

Contemplation as a Mean to Achieve Recognition of Allah

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Abstract

Al-tafakkur is an important practice of using contemplative techniques, to analyze the events of Allah's creatures, to gain confidence in everything related to *ma'rifah Allah* in *tasawwuf*. A believer in Allah increases in his faith in Allah and piety through insightful and hearty contemplations. In addition, *al-tafakkur* is one of the ways to remembering Allah and the hereafter, to obtain patience, peace, and tranquility. The study is an analytical study based on library resources. The study finds that *al-tafakkur* is an important element of *tasawwuf*, an essential foundation that one needs to increase in *ma'rifah Allah*. This is because *ma'rifah Allah* is applied in the discipline of *tasawwuf* to aim for the existence of faith and piety of Allah s.w.t, which is the main pillar in the creed of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah*. Without *iman* (faith) and *taqwa* (piety), the *Aqidah* is believed to be unstable and unable to guide to the perfection of obedience to Allah. Therefore, it is worth noting that *al-tafakkur* is not merely a practice that refers to the contemplation and analysis of an incident of God's creatures; it is a special and obligatory practice in achieving *ma'rifah Allah* and His love as the most important part of life.

Keywords: Tafakkur, *Ma'rifah Allah*, *Tasawuf*, *Iman*, *Taqwa*

Introduction

Al-Tafakkur is an important practice, and it is identified as one of the methods of approaching Allah s.w.t, through the reflection on Allah signs. The development of *Sufis order* is in line with the teachings of *aqidah*, and *fiqh* conforms with the knowledge of the leaders of *mu'tabar 'ulama* in their respective fields.

Nowadays, many people study *Sufis order* because it is one of the ways to make faith and piety of a believer grow and become intact. This brief paper discusses the concept of *al-Tafakkur* in enhancing the *ma'rifah Allah* by increasing in faith and piety in Him. He said: "think twice a year ahead". This means that the engagement in *al-Tafakkur* is far more beneficial than worship to Allah alone.

DEFINITION OF AL-TAFAKKUR

Al-Tafakkur stems from the basic word '*fakkara*', meaning 'he thought'. It is reflection; reflection and thinking about something. In is conceptually an act of thinking about, and remembering, Allah as a reflection of His creation in heaven and on earth in its entirety.

INSTANCES OF AL-TAFAKKUR IN THE QURAN

The most important point is to read the Quran and to understand the meaning of each of its verses by meditating on its contents and meaning thoroughly. The Quran enjoins people to contemplate, as it produces peace of mind and tranquility. Allah s.w.t says:

أَو لَمْ يَتَفَكَّرُوا فِي أَنفُسِهِمْ مَّا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَأَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى وَإِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ النَّاسِ بِلِقَائِ رَبِّهِمْ لَكٰفِرُونَ

Do they not contemplate within themselves? Allah has not created the heavens and the earth and what is between them except in truth and for a specified term. And indeed, many of the people, in [the matter of] the meeting with their Lord, are disbelievers (Surah al-Rum: 8).

Sufi (Ascetics) And Tafakkur Practice

As the phrase goes of Imam al-Shafi'i, in *al-Munqidh min al-Dalal* of al-Ghazali (1999), "fight against the lust of your mouth, and face the weird questions with contemplation", anyone who lives and faces various problems should hasten to meditation, particularly concerning the hereafter. According to al-Ghazali (2011), a meditating heart is easy to become aware and firm in the belief that affairs in the hereafter are the main thing, and thus places full hope on Allah s.w.t as the Helper and Solution to all the problems faced.

Al-Tafakkur As A Characteristic Feature Of Ulu Al-Albab

It is clearly clarified in the Qur'an that *ulu al-Albab* (those endowed with consummate intellect) are those who meditate always through *tafakkur* to arrive at the higher level of *tazakkur* (the presence of something which is remembered and known in the heart). Allah s.w.t says:

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ لَآيَاتٍ لِّأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ قِيَمًا وَقُعودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِهِمْ وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هٰذَا بَطْلًا سُبْحٰنَكَ فَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ

"In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and in the alternation of the night and the day there are signs for men of understanding; those who mention and remember Allah while they are standing and sitting and when they lie in wait, and they reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth, saying: "Our Lord! Thou hath not made these things in vain, Glory be to Thee, then Guard us from the Penalty of the Blaze."

