

Literature Review on Concept of Tafakkur in Islamic Mysticism

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Abstract

Tafakkur is an act of thinking, contemplating, reflecting, training and *tadabbur* that encompass human's mind, heart and spiritual. Thus, this study was conducted to further elaborate on *tafakkur* by realizing three selected objectives. Which is, explaining the concept of *tafakkur*, explaining the concept of *tafakkur* according to Islamic scholars and identifying the concept of *tafakkur* practiced by the Sufis. The methodology of this study is a library study to collect information, data and theories involved. Then, the data were analyzed by using content analysis method. The results of the study found that the practice of *tafakkur* produces individuals who are enlightened (*Ulu al-Bab*), have a strong hold to a knowledge, not easily influenced by others and able to see the wisdom behind a test. The practice of *tafakkur* also benefits the body and the soul of the practitioner plus to the community surrounding. In addition, the practice of *tafakkur* have become routine worship to Sufis members then accompanied by other *tasawwuf* elements. For example, element of *`uzlah*, *suluk*, *khulwah*, *dhikir*, *riyadah* and *muraqabah* so that the *tafakkur* practice is more complete and effective. The ultimate goal of *tafakkur* practice is to know Allah SWT with the ultimate knowledge through the concept of *al-Fana'*, *al-Baqa'* and *Ma'rifah Allah*.

Keywords: Concept of *Tafakkur*, *al-Fana'*, *al-Bawa'*, *Ma'rifah Allah*

Introduction

The practice of *tafakkur* have been practiced thousand years ago by people who are enlightened. Among them, Prophet Muhammad saw himself practice *tafakkur* as a method to contemplate the power of Allah SWT, expecting guidance and solutions to the problems faced. He always isolate himself and practice *tafakkur* in cave of *Hira'* consistently without ever giving up and finally receive the revelation and guidance from Allah SWT when he was 40 years old. Therefore, Prophet Muhammad SAW is known as the savior of the creed and human civilization from continues to be covered in the darkness of *jahiliyyah*. Furthermore, the practice of *tafakkur* is recommended by Allah SWT. Allah said in az- *Zariat* verse 51: 21, which means:

Meaning: “ *And in your own selves! So, do you not perceive?*”.

In addition, Islam has also put reason in high places and the use of sensible minds coincides with the norms of the teachings of Islam itself. In this regard, the practice of thinking toward good and benefits is highly encouraged. The proof is that Allah SWT makes reason as a place of acceptance of Islamic law as it has in the study *Maqasid al-Shariah ad Philosophy of Islamic Law: A System Approach* by Auda (2008: 145) and Allah SWT also protects the mind from corruption by prohibiting the use of intoxicants such as drugs, alcohol and the act of thinking beyond boundaries so that the mind is always healthy and sane.

The Concept of *Tafakkur* in General

With regard to the meaning of *tafakkur*, al-Ghazzali (2005: 188) in his books *Mukasyafah al-Qulub, al-Muqarrab ila 'Allam al-Ghuyub* has defined, *tafakkur* is a way of thinking deeply until the wisdom and the rational comes out awchich can produce knowledge confidently and free from blind taqlid. As for al-Munajjid (2009: 7) said in his essay titled *al-Tafakkur*, *tafakkur* means observation and management of the heart in accepting and understanding the meaning behind the incident.

So it is understandable that *tafakkur* is a prudent thought practice to see the wisdom behind an event, to increase faith, to achieve the reality of something and to calm down from any negative elements. al-Munajjid (2009: 7) adds *tafakkur* also able to alter the perceptions of a Muslim against the test that affects and assumes that all the hardships can erase all the sin, elevated by Allah SWT and rewarded from Him. Therefore, *tafakkur* can increase faith in Allah SWT and assume that each test has its own wisdom.

In addition, al-Suyuti (2009: 61) states that the practice of *tafakkur* also serves as a gesture so that the human beings always remember the blessings given by Allah SWT and also remind that only to Allah SWT only where humanity complains and asks for help. Next, so the people be aware of the rewards and promises of Allah SWT on every act of their deeds.

