If the first verse revealed was, ‘Do not drink wine,’ they would have responded, ‘We will never give up wine!’ And if the first verse revealed was, ‘Do not fornicate,’ they would have responded, ‘We will never give up fornication!’”⁶⁸ During the Makkan period of revelation, the Companions were being trained spiritually so that they would accept Allah’s guidance.

ibn ‘Umar said, “We lived for a short while and the newest among us would be given faith before the Quran. A chapter would be revealed upon Muḥammad ﷺ and they would learn its lawful and unlawful and what is necessary to pause upon just as you learn the Quran.” He then said, “I have some men when one of them would be given the Quran they would recite from al-Fātiḥah to the end and not know what it has commanded and prohibited. They wouldn’t know what is necessary to pause on. They would recite it very quickly.”⁶⁹ Jundub ibn ‘Abdillah said, “We were with the Prophet ﷺ while we were strong youth and we learned faith before the Quran. Then we learned the Quran and it increased our faith.”⁷⁰

5.3.2 Daily Recitation of the Quran

Spending a lot of time in the Company of the Quran through daily, regular, and consistent recitation opens the door of deep reflection. The more a person gives of themselves to the Quran, the more the Quran will give to them. Daily recitation is a key that opens the door of *tadabbur*. The Prophet ﷺ was particular about maintaining his daily recitation and encouraged the Companions to do so as well. When the delegation of *Thaqīf* came to Madinah, the Prophet ﷺ hosted them and would visit them after *‘ishā* prayer. One night he was a little late and the delegation remarked, “O Messenger of

⁶⁸ Bukhārī, *k. faḍā’il al-quran, b. ta’līf al-quran*, 4993

⁶⁹ al-Ḥākim, *al-Mustadrak*, 91:1101

⁷⁰ ibn Mājah, *k. al-muqaddimah, b. fī al-īmān*, 61

Allah! Tonight, you remained away from us longer than you usually do.” The Prophet ﷺ said, “It occurred to me that I had not read my daily portion of Quran and I did not want to leave the masjid until I had completed it.”⁷¹ This report demonstrates that the Prophet ﷺ had a routine of reciting a portion of the Quran daily.

This practice was instilled within his companions as well. al-Awzā‘ī narrates that the Companions and the Successors performed five actions with excellence: adhering to the community, following the Sunnah, populating *masājid*, reciting Quran, and striving in the path of Allah.⁷² The following are reports highlighting the daily recitation of the Companions:

1. ‘Uthmān said, “If our hearts were pure they would never be full from the speech of our Lord. I dislike for a day to pass me by without looking in the muṣḥaf.” When ‘Uthmān passed away, his copy of the Quran was worn out from how often he would read from it.⁷³
2. A man came to visit ‘Umar in the afternoon and he granted him permission to enter after some time. He apologized for the delay saying, “I fell asleep last night without reciting my daily portion of the Quran and I was making it up.”⁷⁴
3. al-Qāsim ibn Muḥammad ibn abī Bakr used to visit ‘Ā’ishah before fajr. One day he came and found her praying. After completing her prayer she said, “I slept without reciting my daily portion and I didn't want to leave it.”⁷⁵
4. ‘Urwah ibn al-Zubayr used to recite one-fourth of the Quran daily while looking at the muṣḥaf and would recite the same amount in night prayer. He left it one night when his leg was injured and then resumed it the following evening.⁷⁶

⁷¹ ibn Mājah, *k. iqāmah al-ṣalāh wa al-sunnah fīha*, b. *fī kam yustahabb yukhtam al-quran*, 1345. This narration is graded as ḍa‘īf.

⁷² Abū Nu‘aym, *Ḥilyah al-Awliyā*, 6:142

⁷³ al-Bayhaqī, *Shu‘ab al-Īmān*, 2030

⁷⁴ ibn Abī Shaybah, *Muṣannaḥ*, 4782

⁷⁵ ibn abī Shaybah, *Muṣannaḥ*, 4784

⁷⁶ Abū Nu‘aym, *Ḥilyah al-Awliyā*, 4:426

5.3.3 Reciting the Quran in Night Prayer

Reciting the Quran during night prayer (*tahajjud*) creates an environment conducive to *tadabbur* by offering peace, concentration, reflection, solitude, and emotional connection. These factors combine to create an opportunity for individuals to engage deeply with the Quran, ponder its meanings, and derive spiritual and intellectual benefits from its verses. Allah ﷻ says in Sūrah al-Isrā,

وَمِنَ اللَّيْلِ فَتَهَجَّدْ بِهِ نَافِلَةً لَّكَ عَسَىٰ أَن يَبْعَثَكَ رَبُّكَ مَقَامًا مَّحْمُودًا

“And rise at ‘the last’ part of the night, offering additional prayers, so your Lord may raise you to a station of praise.”⁷⁷

In this verse, Allah ﷻ is addressing the Prophet ﷺ and is instructing him to offer the night prayer. Through the blessings of the night prayer, Allah ﷻ will elevate his rank in the Hereafter and grant him the station of praise. Although this verse is addressed to the Prophet ﷺ, the instruction and guidance is extended to his community. From this verse we learn that reciting the Quran in night prayer is a means of attaining an elevated status in the Hereafter.

Allah ﷻ also tells the Prophet ﷺ,

يَا أَيُّهَا الْمُرْتَمِلُ فَمِ اللَّيْلِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا نِّصْفَهُ. أَوْ أَنْقُصْ مِنْهُ قَلِيلًا أَوْ زِدْ عَلَيْهِ وَرَتِّلِ الْقُرْآنَ تَرْتِيلًا إِنَّا سَنُلْقِي عَلَيْكَ قَوْلًا ثَقِيلًا

“O you wrapped ‘in your clothes’! Stand all night ‘in prayer’ except a little - ‘pray’ half the night, or a little less, or a little more—and recite the Quran ‘properly’ in a measured way. ‘For’ We will soon send upon you a weighty revelation.”⁷⁸

Allah ﷻ is instructing the Prophet ﷺ to spiritually prepare for receiving revelation by performing the night prayer. Reciting the Quran in the night prayer is a means of spiritually preparing one for undertaking difficult tasks and responsibilities. It is also worth noting that Jibrīl would come in Ramaḍān to review the Quran with the Prophet ﷺ at night because it is more conducive for understanding and reflection.

⁷⁷ Quran 17:79

⁷⁸ Quran 73:1-5

The Companions followed in the footsteps of their teacher and made it a consistent and regular habit to recite the Quran in *tahajjud*. The night prayer, *tahajjud*, became a part of their culture and way of life. During the time of the Prophet ﷺ, if one were to walk the streets and alleys of Madinah in the middle of the night, one would hear the sound of the Quran coming from every household. They would maintain this practice even in the most difficult circumstances when they were out on military expeditions. The Prophet ﷺ said, “I recognize the voice of the *Ash‘ariyyīn* when they enter at night with their recitation of the Quran, and I recognize their station from the recital of the Quran during the night time, although I have not seen their encampments as they encamp during the day time.”⁷⁹ After the Battle of al-Qādisiyyah, Sa‘d ibn abī Waqqās wrote a letter to ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb informing him about the victory. In it he wrote, “At night [the Muslims] would recite the Quran [their voices] buzzing like the buzzing of bees and during the day they were like lions.”⁸⁰

5.3.4 Repetition of Verses for the Purpose of *Tadabbur*

One of the ways of enhancing one’s engagement with the Quran is by repeating a verse or several verses that one finds to be powerful, profound, and deep. Repeating verses can foster a deep emotional and spiritual connection with the Quran. As individuals recite and reflect on the words of Allah ﷻ, it can evoke feelings of awe, reverence, gratitude, and humility. This emotional engagement can further enhance the process of *tadabbur* and deepen the spiritual experience. Repetition also aids in internalizing the concepts and messages conveyed in the Quran. By repeating verses, individuals can internalize the teachings, values, and moral guidance contained within the text, which can then influence their thoughts, actions, and character. This was a practice of the Prophet ﷺ and something that was passed on to his Companions. al-Nawawī says, “Righteous individuals of the past would spend the entire night reciting a verse repeatedly and reflecting on it.”⁸¹ ibn al-Qayyim affirms, “This was the practice of the salaf; they would repeat a verse until the morning.”⁸² In his work *Miftāḥ Dār al-Sa‘ādah*

⁷⁹ Bukhārī, *k. al-maghāzī, b. ghazwah khaybar*, 4232

⁸⁰ ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah*, 9:636

⁸¹ al-Nawawī, *al-Tibyān fī Ādāb Ḥamalah al-Quran*, 83

⁸² ibn al-Qayyim, *Miftāḥ Dār al-Sa‘ādah*, 187

he speaks about the benefit and value of tadabbur. He mentions that if a person recites a verse that they find to be a spiritual cure for their heart or nourishment for their soul, they will repeat it even a hundred times or the entire night. Reciting the Quran with understanding and reflection brings the most benefit to one’s heart, increases faith, and allows one to taste the sweetness of the Quran.

Abū Dharr narrates that one night the Prophet ﷺ led them in ‘*ishā*’ prayer and then returned to his family. He then later returned to the mosque to perform the night prayer (*tahajjud*). I came and stood behind him and he motioned to me to stand to his right. ibn Mas‘ūd also came and stood behind us and he motioned to him to stand to his left. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ stood in prayer until the morning reciting

إِنْ تُعَذِّبُهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ عِبَادُكَ ۖ وَإِنْ تَغْفِرَ لَهُمْ فإِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

“if You punish them, they belong to You after all. But if You forgive them, You are surely the Almighty, All-Wise.”⁸³

The Companions of the Prophet ﷺ followed in his footsteps and would repeat verses in order to engage in deeper reflection. Masrūq reports that a man from Makkah pointed to a space in the mosque and said, “This is your brother Tamīm al-Dārī’s spot. One night I saw him standing in prayer repeating Allah’s statement

أَمْ حَسِبَ الَّذِينَ اجْتَرَحُوا السَّيِّئَاتِ أَنْ نَجْعَلَهُمْ كَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ سَوَاءٍ مَحْيَاهُمْ وَمَمَاتُهُمْ ۗ سَاءَ مَا يَحْكُمُونَ

“or do those who commit evil deeds ‘simply’ think that We will make them equal—in their life and after their death—to those who believe and do good? How wrong is their judgment!”⁸⁴ until the morning.⁸⁵

ibn Mas‘ūd spent the entire night repeating “My Lord! Increase me in knowledge.”⁸⁶ ‘Urwah ibn al-Zubayr narrates that he saw his mother Asmā’ bint Abī

⁸³ Quran 5:118

⁸⁴ Quran 45:21

⁸⁵ al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Mu‘jam al-Kabīr*, 1250

⁸⁶ al-Nawawī, *al-Tibyan fī Adāb Ḥamalāh al-Quran*, 86

Bakr repeating “Allah has graced us and protected us from the torment of ‘Hell’s’ scorching heat.”⁸⁷

5.3.5 Approaching the Quran as if Allah ﷻ is Speaking Directly

The Companions of the Prophet ﷺ were the initial audience of the Quran. Several of the verses are addressed to them and others speak directly or indirectly about events that took place in their lives. When the Companions would approach the Quran, they would approach it as if Allah ﷻ were speaking to them directly. One of the most effective ways for one to benefit from the message and guidance of the Quran is by approaching it as if it is being addressed directly to them. al-Ghazālī writes that when a person recites the Quran or listens to the Quran they should imagine as if they are the intended audience. When they come across a command or prohibition they approach it as if they are the ones being commanded or prohibited. When they come across a reminder or warning, it is they who are being reminded and warned.⁸⁸ That is how the Companions, and the earliest generations of Muslims would approach the Quran. Muḥammad ibn Ka‘b al-Quraḏī said, “Whomsoever the Quran reaches it is as if Allah has spoken to them.”⁸⁹

‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar narrates that his father ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb saw some dirhams in the hand of Jābir ibn ‘Abdillah. He asked him, “What are these dirhams for?” He said, “I want to purchase some meat for my family that they would like.” ‘Umar responded, “Every time you want something do you purchase it!? Have you forgotten about the verse, “You ‘already’ exhausted your ‘share of’ pleasures during your worldly life, and ‘fully’ enjoyed them.”⁹⁰ This particular verse is actually addressed to the non-believers. Allah ﷻ says,

وَيَوْمَ يُعْرَضُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا عَلَى النَّارِ أَذْهَبْتُمْ طَيِّبَاتِكُمْ فِي حَيَاتِكُمُ الدُّنْيَا وَاسْتَمْتَعْتُمْ
بِهَا فَالْيَوْمَ بُحْزُونًا عَذَابَ أَلِيمٍ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَسْتَكْبِرُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَبِمَا كُنْتُمْ
تَفْسُقُونَ

⁸⁷ Qarḏāwī, *Kayf Nata ‘āmal ma ‘ā al-Quran al-Karīm*, 171

⁸⁸ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, 1:285

⁸⁹ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, 1:285

⁹⁰ al-Bayhaqī, *Shu‘ab al-Imān*, 5672

“Watch for the Day when the disbelievers will be exposed to the Fire. They will be told, ‘You already exhausted your share of pleasures during your worldly life, and fully enjoyed them. So today you will be rewarded with the torment of disgrace for your arrogance throughout the land with no right, and for your rebelliousness.’”⁹¹

However, ‘Umar felt as if it was being addressed to him and other believers as well.

5.3.6 Examples of the Companions Engaging in *Tadabbur* al-Quran

The Companions of the Prophet ﷺ engaged in *tadabbur* in various ways, as they were deeply committed to understanding the message and guidance of the Quran and applying it to their daily practical lives. The following are a few ways they practiced *tadabbur*:

1. **Attentive Listening:** When the Prophet ﷺ recited the Quran, the Companions would listen carefully, attentively absorbing the words and meanings. They recognized that the Quran was direct revelation from Allah ﷻ, His divine speech, and hence, every verse was of great significance. Allah ﷻ instructed them in the Quran,

وَإِذَا قُرِئَ الْقُرْآنُ فَاسْتَمِعُوا لَهُ وَأَنْصِتُوا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُوا

“When the Quran is recited, listen to it attentively and be silent, so you may be shown mercy.”⁹²

2. **Asking Questions:** The Companions were not afraid to ask the Prophet ﷺ about the meanings of specific verses, or words, or seek further explanations. They would approach him whenever they encountered something they did not fully understand.
3. **Contextual Understanding:** The Companions often sought to understand the historical context and circumstances surrounding the revelation of specific verses. Knowing the context helped them grasp the intended message better.

⁹¹ Quran 46:20

⁹² 7:204

4. Memorization and Recitation: Many of the Companions memorized the Quran, which enabled them to reflect on its verses frequently during their daily lives. They would recite and ponder over the verses they had memorized.
5. Implementing the Teachings: The Companions did not merely treat the Quran as a theoretical book; they strived to live by its teachings. They applied the Quranic guidance in their daily actions and decisions, seeking to embody its values.
6. Discussion and Study Circles: The companions often engaged in gatherings where they discussed the meanings of the Quranic verses and shared their insights and reflections. These study circles provided an opportunity for collective learning and growth.
7. Seeking Guidance from Other Companions: If a Companion was unsure about the meaning of a verse, they would consult other companions or scholars who might have a deeper understanding.
8. Contemplation through Prayer: During their prayers, the Companions would recite the Quran, and this provided them with an opportunity for personal reflection and spiritual connection.
9. Humility and Sincerity: The Companions approached the Quran with humility and sincerity, acknowledging that they were seeking guidance from their Creator. They recognized that the Quran contained profound wisdom and guidance for all aspects of life.

The Companions' commitment to *tadabbur* and their deep understanding of the Quran played a significant role in spreading the message of Islam and establishing a strong foundation for the Islamic scholarly tradition. Their example serves as an inspiration for Muslims to engage in thoughtful reflection and contemplation on the Quran's verses to gain wisdom and guidance in their lives. The following are examples that demonstrate their *tadabbur* and deep connection and engagement with Allah's speech:

Allah ﷻ says in Sūrah al-Baqarah,

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كَتَبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقُرْآنَ حَقًّا تِلَاوَةً ۚ حَقًّا تِلَاوَتِهِ ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ ۗ

“Those We have given the Book recite it as it should be recited. It is they who ‘truly’ believe in it”⁹³

ibn ‘Abbās said this means they follow what is in the Quran as it should be followed. They consider lawful what the Quran has made lawful, unlawful what the Quran has made unlawful, and they don’t misinterpret it. His student, Mujāhid, explained that this verse means a person acts upon what Allah ﷻ mentions in the Quran.⁹⁴

Because of their deep reflection and engagement with the Quran, the Companions would practice and implement what they recited. ibn Mas‘ūd mentioned that when the Companions would learn ten verses they wouldn’t go beyond them until they understood its meanings and acted upon them.⁹⁵ al-Sulamī, a student of the Companions, said, “We learned the Quran from people who when they would learn ten verses would not move on until they learned them and acted upon them. We learned the Quran and how to implement it.”⁹⁶

One of the most challenging incidents in the life of the Prophet ﷺ and his family is the story of *Ifk*. This was a very difficult, hurtful, and personal incident that involved both the Prophet ﷺ and his family, specifically his beloved wife, the mother of the believers, ‘Ā’ishah. This is known as *Qiṣṣah al-Ifk*, which literally means the story of the lie. This is the title given to the incident involving a false accusation against ‘Ā’ishah that took place in the sixth year after Hijrah. Some hypocrites falsely accused ‘Ā’ishah and started spreading rumors that were then carried by a very few members of the Muslim community. This false story caused the purest soul in human history much suffering, and made the Muslim community go through one of the hardest experiences in its short history. It left the hearts of the Prophet ﷺ, his wife ‘Ā’ishah, her father Abū Bakr, and his wife, as well as Ṣafwān, for a whole month subject to doubt, worry, and endless pain. This incident caused unrest within the community for approximately one month, until Allah ﷻ revealed these verses in defense of the honor of ‘Ā’ishah.

⁹³ Quran 2:121

⁹⁴ al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi‘ al-Bayān*, 2:490

⁹⁵ Aḥmad, *Musnad*, 23482

⁹⁶ Aḥmad, *Musnad*, 23482

After Allah ﷻ declared her innocence, Abū Bakr vowed to not provide his relative Miṣṭah, who was involved in spreading the rumor, with financial assistance. He said, “By Allah, I will never provide Miṣṭah with anything because of what he said about ‘Ā’ishah.” Allah ﷻ later revealed,

وَلَا يَأْتَلِ أُولُو الْفَضْلِ مِنْكُمْ وَالسَّعَةِ أَنْ يُؤْتُوا أُولَى الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَالْمُهَاجِرِينَ
 فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ۚ وَلْيَعْفُوا وَلْيَصْفَحُوا ۗ أَلَا تُحِبُّونَ أَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

“Do not let the people of virtue and affluence among you swear to suspend donations to their relatives, the needy, and the emigrants in the cause of Allah. Let them pardon and forgive. Do you not love to be forgiven by Allah? And Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful.”⁹⁷

As soon as Abū Bakr heard this verse he said, “Yes! By Allah! I love that Allah should forgive me,” and resumed his financial assistance to Miṣṭah.⁹⁸ The words of Allah ﷻ penetrated the depths of his heart and he immediately put them into practice.

This narration highlights the intricate interplay between individual reactions, divine guidance, and personal growth. The incident underscores the concept of *tadabbur* and how Abū Bakr engaged with the Quran. Abū Bakr's initial reaction to the false accusation against ‘Ā’ishah resulted in his vow to withhold financial support from Miṣṭah, demonstrating his emotional response. However, when Allah ﷻ revealed a verse advising against suspending assistance to relatives, Abū Bakr's willingness to forgive and let go was a manifestation of *tadabbur*. His immediate alignment with the divine guidance revealed a profound understanding of the Quran's teachings, emphasizing forgiveness, mercy, and the recognition of Allah's forgiving nature. This narrative exemplifies how spiritual insights gained through contemplation of divine revelations can transform one's attitudes and actions, leading to greater harmony with ethical principles and personal growth.

ibn ‘Abbās narrates that during the caliphate of ‘Umar a person by the name of ‘Uyaynah ibn Hiṣn came to Madinah to visit his nephew al-Ḥurr ibn Qays. al-Ḥurr was part of ‘Umar’s council whom he would consult and seek advice from. His council

⁹⁷ Quran 24:22

⁹⁸ Bukhārī, *k. al-Maghāzī, b. ḥadīth al-ifk, 4141*

consisted of those who were well versed in the Quran regardless of whether they were young or old. ‘Uyaynah asked his nephew to get permission on his behalf to speak with ‘Umar and he did so. When ‘Uyaynah came in front of ‘Umar he insulted him saying, “By Allah, you don’t give us fair support and you don’t rule us with justice!” ‘Umar became extremely upset and was about to respond when al-Ḥurr said, “O Leader of the Faithful. Allah ﷻ said to His Prophet, ‘Be gracious, enjoin what is right, and turn away from those who act ignorantly,’ and this person is from the ignorant.” As soon as al-Ḥurr said these words ‘Umar’s anger subsided. He was someone who strictly adhered to the Quran.⁹⁹

This narration illustrates the immediate application of *tadabbur* and understanding of Quranic principles in a real-life situation. When ‘Umar faced an insult and was about to react in anger, al-Ḥurr reminded him of the Quranic injunction to be gracious, promote righteousness, and ignore the actions of the ignorant. This incident highlights the transformative power of Quranic teachings in regulating human emotions and actions. ‘Umar’s rapid shift from anger to composure showcases how a profound connection with the Quran can guide individuals in managing their responses and behavior in alignment with divine values. It emphasizes the practicality of *tadabbur* in grounding believers in moments of conflict or emotional turmoil, allowing them to embody the Quran’s wisdom and maintain a higher moral standard.

Drinking wine and intoxicating beverages was a part of the social culture of the Arabs during the time of ignorance before Islam. Allah ﷻ revealed the prohibition of consuming intoxicating beverages gradually. As soon as the final prohibition was revealed, the Companions accepted it without any hesitation whatsoever. Anas narrates that he was serving an intoxicating beverage to Abū Ṭalḥah, Abū Ayyūb, and other Companions of the Prophet ﷺ in his home when a man came and said, “Has the news reached you?” We said, “No.” He said, “Intoxicating beverages have been declared unlawful.” It was said, “O Anas! Pour out what is in the containers!” They didn’t ask any questions or hesitate even for a moment. As soon as they heard about the prohibition, they poured out whatever they had with them. It is narrated that on that day

⁹⁹ Bukhārī, *k. al-‘itiṣām bī al-kitāb wa al-sunnah, b. al-iqtidā bī sunan rasūlillah*, 7286

the streets of Madinah were flowing with the intoxicating beverages that the Companions disposed of.

