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KNOWLEDGE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS IN THE QUR’AN- AN INSIGHT INTO THE STAGNANT ISLAMIC DISCIPLINES

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Abstract: What raises man far above other creations, known and unknown is his ability to access to immensely immeasurable knowledge of the seen and the unseen worlds. Incredibly, the knowledge with all its discovered dimensions keeps day by day increasing due to the intellectual aptitude and caliber of man. The Qur’an, the Last and the Final Revelation from Allah, the most sublime and the ultimate source of knowledge inspires mankind to learn and develop knowledge in its truest sense, which surely leads to the blissful life. The Qur’an uses four main terms denoting knowledge, with each being essentially different from the other as to its meaning, direction, and purpose: (1) *al-‘ilm*, (2) *al-ma’rifah*, (3) *al-hikmah*, and (4) *al-dirayah*. The Qur’an being the source of wisdom (perfection of knowledge) avers in no uncertain terms that knowledge needs to be developed systemically and in an organized manner/methodology. For that matter, the Qur’an attracts attention of man to his/her three faculties marvelously ingrained in him/her, namely *sam’* (hearing), *basar* (seeing), and *fu’ad* (thinking). These three faculties constitute intellectual capacity of human being. When deliberated over the verses where these three constituents of human intellect are mentioned in the Qur’an, one may realize that these terms seek to indicate to the comprehensive process of knowledge development. This research is aimed at discussing the various stages of development of knowledge in the light of the relevant verses of the Qur’an. The methodology applied in the study is critical analysis combined with deductive analogy. The conclusion reached at therein is that the continuous human development entails continuous human endeavor to develop knowledge.

Keywords: Knowledge Development, the Qur’an, *Sam’*, *Basar*, *Fu’ad*, Constituents of Intellect.

INTRODUCTION

It seems man is the only being who has been equipped with intellectual power wherewith to think, choose, and act as human being on the surface of the earth. The more the stress on the intellectual power, the more the development of knowledge. The less the intellectual exercise, the weaker and narrower the knowledge. The absence of intellectual role in developing knowledge leads ultimately to the collapse of humanity, causing man to stand on par with animals that survive with their instinctive ability only. Knowledge in human life is as crucial as the water for the fish. Knowledge is not something static, still, and stationery. It is to grow and grow and grow. The static condition of knowledge resembles stanchly stinking pool of water, exuding unpleasant smell. What is knowledge? How should it be developed? The Qur'an answers to these two questions in a convincing way. This study represents a humble effort to explore, identify, and explain the Qur'anic scheme of knowledge development in human life.

LITERATURE REVIEW

One may hardly find any reliable intellectual work either in the form of article or book on the issue of knowledge development process in the Qur'an except that of Syed AbulA'laMawdudi (1903-1979). His book entitled "*Ta'leemat*" (Education: English version), published by Islamic publications, Lahore (available online: millet.com) appears to be the only work in which the Qur'anic verses on *sam'*, *basar*, and *fu'ad* have been taken into consideration with a view to developing a desirably marvelous education system including curricula in the Islamic world educational institutions. The book's eight chapters deal with the need, design, curricula, methodology, stages, and end-product of Islamic education; and the ninth (the last) chapter focuses on the role of Muslim students in making the Islamic education system successful. The present study borrowed the basic concept of knowledge development process in the Qur'an from this work of Syed Mawdudi, and tries to interpret it further, making its application universal in the fields of knowledge.

THE QUR'ANIC TERMS FOR KNOWLEDGE

The terms the Qur'an uses in the sense of knowledge are mainly four: (1) *AL-'ILM* (2:144), (2) *AL-MA'RIFAH* (2:146), (3) *AL-HIKMAH* (4:113), and (4) *AL-DIRAYAH* (31:34).

1-AL-'ILM: The Arabic word *'ilm* literally stands for clear sign through which the thing in question could easily be recognized. It then flows from here that *'ilm* means the knowledge which is true and represents the fact. Few examples from the Qur'an will suffice to elucidate the matter:

- 1) "*Do they not know that Allah knows what they do secretly and openly*" (2:77)

- 2) “Those who were vouchsafed the Scripture aforetime know for sure (*la ya‘lamun*) that this is the truth from their Lord and Allah is not unaware of what they do” (2:144).
- 3) “And pursue not about which you have no knowledge. Verily, the hearing, the sight, and the heart—each of them will be called to account” (17:36).

