

Book 39 Reflection/Meditation

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W7- Book 39 Reflection/Meditation

The Merit of Meditation

Allah, exalted is He, encourages reflection on His noble Book in many passages, praising those who engage in such contemplation. He states: {...who remember God, standing, sitting, and on their sides, contemplating the creation of the heavens and the earth: Our Lord, You have not created this in vain}. Additionally, He mentions: {Surely in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of night and day, there are signs for people of understanding...}

Muhammad ibn Wāsi narrated that a man from Basra once visited Umm Dharr after Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī's death, asking about his worship. She responded, 'He used to sit all day in a corner of the house, meditating.' Al-Hasan al-Basri remarked, 'Meditating for an hour is better than praying all night.' He also explained: if one's speech lacks wisdom, it is merely idle talk; if silence isn't a result of meditation, it is forgetfulness; and if reflection isn't aimed at pondering, it is just play. Bishr al-Hafi added, 'If people meditated on Allah's majesty, they would never disobey Him, exalted and glorified is He.' Furthermore, al-Shafi'i, may Allah have mercy on his soul, advised, 'Use silence to prevent unnecessary speech and meditation to enhance understanding and reasoning.'

The Essence and Fruit of Meditation

Meditation involves mentally presenting two distinct cognitions (ma'rifatayn) in the mind to derive a third. For example, consider someone focused on this world and favouring worldly life but aiming to recognise that the afterlife should take precedence. They first need to understand that what is ongoing deserves priority, and that the afterlife is eternal. From these two cognitions, they can infer the third: that the afterlife is more worthy of one's preference. This mental process of combining the initial two cognitions to reach the third is called, variously, meditation (tafakkur), consideration (itibar), reminiscence (tadhakkur), speculation (nazar), pondering (ta'ammul), and reflection (tadabbur). Tadabbur, ta'ammul, and tafakkur are synonyms, while tadhakkur, itibar, and nazar carry different nuances, even though their core idea is similar- much like how al-sārim, al-muhannad, and al-sauf all refer to a sword from different perspectives.

Thus, **itibar** is used to designate presenting in one's mind two cognitions insofar as one proceeds from them to a third. If this transition is not achieved and one is only able to consider the two cognitions, then the term used is tadhakkur [reminiscence] and not i'tibar.

Regarding **nazar** [speculation] and **tafakkur** [meditation], they are employed to seek a third form of understanding. Those who do not pursue this additional cognition are not considered to engage in speculation. Every person who meditates has attained remembrance, but not all who remember are meditative about it.

Remembering involves repeating thoughts to ensure they become well-established and are not forgotten. In contrast, meditation helps expand one's understanding and can lead to new insights. This highlights the key difference between reminiscence and meditation.

When different cognitions are accumulated and linked in the mind in a specific sequence, they lead to new knowledge. This is because one cognition results from another. Therefore, when a new cognition occurs and is paired with another, it produces a novel outcome. Many people are prevented from gaining a deeper understanding of various sciences due to a lack of capital, meaning the knowledge that fuels these sciences.

For example, someone who lacks commodities cannot profit from them. Even if they have commodities, poor business skills can prevent them from turning a profit. Similarly, a person may possess enough knowledge to form a foundation for multiple sciences but still struggle to apply, organise, or connect this knowledge to achieve different results.

Meditation essentially combines two thoughts to create a third, with the main goal being knowledge and understanding. Because of this, meditation serves as the foundation and essential key to all positive outcomes. It emphasises the importance of meditation, demonstrating that it goes beyond simple remembrance and reminiscence, as it is both a form of recalling and an act of deeper comprehension. To grasp how meditation changes a person's state, **it is important to recognise that there are five levels of progression.**

¹ **reminiscence**, which consists of presenting two cognitions in one's mind;

² Meditation involves gaining the desired ³**knowledge** through two key cognitions: the occurrence of understanding and the ⁴**heart's** illumination by it. As a result of this enlightenment, the heart's state shifts from its previous condition and, the ⁵**limbs** serve the heart in alignment with this renewed state.

The Channels of Meditation

A servant's thoughts about *dīn* always revolve around two main areas: themselves, including their qualities and states, or God, encompassing His attributes and actions, as these are the only two relevant categories. The first category concerns the servant reflecting on their own qualities and actions to identify what is praiseworthy and what is blameworthy.

This involves **four types**: acts of disobedience, acts of obedience, qualities that lead to ruin, and qualities that lead to salvation.

