

The Symbolic Meaning of *Nâshiyah Kâdzibah* in Q.S. al-‘Alaq/96 Verse 16: A Study of Qur’anic Exegesis and Neuroscience

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Article Info	Abstract
Received: 19-05-2025 Revised: 25-06-2025 Accepted: 25-06-2025 Published: 26-06-2025 Keywords: Nâshiyah Kâdzibah; Qur’anic Exegesis; Neuroscience; Symbolic Interpretation; Frontal Lobe.	This article examines the symbolic meaning of the phrase <i>nâshiyah kâdzibah khâthi’ah</i> in Q.S. al-‘Alaq verse 16 through an integrative approach combining tafsir studies and neuroscientific perspectives. The phrase is often translated as “a lying and sinful forelock,” yet a literal interpretation does not sufficiently capture the depth of its moral and psychological messages. This study aims to explore the symbolic dimension of the verse by connecting it to the neurological function of the frontal lobe as the center of human behavioral control. The research adopts a qualitative methodology using a library research design, with data analyzed descriptively through in-depth textual analysis of primary literature in Qur’anic exegesis and neuroscience. Key sources include <i>Tafsir al-Qur’an al-‘Azhîm</i> by Ibn Kathir, <i>Fî Zhilâl al-Qur’an</i> by Sayyid Qutb, <i>Tafsir al-Misbah</i> by Quraish Shihab, and <i>Tafsir al-Aayaat al-Kauniyah</i> by Zaghul al-Najjar. The findings reveal that the Qur’an symbolically refers to the human brain region responsible for moral judgment, behavior regulation, and decision-making—known in modern neuroscience as the frontal lobe. This study highlights the relevance of Qur’anic symbolic expression in dialogue with contemporary scientific discoveries.
Info Artikel	Abstrak
Kata Kunci: Nâshiyah Kâdzibah; Tafsir Al-Qur’an; Neurosains; Interpretasi Simbolik; Lobus Frontal.	Artikel ini menelaah makna simbolik frasa <i>nâshiyah kâdzibah khâthi’ah</i> dalam Q.S. al-‘Alaq ayat 16 melalui pendekatan tafsir dan neuroscientific. Frasa ini sering diterjemahkan sebagai “ubun-ubun pendusta dan durhaka”, namun pemahaman literal tidak sepenuhnya mencerminkan kedalaman pesan moral dan psikologis yang terkandung di dalamnya. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengungkap makna simbolik dari frasa tersebut dengan mengaitkannya pada fungsi neurologis lobus frontal sebagai pusat kendali perilaku manusia. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan jenis penelitian kepustakaan (library research), yang dianalisis secara deskriptif melalui teknik analisis mendalam terhadap literatur utama bidang tafsir dan neurosains. Sumber data mencakup kitab-kitab tafsir klasik dan kontemporer seperti <i>Tafsir Al-Qur’an Al-‘Azhîm</i> karya Ibnu Katsir, <i>Fî Zhilal Al-Qur’an</i> karya Sayyid Qutb, <i>Tafsir Al-Misbah</i> karya Quraish Shihab, serta <i>Tafsir Al-Aayaat Al-Kauniyah</i> karya Zaghul An-Najjar. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa Al-Qur’an secara simbolik telah merujuk pada bagian otak manusia

yang mengatur aspek moral, perilaku, dan pengambilan keputusan, yang dalam ilmu neurosains modern dikenal sebagai lobus frontal. Simpulan ini memperlihatkan relevansi antara pesan wahyu dan temuan sains kontemporer.



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INTRODUCTION

Allah has endowed humans with the noblest and perfect of all creatures, equipped with extraordinary physical and psychological faculties, thus referred to as *absanu taqwīm* (the best of forms). The uniqueness of humans lies in the possession of intellect, emotion, reason, and the will to believe, all of which contribute to their spiritual superiority. In parallel, the perfection of the human body is reflected in its upright posture and the capacity to use the brain for independent thinking, enabling the creation of science and technology. These dual aspects of human perfection affirm the elevated status of human beings as the best of all creations, as stated in the divine verse: *“Indeed, we created man in the best of stature” (Qur’an, At-Tin 95:4).*

This verse emphasizes that humans were created as the most superior beings, possessing advantages and potentials surpassing those of all other creatures. In order to fulfill the great divine trust (*amanah*), humans have been equipped with a complex organ capable of storing and processing information: the brain. This organ plays a crucial role in receiving, retaining, and generating information. The capacity of the human brain, when converted to digital units, reaches approximately 10^{13} bits, or about 10^7 gigabits—equivalent to the content of one billion pages or two million books, each containing 500 pages. Furthermore, the brain serves as the central coordinator of the five senses—vision, touch, taste, hearing, and smell—maintaining harmonious and balanced functionality (Kemenag, 2015: 45–48).

