

Tafakkur from a Qur'anic Perspective

Dr. Jamal Ahmed Badi*

Introduction

This paper attempts to provide an exposé of the concept of *Tafakkur* as an integral part of the Qur'anic view of man. Obviously, man as a vicegerent has a noble task and a grand mission to undertake on this earth. As clearly stated in certain Qur'anic verses, the essence of the mission of man has to do with the faculties which are put at his disposal by his Omnipotent Creator. In this respect, the faculty of *Tafakkur* becomes one of the most important features that not only distinguishes man from other creatures; but also qualifies him to accomplish a pivotal role as a civilization builder and mission conveyer. In the present work the concept of *Tafakkur* is approached from a socio- linguistic angle. This implies the analysis of the Qur'anic meaning of *Tafakkur* as well as the social implications of these connotations.

On the other hand, the present work finds its *raison d'être* in the need for deep insights into the *Qur'anic* view of *Tafakkur*, not only as a human faculty but also as an agent of human creative thinking and human dynamic development. The paper attempts to disentangle some of the main elements of the concept of *Tafakkur*.

Definition of Tafakkur

Tafakkur is the Arabic term for deep thinking. According to *al – Fairuzabadi*, who is one of the prominent early Muslim Linguists *al – Fikr (pl. afkar) “ i.e. thought “* is reflection upon something . According to his view, *Fikr* and *Tafakkur* are synonymous ⁽¹⁾Though *Ibnu Manzur*, another famous linguist, uses the same definition, he states that *Tafakkur* is the noun from *Tafkir* . He quotes *al- Juhari* who defines *Tafakkur* as pondering and contemplating ⁽²⁾.*Tafkir* or “ thought” , is an abstract notion, where by *Tafkir* or *Tafakkur* “ thinking” is a deliberate,

* Head, Department of General Studies, International Islamic University, Malaysia.

(1) *Al – Fairuzabadi : Al – Qamus al – Muhit “*, Beirut , Muassassat al Risalah , 1996 (the root fakara).

(2) *Ibnu Manzur : “Lisanu al – Arab “* , Darul Fikr , Beirut . 1990 (the root fakara).

systematic process of reflective discourse. This is why the *Qur'an* refers to it in multiple words rather than in one single term as we will see later.

Professor *Malik Badri*, a contemporary Muslim psychologist, draws a clear distinction between '*Tafkir*' and '*Tafakkur*'. *Tafakkur* is deeper and broader in scope than *Tafkir*. *Tafakkur* bridges the perceptions from this life (*Dunia*) to those of the hereafter (*akhira*), and from the creations to their Creator, the Almighty. This bridging is known as '*Ibrah*' or '*I'atibar*'. Thus, *Tafkir* might be confined to solving the problems of our present life where emotions may not be involved. But *Tafakkur* goes beyond this life to the broader area of '*Akhira*', and beyond the superficiality of materialism to a deeper horizon of 'the spirit' and by that, *Tafakkur* motivates all the external, internal and activities of the mu'min, i.e. the believer⁽¹⁾.

Professor Badri is of the view that *Tafakkur* goes through three interrelated stages as follows:

1. Information that comes through conception via the senses of imagination or abstract intellectual information.
2. Paying closer and greater attention to that information, acknowledging its aesthetic traits and perfect creation, which in turn leads to amazement and appreciation.
3. Moving to think about the Greater, which leads to stronger faith and better knowledge of His attributes⁽²⁾.
4. People differ in their levels of "*Tafakkur*" according to their depth of *Iman* (Faith), ability to focus and concentrate, emotional and intellectual states, environmental factors, degree of knowledge and familiarity with what they think about and its essence.⁽³⁾

Our'anic Usage of the Term Tafakkur

The *Qur'an* has used the derivatives of the verb '*Fakkara*' – which is the root word of *Tafakkur* – eighteen times: (*Al- Baquarah* 219 & 266, *Al – Imran* : 191, *Al- An'am* : 50, *Al- A'araf* 176 & 184, *Yunus*: 24, *Ar-Ra'd*:3, *An- Nahl*:11,44&69,

⁽¹⁾Al - Tafakkur mina al – Mushahada ila al Shuhud , IIIT publications , Herndon, Va . 1993. P.41

⁽²⁾ Ibid . P. 42& 43.

⁽³⁾ Ibid . p 87-98

Aar-Rum:8 & 21, Saba': 46, Az – Zumar: 42, Al- Jathiyah: 13, Al-Hassshr : 21, and Al-Muddathir: (18).

By going through these verses one can observe the following;⁽¹⁾

1. The term has been used 18 times as mentioned above
2. The term has been used as a 'verb' rather than a 'noun' in all verses i.e. as a process rather than an abstract conception.
3. In one verse the verb is used in the past tense: (*Al- Muddathir: 18*), whereas it has been used in the present tense in all other 17 places. This emphasizes the continuity of the process.
4. The 17 instances of the present tense of the verb are used in their plural form which implies the importance of collective thinking in Islam or what we may call the “*shuratic* way of thinking”.
5. The majority of the *Mufasirun* interpreted ‘*Tafakkur*’ as reflection and contemplation, which is a process and not an outcome.

Synonymous Qur'anic Terms

The *Qur'an* has used the following terms as synonyms for ‘*Tafakkur*’;

1) *Nazr* “النظر” : *to consider*:

“ Say: consider whatever is in the heavens and on earth” (*Yunus:101*).

“ Have they, then, never considered (God’s) mighty domination over the heavens and the earth, and all the things that God has created?” (*Al-A'araf: 185*).

2) *Tabassur* “التبصر” : *insight*; as in *Surat Yusuf*: “say (O Prophet): This is my way: Resting upon conscious insight accessible to reason, I am calling you all unto God, I and they who follow me”⁽¹⁾. (*Yusuf: 108*)

3) *Tadabbur* “التدبر” *Pondering*.

⁽¹⁾ Khalid, Ma' ad Ahmad : *Al- Tajdid Journal*, 11UM. Issue 3 , Feb. 1998 . Page 181.

