
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY IN THE FIELD OF ISLAMIC STUDIES A CRITICAL DELIBERATION

*Prof. Dr. Israr Ahmad Khan**

Research and development have in the contemporary world become intrinsic parts of knowledge. Knowledge is really in need of further development, which entails research. Natural and social sciences never experienced decline due to continuous researches undertaken by their stalwarts. Quite recently, Islamic Studies disciplines have also registered their presence in the arena of research with a view to ensuring their further development. It seems the researchers in the field of Islamic Studies are yet to identify methodological principles of research, different from those in natural and social sciences. The known areas covered by Islamic Studies include "tafsir al-Qur'an", "sharh hadith", "fiqh", and "usul al-fiqh". These subjects essentially differ from natural sciences and humanities. These Islamic areas of study require extraordinary care and method of handling due to them being sensitive to anything new that might affect, at times, negatively their fundamentals and foundational rules. There is a need of developing relevant methodology of research without altering the fundamentals and foundations. The paper represents a humble attempt to deliberate and identify the most needed ways to conduct research in the disciplines of Islamic Studies.

Keywords: Islamic Studies, Research, Methodology, the Qur'an, Hadith

INTRODUCTION

Knowledge is the essence of human life. It leads to bliss in the present world as well as in the hereafter. It is simply because man is an intellectual being. The essential difference between man and animal is that the former has been imbued with both intellectual faculty and instincts, whereas the latter is originally constituted by instincts only. That is why when the man abandons his power of thinking, he becomes almost similar to, and at times, worse than animals. Man has to maintain his position as intellectual being as he is duty-bound to acquire, develop, and create knowledge. The three stages of human endeavor towards knowledge, namely acquisition of knowledge, development of knowledge, and creation of new knowledge, refresh and strengthen intellectual power of man. These three stages of knowledge when referred to together may be called research. Right from the moment the first human spouses (Adam and Eve) stepped into the earthly sphere search of and research into knowledge were the most preferred task for the betterment of life. With the passage of time the horizon of

* Department of Qur'an and Sunnah Studies, International Islamic University, Malaysia.

search/research into knowledge has, to an unbelievable extent, expanded. In order to cope with the ever-increasing need of research into knowledge hundreds of thousands of universities, colleges, centers, and institutes have been established in the world. Now in response to the pressing need of development in each and every field of knowledge the teachers and students are seriously engaged in the task of research. Without the task of research, neither university teachers nor university students are, any longer, considered serious providers and seekers of knowledge respectively. Consequently, millions of research theses have been produced by researchers. These research works are for sure of various categories, high standard, sub-standard, and also worthless. The main reason for the sub-standard and worthless research works could be most probably lack of appropriate research methodology. This has become universally grave phenomenon now, permeating all disciplines of studies. Islamic Studies, widely recognized discipline of study and research today, is no exception to this academic crisis. It seems that teachers and students of Islamic Studies are hardly clear on how to propose for research theme, how to begin the research, how to authentically continue the research, and how to successfully end the research. This paper represents a humble attempt to reflect on research methodology in two specializations of Islamic Studies, one related to the Qur'an and the other connected with Hadith.

Meaning of Knowledge

Knowledge is popularly known as facts, information, and skill acquired by a person through experience or education or both. Theoretical and practical ideas gathered through deliberation and experiments are also called knowledge. It is quite pertinent here to see how scholars classical as well as modern, western as well as eastern, Muslim as well as non-believing have defined knowledge. The Greek word for knowledge is *episteme*. According to Socrates, *episteme* is “**justified true belief**”. This definition of knowledge is also attributed to Plato this attribution may not withstand scrutiny. In his dialogue, *THEAETETUS* he appears to have rebutted this definition of knowledge: neither perception, nor true belief, nor the addition to the true belief can be knowledge.

Irrespective of who came up with this definition of knowledge, whether Plato or Socrates, it is considered a classical definition of knowledge. It has been criticized by modern thinkers including

Edmund Gettier as defective. But on its face value there does not seem to be any aberration. There are three elements in the definition: justification, truth, and conviction. The link among them is explicit. Knowledge actually represents what is true; what is true needs to be believed in; and what is true can authentically be justified.

Albert Einstein is claimed to have said: "Information is not knowledge. The only source of knowledge is experience". From this quote it may be derived that "end-product of experience is knowledge". He is physicist. He is known to have denied the existence of any world besides or beyond this physical and material world. Facts and news about the other world cannot be had on the basis of individual experiences. By denying information as knowledge Einstein rejects the facts concerning the unseen world. This is actually unscientific. The only source of knowledge about the spiritual world is information provided by those who were the most trustworthy, the most honest, and the most truthful known as the Prophets and Messengers of Allah, the Creator, the Sustainer, the Provider, the Controller of the universe. Apart from that even the physical world has not been fully discovered. Does it mean that the undiscovered physical phenomena do not constitute knowledge?