A deeper exploration of the brain and its various functions forms the core of the scientific discipline known as neuroscience. Etymologically, neuroscience is a branch of science concerned with the study of the systems, structures, and functions of the brain. This principal organ acts as the control center for all living beings. Research into the brain thus entails investigating the most complex aspect of biological function. This complexity has far-reaching implications, influencing every dimension of human life, from the microscopic scale of atoms to the social scale of communities, even extending to global-level effects (Ikrar, 2015: 1–2).

One particular topic of interest in neuroscience is the prefrontal region of the head. In the Qur'an, this area is referred to with the term *nâshiyah*, which appears four times across three verses—namely, in Surah Hûd (11:56), ar-Rahmân (55:41), and al-‘Alaq (96:15–16). The word *nâshiyah* is a singular noun meaning “forelock” or “front of the head,” while its plural form is *nawâşî*. According to al-Azhari, in classical Arabic, *nâshiyah* refers specifically to the front portion of the head where hair grows (Yahya, 2004). Notably, in three of the four instances where *nâshiyah* appears in the Qur'an, the term is associated with negative connotations, particularly in Surah Hûd (11:56) and al-‘Alaq (96:15–16).

In Surah al-‘Alaq, the term forelock (*nâshiyah*) is mentioned in conjunction with the concepts of falsehood and transgression, as stated in the verse: “No! If he does not desist, we will surely drag him by the forelock – a lying, sinful forelock.” (Qur'an, al-‘Alaq 96:15–16) This verse invites further reflection on the Qur'anic explanation of the forelock and its association with lying, particularly about neuroscience. The phrase *nâshiyah kâdzibah* (a lying forelock) suggests that humans have an inherent tendency to lie. However, according to Quraish Shihab, *kâdzibah* (lying) should be understood as a rhetorical exaggeration (hyperbole). This interpretation calls for a deeper analysis of other exegetical perspectives—both classical and contemporary—such as those of Ibn Kathir, Sayyid Qutb, and Zaghul an-Najjar in interpreting al-‘Alaq 96:16. It also requires a comparison with insights from neuroscientific experts, such as Taruna Ikrar, to assess the extent to which the Qur'an's explicit message reflects human ethical tendencies or neurological predispositions. This research aims to evaluate the compatibility between Qur'anic exegesis and the findings of modern neuroscience.

In general, this is not an entirely novel area of research; several scholars have attempted to analyze Surah *al-‘Alaq*, particularly verse 16, through the lens of neuroscience. The novelty of this study lies in how it distinguishes itself from previous research. To highlight this, the paper reviews earlier studies relevant to this theme, such as the work of Muhammad Andri Setiawan and Karyono Ibnu Ahmad, titled “*Al-‘Alaq: A Neuroscientific Perspective in the Qur'an.*” Their study found that all verses in Surah *al-‘Alaq* are closely connected to various branches of neuroscience, including cognitive psychology, clinical neuroscience, behavioral neuroscience, and social neuroscience. Specifically, verse 16 emphasizes the importance of maintaining mental and spiritual health to prevent neural disorders and neurodegenerative diseases (Setiawan & Ahmad, 2024: 5–9). Their research,

which explores the entire surah, differs from the present study's focus on verse 16 alone, especially regarding ethical dimensions and the symbolic interpretation of *nāshiyah kādẓibah*.

Another related study is by Vivi Indri Asrini, titled "*Interpretation of Neuroscience Verses in Islamic Education: A Study of Salman's Tafsir on the Concept of Nāshiyah in Surah al-'Alaq.*" This research found that classical commentators had not accurately identified the significance of *nāshiyah* as a metaphorical crown, primarily due to the absence of a neuroscience-based interpretive approach. In contrast, Salman's Tafsir defines *nāshiyah* as referring directly to the brain (Asrini, 2023: 674–682). The distinction from the current research lies in the scope of sources used. At the same time, Asrini's study draws solely from Salman's Tafsir; the present study incorporates four tafsirs, ranging from classical to contemporary interpretations, including *Tafsir al-Ayyat al-Kauniyyah fi al-Qur'an al-Karim*, which follows a scientific exegesis model.