⁽¹⁾ The noun *basirah* (as also the verb) has the abstract connotation of "seeing without one's mind" : and so it signifies "the faculty of understanding based on conscious insight" as well as, tropically, “an evidence accessible to the intellect” or "verifiable by the intellect”. Asad, Mohammad : *The Message of The Qur'an*, Note 104 page 354.

“All this have We expounded in this blessed divine writ which We have revealed unto thee, (O Muhammad) so that men may ponder over its messages, and those who are endowed with insight may take them to heart” (*Sad:29*)

In another verse Allah the almighty says: “Will they not, then , Ponder over this Qur’an? Or are there lock upon their hearts?” (*Muhammad: 24*).

4) *Tafagguh* “التفقه”: *To fully understand, to grasp, to comprehend and apprehend*

“Behold how many facets We give these Messages, so that they might understand the truth” (*Al-Ana ’m: 65*).

In the same *surah*, in another verse: “And He it is who brought you all into being out of one living entity, and a resting – place (after death): clearly, indeed, have We spelled out these messages unto people who can grasp the truth!” (*Al-Ana ’m: 98*).

5) *Tadhakkur* “التذكر” : *To bear or keep in mind or to heart:*

“ And He makes clear His messages unto mankind, so that they might bear them in mind.” (*Al – Baqarah: 221*).

“ Clearly, indeed, have We spelled out these messages unto people who are willing *to take them to heart.*” (*Al – An ’am: 126*).

“ Can, then, he who knows that whatever has been bestowed from on high upon thee by thy Sustainer is the truth be deemed equal to one who is blind?

Only they who are endowed with insight keep this in mind.” *Ar-Ra ’d: 19*.

6) *I’atibar* “الاغبار” : *to learn, derive or take a lesson from the history of other nations and the experiences of others and not to repeat their faults.*

“ Behold, there is indeed a lesson for all who have eyes to see.” (*Al- Imran: 13*) “ It is God who causes night and day to alternate: in this to, behold, there is surely a lesson for all who have eyes to see “ (*An- Nur . 44*).

“ *Learn a lesson, then, O you who are endowed with insight.*” (*Al- Hashr:2*).

7) *Ta'aqqul* “العقل” : *to use one's mind in the right way.*⁽¹⁾

“Have they, then, never journeyed about the earth, letting their hearts gain wisdom, and causing their ears to hear?” (*Al-Haj:46*).

The *Qur'an* classifies *aql* or intellect into two categories:

1. *Aqlu-Rushd* or guided mind, and
2. *Aqlu-Idrak* or a conceiving mind, where the mind conceives but does not lead to guidance in ethical and religious fields.

“And most certainly have We destined for hell many of the jinn and men who have hearts with which they fail to grasp the truth, and eyes with which they fail to see, and ears with which they fail to hear. They are like cattle-any, they are even less conscious of the right way: it is they who are truly heedless!” (*Al- A'raf: 179*).

Reasoning, according to the *Qur'anic* perspective, is the primary function of reason, so, if reason fails to fulfill this function, it loses its value.

“Verily, the vilest of all creatures in the sight of God are those deaf, those dumb ones who do not use their reason.” (*Al- Anfal:22*).

Al-Aqad puts it in another way by arguing that the kind of *aql* which Revelation addresses is the one that can conceive of truth, distinguishes between paradoxes, seeks insight, reflects and ponders. It is the *aql* or intellect which is contrary to the one, which is rigid, arrogant and misleading. It is not the one that is opposite to *Junun* or insanity because insanity nullifies *Taklif* and the Insane “Person” is excused . He emphasizes that *aql*, according to the Islamic view, is the one that seeks truth and is always in search of it.⁽¹⁾

7) *Tawassum* “التوسم”⁽²⁾ *To contemplate or reflect.*

⁽¹⁾Aql or "intellect" has not been used as a noun in the Qur'an, but as a verb it has been used forty nine times in different tenses and forms. In addition, synonyms of "aql" were used several times, such as: "Lub" "hulm" , " hijr", "nuha" qalb" And " Fu, ad". For further elaboration see: Ismail, Fatima / al- Qur'an wa Aal-Nadharu Al- Aqli/ IIIT, Herndon, Va. 1993. Pages 63&64.

⁽¹⁾Al – Aqad, Abbas:"Al- Tafkir Faridhatum Islamiyyah" , Al- Maktabah al – Asriyyah , Beirut. P 17&36.

⁽²⁾“In its full significance , the term mutawassim denotes "one who applies his mind to the study of the outward appearance of a thing with a view to understanding its real nature and inner characteristics' A sad, Muhammad, note 54 page 390.

- 1) (saying) : Our Lord! You have not created all this without purpose, glory be to You! Save us from the torment of the Fire.” (*Al- Imran:190-191*).
- 2) To reflect upon the verses of *Qur’an* “This is a Book (*the Qur’an*) which we have sent down to you, full of blessings that? May *ponder over* its verses, and that *men of understanding* may engage in remembrance.”(*Saad:29*).
- 3) Allah tells us in the *Qur’an* that the objective of so many stories which have been mentioned in various *Surahs* is to motivate humankind to think and reflect in order to learn and to seek wisdom. “Narrate to them the stories, so that they may reflect.” (*Al- A’raf:176*).
- 4) Allah commands us to reflect upon the beginning of everything and to observe the roots so one may not jump to (questionable) conclusions without a critical insight. “Say (O Muhammad): Travel in the land and see how He (Allah) originated creation.” (*Al-Ankabut:20*).
- 5) Allah directs the attention of humankind to one of the methodologies of thinking by saying: “Say to them (O Muhammad): I exhort you on one thing only – that you stand up for Allah’s sake in pairs and singly, and reflect.” (*Saba:46*).

Dr. *Bakkar* considers thinking a vital necessity based on the *Qur’anic* verse: “Who has created death and life, that He may test which of you is the best in conduct.” (*Al- Mulk:2*).

