

The Concept of "Tadabbur" (Reflection) in the Qur'an and Its Role in Contemporary Islamic Thought

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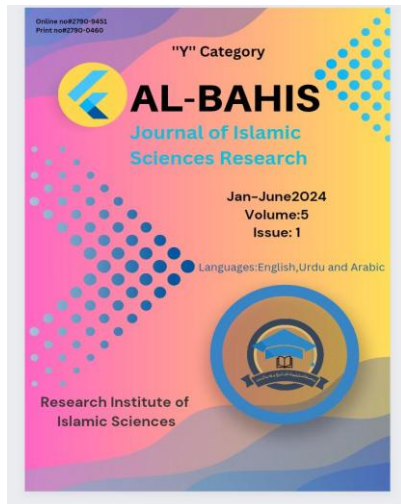
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The Concept of "Tadabbur" (Reflection) in the Qur'an and Its Role in Contemporary Islamic Thought

Abstract:

The study focuses on the concept of tadabbur, or serious reflection on the verses of the Quran, as it is conceived in the Quran and in modern Islamic thought. The research identifies tadabbur as a primary intellectual and spiritual requirement through linguistic, thematic and critical analysis of primary Islamic texts, which is independent of tafakkur (reflection on creation) and tadhakkur (remembrance). It is a goal of revelation set as a foundation, which is tadabbur, a symptom of a healthy heart, and evidence of a divine origin (Surat Sad 38:29; Surat Muhammad 47:24; Surat al-Nisa' 4:82). The study links both historical and modern causes of its fall, such as education failure, language barrier, Internet distraction, and ideological fanaticism, and shows how the resulting negligence has given way to intellectual stagnation, extremism, spiritual sterility and susceptibility to alien ideologies. It claims that tadabbur is a necessary intellectual practice that can be used to revive (tajdid) to combat extremism by conducting comprehensive reading, addressing modernity, restoring Islamic ethics and spirituality and creating just societies. An effective model of revival is suggested on the individual, educational, and community levels with the focus on reflective recitation, curriculum reform, and institutional change.

Keywords:

Tadabbur, Qur'anic Reflection, Contemporary Islamic Thought, Islamic Revival, Extremism

1: Introduction

1.1 Background and Context

The Quran has a unique place in the life of a Muslim. It is termed in its own verses as guidance to mankind (hudan li'l-nas), definite evidences (bayyinat), and the criterion (al-furqan) of right and wrong. Allah Almighty states:

شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ وَبَيِّنَاتٍ مِّنَ الْهُدَىٰ وَالْفُرْقَانِ

The month of Ramadan is the month in which was revealed the Quran, a guidance to man and clear evidences of the guidance and the criterion. ¹

The text has been the source of Islamic theology, law, ethics and civilization since more than fourteen centuries. However, amid such a rich heritage, modern Muslim societies are confronted with some deep-seated issues that require serious consideration. This has been accompanied by an intellectual stagnation (jumud fikri) which has made many

¹ Al-Qur'an 2:185

Muslim societies find it difficult to generate original scholarship that would be able to address the burning issues of modernity.²

In politics, the post-colonial Muslim world has been characterised by division, turmoil and dictatorial rule. The emergence of extremist ideologies, usually based on literalist interpretations of religious books and alienated to holistic theological interpretations has led to untold misery, socially. On the spiritual level, as far as rituals are being widely practiced, there is a tangible feeling of emptiness; faith is not alive anymore, and it is more about cultural belonging than about relationship with the Divine.³

In this respect, an important paradox appears: as the practice of recitation of the Quran (tilawah) is still popular and highly regarded, the culture of in-depth, more individual reflection on the meaning of this text, the culture of tadabbur, is completely overlooked. Another common way to understand the Quran is as the source of ritual blessing (barakah), verses read in a gorgeous but non-meditative manner, injunctions obeyed but not internalized, narratives listened to and not meditated upon. Such loss to the revealed text and the existential reality of Muslims is a crisis of gigantic dimensions in that once the Divine Word is no longer shown the way of the believer, the latter is bound to grope in the shadows of existence.

1.2 Problem Statement

The main issue that is the focus of this research is the apparent disparity between Quran as a guide that is to be read and put into practice and its modern state as a guide used by most Muslims as a source of ritual blessing. This academic gap is not the only one, but it has actual implications. People fail to recognize the transformative power of the text when tadabbur the conscious, mindful reflection upon the verses of the Quran in order to derive their meanings and implications is not present. It becomes as the modern scholars call it, a silent Qur'an instead of a speaking one.⁴

This oversight is a contributing factor to the number of challenges listed above. Because extremist groups have not been indoctrinated in the whole-text approach of engagement that tadabbur involves, they can pluck verses out of context in precisely this way. Allah Almighty cautions against such inconsiderate and shallow reading:

أَفْتُمُونَنَّا بِبَعْضِ الْكِتَابِ وَتَكْفُرُونَ بِبَعْضٍ

So do you believe a part of the Scripture and not another?⁵

It is to an intellectual stagnation within Muslim societies that one can trace, in large part, a diminution in the culture of the critical but reverential questioning that tadabbur encourages. And the spiritual barrenness of most is a result of failing to bring Quran to bear upon their hearts, to speak to their fears, and to form their personalities internally. Allah refers to the believers as those whose hearts are touched by the Quran:

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَجِلَّتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَإِذَا تُلِيَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُهُ زَلَّوْنَهُمْ إِيْمَانًا

² Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Kayfa Nata'āmal ma'a al-Qur'ān* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 1995), 15–22; translated as *How to Deal with the Qur'an*, trans. Mahbubur Rahman (Cairo: Dar al-Shorouk, 2001) 23–31

³ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Heart of Islam: Enduring Values for Humanity* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2002) 235–58

⁴ Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, *The Silent Qur'an and the Speaking Qur'an: Scriptural Sources of Islam between History and Fervor* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 1–15.

⁵ Al-Qur'ān 2:85

The believers are those only who, at the mentioning of Allah their hearts are feared, and their hearts are raised by the recitation of His verses to them.⁶

1.3 Research Questions

Against this backdrop, the following questions are being pursued as part of this research:

What does tadabbur mean in the Quran and in the Prophet? What is its meaning and meaning? What is its language and conceptual difference to similar terms tafakkur (contemplation) and tadhakkur (remembrance/admonition)?

Which are the Quranic verses and the traditions of the Prophet which form the basis of tadabbur as a key obligation and virtue in Islam?

What is the role of tadabbur as a mode of producing true faith (iman), correct knowledge (ilm) and good action (amal Salih)?

How precisely can the revival of tadabbur deal with such critical issues of modernness in Islamic philosophy as extremism, intellectual lethargy, and spiritual decadence?

What are the practical processes and structures that can be suggested to recapture the culture of tadabbur in the current times, both at the individual, educational levels.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This is a timely and necessary research. It is based on the belief that the problems that the Muslim ummah is facing today cannot be effectively solved by political solutions and shallow reforms. What must be done is basic reorientation to the Divine Word in terms of going back to the Quran as a text to recite but as a living source to be contemplated over, grasped, and internalized.⁷

The reflection of this kind is commanded by Allah Himself, and he maintains it as the mark of those people who have a sound intellect:

كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ مُبَارَكٌ لِيَدَّبَّرُوا آيَاتِهِ وَلِيَتَذَكَّرَ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

"It is a blessed Book and we have revealed it to you, that they might contemplate deeply its verses, and that those of insight should be reminded of it."⁸

The proposed study will help advance the larger project of Islamic revival (tajdid) in that it offers a thorough examination of the concept of tadabbur with reference to the original foundations of Islam, and the ways it can be applied to present-day intellectual and spiritual crisis. It attempts to show that tadabbur is not a marginal spiritual practice but a fundamental intellectual practice- one that contains the secret of rediscovering the Quranic power of transformation in the contemporary world.

Additionally, the studies are important regarding its possible practical implementation. It provides practical measures toward bridging the text and life divide which is at the very core of much of the problems of the modern era by presenting a structure of how tadabbur could be brought back to life in educational programs, community programs and practice.

1.5 Scope and Methodology

This paper is limited in its area of study to a discussion of the two main books of Islam: the Quran and the original Hadith (Prophet sayings). Classical texts of Quranic

⁶ Al-Qur'ān 8:2

⁷ Sayyid Qutb, *Khaṣā'is al-Taṣawwur al-Islāmī* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 1980) 45–68

⁸ Al-Qur'ān 38:29

commentary (tafsir) and Quran sciences (ulum al-Qur'an) are referred to to know how past generations of thinkers conceptualized the concept of tadabbur and what it entails. Also, the research has an interaction with the modern academic debate on Islamic revival, intellectual reform, and the hermeneutics of the Quran.

The type of methodology is qualitative, analytical and deductive. It goes through the following stages:

Linguistic Analysis: The paper looks at the root word of the word tadabbur (d-b-r) and the meaning of this word within the classical Arabic dictionaries. This linguistic basis is what is needed to comprehend the entire connotation of this word when it is seen in the Quran and the Hadith.

Thematic Analysis: All the verses in the Quran which include the root d-b-r in the forms of reflection or pondering are gathered and scrutinized. On the same note, the pertinent Hadith are analysed to learn the Prophetic emphasis of reflective involvement with the Quran.

Comparative Analysis: The halaqa of tadabbur is differentiated with the other similar concepts like tafakkur and tadhakkur in order to explain the unique meaning and purpose of this concept.

Critical Analysis: The principles of tadabbur based on the primary sources are then analyzed in relation to the issues of the modern intellectual life showing their importance and descriptive strength.