Muslim scholars' vistas of knowledge, as a matter of fact, should be deemed wider than those from the secular west because *'ulama*, *fuqaha*, *mufasssirun*, *muhaddithun*, and *mutakallimuntend* to look at everything including knowledge from both material and spiritual angles. Al-Raghib al-Asfahani defines knowledge in two ways, focusing on two Arabic synonyms of knowledge i.e. *al-'ilm* and *al-ma'rifah*. He says: "*al-'ilm* denotes recognition of the thing by its reality"; and "*al-ma'rifah* signifies recognition of the thing through deliberation over its impact and manifestation". Here *al-'ilm* appears to be absolute and immutable, whereas *al-ma'rifah* seems to be relative and disputable. It should be born in mind that the word "thing" as referred to in al-Asfahani's definition is comprehensive, encompassing all that is in the seen and the unseen phases of the truth.

The Qur'an uses the two terms, *al-'ilm* and *al-ma'rifah* as synonyms. One example each will suffice to validate it: (1) last part of *Surah al-Baqarah*: 144 reads: قَدْ نَرَىٰ تَقَلُّبَ وَجْهِكَ فِي السَّمَاءِ ۚ فَلْيُوَلِّبْنَا لَكَ قِبَلَهُ ۗ تَرْضَىٰ لَهَا قَوْلًا وَجْهِكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَحَيْثُ مَا كُنْتُمْ فَوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ شَطْرَهُ ۗ

وَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ لِيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا يَعْمَلُونَ
“And verily, those who have been vouchsafed revelation aforetime know well [laya ‘lamuna] that this the truth from their Lord; and Allah is not unaware of what they do”, and Surah al-Baqarah: 146 reads: “They unto whom We have vouchsafed revelation aforetime know it [ya ‘rifunahu] as they know [ya ‘rifuna] their own children: but, behold, some of them knowingly [ya ‘lamun] suppress the truth”. In these two Qur’anic expressions—ya ‘lamun and ya ‘rifun—the message communicated is that the Jews definitely have knowledge that the change of direction in prayer from Jerusalem to Makkah is indeed from Allah hence truth.

It is interesting to note that the Qur’an uses both *al-‘ilm* and *al-ma‘rifah* for human knowledge but applies only *al-‘ilm* for the knowledge of Allah, and not *al-ma‘rifah*. It may be, then, derived from this fact that there is some fine difference between *al-‘ilm* and *al-ma‘rifah*. The difference has already referred to above.

Meaning of Research

The word research literally means fresh investigation. Its technical is almost similar to its literal one. Research may, then, be defined as thorough deliberation over and deep investigation into the selected topic and the issue concerned, leading to the development of totally new idea or essentially new interpretation of the old idea. This definition refers very clearly to four intrinsic parts of research process: (1) selection of a topic/issue, (2) thorough deliberation over each and every possible angle of the topic related material, (3) deep investigation into the issue-related views and arguments, and (4) development of so far unknown idea or new interpretation of the issue.

Compilation and translation of what is already known do not merit to be categorized as research because there is no possibility of new information or new interpretation. Below are given two examples, one concerning new idea and the other regarding new explanation.

New Idea: Hundreds of *tafsir* works are available. But in none of them there is any identification of preface in the Qur’anic Surahs. According to a research paper on the theme of preface in the Qur’an, long surahs in the Qur’an comprise, among other components, preface. Preface in *Surah al-Baqarah* is constituted by the first five *ayaat*—“*Alif Lam Mim. This Divine Writ—let there be no doubt about it—is a guidance for all the God-conscious who believe in the Unseen, and establish solah, and spend on others out*

of what We provide for them as sustenance; and who believe in that which has been revealed to you, as well as in that which has been revealed before you; and who have conviction in the hereafter. It is they who follow the guidance from their Lord; and it is they who shall attain to a happy state". As is well known, preface is devoted to highlight the main issue/idea in the academic paper. Here in the preface of the second Qur'anic chapter the issue highlighted is the basic qualities of those who deserve guidance from Allah so as to secure blissful life. *Surah al-Baqarah* describes four categories of people with their attitude, practices, and behavior—disbelievers, hypocrites, Jews, and believers. Since the main addressees are believers, they are advised to refrain from the path chosen by the other three sections of the society on the grounds that they have distorted the truth and deviated from the right path, and are also inspired to follow the guiding principles revealed by Allah. Thus with the identification of preface in the *Surah al-Baqarah* it is rather easy to understand the message therein.