Life is a real test, he infers, and life is full of challenges and problem solving opportunities. To overcome these challenges, to solve problems and hence to pass the test, there is a great need for thinking because there are *Sunnan* or Divine needed to be think about.

“Verily, in all this there are messages indeed for those who can read the signs.” (*Al-Hijr: 75*).

As it can be noticed that the *Qur’an* has used different terms for *Tafakkur*, it has been said that more words a culture uses as synonyms, the more important to the culture the idea or the thing the word represents.

We can clearly observe that all these *Qur'anic* terms describe the functions of the human intellect or *aqI*⁽¹⁾.

It is also very obvious that the *Qur'an* encourages thinking and reflection as it leads to belief in Allah the Almighty.

The Status of Tafakkur in Islam

Tafakkur is considered as Ibadah or a form of worshipping Allah, which, is rewarded and provided to be done with sincerity

(*Ikhlas*), good intention and for a good purpose.

Abbas Al- Aqad, a prominent contemporary thinker, consider '*Tafkir*' or thinking as an Islamic obligation⁽¹⁾.

According to Dr. *Bakkar*⁽²⁾ , the *Qur'anic* verses which encourage thinking could be classified into five group, namely:

- 1) **In** the field of *Tawhid* and to direct man's attention to the Creator of the universe. For example, Allah says: "Verily! In the creation of the heavens and earth, and in the alternation of night and day, there are indeed signs for men of understanding.

Those who remember Allah while they are standing, sitting, and lying down on their sides, **and think deeply** about the creation of the heavens and the earth, principles which govern human life and which can only be explained and discovered through thinking.

There are Divine principles which govern the Universe as well. Allah has diffused within the Universe many Divine principles which are consistent, coherent, comprehensive and constant.

An individual will not discover these principles by passively sitting in an armchair. One must actively investigate, study and examine them. Once the principles have been discovered, they must be applied and used to advantage.

⁽¹⁾Ismail, Fatima. Ibid.pp.66.

⁽¹⁾Al- Tafkir Faridhatun Islamiyyah.

⁽²⁾Bakker, Abdul Karim "Al-Tafkir al- Mudhui"

Thinking is necessary for the implementation of Islamic values, adds Bakkar. Sincerity, loyalty, and eagerness are very important factors in solving and overcoming our problems, but they may not ensure lasting sacrifice and dedication unless the *Ummah* put its own values into daily practice. This could be done through the continuous process of *Ijtihad* aimed at generating specific functions for each value, and generating motivations for those function to keep them everlasting.

He gives three examples for the purpose of illustration. They are:

a) *Shura or Mutual Consultation:*

Since life is becoming more complicated and sophisticated, there is a pressing need now to improve and enhance the ways of implementing *Shura* and to crystallize this great value in newly organized forms in order to ensure relevance to contemporary issue.

b) *The Unity of the Muslim Umah:*

This is another great Islamic value, which Muslims talk about all the time. Many books have been written, and a number of conferences held to evaluate its magnitude. But all of this is not enough. What we need is an ongoing examination and discussion of the causes of the existing Muslim disunity in order to avoid it.

We should also think about a suitable framework for *Unity* which fits the complex conditions that we are facing.

Moreover, we need to explore the relationship between *freedom* and *unity* and means through which we can fulfill both of these values.

c) *Helping the Needy:*

Again this is one of the great Islamic values, which is encouraged by the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*. "And if anyone saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of all mankind." (*Al-Ma'idah:32*).

Because of the desire to get this reward, this value is still practiced in Muslim societies. But contemporary challenges such as wars, floods, earthquakes, droughts, and poverty

necessitate more effective and organized efforts in order to overcome those challenges. *Thinking* is the keyword again.

Barriers That Hinder Tafakkur

The *Qur'an* mentions certain factors that influence *Tafakkur* in a negative way, leading to deception, falsehood, ignorance, disbelief and misguidance. For example:

1) “*Jahl*” الجهل : ***Or Ignorance and not being aware of the truth.*** “And even if we were to send down angels unto them, and if the dead were to speak unto them, and even if we were to assemble before them, face, all the things that can prove the truth, they would still not believe unless God so willed. But (of this) most of them are entirely unaware.” (*Al-An'am: 111*).

“And we brought the children of Israel across the sea; and thereupon they came upon people who were devoted to the worship of some idols of theirs. Said the children of *Israel* : (O Moses , set up for us a god even as they have gods!). He replied: (Verily, you are people without any awareness of right and wrong!).” (*Al- a'araf: 138*).

2) “*Al- I'arad*” الإعراض : ***or turning a way from the truth.*** “ So long as we keep their heart and their eyes turned away from the truth⁽¹⁾ , even as they did not believe in it in the first instance: and so We shall leave them in their overweening Arrogance, blindly stumbling to and fro.” (*Al- An'am 110*).

“And so, when they swerved from the right way, God let their hearts swerve from the truth⁽²⁾” (*As- Saff:5*).

All these verses serve as a reference to the natural law instituted by God, whereby a person who persistently adheres to false beliefs and refuses to the voice of truth gradually loses the *ability to perceive the truth.*⁽³⁾ .

3) *Taglid & Ta'assub* التقليد والتعصب : ***Blind imitation of tradition .***”But when they are told , (follow what God has bestowed from on high ,) some answer, (Nay, we shall follow only

⁽¹⁾ “So long as they remain blind to the truth in consequence of their unwillingness to acknowledge it and this is in accordance with the law of cause and effect which God imposed on His creation.” Asad, Note 95 P. 189.

⁽²⁾ “ Thus, Persistence in wrong actions is bound to react on man's beliefs as well.” Asad, Note 4, P . 860.

⁽³⁾Asad, Note 7, P.4.

that which we found our forefathers believing in and doing.)Why, even if their forefathers did not use their reason at all, and were devoid Of all guidance?" (*Al-Baqarah: 170*).

- 4) *Hawa الهوى : Lust and desires* . “ But, behold, many people lead others astray by their own errant views, without (having any real) knowledge.” (*Al-An'am: 119*.)

