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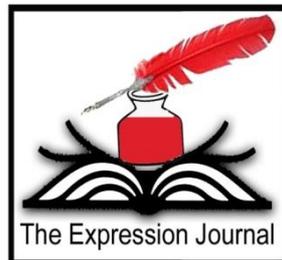
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RESEARCH: THE QURANIC PERSPECTIVE

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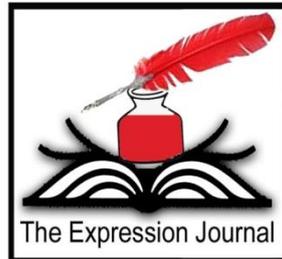
Abstract

The paper entitled “Research: The Quranic Perspective” is an attempt to explore what the *Quran* says about research in general in all areas of knowledge. The *Quran* looks upon every phenomenon of interest pertaining to any area of knowledge as an ayah or a divine sign which holds in store a great deal of enlightening realization that yields the researcher a clear sense of direction in life and makes him clear-sighted. A reciprocity between the ayahs in the *Quran* and the diverse phenomena in the universe could be discerned easily. This is a perspective on research that remains largely unknown to the academic community in the west and much of the rest of the world. However, it is of vital significance as it helps human beings synthesise their quests, pursuits, efforts, inquiries, explorations and realisations in a harmonious whole, enables them to view every phenomenon in life or in the universe around them in a wholistic way and cures them of the illnesses engendered from the compartmental approach to academic pursuits and every single attempt to understand the universe and their particular role in it. The paper further explores as to whether the *Quran* pinpoints any particular method of carrying out researches in any particular area of knowledge.

Keywords

Research, Methodology, Perspective, Quran, Quranic, Ayahs, Hadeeth, Explorers, Signs.

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Research supervisors generally insist, and researchers agree on consistently following a perspective and methodology based on a theory. The case is not very different whether the field of enquiry is related to the physical/ material universe or the world of human behavior or activities. Perspectives like patriarchy, matriarchy, feminism, materialism, Marxian dialectics, existentialism, capitalism, socialism, democracy, colonialism, imperialism, post-colonialism, structuralism, deconstruction, modernism, postmodernism, post-truth, etc. are often pinpointed as the ones to be considered or pointed out as the ones that have been pursued.

These theories or perspectives and the engendered methodologies, the ones that have influenced the academic pursuits very pervasively all over the western world, have created a great deal of chaos, confusion and anarchy in all walks of life in the west. As the west emerged as the dominant global political force in the last century, these began to influence the east and, in course of time, came to be accepted as the only influential approach or perspective known to the academic world.

The contemporary descendants of the Muslim researchers and explorers of the past who founded most of the basic sciences and disciplines of study during the centuries from the seventh to the fifteenth also have been remarkably carried away by the general trend and have not been able to stand apart. This came as a result of the sociopolitical and historical reasons coupled with a misleading influence within the community. Though the followers of the *Quran* world over have an extremely unique, comprehensive, and exclusively self-sufficient approach to knowledge, pursuit of knowledge and research, they have, obviously, deviated into a wrong course of approaching knowledge over the last four to five hundred years. Muslim universities

and educational institutions world over serve almost the same educational contents based on the diverse materialistic perspectives as their western counterparts when it comes to the question of approach and perspective in various disciplines of study.

The followers of the *Quran* world over, however, have realised that the current trend that characterises the pursuit of knowledge in all disciplines is not compatible with the teachings of the *Quran*. Rather, it is diametrically opposed to it. As the only extant divine text that imparts to humanity a comprehensive perspective on their existence, predicament and relationship with the universe around, the *Quran* gives us a very lucidly clear vision on knowledge, pursuit of knowledge and research. Knowledge, accordingly, is an exclusive possession of Allah Almighty, the creator and sustainer of the universe and everything in it. No one can grab any element of his knowledge about anything except with his permission and intention.