New Interpretation: *Surah al-Baqarah: 62* reads: "Verily, those who have attained to faith, and those who follow the Jewish faith, and the Christians, and the Sabians—all who believe in Allah and the Last Day, and do righteous deeds—shall have their reward with their Lord; and no fear need they have, and neither shall they grieve". Around this declaration so much controversy has spun. The main reason for this situation is the statement in the above ayah that the eternal reward is awaiting those who fulfill only three conditions: (1) believe in Allah, (2) believe in the Last Day, and (3) do righteous deeds. There is no mention of belief in the Prophet and the Book as condition.

The same message has been repeated in *Surah al-M'edah: 69*: "Verily, those who have attained to faith, and those who follow the Jewish faith, and the Sabians, and the Christians—all who believe in Allah and the Last Day and do righteous deeds—no fear need they have, and neither shall they grieve".

Mufassir and other scholars interpret these *Āyāt* differently. These interpretations could be classified into four views. First, these two *Āyāt* talk about the believers, the Jews, the Christians, and the Sabians before the Last Prophet (s.a.w.) was raised.¹ Second, these two *Āyāt* stand abrogated after the revelation of another *Āyah* ("If anyone desires a religion other than Islam, never

will it be accepted of him, and in the life to come he will be the lost" [3:85]).² Third, The two *ÉyÉt* underscore that not only the believers but also others including Jews, Christians, and Sabians are eligible for Allah's reward in the hereafter provided that they fulfill three conditions: (1) they believe in Allah, (2) they believe in the Last Day, and (3) they do righteous deeds. It is not necessary to believe in the Last Prophet or any Prophet as well as in the Qur'an or any scripture because the two *ÉyÉt* do not mention the belief in the Last Prophet and in the Qur'an.³ Fourth, these two *ÉyÉt* do not seek to lay down the exhaustive list of list of faith-articles. Belief in the Last Prophet is not mentioned therein but that belief is the logical corollary of belief in Allah.⁴ The first three views represent mere speculation. The idea of abrogation of the two above mentioned *ÉyÉt* attributed to 'Abd Allah ibn 'AbbÉs cannot be taken as authentic because its chain of narrators is defective. The fourth seems to be logical but its proponents remain short of advancing the reason for that. Actually, in the two *ÉyÉt* there has occurred the phenomenon of ellipsis and brevity. Two words, the Last Prophet and the Qur'an stand omitted therefrom. Thus, with the omitted words the statement is this: "...all who believe in Allah, and His Prophet, and the Book, and the Last Day..." With this rule the controversy over the meaning of the above two revelations is resolved and the fourth view as mentioned above gets justified. *Tadabbur* (deliberation) over the above two *ÉyÉt* leads one to ask a question as to who will determine the nature and the bases of righteous deeds. The logical answer is that mention of righteous deeds warrants the belief in the Last Prophet and the Book revealed to him.⁵

Methods Leading to the Targets

In order for developing new idea or new interpretation in a research task related to the Qur'an or Hadith there are several methods such as analytical and critical. These two methods are for sure the most reliable methods which can lead researcher to the desired result. But due to lack of awareness of what these methods theoretically and practically signify the most researches fail to reach the goal of new idea or new interpretation. There is a need of understanding analytical and critical methods of research.

Analytical Method: Literally, analysis means identifying nature of all the components of something. In academic field it will refer to describing all the elements in a particular view, evidence,

argument, statement, and material. Technically, analysis denotes seven steps towards response to two questions: what is what and why in the arguments and views. The seven steps in the analysis of academic and intellectual material are: (1) shedding light on the chosen issue, (2) recognizing all the components therein, (3) describing each of them in an elaborate manner, (4) referring to the supporting evidence either explicitly mentioned or implicitly indicated, (5) evaluating the evidence with a view to confirming its suitability or non-suitability with the idea, (6) tracing strong evidence in case of the weak evidence given, and (7) establishing what is valid and what is invalid in the issue or material concerned. In most cases of research where the analytical method is applied the task does not go beyond the first four steps; and, at times, the third step (describing each of them in an elaborate manner) is missing in the process. As a result the analysis remains confined to answering the first question what is what; and there is no attempt to answer the second question why. In that case the task may not be called analysis. Generally, researchers believe that analysis in research connotes highlighting the issue and sharing in supporting evidence without looking into the nature of evidence. Research papers or theses on Qur'an or Hadith related topics appear to be spectacularly replete with mere quotations either from the Qur'an, or from Hadith literature, or from the history, or from the views of scholars. And the researchers are confident that they have accomplished the task of analysis.