“Hast thou ever considered the kind of man who makes his own desires his deity?” (*Al-Furqan: 43*).⁽¹⁾.

“ And since they can not respond to this thy challenge, know that they are following only their own likes and dislikes: and who could be more astray than he who follows but his own likes and dislikes without any guidance from God?” (*Al-Qasas:50*).

- 5) *Takabbur التكبر Arrogance*: Takabbur or arrogance has been mentioned about sixty times in the *Qur'an*. In all these places it has been condemned, as it is one of the main causes of going astray and causes one deny the messages of God.

“ From My messages shall I cause to turn away all those who, without any right, behave haughtily on earth: for, though they may see every sign of the truth, they do not believe in it, and though they may see the path of rectitude, they do not choose to follow it- whereas, if they see a path of error, they take it for their own: this, because they have given the lie to Our messages, and have remained heedless of them.⁽¹⁾” (*Al-A'raf:146*).

“ it is in this way that God sets a seal on every arrogant, self- exalting heart.⁽²⁾” (*Ghafir:35*).

- 6) *Nif'aq النفاق : hypocrisy and two – facedness*: Since *nifaaq* means dishonesty and having a bad heart full of doubt and unwillingness to submit to the will of Allah, it snatches away the faculty of understanding.“But this truth the hypocrites cannot grasp.” (*Al-Munafiqun:7*).

- 7) *Reliance on conjecture اتباع الظن* : Conjecture devoid of sound proof and universal appeal will certainly lead to fallacies.

⁽¹⁾ see also : *Al-Jathiyah:23*.

⁽¹⁾ “As so often in the Qur'an God's “causing” the sinners to sin is shown to be a consequence of their own behavior and the result of their free choice.” Asad, Note 110, P.224

⁽²⁾ This is said about who would call God's messages in question without having any evidence.

Allah says: “Now if thou pay heed unto the majority of those who live on earth, they will but lead thee astray from the path of God: they follow but other people’s conjectures, and they themselves do nothing but guess.” (*Al- An’am: 116*)⁽³⁾.

Allah reminds us that conjecture can never be a substitute for truth.⁽⁴⁾

8) *Juh’ud*⁽¹⁾ **الجدود**: **Conscious rejection or denial of truth, after being convinced about it.**

“But when Our light- giving messages came into them, they said, (This is clearly but spellbinding deception)- and in their wickedness and self- exaltation they rejected them, although their minds were convinced of their truth.” (*An- Naml: 13&14*).

“ For thus it is : perverted are the minds of those who knowingly reject God’s messages.” (*Ghafir: 63*).

“ And none could knowingly reject Our messages unless it be such as would deny an obvious truth.” (*Al- Ankabut:47*).⁽²⁾

9) *Takdhib* **التكذيب**: **Giving the lie to the messages of God:**

“ To them shall happen the like of what happened to Pharaoh’s people and those who lived before them : They gave the lie to Our messages – and God took them to task for their sins: for God is severe in retribution,” (*Al’Imran:11*).

“And who could be more wicked than he who attributes his own lying inventions to God or gives the lie to His messages?” (*Al- An’am21*).

“ Lost indeed are they who consider it a lie that they will have to meet God – till the Last Hour suddenly comes upon them, and they cry, Alas for us, that we disregarded it” (*Al- An’am:31*).

“But they who give the lie to Our messages and scorn them in their pride – these are destined for the fire, therein to abide.” (*Al- A’araf:36*).

⁽³⁾ See also *Al-An'am* : Yunus: 66 , *An –Najm*: 23& 28, and *Al-Jathiyah*:24.

⁽⁴⁾ As in : (*Yunus* : 36) and (*An- Najm*: 28).

= ⁽¹⁾ “Jahada: in the sense of a person’s denying or rejecting something, which he know to be true.” Asad, note 45, p.613.

⁽²⁾ See also *Al- An'am*: 33, *Al- Alaraf* : 51, *Fussilat* 15, and *Al- Ahqaf*:26.

“Nay, but they are bent on giving the lie to everything the wisdom whereof they do not comprehend, and ere its inner meaning has become clear to them. Even thus did those who lived before their time give the lie to the truth: and behold what happened in the end to those evildoers!” (*Yumus:39*).

“For, behold, it has been revealed to us that in the life to come suffering shall befall all who give the lie to the truth and turn away from it!” (*Taha:48*).

Indeed all the above mentioned traits (barriers) contribute a great deal to misleading our perception of the truth.

This shows us the wisdom of seeking Allah’s help and guidance at least seventeen times a day by reciting Suratul Fatiha: “Guide us to the straight way, the way of those upon whom Thou Hast bestowed Thy blessings, not of those who have been condemned (by Thee), nor of those who go astray.”

Some *Mufasirun* say that condemnation here is related to those who know the truth but fail to follow it and, as a consequence, reject it.

It reveals the great wisdom behind the Prophetic *dua*’ “O Allah help me to conceive the truth as a truth and enable me to follow it, and help me to conceive the wrong as being wrong and enable me to refrain from it.”

Creative Thinking : An Islamic Perspective:

Islam encourages creativity and creative thinking at so many levels and by various ways and means.

- It calls for contemplation, reflection, reckoning, and good understanding;
- It uses modes of expression that provoke the mind and forces it to think;
- It discourages subjectivity and whatever causes bias, prejudice and rigidity;
- It promotes open – mindedness, open –heartedness and flexibility, and
- It implements analytical and evaluative thinking.

Professor Dr. *Mohammad Arjun*, a very well- known contemporary scholar, considers the fifth fundamental principle of Guidance in the *Qur’an* as a way of provoking and freeing the

human mind from the domination of materialistic desires and whims so that *aqI* may be adjusted to its original status. He is also of the view that the rational thinking and reasoning used in the *Qur'anic* dialogues by means of which the misunderstandings of nonbelievers are removed and their misconceptions are refuted are an intellectual aspect of *I'ajaz* or inimitability of the *Qur'an*.⁽¹⁾

The first characteristic of revelation regarding this matter is the call for *Ihsan*⁽²⁾ in all of what we do in this life. Allah Says: He Who has created death as well as life, so that He might put to a test (and thus show) which of you is best in conduct⁽¹⁾.