This report underscores the concept of *tadabbur* among the companions of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. It illustrates their profound understanding of the evolving divine guidance and their unwavering commitment to it. Despite the deeply ingrained cultural practice of consuming intoxicants in pre-Islamic Arabia, the companions wholeheartedly embraced the gradual revelation of the prohibition, demonstrating their willingness to adapt and align their behavior with the evolving commandments of Islam. The account of Anas and his companions immediately pouring out the intoxicating beverages, without questioning or hesitation, is a powerful testament to their implicit trust in the wisdom of Allah and their profound respect for the authority of the Prophet. Their actions not only symbolize their submission to divine guidance but also their leadership in promoting the message of Islam within the community, as evidenced by the collective disposal of intoxicants throughout Madinah. This report highlights how the companions' *tadabbur* led to their swift and unwavering adherence to the teachings of Islam, serving as a valuable example of faith and obedience.

The power, beauty, and eloquence of Allah's words would bring the Companions to tears. Allah ﷻ describes some of them in the Quran saying,

قُلْ ءَامِنُوا بِهِ أَوْ لَا تُؤْمِنُوا ۚ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ إِذَا يُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْهِمْ يَخِرُّونَ
لِلْأَذْقَانِ سُجَّدًا وَيَقُولُونَ سُبْحَانَ رَبِّنَا إِنْ كَانَ وَعْدُ رَبِّنَا لَمَفْعُولًا وَيَخِرُّونَ لِلْأَذْقَانِ
يَسْكُونَ وَيَزِيدُهُمْ خُشُوعًا

“Say, ‘O Prophet, ‘Believe in this ‘Quran’, or do not.’ Indeed, when it is recited to those who were gifted with knowledge before it ‘was revealed’, they fall upon their faces in prostration, and say, ‘Glory be to our Lord! Surely the promise of our Lord has been fulfilled.’ And they fall down upon their faces weeping, and it increases them in humility.”¹⁰⁰

Allah ﷻ describes them and praises them with two distinct qualities when they would recite the Quran; weeping and humility. Their engagement with the Quran and reflection on its meanings would deeply move their hearts, give them goosebumps, and

¹⁰⁰ Quran 17:107-109

cause tears to flow down their cheeks. ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Urwah ibn al-Zubayr asked his grandmother Asmā regarding the condition of the Companions when they would recite the Quran. She said, “They would be as Allah described them; their eyes would shed tears and their skin would crawl.” She was referring to Allah’s ﷺ statement,

اللَّهُ نَزَلَ أَحْسَنَ الْحَدِيثِ كِتَابًا مُتَشَابِهًا مَثَابِي تَقْشَعِرُّ مِنْهُ جُلُودُ الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ
ثُمَّ تَلِينُ جُلُودُهُمْ وَقُلُوبُهُمْ إِلَى ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ ۚ ذَلِكَ هُدَى اللَّهِ يَهْدِي بِهِ ۖ مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۚ وَمَنْ
يُضِلِلِ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ هَادٍ

“‘It is’ Allah ‘Who’ has sent down the best message—a Book of perfect consistency and repeated lessons—which causes the skin ‘and hearts’ of those who fear their Lord to tremble, then their skin and hearts soften at the mention of ‘the mercy of’ Allah. That is the guidance of Allah, through which He guides whoever He wills. But whoever Allah leaves to stray will be left with no guide.”¹⁰¹

The Companions’ understanding of the Quran and reflection on its meanings impacted their hearts and minds moving them to tears.

‘Ā’ishah said, “I had seen my parents following Islam since I attained the age of puberty. Not a day passed but the Prophet ﷺ visited us, both in the mornings and evenings. My father Abū Bakr thought of building a mosque in the courtyard of his house and he did so. He used to pray and recite the Quran in it. The pagan women and their children used to stand by him and look at him with surprise. Abū Bakr was a soft-hearted person and could not help weeping while reciting the Quran. The chiefs of the Quraysh became afraid of that (i.e. that their children and women might be affected by the recitation of Quran).”¹⁰²

This narration provides a glimpse into the early experiences of ‘Ā’ishah and her family’s connection with Islam, highlighting the role of *tadabbur*, or deep contemplation of the Quran, in their lives. Abū Bakr’s initiative to build a mosque in their courtyard and his devotion to prayer and recitation of the Quran created a spiritual environment that attracted the attention of even non-Muslims. The emotional impact of the Quran on Abū Bakr, leading him to tears, indicates his profound engagement with

¹⁰¹ Quran 39:23

¹⁰² Bukhārī, *k. al-ṣalāh, b. al-masjid yakūn fī al-ṭarīq min ḡayr ḡarar bī al-nās*, 476

the text. The reaction of the Quraysh leaders underscores the powerful influence of the Quran on hearts and minds, sparking fear that its message might affect their own families. This narrative highlights how the practice of *tadabbur* is not only about personal reflection but also about creating an atmosphere where the Quran's transformative message can be felt by others, promoting curiosity and contemplation among those exposed to it.

‘Ubayd ibn ‘Umayr narrated that ‘Umar led them in prayer and started reciting Sūrah Yūsuf. When he reached Allah’s words,

وَتَوَلَّىٰ عَنْهُمْ وَقَالَ يَا سَعْدِي عَلَىٰ يُوسُفَ وَأَبْيَضَّتْ عَيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْحُزْنِ فَهُوَ كَظِيمٌ

“He turned away from them, lamenting, ‘Alas, poor Joseph!’ And his eyes turned white out of the grief he suppressed.,”¹⁰³ he cried and went into the bowing position.¹⁰⁴

This narration demonstrates ‘Umar’s engagement with the text and the profound impact of its meanings on his heart.

Masrūq narrates that he recited the following verses to ‘Ā’ishah,

فَمَنْ لَّهِ عَلَيْنَا وَوَقَلْنَا عَذَابَ السَّمُومِ

“So Allah has graced us and protected us from the torment of ‘Hell’s’ scorching heat.”¹⁰⁵

She cried and remarked, “My Lord! Grace us and protect us from the torment of Hell’s scorching heat.”¹⁰⁶ When Masrūq recites the verse to ‘Ā’ishah, her emotional response of crying and supplicating to Allah demonstrates her engagement with the verse's meaning beyond its literal words. Her prayerful request for Allah's protection reveals how *tadabbur* involves contemplating the implications of the verses and connecting them to one's own life and circumstances. This interaction underscores the transformative nature of the Quran, which has the power to evoke profound emotions and lead individuals to seek divine blessings and mercy, while also highlighting the

¹⁰³ Quran 12:84

¹⁰⁴ Abū ‘Ubayd, *Faḍā’il al-Quran*, 137

¹⁰⁵ Quran 52:27

¹⁰⁶ ibn abī al-Dunyā, *al-Riqqah wa al-Bukā*, 98

intimate and personal relationship that can be fostered with the text through reflective engagement.

Nāfi‘ narrated that when ibn ‘Umar recited, “Has the time not yet come for believers’ hearts to be humbled at the remembrance of Allah and what has been revealed of the truth, and not be like those given the Scripture before—‘those’ who were spoiled for so long that their hearts became hardened. And many of them are ‘still’ rebellious,”¹⁰⁷ he would weep excessively. This narration showcases the profound impact of the Quranic verse on ibn ‘Umar and exemplifies the principle of *tadabbur* in action. ibn ‘Umar’s emotional reaction, characterized by his excessive weeping, signifies a deep engagement with the verse’s content and a recognition of its relevance to his own spiritual journey. The verse’s call for believers to be humbled by Allah’s remembrance and not follow the path of those before them who let their hearts harden resonates deeply with ibn ‘Umar. His tears reflect a sincere understanding of the dangers of spiritual complacency and a heartfelt desire to avoid a similar fate. This demonstrates how *tadabbur* involves not only intellectual contemplation but also a visceral and emotional connection to the Quran’s messages, leading to profound self-awareness, repentance, and a commitment to personal growth.

ibn abī Mulaykah narrates that he traveled with ibn ‘Abbās from Makkah to Madina. When they would rest at night, ibn ‘Abbās would spend half the night in prayer reciting the Quran clearly letter by letter. He would then cry excessively.¹⁰⁸ This narration provides a glimpse into the devotion and spiritual practice of ibn ‘Abbās, illustrating the essence of *tadabbur*. During their journey, ibn ‘Abbās’s choice to spend half the night in prayer, meticulously reciting the Quran letter by letter, underscores his deep engagement with the sacred text. His clear and deliberate recitation suggests an intense focus on understanding and internalizing the words. The subsequent shedding of tears reflects his emotional connection to the Quran’s profound truths. This narration exemplifies the integral relationship between reflective recitation and emotional response, epitomizing how *tadabbur* involves both intellectual comprehension and heartfelt communion with the Quranic message, leading to a transformative and intimate spiritual experience.

¹⁰⁷ ibn abī al-Dunyā, *al-Riqqah wa al-Bukā*, 77

¹⁰⁸ al-Marwazī, *Qiyām al-Layl*, 131

It is reported that ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar drank some cold water and then began to weep. Someone asked him why he’s crying. He said that as he was drinking the cold water he remembered the following verse,

وَحِيلَ بَيْنَهُمْ وَبَيْنَ مَا يَشْتَهُونَ

“They will be sealed off from whatever they desire...”¹⁰⁹

At that moment I remembered that the people of fire will desire nothing more than cold water as Allah ﷻ says regarding them, “The residents of the Fire will then cry out to the residents of Paradise, ‘Aid us with some water or any provision Allah has granted you.’ They will reply, ‘Allah has forbidden both to the disbelievers.’”¹¹⁰

When Sūrah al-Zalzalah was revealed Abū Bakr began to weep. The Prophet ﷺ asked him, “What is causing you to cry?” He replied, “This Sūrah has made me cry.”¹¹¹ The fact that the revelation of Sūrah al-Zalzalah moved Abū Bakr to tears underscores his profound connection with the message, demonstrating the essence of *tadabbur*. His emotional response indicates a personal understanding of the significance of the verses, likely linked to their portrayal of the Day of Judgment and the cosmic upheaval. The Prophet's inquiry about Abū Bakr's tears showcases the atmosphere of curiosity and learning within the companions' community, where such reactions were encouraged and explored. Overall, this narration exemplifies how *tadabbur* entails more than intellectual engagement; it involves a deep emotional resonance with the Quranic content, fostering a transformative and empathetic connection to its themes and teachings.

After the Battle of *Dhāt al-Riqā’*, the Companions were on their way back to Madinah and they set up camp somewhere for the night. ‘Ammār ibn Yāsir and ‘Abbād ibn Bishr were appointed to stand guard for the night and they decided to take turns. One of them would stand guard while the other one would sleep and rest. It was ‘Abbād’s turn to stand guard and the weather was nice and cool and the night was peaceful. He decided to spend some time in prayer. Meanwhile, an enemy soldier was lying in wait looking for an opportunity to strike. When he saw ‘Abbād praying he

¹⁰⁹ Quran 34:54

¹¹⁰ al-Bayhaqī, *Shu‘ab al-Īmān*, 4614

¹¹¹ al-Bayhaqī, *Shu‘ab al-Īmān*, 6701

decided to shoot him with an arrow. He was completely unfazed. He simply pulled out the arrow and carried on with his prayer. He shot him with a second arrow, and he simply pulled it out and continued to pray. Then he shot him with a third arrow, and he pulled out and continued to pray. After completing his prayer, he woke up ‘Ammār for his turn to keep watch. When ‘Ammār saw his wounds he exclaimed, “Why didn’t you wake me up the first time you were struck?” He responded, “I was in the middle of a sūrah and I didn’t want to interrupt it until I completed it.”¹¹²

This narration exemplifies a remarkable display of devotion and determination in the face of adversity. Despite being shot with arrows while praying, ‘Abbād remains steadfast, highlighting his unwavering focus on his worship. His actions underscore the concept of spiritual absorption and the reverence given to the Quranic recitation, illustrating how one's dedication to prayer and sacred recitation can transcend external distractions and discomforts. This story serves as a powerful reminder of the strength of faith and the ability to maintain a profound connection with the divine even in challenging circumstances.

Abū Ṭalḥah was one of the wealthiest Companions of the Prophet ﷺ from the Anṣār. He owned a number of properties and date-palm groves throughout the city of Madinah. His favorite property was a garden named *Bayr Ḥā* that was just outside the mosque of the Prophet ﷺ. The Prophet ﷺ used to visit the garden and drink its pure water. Abū Ṭalḥah heard the verse from Sūrah Āl ‘Imrān where Allah ﷻ says,

لَنْ تَنَالُوا الْبِرَّ حَتَّى تُنْفِقُوا مِمَّا تُحِبُّونَ ۚ وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ

“You will never achieve righteousness until you donate some of what you cherish. And whatever you give is certainly well known to Allah.”¹¹³

He immediately came to the Prophet ﷺ and said, “O Messenger of Allah! Allah ﷻ says, ‘You will never achieve righteousness until you donate some of what you cherish. And whatever you give is certainly well known to Allah.’ My most beloved property is *Bayr Ḥā* and I am giving as charity in the name of Allah. I hope to receive reward for it with Allah ﷻ, so O Prophet, spend it wherever Allah directs you to.” The

¹¹² al-Bayhaqī, *Dalā’il al-Nubuwwah*, 3:379

¹¹³ Quran 3:92

Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “Amazing! That is profitable wealth! That is profitable wealth! I have heard what you said and I advise you to give it to your relatives.” Abū Ṭalḥah followed the advice of the Prophet ﷺ and gave the garden to some of his relatives.¹¹⁴ That is the impact the Quran had upon the hearts of the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ. The speech of Allah ﷻ and its guidance weren’t simply words recorded on material or stored in people’s hearts. The speech of Allah ﷻ for them wasn’t just theory or ideas. It was very real; it was a practical lived reality. Whatever they heard penetrated their hearts and motivated them into action.

ibn abī Mulaykah narrated that he accompanied ibn ‘Abbās while traveling from Madinah to Makkah. When they would rest at night, ibn ‘Abbās would spend half the night in prayer reciting the Quran in a very measured, slow, and deliberate pace. He would weep abundantly while reciting,

وَجَاءَتْ سَكْرَةُ الْمَوْتِ بِالْحَقِّ ۗ ذَٰلِكَ مَا كُنْتَ مِنْهُ تَحِيدُ

“Ultimately, with the throes of death will come the truth. This is what you were trying to escape!”¹¹⁵

Shu‘ayb ibn Dirham remarked that there was continuous stream of tears on the cheeks of ibn ‘Abbās.¹¹⁶

Sometimes ‘Umar would recite a verse during his daily Quran recitation and it would cause him to choke up and tear. Sometimes he would weep so much that he would become physically ill and end up staying indoors for a day or two. People would visit him thinking that he was ill.¹¹⁷ One night, ‘Umar heard a man reciting Sūrah al-Ṭūr in the night prayer. When he reached Allah’s words,

إِنَّ عَذَابَ رَبِّكَ لَوَاقِعٌ مَّا لَهُ مِنْ دَافِعٍ

“Indeed, the punishment of your Lord will come to pass - none will avert it,”¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ Bukhārī, *k. al-zakāh, b. al-zakāh ‘alā al-aqārib*, 1461

¹¹⁵ Quran 50:19

¹¹⁶ al-Dhahabī, *Siyar A‘lām al-Nubalā*, 3:352

¹¹⁷ al-Bayhaqī, *Shu‘ab al-Īmān*, 2:364

¹¹⁸ Quran 52:7-8

he said, “This is an oath, by the Lord of the Ka‘bah, that is the truth.” He went back to his home and fell ill for about a month. People would visit him not knowing what cause him to be ill.¹¹⁹

Nāfi’ narrates that when ibn ‘Umar would recite

أَلَمْ يَأْنِ لِلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا أَنْ تَخْشَعَ قُلُوبُهُمْ لِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَمَا نَزَلَ مِنَ الْحَقِّ وَلَا يَكُونُوا
كَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ مِنْ قَبْلَ فَطَالَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْأَمَدُ فَقَسَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ ۖ وَكَثِيرٌ مِنْهُمْ
فَاسِقُونَ

“Has the time not yet come for believers’ hearts to be humbled at the remembrance of Allah and what has been revealed of the truth, and not be like those given the Scripture before—‘those’ who were spoiled for so long that their hearts became hardened. And many of them are ‘still’ rebellious”¹²⁰

he would weep excessively. ibn ‘Umar would also donate any item or property he liked after reflecting on Allah’s words,

لَنْ تَنَالُوا الْبِرَّ حَتَّى تُنْفِقُوا مِمَّا تُحِبُّونَ ۚ وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ

“You will never achieve righteousness until you donate some of what you cherish. And whatever you give is certainly well known to Allah.”¹²¹

He had a female slave that he loved a lot, so he set her free, and married her to his freed slave and student Nāfi’. Once he purchased an animal and when he rode it he liked it a lot. He immediately instructed Nāfi’ to give it away as charity. Nāfi’ also reports that whenever ibn ‘Umar would recite the end of Sūrah al-Baqarah from,

لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ ۗ وَإِنْ تُبَدُّوا مَا فِيْ اَنْفُسِكُمْ اَوْ تُخْفُوْهُ يُحٰسِبْكُمْ
بِهٖ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ ۙ فَيَغْفِرُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيُعَذِّبُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ

“To Allah ‘alone’ belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. Whether you reveal what is in your hearts or conceal it, Allah will call you to account for it. He forgives whoever He wills and punishes whoever He wills. And Allah is Most Capable of

¹¹⁹ ibn Rajab, *al-Takhwīf min al-Nār wa al-Ta‘rīf bi Hāl Dār al-Bawār*, 48

¹²⁰ Quran 57:16

¹²¹ Quran 3:92

everything,”¹²² he would cry and say, “This is a severe accounting.”¹²³

Qaza‘ah narrates that he saw ibn ‘Umar wearing a garment made out of some thick and rough material. He brought him a garment made out of soft material from Khurāsān. He said to ibn ‘Umar, “It would make me happy to see you wearing it.” ibn ‘Umar asked to see it. He felt it and asked if it was made out of silk. Qaza‘ah said, “No, its made out of cotton.” ibn ‘Umar said, “I fear that if I wear it I will become arrogant and boastful “and Allah does not like whoever is arrogant, boastful.”^{124 125}

When

مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يُقْرِضُ اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا فَيُضَاعِفَهُ لَهُ أَضْعَافًا كَثِيرَةً ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَقْبِضُ
وَيَبْصُطُ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ

“Who will lend to Allah a good loan which Allah will multiply many times over? It is Allah ‘alone’ who decreases and increases ‘wealth’. And to Him you will ‘all’ be returned”¹²⁶

was revealed, Abū al-Daḥḍāḥ came to the Prophet ﷺ and said, “O Messenger of Allah! Does Allah really want a loan from us?” The Prophet ﷺ said, “Yes, O Abū al-Daḥḍāḥ.” He said, “Show me your hand O Messenger of Allah.” The Prophet ﷺ offered him his hand and he took it and said, “I have loaned my garden to my Lord.” This was a garden that had approximately 600 date palm trees. And he gave it away in charity while his wife and children were still in it. He came to the garden and said, “O Umm al-Daḥḍāḥ! Please exit because I have loaned it to my Lord.” She replied, “Your transaction is profitable O Abū al-Daḥḍāḥ!”¹²⁷

‘Ikrimah narrates that one day he came to visit ibn ‘Abbās and he found him crying with a copy of the Quran in his lap. He came, sat next to him, and asked him what made him cry. ibn ‘Abbās said he was crying because of the pages he just recited. He was reciting Sūrah al-A‘rāf and he had just come across the verse,

¹²² Quran 2:284

¹²³ ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣifāh al-Ṣafwah*, 1:294

¹²⁴ Quran 57:23

¹²⁵ al-Dhahabī, *Siyar A‘lām al-Nubalā*, 3:233

¹²⁶ Quran 2:245

¹²⁷ Abū Nu‘aym, *Hilyah al-Awliyā*, 4

وَسَاءَ لَهُمْ عَنِ الْقَرْيَةِ الَّتِي كَانَتْ حَاضِرَةَ الْبَحْرِ إِذْ يَعْدُونَ فِي السَّبْتِ إِذْ تَأْتِيهِمْ
حَيْثُ هُمْ يَوْمَ سَبْتِهِمْ شُرَعًا وَيَوْمَ لَا يَسْبِتُونَ ۖ لَا تَأْتِيهِمْ ۚ كَذَلِكَ نَبْلُوهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا
يَفْسُقُونَ

“Ask them ‘O Prophet’ about ‘the people of’ the town which was by the sea, who broke the Sabbath. During the Sabbath, ‘abundant’ fish would come to them clearly visible, but on other days the fish were never seen. In this way We tested them for their rebelliousness.”¹²⁸

ibn ‘Abbās then recited,

فَلَمَّا نَسُوا مَا ذُكِّرُوا بِهِ ۖ أَنجَيْنَا الَّذِينَ يَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ السُّوءِ وَأَخَذْنَا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا
بِعَذَابٍ بَئِيسٍ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْسُقُونَ

“When they ignored the warning they were given, We rescued those who used to warn against evil and overtook the wrongdoers with a dreadful punishment for their rebelliousness.”¹²⁹

He remarked, “Those who warned against evil were saved and those who didn’t warn weren’t mentioned. We see several things that we consider to be evil but we don’t say anything about them.” ‘Ikrimah said, “May Allah ransom me for you. Don’t you know that they disliked what their people were doing, opposed them, and said, ‘When some of ‘the righteous among’ them questioned ‘their fellow Sabbath-keepers’, ‘Why do you ‘bother to’ warn those ‘Sabbath-breakers’ who will either be destroyed or severely punished by Allah?’ They replied, ‘Just to be free from your Lord’s blame, and so perhaps they may abstain.’” Upon hearing this ibn ‘Abbās was relieved.¹³⁰

Muḥammad ibn Jubayr ibn Muṭ‘im narrates from his father, Jubayr ibn Muṭ‘im, that he heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ reciting Sūrah al-Ṭūr in Maghrib prayer. He says that when the Prophet ﷺ recited, “Or were they created by nothing, or are they ‘their own’ creators? Or did they create the heavens and the earth? In fact, they have no firm belief ‘in Allah’” he felt as if his heart was about to fly.

This narration captures the profound impact of the Quranic recitation on the listener's heart and emotions. Through the recitation of Sūrah al-Ṭūr, the Messenger of

¹²⁸ Quran 7:163

¹²⁹ Quran 7:165

¹³⁰ ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Quran al-‘Azīm*, 2:342

Allah ﷻ conveys the rhetorical questions about creation and the lack of firm belief in Allah, evoking a powerful response in Jubayr ibn Muṭ‘im. His feeling that his heart was about to fly reflects a visceral and emotional connection to the verses. This narrative underscores the transformative nature of the Quran's message, revealing how the recitation of its words can lead to deep introspection, spiritual awakening, and a heightened sense of awe in the presence of divine wisdom. It emphasizes how *tadabbur* goes beyond mere intellectual understanding, delving into the realm of emotional resonance and spiritual transcendence in response to the Quranic revelations.