Al-Ghazzali (2005: 20) reminiscent, the practice of *tafakkur* is one of the ways to avoid receiving a knowledge and practice blindly. According to him, thinking, researching and deeply studying about the fields involved and the knowledge they learn will be able to satisfy, increase confidence and can be disseminated to others. Furthermore, issuing greater and useful benefits

to all the institutions. Most importantly, the practice of *tafakkur* is the cause of the blessings of Allah SWT and is classified in the *muhsinin*. Allah said in *Luqman* verse 31: 1-3, which means:

Meaning; “*Alif Lam Mim. These are verses of the Wise Book. A guidance and mercy for those who are good in their deeds*”.

Al-Qurtubi (2005:169) in his book *al-Jami` fi Ahkam al-Qur'an* added, the practice of *tafakkur* also serves as a training to the mind to think well and consider something fairly because Islam puts reason in high places and make reason as a place of legal acceptance. Hence, protecting the mind is one of the five Maqasid al-Syari'ah.

Furthermore, al-Ghazzali (1968: 133) says *tafakkur* can be a solution if there is any confusion in a matter. As a matter of fact, he always practice *tafakkur* and chooses appropriate places to implement the practice. For example, in the year 1102 AD he was on leave from his duty as a teacher in the Nizamiyyah madrasah solely for practicing *tafakkur* in the mosque of Damascus (Griffel, 2009: 322).

Meanwhile, IbnQayyim (2015: 215) said that the practice of *tafakkur* is intended to remind ourselves not to forget the purpose of Allah SWT in creating mankind, to prepare supplies after death, to call upon mankind for good and peace as the purpose of *tafakkur* also to gain salvation and success in the world and the hereafter.

Accordingly, IbnTaymiyyah (1989: 13) states in his writings *al-`Ubudiyyah*, the *Salik* must prepare themselves with a sufficient knowledge in order to understand the path and challenge of *tafakkur* for them to achieve the true purpose of *tafakkur* and to be a devout servant, to be grateful and leave bad deeds. Al-Ghazzali (2005: 131) also agrees and affirms that *tafakkur* is one of the qualities of the believer because of the fact that they are able to attain knowledge that can assure their confidence in Allah SWT, to lead a practice in accordance with the Shari'ah and to avoid from doing things that is unpleasant to Allah SWT.

From the discussion, it is understood that the practice of *tafakkur* produces many benefits to its practitioners, especially from the point of worship. As explained by al-Sistani (2008: 80) in his book entitled *Manhaj al-Ṣāliḥin al-`Ibadat al-Mu`amalat*, that the main worship is to think about the creation of Allah SWT because it can magnify Him and realize that human is a weak servants that always need the help of Allah SWT.

While al-Suyuti (2009: 207) propose that rational and profound thinking is a symbol of the livelihood of the society that is enlightened, the characteristics of the pious people and the good association with others. If the practice becomes an obligation for every individual, it will diminish social problems in society. On the contrary, there will be feelings of compassion, good morals, sensible souls and minds.

In general, *tafakkur* is a practical way of remembering Allah SWT, perfecting worship to Allah, achieving the true essence of knowledge, solving problems plus to produce high-confidence human, knowledgeable and free from ignorance. Thus, the concept of *tafakkur* in tasawwuf can have a positive impact on the souls, emotions and physical aspects of the *salik* as well as to the communities around them.

Concept of *Tafakkur* According to Islamic Scholar

The concept of *tafakkur* has been widely discussed by authorized Islamic scholars. Especially the effectiveness of *tafakkur* practice in forming a superior Muslim personality, an intact soul with a strong faith. For example, al-Qusyairi (2003: 604) says *tafakkur* can help the *salik* to achieve and understand the concept of *al-Fana* ' and *al-Baqa* '. *Al-Fana* ' is the desire of *salik* to destroy itself. That is, the loss of self-consciousness related to the condition and self-esteem.

Al-Tusi (2006: 19) also mention, *al-Fana* ' is the loss of the nature of the soul and the desire. So, whoever succeeds in subjugating the desire have succeed in mastering the concept of *al-Fana* ' and able to obey and know Allah SWT in true essence then succeed in achieving *al-Baqa* '. As He mentioned in surah *al-Nahl*, verse 16: 96:

Meaning: " *What is with you shall perish and what is with Allah shall last. And certainly, we shall bless those who observed patience, with their reward for the best of what they used to do*".