A further contribution comes from Virandra Adha Arista in a study titled "*Interpretation of Neuroscientific Verses (Nāshiyah in QS. al-'Alaq: 15–16),*" which posits that *nāshiyah* refers not only to the forehead but to the entire human body. The study argues that this part of the body is involved in character formation and will be the first to be punished in the Hereafter (Asrini et al., 2022: 305–313). However, this interpretation differs from the present study, which emphasizes the integrated meaning of *kādẓibah* within the context of verse 16 of *al-'Alaq*. A more specific interpretation of *nāshiyah kādẓibah* may clarify its identification with the frontal lobe in neuroscience. Moreover, this research analyzes the ethical dimension of the human being as reflected in *nāshiyah kādẓibah* holistically based on *al-'Alaq* 96:16.

This study aims to uncover the symbolic meaning of the phrase *nāshiyah kādẓibah kbāthi'ah* in Q.S. *al-'Alaq* verse 16 by employing an integrated approach combining Qur'anic exegesis and neuroscience. It also seeks to assess the compatibility between classical and contemporary exegetical interpretations and scientific findings on the brain's role in regulating human behavior. To achieve these objectives, the study formulates the following research questions: First, what is the conceptual relationship between the Qur'an and neuroscience in understanding brain function, particularly concerning the *nāshiyah* (forehead)? Second, how do classical and contemporary exegetes interpret the phrase *nāshiyah kādẓibah kbāthi'ah* in Q.S. *al-'Alaq* verses 15–16? Third, what is the relevance of the meaning of *nāshiyah kādẓibah* in the context of modern neuroscience, especially in relation to the function of the frontal lobe and its connection to ethical aspects of human behavior?

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research methodology, aiming to generate descriptive data in the form of written words through in-depth analysis techniques (Zuchri Abdussamad, 2021: 30). The research is categorized as library research, which involves an intensive examination of written materials such as books, classical texts (*kitab*), articles, and other relevant documents that support the research objectives (Sugiyono, 2013: 1–4).

The primary data sources consist of literature from two main disciplines: Qur’anic exegesis (*tafsir*) and neuroscience. To address the research questions, this study draws upon several authoritative *tafsir* works, including *Tafsir al-Qur’an al-‘Azim* by Ibn Kathir, *Fi Zilal al-Qur’an* by Sayyid Qutb, *Tafsir al-Misbah* by Quraish Shihab, and *Tafsir al-Ayat al-Kammiyyah fi al-Qur’an al-Karim* by Zaghlul an-Najjar.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Qur’an and Neuroscience

The Qur’an was revealed as a miracle for all humanity, bestowed upon the final Prophet, Muhammad (peace be upon him). It is a divine miracle that addresses a wide range of subjects—from the creation of the heavens and the earth to the events of the Day of Judgment. As scientific knowledge has advanced, the Qur’an has increasingly been regarded as a reference source for various academic disciplines, including the social and natural sciences. For this reason, many Muslim and non-Muslim scholars have recognized the Qur’an as one of the most profound and comprehensive bodies of literature in human history. This is evidenced by the extensive scholarly works, academic journals, and narratives referencing Qur’anic verses.

Meanwhile, neuroscience has emerged as one of the fields that can be examined in light of the Qur’an, particularly in verses that describe the function of the human brain, such as in Surah *al-‘Alaq* (96:16). The brain is a vital organ composed of an intricate network of interconnected cells. It receives information from the senses—the mouth, eyes, nose, ears, and others—and processes it to support decision-making. Remarkably, much of the brain’s function operates automatically and unconsciously, enabling humans to respond to stimuli and perform actions without deliberate effort.

Definition of Nāshiyah

In the *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language), the term *nāshiyah* or *ubun-ubun* refers to the part of the head near the upper forehead or the

crown of the head (Pusat Bahasa, 2008: 1769). In Arabic, the word *al-nāshiyah* denotes the root of the brain at the site of the two frontal lobes. The word *al-nāshiyah* is a singular noun derived from *nashā nashan*, which means *muqaddim al-ra's*—the front hair or forelock (Andi Khuzaimah Tamin, 2022: 15–28). In *Al-Munanmir Dictionary*, *nāshiyah* is defined as forelock, front hair, or the front part of the head (Ahmad Warson Munawir, 1997: 1427).