(Ali 'Imran:

190).

The above verse explains that the desired *tafakkur* is a matter beneficial to the *muzakkir*, to be submissive, obedient, and dedicated to His Creator (Allah s.w.t) (IbnKathir, 1990). But the believers are forbidden to meditate on the essence of Allah s.w.t, as responded by Imam Malik bin Anas when asked about how Allah s.w.t resides (*istiwa'*) on the Throne:

الإستواء معلوم، والكيف غير معلوم، والإيمان به واجب والسؤال عنه بدعة
al-Istiwa' (settlement on the Throne) is known, but how it is unknown, believing it is obligatory, and asking about it is innovation.

The Objectives Of *Ma'rifah Allah* From The Sufi Perception

Al-Ghazali (2011) mentions:

لا تصح العبادة إلا بعد معرفة المعبود

An act of worshipping is not authorized until after *ma'rifah Allah* (the recognition of Allah).

According to Sheikh Abu Ali al-Daqqaq, one of the signs of *ma'rifah* is the emergence of Allah's blessings. Whoever increases his/her blessing will increase his/her *ma'rifah*. He further explains that interpretation brings peace to the heart, as knowledge brings peace ('Ajibah, 2009).

In *Tanwir al-Qulub*, al-Kurdi (2002) says: "So it is for the intellectual to deploy all his abilities in pursuing *ma'rifah* without procrastinating it. Do not delay in it, for when death comes before it, the blindness of ignorance comes over, until there is no way to see the *basirah*. Allah s.w.t says:

"Whoever is blind in the world, then in the hereafter will be more blind and lost way"
 (al-Isra': 72)

Sheikh Amin al-Kurdi also says:

Know that self-realization is a very important matter for every person, for whoever knows himself would know his *Rabb*, the more you know, the more you know Allah Almighty, the Powerful and the Eternal. Whoever is stupid towards himself is stupid also against his Allah s.w.t.

According to the Sufis, *ma'rifah Allah* is the nature of people who know the names and attributes of Allah. It is to submit to Allah by obeying all orders and performing all instructions. And at the same time, the '*Arif bi Allah* should be able to abandon the abominable and prohibited traits in shari'ah, always remembering Allah s.w.t so that he loves for Allah and Allah loves him. Allah s.w.t in turn will grant him guidance so that he would not be influenced by various other elements that can turn himself away from the remembrance of Allah s.w.t. (Omar et. al. 2017).

With Allah's guidance that causes all acts and behavior to be clean and not mixed with evil, every movement is associated with Allah and His pleasure, which is an indefinite gift. Such guidance is the *ma'rifah*, and the one who has *ma'rifah* is referred to as *al-Arif*, the singular

form of *al-'Arifin*. Abu Zakaryyah al-Ansari says that *ma'rifah Allah* is the knowledge that brings one to the absolute level of belief in Allah and His Oneness (al-Kalabadzi, 2001).

Sufis do not refer to everyone who has knowledge as *al-'Arif*, but they refer to as *al-'Arif* those who possess the knowledge related to Allah, the thought that everything Allah created is a proof of His existence, the attributes of perfection and beauty (Omar et. al. 2017).

Ibn'Atai'llah also speaks on the meaning of *ma'rifah*, he says *ma'rifah* is knowledge of the substance or nature that is in line with the Islamic tenets, based on the Qur'an and al-Sunnah. *Ma'rifah Allah* is among a preferred knowledge because it is a means to recognize the weird and incomparable substance among creatures, for *وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ* i.e -And no one is like Him ('Ajibah, 2009).

However, Allah still requires every creature to recognize Him by knowing the nature of the substance of Allah and His attributes. With *ma'rifah Allah* the wise continues to increase, the more the increase in *ma'rifah Allah* the closer he is to Allah s.w.t.

