



Bridging text and reality: The principles of Tadabbur from An-Nabulsi's perspective in modern tafsir studies

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ABSTRACT

This study deeply examines the principles of Tadabbur (contemplation) of Surat Al-Baqarah in Muhammad Ratib An-Nabulsi's exegesis, "Tadabbur Āyātillāh fī al-Nafsi wa al-Kawni wa al-Ḥayātī," and its relevance to contemporary Qur'anic interpretative studies. Tadabbur is essential for holistic Qur'anic comprehension, yet systematic literature on its principles remains limited, especially approaches integrating spiritual, cosmological, and practical life aspects. An-Nabulsi offers a unique methodology bridging sacred texts with modern realities. Employing a qualitative-analytical approach, this study explores An-Nabulsi's Tadabbur principles, highlighting how his exegesis provides a transformative framework for applicable Qur'anic understanding. Findings indicate that An-Nabulsi's principles are highly relevant, offering a new lens for addressing modern human challenges, while enriching the scholarly treasury of tafsir, rendering the Qur'an a dynamic life guide. This research contributes to the development of comprehensive Qur'anic Tadabbur methodologies.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Muslims believe that the Quran is a complete guide that directs humanity on the path to spiritual, social, and cosmological salvation (An Nabulsi, n.d.). However, mere literal reading has proven insufficient to awaken modern existential awareness, leading to the emergence of the concept of *Tadabbur* as a method of reflection to explore the deepest messages of the holy verses (Diansyah & Waskito, 2023). Surah Al-Baqarah holds a crucial position because it contains comprehensive teachings ranging from monotheism, sharia law, to social relations (Mufid, 2020). Amidst the growing public interest in studying *Tadabbur*, an irony arises: scientific literature that systematically maps the principles of *Tadabbur* is still rare (Achmad, 2025). This gap raises a fundamental problem: how to seamlessly connect textual understanding with the complex practices of modern life.

This is where the concept of *Tadabbur* emerges as a reflective method for deepening the message of the Quran. *Tadabbur* goes beyond simply reading the text, but rather through the layers of meaning of the verses, connecting them to the realities of life, and using them as a mirror for self-improvement (Diansyah & Waskito, 2023). Through *Tadabbur*, the verses of the Quran are viewed not merely as doctrine but also as an "existential dialogue" that is always relevant to human situations across time and space. Thus, *Tadabbur* offers a way to avoid the trap of a rigid, purely textual understanding and opens up opportunities for a more comprehensive self-transformation.

Surah Al-Baqarah holds a special place in this regard. The longest surah in the Quran contains a comprehensive spectrum of teachings: from strengthening monotheism and explaining sharia law, to stories of previous generations,

to principles of social ethics. With its comprehensive themes, Surah Al-Baqarah can be considered a miniature guide to Islamic life. It not only guides individuals in the ritual dimension but also guides humanity in building healthy social relationships, upholding justice, and establishing a harmonious social order. Therefore, contemplating this surah can be a strategic entry point in efforts to revitalize the relevance of the Quran amidst the dynamics of modern life.

However, amidst the growing interest among Muslims in studying the Quran more deeply through *Tadabbur* (contemplation), an irony has emerged. Scholarly literature specifically mapping the methodology of *Tadabbur* systematically remains very limited. Most references consist of classical tafsir studies or popular lectures, which, while rich in meaning, do not fully address the academic and practical needs of Muslims today. Consequently, there is often a gap between a textual understanding of the Quran and the ability to relate it to the complex practices of modern life.

Various approaches to interpretation have developed from classical to modern times: from textual-historical interpretations of the Qur'an, philosophical interpretations that emphasize rationality, to social interpretations that emphasize public justice (Nirwana A.N. et al., 2024). However, these conventional approaches are often trapped in narrow linguistic or historical analysis without fostering transformative reflection. Muhammad Ratib An-Nabulsi, in his commentary, "*Tadabbur Āyātillāh fī al-Nafsi wa al-Kawni wa al-Hayātī*," offers a unique synthesis by combining spiritual, scientific, and practical dimensions (Zahran, 2021). Unfortunately, no contemporary interpretation theory explicitly structures *Tadabbur* as a comprehensive framework to bridge the message of revelation and the practical needs of modern society.

This study specifically aims to: first, identify the forms of the rules of *Tadabbur* Surah Al-Baqarah from An-Nabulsi's perspective, and second, analyze their relevance to contemporary models of interpretation. This approach is certainly expected to expand the field of interpretation methodology, which has so far focused on legal norms or linguistic history, towards a more vibrant reflective-cosmological dimension (Amirudin, 2023). The research reviewed also has the potential to benefit Qur'an scholars, religious educators, and the wider community who want the interpretation of holy verses to not only stop at the normative level, but also touch on practical and emotional awareness.

The main argument of this research stems from the urgency of bridging the gap between the text of the Qur'an and the increasingly complex problems of modern life. An-Nabulsi, in his commentary, proposed an evolutionary model of *Tadabbur* (contemplation of the soul) that connects contemplation of the soul (*an-nafs*), the order of the universe (*al-kaun*), and practical orientation (*al-hayah*). The hypothesis is that An-Nabulsi's *Tadabbur* principles provide a holistic-transformative interpretive framework that can unite spirituality with contemporary social dynamics. In turn, the *Tadabbur* process does not stop at merely individual spiritual practice but continues to become a relevant epistemic instrument to face the challenges of the times (Ishaq & Hamid, 2021).

2. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

a. Biography of Muhammad Ratib An-Nabulsi

In the landscape of modern Islamic thought, the name Muhammad Ratib An-Nabulsi evokes a unique constellation. Born on December 26, 1938, in Damascus, Syria, into a distinguished family that instilled a love of knowledge from an early age, he seemed destined to embark on a long journey toward the epistemic horizon of the Qur'an. His father, a prominent scholar and expert in recitation, became his first role model, instilling Islamic values and intellectual etiquette that would later shape his interpretations. From this context, one can discern the early seeds of An-Nabulsi's strong emphasis on the integration of spiritual piety with rational reasoning. The Damascus environment, known as a center of classical scholarly tradition, helped shape his traditional dimension, but An-Nabulsi's youthful spirit transcended mere textual scholarship, embracing a broader intellectual struggle. Within this constellation, his family background became not only his biological origins but also the spiritual foundation that shaped the universe of meaning in his later works of exegetical work, *Tadabbur* (An Nabulsi, 2016).

Meanwhile, his academic career demonstrates a remarkable academic dynamism. After graduating from high school in Damascus, An-Nabulsi continued his studies at the University of Damascus and earned a bachelor's degree in Arabic literature. However, his intellectual drive did not stop there. He went to the University of Lyon, France, to explore Arabic language and literature in a modern, secular European atmosphere. Ironically, it was precisely in this Western atmosphere that An-Nabulsi solidified his belief in the spiritual depth of the Quran, earning a doctorate in education specializing in Arabic linguistics. Upon closer examination, the dialectic between Damascus—representing the Eastern Islamic tradition—and Lyon—symbolizing modern Western rationalism—provided a synthesis that would later mature his *Tadabbur* method of interpretation. From these two poles of academic experience, An-Nabulsi learned to reconcile spiritual intentions with scientific methodology without negating each other (*Al Sirah Al Dzatiyyah: An Nabulsi*, n.d.).

An-Nabulsi's devotion to the world of scholarship was not limited to formal academic spaces. He actively participated in various tafsir studies, public lectures, and even founded an Al-Qur'an study institute that focused on internalizing the meaning of verses in the context of contemporary life (Misywar Hayati: An Nabulsi, n.d.). This is where it becomes clear how interpretation for An-Nabulsi is not merely a textual activity, but an existential practice that continuously interacts with modern social, political, and scientific realities. Therefore, it is not surprising that in the book *Tadabbur Āyātillāh fī al-Nafsi wa al-Kawni wa al-Hayāti*, An-Nabulsi formulated an integrative interpretation paradigm that combines the spiritual-psychological (*an-nafs*), cosmological (*al-kaun*), and social praxis (*al-hayah*) dimensions. With this approach, he succeeded in offering a new horizon in the study of tafsir that does not merely emphasize the majesty of the *lafz*, but rather dives deeper into exploring the vibrations of reality contained in the verses to address the anxieties of modern humans.

Furthermore, when examining An-Nabulsi's thought patterns, it becomes clear that his *Tadabbur* approach is not merely a theoretical construct, but rather the fruit of a long reflection that flowed through the waves of his life. His struggle with the legacy of classical Islamic literature gave him an awareness of the authority of the sanad and scientific discipline, while his interaction with modern philosophical and scientific literature sharpened his reasoning in empirical logic. At the intersection of these two horizons, An-Nabulsi developed the postulate that *Tadabbur* is not a practice that negates knowledge, but rather embraces it as a medium to glorify the verses of God in the universe. Thus, his biography is not merely a series of data on his birth, education, and monumental actual works, but rather an existential mosaic that emphasizes that the interpretation of the Qur'an must strengthen humanity while humanizing knowledge.

b. Profiling Tafsir An-Nabulsi (*Tadabbur Āyātillāh fī al-Nafsi wa al-Kawni wa al-Hayāti*)

A closer look at Muhammad Ratib An-Nabulsi's work, *Tadabbur Āyātillāh fī al-Nafsi wa al-Kawni wa al-Hayāti*, reveals that this book is not merely a collection of conventional thematic interpretations. This interpretation is, in fact, designed to integrate the spiritual meaning of the Qur'an with the scientific realm and the social realities of modern life (Zahran, 2021). An-Nabulsi positions "*an-nafs*" as a mirror of the human mind that needs to be continuously sharpened through *Tadabbur*, then "*al-kaun*" directs readers to cosmological reasoning on the verses of the universe, while "*al-hayah*" leads to the actualization of Qur'anic values in everyday social dynamics. This approach demonstrates epistemic courage: combining feeling with reason, dhikr with thinking, which in classical interpretations are often sharply separated. Therefore, An-Nabulsi's interpretation can be read as a direct response to the hermeneutical anxiety of modern Muslims who long for a connection between the text of revelation and the pulse of contemporary life.

First, the "*an-nafs*" dimension in the work is positioned as a mirror of the human soul. An-Nabulsi emphasizes that *Tadabbur* is a contemplative process that not only reads the text's external meaning but also sharpens inner awareness, purifies the soul, and directs humans to an existential understanding of themselves. In this way, the Quran is understood as a means of *tazkiyatun-nafs* (purification of the soul), the relevance of which feels increasingly urgent in a modern society often plagued by alienation, identity crises, and spiritual emptiness.