According to al-Qusyayri (2003: 604), *al-Baqa* ' is the perpetuity of commendable attributes after the fall or destruction of despicable attributes. *Al-Baqa* ' is also a way to meet Allah SWT and reach *Ma`rifah Allah*. So to get the path, the *salik* should always works on their *tafakkur*, practicing and be thoughtful. Allah said in *al-Rahman* verse 55: 26-27, which means:

Meaning: " *Everyone who is on it (earth) has to perish. And your Lord's Countenance will remain, full of majesty, full of honour*".

After *salik* succeeded in mastering the concepts of *al-Fana* ' and *al-Baqa* ', al-Ghazzali (1968: 29) explains in *Minhaj al-Abidin Ila Jannati Rabba al-`Alamin*, it means that *Salik* has reached *Ma`rifah Allah* which is the main purpose of *tafakkur* in tasawwuf. *Ma`rifah Allah* is a knowledge that can affirm the confidence towards Allah SWT without a slight doubt and confusion in it and also able to send someone to testimony God directly. In addition, able to understand God's laws more regularly covering all things.

Al-Kalabazi (1998: 158) also said, *Ma`rifah Allah* is a tasawwuf level which contains the knowledge of the divine nature which is a knowledge at the highest level that relates to the secrets of the heart and mind that can be achieved with *tafakkur*, *dhikir*, *khulwah*, *`uzlah*, *suluk* or any terms that refer to the condition of the *salik* that isolate themselves to be able to reflect into him with the spiritual eye. *Tafakkur* at this level will bring *salik* into elements of *muraqabah*, *mukasyafah* and *muḥaḍarah musyahadah*.

Next, `Abd al-Qadir` Isa (2007: 20) also agrees and thinks, *tafakkur* is one of the most important elements of tasawwuf and able to connect to *Ma`rifat Allah* because *tafakkur* contains

the word *dhikir* so that they will always remember Allah SWT. In addition, *tafakkur* practice will only be effective and perfect if accompanied by other tasawwuf methods. For example al-Ghazzali (2005: 48) says in the book *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, practice of *tafakkur* should be accompanied by other tasawwuf methods, such as *'uzlah*, *khulwah*, *dhikir*, *riyaḍah* and *muraqabah* in order to achieve the true essence and purpose of tasawwuf.

Then, Muhamad Taqiyudin (2009: 70) also argued, The perfect *tafakkur* should involve both the physical body and the spiritual. Among the ways and forms of *tafakkur* involving the spiritual is *dhikir*, *khulwah*, *'uzlah* and *muraqabah*. The practice is aimed at strengthening the heart to always be devoted to worshiping Allah SWT. Al-Baghdadi (1990: 218) also agreed with the opinion and added, *tafakkur* in tasawwuf can only be achieved with *riyaḍah* and earnest effort such as self restrain from sinful desire and leaving unnecessary thing and not just blindly following opinions of other people.

That opinion coincides with the view of al-Ghazzali (1968: 130) which declares that tasawwuf is a way to combat lustful desires in earnest, worship with sincerity, avoid the disgraceful nature and leave the vain thing in order to solely worshiping to Allah SWT wholeheartedly. Furthermore, *tafakkur* practice is also a noble practice inherited by the prophets.

The proof, al-Buṭi (2010: 73) says in *Fiqh al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah Ma'a Mujaz Li Tarikh Li al-Khilafah al-Rasyidah*, Prophet Muhammad SAW always practice *tafakkur* and *'uzlah* to find the light of guidance to illuminate the day of jahiliyyah at that time. As a result, Allah SWT has provided guidance in the form of the Qur'an and the hadith. This matter was emphasized by Allah s.w.t in surah al-'Alaq verse 1-5:

Meaning: "Read with the name of your Lord who created (everything), He created man from a clot of blood. Read, and your Lord is the most gracious, who imparted knowledge by means of the pen. He taught man what he did not know".

Ibn Kathir (1978: 780) also said, other than the Prophet Muhammad SAW, the previous prophets and apostles have also been guided after sincerely practicing *tafakkur*, *khulwah* and *'uzlah* in order to seek the ultimate truth that can bring human out of darkness, ignorance and confusion according to holy scriptures that have been revealed such as al-Quran, Zabur, Taurat, Injil and Suhuf.