Mere quoting the Qur'an, hadith, historical event, and scholars' views does not render the task into analysis. The ayat quoted is to be further elaborated. The hadith referred to is to be checked from both chain and text angles. Historical events used are to be checked as to their authenticity. Views of scholars are to be looked at deeply in order to ascertain their validity.

A short example of analysis is here at hand. Some Muslim scholars and speakers claim that the Qur'an mentions both *isra'* (night journey), and *mi'raj* (heavenly ascension). As for the night journey of the Prophet (s.a.w.) to Jerusalem, it is referred to in *Surah al-Isra'*:1. There is no doubt about it. But for the *mi'raj* the quoted *aayaatare Surah al-Najm*:13-18. It cannot be valid because *Surah al-Najm* was revealed in its entirety in the fifth year after the declaration of the Prophethood, whereas *mi'raj* took place eleven or twelve years after the Prophethood. There is gap of around 6-7

years between the two. These *aayaat* inform about the appearance of Gabriel two times in his real physical form. It is said that the first one was at the time of the first revelation and the second one occurred during *mi'raj*. Does it mean that event of *mi'raj* was described 6-7 years before its occurrence?

Critical Method: Literally criticism signifies expression of disapproval of someone or something based on perceived faults or mistakes. Technically, it may be defined as an academic method of research in which researcher has to investigate the material or views or the theory in question and compare it with the universally established criteria in the field of Islamic studies with a view to validating or invalidating it.

Generally, critical method is taken as forthright rejection of apparently erroneous opinion and unequivocal condemnation of one who expressed it. Academically, this approach may not be considered commendable. Criticism practically entails refutation of the reprehensible idea/ideas on the basis of relatively stronger arguments and evidence. An example of critical method is advanced below.

Well-known Orientalist William Montgomery Watt in his work *MUHAMMAD: PROPHET AND STATESMAN* has devoted a complete chapter entitled *Satanic Verses* in which he has narrated in its detail a story that during the revelation of *Surah al-Najm*(53) Satan managed to interfere into the process of *wahy* and inserted (God forbid!) into the mouth of the Prophet (s.a.w.) some of his own verses. When the Prophet (s.a.w.) memorized and recited that *Surah*, he also included the alleged Satanic Verses as he failed to realize that the source of these verses was Satan. This inclusion of Satanic Verses remained in place for around ten years after which the verses were removed from the *Surah* at the instruction of Archangel Gabriel. The alleged Satanic Verses are: *hunna al-gharanaqat al-'ulawainnashafa'tuhunnalaturtuja* (these are highly praised goddesses and their intercession is genuinely assuring). In the criticism of this story the first thing to be investigated is the source of this story. It is to be checked whether Watt himself concocted this story or borrowed from some other sources. Investigation will reveal that Watt extricated the story from Muslim sources such as Al-Tabari, Al-Jassas, and some other *mufasssirun*.

With this finding Watt may not be scathingly censured. Muslim scholars who related the story in their respective works are to be criticized. Here criticism means refutation of the allegation based on stronger evidence. First, it was not possible for Satan to interfere into the process of revelation of the Qur'an because the Qur'an vehemently declares that the Qur'an was safe at all the three of its stages, before revelation, during revelation, and after revelation. The *ayah* 15:9 *لِحَفِظُونَا إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ* (We have indeed revealed the Dhikr [the Qur'an] and we have safeguarded it) is interpreted as the assurance of the Qur'an's safety after the revelation. This is semantically invalid because the word *لِحَفِظُونَا* does not originally refer to the future only but cover all the three periods, the past, the present, and the future.

Second, was Satan more powerful than the entire divine system including the Archangel? Why did not Archangel realize Satanic interference? Third, was the Prophet (s.a.w.) so unaware that he took the Satanic verses as genuine ones from Allah? It was impossible for the Archangel and the Prophet (s.a.w.) to be duped by Satan. The Qur'an has described Archangel as the noblest envoy, endued with power, with authority, and the most trustworthy (81:19-21). How could it, then, be possible for any foreign being including Satan to enter the most fortified system of revelation.

Fourth, the alleged verses are in apparent conflict with the rest of the *Surah al-Najm* which condemns unequivocally the deities and idol-worship. The Satanic verses praise goddesses and the *Surah* condemns them. It was in no way possible for the Prophet (s.a.w.) to take the so called evil-verses as genuine. Fifth, all the reports through which this story has been narrated are defective and unreliable due to liars being in the chain of narrators.