As for acts of disobedience, a man should carefully examine each of his seven organs every morning, then perform a general inspection of his body to determine if he is engaged in any disobedient acts and should therefore refrain from them. If he finds he disobeyed the previous day, he should make amends through abstention and remorse. Conversely, if he anticipates a risk of disobedience during the day, he should prepare to avoid it and keep his distance.

He should watch his tongue, remembering that it can lead to backbiting, lying, and over-praising virtue. He needs to realise these actions are sinful in Allah's eyes and consider the severe punishment they warrant. Additionally, he should reflect on his inner state and how he might unknowingly commit these faults, encouraging him to avoid them. Similarly, he should be mindful of his hearing, recognising that it can be used to listen to gossip and idle talk, and he should protect himself by avoiding such sounds or discouraging harmful speech. He should also consider his stomach, recognising that overeating or consuming unlawful or doubtful food can lead him to disobey Allah, the Exalted. He must focus on lawful ways to earn his sustenance and avoid unlawful food. By reflecting on each organ, he should ensure they are guarded against faults.

Regarding acts of obedience, he should examine the obligations assigned to him, reflect on how he performs them, and find ways to prevent neglect or compensate for any omissions

through extra acts. He should then focus on each organ, reflecting on the actions that Allah appreciates. For instance, he should think that the eyes were created to observe the heavens and the earth and their lessons, and that they should be used in obedience to Allah —by looking at the Quran and the practices of His Messenger, peace be upon him. Similarly, he should consider that hearing can be directed towards listening to wise words or reading the Quran, rather than succumbing to useless chatter, appreciating Allah's gift. He should also reflect on his wealth, recognising that he can donate specific properties to charity, knowing he doesn't need them and that Allah will replace them if he does. In this manner, he reviews his organs, body, and wealth, reflecting on his sincere intentions and what motivates him to act promptly in obedience.

The qualities that lead to perdition are discussed in Quarter III: The Qualities Leading to Perdition. While there are many, considering just ten is enough to avoid these and ensure safety from the others. These are: avarice, pride, conceit, ostentation, resentful envy, excessive anger, gluttony, lust, love of wealth, and love of status.

On the path to salvation, qualities such as repentance and remorse for sins, patience during trials, gratitude for God's blessings, fear and hope, detachment from worldly possessions, sincerity, honesty in following commandments, love and glorification of Allah, contentment with His actions, longing for Him, humble submission, and humility before Him are essential. We have covered all these aspects here, including their causes and signs. All these issues have been addressed in this quarter, with an emphasis on their causes and symptoms.

Encourage the servant to reflect daily on their heart: identify missing qualities that could bring them closer to Allah. They should examine their sins, reflect, hold them in mind, and grasp their seriousness to foster feelings of repentance and regret. Next, they should consider the threats and severity outlined in the Sacred Law regarding these sins, while confidently recognising that they risk Allah's displeasure, exalted is He, unless they genuinely repent. This practice embodies meditation. Different groups tend to specific sins; thus, they should focus on these particular faults instead of sins they are immune to. For instance, a knowledgeable and cautious individual may not be immune to showing off their knowledge to seek fame or recognition through teaching or admonition. Such behaviour leads to a significant test, which only the truthful can pass. Anyone observing these traits in themselves should step back, isolate, and seek humility and humility.

The second subdivision involves contemplating Allah's majesty, glory, and grandeur by reflecting on His actions —glory be to Him —and on the channels of His destiny, the marvels of His creation, and the wonders of His commands. All these aspects highlight His majesty, grandeur, holiness, and exaltedness. They also reflect the perfection of His knowledge and wisdom and the realisation of His will and power. Therefore, one considers His attributes by observing their signs, since we cannot reflect directly on them. Additionally, these signs point to the One who causes them.

How to Meditate on the Creation of Allah, Exalted is He

Everything that exists besides Allah, exalted is He, is His act and creation. Every atom, substance, accident, quality, and qualified thing contains wondrous subtleties that reveal Allah's wisdom, power, majesty, and glory. Listing all these is impossible. Additionally, among created beings, some remain unknown to us, as Allah, exalted is He, states: {... and He creates what you know not ...}. Some beings are only recognised in their totality, not in detail, which invites us to contemplate their specifics.