5.4 TADABBUR OF THE SUCCESSORS

The *Tābi‘ūn* (Successors) learned the Quran directly from the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ. They are included in the statement of the Prophet ﷺ, “The best of generations is my generation. Then the one after it and the one after it.”¹³¹ The students of the Companions were taught by individuals who had direct contact with the Prophet ﷺ and learned directly from him. They received knowledge about the Quran, ḥadīth, Islamic jurisprudence, theology, and various other disciplines directly from the Companions. There were a number of luminaries among them who were known for their in-depth knowledge and understanding of the Quran.

Like the Companions, the Successors also engaged in *tadabbur* (contemplation and reflection) to deepen their understanding of the Quran and enhance their engagement with it. Based on the narrations compiled before, the following is how they approached *tadabbur*:

1. Study of the Quran and Ḥadīth: The Successors dedicated themselves to the study of the Quran and Ḥadīth, delving into the meanings of verses and the contexts of aḥādīth to extract legal rulings, moral lessons, and spiritual guidance.
2. Understanding the Language and Eloquence: They paid special attention to the Arabic language, as the Quran was revealed in Arabic. They analyzed

¹³¹ Bukhārī, *k. al-riqāq*, *b. mā yuḥadharu min zaharah al-dunya wa al-tanāfusi fiha*, 6429

the eloquence, rhetoric, and linguistic nuances to grasp the precise meanings of the verses.

3. **Historical Context:** Like the Companions, the Successors emphasized understanding the historical context in which specific Quranic verses were revealed and prophetic statements were made. Knowledge of the circumstances of revelation provided a deeper understanding of the divine wisdom behind them.
4. **Comparative Analysis:** The Successors engaged in comparative analysis, examining different verses of the Quran and cross-referencing related aḥādīth to gain a comprehensive and coherent understanding of various Islamic concepts.
5. **Application in Different Situations:** Tadabbur involved contemplating how Islamic teachings applied to different situations and scenarios. The Successors would extract general principles from the Quran and ḥadīth and apply them to contemporary issues and emerging challenges.
6. **Jurisprudence and Legal Reasoning:** The Successors played a vital role in the development of Islamic jurisprudence (*Fiqh*). They engaged in legal reasoning (*ijtihād*) based on their understanding of the Quran and ḥadīth to derive rulings on new issues that were not explicitly addressed in the primary sources.
7. **Ethical and Moral Reflection:** *Tadabbur* also extended to matters of ethics and morality. The Successors sought to internalize the moral teachings of Islam and develop their character accordingly.
8. **Teaching and Writing:** Many of the Successors became renowned scholars and teachers. They passed down their knowledge through teaching, oral transmission, and writing books on various Islamic sciences.

The Successors' approach to *tadabbur* contributed significantly to the development of Islamic thought and scholarship. Their dedication to understanding the Quran and ḥadīth in depth, along with their application of Islamic principles in various fields, laid the groundwork for the diverse schools of thought and methodologies in

Islamic jurisprudence and theology that emerged in later centuries. Their intellectual contributions and commitment to preserving the teachings of Islam continue to be valued and respected by Muslims worldwide.

5.4.1 Examples of the Successors Engaging in Tadabbur

Works of *tafsīr*, ḥadīth, and biography have captured and transmitted several examples of how some of the Successors would be moved by the speech of Quran through their deep reflection.

Maymūn ibn Mahrān recited,

وَأَمْتَرُوا الْيَوْمَ أَيُّهَا الْمُجْرِمُونَ

“Then the disbelievers will be told, ‘Step away from the believers’ this Day, O wicked ones!”¹³² and wept for a long period of time.

He then remarked, “Creation has not heard a more severe rebuke than this.”¹³³

This narration highlights the evocative power of Quranic verses in stirring deep emotions and introspection. As Maymūn ibn Mahrān recites the verse commanding the wicked disbelievers to step away from the believers on the Day of Judgment, his extended weeping signifies a profound connection to the verse's implications. His subsequent comment, where he states that this rebuke is the severest heard by creation, underscores his recognition of the power of the Quranic language in conveying divine warnings and admonitions. This narration exemplifies how the Quran's words can resonate with individuals on a visceral level, eliciting emotional responses and reflections on themes of accountability and the consequences of one's actions. It highlights how *tadabbur* involves not only intellectual contemplation but also a deeply felt engagement with the emotional and spiritual dimensions of the text.

Zā'idah reports that he prayed *Ishā* prayer with Abū Ḥanīfah in the masjid. The people left and he stayed behind to ask Abū Ḥanīfah about a particular issue. Abū

¹³² Quran 36:59

¹³³ Abū Nu'aym, *Hilyah al-Awliyā*, 4:92

Ḥanīfah was unaware that he was still there, and he began praying voluntary prayers. He was reciting Sūrah al-Ṭur and when he reached Allah’s statement,

فَمَنْ أَلَّهْ عَلَيْنَا وَوَقَلْنَا عَذَابَ السَّمُومِ

“So Allah has graced us and protected us from the torment of ‘Hell’s’ scorching heat,”¹³⁴ he kept repeating it.

I stood there waiting for him to complete his prayer, but he kept repeating that verse until the mu’adhdhin gave the call to prayer for Fajr.¹³⁵

This narration provides insight into the depth of Abū Ḥanīfah's spiritual engagement during his voluntary prayers. As Zā'idah waits to ask him a question after ‘Ishā prayer, Abū Ḥanīfah becomes absorbed in his devotion, reciting Sūrah al-Ṭur. His repetition of the verse about Allah's grace and protection from Hell's torment showcases his emotional connection to the Quran's promises. The fact that he continues repeating the verse until the Fajr call to prayer underscores his prolonged and focused contemplation. This narrative illustrates the concept of *tadabbur* as Abū Ḥanīfah embodies a deep absorption in the divine message, allowing it to profoundly affect his emotions and thoughts during his worship.

Mālik ibn Dīnar recited

لَوْ أَنْزَلْنَا هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ عَلَى جَبَلٍ لَرَأَيْنَاهُ خَشِعًا مُتَصَدِّعًا مِنْ خَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ ۖ وَتِلْكَ الْأَمْثَلُ نَضْرِبُهَا لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

“Had We sent down this Quran upon a mountain, you would have certainly seen it humbled and torn apart in awe of Allah. We set forth such comparisons for people, ‘so’ perhaps they may reflect”¹³⁶ and began to cry.

He said, “I swear to you no slave believes in this Quran except that their heart is torn apart in awe of Allah.”¹³⁷ This narration illustrates the profound impact of the Quran's imagery on believers' hearts, as seen through Mālik ibn Dīnar's emotional response. Reciting the verse that depicts a mountain humbled and torn apart if the Quran

¹³⁴ Quran 52:27

¹³⁵ al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, 13:357

¹³⁶ Quran 59:21

¹³⁷ Abū Nu‘aym, *Hilyah al-Awliyā*, 2:378

were revealed to it, Mālik's tears reflect a deep connection to the awe-inspiring power of Allah's words. His subsequent declaration that genuine belief in the Quran results in a heart torn apart in awe emphasizes the transformative nature of faith. This narration captures the essence of *tadabbur* by showing how contemplating the Quran's vivid metaphors can evoke intense emotional and spiritual reactions, leading to a sense of humility and reverence for the divine presence.

‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Ḥārith narrates that one day he visited ‘Abdullah ibn Hanḏalah while he was ill and resting on his bed. In his presence a man recited,

لَهُمْ مِنْ جَهَنَّمَ مِهَادٌ وَمِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ غَوَاشٍ ۚ وَكَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الظَّالِمِينَ

“Hell will be their bed; flames will be their cover. This is how We reward the wrongdoers.”¹³⁸

He began to cry so much that we thought his soul would leave his body. He then stood up and someone told him to sit back down and rest. He responded, “The remembrance of hell is preventing me from sitting. I don’t know if I’m going to be one of its residents.”¹³⁹

Ibrāhīm ibn al-Ash‘ath narrates that he heard Fuḏayl reciting Sūrah Muḥammad and he kept repeating,

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ حَتَّىٰ نَعْلَمَ الْمُجْتَهِدِينَ مِنْكُمْ وَالصَّابِرِينَ وَتَبْلُوَ أَعْبَارَكُمْ

“We will certainly test you ‘believers’ until We prove those of you who ‘truly’ struggle ‘in Allah’s cause’ and remain steadfast and reveal how you conduct yourselves”¹⁴⁰

while crying. He then said, “And reveal how you conduct yourselves. You will reveal our conduct and if you reveal our conduct, you will humiliate us and expose our sins. If you reveal our conduct, you will destroy us and punish us.”¹⁴¹ This narration exemplifies *tadabbur* as Fuḏayl contemplates the verse's implications not only on a general level but also personally, expressing a profound awareness of accountability and the potential exposure of his own shortcomings before the divine.

¹³⁸ Quran 7:41

¹³⁹ ibn Rajab, *al-Takhwīf min al-Nār wa al-Ta‘rīf bi Ḥāl Dār al-Bawār*, 31-32

¹⁴⁰ Quran 47:31

¹⁴¹ ibn Qudāmah, *al-Tawwābīn*, 127

al-Fuḍayl ibn ‘Iyāḍ is a well-known scholar of the second century. Before becoming a scholar, he was the leader of a group of bandits that would raid caravans and rob travelers. According to a few reports, he changed his life after hearing someone recite 57:16. al-Qurṭubī narrates that al-Fuḍayl was in love with a woman and had set a date with her to meet at night. As he was on his way to meet this woman he overheard someone reciting,

أَلَمْ يَأْنِ لِلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا أَنْ تَخْشَعَ قُلُوبُهُمْ لِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَمَا نَزَلَ مِنَ الْحَقِّ وَلَا يَكُونُوا
كَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَطَالَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْأَمَدُ فَقَسَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَكَثِيرٌ مِنْهُمْ
فَسِقُونَ

“Has the time not yet come for believers’ hearts to be humbled at the remembrance of Allah and what has been revealed of the truth, and not be like those given the Scripture before—‘those’ who were spoiled for so long that their hearts became hardened. And many of them are ‘still’ rebellious.”¹⁴²

As soon as he heard these words he stopped in his tracks and said, “Definitely. By Allah! The time has come.” Afterwards his recitation of the Quran was described as being slow, measured, paced, melodious, and full of sorrow as if he were speaking to a person. When he would pass by a verse that mentioned Paradise he would stop, repeat it, and ask for it.¹⁴³ Ibrāhīm ibn al-Ash‘ath said regarding him that he has never seen anyone who feared Allah ﷻ more than him. When he would mention Allah ﷻ or when Allah ﷻ was mentioned in his presence, and when he would recite the Quran fear and sorrow could be seen on his face. His eyes would flow with tears and those in his presence would feel sorry for him.

A female slave was pouring water for ‘Alī ibn al-Hussain from a container of water in order for him to perform ablution. The container slipped from her hand on to his face, broke, and gave him a gash on his face. He looked up visibly upset and she immediately recited “those who control their anger.” He said, “I have swallowed my anger.” She then recited the next part of the verse “and those who pardon others.” He said, “May Allah forgive you.” She then recited the end of the verse “and Allah loves

¹⁴² Quran 57:16

¹⁴³ Abu Nu‘aym, *Hilyah al-Awliyā*, 7:86

those who do good.” He said, “I have freed you for the sake of Allah.” She recited verses from Sūrah Āl ‘Imrān where Allah ﷻ describes the qualities of the Allah-conscious. Allah ﷻ says,

الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ فِي السَّرَّاءِ وَالصَّرَّاءِ وَالْكَطِيمِينَ الْعَيْطَ وَالْعَافِينَ عَنِ النَّاسِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ
 الْمُحْسِنِينَ وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا فَعَلُوا فَحِشَةً أَوْ ظَلَمُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ ذَكَرُوا اللَّهَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا لِذُنُوبِهِمْ
 وَمَنْ يَغْفِرِ اللَّهُ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَلَمْ يُصِرُّوا عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلُوا وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ جَزَاءُهُمْ
 مَغْفِرَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَجَنَّاتٌ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا ۗ وَنِعْمَ أَجْرُ الْعَامِلِينَ ۗ

“They are’ those who donate in prosperity and adversity, control their anger, and pardon others. And Allah loves the good doers. ‘They are’ those who, upon committing an evil deed or wronging themselves, remember Allah and seek forgiveness and do not knowingly persist in sin—and who forgives sins except Allah? Their reward is forgiveness from their Lord and Gardens under which rivers flow, staying there forever. How excellent is the reward for those who work ‘righteousness’!”¹⁴⁴

‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz held on to the following verse as a guiding principle in his life. Allah ﷻ says,

إِنَّ وِلِيَّ اللَّهِ الَّذِي نَزَّلَ الْكِتَابَ ۗ وَهُوَ يَتَوَلَّى الصَّالِحِينَ

“Indeed, my Protector is Allah Who has revealed this Book. For He ‘alone’ protects the righteous.”¹⁴⁵

When he was on his deathbed someone asked if he was going to leave behind any wealth or property for his children because they were poor. He responded by reciting, “Indeed, my Protector is Allah Who has revealed this Book. For He ‘alone’ protects the righteous.” He then said, “By Allah ﷻ! I will not give them anyone’s right. My children can only be on two types: they are either righteous and Allah is the protector of the righteous, or unrighteous and I will not help them with their disobedience. If they’re unrighteous I will not be considered about where they end up, but I will not leave them with something they can use to disobey Allah ﷻ and make me

¹⁴⁴ Quran 3:134-136

¹⁴⁵ Quran 7:196

a partner in it after my death.” He then called his children, bid them farewell, advised them, and supplicated for Allah ﷻ to protect them.

It is narrated that Muḥammad ibn al-Munkadir was praying one night when he started weeping excessively. He cried so much that his family became concerned and came to check on him. He continued to cry so they sent Abū Ḥāzim to check on him. Abū Ḥāzim asked, “What’s making you cry?” He said, “I came across the verse

وَلَوْ أَنَّ لِلَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ حَمِيعًا وَمِثْلَهُ مَعَهُ لَافْتَدَوْا بِهِ مِنْ سُوءِ الْعَذَابِ
يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ۚ وَبَدَا لَهُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ مَا لَمْ يَكُونُوا يَحْتَسِبُونَ

‘Even if the wrongdoers were to possess everything in the world twice over, they would certainly offer it to ransom themselves from the horrible punishment on Judgment Day, for they will see from Allah what they had never expected.’¹⁴⁶

Abū Ḥāzim then started weeping along with him.¹⁴⁷

al-Imām Aḥmad narrates from Qays ibn Ḥāzim that one day ‘Abdullah ibn Rawāḥah was resting with his head in his wife’s lap and he began to weep. When she saw him weeping, she began to weep as well. He asked, “Why are you crying?” She said, “I saw you crying so I started crying.” He said, “I remembered Allah’s statement

وَإِنْ مِنْكُمْ إِلَّا وَارِدُهَا ۚ

‘There is none of you who will not pass over it’¹⁴⁸ and I don’t know if I’m going to be saved or not.’¹⁴⁹

Muḥammad ibn Ka‘b al-Qurazī remarked, “For me to recite Sūrah al-Zalzalah and al-Qāri‘ah all night with reflection is more beloved than reciting the entire Quran quickly.”¹⁵⁰ This narration underscores the value of depth and reflection in the recitation of the Quran. Muḥammad ibn Ka‘b al-Qurazī’s statement emphasizes the importance of quality over quantity in engaging with the Quranic text. His preference for reciting Sūrah al-Zalzalah and al-Qāri‘ah all night with reflection rather than reciting the entire

¹⁴⁶ Quran 39:47

¹⁴⁷ al-Dhahabī, *Siyyar A‘lām al-Nubalā*, 5:355

¹⁴⁸ Quran 19:71

¹⁴⁹ ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Quran al-‘Azīm*, 5:252

¹⁵⁰ Abū Nu‘aym, *Hilyah al-Awliyā*, 3:214

Quran quickly signifies the significance of thoughtful contemplation and connection with the meaning of the verses. This viewpoint exemplifies the essence of *tadabbur* by highlighting the transformative potential of focused, deliberate recitation that allows for a deeper understanding and personal connection to the message, even if it entails a smaller portion of the text.

al-Ḥārith ibn Saʿīd reports that he was with Mālik ibn Dīnār while a person was reciting Sūrah al-Zalzalah. Mālik began to shudder and tremble and others in the gathering began to cry. When the person recited

فَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُ. وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُ.

“So whoever does an atom’s weight of good will see it. And whoever does an atom’s weight of evil will see it”¹⁵¹ started to cry so severely that he passed out.¹⁵²

al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī would spend the entire night reciting

وَإِنْ تَعُدُّوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ لَا تُحْصُوهَا

“If you tried to count Allah’s blessings, you would never be able to number them.”¹⁵³

He was asked about that. He said, “There is a very deep reminder in it. We don’t blink except we experience a blessing and the blessings we don’t know about are even more.” This narration highlights the profound contemplation and gratitude exhibited by al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī. His practice of spending the entire night reciting the verse "If you tried to count Allah’s blessings, you would never be able to number them" signifies a deep understanding of the abundance of divine blessings. His explanation that even the act of blinking is a blessing, and that there are countless blessings unknown to us, demonstrates his profound insight into the constant flow of divine favors. al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī’s engagement with this verse exemplifies the essence of *tadabbur*, as he not only recites the words but delves into their profound meaning, recognizing the need for continuous reflection on the countless blessings that surround us.

¹⁵¹ Quran 99:7-8

¹⁵² ibn al-Jawzī, *Sifāh al-Ṣafwāh*, 3:39

¹⁵³ Quran 16:18

These reports demonstrate that the *Salaf* “tasted the sweetness of faith through the Quran, realizing its value and its remarkable power to bring about change and instill the spirit. They embraced it, occupied themselves with it, and devoted much of their time to it. Their emotions were drawn towards it whenever they met it, immersed in its depths and dominance.”¹⁵⁴

5.5 SUMMARY AND INSIGHTS

Chapter 5 of the thesis explores how the Prophet Muḥammad ,ﷺ his Companions, and early Muslims engaged in *al-tadabbur* (deep contemplation and reflection) on the Quran. It highlights the relationship between believers and the Prophet as akin to that of a student and teacher, with the Prophet serving as the most perfect human example. The Prophet’s life embodied the teachings of the Quran, making him a role model for Muslims in all aspects of life. Learning about his life, character, and practices fosters love, honor, respect, and reverence for the Prophet, which are essential elements in the believers' relationship with him.

The chapter emphasizes the importance of the spiritual heart in Islam, considering it crucial in faith, understanding, practice, and character. The Prophet’s teachings often focused on the heart, viewed as the center of faith and the engine driving human behavior. The Prophet’s engagement with the Quran was profound; he not only recited its verses but deeply reflected on them, creating a culture of *tadabbur* that was passed on to future generations of Muslims.

The Companions of the Prophet ﷺ engaged in *tadabbur* by closely following the Quran's teachings, ensuring they understood and implemented each verse before moving on to the next. Their approach to the Quran involved deep reflection, memorization, contextual understanding, and practical application. This method of engagement fostered a profound connection with the Quran, ensuring that its teachings were embodied in their daily lives.

The *Tābi’ūn* (Successors) learned the Quran from the Companions and continued the tradition of *tadabbur*. They dedicated themselves to studying the Quran

¹⁵⁴ al-Hilālī, *Tahqīq al-Wiṣāl bayn al-Qalb wa al-Quran*, 81

and ḥadīth, understanding the language and eloquence of the Quran, and considering the historical context of revelations. Their deep engagement with the Quran involved analytical and practical approaches, similar to the Companions, ensuring the teachings were understood and implemented effectively. This chapter highlights their contributions to maintaining the tradition of *tadabbur* and a deep connection with the Quran.

The chapter provides several new insights into the practice of *tadabbur*. Firstly, it emphasizes the significance of the spiritual heart in Islam, portraying it as the core of faith and moral behavior. The Prophet's focus on the heart underscores its importance in achieving a pure and righteous character. Secondly, it highlights the Prophet's creation of a culture of *tadabbur*, which ensured that future generations of Muslims would continue to engage deeply with the Quran. This cultural aspect underscores the importance of communal learning and transmission of religious practices.

Moreover, both the Companions and the Successors emphasized not just understanding the Quran but also implementing its teachings in daily life. This practical approach ensured that the Quran's guidance was lived and experienced, not just intellectually comprehended. Lastly, understanding the historical context of Quranic revelations was crucial for both the Companions and the Successors. This approach provided a deeper understanding of the Quran's teachings, revealing the divine wisdom behind specific verses and their application.

These insights reflect the depth of engagement early Muslims had with the Quran, showcasing their efforts to internalize and live by its teachings through thoughtful reflection, practical application, and communal learning.

CHAPTER SIX

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY FOR ENGAGING IN TADABBUR

6.1 PREFACE

As demonstrated throughout this thesis, the primary objective of reciting the Quran is to think, ponder, and reflect on its meanings; to engage in *al-tadabbur*. This deep reflection upon Allah’s words leads toward internal and external reformation by impacting one’s beliefs, thoughts, speech, and behavior. As Allah ﷻ says,

كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ مُبَارَكٌ لِيَدَّبَّرُوا آيَاتِهِ ۖ وَلِيَتَذَكَّرَ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

“[This is] a blessed Book which We have revealed to you, [O Muḥammad], that they might reflect upon its verses and that those of understanding would be reminded.”¹

The causative letter “*lām*” in this verse, translated as “that they might,” highlights a primary wisdom behind the revelation of the Quran. Reciting and listening to the Quran are acts of worship that carry a lot of rewards and blessings, but the transformative and reformatory power of Allah’s words comes through engaging with them. Allah ﷻ asks rhetorically,

أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ ۚ أَمْ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبٍ أَقْفَالُهَا

“Do they not then reflect on the Quran? Or are there locks upon their hearts?”²

Allah ﷻ encourages humanity to engage in the act of *tadabbur* or reflection. Believers are supposed to engage with the Quran intellectually, allow it to affect their hearts, and implement its guidance into their daily lives. *al-Tadabbur* involves engaging with the Quran intellectually, physically, and spiritually, mind, body, and soul. It is through this deeper engagement that one can truly benefit from the guidance and treasures of the Quran.