This could be considered as one of the main reasons for the creation of humankind in Islam. This calls for being alert and aware of everything that a Muslim does.

Self accountability does not confine itself to being honest and sincere alone as many Muslim think. It is due to this narrow conception that we may observe discrepancies in the everyday practices of Muslims.

We are also responsible to do things in the right way, in a complete manner and nicely.

The term: “best” used in the *Qur'anic* verse implies that we Muslim should be competitive in all that we do.

The second characteristic in the *Qur'anic* call is the command to read : *iqra*, which signifies knowledge or *Ilm*.

To cite some *Qur'anic* verses, “God will exalt by many degrees those of you who have attained faith and, above all, such as have been vouchsafed true knowledge.” (*Al- Mujadalah: 11*).

“And so We propound these parables unto man : but none can grasp their innermost meaning save those of true knowledge.” (*Al- Ankabut:43*).

⁽¹⁾ Al- Qur'an al- Adhim Hidaiyatuhu – wa – Ijazuhu, Daru- al – Qalam, Damscus 1989. P 48.

⁽²⁾The term denotes doing things completely and in a nice manner.

⁽³⁾ ⁽¹⁾67:2.

The prophet (peace be upon him) and all Muslims are commanded to ask God for more and more knowledge in their *dua*': "O Lord! Increase my knowledge." (*Taha: 114*).

Islam claims to be knowledge- based scheme of life. By taking a closer look at the Islamic Civilization it crystal clear that Islam is true in its claim: "Thus with a single word, *iqra*; Islam began to nurture an inquiring mind which, by reading the *Qur'an* and other literature and examining nature, would formulate ideas and arrive at conclusions that would help man to understand himself and the world around him. The pursuit of knowledge and the application of reason in understanding natural phenomena were to form the basic foundation of *Qur'an* – based knowledge. Blind following and tradition were being replaced with rational⁽¹⁾ study and with a new spirit of inquiry and understanding that were to become the bedrock of Islamic thought and methodology.

From then on, no thesis or proposition was to be accepted at face value; reason and rigor were to be applied to determine their origins and validity. This new methodology brought about what is now referred to as the scientific mind, which rejects mythology and rests on analysis, reasoning and proof at every step⁽²⁾."

Asking thought provoking- questions is the next characteristic of revelation texts. There are approximately as many as 1200 question in the *Qur'an*. These questions were asked for many purposes such as the affirmation of an idea, concept, value or belief, or the nullification of an idea, concept or belief as well as attention directing and changing perception.

If we consider that an average published *Qur'an* consists of six hundred pages, this means that there are an average of two questions on every single page.

If we explore the *Sunnah*, we notice the same phenomenon. In so many *hadith* the Prophet (peace be upon him) uses this method of asking thought provoking- questions.

In one incident the Prophet (peace be upon him) asked his companions the following question: "Whom do you consider a bankrupt"

⁽¹⁾Muhammad Asad distinguishes between reason and rationalism. Unlike reason, "rationalism does not content itself with registration and control, but jumps into the field of speculation; it is not receptive and detached like pure reason, but extremely subjective and temperamental." Islam at the Crossroads, p. 92.

⁽²⁾Al- Alwani , Taha: Ijtihad. ,Herndon: IIIT, 1993,.P.4,5.

They replied: “The one who has no *dirham* nor a *dinar*”⁽¹⁾

The Prophet then said; “ The bankrupt, indeed, is the one who on the Day of Judgement, comes with considerably huge good deeds, but at the same time his record is replaced with so many bad acts such as insulting, backbiting, killing etc.

So, his good deeds will be distributed among his victims, yet if the distribution is not complete, he then will be burdened with the bad deeds of those whom he wronged. Consequently he will be thrown into the hell-fire.”

A dialogue between the Prophet (peace be upon him) and a young man is on record. The man appeals to the Prophet: “O, Prophet of Allah allow me to commit adultery”. The companions were so shocked: who in the world is this man who is asking permission for such an unlawful act?

The Prophet, who advised his companions not to intervene and to leave the matter to him, invited the man to come closer, and asked him “Would do you allow it to be done to your mother?”

The man replied emphatically in the negative: “Oh, no Prophet of Allah”. The Prophet (peace be upon him) explained : “ Others also do not allow it to be done to their mothers”. Without any kind of delay the Prophet proceeded in his inquiry: “Would do you allow it to be done to your sister?” The answer in the same emphatic tone was: “Oh, no, Prophet of Allah”.

“Would you allow it to be done to your aunt?” The expected logical answer continued to be “Oh, on, Prophet of Allah”.

In the end great Prophet (peace be upon him) put his hand on the man’s shoulder- as a sign of more care for him – and supplicated:

“O Allah forgive him his sins, purify his heart, and keep him away from committing adultery.”

⁽¹⁾The kind of money existed at that time.

It is reported that the youngster was never found to have ever thought of such a thing again.⁽¹⁾

A recently published book by *Zuhair Mansur Al- Meziadi* is an introduction to the creative method from an Islamic perspective. The author argues⁽¹⁾ that unless we attain and follow the unique *Qur'anic* methodology of thinking we will not be able to explore and discover the treasures that Allah the Almighty has created in the universe. He points out that Islam establishes certain unique methodologies to be undertaken by the different senses of man. With regard to the sense of sight he lists the following;

- 1) Observing and looking carefully at the creation of Allah.
- 2) Using our sight to gain the light of guidance from the *Qur'an*.

With regard of the sense of hearing : he includes the following;

- 1) Listening carefully to the verses of the *Qur'an*.
- 2) Listening to whatever is beneficial and good (*al- Qaulu al- Hassan*).
- 3) Avoiding Listening to bad speeches such as backbiting, and slandering.
- 4) Searching for the truth and right while listening and being careful not to be fooled or misled by others. He identifies three areas which man has to ponder over; the human life, the Universe and the Hereafter.