In Malay language, *nāshiyah* or *ubun-ubun* refers to a part of the skull that is relatively soft to the touch. It is located at the top of the forehead, slightly toward the center of the head. The term is also used metaphorically in expressions that describe a person's character or traits (Mohamad Shazani Dewek and Roslan Ali, 2024: 118–137).

In *al-Mufradāt fī Gharīb al-Qur'ān*, the word *al-nāshiyah* originates from the root *nashā*, which means *quṣāṣ al-sha'r*—to trim or cut hair, implying the act of grabbing someone by the hair and pulling them (Raghib al-Asfahani, 1990: 496). According to Suyadi, the term *nāshiyah* in the Qur'an refers to the brain, as the term itself was not yet familiar in 7th-century Arabian society. Instead, *nāshiyah* was commonly used to denote what is now understood as the prefrontal part of the brain. In neurobiology, the *nāshiyah* is located in the prefrontal cortex and functions in planning, motivation, initiating good or evil actions, critical thinking, and expressing honesty or deceit. Thus, the *nāshiyah* corresponds to the prefrontal cortex of the human brain (Ihda Husnul Khotimah, 2023: 396–405).

According to Zaghlul an-Najjar in *Al-Ayāt al-Kaunīyyah fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, the term *nāshiyah* denotes the forehead, the part situated at the front of the head. It was only in the 19th century that scientists began studying this region of the head, and a century later, they discovered that this area plays a key role in decision-making, judgment, and behavioral control (Zaghlul an-Najjar, 2010: 54).

The Concept of Falsehood (*al-Kadzib*)

The term *al-Kadzīb*, *al-Kaẓb*, dan *al-Kiẓb* are verbal nouns (*maṣdar*) derived from the root *kadzaba-yakdzibu*, composed of the letters *kāf*, *dhāl*, and *bā'*, meaning “to say something that ultimately proves to be untrue” (Ahmad Faris al-Qazwini, 2001: 168). Linguistically, *al-kadzīb* is defined by Ibn Manzhur in *Lisān al-'Arab* as the opposite of *al-ṣidq* (truth) (Ibn Manzhur, 2002: 198). Similarly, *al-Wasiṭ Dictionary* defines falsehood as the opposite of truth—informing something contrary to reality or denying the truth (Nakhbah min al-Lughawīyyīn, 1990: 780–781). This definition aligns with the Indonesian term *dusta*,

which the *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (KBBI) describes as “untrue (regarding speech)” or simply “a lie” (Pusat Bahasa, 2008: 372).

In Indonesian, the words *dusta* and *bohong* (lie) appear similar, but a deeper analysis reveals subtle differences. According to KBBI, *bohong* means “not in accordance with actual facts” (Pusat Bahasa, 2008: 372). *Bohong* typically refers to everyday or casual falsehoods. In contrast, *dusta* implies a lie and a deliberate denial of widely recognized truths. *Dusta* may also refer to a more organized and calculated form of deception, carrying stronger moral and ethical connotations. According to Kuntarto, *dusta* is often associated with systematic deceit, particularly in business and social interactions, indicating a deeper moral breach than ordinary falsehoods. It reflects complex ethical violations in human relationships (Maksudin, 2022: 135–153).

Islamic scholars have also provided various terminological definitions of *al-kadhib*. According to Sa’dy Abu Habib in *al-Qāmūs al-Fiqhī: Luġhatan wa Iṣṭilāhan*, in Sunni theology, *al-kadẓib* refers to intentionally or unintentionally reporting something that contradicts reality, whether done deliberately or mistakenly. However, for the Mu’tazilites and Ibāḍiyyah, *al-kadẓib* is defined strictly as intentionally conveying information contrary to actual events (Sa’dy Abu Habib, 1998: 316).