1.6 Structure of the Article

It is based on this introduction that this article is divided into six major sections. Part two gives a conceptual framework, which gives lexical and semantic analysis of tadabbur and determines its basics within the Quran and the Hadith. Section three addresses the reasons and effects of the decline of tadabbur in the Muslim societies in the past and in modern times. The main part of the research, section four, discusses the role of tadabbur in overcoming the modern intellectual dilemmas saying that it should be revived to counter any extremism, to create meaningful dialogue with the modernity, and to restore the ethical and spiritualism back to Islam. In part five, the author suggests effective modes of resuscitating tadabbur on personal, educational, and institutional levels. The conclusion is a recap of the results and gives recommendations about future research and action.

2: Conceptual Framework: The definition of Tadabbur

After the introduction has laid down the current situation and the necessity of rejuvenating the practice of being reflective in reading the Quran, the analysis of the concept of tadabbur as such is conducted systematically in this section. To have a correct interpretation of any term in the Quran the linguistic origin of a term, how it is used in the Quran, how it is used in the Prophet traditions and how it compares to the related concepts all require analysis. This kind of analysis is needed since a lot of the misunderstanding and disregard of tadabbur are a result of poor interpretations of what the term in question implies. This part of the argument asserts that tadabbur does not mean just recitation, it is not and should not be synonymous with intellectual speculation but is an exclusive, trained and spiritually endowed form of dealing with the Quranic text that is central to Islamic revelation.

2.1 The lexical and semantic analysis will be performed using

Tadabbur is a word based on the trilateral root of the Arabic language (dal-ba-ra) (d-b-r). In the classical Arabic dictionaries, this root includes a group of interdependent meanings, which revolve around the concept of pursuing something to the end, regarding its implications, and analyzing its final result. The famous lexicographer, Ibn Faris (d. 395 AH/1004 CE), writes in one of his greatest books, *Mu'jam Maqayis al-Lughah*, that the root d-b-r refers to the termination (akhirah) of a thing, and to the fact that something follows something else.⁹

He goes further to state that al-dubur means the back or the rear of something or that which comes after and follows.¹⁰

In his masterpiece, the *Mufradat Alfaz al-Qur'an*, al-Raghib al-Isfahani (d. 502 AH/1108 CE) gives a more in-depth analysis. He says, al-dubur is the reverse of al-qubul (the front), al-dabir is that which comes after what comes before it and al-tadabbur is the reflection of consequences of things.¹¹

This is an important lexical base. The very term tadabbur suggests the movement in the form of a following of a thing to its end. It means obeying the verses when applied to the Quran, passing through one to another, reflecting on the links between the verses, and finally getting to the meaning and purpose that Allah has intended in them. This is not a look of passivity but an active search of the goal of the Godly conversation.

The verbal form tadabbur adheres to tafapl pattern (tafaWul), which in Arabic morphology usually implies intentionality, exertion and persistence to an action (12).¹² Accordingly, tadabbur is not some accidental or incidental contemplation, but a deliberate, intended, and continued contemplation.

2.2 Difference between this concept and other similar concepts

In order to appreciate the distinct meaning of tadabbur, it has to be differentiated with the rest of the Quranic words that are used interchangeably but with a different connotation. The three terms that are especially relevant are tafakkur, tadhakkur and nazar.

The root fa-kaf-ra (f-k-r) is a source of tafakkur (tafakuWr) meaning the process of thinking, reflecting and applying intellect to come to a point of understanding. According to al-Raghib al-Isfahani, tafakkur refers to the heart involvement in intelligible meanings in the quest to rationally comprehend the intended goal(13).¹³ Although both tadabbur and tafakkur are similar in that they are both mental activities, there is a difference in the scope and object. Tafakkur is a wider word that includes meditation about everything that has been created, all the heavens, all the earth, self and the evidences of Allah in the universe. Quran often invites to tafakkur the believers in the natural world:

⁹ Aḥmad ibn Fāris, *Mu'jam Maqāyīs al-Lughah*, ed. 'Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr, 1979) 2:319

¹⁰ Ibn Fāris, *Maqāyīs*, 2:319

¹¹ Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *Mufradāt Alfāz al-Qur'ān*, ed. Ṣafwān 'Adnān Dāwūdī (Damascus: Dār al-Qalam, 2002) 307

¹² William Wright, *A Grammar of the Arabic Language*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967) 1:33–34

¹³ Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *Mufradāt* 612

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ لآيَاتٍ لِّأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ

As it is, in the invention of heavens and earth and in the passing and passing of night and day, is a sign of those of understanding.¹⁴

Tadabbur on the other hand is particularly and practically applied to the revealed text itself in the Quran. It is meditation to the Quran, on its verses, to understand their related meanings as well as to derive guidance.¹⁵ In this regard, tafakkur may be termed as the reflection on the signs of Allah in creation whereas tadabbur is the reflection on the signs of Allah in revelation.

The origin of tadhakkur (tadhakuWr) is the dhal-kaf-ra (dh-k-r) root which means remembrance, recollection and taking heed. Al-Raghib states that the term tadhakkur is the reminding after negligence of something.¹⁶ Where tadabbur is the active, analytic, way of reflecting on the meaning of a verse, tadhakkur is the way the lesson is received by the heart of a person and changed into action. These two are closely tied together. They are linked even in the Quran:

كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ مُبَارَكٌ لِّيَدَّبَّرُوا آيَاتِهِ وَلِيَتَذَكَّرَ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

"A blessed Book, which We have revelation to you, that they might ponder (li-yaddabbaru) of its verses, and that they of understanding would be recalled (li-yatadhakkara)."¹⁷

In this case, tadabbur is introduced as the medium, and tadhakkur as what one wants to achieve. To get reminded, pay attention, and take action, one cogitates profoundly. Tadhakkur must be tadabbur; tadabbur must be tadhakkur.

2.3 Quranic Bases of Tadabbur.

Quran does not suggest tadabbur only; it orders, glorifies those who practice it, and threatens those who do not. A review of the verses that use the root d-b-r directly and refer to the concept of reflection shows the key significance of the given concept.

Surat Sad (38:29): The Mandate Foundation.

The Quranic verse in Surat Sad, is the basis of the statement on tadabbur in the Quran:

كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ مُبَارَكٌ لِّيَدَّبَّرُوا آيَاتِهِ وَلِيَتَذَكَّرَ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

The Book: This is a blessed Book which we have revealed to you, that they might contemplate deeply the verses in it, and that those of understanding would be remembered.¹⁸

In this verse, there are some critical aspects. First, Quran is referred to as mubarak (blessed) a set of great goodness, advantage, and spiritual food. Second, the reason, why it is revealed, is also clearly mentioned: li-yaddabbaru ayatih (that they may meditate upon its verses). In his famous tafsir, al-Qurtubi (d. 671 AH/1272 CE) writes a commentary on this verse, saying that it refers to the sake of pondering over its verses and knowing their meanings, that is the very reason why it is revealed in the first place

¹⁴ Al-Qur'an 3:190

¹⁵ Ismā'īl al-Fārūqī, *Al-Tawhīd: Its Implications for Thought and Life* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1982) 45–48

¹⁶ Al-Rāghib al-Isfahānī, *Mufradāt* 303

¹⁷ Al-Qur'an 38:29

¹⁸ Al-Qur'an 38:29

.¹⁹ The verse ends with the association of tadabbur with tadhakkur--of sound intellect (ulu al-albab) are they the ones who will be brought to mind in such a reflective process. According to Al-Tabari (d. 310 AH/923 CE), those of understanding would be reminded, means that those of intellect would admonish.²⁰ Consequently, tadabbur is not the secondary or optional act, but it is the object of the revelation of the Quran, according to the same first commentators.

Surat Muhammad 47: 24: A Blame against Forgetfulness.

In Surat Muhammad Allah asks a piercing question which is an utter reproach against people who reject reflection:

أَفَلَا يَتَذَكَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ أَمْ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبٍ أَقْفَالُهَا

And then, do they not meditate over the Quran, or are there locks on their hearts? .²¹

This verse gives a direct relationship between tadabbur and state of the heart. The lack of tadabbur is not the lack of some intellectual power; it is the symptomatology of one spiritual disease--hearts that are sealed and locked and made incapable of guidance. According to Ibn Kathir (d. 774 AH/1373 CE), this is a threat and a warning to those who abandoned the practice of reflecting on the Quran and interpretation of the Quran.²² The verse rhetorical structure am (or) creates a contrast between two extremes: a person has to practice tadabbur or his heart is closed. There is no middle ground. One of the modern exegetes, al-Sa'di (d. 1376 AH/1956 CE) expounds that one who fails to reflect intensively on the Quran has ignored it and turned his back to it, and this is to show that his heart is closed to its goodness.²³

Tadabbur as a Sign of Divine Origin Surat al-Nisa' (4:82): Tadabbur.