Sixth, there is an event related to *Surah al-Najm*. After its revelation the Prophet (s.a.w.) recited it in public near *Safa* and *Marwah* hills. In the end he prostrated as the last *ayah* required him to do so. The audience comprising both Muslims and non-Muslims followed the suit. It was due to the impact of the fresh message of Allah given in the most eloquent style and read by the Prophet (s.a.w.) the audience followed the Prophet (s.a.w.) spontaneously. Later on this event which caused humiliation to Quraysh was rephrased and spread with distortion that the Prophet read some verses in praise of Quraysh's goddesses hence prostration by them

was justified. It seems that later on when the people came across the story fabricated by Quraysh, they inserted another idea that the alleged Satanic verses were the result of Satan's interference into the process of revelation of *Surah al-Najm*.

Three Stages of Research

Man stands in need of maintaining his identity as an intellectual being on the earth. For that matter he has to continuously widen, strengthen, and develop the knowledge. In order to achieve this goal he has to continuously remain engaged in research. It is the research, which ensures development of knowledge. Apathetic approach to research mars the validity and relevance of knowledge in a given time and space. Educational institutions may not be expected to perform their task of developing mind if these are not strengthened by research in every field of knowledge. Research supplies fresh blood to the body of knowledge. Improper research or no research will certainly cause the body of knowledge to suffer from innumerable problems ultimately leading to its decay, which will, in turn, cause the decay of education system. Prevailing research system in Muslim world does not seem to be research in the Islamic sense of the word.

The *Qur'Ēn* guides man towards that direction. There are ten places in the *Qur'Ēn* (2:7; 2:20; 6:46; 16:78; 16:107; 17:36; 23:78; 32:9; 46:26; 67:23) where collective and coordinated role of three essential faculties in man: *al-sam'* (hearing), *al-baġar* (sight), and *al-fu'Ēd* (thinking) has been highlighted. For the matter to be clear two of the *ĒyĒt* are quoted here below.

“And He has endowed you with hearing and sight, and minds, so that you might have cause to be grateful”. (16:78)

“Verily, the hearing, the sight, the mind-----all of them-----will be called to account for”. (17:36)

Syed MawdĒdĒ (1903-1979) finds in these *ĒyĒt* a basis for defining knowledge. He says:

*“The three words *al-sam'*, *al-baġar*, and *al-fu'Ēd* have not been used in the divine speech merely in the sense of hearing, seeing and thinking. *Al-sam'* means acquiring information made available by others; *al-baġar* signifies developing knowledge through self-observation; and *al-fu'Ēd* stands for deriving conclusions after compiling information obtained by the above-mentioned two means. These three elements constitute knowledge of which man has been made capable”*.⁶

Interpretation of Syed Mawdūdī seems to be remarkable. Further deliberation over the above-referred *ÉyÉt* may lead to the conclusion that the mention of three said human faculties is aimed at providing guidelines for research process. It seems that the *Qur'Én* spells out about three stages of research. Firstly, all the available information in a particular field of study is to be accessed, read, and understood. Secondly, the existing information is to be analyzed critically, interpreted thoroughly, and clarified fully about what is what. Thirdly, new vistas of knowledge are to be explored; new discoveries are to be made; and the existing volume of information is to be expanded.

This principle had been applied by Muslims of golden Islamic era when the knowledge bloomed fully. Muslims acquired available amount of knowledge in almost all the fields of learning, *tafsÉr*, *ÁadÉth*, *fiqh*, logic, philosophy, astronomy, chemistry, medicine, physics, optics, architecture, engineering, mathematics, algebra etc. They studied these disciplines carefully and minutely, obtained mastery over them. Then, they moved to the second stage of the process of learning and research: observation and critical analysis. After accomplishing the task of observation and analysis they devoted their time and energy to delve into the vast and untouched ocean of knowledge to increase the quantity of knowledge.

In the past Muslim educational institutions observed this principle of research, which ensured the development of knowledge. In order to achieve this goal they traveled far and wide throughout the known human world, learned foreign language to obtain the intellectual legacy from others, translated the unknown foreign works into Arabic language to let the Muslim students have easy access to the sources, modified them in accordance with their philosophy and made utmost endeavor to come up with something more and new in the fields mentioned above.

It is noteworthy that the west applied the same principle of research and reached where they are today in almost every possible fields of study and learning. Muslims' decline in the field of education seems to have been caused by their lukewarm approach and indifference towards the *Qur'Énic* principle. The dominance of the west in education is its adherence to the Islamic policy of research, which is actually a universal methodology of learning.