Among these beings, some are beyond our naked eye perception, like angels, demons, the Throne, and the Stool. Our meditation on these is limited and obscure. Therefore, let us focus on those closest to human perception, observable to the eye. The Qur'an encourages reflection on these signs, as Allah, exalted is He, states: {Surely in the creation of the heavens and earth and in the alternation of night and day there are signs for men possessed of minds ...}. Allah also exhorts us to contemplate the Qur'an from start to finish, as He says: {And of His signs ...}. Let us now explore how certain verses invite meditation:

One of His signs is the human being, created from a drop of sperm. The person closest to you is yourself, and within you lie countless wonders that reflect Allah's glory, exalted is He. Lifespans pass without uncovering even a tenth of these marvels. So, O heedless and ignorant one of himself, how can you hope to know anything beyond yourself? Allah has enjoined reflection on oneself, as He said: {... and in yourselves; do you not see?}; {And of His signs is that He created you from dust; then, behold, you are mortal, scattered everywhere}; "Has not man considered how We created him from a sperm-drop?" Then, behold, he becomes a clear adversary. The mention of the sperm-drop is repeated in the noble Book, not merely to remind us of its pronunciation but to encourage reflection on its meaning.

Now consider the sperm-drop: a filthy drop of water that becomes useless if left for a short time; how the Lord of lords extracted it from the loins and breastbones; and how He united the male and female, instilling love and affection into their hearts; and how He guides them through love and desire toward union; and how He draws the sperm-drop from man through the act of love-making, and how He causes the blood of menstruation to emerge from the depths of veins and gather in the womb. Then, how He creates the new child within the sperm-drop until it grows and enlarges; and how He transforms the initially white sperm-drop into a red clot; and how He then develops it into an embryo; and how He divides the similar and equal parts of the sperm-drop into bones, nerves, veins, sinews, and flesh; and how He constructs the external organs from flesh, nerves, and veins—shaping the head, cleaving the ears, eyes, nose, mouth, and other passages, and extending the hands and feet, dividing the tips into toes, fingers, and fingertips. Then, how He assembles the internal organs—such as the heart, stomach, liver, spleen, womb, and intestines—with precise measurements and functions. Then He arranges the eye in layers. Reflect on how He created and gathered the bones of the head, made the neck a vessel for the head, attached it to the back, and connected the back bones to the chest bones.

Reflect on how God, exalted is He, created the muscles that move the bones, which are the tools in the human body. Each organ has a specific number and size of muscles. Additionally, consider the veins, arteries, and their branches—explaining this in detail would take a long time.

Reflect now on the sperm-drop, first considering its original state and then what it has become. Think about whether jinn and humans, if they combined their efforts, could create in it faculties like hearing, sight, mind, strength, knowledge, or spirit, or even form its bones, veins, nerves, skin, or hair.

What makes you remarkable is that if you see a highly detailed drawing of a man on a wall, executed with such skill that it appears to be a real person, you would be impressed by the artist's mastery, dexterity, and precision. You would also respect him, even though you know the image was created with paint, pen, hand, skill, knowledge, and will- all of which come from external sources. The artist's role was simply to apply paint on the wall in a specific way. Recognising this should increase your awe and admiration for Allah.

Reflect on Allah's mercy: He delayed the creation of all teeth until the child is two years old, a time when they subsist solely on milk and do not require teeth. Consider how Allah gradually endows the child with perception, reasoning, and guidance until they attain puberty and full maturity.

This overview highlights the incredible wonders of your body, which are impossible to enumerate fully.

It is the innermost realm for meditation and a vivid proof of your Creator's glory. Yet, you often remain unaware, caught up in hunger and sexual cravings. You don't truly understand yourself better than when you eat driven by hunger, feel full, and then sleep; or when you have an urge and indulge in sexual activity; or when anger overtakes you, leading to outbursts. While all creatures share similar instincts, humans uniquely have the knowledge of Allah, exalted is He, through reflecting on the heavens, the earth, and the wonders of horizons and souls.

Among His signs is the earth, where you live. Reflect on its rivers, mountains, and minerals, then look upward to the heavens. Consider the earth when it is barren and dry; then, when water falls upon it, it revives, encouraging growth, turning lush, and sprouting remarkable plants. Various animals emerge from beneath it.

Reflect on how Allah firmly anchored the earth with tall, rugged mountains for stability. He stored water beneath, forming fountains and flowing rivers across its surface. Moreover, He created various trees and plants- including grains, grapes, olives, palms, pomegranates, and many other fruits- which differ in shape and flavour but are all nourished by the same water and thrive in the same land.

His signs are also evident in the variety of animals and their classifications, such as those that fly in the air and those that walk on four, ten, or even a hundred legs, as seen in some insects. These creatures are further categorised by their shapes, benefits, behaviours, and temperaments. Observing the birds in the sky, wild beasts, and domesticated cattle reveals wonders that leave no doubt about the glory of their Creator, the Designer, and the wisdom underpinning their creation. If we attempted to list all the marvels of the spider- its web-

building, food gathering, companionship with its male partner, food storage, geometric house shaping, and how it navigates to its needs- we would find it impossible to mention them all. Truly, every small and large animal contains countless wonders.