Surat al-Nisa, tadabbur is a tafsir of the Quran found in the form of an intellectual argument that the Quran has a divine origin:

أَفَلَا يَتَذَكَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ وَلَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ غَيْرِ (ال). لَوَجَدُوا فِيهِ اخْتِلَافًا كَثِيرًا

So do they not meditate on the Qur'an? Had it been anything but Allah they should have found in it much contradiction.²⁴

This verse brings out a special aspect of tadabbur, it is not merely a spiritual practice, but also an epistemological instrument. By long, comprehensive meditation on the Quran it is possible to find that there is internal consistency of the Quran, that there is its coherence, that it is not contradictory qualities which bear witness to its divine authorship. In his great work, Mafatih al-Ghayb, al-Razi (d. 606 AH/1210 CE), writes that actually, tadabbur results in the knowledge that this Book is of Allah.²⁵

¹⁹ Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Anṣārī al-Qurṭubī, Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān, ed. 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abd al-Muḥsin al-Turkī (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 2006) 15:220

²⁰ Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, Jāmi' al-Bayān fī Ta'wīl al-Qur'ān, ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1954) 20:79

²¹ Al-Qur'ān 47:24

²² Ismā'īl ibn 'Umar ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm, ed. Sāmī ibn Muḥammad al-Salāmah (Riyadh: Dār Ṭaybah, 1999) 7:352

²³ 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Nāṣir al-Sa'dī, Taysīr al-Karīm al-Raḥmān fī Tafsīr Kalām al-Mannān (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 2000) 788

²⁴ Al-Qur'ān 4:82

²⁵ Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, Mafāṭīḥ al-Ghayb (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1420 AH) 10:187

This verse also implies a warning against shallow interpretation which does not see the unity and coherence of the Quranic message. This perfect harmony of the text is only seen when one engages in tadabbur the continuous and compound consideration of the text in its entirety.

Surat al-Mu minun (23: 68): An Enjoinment to Reflection.

The other verse, which uses the root d-b-r with reference to reflection, appears in Surat al-Mu minun:

أَفَلَمْ يَلْتَمِزُوا الْقَوْلَ أَمْ جَاءَهُمْ مِمَّا لَمْ يَأْتِ آبَاءَهُمُ الْأَوَّلِينَ

And then have not they pondered seriously upon the Word or have there not come to them that which had not come to their forefathers?²⁶

In this case tadabbur is made in the direction of al-qawl (the Word) that is a reference to the Quran. The verse confronts those who do not believe the message to do some serious reflection on it. Al-Baydawi (d. 685 AH/1286 CE) notes that the verse poses the question of whether they have not thought deeply about the Quran with the view to knowing that it is the word of Allah.²⁷

2.4. Prophetic Traditions on Reflection

The role of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) as the Qur'an made flesh, has given us the further understanding of the need to wrestle with the text, whilst also giving us the value of the act of reading and the value of understanding what you read.○

One of the most knowledgeable Companions, 'Abd Allāh ibn Mas'ūd (رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ) said that the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) stated, "Recite the Qur'an as long as your hearts are in aqd (agreement) upon it. But if you are in contention, then rise (from the Qur'an)." (28)²⁸ Most commentators of this hadith state that 'aqd' (agreement) means understanding and the state of conscious and spiritual presence. It should be noted that the act of recitation should not merely be an act of the tongue, as it will lose its' transformational potential.²⁹

Finally, the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) made a clear differentiation between the act of recitation and that of recitation with contemplation and understanding.

One Hadith narrated by "A'ishah (رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا) states that the Prophet ﷺ said: "One who is proficient in the recitation of the Qur'an is with the noble, obedient, and (angel) scribes, and (the) one who recites the Qur'an, stutters in it, and finds it difficult, is (rewarded) twice." ³⁰ Most scholars of hadith agree that when referring to "two rewards" he meant that it is also suitable for one who struggles to understand the Qur'an and (the) reflection (upon it) as al-Asqalani (d. 852 AH/1449 CE) explains, "the reward may be for the effort and the hardship of (the) memorization and (the) understanding" .³¹

²⁶ Al-Qur'ān 23:68

²⁷ Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Bayḍāwī, *Anwār al-Tanzīl wa-Asrār al-Ta'wīl*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Mar'ashlī (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1998) 4:274

²⁸ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, no. 5061; Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, no. 2667

²⁹ Aḥmad ibn 'Alī ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Fath al-Bārī bi-Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah, 1379 AH) 9:78

³⁰ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, no. 4937; Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, no. 798

³¹ Ibn Ḥajar, *Fath al-Bārī*, 9:85

Many reports from both the Companions and the Successors (tābi'ūn) show their great deal of engagement with tadabbur. 'Abd Allāh ibn Mas'ūd said: "The Qur'an is the banquet of Allah, so learn from His banquet as (much) as you are able."³² The example of a banquet shows that the Qur'an is meant to be eaten, i.e., internalized and not just recited.

Some reports state that Mujāhid (d. 104 AH/722 CE), a prominent figure in tafsīr, stated: "They (the Companions) used to recite the Qur'an, and reflect on the verses, and were silent at the verses of Paradise and the verses of the Fire"³³ This shows that tadabbur is not a simple intellectual activity that is done, but involves the whole being and an active emotional and spiritual engagement that touched the hearts of the early Muslims.

2.5 The Objectives of Tadabbur

Since the linguistic meaning and Quranic premises of tadabbur have been established, there is need to explain its end goals. The purpose of Tadabbur is not itself, but some of the greater ends that are contained in the core of the Islamic message.

To Achieve Guidance (Huda): Quran refers to itself as a hudan li'l-nas-guidance to mankind.³⁴ Nevertheless, the guidance is not necessarily transferred through exposure to the text. It entails contemplative involvement. Allah states:

إِنَّ هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ يَهْدِي لِلَّتِي هِيَ أَفْضَلُ

In fact, this Quran leads to that which is most upright.³⁵

The guidance here discussed is actualized by tadabbur. This point is underlined by Al-Ghazali (d. 505 AH/1111 CE), who says that the Quran is medicine and only medicine is good when one knows how to apply it.³⁶

Increase Faith (Iman): The Quran defines the believers of the increasing faith when the verses of Allah are read to them, increase their faith.³⁷ The result of this tadabbur is this growth in faith. When one contemplates the meanings of the verses, the promises of Allah, His threats, His wonderful names, his signs in the world, the confidence of the heart is tightened and faith increases. According to Al-Qurtubi, faith can only grow by one considering the Quran and its interpretation.³⁸

To Guide to Righteous deed (Amal Salih): The final goal of tadabbur is to change. Quran was a revelation to be put into practice rather than to be recited. Those that possess the scripture, but not act on it, are criticized by Allah:

مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ حُمِّلُوا التَّوْرَةَ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَحْمِلُوهَا كَمَثَلِ الْجَمَارِ يَحْمِلُونَ أَسْفَارًا

³² Sulaymān ibn Aḥmad al-Ṭabarānī, Al-Mu'jam al-Kabīr, ed. Ḥamdī ibn 'Abd al-Majīd al-Salafī (Cairo: Maktabat Ibn Taymiyyah, 1983), 9:152; Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī classifies it as authentic in Silsilat al-Aḥādīth al-Ṣaḥīḥah (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Ma'ārif, 1995), no. 330

³³ Al-Qurtubī, Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān, 1:36

³⁴ Al-Qur'ān 2:185

³⁵ Al-Qur'ān 17:9

³⁶ Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah, n.d.) 1:273

³⁷ Al-Qur'ān 8:2

³⁸ Al-Qurtubī, Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān,7:276

An illustration of one who was trusted with the Torah but failed to pick it up (practically) is that of a donkey with volumes.³⁹

Tadabbur fills the gap between action and knowledge. A verse, really contemplated, makes an impression on the heart, and the impression is action. This is what Ibn al-Qayyim (d. 751 AH/1350 CE) puts it better saying that the reflection on a verse leads to finding it is pointing to the good and is ordering it, and it is pointing to evil and is forbidding it.⁴⁰

3: The Fall of Tadabbur: Reasons and Results

After defining the conceptual background of tadabbur in the last section, this section will focus on a critical analysis of tadabbur and its downfall within the Muslim societies. Early Muslims were marked by an intense interest in Quran- an interest that influenced people, civilization, and also generated great intellectual heritage. However, throughout the centuries, as well as in the contemporary world, the tradition of intensive, meditative study of the divine text has decreased. To the serious attempt at revival, it would be necessary to know the causes of this decline, because it is impossible to deal with a problem without first diagnosing its causes. The first part of this section suggests that the oversight of tadabbur has not been a mere accident but a consequence of historical processes which can be traced and educational failures, language obstacles and ideological trends of today. In addition, this oversight has also had devastating effects of intellectual stagnation, the emergence of extremist ideologies, spiritual emptiness and the susceptibility to intellectual domination by outsiders.

On the initial stage of the decline of Tadabbur, there are certain historical factors in the history of the city.

The era of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and his companions is the best example of the way to engage with the Quran. The revelation was not something that was just recited but it was experienced, internalized and put into practice in all spheres of life. Abdullah ibn Mas'ud (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ), one of the greatest of the companions in the knowledge of the Quran, has said how they did it:--in the knowledge of the Quran every one of us had an exception who, once learned the ten verses, then did he not proceed to them before he knew their meaning and had acted upon the meaning.⁴¹ This report shows that tadabbur was not an abstract intellectual practice but a disciplined training that focused on change. The Companions knew that the Quran was revealed to be put into practice, and that knowing, and putting that knowing into practice, was the condition of proceeding. This approach mostly persisted during the generations which succeeded after them, the so-called tabi'un and tabi' al-tabi'in. Nonetheless, there were several historical reasons that led to a slow downfall.

To begin with, when Islam spread outside the Arabian Peninsula, great masses of non-Arabs converted to Islam. Although this was an epic blessing, it caused a language problem. Arabic was not the native language of many of the newly converted Muslims. The Quran, which was highly secret in Arabic, lost its accessibility to the ordinary

³⁹ Al-Qur'ān 62:5

⁴⁰ Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Miftāḥ Dār al-Sa'ādah* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1998) 1:190

⁴¹ Al-Qurṭubī, *Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, 1:36. See also Abū 'Ubayd al-Qāsim ibn Sallām, *Faḍā'il al-Qur'ān*, ed. Marwān al-'Aṭiyyah (Damascus: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 1995) 85

faithful by becoming unreadable to them.⁴² Though attempts were made to translate and interpret the meanings, the personal, direct relation to the text which was such in the early generations grew more challenging to retain.