Muslims feel satisfied by memorizing the existing quantity of information. They think that they have completed the task of

learning and deserve to be called scholar and authority. In both religious and secular educational institutions in the Muslim world the teachers and the students are required to concentrate on only getting and absorbing the works already done by Muslim scholars in the past. It is not all; they have to undergo another two stages of the academic task: analytical cum critical observation of what exists and further development of knowledge. These institutions have become mere supermarkets selling available old commodities. That is why educational institutions in the Muslim world have ceased to progress. Every part of its machinery has turned static and rusty hence hackneyed and outdated requiring an urgent replacement with new and viable system. University teachers have to be engaged in continuous process of research in their fields of interest. Then only can they do justice with their position and assignment. Their confinement to the existing quantity of information or the old form of knowledge amounts to making an effort to drive the academic vehicle back to the old era. Today's Muslim world is the part of the global community. They have equal opportunity to obtain knowledge by using state of the art information technology. They will still have to travel far and wide around the earth but not by making physical journey. Electronic media are at the door of Muslims to serve them better if they want to be served.

Rational and Logical Approach in Research

Man is indeed intellectual being. This faculty has made him rational. One of the essential demarcations between man and animal is that the former possesses intellectual power and the latter has been deprived of that power. Use of intellectual power is so significant in human life that the *Qur'Ēn* has around forty nine times reminded man of serious consequences of its misuse or no use, on the one hand, and spelled out clearly wonderful impact of its proper use, on the other. Some spectacular examples from these admonitions may bring the point home.

- 1) *“Verily, the vilest of creatures in the sight of God are those deaf and dumb ones who do not use their reason”*. (8:22)
- 2) *“It is He who lays loathsome evil upon those who do not use their reason”*. (10:100)
- 3) *“We have revealed for you a book in which is a message for you: will you not then apply your reason to understand it”*. (21:10)

- 4) *“Do they not travel about the earth, so that their hearts and minds may learn wisdom, and their ears may thus learn to hear? Truly, it is not their eyes, but their hearts, which are in their breasts”*. (22:46)
- 5) *“And they will say: Had we but listened or used our reason, we would not be among those who are destined for the blazing flame”*. (67:10)

Obviously, as can be seen in the above quoted revealed words of Allah who is the ultimate source of knowledge and wisdom, the success and failure of man in his life depends on how he treats his reason. Education is a very important exercise in his life. Its development or decay is also linked to application or non-application of his intellectual power. Classroom is like a factory shaping and designing human mind. Methodology of teaching is like a die in which the mind is cast. The end product of an educational institution reflects nature of teaching methodology his teacher has been using in the classes. If the teacher has made reflection on the material he shares with the student, and has not simply passed it on to the latter but rather discussed it in a rational and critical manner making it crystal clear whether it is acceptable or not and on what basis, he will certainly contribute to the development of healthy and sound mind. Teaching methodology bereft of rational and critical approach may not be expected to produce minds useful for the society.

Whether natural sciences or social studies or religious disciplines, these are all to be dealt with in a highly rational and critical manner. *Óyah* 47:24 (*“Will they not, then, ponder over the Qur’Én, or is that there are locks upon their hearts”*) provides guidelines for the teacher. While preparing his lectures he has not to simply memorize the material he derives from the sources concerned, he has to deliberate over its nature and analyze it thoroughly, using valid and relevant criteria. Another *Éyah* 25:73 (*“And who, whenever they are reminded of their Sustainer’s messages, do not throw themselves upon them deaf and blind”*) advises both the teacher and the student on how to approach the class lecture. Explaining this statement of the *Qur’Én*, al-ZamakhsharÊ (d.538 A.H)⁷ remarks that whereas the average run of people approach the divine writ with a mere outward show of eagerness, “throwing themselves upon it” for the sake of appearances but in reality not making the least attempt to understand the message as such and,

hence, remaining deaf and blind to its contents; the truly God-conscious are deeply desirous of understanding it, and therefore listen to it with wide-awake ears and look into it with seeing eyes⁸ Thus the teacher and the students have both to be equally active in the classroom, a venue of intellectual exercise. Blind approach to information, religious or non-religious runs counter to the very concept of education, which is aimed at developing the mind.

Intellectual Techniques

Researcher may find himself/herself, at times, at loss knowing not what to do and how to do in the process of research. As long as he/she has the material on the topic concerned, he/she may continue dealing with the issue. But the moment the material is exhausted, the researcher stands exhausted. This situation, at times, leads to plagiarism, which is highly reprehensible offence in the intellectual activities. In the remote as well as in the recent past students and scholars, researchers and supervisors reproduced whatever they memorized in their writings. One may see it mostly in the books in the fields of *tafsir* and Qur'anic Studies. Most of the *tafsir* books are in one way or another reproduction or abridged form of three original works, *Jami' al-Bayan* by Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari, *Al-Kashshaf* by Mahmud ibn 'Umar al-Zamakhshari, and *Mafatih al-Ghayb* by Fakhr al-Din al-Razi. Most popular books in Qur'anic Studies are *Al-Burhan fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an* by Badr al-Din al-Zarkashi and *Al-Itqan fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an*. Both of them are very much similar to each other as to the information and examples.