The underlined words in the above three verses are the English rendering of the Qur’anic term *‘ilm* and its derivatives. The first verse (2:77) serves as a warning to the Jews who opted for duplicity concerning the Last Prophet’s (s.a.w.) status as the true Apostle of Allah. Some of the knowledgeable Jews in Madinah during the time the Qur’an’s revelation would declare their acceptance of Islam for a short period only to renounce it among their people (2:75-76). Over this double game of the so-called Moses’ followers Allah revealed the verse (2:77), exposing their deceitfulness. In this verse the statement concerns with the knowledge of the Jews and that of Allah: the Jews know very well that Allah knows what they do. Here the Qur’anic word *ya‘lamun* and the word *ya‘lamu* are connected with the Jews and Allah respectively. These two words are verbal forms of the word *‘ilm*, denoting that the Jews know for sure that their double facedness is not hidden from the knowledge of Allah.

The second verse (2:144) deals with the Jewish reaction to the change of prayer direction from Jerusalem to Makkah and Allah’s observation over the negative propaganda of the Jews. The observation is that the Jews know very well beyond even an iota of doubt that the original prayer direction for even the people of the Scripture was Makkah itself, so the change from the temporary direction (*Masjid al-Aqsa* at Jerusalem) to the permanent one (*Masjid al-Haram* at Makkah) was truly the divine verdict. The word expressing the Jewish attitude in the verse (2:144) is *la ya‘lamun* which means “they for sure know” i.e., they did not have any doubt over it.

The third verse (17:36) uses the word *‘ilm* to convey the message that it is unbecoming to the people to talk about that which they do not have certain information/knowledge (*‘ilm*). Thus, in the three verses quoted above (2:77; 2:144; 17:36) the word *‘ilm* signifies confirmed knowledge which can in no way be challenged or altered. It is this meaning of the word *‘ilm* that al-Raghib al-Asfahani (d. 1108) refers to in his definition of *‘ilm*: “Perceiving the thing as it is”.¹ The well-known Greek Philosopher Plato’s (d. 348/347 B.C.) definition of knowledge corroborates the meaning of *‘ilm* as enunciated above: “Knowledge is justified, true belief”.²

2-AL-MA‘RIFAH: The word *ma‘rifah* also means knowledge but it is somewhat different from *‘ilm*. In *ma‘rifah* certainty of information may not be available. If *ma‘rifah* enters certainty, it becomes *‘ilm*. Any knowledge in the sense of *ma‘rifah* is obtained through human endeavor, such as observation,

deliberation, meditation, and experimentation etc. For example, a father recognizes his son very well (*'ilm*), but due to known or unknown reasons the son disappears for long and when he appears before his aged father who then takes time in recognizing his son, focusing on some signs he had in his mind concerning his son. The father may still be unsure of the reality of the person purported to be his son. This state of the father's knowledge is *ma'rifah*, not *'ilm*. Al-Asfahani (d. 1108) defines *ma'rifah* as: "recognition of the thing through deliberation and reflection over its appearance and signs".³

The word *ma'rifah* is noun of its verb "*'arafa/ya'rifu*" which means "he came to know/he comes to know". But this knowing, as said earlier, is not necessarily certain. Few quotations from the Qur'an may be useful to understand the matter:

- 1) *"Those whom We had vouchsafed the Scripture aforetime recognize it as they recognize their sons, and verily, some section among them most surely conceal the truth deliberately"* (2:146).
- 2) *"And on the most elevated places there shall be men who recognize all by their marks and call out to the dwellers of the Garden: Peace be upon you. They shall have not yet entered it, although they hope"* (7:46).
- 3) *"O Prophet, enjoin your wives, your daughters, and believing women to draw a [art of their outer coverings. It is likelier that they will be recognized and not molested, Allah is Most Forgiving, Most Merciful"* (33:59).

The first two verses (2:146; 7:46) use originally the word *ya'rifun* (they recognize) and the third one (33:59) *yu'rafna* (will be recognized). In the first verse (2:146) the recognition referred to is of the change of prayer direction from Jerusalem to Makkah. Here the community of the Jews is addressed. They recognize the change of prayer direction as the truth commanded by Allah, exactly as they recognize their own children⁴. It is to be born in mind that children are recognized due to their children's signs and appearances. Likewise, they (the Jews) recognized the truth about the *qiblah* due to its available signs. In the second verse (7:46) some men will recognize, on the Day of Judgment, the people of the paradise by looking at the signs referring to who they are. Here again the word *ma'rifah* in its verb derivative has been used. The third verse (33:59) talks about the people's recognition of the veiled women as modest so that the women might not be harassed. Here the word *ma'rifah* appears in the sense of the recognition through the appearance (veil/cover).