Second, the "*al-kaun*" dimension is directed toward reading the *kawniyah* verses, namely the signs of God's greatness spread across the universe. An-Nabulsi invites his readers to interpret the universe not merely as an object of scientific observation, but as a cosmic text in constant dialogue with the text of revelation. This view opens up a unique opportunity for integration: modern science is not positioned as an opponent of revelation, but as a bridge to a broader revelation of the Creator's majesty. Thus, reading the Qur'an in a cosmological dimension not only fosters spiritual awe but also strengthens the intellectual motivation to pursue knowledge.

Third, the "*al-hayah*" dimension emphasizes that Qur'anic values must be embodied in everyday social life. Contemplation does not stop at personal awareness or cosmological reflection, but rather demands concrete actualization in social relations, public ethics, and the order of social life. An-Nabulsi emphasized that the Qur'anic message is a moral compass for navigating complex social dynamics: from issues of justice and solidarity to resource and environmental management. With this perspective, contemplation becomes a comprehensive process of transformation, from self-awareness to the formation of a civilized society.

This integrative approach demonstrates An-Nabulsi's epistemic courage. He does not fall into the classic dichotomy between dhikr (spiritual awareness) and fikir (intellectual reasoning), often rigidly separated in the older tradition of exegesis. Instead, he seeks to bridge the two: combining the power of feeling and reason, spirituality and science, revelation and empirical reality. In this style, An-Nabulsi's exegesis can be read as a creative response to the hermeneutical anxiety of contemporary Muslims who long for a real connection between the text of revelation and the pulse of everyday life.

Furthermore, this work can also be understood as an attempt to redefine the role of the Quran in modern civilization. The Quran is not merely a source of formal law or private spiritual inspiration, but also an epistemological framework for interpreting the world, understanding science, and developing social ethics. In other words, An-Nabulsi's interpretation

shifts the pattern of Muslims' relationship with the Quran: from mere reading and memorization to a process of internalization, critical reflection, and practical transformation.

The most obvious advantage of this interpretation is its success in constructing a narrative structure that brings *Tadabbur* to life not merely as a passive reflection, but as an active transformation in three fields simultaneously: psychological, cosmological, and social (Mayyalah & Yusuf, n.d.). An-Nabulsi consistently links the verses of the Qur'an to the discoveries of modern science, such as the law of gravity, the rotation of the earth, or biological patterns that manifest the greatness of God, then leads the reader to a deep awareness of monotheism (An Nabulsi, n.d.). With this methodology, his interpretation does not merely offer a linguistic interpretation or legal fiqh, but opens up fresh spiritual-intellectual integrative steps, which are relevant for 21st-century readers living amidst the rapid flow of world *scientification*. Herein lies its unique strength: presenting the Qur'an as an active dialogue with modern knowledge.

However, a critical analysis of An-Nabulsi's commentary reveals certain limitations. His strong approach to cosmological tafsir (contemplation) sometimes overshadows detailed social or political legal discourse (Zahran, 2021). This potentially leaves gaps in discussions of practical issues, such as the governance of contemporary Islamic transactions or the equally pressing issue of social *ijtihad*. Furthermore, despite his powerful spiritual rhetoric, his explanatory style is often lengthy and repetitive, often with strong scientific illustrations, which may be tedious for some lay readers. However, when read within the framework of the grand design of tafsir, this repetition actually serves as a pedagogical technique to emphasize God's greatness through various perspectives on the universe. Therefore, this "weakness" actually reflects the strategy of spiritual intensification that underpins his commentary.

Most importantly, this commentary presents the methodology of *Tadabbur* not merely as an interpretive tool, but as a path to the formation of an integral consciousness of modern humans. By combining the textuality of revelation and natural phenomena, An-Nabulsi is truly building a hermeneutical bridge that overcomes the dichotomous barriers between religion and science, between transcendental ethics and empirical reality. That is why, in the context of contemporary exegetical discourse, this book deserves to be positioned as an important reference that combines the three horizons of *Tadabbur* into a single, mutually reinforcing methodological entity. Although not free from criticism, An-Nabulsi's commentary at least offers a new map capable of addressing the concerns of the people who have long been torn between scientific modernity and deep spiritual piety.

c. Between *Tadabbur* and Tafsir

The meaning of *Tadabbur* in Islamic studies goes beyond simply the command to read the Qur'an literally. From the various theories presented in Chapter I, it is clear that *Tadabbur* is an effort to explore the consequences of the meaning of verses in depth, beyond grammatical or etymological boundaries. Jamal Mahmud emphasized that *Tadabbur* has the root word *dabbara-yudabbiru*, which means to arrange something from end to end in a mature manner, containing elements of repeated contemplation (Supriadi, 2022). This perspective views *Tadabbur* as a process of contemplating traces of meaning so that readers are encouraged to practice its guidance. Therefore, *Tadabbur* is not merely a cognitive activity, but a transformative process that instills moral and spiritual awareness equally. Meanwhile, classical interpretation tends to focus on the linguistic-historical dimension, while *Tadabbur* demands the internalization of meaning, bridging the text with the psychological and social realities of the reader.