It refers to a tradition of preservation of the existing sources of knowledge in any fields whatsoever for the posterity. Even in the areas of Medicine and Sciences reproduction of Muslim scholars' researches was quite prevalent until recently in the west. But all these reproduced works are considered fresh researches, whereas they are not. Simple reason of this tradition was that students and teachers preferred not to engage their minds to produce something new. Their total dependence on the predecessors' works almost paralyzed their intellectual faculty. This is a spectacular example of intellectual crisis, which appears to have restaged its comeback. It is an extraordinarily destructive state of academic achievements. It is to be arrested before it causes the river of knowledge to be disturbingly stinking.

The Qur'an guides academicians, intellectuals, and researchers on how to develop new knowledge further and protect the existing one from decay. In this regard it advises them to actively engage their intellectual power. For that matter it has used various terms, referring to intellectual techniques and activities. Seven of them are very much crucial: *Tadabbur*, *Tafakkur*, *Ta'aqqul*, *Tadhakkur*, *Tafaqquh*, *Tahassun*, and *Tawakkul*.

- 1) *Tadabbur*: It literally as well technically signifies deliberation over the thing as it appears in order to identify its pros and cons. The Qur'an has invited man to deliberate over its message twice: 4:82 and 47:24. In the first one it was declared that if man deliberated over its contents from any angle such as linguistic, legislative, and scientific, he would discover that the Qur'an was a supernatural discourse revealed from on high. In the second one the Qur'an has condemned man for not making deliberation over the Qur'anic message as it amounts to locking the mind and heart out. Deliberation is a definite tool to reach the facts. It is to be born in mind that *tadabbur* is applicable to only what is available in black and white form.
- 2) *Tafakkur*: It denotes pondering with keen observation of the thing with a view to recognizing what is what. The fine difference between *tadabbur* and *tafakkur* is the former is applied to what is available in written form and the latter to the natural phenomena in various shapes and designs. *Surah Aali Imran:191* reads: "It is they who remember Allah standing, sitting, and while lying down on their backs; and who ponder over the creation of the heavens and the earth; and reach the conclusion by declaring that O our Lord! You have not created all this non-sense hence please protect us from the fire". Here *tafakkur* is in the creation, not in the revelation. Its practical application in research process is in the science and social sciences areas where observation constitutes major element of research.
- 3) *Ta'aqqul*: It connotes application of reason to a message or material so as to find out its nature as to its authenticity. Generally, it is claimed that application of reason may and may not lead to the right direction. This may not withstand the scrutiny. The Qur'an invited non-believing opposition to apply their reason to the revealed message of Allah more

than thirty times. For example, 21:10 reads: “*We have indeed revealed Book to you, wherein is your description. Do you not then apply your reason?*” Had the reason been source of committing error in decision, the Qur’an would never have invited the opponents of the Prophet (s.a.w.) to apply their reason to check the authenticity and relevance of the divine word. Undoubtedly, man enjoys freedom in using his reason or not. But he should know that suspension of reasoning is detrimental to his life and activities. Wherever there is total abandonment of intellectual power, there is total reliance on whims and fancies; and most of the wishes and whims are governed by low desires of man hence definitely destructive. Researchers in the field of *tafsir* and *sharhahadith* are not supposed to suspend their independent reasoning because it certainly leads to obstinacy, inflexibility, and rigidity—all very damaging to knowledge and development.

- 4) *Tafaqquh*: It means appreciation of hidden dimensions in the thing. As for its technical connotation, it refers to deriving rulings and principles from the Qur’an and the Prophetic traditions. As it appears, *tafaqquh* is wider in its application than *tadabbur*, *tafakkur*, and *ta’aqul*. Its application in the research process is to derive various shades of meanings from the views of scholars and also from the selected Qur’anic verses and Prophetic traditions. The Qur’an has laid emphasis on the significance of *tafaqquh*. *Surah al-Tawbah*: 122 reads—“*It was not proper for Muslims to join the expedition in greater strength. Why did not some people from among each of their sections stayed behind for the sake of making reflections on the religion and warn their people...*”
- 5) *Tadhakkur*: It implies recalling something out of what was memorized and learned before. The word *tadhakkur* occurs in the Qur’an in various forms (noun and verb) more than thirty five times. The relevant example for the research process is *Surah Sad*:29—“*The blessed Book We revealed to you so that the people in general ponder over its messages, and men of deep insights may receive admonition*”. It may be derived from this Qur’anic statement that *tadhakkur* is an act after *tadabbur*; and

tadabburis a process of thinking demanded from the people in general but *tadhakkuris* expected to be performed only by scholars and intellectuals. The researchers belong to both people in general and those imbued with insights. What is desirable in respect of research that the researcher always remembers what he did and is still doing in his academic act in order to ensure that contradictions and obscurity do not make their way into the research discussion and finding.