3-AL-HIKMAH: The words derived from the root letters (*h k m*) give several connotations. The original sense available therein are control, check, curb, and deterrence. The word *hakamah* means bridle of the horse, through which the horse is controlled. Similarly, a sound and strong decision is called as *hikmah*.

The word *hakim* means philosopher who is considered a knowledgeable person with sound reasoning. The word *hakim* means a judge or ruler who issues orders and passes judgment.⁵ The technical meaning of the word *hikmah* may be derived from its usages in the Qur'an. Few examples are given here below:

- 1) *“And Allah is Munificent, All-Knowing. He grants wisdom whomever He wills, and the one who is granted wisdom is given abundant good, and none but the men endowed with intellectual power understand it” (2:268-269).*
- 2) *“And Allah revealed to you the Book and the wisdom” (4:113).*
- 3) *“We surely endowed Luqman with wisdom--be grateful to Allah for whosoever demonstrates gratitude to (Him), it is for his/her own benefit. And whosoever is ingrate, it is to be remembered that Allah is Self-Sufficient, Extremely Praiseworthy” (31:12).*
- 4) *“He it is who raised among the unlettered an Apostle who rehearses to them His messages, and purifies them, and teaches them the Book and the Wisdom” (62:2).*

The first quotation (2:268-269) is a part of a context where the believers are inspired the significance of charity and generosity. The last part of (2:268) ends with the two great attributes of Allah, Munificent, All-Knowing, which emphasize the fact Allah does not need any charity from the people and He wills to see who spends in the path of Allah. The next verse (2:269) declares that understanding the significance of charity in social life is wisdom which brings forth the good abundantly. The last part of the verse (2:269) refers to the men of understanding (*ulu al-Albab*) who are indeed men of wisdom. Here from this quotation, one may derive the message that doing the charity work and spending in the path of Allah is indeed an attitude of wisdom.

The second verse (4:113) speaks that the Last Prophet (s.a.w.) was given two things, the Qur'an and the *hikmah*. To understand the meaning of *hukmah*(wisdom) here one needs to read two more places in the Qur'an (55:1-4 and 75:16-19). The verses (55:1-4) announce that the Last Prophet (s.a.w.) was taught by Allah the Qur'an and the *Bayan* (interpretation of the Qur'an). Similarly, the verses (75:16-19) stress that the Last Prophet (s.a.w.) was vouchsafed by Allah two things, the Qur'an, and the *Bayan* (interpretation of the Qur'an). Here in the verse (4:113) we find mention of two things that were given to the Last Prophet (s.a.w.), the Book (the Qur'an) and the wisdom (the *Hikmah*). It can now be asserted here that *al-Hikmah* and *al-Bayan* signify the same thing i.e., interpretation of the Qur'an.

The third verse (31:12) if read with deep reflection appears to be disclosing that the approach of gratitude towards Allah is but wisdom (*hikmah*) i.e., understanding the significance of the gratitude to Allah in life. One needs to read here another verse: *“And behold, your Lord made it known:*

if you are grateful, I will surely grant you more and more, and if you are ungrateful, My chastisement is truly severe" (14:7). The message given in this verse (14:7) is that the key to the prosperity is gratefulness to Allah. And this indeed *hikmah* (wisdom).

The fourth verse (62:2) speaks of the heavy duties of the Last Prophet (s.a.w.). One of these Prophetic assignments were teaching the Qur'an and the wisdom (*al-hikmah*). Here teaching the wisdom signifies inculcating his followers the practical and methodological pattern of the Qur'anic injunctions and instructions.

From these four quotations of the verses (2:268-269; 4:113; 31:12 and 62:2), one may find that *hikmah* (wisdom) denotes perfection of '*ilm*(the true knowledge). It may then be stated that '*ilm*'s theory (*nazariyyah*) and *hikmah* is practical manifestation (*tatbiq*) of that theory.