¹ Quran 38:29

² Quran 47:24

Within the field of Quranic Studies, *tadabbur*, as a sub-discipline, does not have a standard technical definition. Scholars and researchers have offered different definitions in an attempt to capture the essence of *tadabbur*; however, I feel that most of them are underinclusive.³ Based on the linguistic definition of *tadabbur* and the explanations and descriptions of the exegetes regarding the concept of *tadabbur*, I propose the following definition: *al-Tadabbur* is to reflect on the words and meanings of the Quran and engage with them intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually - mind, body, and soul - with the intention of extracting lessons, morals, reminders, and guidance that can be practically applied to one's life. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a theoretical framework and methodology for doing so.

There is still a great deal of work that can be done to develop *tadabbur* into a discipline on its own in terms of having a proper framework, principles, guidelines, methodology, and rules. There is a dearth of works on the topic in the English Language. The focus of this research project is to provide a comprehensive framework and methodology for the concept of *tadabbur* and engaging in it for the English-speaking audience. In this chapter, I will present a few examples of frameworks and methodologies proposed by past and present scholars. I will then present my proposed framework and methodology. I will begin this chapter by discussing a few factors that aid in reflecting on the meanings of the Quran.

6.2 FACTORS THAT AID IN REFLECTING ON THE MEANINGS OF THE QURAN

There are several spiritual, intellectual, and physical factors that aid in reflecting on the meanings of the Quran. The following is a partial list derived from a few contemporary works on *tadabbur*⁴:

1. Knowing, Recognizing, and Honoring Allah - ﷻ One of the greatest factors that aid in enhancing one's reflection on the words and speech of Allah ﷻ is knowing,

³ See Chapter 2 for a few examples.

⁴ The list is derived primarily from two works highlighted in the literature review: 1) "Tadabbur al-Quran al-Karim: Mafhūmuhu, Asālibuḥu, Asbābuḥu, Āthāraḥu" by Dr. Fahd al-Wahbī and 2) Muqarrar Tadabbur al-Quran al-Karim li al-Dirāsāt al-'Ulyā (Curriculum for Reflection upon the Noble Quran for Graduate Studies) developed by a team of scholars under Dr. Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz al-'Uwajjī.

recognizing, and honoring Him .ﷺ A believer's most important relationship in this world is their relationship with their Lord and Creator. The foundation of this relationship is love; a believer is supposed to love Allah ﷻ more than anyone and anything else in this world. Allah ﷻ says in Sūrah al-Tawbah,

قُلْ إِنْ كَانَ ءَابَاؤُكُمْ وَأَبْنَاؤُكُمْ وَإِخْوَانُكُمْ وَأَزْوَاجُكُمْ وَعَشِيرَتُكُمْ وَأَمْوَالٌ اقْتَرَفْتُمُوهَا
وَتِجَارَةٌ تَخْشَوْنَ كَسَادَهَا وَمَسَاكِينُ تَرْضَوْنَهَا أَحَبَّ إِلَيْكُمْ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَجِهَادٍ فِي
سَبِيلِهِ فَتَرَبَّصُوا حَتَّى يَأْتِيَ اللَّهُ بِأَمْرِهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ

“Say, ‘O Prophet,’ ‘If your parents and children and siblings and spouses and extended family and the wealth you have acquired and the trade you fear will decline and the homes you cherish—‘if all these’ are more beloved to you than Allah and His Messenger and struggling in His Way, then wait until Allah brings about His Will. Allah does not guide the rebellious people.’”⁵

The Prophet ﷺ said, “There are three qualities and whoever possesses them will experience the sweetness of faith; Allah and His messenger are more beloved to him than anyone else...”⁶

A person’s relationship with Allah ﷻ is one of submission, servitude, obedience, sincerity, and devotion. Allah ﷻ is the Lord and humans are His servants. The foundation of the relationship is love, which expresses itself through hope and fear. Hope in the mercy, forgiveness, grace, and bounties of Allah ﷻ while at the same time fearing His anger, punishment, and displeasure. This relationship is nurtured by learning about Allah ﷻ through His Divine Names and Attributes, by reflecting on His countless blessings and favors, and by expressing gratitude for them. Allah ﷻ says,

كَذَلِكَ ۗ إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاءُ

“Of all of Allah’s servants, only the knowledgeable ‘of His might’ are ‘truly’ in awe of Him.”⁷

The more one loves Allah ,ﷻ the more one loves His divine speech and is able to benefit from it. al-Muḥāsibī writes, “When the glorification of the speaker becomes

⁵ Quran 9:24

⁶ Bukhārī, *k. al-īmān, b. ḥalāwah al-īmān*, 16

⁷ Quran 35:28

great in your heart, there is nothing loftier, more honorable, beneficial, delightful, or sweeter than listening to the words of Allah, comprehending the meanings of His speech with reverence, love, and admiration. This is because the love for a statement is proportionate to the love for its speaker.”⁸ al-Ghazālī writes, “The magnification of the speaker will not truly resonate unless one contemplates His attributes, majesty, and deeds. When these come to mind, one envisions the Throne, the Chair, the heavens, the earth, and all that exists between them – from the jinn, humans, and animals to trees. It's understood that the Creator of them all, the One capable of them, the Provider for them, is the same. All are within the grasp of His power, wavering between His favor and mercy, and His wrath and dominion. He bestows blessings by His favor and punishes by His justice. He is the one who says, "These are destined for Paradise, and I care not," and "These are destined for Hellfire, and I care not." This is the pinnacle of greatness and exaltation. By contemplating examples like this, the magnification of the speaker comes to mind, followed by the magnification of His words.”⁹

Based on analyzing and reviewing Quranic verses, whenever Allah ﷻ mentions revelation, meaning the Quran being revealed, He uses four specific divine attributes: 1) *al-‘Azīz* (the Almighty) 2) *al-Ḥakīm* (the All-Wise) 3) *al-‘Alīm* (the All-Knowing), and 4) *al-Raḥīm* (the Very Merciful).

al-‘Azīz is usually translated as the Almighty or the All-Powerful. It describes the One Who overpowers and can't be overpowered. It conveys the meanings of power, strength, victory, honor, dignity, and highness. When we're reading the Quran, we should always keep in mind that these are the words of *al-‘Azīz*. The source of these words is power, honor, strength, and dignity. Through these words, we can acquire power, strength, victory, honor, dignity, and highness. As the Prophet ﷺ said, “Indeed Allah ﷻ raises some people with this book, and with it lowers others.”¹⁰

The second attribute used is *al-Ḥakīm*, the All-Wise or the Most-Wise. The Quran is revelation from *al-Ḥakīm*, the absolutely and infinitely Most Wise. There is some deep divine wisdom behind each and every single chapter, verse, and word of the Quran. Every single verse, ruling, command, prohibition, and story has some divine

⁸ al-Muḥāsibī, *Risālah al-Mustarshidīn*, 83

⁹ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, 1:281

¹⁰ Muslim, *k. ṣalāh al-musāfirīn wa qaṣriḥā, b. faḍl man yaqūmu bī al-quran wa yu ‘allimuhu...*, 817

wisdom that we as human beings can understand and sometimes can't. When Allah ﷻ instructs us to pray, fast, perform *hajj*, give *zakāh*, lower our gaze, and stay away from interest, He's done so out of His infinite wisdom.

The third attribute used with revelation is *al-ʿAlīm*, the All-Knowing. The One Whose knowledge is infinite, limitless, and never-ending. The One Who knows every single thing; past, present, future, hidden and apparent, big and small. The One Whose knowledge encompasses every single thing. He ﷻ knows what's most beneficial for us as His creation. He knows best what will benefit us in this life and the next and He knows best what will harm us in this life and the next. Whatever He commands us to do, He does so because He knows that's what's best for us. Whatever He prohibits us from doing, He does so because He knows that's what's best for us. Throughout history philosophers, thinkers, reformers, writers and scientists have made mistakes and will continue to make mistakes. Allah ﷻ is free from all mistakes.

The fourth attribute mentioned in the context of revelation is *al-Raḥīm*, the Most Merciful. Allah ﷻ is the Most Merciful the Very Merciful. Allah ﷻ says,

أَشَاءُ بِرَحْمَتِي وَسِعَتْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ

“And My mercy encompasses every single thing.”¹¹

The nature of Divine mercy is that it's vast, encompassing, limitless, endless, infinite, and reaches all things. There isn't any Muslim or non-Muslim, obedient or disobedient individual who is not being constantly showered with Allah's mercy. Allah's ﷻ mercy is extremely vast. When He ﷻ created mercy, He ﷻ divided it into one hundred parts. He ﷻ sent down one part of mercy to this world and has kept the rest for the hereafter. The Prophet ﷺ said, “Allah has divided mercy into one hundred parts, and He retained with Him ninety-nine parts and sent down to earth one part. Through this one-part creatures deal with one another with compassion, so much so that an animal lifts its hoof over its young lest it should hurt it.”¹² Part of His mercy is that He ﷻ sent the Quran to us as a book of guidance. Allah ﷻ describes the Quran as a guide for the people of Allah consciousness.¹³

¹¹ Quran 7:156

¹² Bukhārī, *k. al-adab, b. ja'ala Allah al-rahmah mi'ah juz*, 6000

¹³ Quran 2:2

When reading and studying the Quran it is important to keep these four divine attributes of Allah ﷻ in mind. These words that we're reciting, listening to, and studying are the words of *al-'Azīz*, *al-Ḥakīm*, *al-'Alīm* and *al-Raḥīm*.

2. Reciting with a Slow and Deliberate Pace - As mentioned in the last chapter, Allah ﷻ instructs the Prophet ﷺ to recite the Quran in a slow and measured pace saying,

وَرَتِّلِ الْقُرْآنَ تَرْتِيلًا

“Recite the Quran slowly and distinctly.”¹⁴

ibn Kathīr comments, “Meaning, recite with a slow and deliberate pace because it aids in understanding the Quran and reflecting on it.”¹⁵ This slow, distinct, and measured manner of recitation aids in reflecting on the deeper meanings of the Quran. al-Nawawī writes, “The Scholars said that reciting slowly is recommended for the sake of understanding...”¹⁶ In the last chapter I mentioned several reports that describe the Prophet's ﷺ recitation as being slow, deliberate, measured, and melodious.

Reciting and pronouncing each letter separately and properly aids in allowing one to listen to the words properly and gives them the opportunity to pause and reflect on their meanings. It also demonstrates respect and honor for Allah's divine speech that leads to greater intellectual, emotional, and spiritual engagement. *Tartīl*, slow measured recitation, is more conducive to reflecting on Allah's words than quick hasty recitation. This is an observable reality when it comes to any type of speech and is even more true when it comes to the speech of Allah ﷻ.

Slow and deliberate recitation allows the reader to pay closer attention to the words and their meanings. The Quran is a complex and rich text with profound spiritual, moral, and legal implications. Reading it slowly ensures that the reader does not rush through the verses but takes the time to comprehend the intricate messages, the historical context, and the wisdom contained within the text. A deliberate pace allows for a deeper connection with the Quranic text. It fosters a more profound spiritual experience, helping the reader to engage with the Quran on a personal and emotional level. This connection can enhance the reader's sense of reverence and awe for the

¹⁴ Quran 73:4

¹⁵ ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Quran al-'Azīm*,

¹⁶ Nawawī, *Etiquette with the Quran*, 46

sacred words, making the experience more meaningful and transformative. In addition, a deliberate recitation is more conducive to reflecting on the Quran's guidance and how it applies to one's life. By taking time to ponder over each verse, readers can consider the practical implications of the Quranic teachings and how they can be applied in their daily lives. This reflective process can lead to personal growth, moral development, and a deeper understanding of one's faith.

3. Understanding the Meanings of the Words and Verses - This is the most important factor that aids in deep reflection on the words of Allah .ﷻ In order for one to engage with the speech of Allah ,ﷻ they have to have an understanding of the apparent and direct meanings of the Quran and its message. The only way to reflect on the words and meanings of Allah's ﷻ speech is to know what those words and meanings are. Gaining a general understanding of the meanings of the Quran can be achieved by reading a translation of the Quran along with a selected work of *tafsīr*, which will then allow one to engage in deep reflection. Wahb writes, "Since *tadabbur* involves deep reflection, and since reflection is a matter of deepening our understanding, developing a baseline understanding is necessary. This is easily done by consulting a reliable book of *tafsīr* (exegesis)."¹⁷

For the English-speaking audience, there are a number of translations of the meanings of the Quran available. Quran.com has fifteen different English translations of the Quran available that one can use to help develop a base-level understanding of the meanings of the Quran. A good translation of the Quran is an excellent tool that can help provide an individual with a surface-level understanding of the meanings of the words and verses of the Quran. It is important to note that a translation is not the Quran. A translation of the Quran into any language is not considered to be the Quran itself. The Quran is only in Arabic and a translation is a rendering of its meanings into a different language.

Although a translation can provide a basic understanding of the meanings, oftentimes it is not enough. A lot of meaning, nuance, eloquence, context, power, and beauty is lost in translation. Reading works of *tafsīr* (Quranic exegesis) is another great tool that can help one engage with the meanings of the Quran on a deeper level.

¹⁷ Wahb, Yousef, <https://yaqeeninstitute.org/read/paper/keys-to-tadabbur-how-to-reflect-deeply-on-the-quran>

Unfortunately, there aren't many works of Quranic exegesis available in English. A few classical and contemporary works have been translated to English and there are projects of producing *tafsīr* works in the English language.

Reading and studying an English translation and *tafsīr* of the Quran is essential for having an understanding of the Quran. This understanding is the key to unlocking the door of *tadabbur*. Once a person understands what they are reciting or listening to, they can engage with it on a deeper level intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually. Comprehending the words, phrases, and context allows one to better grasp the intended teaching, guidance, and lessons.¹⁸ The Quran contains layers of wisdom, and understanding its meanings gradually reveals these layers. A person may discover interconnected themes, repetitive motifs, and subtle lessons that might go unnoticed without a deep understanding.¹⁹ Understanding the meanings also prompts contemplative questions. As a person recites, they may wonder about the implications, the underlying wisdom, and the broader implications of the verses, leading to more meaningful reflection.

4. Beautiful Voice - Reciting the Quran in a beautiful voice or listening to a beautiful recitation of the Quran definitely plays a role in enhancing one's engagement with the Quran. The Prophet ﷺ encouraged his Companions to beautify their voices when reciting the Quran. The Prophet ﷺ said, "Beautify your voices with the Quran."²⁰ The Prophet ﷺ also said, "Allah does not listen to anything as He listens to the recitation of the Quran by a Prophet who recites it in attractive audible sweet sounding voice."²¹

Reciting the Quran in a beautiful and melodious voice has a direct impact on the reciter and the listener. It captures one's attention allowing one to listen more actively. This active listening allows one to focus and concentrate more on the meanings, leading to reflection. A beautiful recitation has the power to evoke emotions and feelings within the listener. When the reciter expresses the verses with emotional depth, it can lead the listener to connect with the meanings at a more profound level, making it easier for them to ponder over the message.

¹⁸ Abdullah, Amin. *Approaches to the Quran in Contemporary Indonesia*. Routledge, 2017

¹⁹ Mattson, Ingrid. *How to Read the Quran*. HarperOne, 2015

²⁰ Abū Dāwūd, *k. al-witr, b. istiḥbāb al-tartīl fī al-qirā'ah*, 1468. This narration is graded as ṣaḥīḥ.

²¹ Bukhārī, *k. al-tawḥīd, b. qawl al-nabiyy al-māhir bī al-quran ma'a al-kirām al-bararah*, 7544

The aesthetic and auditory aspects of a melodious recitation can have a profound impact on the spiritual and intellectual engagement with the Quran. A beautiful recitation of the Quran can draw the listener or reader into the text, creating an immersive and emotional experience. The melodious tone, rhythm, and intonation of a skilled reciter can captivate the heart and mind, making the words of the Quran more engaging and memorable. This captivating quality allows individuals to connect with the message of the Quran on a deeper level, aiding in their contemplation and reflection.²²

The beauty in recitation can evoke a sense of reverence and awe. When the Quran is recited in a melodious and heartfelt manner, it enhances the listener's appreciation of the divine nature of the text. This heightened sense of awe can lead to increased focus and humility, making it easier for individuals to contemplate the profound messages and wisdom contained in the Quranic verses.

6.3 AL-GHAZĀLĪ'S FRAMEWORK FOR ENGAGING IN TADABBUR

al-Ghazālī, a prominent medieval Islamic scholar and philosopher, emphasized the practice of *tadabbur* as a means to deepen one's understanding of the Quran and the natural world, and to cultivate a profound spiritual connection with Allah. ﷻ al-Ghazālī's approach to *tadabbur* can be found in his various works, particularly in his magnum opus, *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, which is translated as *Revival of the Religious Sciences*. In the *Ihyā'*, al-Ghazālī has a section entitled *Kitāb Ādāb Tilāwah al-Quran*, which can be translated as *Unit on the Etiquette of Reciting the Quran*. The third chapter in this unit is entitled *al-Bāb al-Thālitih fī A'māl al-Bāḥin fī al-Tilāwah, Chapter Three regarding Inner Aspects of Recitation*. In this chapter, al-Ghazālī identifies ten acts that are required for a more meaningful connection with the Quran:

1. *Fahm Aṣl al-Kalām* (Understanding the Source of the Speech) - al-Ghazālī highlights the importance of recognizing that the Quran is the divine uncreated speech of Allah ﷻ the Lord of the heavens and the earth and everything they contain. He writes, "The first is understanding the greatness of the speech, its exaltedness, and the virtue of

²² Nelson, Kristina. *The Art of Reciting the Quran*. American University in Cairo Press, 2001

Allah ﷻ and His kindness towards His creation in His descent from His majestic throne to a level of comprehension by His creation. Let one observe how He has been gracious to His creation in conveying the meanings of His speech, which is an eternal attribute existing in itself, to the comprehension of His creation. And how that attribute manifested to them through the arrangement of letters and sounds, which are human qualities. Humans are unable to grasp the understanding of the attributes of Allah ﷻ except through the means of His own attributes.”²³ The fact that Allah ﷻ has allowed humans to recite, memorize, study, and understand His divine speech is an immense blessing that should be recognized, acknowledged, and appreciated.

2. *Ta'zīm al-Mutakallim* (Reverence of the Speaker) - al-Ghazālī argues that it is extremely important for one to have reverence, respect, and honor for Allah ﷻ when reciting the Quran. A person should be mindful of the fact that what they are reciting is not the speech of a human being; rather, it is the speech of the Almighty and All-Powerful Allah. The grandeur and magnificence of Allah ﷻ should be present in their heart. In order to understand His speech, the heart must be illuminated with the greatness, magnificence, and glory of Allah ﷻ. He writes, “And just as the outward surface of the Quran's pages and its parchment is protected from the touch of a non-purified hand, unless it is in a state of purity, similarly, the inner meaning is also concealed from the inner core of the heart by virtue of His greatness and majesty, unless it is in a state of purity, free from any impurity, and illuminated by the light of veneration and reverence. And just as not every hand is fit to touch the surface of the Quran, similarly, not every tongue is fit to recite its letters, nor is every heart fit to grasp its meanings...”

So, honoring the speech is honoring the speaker. The greatness of the speaker will not be comprehended until one reflects upon their attributes, majesty, and actions. When one contemplates with their mind, the Throne, the Chair, the heavens, the earth, and everything in between of jinn, humans, animals, and trees, they realize that the Creator of all of them is one, the Almighty over them, their Provider. They understand that all are within the grasp of His power, oscillating between His favor and mercy, and His wrath and dominance. If He bestows, it is by His grace, and if He punishes, it is by His justice. He is the One who says, "These are for Paradise, and I do not care, and those

²³ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' Ulūm al-Dīn*, 2:291

are for Hellfire, and I do not care.' This is the pinnacle of greatness and sublimity. By contemplating upon examples like these, one comprehends the honor of the speaker, and then the honor of the speech.”²⁴

3. *Ḥuḍūr al-Qalb* (Presence of Heart) - al-Ghazālī stresses the importance of focus and concentration while reciting the Quran. A person should focus on the meanings of what they are reciting and lose themselves in it. A person should recite the Quran with the presence of heart while trying their best to remove all irrelevant thoughts and distractions. He says, “And this attribute [presence of heart] evolves from what precedes it in terms of reverence. Indeed, the one who venerates the speech that is recited finds joy and solace in it and does not neglect it. In the Quran, there are passages that the heart finds solace in if the reciter is suitable for them. So, how can one seek tranquility through contemplation in something else while they are in a place of leisure and enjoyment? And the one who gazes upon leisurely sights does not contemplate anything other than them.”²⁵

4. *al-Tadabbur* (Reflection) - According to al-Ghazālī, reflection is the next step after having the presence of heart and focus. Once a person has removed all distractions and is focused on what they are reciting they can properly engage in reflection. He also writes that reflection is the objective behind reciting the Quran and that is why it is encouraged to recite in a slow and melodious tone and to repeat verses. He quotes ‘Alī saying, “There is no good in worship without understanding and in recitation without reflection.”²⁶

5. *al-Tafahhum* (Understanding) - In al-Ghazālī’s framework reflection leads to an individual understanding the message of the words and verses. He writes that understanding is “to extract from each verse what is suitable for it, as the Quran encompasses mentioning the attributes of Allah ﷻ and mentioning His actions, as well as mentioning the conditions of the Prophets, peace be upon them, and mentioning the circumstances of those who denied the truth, along with how they were destroyed. It includes His commands and prohibitions, and the mention of Paradise and Hellfire.”²⁷ The attributes of Allah ﷻ describe His divinity and highlight his various divine names

²⁴ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, 2:294-295

²⁵ Ibid, 2:296

²⁶ Ibid, 2:297

²⁷ Ibid, 2:299

and attributes. Allah's actions include His creation of the heavens and the earth and everything they contain.