Second, it was accompanied by the elaboration of proper sciences of Quranic recitation (tajwid) and Quranic memorization (hifz), useful in their own right, but sometimes to the detriment of understanding. The focus on mastering pronunciation and learning vast amounts of the text, as admirable as it is, might give the impression that these were the major aims of working with the Quran, which is, however, not the case; however, it was revealed to be contemplated and put into action.⁴³

Third, sectarianism and theological polemics gave way to the emphasis on proof-texting instead of the holistic reflection. The Quran was frequently not seen as a guide to individual practice as various schools of theology and law emerged, and the book was treated as a storehouse of texts to prove pre-existing theological stances.⁴⁴ This critical approach to the Quran weakened the tradition of reading the text with the open heart and, therefore, to the divine revelation.

Fourth, the division of Islamic knowledge into more specialized fields, though needed to develop the intellect, resulted in the inability to see the big picture. Early scholars were experts in various fields. Subsequently, specialization intensified, and a scholar of fiqh could devote his entire life to the arguments over niceties of legal methodology without ever having a profound individual encounter with the Quran as a medium of spiritual change.⁴⁵ A critique of this division was launched by Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728 AH/1328 CE) who said that what is to be understood is that the Quran was revealed to be contemplated and put to practice and such knowledge which is not put to practice is of no benefit.⁴⁶

3.2 The modern factors that have contributed to the decline

Although the historical processes preconditioned the fall of tadabbur, the modern circumstances increased the fall and provided new issues peculiar to the modern period. Educational Failures: There is a paradox in the contemporary educational situation in Muslim states. On the one hand, there is the introduction of Islamic education the extent of which has never been as large. Conversely, the level of learning and contemplation has reduced drastically. The classical Islamic system of education tends to focus on memorization and not on understanding. Students can take years before they are ever taught how to think about the meanings of the Quran and how to relate the verses to their life. A modern thinker deplores the fact that students are trained to memorize the Quran rather to understand it, hence they leave school as memorizers of the Quran and not as understanders of the Quran.⁴⁷

⁴² Tariq Ramadan, *The Messenger: The Meanings of the Life of Muhammad* (London: Penguin, 2008) 215–20

⁴³ Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, 1:273

⁴⁴ Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Kayfa Nata'āmal ma'a al-Qur'ān* 45–48

⁴⁵ Wael B. Hallaq, *A History of Islamic Legal Theories: An Introduction to Sunnī Uṣūl al-Fiqh* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 201–5

⁴⁶ Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmū' al-Fatāwā*, ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Qāsim (Medina: Majma' al-Malik Fahd, 1995) 10:45

⁴⁷ Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Kayfa Nata'āmal*, 52

The even more problematic situation has been brought about by modern secular educational systems that were introduced during the colonial period and still exist in most Muslim countries. These systems tend to sideline the Islamic education or marginalize it to a fringe subject. The outcome is a breed of Muslims that are schooled in western-style and have minimal or no background training in the interpretation of the Quran.⁴⁸ This divide between the educated elite (trained in secular institutions) and the religious scholars (trained in traditional madaris) has been increased and this has created a bifurcation that is not to the advantage of either.

Linguistic Barrier: A linguistic barrier between the Quran and most Muslims is probably the most direct barrier to tadabbur. Although Quran was brought out in Arabic, only about 20 percent of Muslims globally are natives who speak Arabic. The other 80 per centage are dependent on the use of translations to get the meaning of the text.⁴⁹ Although translations are good and absolutely needed, they are never perfect. The linguistic delicacies of the Quran, the rhetorical techniques that it uses, the various levels of meaning in it, and coherence structure is all lost in translation. Consequently, non-Arabic-speaking Muslims find themselves led by the Quran as a recitation text and not as a text to be interpreted. What makes the task even more difficult is that even inside the Arabic speaking Muslims the distance between classical Arabic Quranic and modern colloquial Arabic has been expanding dramatically.⁵⁰

Digital Distraction: The modern world can be defined by the ever-increasing exchange of information and media. Although full of positive aspects, the digital world has provided a conducive environment that is unfriendly to the deeper, reflective experience with any text, even the Quran. The digital culture today is one that values speed, conciseness, and shallowness. The social media and internet sites promote fast scrolling, imprints, and brief attention. Tadabbur practice, in turn, involves major commitment, patience, and a capacity to sit with one verse or passage over a long period of time.⁵¹ The modern thinker Muhammad al-Ghazali notes that modernity murders reflection because an individual is engrossed in a myriad of things and has no time to even reflect on one verse.⁵²

Ideological Extremes: Modern ideological tendencies both in and outside the Muslim societies have also led to the disregard of tadabbur. The former is the emergence of literalist movements that give priority to the text and ironically to the detriment of its reflective participation. Such movements usually purport to adhere to the Quran and Sunnah alone and interpret the Quran decontextually and in a proof-texting way. These verses are quoted out of context, without the context of the historical context, as well as their connection to other verses and the classical heritage of exegesis.⁵³ This would be

⁴⁸ Francis Robinson, *The 'Ulama of Farangi Mahall and Islamic Culture in South Asia* (London: Hurst, 2001) 67–89

⁴⁹ Kees Versteegh, *The Arabic Language* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014) 248–52

⁵⁰ Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Kayfa Nata'āmal*, 34–36

⁵¹ Nicholas Carr, *The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2010) 115–38

⁵² Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Kayfa Nata'āmal*, 41

⁵³ Khaled Abou El Fadl, *The Great Theft: Wrestling Islam from the Extremists* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005) 120–45

a style of approach which purports to give precedence to the Quran in reality weakens tadabbur. Tadabbur presupposes the interpretation of a verse regarding all other verses on the same subject, the historical context of the verse (asbab al-nuzul), and the interaction with the interpretative tradition.⁵⁴

The other extreme is the secularist and rationalist disposition of the Muslim intellectual community. This strategy, which is largely guided by western modernity, is also likely to reject the Quran as a historical document that might not necessarily have much reference to the present-day life. Others who champion this school of thought argue that there should be a reformulation of Islamic ideas that will effectively relegate the authority of the Quran.⁵⁵ The two extremes have one thing in common: they weaken the evocation of looking to the Quran as a living source of guidance that should be meditated on and internalized. The literalist regards the Quran as a legal text to be followed blindly; the secularist regards it as a document of history to be learned and not put into practice. Neither engages in tadabbur.

3.3 The implication of the failure to practice Tadabbur

The disregard of tadabbur is not just a spiritual incompleteness; the result of this outcome has brought real and catastrophic effects to Muslim societies and to the Islamic world at large.

Intellectual Stagnation (Jumud Fikri): Intellectual stagnation is one of the most important effects of the deterioration of tadabbur. Islamic intellectual tradition used to be dynamically oriented, creative, and capable to tackle emerging problems with novel knowledge based on the original sources. Ijtihad- the attempt to extract rulings and insights out of the sources contributed to this creativity. And ijtiḥād, correspondingly, can never exist without tadabbur. Once the Muslims stop thinking profoundly about the Quran, they cannot offer new solutions to emergent problems. They end up relying on the scholarship of the past where the views of the previous scholars are used as concluding policies instead of a beginning point of further thinking.⁵⁶ The modern commentator Isma'il al-Faruqi attributes this stagnation to a crisis, and claims that the crisis of Muslims in the modern world is not a crisis of development; it is a crisis of ideas. And the thinking, is able to cultivate only by reflection on the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of his Prophet.⁵⁷

Rise of Extremism: Another of the saddest impacts of tadabbur disregard is the emergence of extreme ideologies that purport to be the voice of Islam, yet, in reality, the contrary. The main similarity with extremist groups is that they choose verses out of context, disregard the internal consistency of the Quran, and use them so that they go against the overall tone of the revelation. The Quran cautions against just such a strategy:

أَلْفُتُوْمُوْنَ يَبْغُضُ الْكِتَابَ وَتَكْفُرُوْنَ بِبَعْضِ

⁵⁴ Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Kayfa Nata'āmal*, 78–82

⁵⁵ Bassam Tibi, *Islam in Global Politics: Conflict and Cross-Civilizational Bridging* (London: Routledge, 2012) 45–67

⁵⁶ Wael B. Hallaq, *Authority, Continuity and Change in Islamic Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 204–32

⁵⁷ Ismā'il al-Fārūqī, *Al-Tawḥīd: Its Implications for Thought and Life*, 125

So do you not trust part of the Scripture and not trust part?⁵⁸

By emphasizing some verses at the expense of the general context of the Quran and the other verses that stress peace, justice and mercy, the extremist groups are precisely conducting the selective reading which the Quran decries. The sole remedy against this selective reading is tadabbur the whole-engulfing, mutually related contemplation of the texts as a whole⁵⁹ Shaykh Abd Allah bin Bayyah, a modern scholar, notes that the extremism phenomenon is caused by the distance between purpose-focused consideration of the texts, and by contentedness with the outward senses without referring to the overriding purposes.⁶⁰

Spiritual Emptiness: Spiritual emptiness is also another effect of ignoring tadabbur. Quran has not only been given so that knowledge of the mind can be informed but it is done to feed the soul. Its lines are termed as shifa' (healing) and rahmah (mercy):

وَنُنزِّلُ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ مَا هُوَ شِفَاءٌ وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ

And We descend of the Quran that which heals and mercy to the believers.⁶¹

This healing and mercy are not simply conferred by recitation but must be reflected. As long as a believer recites the Quran without knowing, without letting it enter the heart so that its meaning can trickle into the heart, the Quran will not serve its purpose as healing. We can say that the lack of tadabbur has contributed immensely to the spiritual emptiness of many modern Muslims, even though they may be practicing rituals in large numbers. Prayer (salah) is turned into a physical experience and not a spiritual experience. Fasting turns into a lack of food and not a soul discipline. Quran turns out to be an object of barakah instead of being an object of changes.⁶² Al-Ghazali explains the spiritual state of one who recites Quran in a state of reflection: he recites and tongue moves and his heart thus is inattentive, and the lights and secrets of Quran are not revealed to him due to recitation reward.⁶³

Exposure to External Ideologies: Lastly, neglect of tadabbur has exposed the Muslim societies to blind adoption of alien ideologies. Lack of intellectual tools to critically appraise imported ideas by Muslims is caused by lack of deep, reflective knowledge of their own tradition. They are therefore prone to embracing, wholesale, the ideologies of the west or other cultures, without having the capacity to sieve these notions through the prism of the Islamic worldview. (64)⁶⁴ Early Muslims interacted with Greek philosophy, Persian administration, among other foreign influences in a confident position which rested on a strong knowledge about their own tradition. But these days most of the Muslims are enrolled in the institutions of the west with heavy influence of western paradigms but they are not really rooted in the thinking of Islam. The outcome

⁵⁸ Al-Qur'an 2:85

⁵⁹ Javed Ahmad Ghamidi, *Mīzān* (Lahore: Al-Mawrid, 2001) 1:45–52

⁶⁰ 'Abd Allāh bin Bayyah, *Ṣinā'at al-Fatwā wa-Fiqh al-Aqalliyyāt* (Jeddah: Dār al-Minhāj, 2007) 45

⁶¹ Al-Qur'an 17:82

⁶² Nasr, *The Heart of Islam*, 235–58

⁶³ Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, 1:275

⁶⁴ Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism* (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, 1993) 112–25

is some form of intellectual dependency which renders the Muslim societies incapable of blazing their own trail.⁶⁵

4: Role of Tadabbur in the Modern Islamic thought

With the conceptual underpinnings of tadabbur reviewed and the reasons and effects of its deterioration considered, this section proceeds to the heart of this study, which is that tadabbur is, actually more than a spiritual practice, an indispensable intellectual procedure that is the key to solving the most urgent problems of the Islamic thinkers today. In this part, this paper contends that tadabbur is a vital renewal of any true project of Islamic renewal (tajdid). It shows how tadabbur is a source of hermeneutical framework, which prevents extremism, allows meaningful interaction with modernity, renews the ethical and spiritual heart of Islam, and preconditions the creation of unified and just societies.

4.1 Tadabbur as a Reformation (Islah) and Revival (Tajdid) Methodology

The revival and reformation movements in the history of Islam have always been marked with the revival of the reflective activity on Quran. A common approach of the great revivalists of the Muslim tradition, including al-Ghazali in the fifth/eleventh century and Ibn Taymiyyah in the seventh/thirteenth, Shah Wali Allah al-Dihlawi in the twelfth/eighteenth century and Muhammad 'Abduh in the fourteenth/twentieth, had one element: they aimed to revive Islamic thought by returning to the Quran in contextualized and extensive reflection.⁶⁶

An exemplary example is presented by Imam Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (d. 505 AH/1111 CE). His spiritual crisis, the story of which he tells in his autobiography *Al-Munqidh min al-Dalal* (The Deliverer from Error), had been solved not by retiring behind the veil of ritualism, or by a renouncement of intellectual investigation. In writing: that when he meditated upon the state of humanity, and came to know, that the true good is knowledge and action, and that the Quran is the key to this, he reverted to contemplating it and grasping its aims (maqasid) and applying it to the problems of his day.⁶⁷ It is hence a project of tadabbur, of returning to the Quran, to understand its goals (maqasid), and apply them to contemporary problems, which the revival of Islamic thought by al-Ghazali was essentially a project

In like manner, the great South Asian reviver Shah Wali Allah al-Dihlawi (d. 1176 AH/1762 CE) made clear that there was need to go back to the Quran with a reflective approach. In his *Al-Fawz al-Kabir fi Usul al-Tafsir*, he holds that the way to understand the Quran is through reflection upon how the Quran was composed and organised and

⁶⁵ Ziauddin Sardar, *How Do You Know? Reading Ziauddin Sardar on Islam, Science and Cultural Relations* (London: Pluto Press, 2006) 78–95

⁶⁶ Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 41–67; John O. Voll, "Renewal and Reform in Islamic History: Tajdid and Islah," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*, ed. John L. Esposito (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) 4:381–86

⁶⁷ Abū Hāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl*, ed. Jamil Ṣalībā (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1983), 89. For English translation, see *Deliverance from Error*, trans. R. J. McCarthy (Louisville: Fons Vitae, 2000) 45

also the relationship between verses to the verse.⁶⁸ To Shah Wali Allah, tadabbur was not just a spiritual practice, but a strict intellectual practice and thus understanding of the internal unity of the Quran, the structuring beauty of the Quran and the interrelationship of the verses in the surah.

The weakening of *ijtihād* (autonomous jurisprudence) in the later centuries has been directly attributed to weakening of *tadabbur*. The work of *ijtihād* the struggle to extract rulings and understandings out of the sources is impossible without a serious contemplative interaction with those sources. This relationship between *tadabbur* and *ijtihād* is expressed when *tadabbur* is weak, which results in *ijtihād* remaining stagnant (only repeating the views of previous scholars) or reckless (giving *ijtihād* without being properly grounded).⁶⁹ Contemporary scholar Muhammad al-Ghazali (d. 1417 AH/1996 CE) explains this relationship when he says no *ijtihād* is valid without *tadabbur* and those who are inattentive towards *tadabbur* have overlooked the most important.⁷⁰

Another important lesson of the modern Islamic thinking is that *tajdid* (revival) is not a single event, but a process. The Prophet said: Indeed, Allah sends to this ummah at the onset of everyone hundred that there will be someone who will revive their religion to them.⁷¹ This repetition is necessary since each generation will have to approach the Quran anew and think of the meanings of the Quran with references to its own situation. *Tajdid* is therefore the continuous raiment of *tadabbur* to new situations. This is what the modern-day thinker Yusuf al-Qaradawi puts forward, saying that Quran is reborn at each age and that which reborn it is the *tadabbur*.⁷²

4.2 Fighting Extremism with Whole person Reading

Among the most pressing needs of modern Islamic thought is the emergence of extremist views that pose themselves as the representatives of Islam and falsify its main teachings. Such ideologies are essentially a consequence of hermeneutical crisis of methodology of reading and interpreting the Quran.⁷³ Extremist hermeneutics can be defined by the tendency to study verses separately, without keeping in mind the fact that the Quran interprets itself, the historical context, and the higher goals.⁷⁴

The Quran itself offers a very effective corrective to this faulty way of thinking. Allah asks Prophet ﷺ to answer those who read the text sporadically:

أَفْتَرُمُونِ بِبَعْضِ الْكِتَابِ وَتَكْفُرُونَ بِبَعْضٍ فَمَا جَزَاءُ مَنْ يَفْعَلُ ذَلِكَ مِنْكُمْ إِلَّا خِزْيٌ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا

So do you believe a part of the Scripture and not part? Then what will be recompense to those who do that in you except disgrace in this worldly life? .⁷⁵

⁶⁸ Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī, *Al-Fawz al-Kabīr fī Uṣūl al-Tafsīr*, ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafā al-A'zamī (Riyadh: Dār al-Rifā'ī, 1983), 45. For English translation, see *The Principles of Quranic Interpretation*, trans. G. N. Jalbani (Karachi: Dar al-Ishaat, 1995) 32

⁶⁹ Hallaq, *Authority, Continuity and Change*, 204–32

⁷⁰ Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Kayfa Nata'āmal*, 67

⁷¹ Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, no. 4291; al-Ḥākim, *Al-Mustadrak*, no. 8500; declared authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*) by al-Albānī.

⁷² Yūsuf al-Qaradāwī, *Al-Ṣaḥwah al-Islāmiyyah bayna al-Juḥūd wa al-Taṭarruf* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 2001) 121

⁷³ Abou El Fadl, *The Great Theft*, 78–112

⁷⁴ Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Kayfa Nata'āmal*, 78–89; Abou El Fadl, *The Great Theft*, 120–45

⁷⁵ *Al-Qur'ān* 2:85

This verse was unveiled in reaction to the Children of Israel, but the principle is applicable to all: it is inadvisable to selectively interpret the revelation. The corrective to compartmentalized reading is the holistic *tadabbur* the act of taking into account each verse within the context of the entire Quran message.