- 6) *Tahassun*: It indication to beautification of the thing with whatever is necessary for that. Its practical application in the research process is strengthening the discussion on an issue in the research with clear evidence, convincing arguments, and concrete proofs. It is also required in the style of discussion. Defaming scholars, condemning people, and humiliating some persons whosoever are totally undesirable and ugly part of research process. The researcher has to definitely keep away from such approach as applied by some well-known *mufasssirun* like Abu Bakr al-Jassas, Abu Bakribn al-Arabi, and Al-Kayya al-Harrasi. They have in their respective *tafsir*works similarly entitled "*Ahkam al-Qur'an*" used foul words for one another and those in the opposite camp of Islamic law. Justice and excellence are obligatory components in Muslims' life. Allah commands: "*Verily, Allah commands justice and excellence....*" (16:90). These two elements can beautify the research product. It may here be argued that justice and excellence as mentioned in the verse are for human behavior and conduct. Yes, research process in its entirety represents intellectual human behavior.
- 7) *Tawakkul*: In the entire universe there are two orders, the creator and the creation. Allah is the Creator and the rest falls under creation, which invariable depends on the Creator, before its coming into being, during its coming into being, and after its coming into being. Man is creation. He is not totally independent of his creator. He is need of his creator at every step in the life. Nothing is complete without the permission of Allah. The researcher has to always seek help from Him before the research, during the research, and after the research. It is because the

researcher's research might cause chaos on the earth and Allah does not want to see chaos and corruption on the surface of the earth: "*And seek not mischief in the land: for Allah does not love those who do mischief*" (28:77). In order to ensure that the research is authentic and useful for the humanity at large the researcher has to place his trust in Him. There is another danger looming over the process of research. If the researcher does not feel close to Allah, he/she will become arrogant, self-conceit, and stubborn. This approach in the Qur'an is called as *istikbar* and *takabbur*. *Tawakkul* and *takabbur* are opposed to each other. If the researcher fallen victim to *takabbur*, he may never do justice with his research.

CONCLUSION

Research is to invigorate human knowledge irrespective of its nature, whether related to the revealed one or the acquired one. With the research nations progress; and with no research nations stagnate. The fields of *tafsir* and *hadith* are also in need of research which means coming up with something new. What has already been done in these areas must be appreciated but they are not the last word. These two subjects are increasingly getting popular in the world. Universities and colleges are in pressing need of research and for that matter research methodology. Generally, the research is taken as an act of reproduction of the previous knowledge. The definition of research, methods of research, stages of research, various techniques of research are required to be fully understood and applied. Research is not the name of only technical guidance in the field; it is rather academic in nature. The process of research as discussed above will surely prove boon, and not bane.

REFERENCES & NOTES

- ¹Sayyid Quṭb, *FĒ ZilĒl al-Qur'Ēn* (DĒr al-ShurĒq, Cairo, 1996), vol. 1, pp. 75-76.
- ²This is on the basis of 'Abd Allah ibn 'AbbĒs' view reported by Ibn AbĒUalĒh. The chain of reporters is: Al-ĪabarĒ from al-MuthannĒ from AbĒØĒlĒ from Mu 'Ēwiyah ibn ØĒlĒ from Ibn AbĒUalĒh from 'Abd Allah ibn 'AbbĒs. See, Al-ĪabarĒ, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 364-365.
- ³Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes in the Qur'an* (Islamic Book Trust, Kuala Lumpur, 1999), p. 166.
- ⁴Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'Ēn: English Translation of the Meaning and the Commentary* (King Fahd Qur'an Printing Complex, Al-Madinah,

1410 A.H.), P. 309; Mawdūdī, SayyidAbulA‘lī, *Tafhīm al-Qur’an* (MarkaziMaktabahIslami, Delhi, 1983), vol. 1, p. 82.

⁵ It represents the author’s own understanding.

⁶ Mawdūdī, Syed Abū al-A‘lī, *Ta‘līmīyat* (MarkaziMaktabaIslami, Delhi, 1991), pp. 57-58.

⁷ He is Ma‘īnībn ‘Umar ibn Muhammad al-Zamakhsharī (467-538 A.H.), a great scholar of the *Qur’ān*. His *tafsīr* work briefly known as *Al-Kashshāf* is of immense value.

⁸ Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur’ān* (Dar al-Andalus, Gibraltar, 1980), p. 558.