If tafsir is often simplified as a process of uncovering the meaning of the words of the Qur'an based on language *qawa'id* and *asbab al-nuzul*, then *Tadabbur* offers a more existential horizon expansion. As-Suyuthi, for example, focuses on displaying tafsir as a word-by-word explanation so that the meaning becomes clear. But at this point, tafsir is vulnerable to being stuck as an academic study without emotional resonance. On the other hand, *Tadabbur* tries to revive the meaning of the verse in the mind of the reader in order to connect with his existential problem. This perspective is seen in Al-Maraghi's opinion, that tafsir emphasizes the clarification of words and verse structure, while *Tadabbur* focuses on the excavation of wisdom that can shape life attitudes. So from here it becomes clear that *Tadabbur* interprets a deeper ethical and psychological dimension. Furthermore, the use of the word *Tadabbur* in different contexts in the Qur'an creates a complex network of meanings. This is reminiscent of Derrida (w.2004), concept of difference, where the meaning of a word is never fixed, but keeps shifting depending on the context. *Tadabbur*, thus, is not a static concept, but rather a process that continues to evolve along with the development of human understanding (Wood & Bernasconi, 1988).

The dialectic between the verses mentioning *Tadabbur* and the context in which it is used creates a creative tension. On the one hand, there is an explicit call to practice *Tadabbur*, which can be understood as a direct command. On the other hand, the diverse contexts open up wide scope for interpretation. This inevitably creates a productive paradox: the more one seeks to understand the concept of *Tadabbur* through *Tadabbur* itself, the broader the understanding that can be achieved. That's the theory.

Furthermore, within the Gadamerian framework, *Tadabbur* can be emphasized as a fusion of horizons between the historical horizon of the Qur'anic text and the contemporary horizon of its readers. This process is never complete, but rather continues in an endless hermeneutical spiral (Farris, 1988). Each generation of Qur'anic readers brings a new perspective to understanding the concept of *Tadabbur*, so that its meaning is continuously enriched and renewed.

A phenomenological approach to the concept of *Tadabbur* in the Qur'an also opens up a discussion about intersubjectivity in understanding the sacred text. How can individual experiences in *Tadabbur* be communicated and shared with others? This orientation naturally leads to further questions about the role of the community in the process of interpreting and understanding the Qur'an. Within this framework, the phenomenology of time and being, as developed in the thought of Heidegger (w.1976), for example, can provide a more in-depth perspective on the nature of the experience of understanding revelation, which is inseparable from the connection between temporality and existence. In the context of *Tadabbur*, a person's subjective experience in understanding the verses of the Qur'an always operates within a dynamic temporal horizon, where meaning is not static, but constantly moving in the interweaving of past, present, and future. *Tadabbur*, therefore, is not merely a reflection on the text in its actual condition, but also a process of being that places humans in an openness to broader meaning.

According to phenomenology, a person's subjective experience never stands alone but is always intertwined with the world of others. When someone interprets or reflects on a particular verse, that experience carries a unique existential dimension, yet still has the potential to be understood collectively within the context of the community of believers. Thus, *Tadabbur* can be understood as a process that moves from individual awareness to collective awareness. Each individual brings their own horizon of understanding, then meets in a discursive space where the meanings of the Quran are communicated, debated, and enriched.

Furthermore, the phenomenology of time-consciousness and being, as thought by Heidegger (w. 1976) can provide depth to the analysis. Heidegger emphasized that humans are *Dasein*, beings whose existence is always bound by temporality: past, present, and future. Our awareness of something, including the text of revelation, is never static, but rather constantly moving within a dynamic time horizon. In the context of *Tadabbur*, this means that understanding the verses of the Qur'an is not something final or frozen, but is always open to reinterpretation in accordance with human existential experience throughout its historical journey.

A simple example: a verse about patience can be interpreted differently by someone grieving than by someone struggling with social injustice. Both experiences are equally valid and demonstrate how the meaning of the verse evolves according to the reader's temporal and existential horizons. Here, it appears that *Tadabbur* is not simply reading the text "now," but also a movement of consciousness that involves past memories (both personal experiences and the history of the community), reflection on the present, and projection of meaning into the future.

From this perspective, *Tadabbur* can be understood as a process of being-in-the-world in Heidegger's terms: humans are always in connection with the world, with time, with others, and with God. *Tadabbur* is no longer just a ritual of reflection, but an ontological transformation: it places humans in an openness to meaning that continues to develop, beyond the literal boundaries of the text. This also shows that revelation is not a dead text, but a living text that always "speaks back" to humans in every era.

Furthermore, the community dimension is crucial. The intersubjectivity of *Tadabbur* ensures that individual understanding is not trapped in solipsism (merely relying on one's own meaning), but is instead tested, enriched, and affirmed in conversations with others. Quranic study forums, *halaqah* (Islamic study groups), or even academic discussions can be understood as intersubjective spaces where personal meanings converge and form new horizons of understanding. This is what makes *Tadabbur* not merely a private process, but also a social practice that contributes to the formation of the collective consciousness of the community.