Next, Ibn Khaldun (1979: 70) concludes, elements in tasawwuf such as *tafakkur*, *khulwah* and *dhikir* is a noble practice that can purify other practices. The practice of *tafakkur* also is a way for practicing *mujadah* and *muḥasabah* which can increase faith and improve the quality of worship towards Allah SWT.

However, al-Ghazzali (2005: 20) asserted, prior to dwelling and practicing *tafakkur* and other related elements, the *salik* must first understand the fundamentals of the Islamic law and

teaching as to know what is compulsory to do, what is prohibited and what is permissible in Islam. Furthermore, can distinguish between clean thing and unclean thing then purificate from inner and outer impurities.

From the opinions and perspectives of the scholars on the above *tafakkur* practices, it can be concluded that *tafakkur* in tasawwuf is a method to know Allah SWT in earnest, to form a noble character, a pure heart and worship only for Allah SWT. It should be noted, other tasawwuf elements such as *`uzlah*, *khulwah*, *dhikir*, *riyadah* and *muraqabah* needs attention too and should be practiced with the practice of *tafakkur* so the practice of *tafakkur* is perfect and achieving the objective.

Practice of Tafakkur in Tasawwuf

The development of tasawwuf practice and tarekat in Malaysia according to Harun (2015: 157) in his study titled *Tasawwuf dan Tarekat: Sejarah Perkembangan dan Alirannya di Malaysia*, the practice of tarekat in Malaysia begins with the arrival of preachers and traders from Arab in line with the date of inclusion of Islam in the Nusantara archipelago. There are many groups of tarekat who are active in Malaysia such as Naqshabandiyyah, Alawiyyah and Syadziliyyah tarekat.

Concerning *tafakkur* in tasawwuf also Riḍa (1990: 720-726) has quoted that *tafakkur* is one of the methods in tasawwuf that is obliged in the religion to purify themselves from sin in order to reach the the highest level of spirituality. As such, *tafakkur* becomes an important practice set out in the tasawwuf element.

For example, in relation to *tafakkur* in the Naqshabandiyyah order, Muhammad (1994: 12) explains in his study about Salik In Naqshabandiyyah, there are two forms to practice *tafakkur*. The general *tafakkur* is performed to reflect on the creatures created by Allah SWT. This type of *tafakkur* also does not require sitting position, a certain way and freely performed by anyone.

The specific *tafakkur* is contained in it *kayfiyyat*, specific body positions and should be guided by the teacher. For example, the *salik* should reflect and do the *dhikir* until he becomes calm and have the divine light in his heart. However, once the *salik* becomes senior then all the methods are no longer needed (Manam, 1994: 12).

To complete the *tafakkur* routine, Yusof (2004: 199) in his writings, 'The Naqshabandiyyah Al-Khalidiyyah Order In Malaysia : A Critical Analysis Based On The Quran and Sunnah', the *salik* should always do the *dhikir* so that the *salik*'s heart will always linked to Allah SWT and not deceived by the will of lust and the pleasure of the world. A *salik* also must earnestly performing worship.

While Mustafa (2013: 300) explains in his book *Majmu`ah al-Aḥzab Syadziliyyah lilquṭb Abi al-ḥasan*, according to Syadziliyyah, there are some important things to be considered by *salik* if they want to *tafakkur*. Among them, the *salik* must first seek repentance by doing the

repentance prayer and seek forgiveness from Allah SWT from previous sins. After that, do the *dhikir* by mentioning the words *tahlil*, *tahmid*, *tasbiḥ*, *salawat* and the holy verses of the Qur'an, as the readings help humans remember Allah SWT. As in His word in surah *al-Jumu'ah* verses 62:10:

Meaning: "Then once the *Salah* is over, disperse in the land, and seek the grace of Allah, and remember Allah abundantly, so that you may be successful".

Then, always remember to Allah SWT by doing the *dhikir* in secret so that, the reading of *dhikir* is completely absorbed in the heart and mind. After that, the *tafakkur* begins by emptying the mind except Allah SWT then thinking about the origin of His creation and the purpose of human created. Furthermore, *salik* should also reflect on the journey of *salik*'s own heart (Ḍiyya al-Din, 2013: 300).