6. *al-Takhallī 'an Mawānī' al-Fahm* (Removing Barriers that Prevent Understanding) - According to al-Ghazālī, there are four major barriers that prevent a person from reflecting on the Quran and understanding its message:

- i. Excessive focus on pronouncing each letter correctly and ensuring that it is coming from its proper point of articulation. Basically, focusing on the form and not the substance. A person spends their mental energy trying to recite the Quran properly and correctly and that prevents them from focusing on the meaning of what they are reciting.
- ii. Blind following of a belief, doctrine, position, opinion, or sect that results in fanaticism. He writes that the second barrier is “to be a mere imitator of a doctrine heard through blind imitation, rigidly adhering to it, and firmly rooting oneself in a biased attachment to it solely based on following what is heard without attaining it through insight and observation. This person becomes constrained by their belief, unable to conceive anything beyond it. It becomes impossible for them to entertain any notion contrary to their established belief. Thus, their perspective remains confined to what they have heard.”²⁸
- iii. Being afflicted with persistent sinning, arrogance, or following one's desires that cause the heart to become dark preventing one from understanding Allah's divine speech. He writes that the third barrier that prevents understanding is “to persist in sin, to be characterized by arrogance, or to be afflicted as a whole with desires that are willingly followed in this world. This becomes a reason for the heart's darkness and corrosion. It is like impurity on a mirror, preventing the clear truth from manifesting within it. It forms a significant barrier for the heart, and it is the most common veil for most people.”²⁹

²⁸ Ibid, 2:304

²⁹ Ibid, 2:305

- iv. Believing that the only correct meaning or interpretation is the one that has been transmitted and narrated by certain authorities. al-Ghazālī argues that limiting the meanings of the Quran to an apparent exegesis can be a barrier that prevents one from engaging with the Quran on a deeper level. He writes that the fourth barrier is “to have read an apparent interpretation and believe that the words of the Quran have no other meanings except those that have been transmitted by ibn ‘Abbās, Mujāhid, and others. To believe that whoever interprets the Quran according to personal opinion has prepared their seat in the fire. This is also a significant barrier.”³⁰

7. *al-Takhṣīṣ* (Make it Personal) - In al-Ghazālī’s framework, it is important to imagine one’s self as the intended addressee of the Quran. When a person comes across glad tidings, warnings, admonitions, reminders, commands, or prohibitions they should imagine that Allah ﷻ is addressing them directly. They should understand that the stories in the Quran are not merely for historical information or entertainment; rather, they are mentioned for individuals to reflect on them and derive important reminders, morals, and lessons. He writes, “And when one adopts such an approach, they do not treat the study of the Quran as work. Instead, they read it like a servant reading the letter sent by their master who sent it to them in order for them to reflect upon it and act in accordance with its demands. Some scholars have said that this Quran is a collection of messages that have come to us from our Lord through His covenants. We reflect on them during prayers, contemplate them in solitary moments, and implement them in acts of obedience and established traditions. Mālik ibn Dīnār used to say, ‘What has the Quran sowed in your hearts, O people of the Quran? The Quran is the spring of the believer, just as rain is the spring for the earth.’ Qatādah said, ‘No one engages with this Quran without gaining either increase or decrease. Allah ﷻ says, ‘It is a healing and a mercy for the believers, but it does not increase the wrongdoers except in loss.’”³¹

8. *al-Ta’aththur* (Being Touched Emotionally) - A person’s heart should be affected by the Quran in various ways. Different verses of the Quran will impact a person’s heart in various ways causing them to feel certain emotions. According to al-Ghazālī, a person should experience a range of emotions while reciting the Quran;

³⁰ Ibid, 2:306

³¹ Ibid, 2:308

happiness, hope, fear, regret, sorrow, and others. al-Ghazālī says, “The impact of recitation on the servant is that they assume the qualities of the recited verse. When warnings and the conditions of forgiveness are mentioned, they shrink out of fear as if they are on the brink of death. And when expansiveness and the promise of forgiveness are presented, they rejoice as if they are soaring with joy. When Allah, His attributes, and His names are mentioned, they bow down in submission to His Majesty and feel the greatness of His Being. And when the non-believers mention inappropriate things regarding Allah, such as ascribing offspring and partners to Allah, they lower their voices and shudder inwardly out of modesty towards the ugliness of their words. When the description of Paradise is recited, their inner being is infused with longing for it. And when the description of Hellfire is conveyed, their limbs tremble with fear of it.”³²

al-Ghazālī writes very passionately about how a person is supposed to be emotionally connected with the words of the Quran. He concludes the section on being affected by describing a true recitation of the Quran. Allah ﷻ says in Sūrah al-Baqarah,

الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَتْلُونَهُ حَقَّ تِلَاوَتِهِ

“Those We have given the Book recite it as it should be recited.”³³

According to al-Ghazālī, proper recitation occurs when the tongue, heart, and mind are engaged at the same time. The tongue ensures correct pronunciation and recitation, the mind understands and processes the meanings, and the heart is impacted with emotions. The tongue recites, the mind interprets, and the heart feels.

9. *al-Taraqqī* (Growth) - What al-Ghazālī means by al-taraqqī is that there are different levels or degrees to one’s recitation of the Quran. The first level or degree is to recite the Quran as if one is standing before Allah ﷻ knowing that He is watching and listening. This leads to a profound sense of humility,

The second level or degree of recitation is to know with one’s heart that Allah ﷻ is watching them, addressing them, and reminding them of His favors and blessings. This leads to awe, reverence, respect, modesty, and understanding.

³² Ibid, 2:310

³³ Quran 2:121

The third level of recitation is to recognize and witness Allah ﷻ and His divine attributes through His speech.

10. *al-Tabarrī* (Humility) - According to al-Ghazālī, in order for one to truly benefit from the Quran they have to surrender themselves to Allah ﷻ completely with utter humility. A person should not be deceived by their own personal purity, nobility, or piety. When a person reads verses that praise the pious, they should not include themselves among them but hope that Allah ﷻ will make them among them. When they read verses that condemn and critique the wrongdoers, they should assume that they are being addressed.

al-Ghazālī's framework is useful in that it provides us with practical things one can do to enhance their engagement with the Quran that would lead to deeper reflection. After analyzing his ten acts that are required for a more meaningful connection with the Quran, they can be divided into three broad categories: spiritual, intellectual, and emotional. These categories are interconnected and each of them plays a role in deeply reflecting on Allah's speech. Despite its utility, al-Ghazālī's framework is not organized, methodical, and systematic. It requires a level of rearrangement, refinement, and enhancement, which is what I aim to do at the end of this chapter. It also wasn't written specifically as a framework for engaging in tadabbur.

6.4 AL-NAWAWĪ'S FRAMEWORK FOR ENGAGING IN TADABBUR

al-Imām al-Nawawī is a well-known and skilled medieval ḥadīth scholar, jurist, and polymath recognized by his peers and students for his piety, intelligence, and knowledge. He was born in the year 631 (1233) and passed away in the year 676 (1277) at the age of 45. Despite his young age, he left a legacy of written work that can fill multiple shelves in a library. He authored over fifty works ranging in size from multi-volume collections to small booklets on a number of different topics. One of his works is entitled *al-Tibyān fī Ādāb Ḥamalāt al-Quran*, which has been aptly translated by Musa Furber as *Etiquette with the Quran*. In this book, al-Nawawī explains the appropriate manners required for students and teachers of the Quran and how one can benefit from it. Essentially it is a roadmap for developing into a person belonging to a category known as *Ahl al-Quran*, which is translated as "People of the Quran".

The entire book can be thought of as al-Nawawī's framework or methodology for engaging in tadabbur. The most important chapter that is connected to reflection and gives us insight into his framework is Chapter 6, the Etiquette of Recitation. al-Nawawī refers to this chapter as the main point of his work. In this chapter, he discusses a wide range of etiquettes including:

1. Sincerity - the foundation of engaging with the Quran is a sincere intention to seek knowledge, guidance, and spiritual growth for the sake of Allah ﷻ.
2. Excellence - When an individual is reciting the Quran, they should bear in mind that they are addressing Allah ﷻ. They should recite the Quran as if they can see Allah; and [even] if he does not see Allah, Allah sees him. This is based on the description of ihsān given by the Prophet ﷺ in the well-known ḥadīth of Jibrīl. One day while the Prophet ﷺ was sitting with his Companions, the Angel Jibrīl came in the form of a human being, approached the Prophet ﷺ and asked a series of important questions and made a few requests. He asked the Prophet ﷺ to inform him about ihsān. The Prophet ﷺ said, "Ihsān is to worship Allah as if you can see Him, and even if you don't see Him, He definitely sees you."³⁴
3. Physical and Ritual Purity - al-Nawawī writes about various aspects of physical and ritual impurity including; using the toothstick to clean one's mouth, being in a state of ritual purity, and making sure the place of recitation is clean and pure.
4. Physical Etiquette with the Quran - It is recommended for the reciter to sit facing the qibla (the direction of the Ka'bah) with humility, tranquility, and dignity. The reciter should open their recitation with the *ta'awwudh* and *basmalah*. The *ta'awwudh* is to say *a'ūdhu billāhi min al-shayṭān al-rajīm*, I seek refuge with Allah from the accursed Satan. The *basmalah* is to say *bismillāhi al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm*, with the name of Allah the Most Merciful the Very Merciful.
5. Humility and Reflection - al-Nawawī highlights the importance of the reciter being in a state of humility and reflection. "There is boundless evidence for this - very well-known and too obvious to be mentioned here.

³⁴ Muslim, *k. al-īmān, b. bayān al-īmān wa al-islām wa al-ihsān...*, 8

[This state] is the sought-after objective, through which breasts are opened and hearts illuminated.”³⁵

6. Etiquette Related to Recitation - The reciter is encouraged to repeat verses, weep during recitation, and recite distinctly with a melodious tone. They are encouraged to beautify their voices as much as possible.

al-Nawawī’s work is beneficial in that it is wide-ranging covering several different acts and factors - spiritual, intellectual, and physical - that would improve one’s engagement with the Quran and reflection on its meanings. Despite its utility, it is not ideal because it wasn’t intended as a specific framework for engaging in tadabbur. In order to construct a methodology for tadabbur from his writing, one would have to read the entire work, analyze it, and extract what they think is his methodology.

6.5 AL-SUYŪṬĪ’S FRAMEWORK FOR ENGAGING IN TADABBUR

Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī was born in 849/1445 in Egypt in a small town named Asyūṭ and passed away in the year 911/1505. He is renowned for his extensive contributions to various fields of Islamic Knowledge including Ḥadīth Studies, Quranic Studies, Arabic, Jurisprudence, and several other topics. He was a polymath who excelled in numerous areas of Islamic scholarship and was a very prolific writer. He authored approximately 700 works covering a wide range of disciplines and topics of varying lengths and volumes. One of his most celebrated works in the field of Quranic Studies is *al-Itqān fī ‘Ulūm al-Quran*.

As seen from the discussion regarding al-Ghazālī and al-Nawawī, scholars have written extensively on the topic of the manners of reciting the Quran. A lot of these manners are highlighted with the intention of attaining the highest levels of tadabbur. In *al-Itqān fī ‘Ulūm al-Quran* al-Suyūṭī has dedicated an entire chapter to the manners and etiquette of the reciter and reciting the Quran. From this chapter, we can extract al-Suyūṭī’s framework for engaging in tadabbur as the following:

1. Frequent and Consistent Quranic Recitation - al-Suyūṭī writes that it is highly encouraged to recite the Quran on a regular and consistent basis. To

³⁵ al-Nawawī, *Etiquette with the Quran*, 42

- support this claim, he mentions a verse from the Quran and several narrations from the Prophet ﷺ and his Companions. For example, ibn ‘Umar narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said, “There is no envy except for two people; a man to whom Allah has given (knowledge of) the Quran, so he recites it night and day, and a man to whom Allah has given wealth, so he spends it night and day.”³⁶ He also mentions several reports of people from the past and their various habits of completing a recitation of the entire Quran on a regular and consistent basis. He says that completing the Quran on a weekly basis is a good practice and was the habit of the majority of the Companions.
2. To be in a State of Ritual Purity - al-Suyūṭī mentions that it is recommended to perform ablution (*wuḍū’*) before reciting the Quran as it is the best form of Allah’s remembrance. The Prophet ﷺ disliked mentioning the name of Allah ﷻ without being in a state of ritual purity.
 3. Reciting in a Clean Place - According to al-Suyūṭī, it is sunnah to recite the Quran in a clean and pure place, and the best place to do so is the mosque.
 4. Reciting Facing the *Qiblah* - It is recommended to sit down while facing the Qiblah in a state of humility and tranquility.
 5. *Miswāk* - It is recommended to clean one’s teeth using a tooth stick as a form of showing respect to the Quran and purifying one’s mouth.
 6. Recite the *Ta’wwudh* - Allah ﷻ says,

فَإِذَا قَرَأْتَ الْقُرْآنَ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ

 “When you recite the Quran, seek refuge with Allah from Satan, the accursed.”³⁷
 7. Recite the *Basmalah* - It is recommended to recite the *basmalah* at the beginning of every sūrah except Sūrah al-Tawbah.
 8. *Tartīl* - It is a sunnah to recite the Quran in a slow and measured pace. Allah ﷻ instructs the Prophet ﷺ to recite the Quran in a slow and measured pace saying, “Recite the Quran slowly and distinctly.”³⁸ This slow, distinct, and measure manner of recitation aids in reflecting on the deeper meanings of

³⁶ ibn Mājah, *k. al-zuhd, b. al-ḥasad*, 4209. This narration is graded as ṣaḥīḥ.

³⁷ Quran 16:98

³⁸ Quran 73:4

the Quran. al-Suyūṭī mentions a number of narrations regarding *tartīl* that have been cited earlier in this work.

9. *al-Tadabbur* and *al-Tafahhum* - al-Suyūṭī writes, “And reading with reflection and understanding is recommended, and it is the ultimate goal and the most important requirement. Through it, hearts are uplifted, and minds are enlightened. Allah the Almighty has said, ‘A blessed Book We have sent down to you, [O Muhammad], that they might reflect upon its verses.’ (38:29) And He ﷻ said, ‘Do they not reflect upon the Quran?’ (4:82). The characteristic of reflection is that one occupies their heart with contemplating the meanings of what is being uttered. By doing so, they come to understand the meaning of each verse, ponder over the commandments and prohibitions, believe in their acceptance, and if they have fallen short in the past, they seek forgiveness and repent. When they come across a verse of mercy, they rejoice, and if it speaks of punishment, they express concern and seek refuge. If it involves seeking protection or exalting Allah, they declare their refuge and magnify. If it involves supplication, they humble themselves and beseech.”³⁹
10. Repetition - al-Suyūṭī mentions one example of repetition from the life of the Prophet ﷺ.
11. Crying - al-Suyūṭī writes that it is recommended to cry when reciting the Quran and if one is unable to cry, they should try. He quotes al-Nawawī from *Sharḥ al-Muhadhdhab*, “And his method to induce weeping is to contemplate what he recites of threats, severe warnings, covenants, and pledges. Then he reflects on his own falling short in fulfilling them. If this does not bring about sadness and tears at that moment, then he should weep over the loss of such feelings, as it is among the calamities.”⁴⁰
12. Beautifying One’s Voice - al-Suyūṭī quotes a number of narrations from the Prophet ﷺ that encourage beautifying one’s voice when reciting the Quran.
13. Recite Out Loud - al-Suyūṭī mentions a few reports that encourage reciting the Quran out loud.

³⁹ al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān fī ‘Ulūm al-Quran*, 245

⁴⁰ al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān fī ‘Ulūm al-Quran*, 247

This chapter from al-Suyūṭī's *al-Itqān fī 'Ulūm al-Quran* is beneficial in that it is wide-ranging covering several different acts and factors - spiritual, intellectual, and physical - that would improve one's engagement with the Quran and reflection on its meanings. Despite its utility, it is not ideal because it wasn't intended as a specific methodology for engaging in *tadabbur*. In order to construct a methodology for *tadabbur* from his writing, one would have to read the entire work, analyze it, and extract what they think is his methodology.

6.6 FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY FOR ENGAGING IN TADABBUR FROM CHATGPT

Recently, there have been some amazing advancements in technology that are designed to increase productivity. Public access to Artificial Intelligence (AI) programs such as ChatGPT has created waves within different fields and industries such as marketing, entertainment, programming, engineering, designing, and education. Programs such as ChatGPT are very powerful tools but are definitely a double-edged sword. I entered the following prompt in ChatGPT, "Please provide a comprehensive framework and methodology for engaging in *tadabbur* for the English-speaking audience," and this is the response it generated:

Engaging in *tadabbur* (contemplation and reflection) of the Quran requires a comprehensive framework and methodology to ensure a deep understanding and meaningful connection with the divine message. Here's a step-by-step guide for the English-speaking audience:

1. Linguistic Preparation - Choose a reputable and accurate English translation of the Quran. Make sure the translation is easy to comprehend while preserving the essence of the original Arabic text.
2. Seek Knowledge - Study the basics of Islam and its core concepts. Familiarize yourself with the historical context of the Quranic revelations, the life of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), and the early Muslim community.

3. Establish Sincerity and Intention - Purify your intention before engaging in tadabbur. Recognize that your primary goal is to seek Allah's guidance and deepen your connection with Him through the Quran.
4. Develop a Quiet and Serene Environment - Find a peaceful and distraction-free space for contemplation. Ensure that you can focus solely on engaging with the Quran without interruptions.
5. Recite and Reflect -Begin by reciting the Quranic verses slowly and melodiously. Pause after each verse or passage to reflect on its meaning. Pay attention to the emotions and thoughts that arise during this process.
6. Ponder Over the Verses - Engage in deep reflection (tadabbur) by pondering over the meanings of the verses. Ask yourself questions like: What is the context of the verse? What message is Allah conveying? How does this verse relate to my life and the world around me? What lessons can I learn from this verse?
7. Connect with the Arabic Words - If possible, learn basic Arabic words to understand the root meanings of key terms in the Quran. This can provide additional insights into the linguistic richness of the text.
8. Study Tafsīr (Exegesis) - Refer to reputable Tafsīr works written by knowledgeable scholars to gain deeper insights into the meanings and interpretations of the Quranic verses. Be cautious of relying solely on personal interpretations without consulting authentic sources.
9. Analyze Cross-References - Look for cross-references within the Quran itself. Often, certain themes or concepts are repeated in different chapters, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the message.
10. Connect with Scholars and Communities - Engage in discussions with knowledgeable scholars, teachers, or peers to gain different perspectives and interpretations. Join study circles or online communities dedicated to Quranic contemplation to share and learn from others.
11. Make Personal Applications - Apply the lessons learned from the Quran to your life. Identify areas where you can improve, make positive changes, and strengthen your faith and relationship with Allah.

12. Pray for Guidance - Seek Allah's guidance and ask for His help in understanding and internalizing the Quran's teachings. Turn to Him in prayer for wisdom and enlightenment.
13. Be Consistent and Patient - Engaging in *tadabbur* is a lifelong journey. Be patient with yourself and remain consistent in your contemplation practice. Over time, you will experience a deeper connection with the Quran.
14. Live the Quran - Let the Quran influence your character, actions, and decisions. Live in accordance with its teachings and be a living embodiment of the Quranic message.

Remember that engaging in *tadabbur* is not a rushed process, but a deeply enriching and transformative experience. Allow the Quran to guide you, and approach it with an open heart and mind, seeking Allah's pleasure and closeness.

6.7 PROPOSED THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY FOR ENGAGING IN TADABBUR FOR THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING AUDIENCE

According to my humble and limited research, classical scholars of Quranic Studies did not author independent titles on the topic of *tadabbur*. Rather, the topic is discussed in varying details throughout classical and modern works of *tafsīr* while explaining verses that encourage engaging in *tadabbur*. Scholars also wrote extensively on the topic of the manners and etiquette of reciting the Quran, which in essence, if practiced would enhance one's engagement with the Quran. In the previous sections of this chapter, I extracted frameworks and methodologies for *tadabbur* according to al-Ghazālī, al-Nawawī, and al-Suyūfī based on some of their works and writing on the manners of reciting the Quran. Despite their utility and benefit, they are not comprehensive and weren't originally meant to be used as specific and detailed methodologies for engaging in *tadabbur*. These works provide a lot of raw material for developing a refined and practical methodology for engaging in *tadabbur*.

In recent times there have been a number of publications - books, booklets, and articles - written on this topic in the Arabic Language. Most of these are exploratory works that discuss the meanings of *al-tadabbur*, its importance, factors that facilitate it, barriers that prevent it, and methodologies for engaging in it. There is still a great deal

of work that can be done to develop *tadabbur* into a discipline on its own in terms of having a proper framework, principles, guidelines, methodology, and rules. The focus of this research project is to provide a comprehensive framework and methodology for the concept of *tadabbur* and how to engage in it for the English-speaking audience. In this section, I will attempt to fill a void in the English language by developing a comprehensive framework and methodology for engaging with the Quran intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually to serve as a template for those inspired by Allah's ﷻ rhetorical question,

وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْآنَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِنْ مُدْكِرٍ

“We have made it easy to learn lessons from the Quran: will anyone take heed?”⁴¹

Based on the linguistic definition of *tadabbur* and the explanations and descriptions of the exegetes regarding the concept of *tadabbur*, I developed the following definition: *al-Tadabbur* is to reflect on the words and meanings of the Quran and engage with them intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually - mind, body, and soul - with the intention of extracting lessons, morals, reminders, and guidance that can be practically applied to one's life. My proposed theoretical framework and methodology has three broad components:

1. Spiritual/Emotional
2. Physical
3. Intellectual

6.7.1 Spiritual

Within the framework of Islam there is a lot of emphasis placed on spirituality and being connected with the Divine. *Tazkiyah*, which is understood as spirituality and purification of the heart, is an integral part of one's practice of Islam. Allah ﷻ describes it as one of the primary responsibilities of the Prophet ﷺ. Allah ﷻ says,

⁴¹ Quran 54:17

لَقَدْ مَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذْ بَعَثَ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِّنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ
وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَإِن كَانُوا مِن قَبْلُ لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ

“Allah has been truly gracious to the believers in sending them a Messenger from among their own, to recite His revelations to them, to make them grow in purity, and to teach them the Scripture and wisdom- before that they were clearly astray.”⁴²

Allah ﷻ describes those who have purified their souls and hearts as having attained ultimate success. He ﷻ says,

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَن زَكَّاهَا وَقَدْ خَابَ مَن دَسَّاهَا

“Successful indeed is the one who purifies their soul, and doomed is the one who corrupts it!”⁴³

On the Day of Judgment, a pure heart plays a central role in achieving salvation.

Allah ﷻ says,

يَوْمَ لَا يَنْفَعُ مَالٌ وَلَا بَنُونَ إِلَّا مَن أَتَى اللَّهَ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ

“...The Day when neither wealth nor children will be of any benefit. Only those who come before Allah with a pure heart will be saved.”⁴⁴

The human being is not simply a material body made of cells, organs, bones, and flesh. The human being is composed of both body and soul, and it is the soul that gives the physical body life. There are several different components that contribute to human consciousness such as the primary nature (*fiṭrah*), ego (*nafs*), reason (‘*aql*), and the heart and soul (*qalb* and *rūh*). These components co-exist and interact with one another making us human.