Furthermore, the existence of verses on *Tadabbur* can be seen as a form of meta-narrative in the Qur'an. The Qur'an not only conveys narratives about history, law, and ethics, but also narratives about how these narratives should be understood. Within the framework of existential phenomenology, this shows that understanding revelation cannot be separated from the dimension of human existence as a creature in time. The awareness of time in *Tadabbur* of the Qur'an allows for a relationship between individual understanding and the community within a broader intersubjective network. The experience of *Tadabbur* is a phenomenon in which one's understanding is constantly related to the understanding of others in a constantly evolving historical and social space. That is why the process of *Tadabbur* involves not only individual reflection but also a dialectic between individual existential awareness and the continuity of meaning within the community that always changes over time. This creates a new layer of complexity in the study of the Qur'an, where the process of understanding itself becomes an integral part of the message conveyed, confirming that the meaning of revelation always operates in an openness to the possibilities of new meanings within the horizon of time and human existence.

In the context of the philosophy of language, the use of the word *Tadabbur* in the Qur'an can be understood as a speech act (Martinich, 2012). When the Qur'an calls for *Tadabbur*, it does not only describe an activity, but also does something - in this case, activating cognitive and spiritual processes in the reader. This demonstrates the performative power of the Qur'anic language which is not only informative but also transformative. Philosophical analysis of the concept of *Tadabbur* in the Qur'an also leads the author to ontological questions about the nature of understanding itself. Is *Tadabbur* a process of discovering pre-existing meaning, or is it a process of creating meaning?; which leads to further discussions about objectivity and subjectivity in the interpretation of sacred texts.

Simply put, the concept of *Tadabbur* in the Quran can be seen as a bridge between revealed epistemology and rational epistemology. It invites humans to use their intellectual abilities to understand revelation, while simultaneously acknowledging the limitations of human reason in comprehensively comprehending divine truth. This dialectic creates space for continuous spiritual and intellectual growth, making the Quran an inexhaustible source of inspiration to explore.

Furthermore, *Tadabbur*, as a subjective process of engaging in Quranic interpretation, does raise important questions about objectivity and scientific truth. This process of deep reflection, which involves both personal and spiritual dimensions, is inherently subjective. However, this does not mean that *Tadabbur* lacks objectivity or cannot produce scientifically valid and sharia-compliant understanding.

To understand how the subjectivity of *Tadabbur* can coexist with scientific objectivity, it is necessary to explore the concept of truth in the context of Quranic studies. In Islamic tradition, truth is understood not only as something that can be empirically verified, but also includes spiritual and moral truths that can be experienced and felt personally. This aligns with the nature of the Quran itself, which is not merely a legal or historical document but also a spiritual guide that speaks directly to the hearts and souls of its readers, personally.

Therefore, reconciling the subjectivity of *Tadabbur* with the demands of scientific objectivity requires several approaches. First, understanding that objectivity in the context of religious studies is not always identical to objectivity in the natural sciences. In modern hermeneutical studies, it is recognized that every interpretation of a text, including sacred texts, always involves an element of subjectivity from the interpreter. What is important is how this subjectivity is managed and directed through a rigorous and accountable methodology. Second, objectivity in *Tadabbur* can be achieved through a process of intersubjective validation. This means that the results of one's personal reflection can be tested and compared with the understanding of others, including scholars and Qur'anic scholars. This process of dialogue and discussion allows for correction and enrichment of understanding, then leads to a more objective consensus. In Islamic history, this process has given rise to various schools of thought and interpretation that, although differing in detail, remain within the agreed-upon framework of sharia (*muttafaq alaihi*) (El Shamsy, 2013).

Furthermore, subjectivity in *Tadabbur* can actually be a path to objectivity through what is called "participatory objectivity" (Smith, 1999). This concept recognizes that a deep understanding of a phenomenon, including sacred texts, often requires personal involvement and direct experience of others. In the context of the Qur'an, this means that deep contemplation and personal appreciation of its verses can open up insights and understandings that might not be achieved through rigid textual analysis alone. Proof of this will be further tested by the consistency of participatory practice at a systemic, measurable, and massive frequency. However, the subjectivity of *Tadabbur* must stand upright with a strong scientific foundation in the sciences of the Qur'an, Arabic language, and historical context. Without this scientific foundation, there is a risk that personal contemplation will deviate too far from the intended meaning. Therefore, scholars have always emphasized the importance of combining *Tadabbur* with formal study of the Qur'an and related sciences.

Therefore, the question of how reliable and arguable the subjective truth of *Tadabbur* depends heavily on how the *Tadabbur* process is conducted. This means that if the *Tadabbur* process is conducted systematically, based on adequate knowledge, and open to dialogue, control, and correction, the results can be guaranteed to have strong argumentative value. Even within the Islamic intellectual tradition itself, there is abundant evidence of insights derived from the *Tadabbur* process of scholars, which have subsequently become an integral part of the recognized corpus of Islamic knowledge.

Therefore, implementing the results of *Tadabbur* in daily life is also an important aspect that needs to be considered. The subjective truth resulting from *Tadabbur* can be considered valid if it aligns with the basic principles of Islam, does not conflict with clear sharia, and brings practical benefits to the lives of Muslim (Fadel, 2008). For example, there are many lessons in worship and morals in Islam that developed from the deep understanding of scholars through the process of *Tadabbur*, which was then widely accepted by the Muslim community. To ensure that the results of *Tadabbur* do not conflict with sharia, several principles can be proposed as safeguards. First, the results of *Tadabbur* must always be returned to the primary sources of Islam: the Qur'an and Hadith. Second, it must be in line with the *maqasid al-shari'ah*, or the objectives of sharia, agreed upon by scholars. And third, the results of *Tadabbur* must be testable in the realities of life and bring benefits to individuals and society, through the lens of intersubjectivity.