Islam strongly prohibits lying and falsehood. Both the Qur’an and Hadith warn believers of the consequences of lying. One such verse states:

وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ تَرَى الَّذِينَ كَذَبُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ وُجُوهُهُم مُّسْوَدَّةٌ ۗ أَلَيْسَ فِي جَهَنَّمَ مَثْوًى لِّلْمُتَكَبِّرِينَ

“And on the Day of Resurrection you will see those who lied about Allah— their faces will be darkened. Is there not in Hell a residence for the arrogant?” (*az-Zumar:39/60*)

The prohibition against lying is also emphasized in a Hadith narrated by Imam Muslim. In this Hadith, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) warned his followers to avoid falsehood, as it is a trait that leads to moral corruption and eventual ruin:

قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم : عَلَيْكُمْ بِالصِّدْقِ فَإِنَّ الصِّدْقَ يَهْدِي إِلَى الْبِرِّ وَإِنَّ الْبِرَّ يَهْدِي إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ وَمَا يَزَالُ الرَّجُلُ يَصْدُقُ وَيَتَحَرَّى الصِّدْقَ حَتَّى يُكْتَبَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ صِدِّيقًا وَإِيَّاكُمْ وَالْكَذِبَ فَإِنَّ الْكَذِبَ يَهْدِي إِلَى الْفُجُورِ وَإِنَّ الْفُجُورَ يَهْدِي إِلَى النَّارِ وَمَا يَزَالُ الرَّجُلُ يَكْذِبُ وَيَتَحَرَّى الْكَذِبَ حَتَّى يُكْتَبَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ كَذَّابًا (رواه مسلم)

“You must be truthful, for truthfulness leads to righteousness, and righteousness leads to Paradise. A man continues to speak the truth and pursues truthfulness until he is recorded with Allah as a

truthful person. And beware of lying, for lying leads to wickedness, and wickedness leads to the Fire. A man continues to lie and pursues falsehood until he is recorded with Allah as a liar.” (HR. Muslim) (Muslim bin al-Hajaj, 1987).

Exegetical Interpretation of the Forelock (al-Nāshiyah) in Surat Al-‘Alaq/96: 15-16

1. Tafsir Al-Qur’an Al-‘Azhim

In his *Tafsir al-Qur’an al-‘Azim*, Ibn Kathīr explains that human beings are naturally inclined toward joy, wickedness, arrogance, and tyranny—especially when they perceive themselves as self-sufficient and wealthy. He contextualizes the concluding verses of Surah *al-‘Alaq* as addressing the actions of Abū Jahl, who at the time had threatened the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) for praying at the Ka‘bah (Baitullāh). In response, Allah admonishes Abū Jahl with a rhetorical challenge: What if the one he forbids (the Prophet) is following the straight path and commanding righteousness through his call to piety? Ibn Kathīr elaborates that Abū Jahl’s threats against the Prophet’s act of prayer are seen and heard by Allah and that Allah will impose a severe punishment upon him. The verse then issues a stern warning: if Abū Jahl does not desist from his transgressions, Allah will seize him by his forelock (*al-nāshiyah*) and humiliate him—his face blackened on the Day of Judgment (Kathīr, 1997: 438–440).

Ibn Kathīr interprets the phrase *al-nāshiyah al-kādżibah al-kebātīyah* (the lying, sinful forelock) in verse 16 as a direct reference to the forelock of Abū Jahl, whose words were filled with deceit and whose actions were morally deviant. Should Abū Jahl call upon his supporters for help, Allah will, in turn, summon the Zabāniyah—the angels of punishment—to seize and chastise him and his followers (Kathīr, 1997: 438–440). The reference to the lying forelock signifies Abū Jahl’s persistent falsehoods and his slanderous efforts to undermine the Prophet’s mission. His continuous denial and opposition represent a defiance against the truth of Islam and its divine teachings.

2. Tafsir Fī Zhilal Al-Qur’an

Sayyid Qutb divides Surah *al-‘Alaq* into three distinct segments. Verses 15 and 16 fall within the third segment, which highlights acts of transgression and presents a vivid and severe portrayal of such immoral behavior as condemned by the Qur’an. This segment opens with a series of brisk rhetorical questions, such as “*What do you think?*”—prompting the audience to reflect on the compounded nature of evil: *What is your view when wickedness is joined by further wickedness? What if the one being prohibited from praying is guided and enjoins piety?*

This line of reflective inquiry is followed by a divine warning—that Allah sees such heinous behavior, particularly the act of prohibiting a believer (the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him) from performing prayer, despite him being on the path of guidance and calling others to piety (Qutb, 2001: 310).