The Quran interprets itself is one of the most significant principles of the Quranic hermeneutics. This is the principle that was said by classical scholars like Ibn Taymiyyah and this was systemized by modern scholars, that the best manner of interpreting any verse of the Quran lies in other verses of the Quran. According to Ibn Taymiyyah, the interpretation of the Quran according to Ibn Taymiyyah is the most right way to interpret the Quran through the Quran. What is summarised in one place, was elaborated in another, what is said in absolute terms in one place, in another is qualified.⁷⁶

The methodological manifestation of *tadabbur* is this concept. *Tadabbur* means to read Quran as a single text, whereby different sections would enlighten each other. A verse on war, for instance, should be considered in the context of the numerous verses that preach justice, mercy and peaceful living. A verse that seems to order harshness needs to be interpreted against the background of the Quranic theme of compassion and wisdom as a whole. Khaled Abou El Fadl, the contemporary scholar believes that this holistic approach is the sole defence against extremist interpretations because extremist groups essentially cannot take the Quran as a whole, to make its moral vision inform the interpretation of its particular rulings, and to understand that the moral imperatives of the Quran cannot be compromised.⁷⁷

One concept closely related is the concept of *maqasid al-shari* (the noble purposes of Islamic law). According to the theory of *maqasid* that emerged among classical scholars like al-Juwayni, al-Ghazali, and al-Shatibi, the ultimate aim of the Islamic law is to enhance human well-being through the preservation of five activities namely religion (*din*), life (*nafs*), intellect (*'aql*), lineage (*nasl*), and property (*mal*).⁷⁸ *Tadabbur* is necessary to identify the purposes of these objectives. When someone considers the Quran in its entirety, one will realize that they are not arbitrary. In comparison, extremist readings tend to concentrate on the literal meaning of the text and breaking its spirit. A terrorist who kills innocent civilians can use verses about fighting but he has not *tadabbur*--to consider the fact that one of the greatest goals of the Shariah is the preservation of life.⁷⁹ According to al-Shatibi (d. 790 AH/1388 CE), the Lawgiver intended with laws the good of humanity, and these good considerations are not known except by thinking about the evidences and taking into account their complex.⁸⁰

Takfir (excommunication), which is also among the most perilous forms of extremism, is also denied by *Tadabbur*. The Qur'an commands:

⁷⁶ Ibn Taymiyyah, *Muqaddimah fī Uṣūl al-Tafsīr*, ed. 'Adnān Zarzūr (Kuwait: Dār al-Qalam, 1971) 28

⁷⁷ Abou El Fadl, *The Great Theft*, 156

⁷⁸ Abū Ishāq al-Shāṭibī, *Al-Muwāfaqāt fī Uṣūl al-Sharī'ah*, ed. 'Abd Allāh Dirāz (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'rifah, n.d.) 2:5–12

⁷⁹ Jasser Auda, *Maqasid al-Shariah as Philosophy of Islamic Law: A Systems Approach* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2008) 85–105

⁸⁰ Al-Shāṭibī, *Al-Muwāfaqāt*, 2:8

وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ تَفَرَّقُوا وَاخْتَلَفُوا مِن بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْبَيِّنَاتُ

And be ye not divided and differing after clear evidences came to them.⁸¹

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ فَرَّقُوا دِينَهُمْ وَكَانُوا شِيَعًا لَّسْتَ مِنْهُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ

Yes, they separated religio and diveid it into sects you are not with them in anything.⁸² When one practices tadabbur in conjunction with the many other verses that assert mercy, forgiveness and unity of the believers, the practice of takfir has been unveiled as serious contravention of the teachings of the Quran.⁸³

4.3 Interaction with Modernity, Science and Philosophy

The greatest challenge to modern Islamic thought has been the way to deal with modernity, its achievements in science, its philosophic questions, its social change, and its ethical question. The reaction of Muslims to modernity has largely been at two extremes, that is, uncritical acceptance and total rejection. This study maintains that both extremes are based on a failure in tadabbur.⁸⁴

Tadabbur develops an open-minded critical thinking, reflective mind. How one is trained to think intensively about the Quran is the formation of intellectual habits that are necessary to deal with modernity: to ask questions, to seek coherence, to identify principles, and to apply these principles to novel circumstances. Even Quran instructs one to contemplate nature, self, and history- all of which are pre-requisites to engage with the sciences and philosophy of the modern world.⁸⁵

Allah says:

قُلْ انظُرُوا مَاذَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ

Say, Look in the heavens and earth.⁸⁶

أَوَلَمْ يَتَفَكَّرُوا فِي أَنفُسِهِمْ

Have they not looked inward upon themselves?⁸⁷

These orders to gaze (nazar) and reflection (tafakkur) do not only pertain to the natural world, they refer to all fields of knowledge. This wider engagement with the world is made available through the reflective interaction with the Quran - tadabbur which is the intellectual basis of the engagement.

Debate has existed on the relationship between the Quran and modern science. In the view of tadabbur, the usefulness of the Quran in connection with science is not that it predicts scientific findings but that it forms a mindset of inquiry, discovery, and contemplation in science. The Quran urges its readers more than once to reflect on the natural world, to view it as a sign (ayah) of the Creator, and to work their intelligences

⁸¹ Al-Qur'ān 3:105

⁸² Al-Qur'ān 6:159

⁸³ Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Al-Ta'aṣṣub wa al-Tasāmuḥ bayna al-Masīhiyyah wa al-Islām* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 1990) 45–78

⁸⁴ Rahman, *Islam and Modernity*, 3–18

⁸⁵ Tariq Ramadan, *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) 98–115

⁸⁶ Al-Qur'ān 10:101

⁸⁷ Al-Qur'ān 30:8

to comprehend how it works.⁸⁸ This modern thinker, Seyyed Hossein Nasr claims that the Quran is not a book of science, but it is a book that transforms reflection on nature to a religious obligation. Tadabbur would re-establish this sense of nature as something sacred, which can provide an Islamic base to the environmental ethics and a purposeful interaction with science. (89).⁸⁹

The issues of modernity, associated probably with the most acute ones, pertain to technology and bioethics. The artificial intelligence, genetic engineering, organ transplantation, end-of-life care, and reproductive technologies are issues that have very broad ethical issues that need to be answered in terms of Islamic principles.⁹⁰ Tadabbur gives an outline of how to answer these questions. Upon a keen observation of the Quran, the observer comes out with certain basic concepts that can be used to make ethical decisions in new areas. These principles include:

1. Safeguard of human dignity: According to the Quran, Allah honored the offspring of Adam.⁹¹ This principle makes it possible to evaluate technologies that can threaten human dignity.
2. The ban Prohibition of harm: The Prophet ﷺ said, there will be no harm, no reciprocating harm.⁹² This is a Quranic principle that is based on the larger ethic of compassion and justice in the Quran, which can be used in evaluating the possible harms and benefits of new technologies.
3. The policy of stewardship (khalifah): Quran talks about human beings as the vicegerent of Allah on earth.⁹³ It is a moral position that takes care of the earth and its resources, giving technology and the policy of the environment an ethical basis.
4. The forbidding of changing the creation of Allah without reasons: The Quran advises against obedience to Satan who swore to take the humans to change the creation of Allah.⁹⁴ It is used to guide the debate on genetic engineering and other manipulations on nature.⁹⁵

These values are not arrived at by grasping the Quran superficially; but through prolonged tadabbur, reflection on the vision of Quran as a whole, recognizing the ethical vision and transferring the ethical vision to new circumstances.

Tadabbur also offers the structure of involvement in both the Islamic and the Western traditions of philosophy. The fact that early Muslims were able to study Greek

⁸⁸ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Religion and the Order of Nature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) 145–78

⁸⁹ Nasr, *Religion and the Order of Nature*, 168

⁹⁰ Abdulaziz Sachedina, *Islamic Biomedical Ethics: Principles and Application* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) 45–89

⁹¹ Al-Qur'an 17:70

⁹² Ahmad ibn Hanbal, *Musnad*, no. 2865; Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, no. 2340; declared authentic by al-Albānī.

⁹³ Al-Qur'an 2:30

⁹⁴ Al-Qur'an 4:119

⁹⁵ Sachedina, *Islamic Biomedical Ethics*, 56–78

philosophy was due to the fact that the scholars of Islam did so on a platform of confidence which was based on the profound knowledge of the Quran. They could assimilate what was not incompatible with Islamic teachings, which they rejected, and assimilate what they borrowed and changed.⁹⁶ This was made possible due to the *tadabbur*. Upon serious consideration of the Quran, one forms a worldview, or a collection of underlying principles regarding reality, knowledge, morality, and the meaning of life. This vision of the world is a prism in which one can assess other thinker traditions. In the absence of such a world view, interaction with other traditions is either defensive (rejecting everything) or submissive (accepting everything).⁹⁷ This aspect was clearly expressed by the modern day philosopher Isma'il al-Faruqi, who said that the Muslim thinker who is based on *tadabbur* treats the Western thought as an equal, not a supplicant who intends to borrow.⁹⁸

4.4 Restoring the Moral and Spiritual Islam

A limiting of the moral and spiritual outlook of Islam has been one of the effects of the decay of the *tadabbur*. Islam has been perceived in most situations as being a series of legal decisions (*fiqh*) and ritual practices. Although the Islamic law remains significant, it does not comprise the whole of the religion. Quran is not just a book of laws, it is a book of guiding the soul, spring of spiritual food, and invocation to moral change.⁹⁹ *Tadabbur* puts back the equilibrium. Reading the Quran attentively one will find not only the legal commands but also the accounts given of the prophets, the description of the paradise and of the hell, the praises of beautiful names given to Allah, and the invitation to acquire such virtues as patience, gratitude, trust or humility. Such spiritual and ethical aspect of Quran is the world of *tadabbur* par excellence.¹⁰⁰ Allah describes the Qur'an as:

كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ لِتُخْرِجَ النَّاسَ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ

"A Book which We revealed to you that thou shouldst bring out of darkness men into light."¹⁰¹

This darkness to light is not realized by mere court decisions but is realized through the reflective process of the Quran that changes the heart and character.