Zinnun al-Misri was asked regarding how one could recognize one's Lord, and he replied saying: "I know my Lord with the gift of my Lord, otherwise without His gift I will never know my Lord" (al-Qushayri, 1989). A distinguished Sufi scholar, Ibn Atai'llah divides *ma'rifah Allah* into two parts: i) the general *Ma'rifah* is to know Allah, to execute the compulsory demands of Allah, and to know Him through His knowledge related to divine issues; and ii) the specific *ma'rifah Allah* is to recognize Allah as the Lord of all beings. So, the one who is wise and discerning is the one who knows the substance of Allah, attributes and *af'al* through intermediation of the worship that Allah has given to the person whom He wants ('Ajibah, 2009).

A pious person recognizes his Lord with His guidance, even though the ordinary beliefs built on the divine knowledge. Imam al-Ghazali once said that a human-being can recognize his Lord through his senses if he is chosen by Allah. The highest recognition is the recognition of the divine grace. Therefore, *ma'rifah Allah* cannot be achieved unless by Allah's wills, like the prophets and the gnostic (*Siddiq*) who really know their Lord (Isa, 2005).

According to al-Ghazali (2011), the special *ma'rifah Allah* is the desire to know the substance, the attributes of Allah, reject all the deficiencies, and set the nature of perfection for Allah. Thus, *ma'rifah Allah* must be achieved by everyone, to fulfill the requirements of the Qur'an, the Sunah, and the consensus of the scholars. Imam al-Ghazali divided the narratives into two parts; the substance and the nature.

Ma'rifah substance is a person's knowledge of Allah s.w.t, that Allah exists with various qualities of perfection, such as the attributes. He begets not nor was He begotten, and nothing is similar to him. *Ma'rifah* of the nature is the knowledge that Allah s.w.t is the Living, the Almighty, the All Knowing, the All-Powerful, the Hearing, the Seer, and other traits of perfection possessed by Allah s.w.t. Al-Ghazali adds that people who really know Allah, their heart always remember and look up to Allah s.w.t. A sign of *ma'rifah Allah* is deep fear of Allah; whoever increases his character to Allah will increase in his fear of Allah (al-Qushayri, 1989; Omar et. al. 2017).

Here it is possible to denounce the claims of some people who say that when we have been acquainted with God we no longer need to worship him. This indictment is an indictment of evil desire for temporary pleasure. Another scholar divides nature into two kinds; *ma'rifah* of the truth (*ma'rifah al-Haq*), and *ma'rifah* of the essence (the essence of the fact).

The Influence Of Al-Tafakkur In Achieving *Ma'rifah Allah*

Al-Tafakkur is remembering Allah s.w.t in silence, which softens the heart and draws it closer to Allah s.w.t. *Al-Tafakkur* leads to *al-Tazakkur* later. In his *Ihya' 'ulum al-Din*, al-Ghazali (2011) directs that a Muslim should think then evaluate on every activity, for example, his verbal confrontation, cursing, lying, purifying, laughing at others, disputes, joking and plunging into what is unimportant, and many others.

Hamka (2007), in his book, affirms that the "tongue represents our inner-self (the heart)". We should therefore handle our tongue with *tafakkur*. Al-Jahiz says: "the best of speech is the one that is brief, if it is worthwhile to speak, make it brief". Ibn al-Jawzi in his book, *Shaid al-Khatir*, writes: "the person who thinks of the end of life will certainly be vigilant, and the person who believes in the length of the journey will certainly be prepared for it". Finally, those who have *ma'rifah Allah* have the real piety and faith with absolute obedience to Allah s.w.t. (al-Zahabi, 1985).

Conclusion

Al-Tafakkur is a ritual in silence to increase knowledge and good deeds. It is an extraordinary practice that can enhance the charity of the worship and strengthen the relationship with Allah as well as strengthen our intrapersonal and interpersonal relationship. It is the key to all the goodness; forming all the cognitive activities of a believer through feeling the existence of Allah s.w.t, remembrance of His attributes, and sensing His greatness and perfection (*jamal*). By meditating and understanding, the wisdom contained in the wonders of creations and creatures, and the life in the hereafter, softens the heart for the steadfastness of faith and piety of *muttaqin* in enhancing the achievement of *ma'rifah Allah*. This study finds that the increase of *ma'rifah Allah* for the spirituality of every Muslim individual is based on the practice of *al-Tafakkur*, and the sincerity of increasing knowledge and practice of faith and *taqwa* as a source of strengthening identity.

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