However, in the modern context where Muslims face various new challenges, the *Tadabbur* approach, which combines personal subjectivity with scientific objectivity, has become increasingly crucial. This allows for a dynamic

and responsive understanding of the Quran to meet the needs of the times, without losing its essence and authenticity. Contemporary Muslim thinkers often use this approach to offer interpretations of the Quran relevant to modern issues such as human rights, gender equality, and environmental preservation, among others.

Conceptualizing the relationship between *Tadabbur* (contemplation), understanding, and interpretation in Qur'anic studies presents its own complexities. Traditionally, many consider understanding to precede interpretation, while *Tadabbur* is a later phase, a form of deeper contemplation on the meaning previously acquired. However, when viewed from a more dynamic perspective, as developed in the theory of intertextuality, the relationship between these three processes cannot be separated in a standard linear hierarchy. Instead, there is a circular continuity in which each process is intertwined and can precede the others depending on one's spiritual and intellectual state. Imam al-Ghazali (w.1111) in *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* when explaining the theme of the virtue of recitation emphasized that there are two main prerequisites before someone can enter the process of interpreting the Qur'an authentically, namely *ta'zim 'ala kalamillah* (glorification of the word of Allah) which includes respect for revelation as a divine text as well as respect for Allah as *Al-Mutakallim* (The Speaker), and the presence of *Hudur Al-Qalb* (presence of the heart) which makes one's interaction with revelation a conscious encounter (Al Ghazali, 2005). These two prerequisites indicate that understanding and/or interpretation does not always precede *Tadabbur* or vice versa, because often someone who has inner devotion can obtain depth of meaning before he reaches the stage of rational understanding of the text. However, Ghazali (d. 1111) in his presentation in *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* in the Tilawah chapter, explains that the phase of understanding and interpretation based on rationality that refers to the interpretation of the scholars cannot be ignored (Al Ghazali, 2005).

Furthermore, al-Ghazali also demonstrated that the profound meaning born of *Tadabbur* (contemplation) can reach a person even when they lack the ability to systematically understand or interpret a verse. This indicates that the relationship between *Tadabbur*, understanding, and interpretation does not always proceed in a causal manner. Sometimes, someone who simply reads a particular verse with an open heart can be immediately touched by its essential meaning without first going through a systematic process of understanding. Conversely, there are also those who have undergone textual understanding and interpretation but have not yet achieved the profound awareness that should be the essence of *Tadabbur*. In this context, the process of interpreting revelation becomes more randomly sporadic, where meaning can occur in various phases without a strict sequence, and a person's spiritual experience can be a dominant factor in determining how a verse presents itself to their consciousness.

This perspective is also in line with the thoughts of al-Zarqani (d. 1948) in *Manahil al-Irfan fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an*, where he emphasized that the concept of *Tadabbur* is not merely an intellectual activity oriented towards linguistic understanding alone, but rather a deep involvement with the meanings of the Qur'an in an applied manner. Al-Zarqani divided the model of the influence of the Qur'an on its experts into various forms, to show that the impact is truly based on active involvement with the meaning of the verses and their application in life, not just a superficial reading (Al-Zarqani, 1995). This further strengthens the argument that the process of *Tadabbur*, understanding, and interpretation cannot be separated in a rigid linear sequence, but instead forms an interconnected network that allows one to experience meaning at various levels that can be simultaneous or even precede other stages.

Within this framework, the idea that these three processes are not hierarchical but rather part of a continuous system of meaning finds its justification. Contemplation can be a gateway to understanding, or conversely, understanding can encourage a person to engage in deeper contemplation, while interpretation can enrich the experience of contemplation by broadening the horizons of more contextual meaning. In fact, in some cases, in-depth contemplation can actually trigger a new, fresher interpretation process that is more applicable to the challenges of the times. Thus, the relationship between these three aspects is not one based on strict stratification, but rather a fluid and mutually influencing interaction in a dynamic that continues to develop along with one's spiritual, intellectual, and social experiences in interacting with the Qur'an.

Based on the above analysis, it can be concluded that *Tadabbur*, despite its subjective nature, still has the potential to produce objective and scientifically valid understanding. The key lies in an appropriate methodology, openness to dialogue and criticism, and adherence to fundamental Islamic principles. With this equitable, comparative approach, the *Tadabbur* process can be a rich source of inspiration and guidance for Muslims in their daily lives, while also making a valuable contribution to the development of dynamic Islamic thought that is relevant to the challenges of changing times.

d. The Recitation of Surat Al-Baqarah from the Perspective of Muhammad Ratib An-Nabulsi

One of Muhammad Ratib An-Nabulsi's methodological foundations in interpreting Surah Al-Baqarah is to place the verse as the central axis that must be bridged with the inner reality of humankind. Because *Tadabbur* according to An-Nabulsi must begin with the awareness of monotheism that internalizes that all verses—whether about laws, stories or beliefs—essentially strengthen the oneness of Allah (An Nabulsi, n.d.). With this foundation

of monotheism, An-Nabulsi rejects the model of partial reading that only picks verses according to practical needs, because it is considered to tear apart the holistic structure of meaning.