Qutb explains that Allah’s threat to “seize the forelock” is an expression of divine severity and condemnation. The term *al-nāshiyah* in this context refers to the forelock, understood as the elevated part of the body that arrogant and tyrannical people tend to hold high. It is, therefore, symbolically appropriate that such a forelock be dragged down in humiliation—especially if it belongs to one who is *lying and rebellious* (Qutb, 2001: 310–311).

Qutb further narrates that this passage was revealed when Abū Jahl passed by the Prophet Muhammad while he was performing prayer at the Maqām Ibrāhīm (the Station of Abraham). Abū Jahl reportedly said, “O Muhammad! Have I not forbidden you from doing this?”—and proceeded to threaten him. The Prophet then grew angry and seized Abū Jahl by the neck, declaring, “*Woe to you! Woe to you!*” In response, Abū Jahl boasted of his numerous followers in the valley. It was then that the final verses of the surah were revealed: “*Then let him call his associates; We will call the Zabāniyah (angels of punishment).*” Sayyid Qutb emphasizes that this punishment could descend instantly upon divine command (Qutb, 2001: 310–311).

According to Qutb, the terms “lying” and “sinful” are not isolated descriptors. Instead, the phrase “*evil compounded with evil*” indicates that Abū Jahl’s falsehoods were repeated and habitual. His denial of the truth was not a singular act but a continuous defiance. Therefore, the Qur’anic threat was especially grave. The term *al-nāshiyah*, in Qutb’s interpretation, refers to the physical locus of arrogance, deceit, and moral corruption—a symbolic seat of one’s moral disposition.

3. Tafsir Al-Misbah

Quraish Shihab opens his interpretation by elaborating on the divine threat issued by Allah: Should Abū Jahl persist in harassing the Prophet Muhammad, he will be seized by his **forelock** or even burned until his skin is charred and discolored. This punishment is deemed fitting, for the forelock of Abū Jahl is characterized as both deceitful and defiant. Shihab further explains that the Qur’anic term *kallā* (No!) serves to negate the false threat issued by Abū Jahl. This verse indicates that Abū Jahl’s threats will never come to fruition, for Allah is the One truly in power, and if Abū Jahl does not cease his actions, Allah Himself will seize him by the forelock (Shihab, 2002: 413).

The term *al-nāshiyah* is translated as forelock, referring to the hair located on the forehead; however, its usage extends to the broader meaning of the area from which the hair grows. This term also appears in another verse of the Qur'an—*ar-Rahmān/55:41*—which reads:

يُعْرَفُ الْمُجْرِمُونَ بِسِيمَاهُمْ فَيُؤْخَذُ بِالنَّوَاصِي وَالْأَقْدَامِ

“The sinners will be recognized by their marks, and the forelocks and the feet will seize them.” (*ar-Rahmān/55: 41*)

According to Shihab, the use of *al-nāshiyah* in Surah *al-'Alaq* should not be confined to the literal forelock alone but symbolically encompasses the entirety of Abū Jahl's being and, by extension, any individual who prohibits others from worshipping Allah. The forehead, in particular, is traditionally regarded as a symbol of human dignity and honor, especially as it is the part of the body placed on the ground during *sujūd* (prostration) in prayer. When Abū Jahl arrogantly refuses to bow in worship, Allah threatens to humiliate him by seizing that very source of pride—his forelock (Shihab, 2002: 413-414).

Shihab then turns his attention to the word *kādzibah* (liar) in this verse, asserting that it denotes a habitual and deeply ingrained falsehood—a lie that has become part of one's character and conduct. The presence of the feminine suffix (ة) in *kādzibah* serves a rhetorical function of hyperbole (*mubālaghah*), emphasizing the intensity and extremity of the deceit. A similar interpretation applies to the term *khāṭi'ah* (sinful), which derives from *khāṭi'a-yakhta'u*, indicating a conscious and deliberate sin—one committed with full knowledge of divine prohibition. In this way, the Qur'an condemns not mere negligence but a willful defiance of moral truth. (Shihab, 2002: 414).

Shihab concludes by clarifying that Allah's punishment is not directed at occasional sinners but rather at those whose sins are persistent and repeated. It is only after such continuous violations that divine retribution becomes inevitable. The interpretation offered by Quraish Shihab highlights the profound connection between *al-nāshiyah* and **moral** corruption. As the forelock represents human honor, it is meant to be placed in prostration to Allah—a sign of submission and servitude. When disbelievers such as Abū Jahl refuse this act of humility, they are instead threatened with divine humiliation through the very part of their body that symbolizes arrogance.