Thinking should be along the lines of the Islamic worldview.

The objective of thinking in Islam is subservient to reaching *Itqan* (Perfection) and *Ihsan* (Excellence).

After elaborating on the contributions of Muslim scholars to human thought,⁽¹⁾ the author discusses briefly the conditions of what he calls the “Islamic creative method”, about which he cited the six following conditions;⁽²⁾

- 1) Aims are determined by the *Shari'ah*.
- 2) Creativity should not contradict the *Shari'ah*.

⁽¹⁾Musnad al imam Ahmad 5/ 256,257.

⁽¹⁾Muqadimah fi Manhaj al- Ibda : Roayyah Islamiyyah, Daru- al- Wafa, Al- Mansurah 1993.P. 31-64.

⁽¹⁾Ibid. P. 230-299.

⁽²⁾Ibid. P. 301- 307.

- 3) Creativity should lead to more knowledge about our Creator.
- 4) Creativity can be in anything that will lead to scientific advancement which in turn will lead to more social progress.
- 5) Creativity can be in anything that strengthens the Muslims.
- 6) Creativity can be in anything that enhances the clarity of the Islamic message and cause it to spread all over the world.

These conditions are very brief and theoretical in nature. They need further investigation, analysis and evaluation. Applications and practical examples are needed as well.

The relationship between creativity and the shari'ah could be determined through the following:

Firstly, the *Shari'ah* is one of the primary impetuses for the development of original thought.

Secondly, the *Shari'ah* is the unifying force or the "cement" which brings together Muslims from all over the world, as well as blending together diverse ideas, inventions, solutions, and discoveries. Accordingly, to the extent that an idea, discovery or solution fits within the framework of the *Shari'ah*, it is "taken in" and accepted.

Thirdly, the *Shari'ah* provides moral-ethical guidance for creative individuals to enable them to pursue their creative endeavors in a healthy manner.

Fourthly, the *Shari'ah* provides the framework for a healthy, morally- upright environment by removing all impediments to the proper and full growth of the intellect.⁽¹⁾

In the light of the above, a number of characteristics of the Islamic concept of creativity can be deduced. First of all, creativity is of a multi-faceted nature, incorporating physical, mental, spiritual and teleological components. Secondly, since creativity is intricately linked with the human role of vicegerency, it cannot be divorced from the concepts of responsibility, accountability, *taqwa*, humility, and gratitude. Thirdly, in addition to being practical and linked with action, creative inventions and innovations should also reflect the spiritual dimension of

⁽¹⁾Loeffelholz, Ouida: Creativity in Islamic Thought. UIAM, master thesis, Nov. 1999. P. 113-117.

humans and should not have a strictly utilitarian function. Fourthly, creativity should not be an individualistic affair, but should take into consideration the interest and needs of the community. A fifth characteristic of the Islamic concept of creativity, concerns the issue of reward. According to the Holy *Qur'an* all humans will be judged according to their intentions and efforts. Those who do good deeds will be rewarded greatly, while those who generate evil ideas and creations, will be punished accordingly⁽¹⁾.

Tafakkur: A leading Factor to Ijtihad:

Ijlihad is derived from the root word *jahada* which literally means striving, or self-exertion in any activity.

Ijtihad mainly consists of intellectual exertion. It is defined as the application by a jurist of all his faculties either in ***inferring*** the rules of the *Shari'ah* from their sources, or in ***implementing*** such rules and ***applying*** them to particular issues.⁽²⁾

Such inferring and implementing cannot be achieved without *Tafakkur*.

Islam encourages the appreciation of multiple views and differences of opinion provided that they are based on solid grounds, sound and authentic proof and evidence from the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* and backed by good, acceptable reasoning.

In one of the great events of the *Sirah*, the Prophet (peace be upon him) commanded his companions: "Whoever believes in Allah and the hereafter should not pray, *Asr* except at *Bani Quraidhah*." It was narrated that the time of that prayer came while they were still on their way to the place they were going to. They split into two groups, one group decided to pray ' *Asr* at its due time by interpreting the command as being a way of telling them to hurry up. The other group waited until they reached the place and prayed *Salatu Al- Asr* after sunset adhering to the given command. After they came back to *Madinah* and reported the incident to the Prophet (peace be upon him), the Prophet approved both views.

The Muslim scholars used this incident as clear evidence among others for calling for *Ijtihad*.

⁽¹⁾Ibid. p. 117-123.

⁽²⁾Kamali, Mohammad Hashim: Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence. Iimiah Publishers, K.L.1999 . p. 367.

Another incident is the *Hadith* of *Mu'adh ibn Jabal* when he was sent by the Prophet to *Yamen*. The Prophet (peace be upon him) asked *Mu'adh*: “What will you do if you are faced by a problem?

Mu'adh : replied “ I will refer it to the book of Allah.” The Prophet asked *Mu'adh* again: “ what about if it is not mentioned in the Book of Allah?”

Mu'adh answered : “I will refer it to the *Sunnah* of the Prophet of Allah.”

The Prophet asked for the third time: “ What will you do if you cannot find it there?” *Mu'adh* responded confidently: “Then I will do my *Ijtihad*.”

The Prophet was so happy about the answer given by *Mu'adh* and approved his last statement pertaining to performing *Ijtihad*⁽¹⁾.

The significance of *Ijtihad* is that it “ continues to be the main instrument of interpreting the Divine message and relating it to the changing conditions of the Muslim community in its aspirations to attain justice, salvation and truth.”⁽¹⁾

To put it another way, one might say: “Considering that the accepted juridical sources of Islam are valid for all times and places, *Ijtihad* may be considered as a *creative but disciplined intellectual effort* to derive legal rulings from those sources while taking in consideration the variables imposed by the fluctuating circumstances of Muslim Society.”⁽²⁾

As consequence of *Ijtihad* development the concept of *Maqasid* was introduced into Islamic thought. The *Shari'ah* on the whole, seeks primarily to protect and promote five essential values, namely: faith, life, intellect, lineage or progeny and property. It validates all measures necessary for their preservation and advancement⁽³⁾.