The spiritual heart is the single most important part of the human body. That is where the seed of faith is planted, nurtured, and allowed to grow. The spiritual heart is the center of faith, *īmān*, understanding, thought, reflection, and contemplation. The spiritual heart is the engine that drives human behavior; both actions and statements. The spiritual heart is the center of the soul, just as the physical heart is the center of the

⁴² Quran 3:164

⁴³ Quran 91:9-10

⁴⁴ Quran 26:88-89

body. That is why the terms “heart” and “soul” are used interchangeably to refer to the center of human consciousness and being.⁴⁵ The Prophet ﷺ informed us that there is a single piece of flesh in the body, if it is sound, healthy, wholesome, and pure then the entire body will be sound, healthy, wholesome, and pure. If it is corrupt, sick, and damaged then the entire body will be corrupt, sick, and damaged. And that is the heart. The heart referred to in this ḥadīth is not the physical heart, the organ in the human body. Rather, what is being referred to here is the spiritual heart.

The heart is the means by which a believer interacts and connects to revelation and the Divine. Allah ﷻ says,

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَذِكْرٍ لِمَنْ كَانَ لَهُ قَلْبٌ أَوْ أَلْقَى السَّمْعَ وَهُوَ شَهِيدٌ

“Surely in this is a reminder for whoever has a ‘mindful’ heart and lends an attentive ear.”⁴⁶

In order to develop a deeper engagement with Allah’s speech, it is important to start by focusing on the heart through the following:

1. Sincerity - The Prophet ﷺ said, “Actions are only by their intentions, and every person will only get what they intended.”⁴⁷ This ḥadīth has been described as the axis around which Islam revolves because it highlights the value, importance, and significance of sincerity. One should recite the Quran sincerely for the sake of Allah ﷻ with the intention of seeking guidance, knowledge, direction, reminders, an increase in faith, and spiritual purification.

The word used for sincerity in Arabic is الإخلاص, the verbal noun from the verb أَخْلَصَ / يُخْلِصُ which literally means to dedicate, be loyal, devoted, or faithful. It comes from the root letters خ ل ص that convey the meaning of purifying or cleaning something. When a person is sincere they have purified their intention and cleansed it from anything else besides Allah ﷻ. Sincerity means to worship Allah ﷻ with the sole objective or goal of attaining His nearness. Whenever a person performs an act of worship or a good deed the intention behind it is pure; it is being done solely to seek the pleasure of Allah ﷻ. They are not looking for any type of material benefit, praise, fame, and recognition from

⁴⁵ Tarsin, Asad. *Being Muslim: A Practical Guide*. Sandala, 2015

⁴⁶ Quran 50:37

⁴⁷ Bukhārī, *k. bad al-wahy, b. kayfa kān bad’ al-wahy ilā rasūlillah*, 1

people. Rather it is being done out of submission and obedience to Allah ﷻ; out of love for Him and to earn His mercy and forgiveness.

As Allah ﷻ says,

وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ خُنْفَاءً وَيُقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُوا الزَّكَاةَ ۚ وَذَلِكَ دِينُ الْقَيِّمَةِ

“And they were not commanded except to worship Allah, [being] sincere to Him in religion, inclining to truth, and to establish prayer and to give zakah. And that is the correct religion.”⁴⁸

Similarly, Allah ﷻ tells the Prophet ﷺ,

قُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ * لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ ۚ وَبِذَلِكَ أُمِرْتُ وَأَنَا أَوَّلُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ

“Say, ‘My prayers and sacrifice, my life and death, are all for Allah, Lord of all the worlds; He has no partner. This is what I have been commanded, and I am the first to submit myself to Him.’”⁴⁹

It is critical to approach the Quran, Allah’s divine speech, sincerely in order to seek guidance, healing, and mercy. Allah ﷻ says regarding the Quran,

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَذِكْرٍ لِمَنْ كَانَ لَهُ قَلْبٌ أَوْ أَلْقَى السَّمْعَ وَهُوَ شَهِيدٌ

“Surely in this is a reminder for whoever has a ‘mindful’ heart and lends an attentive ear.”⁵⁰

Sincerity is the foundation of meaningful *tadabbur*. It ensures that the process is driven by a genuine desire to seek Allah's guidance, understand His message, and apply it in one's life. Without sincerity, the practice of *tadabbur* may become superficial, devoid of spiritual depth, and disconnected from its intended purpose.

2. Humility - Humility is a virtue and attitude that is encouraged in the Quran and Sunnah and its opposite, pride and arrogance, are condemned. Allah ﷻ says,

⁴⁸ Quran 98:5

⁴⁹ Quran 6:162-163

⁵⁰ Quran 50:37

وَبَشِّرِ الْمُخْبِتِينَ الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَجِلَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَالصَّابِرِينَ عَلَىٰ مَا أَصَابَهُمْ
وَالْمُقِيمِي الصَّلَاةِ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ

“And give good news ‘O Prophet’ to the humble: those whose hearts tremble at the remembrance of Allah, who patiently endure whatever may befall them, and who establish prayer and donate from what We have provided for them.”⁵¹

The Prophet ﷺ said, “Whoever has humility for the sake of Allah, Allah will elevate him.”⁵² Humility is a critical attribute when engaging in *tadabbur* (reflection) on the Quran, as it creates an environment conducive to true understanding, spiritual growth, and a deeper connection with Allah's words.

Humility is a virtue and an attitude characterized by a modest and respectful view of oneself in relation to others and the world. It involves recognizing one's own limitations, imperfections, and vulnerabilities, while showing respect, openness, and empathy towards others.⁵³ One should approach the Quran with humility recognizing that they are reciting the words of their Lord and Creator, the Almighty, the All-Wise, the All-Knowing, the Most Merciful. They should also approach the Quran with intellectual humility recognizing that they are reciting words of the Divine whose knowledge is infinite and limitless. One aspect of intellectual humility is leaving one's pre-conceived notions, understandings, ideas, and philosophies to the side and allowing Allah's words to shape and mold one's faith, character, morals, principles, ethics, virtues, and worldview.⁵⁴ Arrogance and pride hinder the ability to receive guidance and wisdom from the Quran. Humility counteracts arrogance and helps individuals shed their ego, enabling them to approach the Quran with an open and receptive heart.

Humility allows individuals to approach the Quran with a sense of awe and reverence for Allah. It acknowledges the vastness and greatness of the Divine Creator, encouraging one to be receptive to His teachings with a heart full of humility and respect. Humility is integral to the practice of *tadabbur*, as it facilitates a deep, sincere, and transformative engagement with the Quran.⁵⁵ By humbling ourselves before Allah's

⁵¹ Quran 22:34-35

⁵² Muslim, *k. al-birr wa al-ṣila wa al-ādāb, b. istiḥbāb al-‘afw wa al-tawādu’*, 2588

⁵³ al-Saqqāf, ‘Alawī bin ‘Abd al-Qādir, *Mawsū‘ah al-Akhlāq*, 1:291-299

⁵⁴ al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, 2:304

⁵⁵ al-Nawawī, *Etiquette with the Quran*, 42

words, we create an environment in which we can genuinely understand, embrace, and apply the wisdom contained within the sacred text.

3. Repentance - Sins and acts of disobedience are major roadblocks and barriers that prevent one from engaging with the Quran on a deeper level. The Quran is addressed to the spiritual heart, and in order for the spiritual heart to benefit from the guidance of the Quran it must be healthy, clean, and pure. A diseased, corrupt, and polluted heart is veiled from receiving maximum benefit from the words of Allah ﷻ. Sins infect the heart just as diseases infect the body. Just as a stained and dirty mirror cannot reflect the beauty of an object, a stained and dirty heart cannot reflect the beauty of the Quran. ibn al-Qayyim reports ibn Taymiyyah as saying, “If the angels—who are created beings—are prevented from entering a house by dogs and images, then how could knowing Allah, loving Him, the sweetness of remembering Him, and the comfort of being near to Him, enter a heart that is filled with the dogs of desires and images [of worldly pursuits]?”⁵⁶ Regarding this concept ibn Qudāmah writes, “The reciter must clear himself of the deterrents of understanding, such as being insistent upon a sin, or harboring arrogance, or surrendering to his biases—for these all cause the heart to darken and corrode. The heart is like a mirror, desires are like corrosion, and Qur’anic concepts are like images that are reflected in the mirror. Spiritual training, through cleansing it of [contrary] desires, is analogous to polishing that mirror.”⁵⁷

Everyone is guilty of some sort of mistake, sin, poor choice, or act of disobedience. There is no such thing as a perfect human being as perfection belongs to Allah ﷻ alone. Everyone has their own faults, shortcomings, and weaknesses. The pull of the world, the *dunya*, temptations, desires, and wants is powerful and the struggle against one’s ego is real. The Prophet ﷺ said, “Every single son of Adam is a profuse wrongdoer. And the best of profuse wrongdoers are those who repent frequently.”⁵⁸ Meaning, not only do people sin, but they sin a lot. People sin publicly and privately, knowingly and unknowingly, big and small.

Although a person may not initially recognize it, these sins have an effect upon one’s spiritual heart. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: “Verily, when the slave (of Allah)

⁵⁶ ibn al-Qayyim, *Madārij al-sālikīn*, 2:418.

⁵⁷ ibn Qudāmah al-Maqdisī, *Mukhtasar Minhaj al-Qāsidīn*, 53–54.

⁵⁸ Tirmidhī, *k. ṣifāh al-qiyāmah wa al-riqāq wa al-war’ ‘an rasūlillah*, 2499. This narration is graded as *da’if*.

commits a sin, a black spot appears on his heart. When he refrains from it, seeks forgiveness and repents, his heart is polished clean. But if he returns, it increases until it covers his entire heart. And that is the ‘*Rān*’ which Allah mentioned: ‘Nay, but on their hearts is the *Rān* which they used to earn.’”⁵⁹ Sins cover the spiritual heart preventing it from accepting the guidance, light, and mercy of the Quran.

The process of cleansing one’s heart and purifying is through repentance and seeking forgiveness. Allah ﷻ says,

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا تَوْبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ تَوْبَةً نَّصُوحًا عَسَىٰ رَبُّكُمْ أَن يُكَفِّرَ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ
وَيُدْخِلَكُم جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ يَوْمَ لَا يُخْزِي اللَّهُ النَّبِيَّ وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا مَعَهُ ۗ
نُورُهُمْ يَسْعَىٰ بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَبِأَيْمَانِهِمْ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا أَتْمِمْ لَنَا نُورَنَا وَآغْفِرْ لَنَا ۖ إِنَّكَ عَلَىٰ
كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

“O you who have believed, repent to Allah with sincere repentance. Perhaps your Lord will remove from you your misdeeds and admit you into gardens beneath which rivers flow [on] the Day when Allah will not disgrace the Prophet and those who believed with him. Their light will proceed before them and on their right; they will say, ‘Our Lord, perfect for us our light and forgive us. Indeed, You are over all things competent.’”⁶⁰

Allah ﷻ loves those who turn to Him in repentance.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ التَّوَّابِينَ وَيُحِبُّ الْمُتَطَهِّرِينَ

“Indeed, Allah loves those who are constantly repentant and loves those who purify themselves.”⁶¹

Repentance is extremely powerful; it removes one’s sins. The Prophet ﷺ said, “One who repents from sin is like one who has no sin at all.”⁶²

Repentance and seeking forgiveness cleanse the heart and soul from the stains of sins and wrongdoings. Engaging in *tadabbur* with a heart burdened by sin can hinder genuine understanding and connection with the Quran's messages. Repentance allows

⁵⁹ Tirmidhī, *k. tafsīr al-Quran ‘an rasūlillah*, 3334. This narration is graded as ḥasan.

⁶⁰ Quran 66:8

⁶¹ Quran 2:222

⁶² al-Bayhaqī, *Shu‘ab al-Īmān*, 6780

for a fresh start and a purer state of mind. Repentance and seeking forgiveness play a crucial role in the practice of *tadabbur*. Incorporating repentance and seeking forgiveness into the practice of *tadabbur* creates a holistic approach that combines spiritual purification, humility, and sincere devotion.⁶³ This, in turn, enhances the depth of understanding, connection, and impact that the Quran has on the individual's heart and soul. The Prophet ﷺ would supplicate, “O Allah... make the Qur’an the spring of my heart, the illumination of my chest, the assuaging of my grief, and the departure of my anxiety.”⁶⁴

4. Imagine that Allah ﷻ is Addressing You - When reciting the Quran, if one imagines that Allah ﷻ is addressing them directly, it will lead to a more profound engagement with the Quran. Imagining that Allah ﷻ is addressing you personally while engaging in *tadabbur* can significantly enhance the depth and impact of your engagement with the Quranic verses. This practice brings a sense of intimacy and relevance to the Quran's messages, allowing you to connect on a deeper level. The Quran's message becomes more relevant to your personal circumstances, challenges, and aspirations. It helps motivate you to explore how Allah's guidance applies to your unique circumstances.

Approaching the Quran through this personal lens fosters a more intimate and direct relationship with the Quran. Imagining a personal address encourages you to internalize the teachings of the Quran. Instead of viewing the verses as abstract principles, you see them as direct guidance for your life, leading to practical application. Imagining Allah's address nurtures a deep spiritual connection. This connection transcends intellectual understanding and touches the heart, allowing for a transformative experience through the Quranic verses.⁶⁵

It is important to imagine oneself as the intended addressee of the Quran. When a person comes across glad tidings, warnings, admonitions, reminders, commands, or prohibitions they should imagine that Allah ﷻ is addressing them directly. They should understand that the stories in the Quran are not merely for historical information or entertainment; rather, they are mentioned for individuals to reflect on them and derive

⁶³ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, 2:305

⁶⁴ Aḥmad, *Musnad*, 3704

⁶⁵ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, 2:308

important reminders, morals, and lessons. al-Ghazālī writes, “And when one adopts such an approach, they do not treat the study of the Quran as work. Instead, they read it like a servant reading the letter sent by their master who sent it to them in order for them to reflect upon it and act in accordance with its demands. Some scholars have said that this Quran is a collection of messages that have come to us from our Lord through His covenants. We reflect on them during prayers, contemplate them in solitary moments, and implement them in acts of obedience and established traditions. Mālik ibn Dīnār used to say, ‘What has the Quran sowed in your hearts, O people of the Quran? The Quran is the spring of the believer, just as rain is the spring for the earth.’ Qatādah said, ‘No one engages with this Quran without gaining either increase or decrease. Allah ﷻ says, ‘It is a healing and a mercy for the believers, but it does not increase the wrongdoers except in loss.’”⁶⁶

Incorporating the practice of imagining Allah's personal address into your tadabbur process enhances the sense of intimacy, relevance, and impact of the Quranic teachings. It helps bridge the gap between the timeless wisdom of the Quran and the challenges and opportunities of your daily life, allowing for a more profound and transformative engagement with the sacred text.

6.7.2 Physical

According to Muslim theologians, faith is a complex reality composed of three main components: belief with the heart, declaration with the tongue, and actions with the limbs.⁶⁷ All three components come together and interact within a person of faith. Within the framework of Islam, there is a deep connection between the spiritual heart and limbs, between the internal and the external. External acts of righteousness, both verbal and physical, are expressions of the belief within one’s heart. The Prophet ﷺ said, “Faith has seventy some-odd branches. The highest is *lā ilāha illa Allah*, the lowest is removing harm from the path, and modesty is a branch of faith.”⁶⁸ This ḥadīth demonstrates that faith expresses itself through a person’s speech and behavior in

⁶⁶ al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā’ Ulūm al-Dīn*, 2:308

⁶⁷ al-Nawawī, *al-Minhāj Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj*, 1:101-103

⁶⁸ Muslim, *k. al-īmān, b. bayān ‘adad shu‘ab al-īmān*, 35

several different ways. These external expressions have an impact on the spiritual heart, just as the spiritual heart has an impact on external expressions.

The internal and external aspects of faith and practice are interrelated and connected. The Prophet ﷺ said, “Truly there is a morsel of flesh in the body, if it is sound the entire body is sound, and if it is corrupt then the entire body is corrupt. Indeed it is the heart.”⁶⁹ The physical acts of *wuḍū* (ritual ablution) and appropriate clothing for prayer and recitation serve as a bridge between the spiritual and physical aspects of one’s being. When one’s body is in a state of purity and dressed respectfully, it can contribute to a sense of spiritual preparedness for deep contemplation.

Observing the physical etiquette and manners of reciting the Quran is an important component of engaging in *tadabbur*. Observing certain physical etiquette while reciting the Quran creates a mindful and focused environment. Maintaining a respectful demeanor and observing proper posture leads to an atmosphere that leads to concentration and contemplation. One aspect of physical etiquette is finding a quiet and clean space, which minimizes distractions. All of these factors enhance one’s concentration and focus allowing for deeper engagement with Allah’s speech.

In essence, observing the physical etiquette and manners of reciting the Quran lays the foundation for a profound and sincere engagement with the text, which is essential for effective *tadabbur*. This practice not only promotes a deep understanding of the Quranic meanings but also nurtures a spiritual connection between a person and the teachings of the Quran.

1. Ritual and Physical Purity - The Quran and Sunnah highlight the importance of purification and cleanliness and its relationship to faith. Allah ﷻ says,

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ التَّوَّابِينَ وَيُحِبُّ الْمُتَطَهِّرِينَ

“Truly Allah loves those who repent often and those who purify themselves.”⁷⁰

Islam places a lot of importance on physical and spiritual purity. Physical purity is ensuring one’s body, clothes, and environment are clean. It also includes personal

⁶⁹ Bukhārī, *k. al-īmān*, *b. faḍl man istabra’a lī dīnihi*, 52

⁷⁰ Quran 2:222

hygiene. Purification of one's body, clothes, and place of prayer is a precondition for the validity of prayer. Spiritual purity is cleansing one's soul through seeking forgiveness and repentance and cleansing one's heart. The spiritual heart can become polluted and diseased through spiritual illnesses such as jealousy, envy, hatred, arrogance, and pride.

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Purification is half of faith."⁷¹ One of the branches of faith is cleanliness and purification and that is why the Prophet ﷺ emphasized the importance of both physical and ritual purity along with personal hygiene. In Islam, ritual purity is known as "*ṭahārah*". It is a significant concept that involves cleansing oneself from physical, legal, and spiritual impurities before engaging in acts of worship or other religious activities. Ritual purity plays a crucial role in Islamic practice, as it enables Muslims to approach their acts of worship with a clean body and soul, fostering a sense of spiritual connection and devotion.

It is recommended (*mustahab*) to be in a state of ritual purity when reciting the Quran. According to the consensus of the jurists, it is permissible to recite the Quran (without touching a copy of the Quran) in a state of minor ritual impurity.⁷² The method of attaining ritual purity is by performing *wuḍū*, which is translated as ablution. *Wuḍū* is a ritual washing that involves washing the hands, rinsing the mouth and nose, washing the face, the arms up to and including the elbows, wiping the head, and washing the feet up to and including the ankles. If one is in a minor state of ritual impurity, *wuḍū* is required before engaging in certain acts of worship such as praying, touching a copy of the Quran, and performing *ṭawāf*.

Wuḍū is not only a ritual washing, but it is also a very powerful form of spiritual purification that washes away a person's minor sins. The Prophet ﷺ said, "One who performs *wuḍū*' and performs it well, his sins exit his body, even from beneath his nails."⁷³ 'Uthmān narrates: "I saw the Messenger of Allah ﷺ performing *wuḍū*' as I am performing *wuḍū*' now. He then said, 'One who performs *wuḍū*' like this, is forgiven for his past sins, and his *ṣalāh* and walking to the masjid are an additional reward."⁷⁴ In another narration the Prophet ﷺ said, "When a Muslim slave - or believer - performs

⁷¹ Muslim, *k. al-ṭahārah, b. faḍl al-wuḍū'*, 223

⁷² al-Nawawī, *Etiquette with the Quran*, 36

⁷³ Muslim, *k. al-ṭahārah, b. khurūj al-khaṭāyā ma'ā mā al-wuḍū*, 245

⁷⁴ Bukhārī, *k. al-riqāq, b. qawl Allah yā ayyuha al-nās inna wa'd Allah haqq...*, 6433

wuḍū', and washes his face, every sin to which his eyes looked leaves his face with the water - or with the last drop of water. When he washes his hands, every sin which his hands committed leaves his hands with the water - or with the last drop of water. When he washes his feet, every sin towards which his feet walk leaves his feet with the water - or with the last drop of water. This continues until he emerges completely purified of sins."⁷⁵ All of these narrations demonstrate that ablution is a means of spiritual purification that washes away one's minor sins.

While *wuḍū'* itself does not directly lead to *tadabbur*, it is an essential part of a Muslim's daily routine and spiritual practice. It sets the stage for a state of physical and spiritual readiness that can enhance the quality of one's engagement with the Quran by promoting a sense of mindfulness, concentration, and humility. The process of performing *wuḍū'* can serve as a mindfulness exercise. As a Muslim carries out the steps of *wuḍū'*, they may use this time to mentally prepare themselves for recitation and reflection on the Quranic verses. The act of performing *wuḍū'* can help clear the mind of distractions, making it easier to concentrate on the meanings of the verses during *tadabbur*. The physical washing and wiping of the limbs during *wuḍū'* can also symbolize the purification of one's thoughts and intentions leading to a more meaningful engagement with the Quran. *Wuḍū'* is often seen as a spiritual act, a way to prepare oneself for prayer and other acts of worship. Engaging in *tadabbur* can be thought of as a form of worship in itself. By performing *wuḍū'*, a person signifies their intention to approach the Quran with reverence and humility, which can enhance the quality of their reflection and contemplation.

2. Oral Hygiene - The Prophet ﷺ placed a lot of emphasis on cleanliness and hygiene in general, and oral hygiene in particular. He ﷺ placed significant emphasis on oral hygiene, recognizing its importance for both physical health and spiritual well-being. The Prophet ﷺ would use the *siwāk* several times throughout the day: when waking up from sleep, when entering the home, during ablution, and before prayer. The Prophet ﷺ said, "If it was not for my fear of overburdening my Ummah, I would have ordered them to use the *miswāk* for every prayer."⁷⁶ Anas narrates that the Messenger

⁷⁵ Muslim, *k. al-ṭahārah*, *b. khurūj al-khaṭāyā ma'ā mā al-wuḍū*, 244

⁷⁶ Bukhārī, *k. al-tamannī*, *b. mā yajūz min al-law*, 7240

of Allah ﷺ said, “I have repeatedly advised you to use the *miswāk*.”⁷⁷ The Prophet ﷺ said, “The tooth-stick purifies the mouth and pleases the Lord.”⁷⁸ ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib would say, “Your mouths are the passageways of the Quran, so refresh them with the *siwāk*.”⁷⁹

As understood from these narrations, using the *miswāk* was highly encouraged by the Prophet ﷺ. In Islam, cleanliness is closely associated with purity, and the *miswāk* carries symbolic significance related to both physical and spiritual purity. Using it can serve as a reminder of the importance of maintaining inner purity and sincerity when delving into the profound meanings of the Quran during *tadabbur*. The act of using the *miswāk* can serve as a mindful practice that help prepares one both practically and spiritually to engage with the Quran on a deeper level.