Regarding falsehood, Shihab emphasizes that *kādzibah* reflects a level of deceit that is not merely episodic but has become second nature. This kind of deceit, which defines the

character of Abū Jahl and his associates, is what Allah threatens to disgrace most severely, should they persist in their immoral behavior.

4. Tafsir Al-Aayât Al-Kauniyyah fii Al-Qur'an Al-Karîm

Zaghlul An-Najjar interprets *al-'Alaq* verse 16 through the lens of **āyāt** kauniyyah—Qur'anic verses that refer to signs, phenomena, and the grandeur of the natural universe as manifestations of divine power. He argues that understanding the association between the forelock (*al-nāshiyah*) and falsehood was previously difficult, but scientific discoveries in the late 20th century began to shed light on the matter. According to An-Najjar, this verse implicitly points to the prefrontal cortex—the center of human control, planning, problem-solving, and decision-making (An-Najjar, 2010: 546).

Linguistically, *al-nāshiyah* refers to the front part of the head, specifically the forehead between the eyes. The term *as-saf'u* means “to seize or pull strongly.” The description of the “lying and sinful forelock” is understood by An-Najjar as a reference to Abū Jahl while also indicating that modern neuroscience can now confirm that this region plays a key role in executive function and behavior regulation—truths that the Qur'an had revealed centuries prior in verses 15–16 of *Surah al-'Alaq* (An-Najjar, 2010: 545).

An-Najjar cites the famous neurological case of Phineas P. Gage, an American railroad foreman who survived a traumatic brain injury in 1848. A 13-pound iron rod penetrated his skull—entering through his left eye and exiting through the top of his head—severely damaging his frontal lobe. Remarkably, Gage survived with his basic sensory and motor functions intact. However, his personality changed drastically: from a dependable and responsible man to someone impulsive and emotionally unstable. This incident marked a pivotal moment in the field of neuroscience, sparking inquiries into the role of the frontal lobe. Although it accounts for less than 2% of the human body weight (approximately 1–2.5 kg), the brain's significance is immense, as it governs the entire human body and psyche. Modern research identified the damaged area in Gage's case as the frontal lobe (An-Najjar, 2010: 546).

Zaghlul An-Najjar elaborates that the human brain consists of four major lobes, each with distinct functions: *first*, frontal lobe: considered the most critical region, it houses the centers responsible for emotional regulation, memory, language, decision-making, problem-solving, behavioral control, and social communication. Most of these functions are concentrated in the prefrontal cortex, located behind the forehead—an area the Qur'an metaphorically refers to as *al-nāshiyah* (An-Najjar, 2010: 548).

Second, parietal lobe: located behind the frontal lobe, it processes sensory information, including touch, temperature, spatial awareness, and the perception of shapes and sizes. *Third*, temporal lobe: located below the parietal lobe, it is responsible for auditory processing, sound perception, and language interpretation and contributes to the formation of auditory memory. *Fourth*, occipital lobe: located at the rear of the brain, it serves as the visual processing center, responsible for interpreting visual information (An-Najjar, 2010: 549).

The Meaning of Nāshiyah Kādzibah and Its Relationship with Neuroscience

Research indicates that all four commentators—Ibn Kathīr, Sayyid Qutb, Quraish Shihab, and Zaghul An-Najjar—agree that the human forelock (*nāshiyah*) functions as the central control center for emotions, memory, language, decision-making, problem-solving, behavioral regulation, and social communication. However, they also agree that the forelock itself does not inherently tend toward falsehood or sin.

The use of negative diction in *Surah al-‘Alaq*—namely, the phrase “*a lying, sinful forelock*”—is explicitly directed at Abū Jahl, as these verses were revealed shortly after he prohibited the Prophet Muhammad from praying at the Ka‘bah. If Abū Jahl were to persist and summon support from his tribe, Allah warns that He would send down the angels of punishment (*Zabāniyah*) to seize him.

The labeling of the forelock with falsehood and sinfulness is based on several perspectives: Ibn Kathīr explains that Abū Jahl frequently lied and made systematic efforts to slander the Prophet’s mission; thus, his rejection and hostility were deliberate and sustained. Sayyid Qutb describes this as an accumulation of evil—“evil piled upon evil”—emphasizing that Abū Jahl’s repeated falsehoods warranted the severe warning from Allah. The forelock, representing arrogance and deceit, becomes the focal point of divine retribution.