Allah! There is no god but He, -the Living, the Self-subsisting, Eternal. No slumber can seize Him nor sleep. His are all things in the heavens and on the earth. Who is there can intercede in His presence except as He permits? He knows what (appears to His creatures as) before or after or behind them. Nor shall they grab anything of His knowledge except as He wills. His Throne does extend over the heavens and the earth, and He feels no fatigue in guarding and preserving them, for He is the Most High, the Supreme in glory. (*The Quran* 2: 255)

... Our Lord can reach out to the utmost recesses of things by His knowledge. In Allah is our trust. Our Lord! Decide you between us and our people in truth, for you are the best to decide. (*The Quran* 7:89)

He unfolds knowledge proportionately, and in an order or system of priority, in accordance with the method he has designed. Knowledge of all kinds that human beings acquire by whatever means and method accessible to him has no other source than Allah, the creator of the universe.

Read! In the name of your Lord and Cherisher, Who created –

Created man, out of a sticky substance that clings on:

Read! And your Lord is Most Bountiful –

He Who taught (the use of) the pen –

Taught man that which he knew not. (*The Quran* 96:1-5)

Certain areas of knowledge, either about the universe or about humans themselves will remain inaccessible or un-explorable for humans until humanity has reached that stage in the development of civilisation and growth of technology, or in other words, until the time set for it by Allah Almighty comes. And when it comes, factors hitherto unnoticed emerge and conspire or work together for it to be brought to light through the efforts of the ones destined by the Almighty to be instrumental.

O you assembly of Jinns and men! If it be you can pass beyond the zones of the heavens and the earth, pass you! Not without authority shall you be able to pass! (*The Quran* 55: 33)

Human efforts involved in these are extremely valuable unlike many are wrongly guided to presume as an outcome or consummation of reflections in this direction.

Knowledge of all kinds is being unfolded for the benefit of mankind and for him to learn wisdom from the process.

Soon will we show them our signs in the horizons, and in their own selves, until it becomes manifest to them that this is the Truth. Is it not enough that your Lord does witness all things? (*The Quran* 41: 53)

Allah will keep on showing mankind his diverse signs in the horizons or in the universe at large and even in the peculiar aspects of human existence including his physiological or psychological or behavioral peculiarities. The two broader areas of human enquiries have been hinted at here in the reference to the “horizons” (suggestive of everything related to the physical or material world) and “their own selves” (everything related to human existence including his physiological, sociological, and psychological existence. There has been, virtually, no other area of study or exploration humans have hit upon, over the years, that has not been covered by the implications of the two terms described here. The only probable area left out might be the one pertaining to metaphysics, spirituality and existence or predicament after death and that is the very area that he is enlightened on as an outcome of his explorations in the two areas mentioned.

The stakeholders of the process of the unfolding of knowledge are exclusively human beings. It was man whom Allah entrusted with the task of pursuing knowledge. He gave him the skills of reading and writing, and gave him the skills of classification and nomenclature.

And when thy Lord said to the angels: Lo! I'm about to place a viceroy (one entrusted with a responsibility or task) on the earth ... (*The Quran* 2:30)

And We taught Adam all the names (the skills of classifying and naming everything) ... (*The Quran* 2:31)

Read! In the name of your Lord and Cherisher, Who created-
Created man, out of a sticky substance that clings on:

Read! And your Lord is Most Bountiful,-

He Who taught (the use of) the pen,-

Taught man that which he knew not. (*The Quran* 96:1-5)

He has taught him speech (gave him intelligence). (*The Quran* 55:4)

These four skills divinely gifted to mankind viz. reading, writing, classification, nomenclature (taxonomy) are the bases of human acquisition of knowledge that work as the fundamentals on which all human civilizations have been built up. The purpose of unfolding knowledge pertaining to everything is enabling mankind to learn for himself and be convinced about the highest truth that there is a creator to the universe, the one who has created everything including man according to his plan and planned everything according to his will.

Soon will We show them our Signs in the horizons, and in their own selves, until it becomes manifest to them that this is the Truth. Is it not enough that your Lord does witness all things? (*The Quran* 41: 53)

He has taught mankind a methodology of pursuing knowledge or, in other words, a research methodology which will lead him to the realization of this goal.

