

ALI 611A:Tafakkur in the Quran, Session 1

ACADEMY FOR LEARNING ISLAM

Sh. Murtaza Bachoo



Outline

- Introduction to Terminology
- Importance of Tafakkur
- What to Reflect Upon
- Practical Guidance on Tafakkur
- Tafakkur and Meditation

Terminology

- The word tafakkur is derived from the three letter fa-ka-ra
- Tafakkur is ta'ammul, meaning to reflect, think, contemplate.
- Some Muslim scholars and philosophers have defined tafakkur as the *'organizing what we know in order to understand what we do not know.'*

Terminology

- Some Muslim philosophers have defined tafakkur in the following manner:

إِعْلَمُ أَنَّ التَّفَكُّرَ تَلَمُّسُ البَصِيرَةِ لِإِسْتِدْرَاكِ البُغْيَةِ

Know that contemplation is the inquisitive groping of the inner vision for attaining the coveted end.

(Khwaja in Manazil al-Sa'ireen)

The Importance of Tafakkur

- A condition for living a human life.

إِنَّ شَرَّ الدَّوَابِّ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الصَّمُّ الْبُكْمُ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ

Indeed the worst of beasts in Allah's sight are the deaf and the dumb who do not apply reason. (8:22)

يا هشام ان لكل شيءٍ دليلاً و دليل العقل التفكير

O Hisham, everything has a proof, and the proof of intellect is contemplation. Imam al-Kazim (a)

Importance of Tafakkur

- Contemplation as Worship

Indeed in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of night and day, there are signs for those who possess intellects.

*Those who remember Allah standing, sitting, and lying on their sides, and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth [and say] , "Our Lord, You have not created this in vain! Immaculate are You! Save us from the punishment of the Fire."
(3:190-191)*

Importance of Tafakkur

- Traditions on the importance of tafakkur.

Reflecting for a short period of time is better than standing in prayer the entire night.

Worship is not excessive prayer and fasting. Worship is reflecting upon the affairs of Allah (S).

- Reflection is a means for understanding the truth.
- Reflection is a means for awakening the heart.

Topics of Reflection

- There are three primary areas of tafakkur:
 1. Essence of Tawhid
 2. The creation of Allah (S)
 3. The reality of actions and states
- There are other topics of tafakkur which will be mentioned.

The Essence of Tawhid

- Reflection upon Allah (S) is of two types:
 - Reflection upon the essence of Allah (S).
 - Reflection upon the existence and attributes of Allah (S).
- The first type is discouraged or forbidden, whilst the second type is encouraged with a teacher or guide.

The Creation of Allah

أَو لَمْ يَتَفَكَّرُوا فِي أَنفُسِهِمْ مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَأَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى

Have they not reflected in their own souls? Allah did not create the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them except with reason and for a specified term. (30:8)

- Reflect without external pressures or influences.
- There is a purpose in creation.
- This purpose is visible in all parts of creation.

Examples of Reflection

As for the fly, contemplate upon it. Despite the smallness of its size, the Lord of the universe has created it with the form of an elephant, that is the largest of animals. He has made tusks (antenna) like the tusks of an elephant. All the other body parts that are found in an elephant, He has also created in a fly, in addition to two wings and two horns.

- Outer and inner faculties, wings to acquire its sustenance, taught it how to acquire food, escape from enemies, sensitive hearing, ability to clean its eyes...

Examples of Reflection

- Mi'raj al-Sa'adah by Mulla Ahmad Naraqī
- Forty Hadith by Imam Khumayni.
 - Hadith 12 on Contemplation.
- Spiritual Journey of the Mystics by Ayatullah Jawad Maliki Tabrizi.
 - How to Think and Deliberate over the Qur'an

Questions on Contemplation

- What was Mulla Ahmad Naraqı looking for in each point of contemplation?
- How do you think he was able to draw so many points from a small example?
- How did he relate it to Allah (S)?