Quraish Shihab interprets *kādzibah* as a hyperbolic expression of repeated falsehood. The use of the feminine marker (ة) (*tā’ marbūṭah*) at the end of *kādzibah* indicates an intensified, habitual nature of lying. For Shihab, this behavior was not accidental or due to negligence but had become deeply ingrained in Abū Jahl’s character. Thus, Allah’s threat to drag his forelock symbolizes the disgrace of dishonoring one’s most noble part—the head.

Zaghul An-Najjar offers a scientific interpretation, equating the *nāshiyah* with the frontal lobe, the region of the brain responsible for high-order functions like planning,

decision-making, and character. He asserts that the human forehead has no inherent tendency toward deception; instead, the morality of its actions is shaped by personal choices and decisions. Verses *al-‘Alaq* 96:15–16 demonstrate that the forehead is an anatomically and spiritually significant part of the human body. The characterization of this region as “lying and sinful” reflects Abū Jahl’s moral failure and rebellion, particularly his prohibition of the Prophet’s prayer—an act seen as blatant defiance against divine authority.

Thus, based on the interpretations of these four commentators, it would be inaccurate to generalize that all humans are inherently deceitful based on these verses. The description is context-specific, targeting Abū Jahl with heightened rhetorical force using the hyperbolic phrase “*nāshiyah kādżibah kbāti‘ah*.” This phrase also aligns with neuroscientific findings that identify the frontal lobe as the most vital and complex region of the brain, tasked with moral reasoning, rational thinking, planning, and judgment (Ikrar, 2015: 9). The prefrontal cortex, a subregion of the frontal lobe, plays a crucial role in shaping human behavior and moral judgment. The brain, as the central processor of human actions, interprets thought into action—evil thoughts yield evil actions, while good intentions result in righteous conduct. Therefore, humans must align their mental processes with ethical and moral values, resisting selfish impulses in order not to become “lying and sinful,” as described in *Surah al-‘Alaq*.

Moreover, the frontal lobe must not only be used wisely but also protected, as damage to this area—especially to the prefrontal cortex—can result in behavioral and personality changes, as famously illustrated by the case of Phineas Gage. His traumatic brain injury led to a complete shift in personality—from responsible and reliable to impulsive and vulgar.

This is corroborated by the research of Adrian Raine, whose work on the biological foundations of criminal behavior provides further evidence of this connection. Raine’s studies on brain structure, genetic predispositions, and environmental influences revealed that dysfunction in the prefrontal cortex is a strong predictor of violent and antisocial behavior. In a study involving 38 individuals (both male and female criminals), brain scans using PET (Positron Emission Tomography) confirmed that many had abnormalities in this critical brain region (Raine & Yang, 2006: 203–2013). These findings underscore the Qur’anic insight that human deception and wrongdoing are rooted in the very part of the brain responsible for moral choices and judgment. Whether caused by external trauma or

internal moral corruption, any dysfunction in the frontal lobe can significantly impair decision-making and ethical behavior—reaffirming the relevance of Qur’anic wisdom in light of modern neuroscience.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that the phrase *nāshiyah kādzibah kbāthi’ah* in Q.S. al-‘Alaq verse 16 is not merely a physical description of the forehead, but a symbolic expression referring to the center of behavioral and ethical control in humans, namely the frontal lobe in neuroscience. Both classical and contemporary tafsir approaches offer diverse interpretations of the term *nāshiyah*, ranging from its literal meaning as the front part of the head to a symbolic understanding as the locus of will and moral responsibility. Modern scientific interpretation, as explained by neuroscience experts such as Taruna Ikrar, affirms that the frontal area of the human brain functions in regulating decision-making, ethical impulses, and tendencies toward right or wrong actions. This demonstrates a strong correlation between the moral message of the Qur’an and contemporary scientific findings, reinforcing the Qur’an’s miraculous nature both scientifically and spiritually.

However, this study is limited in its scope of tafsir sources and does not empirically involve direct neurological or neuropsychological analysis of the brain’s response to truth and falsehood. Therefore, future research is recommended to adopt an interdisciplinary approach by incorporating neuroimaging methods and experimental psychology to empirically examine how the human brain responds to moral values as implied in the Qur’anic verses.

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