⁽¹⁾There is a difference of opinion among some scholars regarding the authenticity of this *Hadith*.

⁽¹⁾*Ibid.* p. 366.

⁽²⁾Al Alwani, Taha Jabir; *Ijtihad*, IIIT/ Herndon, Va. 1993- p. 4. Iqbal argues that the: " schools of law recognize three degrees of *Ijtihad*:1) Complete authority in legislation which is practically confined to the founders of schools, (2) relative authority which is to be exercised within the limits of a particular school, and (3) special authority which relates to the determining of the law applicable to a particular case left undetermined by the founders." (The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam. P. 148). Dr. Taha traced five new trends of *Ijtihad*, p. 20 & 21 . In my humble opinion all these trends need to be analyzed, assessed, re- examined and evaluated carefully.

⁽³⁾Kamali, *ibid.* p. 397.

The *Shari'ah* is generally predicated on benefits to the individual and the community, and its laws are designed so as to protect these benefits and to facilitate the improvement and perfection of the conditions of human life on earth⁽¹⁾.

A number of prominent scholars have thereafter contributed to the development of the theory and science of *Maqasid*. *Al-Shatibi* advocated and accentuated the need for knowledge of the science of *al-Maqasid* as a prerequisite to the attainment of the rank of a *mujtahid*. *Ibnu Ashur*, a contemporary scholar, stressed that knowledge of the science of *Maqasid* was indispensable to *Ijtihad* in all its manifestations⁽²⁾.

Since one of the main objectives of the *Shari'ah* is to maximize benefits and to minimize and eliminate harm, new *subconcepts* have emerged such as prioritizing (*Awlawiyyat*), criteria to ascertain preference amongst conflicting interests (*Al-tarjih*), and weighing between benefits and harm (*Muazana*)

Some of the maxims of the above mentioned concepts are:

- Avoiding harm takes precedence over gaining benefit.
- A harm cannot be removed by substituting it with a similar degree of another harm let alone a higher one.
- Public interest takes precedence over individual interest.
- Incurring individual harm is acceptable to avoid/ prevent public harm.
- Necessities make prohibitions allowable.
- We may tolerate or accept giving up a minor benefit in order to gain a major one
- We may tolerate or accept a lesser harm in order to avoid a major one.
- We may tolerate or accept a minor harm in order to gain a major benefit.
- We may give up a minor benefit in order to avoid a major harm.

These valuable and precious maxims can be very helpful in overcoming so many contemporary challenges that are faced by the Muslim *Ummah* today. They can also be used as criteria to distinguish between permissible and non-permissible creative ideas and applications.

⁽¹⁾ibid. p. 394.

⁽²⁾Ibid . P. 405

The Contributions of Muslim Thinkers to Human Thought:

Here I will discuss *Tafakkur* as an outcome and as a response to the *Qur'anic* commands to ponder, reflect and contemplate.

I would like to start this section of the paper with the question that Pervez Hoodbhoy⁽¹⁾ posed in his book: “Islam and Science”: Can there be an Islamic Science?⁽²⁾

The fact that he posed a question as the title of a chapter raises doubts. In so doing the author implies that the answer to his designed question is “no”.

The author argues that Islamic science does not exist and all efforts to make an Islamic science have failed. Furthermore, according to his personal view, the author stresses that there has never existed, and still does not exist, a definition of Islamic Science⁽¹⁾, which is acceptable to all Muslim.

The author raises more doubts by posing more attention- directed question towards a chosen frame – which is a popular method of Western judgmental negative logical thinking – where the answers to these questions could be detected and speculated on the way they are worded and articulated:

- Was the science developed by Muslims specifically of an Islamic character, hence deserving to be called Islamic science? Or was it universalistic and therefore more appropriately called Muslim Science?
- Is the thesis that the Golden Age of science was developed primarily by Arabs correct? How important was the role of non- Muslim and non – Arab scholars?
- Did the major institutions of medieval Muslim society truly accept, assimilate, and internalize the rational sciences?
- Whether the science developed by Muslims in medieval times was uniquely connected with Islamic theology and beliefs, or whether its presumptions and techniques were essentially those of other human civilizations as well?

⁽¹⁾A young physicist at Qugid – i– Azam University in Pakistan.

⁽²⁾Hoobbhoy, Pervez: Islam and Science, "Religious Orthodoxy and the Battle for Rationality." Zed Books Lts., London & New Jersey 1991. Chapter 7 p.77

⁽¹⁾About definition of science see: Acikgenc, Alparslan; Islamic Science: Towards a definition. ISTAC publications, K.L. 1996.

The author stresses and emphasizes that Religious orthodoxy confronts Muslim science ⁽¹⁾. In order to prove that assumption the author intentionally and purposely mixes philosophy and the negative attitudes of early Muslim scholars towards it on the one hand, and sciences as a whole on the other hand. This contradicts the simplest principles of research methodology.

Besides, he exploits the differences of opinion amongst various Islamic sects to formulate a fabricated Islamic view that suits his preconceptions, prejudices and biased conclusions.

According to Professor Dr. *Irfan Abdul Fattah*,^(*) a very well-known contemporary scholar, a great deal of misunderstanding and superficial, erroneous and stereotyped conjecture concerning the productive innovative aspects of Islamic science and Muslim cultural achievements have been accumulated in Western traditions, due to a diversity of reasons, such as:

1. In modern history, the term science is restricted wholly to a knowledge acquired by observation and experimental methodology. What is beyond the reach of sensual observation and experimental study is not knowledge and defies the definition of the term Science.
2. Western thought, from the early days of Greek philosophy in the sixth century B.C. developed a notion of a reason with ontological capacity which extends to cover and understand both the unseen and the observable worlds. Hence the emergence – Later on – in Christian theology of the duality of knowledge; the secular and the sacred, and the unbridgeable gap between these two areas of human understanding. Such a duality was constantly reflected in prescribed curricula of study.
3. The Euro-centric or West – centric unilateral theories concerning human civilization presented world civilization as the pure product of the West. Other cultures are denied the privilege of innovative experiences, in toto. As far as Islamic culture is concerned, these self-centric theories still prevail in works dealing with Islam. In their view Islam presented as a petrified entity, inherently void of the ability to change or develop⁽¹⁾.