Tadabbur is not just an intellectual practice; it is a spiritual practice that brings about virtue. When an individual ponders profoundly on a verse concerning patience (*sabr*), say, one is not merely obtaining knowledge about patience; he or she is being changed by the experience of the divine command and the promise. The Qur'an says:

وَاسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ وَلِنَّهَا لَكَبِيرَةٌ إِلَّا عَلَى الْخَاشِعِينَ

⁹⁶ Dimitri Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early 'Abbāsīd Society (2nd–4th/8th–10th Centuries)* (London: Routledge, 1998), 1–26

⁹⁷ Al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism*, 78–95

⁹⁸ Al-Fārūqī, *Al-Tawḥīd*, 145

⁹⁹ Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Kayfa Nata'āmal*, 92–98

¹⁰⁰ Nasr, *The Heart of Islam*, 78–102

¹⁰¹ Al-Qur'ān 14:1

And pray therewith with forbearance and prayer, and the help is, it is not easy, but only the very lowly submissive.¹⁰²

With the aid of tadabbur, the faithful carries this command within himself or herself, considers the essence of patience, meditates about the examples of the prophets who demonstrated patience and attempts to achieve this virtue in his/her life. Al-Ghazali stresses on this transformative aspect of tadabbur and says that it was the Quran that was revealed to change character and that only tadabbur will enable the Quran to penetrate the heart.¹⁰³

The Prophet ﷺ explained the meaning of ihsan (spiritual excellence) when he said: To serve Allah as though you behold him, and that, even though you do not behold him, He beholdest you.¹⁰⁴

This is the state of spiritual awareness that is the final by product of tadabbur. When a person thinks closely about the Quran, he or she acquires a high awareness of the existence of Allah, His names and attributes, His mercy and justice, and His ever-present care of creation. Reflection has been connected in the Quran itself with this state of awareness:

الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ قِيَامًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِهِمْ وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ

People who remember Allah standing, sitting, and lying on their sides and analyze how the heavens and the earth have been created.¹⁰⁵

When dhikr (remembrance) is combined with tafakkur (reflection), they form ihsan a state where the believer is always conscious of Allah and lives in that consciousness.¹⁰⁶

Spiritual barrenness among the most modern Muslims which is the feeling that the practice of religion has grown to be a ritual and a corpse can be remedied by tadabbur. The moment the Quran is turned into a matter of reflection as opposed to recitation, it gains back the ability to touch the heart, shed tears on the face, offer solace in hardship, and offer hope in despair.¹⁰⁷ According to the Quran, the Quran identifies itself as:

وَنُنزِّلُ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ مَا هُوَ شِفَاءٌ وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ

And We are sending of the Qur'an that which heals and mercy to the believers.¹⁰⁸

This curing is not automatic because the patient has to participate in the medicine by using it reflectively and actively. The process of making the Quran shifa, a healing to the heart, soul and mind, is called Tadabbur.

4.5 Developing an Integrated and Fair Society

The Quran describes the vision of society as the vision of justice, compassion and responsibility to one another. This vision is not dictated to them by a predetermined set of strict legal formulas, but it arises out of a meditative process of engagement with the

¹⁰² Al-Qur'ān 2:45

¹⁰³ Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, 1:276

¹⁰⁴ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, no. 50; Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, no. 8

¹⁰⁵ Al-Qur'ān 3:191

¹⁰⁶ William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-'Arabi's Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989) 145–68

¹⁰⁷ Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Kayfa Nata'āmal* 101–8

¹⁰⁸ Al-Qur'ān 17:82

text. In tadabbur, the principles of how social, economic and political life should be discerned.¹⁰⁹ Allah commands:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ وَإِيتَاءِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَيَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَاللَّبِئِیِّ

Indeed, Allah orders justice, good and generosity towards kinsmen and his commandments prohibit immorality, evil and oppression.¹¹⁰

This verse that is said by many classical scholars to hold the total ethical vision of the Quran can only become a living guide when it is contemplated. Learning how is adl (justice) as applied to economic inequality? What is ihsan (goodness/excellence) when it comes to social relations? The answers to these questions entail tadabbur--reflective interaction which is not restricted to the literal meaning of the writing.¹¹¹

The Quran instructs followers that they should transact their business by consultation (shura):

وَأْمُرْهُمْ شُورَىٰ بَيْنَهُمْ ۚ

And their matters are such that they make consultation among them.¹¹²

This principle, when contemplated on with tadabbur, offers a basis of participatory governance, accountability and collective decision-making. The exact types that shura may assume are not stipulated in the Quran; they have to be advised by considering the principles of the text with reference to modern situation.¹¹³

Development of a pluralistic coexistent ethos is one of the greatest contributions of tadabbur to the modern society. To the Quran, diversity amongst human beings is not meant to be eradicated; rather, this is a divine intention:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا

"O men, surely we have made thee of male and female of making thee peoples and tribes that thou mayest know each other"¹¹⁴

Indeed, when one contemplates this verse seriously, they realize that diversity is not some form of punishment but a gift, not a reason to have conflicts with each other but a chance to learn and understand each other. The word is not li-tanafaru (that you may hate each other) nor li-taqatalu (that you may fight each other), but li-taarafu (that ye may know each other).¹¹⁵

The Quran principle of religious pluralism is also brought out by Tadabbur. Although Islam cannot deny its truth, it also admits that there are also other paths and treats those of other beliefs with respect:

لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ

Religion is not enforced.¹¹⁶

¹⁰⁹ Abdullah Saeed, *The Qur'an: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2008) 178–205

¹¹⁰ Al-Qur'ān, Sūrat al-Naḥl 16:90

¹¹¹ Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, 4:556–58

¹¹² Al-Qur'ān 42:38

¹¹³ Muḥammad al-Ghazala, *Al-Islām wa al-Ḥukm al-'Urfī* (Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 1992), 45–67.

¹¹⁴ Al-Qur'ān 49:13

¹¹⁵ Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Kayfa Nata'āmal*, 112–18

¹¹⁶ Al-Qur'ān 2:256

وَلَا تَسُبُّوا الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ لِيَسُبُّوا اللَّهَ عَدْوًا بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ

And do not address the invoking other than Allah, lest they address Allah in hostility without knowledge.¹¹⁷

When these verses are considered in combination with each other, a pluralist framework has been made, which does not only acknowledge the truth claims of Islam but also acknowledges the dignity of those who do not share this belief.

The Quran is very urgent about economic inequality. With tadabbur, one is able to see a broad picture of economic justice which encompasses the banning of interest (riba), the zakat (wealth tax) and promotion of charity (sadaqah). More essentially, the reader can see the principle according to which wealth is a trust of Allah and that hoarding of wealth without minding the poor is denounced.¹¹⁸ Allah warns:

وَالَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ الذَّهَبَ وَالْفِضَّةَ وَلَا يُنْفِقُونَهَا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ مَبْشُرُهُمْ وَعَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ

And the one who gathers and hoards gold and silver and does not spend them as Allah does--bring him tidings of a painful punishment!¹¹⁹

By considering this verse in the context of the larger economic lessons of the Quran, there is a need to have an economic system that would forestall the concentration of wealth and make sure that resources circulate across the society.¹²⁰

6: Planning Framework to revive Tadabbur.

Since the conceptual underpinnings of tadabbur are in place and its importance in increasing the relevance of tadabbur to modern issues has been established, this section now becomes practical in its answer: How can tadabbur be rejuvenated in the modern world? The analysis above has revealed that the oversight of tadabbur is not a mere coincidence but a consequence of certain historical, educational, and linguistic as well as ideological reasons that can be identified. Its regeneration, then, will need a multi-dimensional approach, which is planned and will take into account these issues on various levels. This section suggests an elaborate model of bringing tadabbur back to life at three interrelated levels of individual, educational, and the community and institutional level.

5.1 Rebirth of Tadabbur on the Personal Level.

Tadabbur needs to be revived in the individual Muslim. There is no chance of the success of any institutional reform that individuals fail to develop a personal relationship with the Quran that is based on reflection.

Reflective Recitation (Tilawah ma'a Tadabbur): The initial one is to change the practice of Quranic recitation as a mainly ritual activity into an activity of reflection. Ibn Mas used to say: avoid reciting the Quran quickly as the poetry is recited and disperse it like the scattered date. Stop at its wonders and move hearts with it and do not the worry of any one of you reach the end of the surah."¹²¹ an operational methodology consists of: preparation (istihdar) through clearing of mind, renewal of intention;

¹¹⁷ Al-Qur'ān 6:108

¹¹⁸ M. Umer Chapra, *Islam and the Economic Challenge* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1992) 55–89

¹¹⁹ Al-Qur'ān 9:34

¹²⁰ Chapra, *Islam and the Economic Challenge*, 78–85

¹²¹ Abū 'Ubayd, *Faḍā'il al-Qur'ān*, 87; also narrated by al-Ṭabarānī. Al-Albānī classifies it as authentic in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Targhīb wa al-Tarhīb*, no. 1440

pausing upon each verse; interactive (Interactive) by responding to verses of mercy, punishment, and glorification; personalization through reflection of how the verse relates to one life; and implementation (tatbiq) through action on what has been reflected on.¹²²

Studying the Arabic version of the Quran: To most of the Muslims, learning the Arabic version of the Quran is a major impediment among the non Arabic speakers. To revive tadabbur, there must be a new effort to learn the Quranic Arabic. This is not always fluency but the development of a proper level of understanding in order to approach the text directly. Learning the basic vocabulary the 1,000 most widespread words occupy about 85 percent of the text, making it possible to engage in meaning.¹²³ It is done through interlinear translations and modern resources. The prophet assured his prophecies with two times the reward of those who struggle and advised them not to give up.¹²⁴

Developing a personal reflection journal (Mudhakkara): Spotting a journal of reflection enhances interaction. A journal may contain: noting the verse(s) that one thought about; writing his or her first impression; using standard or reliable tafsir texts; contemplating the applicability to one's own life; and making a note of the questions to be pursued. This tradition is what makes Quran no longer a book, but a book that is not only read, but a book that is also studied and memorized.¹²⁵

Spiritual Preparation: Tadabbur involves a heart of the receptors. The Quran attributes the lack of reflection to the hearts that are sealed¹²⁶ Preparation: revitalizing intention to seek guidance; seeking refuge against Satan; developing humility; eliminating distractions; making du'a' to gain beneficial knowledge. The Prophet said: O Allah, I request you good knowledge, good provision and accepted action.¹²⁷

Consistency: The Prophet ﷺ stated: The most beloved to Allah are the most consistent even though they may be trivial.¹²⁸ When a person contemplates a limited number of verses daily, then he or she will build a strong connection with the Quran. An example is that some early Muslims spent eight years to complete the Quran reflecting on every verse.¹²⁹

5.2 Rejuvenating Tadabbur in the Education Level

Individual efforts are required, but not enough. The recovery of tadabbur involves the systematic reform in the education institutions.