Within the framework of Muhammad Ratib An-Nabulsi's *Tadabbur* on Surah Al-Baqarah, an understanding is woven that explores human nature to the deepest recesses of the soul. Fear, greed, and hypocrisy appear not merely in the rhetorical imagery of the verse, but as psychological mirrors that challenge the reader to trace their origins in the recesses of the heart. This interpretation positions the Quran as a reflector of mental conditions that demand cleansing from destructive patterns, igniting the function of *Tadabbur* as spiritual therapy. However, this inner reflection does not stop looking inward; it expands to the cosmic horizon, where the phenomena of rain, the rotation of the earth, and the sky are elevated not only within the framework of scientific data. An-Nabulsi's interpretation of Surah Al-Baqarah: 164 exemplifies how geographical knowledge simultaneously evokes a subtle gratitude, blending reason and feeling in a comprehensive awareness of monotheism. This kind of *Tadabbur* breaks down the false barrier between revelation and science, presenting an experience of faith that involves both intelligence and awe. On another level, he emphasized that every verse is a call to action, so that the message of zakat, the prohibition of usury, or transaction ethics become social constructs that ground divine values in the economic pulse of the people, not merely personal moral inspiration (An Nabulsi, n.d.).

The strength of this approach is also reflected in An-Nabulsi's rejection of fragmentary readings that divide Surah Al-Baqarah into merely a collection of Islamic jurisprudence laws or historical accounts of the Children of Israel. For him, each fragment is deeply embedded in the larger architecture of meaning woven together by monotheism; dismembering it would only weaken the vitality of the Quranic message. His interpretation views the divine causal pattern not as a record of the past, but as God's law that is constantly at work, providing guidance for reading contemporary socio-political dynamics through the lens of Quranic morality. From there, he connects the verses of Surah Al-Baqarah with other Surahs such as Ali Imran or Al-Anfal, weaving intertextuality that shows the Quran as a network of mutually affirming meanings. His educational strategy also positions the reader beyond mere passive spectators; through rhetorical questions and light analogies, he guides them toward gradual reflection, progressively building legal and moral awareness. Even more profoundly, An-Nabulsi's contemplation examines hypocrisy, love of the world, and the ancient conflict of the Children of Israel as a reflection of the social pathology of today's society, making the Quran a diagnostic tool that not only purifies the individual but also reforms the collective moral direction. With this approach, the Quran is no longer confined to the ritual of recitation, but rather exists as a life partner that organizes the inner self while improving the social landscape.

In the end, it can be emphasized that the rules of *Tadabbur* An-Nabulsi in Surat Al-Baqarah are a unique synthesis between inner contemplation, scientific thinking, and practical social guidance. From the results of an in-depth study of the interpretation of *Tadabbur Āyātillāh fī al-Nafsi wa al-Kawni wa al-Ḥayātī*, four essential principles can be formulated which are the methodological characteristics of the *Tadabbur* approach from An-Nabulsi's perspective: first, the interaction between textual verses and cosmic phenomena (التفاعل بين الآيات النصية والكونية) which broadens the horizon of understanding revelation; second, *Tadabbur* demands not just rational analysis but a heart-shaking spiritual experience (التدبر لا يقتصر على المعرفة العقلية); third, the integration of shari'ah with concrete reality makes *Tadabbur* a guide to life, not just a dogma (التكامل بين الفهم الشرعي والتطبيق الواقعي); and fourth, the reflection of *Tadabbur* must lead to a transformation of real behavior (التدبر الحقيقي يتطلب الانتقال من التأمل إلى التغيير الفعلي). That is why this approach deserves to be called the integrative-transformational *Tadabbur* paradigm which must not only glorify the text, but also strive to revolutionize human consciousness so that it runs in harmony with the rhythm of the universe.

e. The Key to Surat Al-Baqarah Perspective of Muhammad Ratib An-Nabulsi in Modern Tafsir Study

Muhammad Ratib An-Nabulsi's integrative-transformational *Tadabbur* approach presents a significant breakthrough in linking the classical tafsir tradition, which is rich in textual and philological dimensions, with the concerns of contemporary tafsir that emphasize social relevance. An-Nabulsi shows how the concept of intertextuality formulated opens a conversation between the verses of the Qur'an and empirical phenomena and the social dynamics of the community. This makes the sacred text no longer static, but present in an active conversation with modern reality. An-Nabulsi methodologically goes beyond the traditional approach confined to sanad or asbab al-nuzul, then leads the reader into a process of absorbing contextual meaning, demanding the simultaneous participation of the heart and reason. Tafsir thus transforms into a space of critical reflection, freeing the Qur'an from the stagnation of meaning, then positioning it as a guide for life amidst the complexity of a changing era.

The uniqueness of this approach is evident in An-Nabulsi's synthesis of the *tahlili* method, which examines linguistic details, the *mawdu'i* model, which structures themes, and hermeneutics, which opens up interpretive interpretation. This reveals how this combination avoids fragmented explanations, but rather avoids atomization of

meaning while protecting interpretation from the loose relativism that often overshadows modern interpretation. In this way, the meaning of the verse is not separated from its normative roots, but remains flexible in reading the context. Herein, it is clear that this method does not simply add a touch of interpretation, but rather constructs an epistemological reconstruction of Qur'anic interpretation that harmonizes the depth of traditional sanad with the courage of modern critical interpretation, in order to create a balance between the authenticity of the text and the dynamics of the dialectic of reason-revelation-reality.