Omar (2012: 154) also stated that in the Naqshabandiyyah order, *tafakkur* and *dhikir* were the most important characteristic of the *tasawwuf tarekat*. *Dhikir* is intended to form the spiritual and the heart because the meaning of *tafakkur* itself means utterance and remembrance. *Tafakkur* acts as a memory amplifier to the heart and mind. In addition, the teacher is the most important element when it comes to make the right step for the *salik* and it is also as a reference and confirmation regarding the practice of *tafakkur*.

Sidek (1989: 22) insists, the reading of *tafakkur* in the Naqshabandiyyah order contains the holy verses from the al-Quran and *salawat* on the noblest of Prophet Muhammad SAW. Moreover, the *salik* should repeat three times the words '*Ilahi Anta maqṣudi wa riḍaka maṭlubi*' to increase the conviction that Allah SWT sees and knows the state of their bodies and their souls.

Sidek (1989: 35) adds, though *tafakkur* is not specially restricted to a specific time and place. However, *tafakkur* and *dhikir* are usually done after the Maghrib prayer until the Isyak prayer and also after the Subuh prayer until the sun rises in the position facing the *kiblat*, choosing a comfortable place and a suitable place for worship. As the Prophet Muhammad SAW said in al-Syaykhani books of hadith, 2: 7743 which means:

"A man *dhikir* saying the name of Allah in isolation until his eyes run with tears".

Omar (2012: 120) also said that the Naqshabandiyyah order had two types of *dhikir*. First, *dhikir Ismu al-Dhat*. How to do this kind of *dhikir* is to mention the word Allah repeatedly in your heart and focus your mind on only Allah SWT. Second, *dhikir Nafi Ithbat*. The *kalimah* of this *dhikir* is *La Ilaha Illa Allah*, it is intended to remember Allah SWT and to remove the impurities that are in the heart.

While Valeria (2014: 4) also said that *dhikir* also aimed to avoid committing sin coming from tongue such as vain conversations, eliminating the passage of heart from *syirik* to Allah SWT despite the small things, instilling the love of Allah SWT and realizing the existence of Allah SWT that He truly exist thus denying another god besides Him.

Then al-Falimbani (1932: 35) stated that one should compile and practice the *dhikir* or *wirid* in accordance based on the conditions of his life. For example, someone who has a family, working, studying and so on has certain and different obligation. Therefore, seek the right time to do the *dhikir* to always remember Allah SWT and avoid being negligent and at the same time can fulfill the obligations that have been accounted for.

Al-Baghdadi (1990: 217) also pointed out that reading the word *dhikir* is also the most important principle in *tasawwuf* and anyone who do the *dhikir* to Allah SWT will continue to receive the blessings of Allah SWT. Next, according to Shaykh al-Syadzili (2008: 51), *fadhilat dhikir* is able to open a secret of the heart and can control the desire of lust in the *salik*. Like the word of Allah SWT said in surah *al-Ahzab*, verses 33: 21:

Meaning: “ *There is indeed a good model for you in the Messenger of Allah – for the one who has hope in Allah and the Last Day, and remembers Allah profusely*”.

In short, the practice of *tafakkur* in *tasawwuf* has several levels and forms. Among them are general and specific levels. The general level can often be done by anyone, like thinking about the natural phenomena. While the specific *tafakkur* should be done in orderly manner and received guidance from the teacher then accompanied by repentance. In addition, the reading of *dhikir* during the *tafakkur* helps *salik* control the mind, the heart and the feeling when practicing *tafakkur* in order to focus on Allah SWT as the main goal of *tafakkur*.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study finds that *tafakkur* is a practice that demonstrates deep thinking to achieve the essence of knowledge and detached from blind *taqlid* in a matter. Therefore, the practice of *tafakkur* is also a practice that is based on the al-Quran, the hadith of the Prophet SAW, the agreement of the companions and the righteous to reflect on the signs and creations of Allah SWT. While for *sufis* or *salik*, they make *tafakkur* and other *tasawwuf* elements such as *dhikir*, *khalwah*, *uzlah*, *riqah* and *muraqabah* as the aim for acquiring *al-Fana* ', *al-Baqa*' then to reach *Ma`rifah Allah*.

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