4-AL-DIRAYAH: The technical sense of the term *dirayah* in the '*Ulum al-Hadith*' is investigation of a *hadith* from both chain of narrators and the text of the report to reach the conclusion whether the *hadith* is reliable or not.⁶ Literally, the word *dirayah* means deeper understanding the thing based on valid grounds.⁷ It is to be seen whether the Qur'an uses the term *dirayah* in the same sense as the above. The Qur'an has used the word *dirayah* and its derivative around twenty times. Few of the quoted here below:

- 1) "Say: *If Allah had so willed, I would not have recited it to you nor would He have made it known to you. I dwelt among you a whole lifetime. Do you not then apply your reason?*" (10:16).
- 2) "Surely, Allah alone has the knowledge of the Hour. It is He who send down the rain and knows what is in the wombs, and no person knows what he/she will earn tomorrow, nor does he/she know in which land he/she will die. Verily, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware"(31:34).
- 3) "And likewise, We revealed to you a spirit by Our command. You knew neither what the Book nor what the faith was. But We made that spirit a light whereby We guide those of Our servants whom We please to the right way. Surely, you are directing the people to the right way" (42:52).

The underlined words-known, knows, and knew-are English rendering of some derivatives of *dirayah*(*adra, tadri, tadri*). Does the word *dirayah* simply mean knowing? Another possible English translation of the word *adrakum*(10:16) is: "*taught you*". In the second verse (31:34) the word *la tadri*(no human being knows) occurs twice. The message is that man cannot know about what is destined for man as to his/her sustenance in future and about when and where he/she will die. The third verse (42:52) says that even the Last Prophet (s.a.w.) was totally unaware (*ma kuntatadri*) of the messages to be revealed to him. One may then conclude from these three usages of the word *dirayah* that what is not known to human being, and he/she cannot access

to it through his/her own efforts unless he/she is informed about it by the Supreme Being, Allah. What appears certain in the above quoted verses is that information concerning the hidden world (*'alam al-ghayb*) which lies beyond the human perception cannot be accessed except through divine revelation sent down to Allah's chosen people, Messengers, and Prophets.

THE QUR'ANIC TERMS FOR THE KNOWLEDGEABLE

It may not be deemed out of place to identify and deliberate over the terms the Qur'an uses for the people with knowledge. Understanding these terms may expand the vista of knowledge and its various dimensions. The known denominations of the knowledgeable are three:

1-ULU AL-NUHA: The word *nuh* literally means intellect, so *ulu al-nuh* means intellectuals. Al-Asfahani is of the view that *nuh* is the intellect which prevents the intellectual from committing wrong.⁸ It has occurred in the Qur'an only once: "*Eat and pasture your cattle. Most surely, there are messages in this for those endowed with understanding*"(20:54). This verse along with other preceding verses (20:49-53) constitutes a context which describes the limitless power of the Lord of the universe (*rabb*), Allah who made the earth an expanse, made therein paths, and sent down rain through which plants and herbs grow. The intellectuals receive true messages from all the blessings of Allah. It is because they apply their reason to the natural phenomena and understand what they should understand.

2-ULU AL-ALBAB: In Arabic *ulu* means those who possess something and *albab* is the plural of *lubb* which means core of everything or its reality as well as sound intellectual power.⁹ It occurs around fifteen times (2:179; 2:197; 3:7; 3:190; 5:100; 12:111; 13:19; 14:56; 38:29; 38:43; 39:9; 39:18; 39:21; 40:54; 65:10;). One quotation may suffice to give understanding of the word: "*Q people of understanding, there is life for you in legal retribution so that you may develop consciousness of Allah*" (2:179). The underlined words are the translation of *yaulu al-albab*. Keeping in view the literal sense of the word, it may be said that *ulu al-albab* is an epithet for those who possess the ability to deeply understand the thing even by looking at its outer aspect. In English such people are called genius. So, *ulu al-albab* signifies genius.

3-AL-'ULAMA': '*Ulama*' is the plural of '*aalim*' which literally means knowledgeable. The word '*ulama*' occurs in the Qur'an only twice:

- 1) "*Was it not sufficient proof for them that it has been recognized by the knowledgeable among the children of Israel?*"(26:197).
- 2) "*Only the knowledgeable among His servants, fear Allah. Indeed, Allah is Exalted in Might. Much Forgiving*"(35:28).