The pragmatic impact of this approach is palpable when An-Nabulsi's interpretation explores current issues such as social justice, economic inequality, and environmental problems. His *Tadabbur* (religious discourse) does not stop at conceptual discourse but instead becomes a laboratory for practical solutions. Tafsir becomes a life force that encourages renewal of individual and collective behavior, breaking the ice that often arises when knowledge remains confined to the intellectual realm. This is highly strategic in modern society, which often finds itself trapped in the separation of knowledge from the implementation of values. By emphasizing the applicative dimension, An-Nabulsi constructs tafsir as a transformative instrument that not only interprets texts but also interprets reality and moves social awareness toward a more liberating horizon.

At its peak, An-Nabulsi's *Tadabbur* approach demonstrates a holistic relevance that encompasses the individual's spiritual dimension, scientific appreciation of natural phenomena, social responsibility, and the realization of the maqāṣid al-sharī'ah in the harmony of monotheism, sharia, and morals. Furthermore, it has been demonstrated how An-Nabulsi decentralized the authority of tafsir, making every reader who adheres to methodological principles an active subject of interpretation. This model certainly does not only expand access to tafsir, but is more oriented towards fostering critical awareness among the people, further positioning the Qur'an as a source of values that is always alive, riding the waves of time that are constantly changing and revolutionary. Thus, An-Nabulsi's *Tadabbur* is no longer limited to enriching tafsir methodology, but goes further to affirm the Qur'an as a beacon of civilization, guiding people to interpret the text while interpreting their own reality fairly.

3. CONCLUSION

This entire study demonstrates how Muhammad Ratib An-Nabulsi, with his intellectual style interwoven between tradition and modernity, successfully reconceptualized *Tadabbur* not merely as a process of textual interpretation, but as an integral way of life that connects the heart, mind, and cosmos. From the introduction it has been read that the main problem of modern tafsir studies is the disconnection of meaning between the revealed text and empirical reality, while An-Nabulsi emphasized that Surah Al-Baqarah must be read as an active dialogue between revelation and the universe. His model not only reveals the linguistic layers of the verse but also brings to life the moral, psychological, and scientific messages, so that the Qur'an appears as a multidimensional structure of meaning that guides humans beyond mere verbal dogma. An-Nabulsi's biography shows how his life experiences—walking the tradition-laden alleys of Damascus while undergoing academic rigor in Lyon—mature his hermeneutical perspective. The interpretation of *Tadabbur Āyātillāh fī al-Nafsi wa al-Kawni wa al-Ḥayāti* was not born in a sterile laboratory, but from a long dialectic between the authoritative legacy of sanad and the anxiety of the modern era that relativizes everything. It is at this point that the principle of *Tadabbur* Al-Baqarah formulated by An-Nabulsi appears not merely a methodological tool, but the foundation of a Qur'anic worldview that integrates monotheism, cosmology, and social praxis. For him, interpretation is not only a philological project, but an existential struggle to return humanity to God's orbit.

The strength of An-Nabulsi's methodology lies in his courage to break through the fragmentation of interpretation. Various sessions on results and discussions revealed how his intertextuality, reflective exclusivity, transformative power, and integrative approach revolutionized the landscape of Quranic interpretation. This principle of *Tadabbur* not only fills the gaps in classical methodology, which is often static, but also refines contemporary approaches that are sometimes too loose to the point of risking the authority of meaning. Through four main pillars—the interaction of revelation with nature, living spirituality, the integration of sharia with reality, and transformative impulse—An-Nabulsi asserts that every Quranic verse is essentially a macro map that guides humans in organizing the microstructure of their lives. The relevance of An-Nabulsi's *Tadabbur* methodology is not only crucial for the development of the epistemology of interpretation, but also vital for addressing the uncertainty of modern humans who are torn between cold rationality and spiritual thirst. This approach opens up a more flexible and responsible horizon of interpretation—maintaining the sacredness of the text while offering it as a solution to the wounds of the times, from economic inequality and environmental degradation to moral decadence. Interpretation is no longer confined to the pulpit or academic podium, but descends to meet the inner turmoil and social realities of humanity, as God's word should be present in history.

It is no exaggeration to call Muhammad Ratib An-Nabulsi's entire offering a model of integrative-transformational *Tadabbur*. This is because the framework he built does not stop at theoretical harmony between the dimensions of monotheism, sharia, cosmology, and social, but rather gives birth to an active dialectic that transforms human consciousness from mere discourse connoisseurs to actors in Qur'anic history. In the world of modern interpretation that is sometimes trapped in academic formalism or cultural relativism, An-Nabulsi's approach combines feeling and reason, text and context, thus presenting the Qur'an as a "living partner" that guides humans in organizing the inner universe while simultaneously improving the social constellation. This integrative-transformational *Tadabbur* not only rescues revelation from the dangers of atomistic reading, but also prevents interpretation from narrow moralistic constrictions, making it an epistemic movement responsive to the wounds of the times—from spiritual aridity to public ethical deficits.

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