Do you think the spider learnt this skill on its own, was created that way, or was it taught by a human? Or do you believe a human directed it, or that it acted without any guidance? A keen observer sees in this tiny creature the glory, majesty, perfection, power, and wisdom of the Creator and Sustainer- qualities that amaze the mind and intellect. This is just a small glimpse of what can be seen across the wide variety of animals. While this is only one example among many, our lack of wonder at these phenomena comes from our familiarity with them.

His signs are also visible in the deep oceans surrounding the dry land. These vast waters contain far more marvels, including numerous animal species and precious stones, than what we observe on Earth's surface. Their volume greatly surpasses that of the land. Every land animal, such as horses, birds, cows, and humans, has a counterpart in the ocean, often in larger numbers. Moreover, oceans harbour countless unique species that do not exist on land.

Reflect on Allah's creation of pearls inside water shells and the growth of corals from rocks beneath the water. Corals are plant-like structures that resemble trees and grow on rocks. Consider the marvels of boats—how Allah sustains their buoyancy on water and enables traders and those seeking wealth to navigate them. He also created ships for cargo, sent winds to move these ships, and gave sailors the ability to understand the origin, direction, and timing of the winds.

What is even more remarkable than all these facts is the most obvious of all: the composition of a drop of water. It is a delicate, thin substance that is transparent and flows smoothly; its parts are joined as if it were a single entity. It is fragile and can break easily, as if it lacks structure. Yet, it is under human control; it can take a solid form or appear otherwise. Despite this, all life on Earth — whether animal or plant — depends on it. If a servant needed water but was denied, he would, if able, offer Earth's treasures to obtain it. The same happens if he suffers from water retention. Truly, the son of Adam is strange! He praises gold, silver, and precious stones, yet ignores Allah's blessing in a simple sip of water. These are clear signs and witnesses, silent yet eloquent, speaking of their Creator's greatness and His perfect wisdom.

One of His signs is the dense air, which resembles the ocean. Birds fly through it using their wings, and it becomes agitated when the wind blows, much like sea waves. Allah has made it dispersed by His mercy: {... And we loosen the winds ...} but if He wills, He can turn it into punishment for the wrongdoers: {We loosed against them a loud wind on a day of continuous misfortune, tearing up men as if they were uprooted palm stumps.} Consider the density of air and its strength when pushed into water, despite its intangible nature. Even a strong person cannot force an inflated skin container into water. This wisdom of Allah, exalted is He, allows boats to float on water. Reflect on the wonders of weather — clouds, thunder, lightning, rain, snow, meteors, and storms — all occurring between sky and earth. The Qur'an has mentioned all such phenomena in Allah's words, exalted is He: {We created not the heavens and earth, and all that between them is, in play ...}.

Among His signs are the heavens' dominions. Consider the universe and everything it contains- planets, Earth, oceans, and air. Compared to the vastness of the heavens, these are like a drop in the ocean or even smaller. Allah emphasises the importance of the heavens and planets in His Book, with every surah mentioning their greatness. The Qur'an also contains many oaths about them, such as Allah's saying, exalted is He: {By heaven of the constellations...}; {By heaven and the night-star}; {By the heaven and That which built it}. Allah, exalted is He, also declares: {No! I swear by the fallings of the stars [and that is indeed a mighty oath, did you but know it]}. Look up at the sky, observe its stars, cycles, and the rising and setting of the sun and moon, as well as the East and West- all in constant motion, with no pause or change. These follow well-ordered, measured phases that neither increase nor decrease until Allah rolls them up like a scroll for writing. Reflect on the abundance and multitude of the planets and the vastness of the universe.

Differences in their colours. Allah, exalted is He, praises those who ponder His words: {.. and [who] reflect upon the creation of the heavens and the earth ...}. Similarly, He condemns those who ignore them, saying: {.. and We set up the heaven as a roof well-protected; yet still from Our signs they are turning away}. He, glory be to Him, also states: {And We have built above you seven strong ones}. Consequently, observe the dominions to witness His greatness and power. Glory be to Him who revealed to His servants what He chose to share, then addressed everyone, saying: {... You have been given knowledge of nothing except a little.} These are the areas where those who meditate can reflect on Allah's creation. Contemplating Allah's essence is not included, but by considering creation, one naturally comes to understand the Creator, His glory, majesty, and power.