The underlined word "knowledgeable" is English rendering of '*ulama*'. The first usage (26:197) refers to those among the children of Israel who possess information about the veracity of the Qur'an being revealed to the Last Prophet (s.a.w.). The second usage of the word (35:28) signifies that the real

knowledgeable are those who are conscious of Allah. As has been seen earlier, the word *ilm* means true knowledge that can be logically proved. Thus, the word *ulama* then denotes possessors of true knowledge, who are capable to prove the authenticity of the information in question.

The word *ulama* is a general denomination for the knowledgeable and *ulu al-nuha* and *ulu al-albab* are two somewhat different categories of *ulama*. *Ulu al-nuha* (intellectuals) are the knowledgeable who deliberate over the things and reach the core of the matters; and *ulu al-albab* (the genius) are the knowledgeable who get the idea concerning the things even by looking at the outer layers/aspects.

DEFINING KNOWLEDGE DEVELOPMENT

In the contemporary world everywhere, institutes of learning, manufacturing firms, government or semi-government or non-government organizations the focus is on research and development with a view to enhancing the performance towards the achievement of the set goal/s. Today's society is knowledge-based society. In both natural and social sciences one can see continuous development of knowledge. Generally, knowledge development processes appear increasing the amount of the refined information.

Knowledge development takes place at individual level as well as organizational level.¹⁰ Both of them need to share the knowledge with each other.¹¹ To Dr. Ganesh D. Bhatt, Knowledge development or management involves several stages or processes including knowledge creation, knowledge adoption, knowledge distribution, and knowledge review and revision.¹² In light of this general proposal for knowledge development, one may endeavor to define knowledge development from the angle of the Qur'an which inspires the mankind to apply intellectual procedures, *tadabbur* (4:82), *tafakkur* (3:191), *ta'aqqul* (21:10), *tafaqquh* (9:122), *tabassur* (20:96), and *tazakkur* (2:269). Thus, the knowledge development may be defined as a continuous process of learning the knowledge, reviewing the knowledge, and creating new vistas of the knowledge through *tadabbur*, *tafakkur*, *ta'aqqul*, *tafaqquh*, *tabassur*, and *tazakkur*.¹³

THE VERSES ON THE KNOWLEDGE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

There are six verses in the Qur'an (16:78; 17:36; 23:78; 32:9; 46:26; and 67:23) where three words, *sam'* (hearing), *basar* (sight), and *fu'ad* (heart) occur in one and the same sequence. There are also several other verses where these three words do occur, but in a bit different order (viz. 7:179). Syed Mawdudi, most probably, is the first scholar who derived from these verses a message concerning the development of knowledge. He is of the view that the word *Sam'* (hearing) signifies acquiring knowledge from others; the word *Basar* (sight) denotes looking at the acquired knowledge critically; and the word *Fu'ad* (heart) refers to developing new knowledge. Syed Mawdudi

expresses this view while discussing the Muslim leadership classification.¹⁴ This author finds in this *ijtihad* (logical reasoning) something marvelous on the issue of the knowledge development. The role of *sam'* seems to be highly crucial in education at the primary, secondary, and undergraduate levels; that of *basar* needs to be in place at Postgraduate level; and that of *fu'ad* should be evident in PhD theses. The same could be very much applicable to other areas of life, including politico-intellectual and socio-economic. What is seen in the world today is that only the industrial sector is seriously applying the three-pronged procedure (*sam'*, *basar*, *fu'ad*) in the production, the advertisement, the marketing, and the protection of the consumers' interests. In the universities and institutions of higher learning today, the emphasis is laid on many disciplines from the angle of development. But this emphasis loses its dynamism in the field of social sciences and humanities.

STAGNATION VERSUS DEVELOPMENT IN ISLAMIC DISCIPLINES

One may be wondering over whether this procedure (SBF) is applicable to Muslim scholarship phenomena. Muslim scholars have developed over the past fifteen centuries several disciplines, *tafsir*, methodology of Qur'anic interpretation, *sharh hadith*, '*ilmasma' al-rijal*, *fiqh*, *usul al-fiqh*, '*ilm al-kalam*, '*ilm al-nafs al-dini*, '*ilm al-ijtima' al-dini*, '*ilm al-tarikhwa al-hazarah* etc. In these fields of knowledge large number of works were produced and are still being produced. Most of these works are centuries old that are being copied and copied and copied. What is being produced today in these disciplines represent mere reproduction of the original ones. The main reason for this static situation is that most of the Muslim scholars do not see any justification in the development of the knowledge available in the old sources. They strongly believe that what has been written so far in various Islamic fields of study suffices until the Last Hour. This approach might have been justified when these works were written down. To consider them the last word contrasts with the true spirit of the knowledge development. Undoubtedly, in the Muslim seminaries and institutes of higher learning the world over the teachers and those famed as learned men in their respective areas of Islamic disciplines are known to have learned by heart almost all the previously produced works. They do not find any justification for further and new addition to the available compendia of knowledge. They therefore confine their efforts to merely transferring the old information to their students, disciples, and those interested who in return cram the information as the most sacred one. Few concretely relevant examples may explain the situation concerning the stagnation of the development of knowledge.