⁽¹⁾ *ibid.*, p.95.

-For a full discussion of these stereotyped allegations, see : Said, Edward (1978), *Orientalism*. London.

^(*)For further details consult: 1. *Dirasatun fi al – fikr al – Arabi al- Islamic* Dar- Amar, 1991. P. 17-29.

⁽¹⁾For a full discussion of these stereotyped allegations, see: Said, Edward (1978), *Orientalism*. London.

Hoodbhoy felt that his book needed to be balanced with a somewhat dissimilar view as mentioned in the “foreword”.

“Unveiling Islam” by Roger Du *Pasquier*⁽²⁾ could be taken, to a certain extent, as the fulfillment of that wish. Du *Pasquier* states clearly that Islamic civilization is based on *Tawhid*: “Drawing on a vast diversity of sources and material, it (i.e. Islamic Civilization) revealed an extraordinary assimilative power which allowed it, throughout the centuries and in all the regions in which it took root, to retain a remarkable degree of coherence and homogeneity, and to remain, like everything else which emanates from Islam, centered on the principles of oneness.”⁽¹⁾

Another fulfillment of Hoodbhoy’s wish is a good compiled work of twenty Muslim scholars from the Indian subcontinent- where Hoodbhoy lives- entitled “Muslims’ Contribution to Science”⁽²⁾. The most important findings of Dr. *Razi-ud-din Siddiqi*’s work on the Attitude of Islam Towards Science is that Islamic perspective pre-matched the three main aspects of science today are:

1. Islam makes it obligatory on every believer to acquire knowledge. In this regard the democratization of knowledge with the consequent liberation of the human spirit and mind brought about by Islam was really the greatest revolution in human affairs.
2. The *Qur’an*, unlike Greek philosophy, appealed constantly to reason and experience and thus it showed for the first time that science was based on experiment as well as theory.
3. There is no asceticism in Islam. This world and all its resources are to be used for the material betterment of the human race, though men should not devote themselves exclusively to the physical aspect of their personality alone. They should conquer the forces of Nature, and should subjugate them for their own good.

In this compiled work, the contributions of the Muslim thinkers- throughout Islamic history- to scientific progress were shown and elaborated on, particularly in the fields of Mathematics, Chemistry, Medical Sciences and Medicine, Astronomy, Anatomy, History and Sociology.

⁽²⁾Published by The Islamic Texts Society, Cambridge 1992.

⁽¹⁾Ibid. p. 102

⁽²⁾Compiled by; Dr. Mohammad Mirza & Muhammad Iqbal Siddiqi. Kazi publications, Lahore, Pakistan, 1986. Five years before the work of Hoodbhoy.

Out of a long list of Muslim Scholars the following are noteworthy:

1. *Al-Beiruni*, who is considered the most profound and original savant and mathematician in Islam.
2. *Al-Farghani*, *Al-Battani* and *Al Khawarizmi* the great pioneers in Astronomy.
3. *Jabir ibn- Hayyan*, The father of modern chemistry.
4. *Abu Bakr Al-Razi* and *Ibnu Sina*, big names in the domain of medical science⁽¹⁾.
5. *Ibn al –Haitham* who was able to develop Optics to its highest degree during his time.
6. *Ibn- al- Nafis al- Damishqi*, *Zakariyyah al-Qazwini* and *Hamad al Mastaufi*, leading figures in anatomy.
7. *Ibnu Khaldun*, an honorable name in both fields of History and Sociology.

Another good aspect of the compilation is the valuable Quotations from Western scientists about the Muslim scholars' contributions to scientific progress. The most valuable quotation of all is the following one by George Sarton who says: "The most valuable of all, the most original and the most pregnant (works) were written in Arabic. From the second half of the eighth to the end of the eleventh century, Arabic was the scientific, the progressive language of mankind. During that period anyone wishing to be well-informed and up- to- date, had to study Arabic. It will suffice here to evoke a few glorious names without contemporary equivalents in the West; *Jabir ibn Haiyan*, *al-Kindi*, *al-khwarizmi*, *al-Razi*, *Thabit ibn Qura*, *al-Battani*, *Hunain ibn Ishaq*, *al- Farabi*, *Ibrahim ibn Siman*, *al- Mas'udi*, *al- Tabari*, *Abul- Wafa*, *Ali ibn Abbas*, *Abul Qasim*, *ibn al-Jazzar*, *al-Beruni*, *Ibn Sina*, *Ibn Yunus*, *al- Karkhi*, *Ibn al-Haitham*, *Ali ibn Isa*, *al- Ghazzali*, *Al-Zaqali*, *Omar Khayyam*- a magnificent array of names which it would be difficult to extend. If anyone tells you that the Middle Ages were scientifically sterile, just quote these men to him. All of these scientists flourished within a relatively short period between 750 and 1100"⁽¹⁾

⁽¹⁾For more insight on this contribution see; Fazlur Rahman: "Health and Medicine in Islamic Tradition". Abdulmajeed & co.K.L. 1993.

⁽¹⁾Ibid .p. 131-132.

Conclusion:

In the previous analysis, the task of providing a comprehensive *Qur'anic* view of the concept of *Tafakkur* was attempted. The main indications of the concept were highlighted, and their social implications were put forward. The discussions presented in this paper lead us to the conclusion that the concept of *Tafakkur* within the *Qur'anic* context is considered as the *piece de resistance* of any creative thinking or civilizational progress in all aspects of life. This is how our new generations should view the concept of *Tafakkur* and perceive its intellectual and social implications.

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