¹²² Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Kayfa Nata'āmal*, 145–78; Yasir Qadhi, *An Introduction to the Sciences of the Qur'ān* (Birmingham: Al-Hidaayah, 1999) 321–45

¹²³ Muḥammad 'Abd al-'Azīm al-Zurqānī, *Manāhil al-'Irfān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* (Cairo: Dār Iḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabiyyah, n.d.), 1:45–52; contemporary computational analyses of Qur'anic vocabulary.

¹²⁴ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, no. 4937; Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, no. 798

¹²⁵ Tariq Ramadan, *The Messenger*, 215–20; Ziauddin Sardar, *Reading the Qur'an: The Contemporary Relevance of the Sacred Text of Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) 145–52

¹²⁶ Al-Qur'ān 47:24

¹²⁷ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, no. 2722.

¹²⁸ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, no. 6464; Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, no. 783

¹²⁹ Al-Qurṭubī, *Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, 1:36

Curriculum Reform: The most radical reform is to introduce the tadabbur-based approaches into the curriculum. Tafsir mawdu as a form of tadabbur, thematic study (tafsir mawdu'i) requires students to compile verses throughout the Quran exposing them to the relationship between the verses, and providing them with a whole picture.¹³⁰ According to Muhammad al-Ghazali, thematic or interpretation is the one that develops tadabbur because it brings together fragmented texts on one subject and the students are able to observe the unity and coherence of the Quran.¹³¹ Asbab al-nuzul (context of revelation) and maqasid (higher objectives) need to be integrated.¹³²

Training of teachers: Teachers have to be trained to facilitate reflexive learning and not just pass information. This involves posing questions that make students think, prompting students to formulate their insights, modeling reflective practice, establishing a non-threatening environment in which they question things, and evaluating reflection as opposed to memorization.¹³³

Language Education: The schools must concentrate on teaching Quranic Arabic at an early stage, emphasize on Quranic vocabulary, intermingling with Quranic study, and using the modern pedagogical strategies.¹³⁴

Higher Education: In university level, tadabbur has to be revived by integrating both strong scholarship and spirituality. Scholars must be able to have basing on the traditional sciences of Islam as well as the modern sciences, to formulate methodologies of contemporary tafsir and to generate scholarly works that are more accessible.¹³⁵

5.4 Reforming Tadabbur on Community and Institutional Level:

The community and institutional structures should support individual and educational efforts.

Mosques as Reflective Learning: Traditionally, the mosques used to be the places of learning, contemplation and community discussion. To revive themselves, they need to form halaqat al-tadabbur (reflection circles) in which they read together, reflect together and discuss together. The Prophet ﷺ said: No people would ever assemble in one of the houses of Allah, read and memorize the Book of Allah together, except that peace and mercy be upon them, and the angels be round them, and Allah speak to them. (136).¹³⁶ The Friday sermons (khutab) must be based on the tadabbur, a part of the Quran and its significance and use. Ramadan, the month of the Quran, is especially good when intensive programs are conducted.¹³⁷

¹³⁰ Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Kayfa Nata'āmal*, 112–35; 'Abd al-Ḥayy al-Farmāwī, *Al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī* (Cairo: Dār al-Thaqāfah, 1977)

¹³¹ Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Kayfa Nata'āmal*, 118

¹³² Al-Wāḥidī, *Asbāb al-Nuzūl*, ed. 'Abd al-'Azīz 'Umar (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1991), 5–8; Auda, *Maqasid al-Shariah*, 85–105

¹³³ Ingrid Mattson, "Islamic Education," in *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Studies*, ed. John L. Esposito (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) 135–52

¹³⁴ Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Kayfa Nata'āmal*, 34–36; Ayman S. Ibrahim, *A Concise Guide to the Quran: Answering Thirty Critical Questions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020), 112–15; Versteegh, *The Arabic Language*, 248–70

¹³⁵ Rahman, *Islam and Modernity*, 45–68; Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Kayfa Nata'āmal*, 156–65; Ramadan, *Western Muslims*, 98–115

¹³⁶ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, no. 2699; Abū Dāwūd, no. 1455; al-Tirmidhī, no. 2945

¹³⁷ Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, 1:280–85

Digital Resources: The digital era provides a unique chance in spreading tadabbur resources. Videos series, podcasts, and mobile apps could offer content with ease. Classical works can be translated and made available in digital tafsir sites. Authors of content must oppose superficiality and exemplify long-term and in-depth activity in reading.¹³⁸

Intellectual Forums: Tadabbur has to be revived with strong intellectual frameworks. The academic institutions of Quranic studies ought to unite scholars of all fields. The tadabbur conferences and symposia have the potential to establish a tadabbur community of scholars and practitioners. Classical Tafsir ought to be translated into the major Muslim languages.¹³⁹

Role of Families: The first and the longest lasting location of education is the home. Families ought to have weekly tadabbur sessions, parents would be good examples of reflection, provide Quranic settings, and would respond to the questions raised by children with utmost seriousness.¹⁴⁰

6: Conclusion:

6.1 Summary of Key Findings

This study has determined that tadabbur is not a peripheral suggestion but a central one that has been divinely ordained and which is at the core of Islamic revelation. Derived linguistically on the basis of the root d-b-r meaning to follow to the end, tadabbur is none of tafakkur (consideration of creation) and tadhakkur (remembrance and taking heed). The Quran also establishes it as the reason why the Quran was revealed, 38:29 Surat Sad; as evidence of being divinely inspired, Surat al-Nisa 4:82; and as an invitation to thinkers to change their minds, Surat al-Mu'minun 23:68. Prophetic traditions are characterized by reflective recitation, the increased reward of those who find it hard to grasp, and by the example of the Companions who were active in reworking the text.

The decline was caused by historical factors such as the linguistic gap as Islam spread, the understanding-ritualization shift, fragmentation of knowledge, sectarian polemics. The modern causes are educational failures that focus on memorization without understanding the material and the persistent language barrier, being distracted by digital devices instead of spending time reflecting, and ideological extremes (literalist and secularist) that inhibit reflective practice. Among the consequences, the lack of intellectual growth, the emergence of the extremist trends due to selective reading, spiritual barrenness, and susceptibility to alien ideology are identified.

Tadabbur is a revival methodology (tajdid), which offers the basis of ijtihad and everlasting renewal. It protects against the extremism by reading the Quran holistically, with the principles, which the Quran interprets itself (al-Qur'an yufassir ba'duhu ba'dan), and that the higher objectives (maqasid) of the Shariah should be used in interpretation. It develops a critical thinking brain that can handle modernity, science and philosophy giving ethical values in bioethics and technology. It restores the ethical and spiritual essence of Islam, leaving legalism behind and developing virtue and the state of ihsan.

¹³⁸ Gary R. Bunt, *iMuslims: Rewiring the House of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009) 78–105

¹³⁹ Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Kayfa Nata'āmal*, 165–72

¹⁴⁰ Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, 2:45–67

Lastly, it has offered a basis of constructing unified and fair societies and identification of principles of justice, consultation, pluralism, and economic equity out of the Quranic text.

6.2 Contribution to the Field

The study provides a holistic conceptual framework of tadabbur based on classic scholarship; a diagnostic perspective of what is making it be neglected; a hermeneutical approach of seeking reading holistically that fits the extremist and a multi-level approach of revival that can be applied at individual, teacher, community, and policy-makers levels.

6.3 Recommendations

To the individual: first and foremost adopt reflective recitation, learn Quranic Arabic, keep reflection journals, strive to be spiritual receptive, and focus on consistency, rather than intensity.

To the educators: Reform the model of curriculum to incorporate thematic study, context and upper end goals; educate teachers in reflective pedagogy; emphasize the teaching of the Quranic Arabic language; and incorporate tadabbur into all subject areas.

To imams and community leaders: Found halaqat al-tadabbur, base Friday sermons on reflective practice with the Quran, build up programmes, and exemplify reflective practice.

To the scholars: Find a way of creating contemporary tafsir, generate accessible scholarship, conduct interdisciplinary studies, and create intellectual infrastructure.

To policymakers: Educational reform, investing in intellectual infrastructure, encouraging media material that leads to reflection, and family programs.

6.4 Concluding Remarks

Approached with tadabbur, the Quran has even been shown to appear as living guidance, neither as a historical object nor a hard law, but a light that dispels the way. Allah describes it:

نُورِيهِدَىٰ بِهِ اللَّهُ مَنِ اتَّبَعَ رِضْوَانَهُ سُبُلَ السَّلَامِ

A light whereby Allah lights up the path of those who follow His will to the paths of peace.¹⁴¹

The rebirth of tadabbur is the duty of the ummah. This study determines that the next phase of the vibrant Islamic thought cannot be found in the sacrifice of tradition or the blind following of modernity, but the reversion to the divine book with the approach of deep reflection that it itself dictates. This is the key to eternal guidance of the Quran, and the ummah can live in the world of difficulties with wisdom, justice, and unshaken faith.



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¹⁴¹ Al-Qur'ān 5:16