Tafsir (interpretation/commentary of the Qur'an) was paid special attention to right from the time of the Last Prophet's (s.a.w.). Among the oldest extant works of *tafsir* deemed notable are three, *Jami'al-Bayan* by

Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari (839-923 C.E.), *Al-Kashshaf* by Mahmud ibn 'Umar al-Zamakhshari (1075-1143 C.E.), and *Mafatih al-Ghayby* by Fakhr al-Din al-Razi (1150-1210 C.E.). These three *tafsir* works of encyclopedic nature appear original from three angles, linguistic, conceptual, and methodological. After these original works large number of *tafsir* works were produced, but unfortunately these so-called new works are mere reproduction of the above three original ones. Few *tafsir* works in the modern times might be considered original ones, such as *Tafhim al-Qur'an* by Syed Mawdudi (1903-1979 C.E.), *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* by Syed Qutb (1906-1966 C.E.), and *Tadabbur-E-Qur'an* by Amin Ahsan Islahi (1904-1997 C.E.). Once again, now there has become a new trend of toeing the line of these three modern *tafsir* works, besides the three classical *tafsir* works. It is praiseworthy to benefit from the previous and the modern works in the field of *tafsir*, but to remain confined to furthering the cause of the works already done is merely the process of *sam'* which needs to enter the remaining two other phases of *basar* (critical look) and *fu'ad* (invention of new knowledge).

From the angle of knowledge development in *tafsir*, so much is needed to be done. Most of the *tafsir* works whether classical, medieval, or modern appear to have been written from the angle of jurisprudence (*fiqh*). There is no doubt that the Qur'an serves, among other things, as the source of law. But to read the Qur'an merely from legal angle is gross injustice on the part of the reader and the commentator. The Qur'an is basically the Book of Wisdom (10:1; 11:1; 36:2). The Qur'an is then to be read and interpreted with an objective of identifying the jewels of divine wisdom interspersed therein throughout its revelations right from the first *surah* until the last one. It is these wisdoms in the Qur'an that will determine the objectives of the Qur'an and the true interpretation of its verses.

So many dimensions in the *tafsir*, such as the issue of abrogation (*naskh*), that of illustrative verses (*mushabihat*) are yet to be explored further. The issue of abrogation (*naskh*) is discussed in the *tafsir* works not because of the Qur'anic evidence, but mainly on the basis of so-called views ascribed to some scholars from the generation of the Companions (*sahabah*) and that of the Disciples (*tabi'un*). The ascription of these views is yet to be ascertained. Aside from that, the Qur'anic verses that are deemed as the evidence in favor of *naskh* need to be reflected afresh. It is to be born in mind that despite serious controversy over the issue of *naskh*, the *mufasssirun* (commentators) present it in their *tafsir* works as a matter of consensus (*ijma'*). Tragically, unreliable and concocted reports are used to prove that the original version of the revelations contrasted with the final version. This is so daring on the part of the *mufasssirun* and it is to be condemned in the strictest sense of the word. The issue of *mutashabihat* has been twisted to the extent that if a verse is not interpreted easily, it is consigned to the category of *mutashabihat*. The main

reason for this stagnation in *tafsir* is the preference to the traditions set by some classical *mufasssior mufasssirun*. Similarly, another issue which could not find its way in *tafsiris* is that of the viable *tafsir* methodology. Once the issue of *tafsir* methodology is resolved, controversies in the interpretation of the verses in the Qur'an will surely disappear. But the problem with Muslim scholars is that majority of them consider the works done so far as sacrosanct. In the modern times, the focus on the manner of recitation of the Qur'an ('*ilm al-qira'at* and '*ilm al-tajweed*'). What matters much in the Qur'an than anything else is the original messages of the Qur'an. Here the commentators of the Qur'an need to take their endeavor to the stages of *basar* and *fu'ad*. Otherwise, the stagnation in the knowledge of the *tafsir* will manifest only stagnation.