3. Place and Manner of Sitting - It is recommended to find a clean, quiet, and peaceful place to recite the Quran and reflect on its meanings and sit in a humble and calm manner. al-Nawawī explains, “It is recommended that recitation [of the Quran] be in a carefully chosen and clean place. Because of this, a group of scholars recommended reciting in the mosque, since it combines cleanliness and nobility; and it achieves another benefit: spiritual retreat [*i’itikāf*]. Anyone who sits in a mosque should intend spiritual retreat whether he sits for a short or long duration. Upon entering the mosque, he should intend such a spiritual retreat. This etiquette should be given attention and disseminated widely so that they young and general public know of it, for it is one of the things that is now ignored.”⁸⁰ al-Nawawī underscores the significance of choosing a clean and suitable environment for reciting the Quran. This highlights the respect and reverence that should be given to the Quranic text. It aligns with the Islamic principle of cleanliness and purity in matters of worship.

It is also recommended to sit with humility, tranquility, and dignity while facing the *qiblah*, which is the direction of prayer. al-Nawawī advises, “It is recommended for the reciter to face the *qiblah*, even when not in Prayer. It has been related in a ḥadīth: ‘The best way to sit is facing the *qiblah*.’ One sits with humility, tranquility, and dignity,

⁷⁷ Bukhārī, *k. al-jumu‘ah, b. al-siwāk yawm al-jumu‘ah*, 888

⁷⁸ al-Nasā’ī, *k. al-ṭahārah, b. al-targhīb fī al-siwāk*, 5. This narration is graded as ṣaḥīḥ.

⁷⁹ ibn Mājah, *k. al-ṭahārah wa sunanihā, b. al-siwāk*, 291. This narration is graded as ḍa‘īf.

⁸⁰ al-Nawawī, *Etiquette with the Quran*, 39

lowering his head. He sits alone to perfect his etiquette and humbleness, like sitting before his teacher.”⁸¹

4. Manner of Recitation - The reciter who intends to engage in tadabbur should open his recitation by reciting the *ta'awwudh*, *a'ūdhu billāhi min al-shaytān al-rajīm*, which translates as “I seek refuge with Allah from the accursed Satan.” Allah ﷻ says in Sūrah al-Isrā,

فَإِذَا قَرَأْتَ الْقُرْآنَ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ

“When you recite the Quran, seek refuge with Allah from Satan, the accursed.”⁸²

One of the most important keys for meaningful engagement with the Quran is focus and concentration. Seeking refuge with Allah ﷻ from the accursed Satan is a way of minimizing distractions.

In several verses throughout the Quran, Allah ﷻ instructs the believers on how to protect themselves from the tricks, plots, and evil whisperings of Satan. Satan is declared as mankind’s sworn enemy and arch-nemesis. His goal and mission in the life of this world is to take as many people with him to Hell as possible. Allah ﷻ describes his open enmity towards mankind saying,

إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ فَاتَّخِذُوهُ عَدُوًّا ۗ إِنَّمَا يَدْعُوا حِزْبَهُ لِيَكُونُوا مِنْ أَصْحَابِ السَّعِيرِ

“Satan is your enemy—so treat him as an enemy—and invites his followers only to enter the blazing fire.”⁸³

Satan took an oath to misguide as many of us as possible.

قَالَ فَبِعِزَّتِكَ لأُغْوِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ إِلَّا عِبَادَكَ مِنْهُمُ الْمُحْلَصِينَ

“Iblis said, ‘I swear by Your might! I will tempt all but Your true servants.’”⁸⁴

⁸¹ al-Nawawī, *Etiquette with the Quran*, 40

⁸² Quran 16:98

⁸³ Quran 35:6

⁸⁴ Quran 38:82-83

This is one of the several reasons why believers are encouraged to seek refuge with Allah ﷻ from Satan the accursed, especially when reciting the Quran.

After seeking refuge with Allah ﷻ from the accursed Satan, the reciter should recite the *basmalah*, which translates as “with the name of Allah the Most Merciful the Very Merciful.” The phrase starts with the letter “*bā*”, which is known as a preposition (*ḥarf al-jarr*). The unique thing about prepositions is that they can convey different meanings and connotations based on what word they are being used with. The scholars of the Quran mention that it is used for the meaning of *isti‘ānah*, or seeking help, assistance, support, and aid. When a person says the *basmalah*, they are seeking the help, assistance, support, and aid of Allah ﷻ in whatever activity they are about to engage in. For example, if one says it before eating it means that they are eating with the name of Allah the most Merciful the Very Merciful seeking His help and assistance. If they say it before reciting Quran it means that they are reciting Quran with the name of Allah the most Merciful the Very Merciful seeking His help and assistance. Through the *basmalah*, the reciter is asking Allah ﷻ to help, assist, and aid them in reciting the Quran with focus, concentration, humility, and contemplation. It is an effective way of preparing one’s mind and soul to engage with the meanings of the Quran on a deeper level.

One should then recite the Quran with humility, manners, and etiquette in a slow and deliberate pace while observing the rules of *tajwīd*. As mentioned earlier, Allah ﷻ instructs the Prophet ﷺ to recite the Quran in a slow and measured pace saying, “Recite the Quran slowly and distinctly.”⁸⁵ *Tartīl*, slow measured recitation, is more conducive to reflecting on Allah’s words than quick hasty recitation. This is an observable reality when it comes to any type of speech and is even more true when it comes to the speech of Allah ﷻ.

Reciting the Quran in a beautiful voice or listening to a beautiful recitation of the Quran definitely plays a role in enhancing one’s engagement with the Quran. The Prophet ﷺ encouraged his Companions to beautify their voices when reciting the Quran. The Prophet ﷺ said, “Beautify your voices with the Quran.”⁸⁶ The Prophet ﷺ also said, “Allah does not listen to anything as He listens to the recitation of the Quran by a

⁸⁵ Quran 73:4

⁸⁶ Abū Dāwūd, *k. al-witr, b. istiḥbāb al-tartīl fī al-qirā’ah*, 1468. This narration is graded as ṣaḥīḥ.

Prophet who recites it in attractive audible sweet sounding voice.”⁸⁷ Reciting the Quran in a beautiful and melodious voice has a direct impact on the reciter and the listener. It captures one’s attention allowing one to listen more actively. This active listening allows one to focus and concentrate more on the meanings, leading to reflection.

6.7.3 Intellectual

1. Read a Translation - In order to engage in *tadabbur*, it is important to familiarize oneself with the meanings of what they are reciting. It is not possible to deeply reflect on the meanings of the Quran without first being familiar with the meanings of the words and verses. This is challenging for those who don’t know the Arabic Language. Allah ﷻ in His infinite wisdom, chose Arabic to be the language of His last and final revelation sent for the guidance of humanity until the end of times. This poses a unique challenge for Muslims whose native tongue is not Arabic. They either have to spend the time and effort to learn the language so they can access the surface-level meanings of the Quran directly or rely on translations.

Since *tadabbur* involves deep reflection, and reflection depends on understanding, developing a surface-level understanding of what is being recited is necessary. A base-level understanding of what is being recited can be achieved by reading a reliable and accurate translation of the Quran. There are a number of English translations of the meanings of the Quran available. However, each translation is not equal, and it is important for one engaging in *tadabbur* to be familiar with the strengths, weaknesses, and biases of the translation they are choosing to use. Translations are an attempt to capture the meanings of the words of Allah ﷻ and reflect the translator’s understanding, expertise, strengths, weaknesses, and biases. Based on factors such as accessibility, accuracy, flow, and scholarly rigor, the researcher suggests the following three English translations:

1. The Noble Quran - Meaning with Explanatory Notes by Mufti Taqi Usmani
2. The Clear Quran - A Thematic English translation by Dr. Mustafa Khattab
3. The Quran - A New Translation by M.A.S. Abdel Haleem

⁸⁷ Bukhārī, *k. al-tawhīd, b. qawl al-nabiyy al-māhir bī al-quran ma ‘a al-kirām al-bararah*, 7544

These three translations have been selected primarily for four reasons:

1. The translators have a traditional academic background in Islamic Studies and are familiar with the classical and modern *tafsīr* tradition.
2. The translations are written in English that is accessible and easy to understand for the average person.
2. The translators are fluent in both Arabic and English.
3. The translators mostly strict to a literal translation of the Quranic text.

Reading an English translation of the Quran is important for non-Arabic speakers who want to engage in *tadabbur* because it provides access to the Quranic message, fosters spiritual connection, enables understanding and reflection, and promotes personal growth and ethical development. It is a valuable resource for individuals seeking to engage with the Quran's teachings in a language they can comprehend.

2. Read a *Tafsīr* - Although a translation can provide a basic surface-level understanding of the meanings, it is not enough. A lot of meaning, nuance, eloquence, context, power, and beauty is lost in translation. Reading works of *tafsīr* (Quranic exegesis) is a very important step that helps one engage with the meanings of the Quran on a deeper level. A *tafsīr* will go beyond the surface-level meanings of the words and verses and provide a deeper understanding of the message that is being conveyed. The primary objective of *tafsīr* is to explain and uncover the intended meanings of Allah's divine speech. Any information that aids in uncovering and explaining the meanings of the Quran is classified as *tafsīr*. *Tafsīr* is the key to uncovering the deeper meanings of the Quran, which will lead to more meaningful *tadabbur*. *Tafsīr* provides essential context, interpretation, and insights into the Quranic text, enabling readers to reflect deeply on its messages and apply them to their lives in a meaningful way. It enhances the spiritual, intellectual, and moral growth of individuals who seek to engage with the Quran on a profound level.

There have been hundreds of *tafsīr* works authored throughout history varying in length, breadth, depth, complexity, and focus. Unfortunately, a lot of these works were authored in the Arabic Language and have not been translated into English. The English-speaking audience has limited access to the very rich and exhaustive tradition of *tafsīr*. There are a few classical and contemporary works that have been translated

from Arabic to English, others that have been translated from Urdu to English, and a few original works of Quranic exegesis in English. The following is a very brief survey of tafsīr works available in the English language:

1. *Tafsīr al-Quran al-‘Aẓīm (The Explanation of the Great Quran)* more commonly known simply as *Tafsīr ibn Kathīr* by the distinguished damascene scholar of the eighth century ‘Imād al-Dīn Abū al-Fidā Ismā‘īl ibn Kathīr. In this work, ibn Kathīr focused on narrations that explain the meanings, context, and lessons of each verse.
2. *al-Jāmi‘ lī Aḥkām al-Quran (The Compiler for the Rulings of the Quran)* simply known as *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī* authored by the erudite Andalusian scholar Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Qurṭubī. He was a well-known Māliki jurist and focused on the legal rulings that can be derived from the Quran. While doing so he also explained the verses in detail highlighting the meanings of difficult words, grammar, syntax, modes of recitation, and explaining the eloquence and beauty of Allah’s words. He also narrated a number of aḥādīth related to the verses. A partial translation of this very beneficial work is available.
3. *Maḥāṭib al-Ghayb (Keys of the Unseen)*, also known as *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr (The Large Commentary)* by Muḥammad ibn ‘Umar Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzi. He was an expert in theology, Arabic grammar and philosophy. In his work he discusses a number of rational and scholastic debates while refuting unorthodox sects of Islam. His work is considered to be a very unique contribution to the field of tafsīr. An English translation of the commentary on Sūrah al-Fātiḥah is available.
4. *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* is One of the most widely-read and studied works of tafsīr across the Muslim world because of its simplicity and brevity. It was written by the two Jalāl’s: Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Maḥalli (864) and his student the famous Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (911). Jalāl al-Dīn al-Maḥalli started the work from Surah al-Kahf and worked his way to the end of Surah al-Nās and then al-Fātiḥah. He passed away before completing the other half and the work was completed by his student Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī. Both

of these individuals were prolific scholars whose biographies can fill pages. Al-Suyūṭī is perhaps the most prolific author in Islamic history. Approximately seven-hundred works are attributed to him covering every discipline within Islamic Studies. This particular tafsīr is short, concise yet comprehensive and is often the first work of tafsīr studied by students of Islamic Studies. It is published in one volume and has been translated into English.

5. *Taysīr al-Karīm al-Raḥmān fī Tafsīr Kalām al-Mannān* by by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sa‘dī. This is a straightforward, easy to read, easy to understand explanation of the meaning of Quranic verses and statements.
6. *Fī Dhilāl al-Qur’ān (In the Shade of the Quran)* written by the Egyptian author, Islamic thinker, and poet Syed Qutb (1966). It is a contemporary commentary on the Quran and is very different from the scholastic works of tafsīr that focus on language, grammar, syntax, recitations, and rulings. He wrote it over a period of fifteen years, most of which were spent in prison. In it he shared his personal thoughts and insights regarding the meanings of verses in the light of classical interpretations. He was a very eloquent writer, and his eloquence is captured in the way this work flows seamlessly from one verse to the next. This work has been translated to English and is a unique and beneficial addition to the corpus of tafsīr literature.
7. *Ma‘ārif al-Quran* is the most famous work of the late Grand Mufti of Pakistan Muḥammad Shafī’ al-’Uthmāni (1976), the father of the well-known jurist and scholar Mufti Taqī ‘Uthmāni. Originally written in Urdu, the author based this work off of the most famous classical works of tafsīr such as *Tafsīr al-Ṭabari*, *ibn Kathīr*, *al-Qurṭubi*, *al-Rāzi*, *al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ*, and *Rūḥ al-Mā’nī*. He wrote the work in a very simple narrative style making it easily accessible for the average person to read. Not only does it include the discussions and analysis of the Quran found in the classical works of tafsīr, but it also tries to answer contemporary questions and issues in a logical and scholarly manner. It is used as a good reference book on Islamic topics and has been translated to English.

These are just a selection of *tafsīr* works available in English. Each of these works offers a unique perspective on the Quranic text, catering to a range of interests and approaches to understanding the Quran's message. Readers can choose the one that aligns with their needs and preferences for studying the Quran in English.

3. Objectives and Overview of the Chapter - The Quran consists of 114 sūrahs, which is usually translated as “chapters,” starting with Sūrah al-Fātiḥah (“The Opening”) and ending with Sūrah al-Nās (Mankind). Each sūrah is made up of a different number of *āyāt*, translated as “verses,” the longest surah being 284 verses and the shortest just 4. Each of the *āyāt* are also of varying lengths, the shortest being two words and the longest being more than a hundred. There are a total of 6,235 *āyāt* in the Quran.⁸⁸

The Quran speaks about beliefs, law, history, morals, values, and ethics. It even contains knowledge that is associated with the fields of medicine, debate, astronomy, engineering, algebra, and geology. Although the Quran contains knowledge regarding these sciences and many others, it is not a book of history, science, or medicine. It is primarily a book of guidance. al-Ghazālī is of the opinion that all of the verses of the Quran revolve around six basic topics: 1) Allah ﷻ and His Divine attributes, names, and acts; 2) spiritual wisdom and the path towards Allah; 3) descriptions of the hereafter; 4) stories of previous Prophets, Messengers, sages, disbelievers, and sinners; 5) arguments for belief and refutations of disbelief; and 6) laws, commands, prohibitions, and prescriptions for life.⁸⁹ All other sub-themes are connected to and derived from these six in some way, shape, or form.

The Quran as a whole has overarching themes, concepts, and ideas related to faith, guidance, spirituality, morality, ethics, and character that tie the verses and chapters together. Each chapter (sūrah) of the Quran also focuses on certain subjects, themes, and ideas. Analyzing these themes and ideas allows the reader to identify certain objectives (*maqāṣid*) of the particular sūrah and the Quran as a whole. An aspect of *tadabbur* is to look at and analyze the major themes of a particular sūrah and explore how they are connected to each other and how they fit into the general themes of the

⁸⁸ There are a few different opinions regarding the exact number of *āyāt* in the Quran because of a difference in numbering some of the verses.

⁸⁹ Ghazālī, *The Jewels of the Quran*, 3

entire Quran. Identifying the objectives, themes, concepts, and ideas discussed in each sūrah is an excellent tool that will aid in one's *tadabbur*.

Scholars of the Quran analyze the major themes, concepts, and ideas found within a particular Sūrah and present how they come together as a unified whole. The scholar or researcher will analyze the entire Sūrah in order to extract its principal themes, objectives, and subject matter. Then they will summarize each section of the Sūrah tying them to the principal themes and objectives. They will also demonstrate how each of these parts are related to each other and how the beginning and end of the Sūrah are tied to each other. They may also show how the various *suwar* of the Quran are connected to each other or the correlation between them. For example, the opening verses of Sūrah Maryam briefly mention the story of Zakariyyā and his son Yaḥyā (as). A classical analytical exegesis, such as ibn Kathīr, explores the meanings verse by verse, explaining and clarifying the meanings of the words and sentences. A person engaging in *tadabbur* may identify that one of the main themes of the passage is Allah's divine mercy. They will then describe how that divine mercy is expressed and manifested throughout the story.

Knowing the objectives and overview of a sūrah is a foundational step in engaging in *tadabbur*. It provides context, coherence, and focus for reflection, enabling one to extract deeper insights, apply the Quranic message to life, and foster a stronger connection with the Quran's teachings.

4. Connect Emotionally - `Connecting emotionally with the Quran plays a major role in reflecting on the deeper meanings of the Quran. Human emotions are very powerful and can serve as a catalyst that leads to submission, surrender, devotion, and obedience. Regarding the emotional impact of the Quran Allah ﷻ says,

اللَّهُ نَزَلَ أَحْسَنَ الْحَدِيثِ كِتَابًا مُتَشَابِهًا مَثَانٍ تَفْشَعُرُ مِنْهُ جُلُودُ الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ
ثُمَّ تَلِينُ جُلُودُهُمْ وَقُلُوبُهُمْ إِلَىٰ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ هُدَىٰ اللَّهِ يَهْدِي بِهِ ۚ مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۚ وَمَنْ
يُضِلِلِ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ هَادٍ

“It is Allah Who has sent down the best message—a Book of perfect consistency and repeated lessons—which causes the skin and hearts of those who fear their Lord to tremble, then their skin and hearts soften at the mention of the mercy of Allah. That is the

guidance of Allah, through which He guides whoever He wills. But whoever Allah leaves to stray will be left with no guide.”⁹⁰

In this verse, Allah ﷻ is describing the emotional and physical impact His words have upon the human heart and consciousness. There are verses and passages in the Quran that penetrate a person’s heart causing it to tremble and send shivers down their spine. They feel the power and magnitude of Allah’s words and it causes them to have goosebumps. Other verses and passages highlight Allah’s infinite grace and mercy filling the heart with a sense of peace, comfort, and tranquility.

Several passages of the Quran are worded and presented in a manner that is meant to evoke feelings of hope and fear. Hope and fear are essential expressions of faith within Islam. Throughout the Quran, Allah ﷻ employs a unique literary style termed *tarhīb* (intimidating to stop bad) and *targhīb* (giving encouragement to do good). It is used to create both a sense of fear and a sense of hope. According to the Islamic framework, a true believer lives their life in this world between fear of Allah’s punishment and hope in His divine mercy. A true believer fears the Day of Judgment, standing before Allah ﷻ and being held accountable for their deeds and statements; they fear punishment and Allah’s anger. This feeling of fear is not supposed to lead to a sense of hopelessness or despair. Rather, it should motivate one to work hard and struggle to obey the commandments of Allah ﷻ and stay away from His prohibitions. At the same time, a believer is supposed to have hope in the divine mercy, forgiveness, and grace of Allah ﷻ. Believers live their lives oscillating between the states of hope and fear and that is the reality of *īmān*.

For example, passages that describe Hell and its various torments and punishments are designed to instill a feeling of fear within the reciter’s heart. These vivid descriptions should cause their heart to tremble and their skin to crawl. The passages that describe Paradise and its delights calm the heart and instill a feeling of immense hope in the mercy, grace, pardon, and forgiveness of Allah ﷻ. When Allah ﷻ is speaking about various favors and blessings bestowed upon mankind it leads to a sense and feeling of gratitude. When a person recites the opening of al-Fātiḥah saying, “All thanks and praise are for Allah Lord of the worlds” they should try to connect with the expression of gratitude with emotion. They should reflect on all the countless

⁹⁰ Quran 39:23

blessings they enjoy as human beings - big and small, hidden and apparent, and tangible and intangible - and say these words with sincerity, humility, gratitude, and appreciation.

Connecting emotionally with the Quran is a profound and essential aspect of engaging in *tadabbur*. Emotions serve as a gateway to a deeper, more meaningful understanding of the Quranic text. When one reads or recites the Quran with an open heart and a sincere desire to connect emotionally, the words come alive, evoking feelings of awe, humility, gratitude, reverence, hope, fear, and compassion. These emotions are not mere sentiments but powerful catalysts for introspection and reflection. They draw readers closer to the divine message, making it more personal and relatable. When emotions are engaged, one becomes more receptive to the moral and spiritual guidance offered by the Quran. It is through this emotional connection that *tadabbur* transcends intellectual analysis, leading to a transformative and holistic engagement with the Quran, where its teachings become an integral part of one's life, values, and actions. Emotionally connecting with the Quran is the bridge between the heart and the mind, facilitating a profound journey of self-discovery and spiritual growth.

5. Interact with the Quran - The Prophet ﷺ would interact with the Quran as if here were engaged in conversation with Allah .ﷻ Hudhaifah narrates that one night he prayed tahajjud (the voluntary night prayer) with the Prophet ﷺ. The Prophet ﷺ started reciting Sūrah al-Baqarah and Hudhaifah thought to himself that the Prophet ﷺ would stop after one hundred verses, but he continued. Then he thought that the Prophet ﷺ would complete the sūrah and then go into the bowing position, but he continued. The Prophet ﷺ then recited Āl 'Imrān and al-Nisā' and he recited at a slow and measured pace. Whenever he came across a verse that glorified Allah, he would pause and glorify Allah. When he passed by a verse of supplication, he would pause and supplicate. When he passed by a verse about seeking refuge, he would pause and seek refuge.⁹¹ From this narration, we learn that the Prophet ﷺ would stand in prayer for long periods of time reciting large portions of the Quran with mindfulness and concentration. He would

⁹¹ Muslim, *k. ṣalāh al-musāfirīn wa qaṣrihā*, *b. istiḥbāb taṭwīl al-qirā'ah fī ṣalāh al-layl*, 772

focus and reflect on what he was reciting engaging in a conversation with the speech of Allah ﷻ.