The most significant discipline next to the *tafsiris* is *sharh hadith* (**hadith commentary**). The commentaries of the main *hadith* compilations, such as *asal-Jami' al-Sahih* by Muhammad ibn Ismael al-Bukhari (810-870 C.E.), *Sahih* by Muslim ibn Al-Hajjaj (...-875 C.E.), *Sunan* by Muhammad ibn 'Isa al-Tirmidhi (824-892 C.E.), *Sunan* by Sulayman ibn al-Ash'ath Abu Da'ud (817-889 C.E.), *Sunan* by Ahmad ibn Shuyb al-Nasa'i (...-915 C.E.), *Sunan* by Muhammad ibn Yazid ibn Majah (824-887 C.E.), *Al-Muwatta'* by Malik ibn Anas (711-795 C.E.), and *Musnad* by Ahmad ibn Hanbal (780-855 C.E.) are numerous. These commentaries focus mainly on authentication of reports recorded in the respective *hadith* compilations through the authentication of the chain of narrators (*sanad*). There is hardly any investigation into the report-text (*matn*). The scholars have developed somewhat blind approach to *hadiths* recorded particularly by al-Bukhari and Muslim in their respective works to the extent that even if a particular report does not corroborate the logic they insist on its veracity. Al-Bukhari, for instance, has recorded a report on the authority of Hisham ibn 'Urwah ibn al-Zubayr (680-763 C.E.) on the age of *umm al-mu'minin* 'A'ishah bint Abi Bakr (...-678 C.E.) at the time of her marriage to the Last Prophet (s.a.w.) as only six (6).¹⁵ All the commentators of al-Bukhari's work insist that this report is genuine and authentic. Here they tend to ignore the fact that Hisham ibn 'Urwah's memory no longer remained retentive in his old age when he resided at Baghdad and historically this report of Hisham belongs to his old age. The only known reason for the scholars' blindness towards this historical reality is that the report concerned is recorded by al-Bukhari. This stand of the *hadith* scholars represents stagnation in the development of the knowledge related to *hadith*.

The very significant issue in *hadith* compendia is negative image of womenfolk. One such *report* as recorded in al-Bukhari's *hadith* work is that women are all without exception declared intellectually and religiously deficient (*naqisat al-'aqlwa al-din*).¹⁶ This report appears to be defective from

the angle of the wording of the report. This report is very humiliating to the womenfolk. The Last Prophet (s.a.w.) is not known to have ever humiliated his Companions whether male or female. The commentaries of *hadith* need to take into consideration the authenticity of the *hadith* text. The knowledge of *hadith* must grow and for that the *basar* and *fu'ad* to play their role in the field of *hadith* authentication, the text/s of report/s recorded in *hadith* collections are to be looked at afresh.

Then comes the discipline of **jurisprudence (*fiqh*)**, which is generally treated as the core of Islamic life. The main problem with this discipline is that it is mere *fatwa* oriented. In the previous ages *fatwas* were acceptable, but today in the modern times *fatwa* orientation of *fiqh* may not be wholeheartedly welcome due to its rigidity and bias. This knowledge also needs development. For that matter the Qur'an is to be read from a new angle. Whatever was done until recent past was literalist approach. One concrete example may suffice to elucidate the point. The punishment for theft as prescribed in the Qur'an (5:38) is cutting the thief's hand off. The Muslim jurists forget to read the verse (5:39) next to the provision of punishment. This verse focuses on the repentance of the thief and reform thereafter: "*But whoever repents after his/her iniquity and reforms, then Allah surely will turn to him/her. Allah is indeed All-Forgiving, Most Merciful*" (5:39). It seems the punishment of theft is to be carried out on the repeat offenders who initially repented and reformed himself/herself but failed to continue with his/her new approach of reform (*islah*). Likewise, the penalty for *zina* (adultery) is to be looked at from the angle of the Qur'an (24:2) only, and not based on the reports recorded in *hadith* compilations. This author is of the strong view that most of the reports recorded in the sources are unreliable and fabricated. It should never be ignored that *hadith* compilation began most probably much damage had already been done by the story tellers (*qussas*). Despite all the genuine efforts of the *hadith* scholars to authenticate the rumored reports, much is yet to be done. *Tadabbur* (reflection) over the Qur'an is urgently needed by the Muslim jurists, judges, and scholars in general. The Qur'an says: "*Do they not then reflect on the Qur'an, or have they locked out their hearts?*" (47:24). The experts in Islamic law need to read the Qur'an with deep reflection. Like *tafsir* and *hadith*, *fiqh* also requires to open the door of *basar* and *fu'ad*, because all that has been done so far in *fiqh* is representative of *Sam'* only. This is the only way to overcome the stagnation of *fiqh*.

Research has assumed today in Islamic disciplines a very significant position. The researchers at PhD level must think about going through the three stages of development, *Sam'* (collection of data), *Basar* (reflection and review of the collected data), *Fu'ad* (invention/development of new information/idea).

CONCLUSION

Knowledge constitutes vertebra of the very human existence. Man can survive even without knowledge, but that survival will not be better than that of animals. Man is required to learn, memorize, analyze, synthesize, and develop knowledge. Human life is multifaceted, personal, collective, familial, social, economic, political, cultural, devotional, moral, technological etc. All these dimensions are bound to either grow or decline. The man individually and collectively finds himself inclined towards growth, and not decline. Growth of knowledge in both its revealed and acquired categories can be ensured only by opting for the Qur'anic principles as indicated in its six verses (16:78; 17:36; 23:78; 32:9; 46:26; 67:23). From these verses one can derive three stages of knowledge development: (1) acquiring and memorizing existing knowledge, (2) understanding and criticizing knowledge, and (3) inventing and explaining new knowledge. The west is viewed as quite advanced in many fields of knowledge including social and natural sciences because it seemingly opted for the three stages of doing knowledge as inspired by the Qur'an. Conversely, the Muslim world has lagged in almost every field of knowledge. The reason for that decline is very much simple to understand. Muslim individuals, institutions, societies, and nations feel complacent with only the first stage of doing knowledge i.e., learning, memorizing, imitating, and compiling the existing knowledge. They are no longer eager and inspired to proceed to the second and then the third stages of knowledge. Logically, whosoever, individuals or nations, follow the Qur'anic timeline of the development of knowledge will emerge winners; and those ignoring the Qur'anic principles of knowledge will invariably remain losers.

REFERENCES & NOTES

- ¹ Al-Asfahani, al-Raghib, *Al-Mufradat fi Ghrib al-Qur'an* (Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifah, n. d.), p. 343.
- ² Lewis Vaughn, *A Historical Introduction to Philosophical Ideas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), Chapter 4: Plato the Really Real (Chapter Summary): <https://global.oup.com/summary>
- ³ Al-Asfahani, *Op. Cit.*, P. 331.
- ⁴ Most of the commentators consider that the recognition referred to in the verse (2:246) is of the Prophet (s.a.w.). This appears somewhat misreading of the context which belongs to the change of prayer direction, not the Prophet's (s.a.w.) status as the Last Prophet.
- ⁵ Al-Asfahani, *Op. Cit.*, PP. 126-128.
- ⁶ Al-Jalali, al-Sayyed Muhammad Husain al-Husaini, *Dirayat al-Hadith* (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-A'lami li al-Matbu'at, 2004), P. 12.
- ⁷ Al-Asfahani, *Op. Cit.*, P. 168.
- ⁸ Al-Asfahani, *Op. Cit.*, p. 507.
- ⁹ Ibid. P. 446.

- ¹⁰Ganesh D. Bhatt, *Organizing Knowledge in the Knowledge Development Cycle*, in Journal of Knowledge Management, Volume 4, Number 1, 2000, PP. 15-26, MCB University Press.
- ¹¹Ibid.
- ¹²Ibid.
- ¹³This coinage of the definition of knowledge development is exclusively this author's own effort.
- ¹⁴Syed Mawdudi, *Ta'limaat* {Urdu}, (Lahore: Islamic Publications Limited, n.d.), P. 48.
- ¹⁵Al-Bukhari, Muhammad ibn Ismail, *Al-Jami' al-Sahih* (Karachi: Al-Bushra, 2016), Vol. 3, P. 2345, Kitab al-Nikah, Bab No. 60, Hadith No. 5158.
- ¹⁶Al-Bukhari, Muhammad ibn Ismail, *al-Jami' al-Sahih* (Kaeachi: al-Bushra, 2016), Vol. 1, P. 276, Kitab al-Hayz, Bab No. 6, Hadith No. 304.