When the Prophet ﷺ would come across rhetorical questions in the Quran, he would respond with beautiful statements of affirmation. For example, Allah ﷻ says at the end of Sūrah al-Tīn,

أَلَيْسَ اللَّهُ بِأَحْكَمِ الْحَاكِمِينَ

“Is Allah not the most just of all judges?”⁹²

The Prophet ﷺ would respond, “Of course, and I am a witness upon that.” Abū Hurairah narrates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “When one of you recites ‘By the fig and the olive’ (Sūrah 95) and comes to its end ‘Is not Allah the best judge?’ (verse 8), he should say, ‘Certainly, and I am one of those who testify to that.’ When one recites ‘I swear by the Day of Resurrection’ (Sūrah 75) and comes to ‘Is not that one able to raise the dead to life?’ (verse 40), he should say, ‘Certainly.’ And when one recites ‘By those that are sent’ (Surah 77), and comes to ‘Then in what message after that will they believe?’ (Sūrah 50), he should say, ‘We believe in Allah.’”⁹³

Interacting with the Quran and actively responding to its message is a dynamic process that enriches the practice of *tadabbur*. It involves more than passive reading; it's a dialogue between the reader and the text. Engaging in personal reflections, asking questions, and contemplating how the Quran's guidance relates to one's life are crucial aspects of this interaction. Responding to the Quran involves taking action based on its teachings, embodying its values, and striving to improve oneself. This active engagement deepens the connection with the Quran and transforms *tadabbur* from a theoretical exercise into a practical and spiritually fulfilling journey. Through interaction and response, one not only gains a profound understanding of the Quran but also experiences its transformative power in daily life, aligning one's actions and intentions with its divine guidance. This ongoing dialogue and response are integral to the spiritual growth and self-improvement that *tadabbur* seeks to cultivate.

⁹² Quran 95:8

⁹³ Abū Dāwūd, *k. al-ṣalāh, b. miqdār al-rukū' wa al-sujūd*, 887. This narration is graded as ḍa'if.

6. Use Imagination - Human imagination is a very powerful tool that brings the words on a page to life. Through one's imagination, a person can paint a vivid description and image of anything they are reading or listening to. Imagining what one is reciting in the Quran is an effective way of enhancing *tadabbur*. For example, when Allah ﷻ describes Paradise as gardens beneath which rivers flow, they can imagine a beautiful park with lush green grass, tall mature shady trees, flowers of diverse colors and fragrances, and a river of fresh clear sparkling water running through it. When a person reads a description of Hell, they should try and imagine the intensity of the heat and severity of the various punishments. When reading the story of the Prophet Mūsa and his encounter with the Pharaoh, they can imagine themselves standing before the most powerful tyrant of his time, inviting him towards the truth, challenging his power, and demanding he emancipate the Children of Israel. Imagination can be used with all the various stories of past prophets and nations mentioned in the Quran.

Employing one's imagination while delving into Quranic descriptions and stories can greatly enhance the process of *tadabbur*. It allows readers to immerse themselves in the narrative, visualize the scenes, and empathize with the characters. This imaginative engagement brings the Quranic stories to life, making them more relatable and impactful. It fosters a deeper emotional connection with the lessons and moral teachings embedded within these narratives. By placing oneself in the shoes of the individuals mentioned in the Quran or envisioning the vivid imagery described, one can better grasp the underlying wisdom and guidance. Imagination, when used thoughtfully and respectfully, enables readers to extract profound insights and contemplate the relevance of these stories to their own lives. It's a powerful tool that can transform the Quran from a historical account into a source of timeless wisdom and inspiration, facilitating a more meaningful and personal connection with its message.

7. Ask Reflective Questions - A very practical tool for engaging in *tadabbur* is to ask reflective questions regarding the verses and passages that are being read or recited. A reflective question is a type of inquiry that encourages deep thought, contemplation, and introspection. It prompts individuals to consider their experiences, beliefs, values, and emotions, often leading to a more profound understanding of themselves or a particular subject. Reflective questions are not typically answered with a simple yes or no; instead, they require individuals to explore their thoughts, feelings,

and perspectives. Reflective questions are often used in educational settings to promote self-awareness, critical thinking, and personal growth. They encourage individuals to pause, explore their inner thoughts, and gain deeper insights into themselves and the world around them.

Asking reflective questions is a fundamental element of the *tadabbur* process when engaging with the Quran. These questions serve as a bridge between the text and the reader's inner self, prompting thoughtful contemplation and introspection. When a person encounters Quranic verses or stories and poses reflective questions, they encourage a profound exploration of the text's relevance to their own life, beliefs, and actions. This practice allows the reader to connect deeply with the Quran's message, extracting timeless wisdom and personal guidance. Reflective questions promote a dynamic engagement with the Quran, shifting it from a passive reading to an active dialogue between the reader and the divine text. They encourage self-discovery, personal growth, and a more profound understanding of how the Quran's teachings can be applied in one's daily life, fostering a holistic approach to faith and spirituality.

For example, when a person recites the opening verse of Sūrah al-Fātiḥah, “All thanks and praise are for Allah Lord of the worlds” they can ask themselves a series of reflective questions:

1. Why am I thanking and praising Allah ﷻ?
2. What am I grateful for?
3. What does it mean to offer thanks and praise to Allah, and how does this recognition impact my perspective on life and gratitude for His blessings?
4. In what ways can I express my gratitude and praise for Allah beyond words, through my actions, intentions, and interactions with others?
5. How can I deepen my understanding of Allah's role as the Lord of the worlds and the implications of His sovereignty in my daily life and decision-making?
6. Reflecting on the concept of "worlds" in this verse, how does recognizing Allah as the Lord of all realms, both seen and unseen, affect my sense of humility and interconnectedness with creation?

7. How can I incorporate the recognition of Allah as the Lord of the worlds into my daily prayers, supplications, and moments of reflection, deepening my spiritual connection and mindfulness of His presence?

8. Draw Parallels - Drawing parallels is a powerful technique in *tadabbur* that involves finding similarities or connections between different elements, events, or situations in the Quran and in one's life. It serves as a tool to gain a deeper understanding of Quranic messages and their relevance to one's personal experiences and circumstances. Drawing parallels helps build a more personal and relatable relationship with Allah's divine words.

When individuals draw parallels during their engagement with the Quran, they essentially bridge the gap between the text and their contemporary lives. They are attempting to make scripture relevant to the practical, moral, and spiritual reality of their lives and experiences. This approach allows them to extract timeless wisdom and guidance from the Quranic stories and teachings. Drawing parallels can be particularly effective because it makes the Quran more relatable and applicable to one's own context, fostering a more profound and meaningful connection with the text.

For example, when reflecting on the story of Prophet Mūsa in the Quran, one might draw parallels to the concept of leadership and the challenges faced by leaders in today's world. By comparing the trials and decisions of Prophet Mūsa to modern leadership dilemmas, individuals can gain insights into effective leadership, the importance of patience, and the role of faith when faced with adversity. Several parallels can be drawn between the stories of the Prophets and Messengers mentioned throughout the Quran and an individual's personal life and experiences.

Another example could involve drawing parallels between the Quranic concept of "*ṣabr*" (patience) and the challenges people face in their daily lives. By reflecting on how the Quran describes the virtue of patience in various situations, individuals can find guidance and inspiration for dealing with their own trials and tribulations.

As mentioned earlier, Allah relates a number of different stories and events that occurred in the past. The purpose of these narratives is not to simply provide information or relate historical facts. Rather, the purpose is for the reader or listener to

think, reflect, and derive practical morals, lessons, reminders, and guidance. As Allah ﷻ says,

لَقَدْ كَانَ فِي قَصَصِهِمْ عِبْرَةً لِأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ ۗ مَا كَانَ حَدِيثًا يُفْتَرَىٰ وَلَكِن تَصْدِيقَ
الَّذِي بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَتَفْصِيلَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ

“There was certainly in their stories a lesson for those of understanding. Never was the Quran a narration invented, but a confirmation of what was before it and a detailed explanation of all things and guidance and mercy for a people who believe.”⁹⁴

Allah ﷻ also says,

ذَلِكَ مَثَلُ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا ۖ فَافْضُصْ الْقِصَصَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ سَاءَ مَثَلًا
الْقَوْمِ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَأَنْفُسُهُمْ كَانُوا يَظْلِمُونَ

“This is the example of the people who deny Our signs. So narrate ‘to them’ stories ‘of the past’, so perhaps they will reflect. What an evil example of those who denied Our signs! They ‘only’ wronged their own souls.”⁹⁵

In essence, drawing parallels in *tadabbur* allows individuals to transcend the boundaries of time and culture, making the Quran a living and relevant guide for navigating the complexities of modern life. It deepens their appreciation for the Quran's timeless wisdom and enhances their ability to apply its teachings to their own unique circumstances, promoting personal growth and spiritual development.

9. Principles of Tadabbur (*Qawā'id al-Tadabbur*) - The term “*qā'idah*” in Arabic generally refers to a "rule," "principle," or "guideline." In various contexts, it can have different meanings. In Arabic grammar (*nahw*), a “*qā'idah*” refers to a grammatical rule or principle that governs the structure and usage of words and sentences in the Arabic language. These rules help in understanding the proper syntax and morphology of Arabic. Within the framework of Islamic jurisprudence, a “*qā'idah*” refers to a legal maxim or principle that serves as a guideline for deriving specific rulings (*ahkām*) in Islamic law. These principles assist Islamic jurists in making legal judgments based on the Quran and Sunnah. In a broader educational context, the term

⁹⁴ Quran 12:111

⁹⁵ Quran 7:176-177

“*qā'idah*” may be used to describe a fundamental rule or basic principle that serves as a foundational concept in a particular field of study.

In each context, a “*qā'idah*” serves as a fundamental guideline or rule that helps individuals understand, apply, or derive specific conclusions within a given domain of knowledge or practice. The exact meaning and application of the term depends on the context in which it is used.

A “*qā'idah of tadabbur*” would refer to a fundamental principle or guideline for engaging in the practice of *tadabbur*, which is deep reflection and contemplation on Quranic verses. Such a principle or guideline would encompass various aspects of how to effectively approach the process of *tadabbur*, including the importance of context, the use of language and imagery, the role of emotional connection, and the practical application of insights gained through reflection. Essentially, a *qā'idah of tadabbur* would serve as a foundational concept to guide individuals in their pursuit of a deeper understanding of the Quranic message and its application in their lives.

The following are examples of guidelines (*qawā'id*) that can be used for *tadabbur*:

1. Contextual Understanding: It is extremely important to consider and understand the historical and cultural context in which a particular verse was revealed. The Quran was not revealed in a vacuum. In order to understand the message of a verse or *sūrah*, it is important to understand its context. The Prophet ﷺ spent a very difficult twelve years in Makkah. People who knew him as the most honest and trustworthy now called him a liar, a forger, a sorcerer, a magician, and even a mad man. He was seen as a direct threat to the status quo. The people who initially accepted Islam were generally weak and poor, and faced persecution at the hands of the Quraysh. After migration, the Muslims gained strength, power, and influence. The issues they dealt with in Madinah were very different than the issues they dealt with in Makkah. That is why there is a noticeable difference in themes and subject matter of revelation before and after migration. For instance, understanding and analyzing the historical context

of the verses regarding the Battle of Badr helps grasp the significance of those events and the lessons they offer.

2. **Interconnectedness:** The Quranic verses often refer to and build upon each other. Recognizing these connections is essential for comprehensive comprehension. For instance, the Quran may introduce a concept or theme in one verse and then elaborate on it in subsequent verses. The verses of *suwar* (plural of *sūrah*) are not placed in a random sequence; rather they are organized in a manner that forms a coherent whole. Several scholars, both classical and contemporary, argue that the Quran is endowed with a coherence that is not only remarkable in itself but is integral to the meaning and interpretation of the Quran.⁹⁶ The term they use to describe this remarkable and inherent coherence is *nazm*, which can be translated as structure or organization. *Tadabbur* involves tracing these connections to gain a holistic understanding.
3. **Literal and Metaphorical Interpretation:** *Tadabbur* involves discerning when a verse should be taken literally and when it may carry metaphorical or allegorical meanings. For example, verses describing the Day of Judgment may include both literal descriptions of events and metaphorical representations of their significance.
4. **Universal and Specific Application:** Some Quranic teachings have universal applicability, while others may be specific to certain situations or individuals. Understanding when a verse has broader significance and when it is context-specific is important for correct interpretation. For instance, the command to offer prayer (*ṣalāh*) is a universal principle, while specific rulings for certain historical events may not be applicable today.
5. **Spiritual and Moral Lessons:** *Tadabbur* involves extracting spiritual and moral lessons from the Quranic verses. For example, the story of Yūsuf offers moral lessons on patience, resilience, forbearance, strength, envy, jealousy, and forgiveness.
6. **Prayer and Application:** *Tadabbur* isn't merely an intellectual exercise; it should lead to personal reflection and application in one's life. For example,

⁹⁶ Muntasir Mir, *Coherence in the Quran* (Indianapolis, American Trust Publication, 1986), p.3

after reflecting on verses about charity, a believer might feel compelled to increase their acts of charity and kindness.

7. Consistency and Coherence: The Quran is known for its internal consistency and coherence. *Tadabbur* involves recognizing this coherence and how different verses complement and reinforce one another. For instance, the Quran's consistent message of monotheism and the oneness of Allah.

These principles of *tadabbur* guide believers in understanding the Quran more deeply and applying its teachings in a meaningful and balanced way, fostering spiritual growth and moral development.

‘Abd al-Raḥmān Ḥasan Ḥabannakah al-Maydānī authored a work entitled *Qawā‘id al-Tadabbur al-Amthal lī Kitāb Allah ‘Azza wa Jall* (*The Principles of Optimal Reflection on the Books of Allah the Almighty the Majestic*) where he compiles and explains forty principles for engaging in reflection on the Quran. One principle he developed is to identify the unifying theme or subject of a sūrah and reflect on how each verse or passage of the sūrah connects to it. He writes, “The one who contemplates the Book of Allah must keep in mind, among the goals of his research and reflection, to uncover and discover the main topic or theme around which the sūrah revolves. This requires him to carefully and deeply examine the entire sūrah, and trace the connections between its verses and the meanings of its sentences with the main topic, and the various elements that branch out from it, and those ideas that may be partially related to it. This research has many benefits for those qualified for this effort.”⁹⁷ The author describes and compares each chapter of the Quran to a mature tree with roots, a trunk, branches, leaves, and fruit. All of the various parts of the tree - the trunk, branches, leaves, and fruit - come from the roots. Similarly, each sūrah has a main theme or topic and all of the verses and their meanings are connected to it in some way, shape, or form.

⁹⁷ al-Maydānī, *Qawā‘id al-Tadabbur al-Amthal lī Kitāb Allah ‘Azza wa Jall*, 27

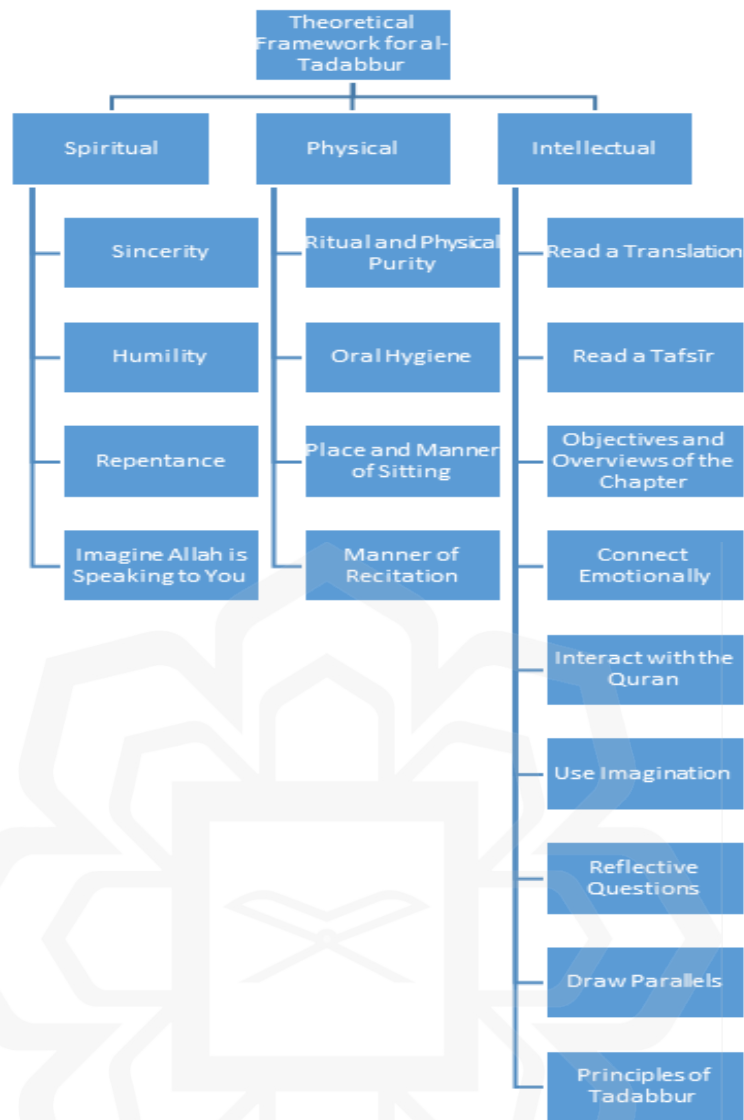


Figure 6.1. Summary of Theoretical Framework as a Chart

6.8 CONCLUSION

This thesis has undertaken an in-depth exploration of the concept of *tadabbur* within both classical and contemporary *tafsīr* literature. By developing a comprehensive framework for engaging deeply with the Quran's meanings and messages, the research distinguishes between *tafsīr* and *tadabbur*, extracts methodologies from the Prophet ﷺ, his Companions, and early Islamic scholars, and formulates a practical approach that can be employed by the average Muslim for Quranic reflection.

6.8.1 Fulfillment of Research Objectives and Questions

The thesis thoroughly explores the meaning and evolution of *al-tadabbur* as defined by classical and contemporary exegetes. The research reveals that while the core concept of *tadabbur* as deep reflection has remained consistent, its applications and interpretations have evolved to address contemporary contexts and challenges. This exploration aligns with the first research objective and answers the corresponding research question regarding the definition and understanding of *al-tadabbur* over time.

The study identifies various methods used by Allah ﷻ in the Quran to encourage *tadabbur*. These include direct invitations to reflect, addressing people of understanding, providing examples and parables, and concluding verses with calls for deep reflection. This detailed analysis fulfills the second research objective and addresses the second research question concerning the methods and their significance.

The research highlights the significance of *tadabbur* in renewing faith, responding to Allah's invitation, recognizing divine commands, practical application, and personal reformation. By differentiating between *tafsīr* (exegesis) and *tadabbur* (reflective contemplation), the study clarifies the unique and complementary roles they play in Quranic engagement. This analysis meets the third research objective and answers the third research question.

The thesis formulates clear guidelines, principles, qualifications, and a structured methodology required for engaging in *tadabbur*. It draws from the practices of the Prophet ﷺ, his Companions, and early scholars, thus providing a robust framework grounded in Islamic tradition. This framework fulfills the fourth research objective and answers the fourth research question.

The research demonstrates practical applications of *tadabbur*, showing how it can help the average Muslim connect with the Quran intellectually, spiritually, and emotionally. By providing practical steps and examples, the study ensures that the concept of *tadabbur* is accessible and beneficial for all Muslims, thus fulfilling the fifth research objective and answering the fifth research question.

6.8.2 Results and Recommendations

The findings of this thesis underscore the transformative potential of *tadabbur* in enhancing one's connection with the Quran. The study reveals that engaging in *tadabbur* leads to a deeper understanding of divine messages, promotes intellectual and spiritual growth, and encourages practical implementation of Quranic teachings. The identification of various Quranic methods to encourage reflection highlights the divine wisdom in facilitating *tadabbur* and emphasizes its importance in a Muslim's spiritual journey. The study formulated a practical and useful definition of *tadabbur* based on the writings and views of classical and contemporary exegetes.

An extensive review of the Quranic text revealed multiple styles and methods used to invite believers to engage in *tadabbur*. These included direct invitations to reflect on the Quran's general message, addressing people of intelligence and understanding, and the use of parables and narratives to stimulate deep thought and reflection. This analysis underscored the Quran's emphasis on intellectual and spiritual engagement as a means of attaining deeper understanding and connection with the divine message.

The study uncovered various methodologies employed by the Prophet ﷺ, His Companions, and early Muslims in engaging with the Quran. Key practices included *tartīl* (slow and distinct recitation), *tarassul* (intentional and deliberate recitation), and connecting verses to personal and communal experiences. The Companions, known for their profound engagement with the Quran, demonstrated practices such as daily recitation, repeating verses for deeper reflection, and viewing the Quran as direct communication from Allah ﷻ.

A structured methodology for engaging in *tadabbur* was developed, incorporating spiritual, physical, and intellectual preparations. This framework aims to make the practice accessible and practical for the average Muslim, enhancing both intellectual and spiritual engagement with the Quran. The proposed framework bridges the gap between traditional exegesis and contemporary needs, facilitating a deeper connection with the Quran for average Muslims.

Based on these findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Educational Programs and Resources: Developing educational programs and resources that promote the practice of *tadabbur* among Muslims is crucial. These programs should incorporate the comprehensive framework developed in this thesis, emphasizing the intellectual, emotional, and spiritual aspects of *tadabbur*.
2. Integration into Quranic Studies Curricula: Integrating the *tadabbur* framework into Quranic studies curricula at various educational levels can encourage deep reflection and understanding of the Quran. This integration can help bridge the gap between traditional exegesis and contemporary needs, facilitating a holistic approach to Quranic engagement.
3. Further Scholarly Research: Continued scholarly research is essential to refine and expand the *tadabbur* framework. This research should aim to make the framework more accessible and practical for diverse Muslim communities, addressing specific needs and contexts.

6.8.3 Expected Contributions

The contributions of this thesis to the field of Quranic studies are multifaceted. By providing a robust and accessible framework for I, the research bridges the gap between traditional exegesis and contemporary needs. The study offers practical tools and methodologies that can enhance Muslims' intellectual and spiritual engagement with the Quran, promoting a holistic understanding of its teachings.

Furthermore, the thesis contributes to the broader discourse on Quranic reflection and interpretation, encouraging a deeper connection with the Quran for average Muslims. The practical applications of *tadabbur* demonstrated in this research highlight its potential to transform personal and communal engagement with the Quran, fostering a more profound and meaningful connection with the divine message.

In conclusion, this thesis has successfully fulfilled its research objectives and answered the research questions, providing a comprehensive and practical framework for engaging in *tadabbur*. The study's findings and recommendations hold significant potential for enhancing Quranic studies and promoting a deeper, more reflective engagement with the Quran among Muslims worldwide.

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