Read! In the name of your Lord and Cherisher, Who created –

Created man, out of a sticky substance that clings on:

Read! And your Lord is Most Bountiful –

He Who taught (the use of) the pen –

Taught man that which he knew not. (*The Quran* 96:1-5)

This methodology is reading or exploring everything in the name of the lord who created everything, the one who was generous enough to gift mankind the skill of using pen and taught man everything that was unknown to him. The realization that there is a creator for this universe and that he has not created mankind and everything else in the universe except with a purpose will give a researcher or explorer a sense of direction for everything that he undertakes. This sense of direction is the most essential basic education a researcher or explorer requires in the perspective of the Quran. What the western materialistic researchers and explorers lack very much is this. The anarchy and confusion prevailing in the western world of intellectual pursuit is a result of such a void.

The Quran makes it clear that Allah has two types of signs or ayahs. They are Allah's ayahs in the Quran and his ayahs in nature around us. An ayah is essentially a phenomenon, either the verbal ones in the Quran that could be recited or the non-verbal (visual or auditory) ones in the universe that could be perceived or pursued that manifest the truth of the existence of the creator. They are the stamps or signatures of the almighty lord that convince us, in a most amazing and exciting way, of the truth about him.

Behold! in the creation of the heavens and the earth; in the alternation of the night and the day; in the sailing of the ships through the ocean for the profit of mankind; in the rain which Allah sends down from the skies, and the life which He gives therewith to an earth that is dead; in the beasts of all kinds that He scatters through the earth; in the change of the winds, and the clouds kept in subjugation between the sky and the earth, indeed, are Signs for a people that are wise. (*The Quran* 2: 164)

There will be no kind of dichotomy, clash or contradiction between the two types of Allah's ayahs. On the other hand, there will be a complete and absolute reciprocity between the two. They are complementary to each other and explain each other. No clear-sighted scientific exploration will disprove any of the statements or claims made by Allah in the Quran. Every new disclosure of science will be a further exciting commentary on the unexplored areas of Allah's ayahs in the Quran. Any effort to find any lapse or absence of reciprocity between the two types of Allah's ayahs will end up in failure and despair.

Blessed be He in Whose hands is Dominion; and He over all things has Power; He Who created Death and Life, that He may try which of you is best in deed: and He is the Exalted in Might, Oft-Forgiving;-He Who created the seven heavens one

above another: No want of proportion will you see in the Creation of (Allah) Most Gracious. So, turn your vision again: Do you see any flaw? Again, turn your vision a second time: (Your) vision will come back to you dull and discomfited, in a state worn out. (*The Quran* 67: 1-4)

The instruction here, to turn one's vision to the heavens, is obviously to make a close observation of the universe and everything in it. And the further instruction to "turn your vision a second time" is understandably an imperative to carry out meticulous "research" of all phenomena in nature. The Quran, through implications, hints at a method or process of research in this ayah. The repeated instruction here to look for flaws in the creation of the heavens, rightly understood, is an instruction to bring to light the mismatches between Allah's ayahs in the Quran and those infinite ayahs of Allah in the universe, an effort at falsification (a process of philosophical and epistemological discourses) in which the success of the researcher or explorer is in his failure to come out with mismatching elements.

However, all the ayahs in the Quran are not self-explanatory, plain for comprehension and lucid for understanding. The Quranic ayahs are of two types: *Muhkamat* and *Mutashabihat*. *Muhkamat* are those ayahs that function as the core of the divine book which delineate the fundamentals of faith and practice, and also provide the moral guidelines to draw the necessary light required for human existence. *Mutashabihat* are those ayahs in the Quran the proper implications of which Allah has kept undisclosed for his own reasons.

He it is Who has sent down to you the Book: In it are verses (*Muhkamat*) basic or fundamental (of established meaning); they are the foundation of the Book: others are (*Mutashabihat*) allegorical. But those in whose hearts is perversity follow the part thereof that is allegorical, seeking discord, and (obstinately) searching for its hidden meanings, but no one knows its hidden meanings except Allah. And those who are firmly grounded in knowledge say: "We believe in the Book; the whole of it is from our Lord:" and none will grasp the Message except men of understanding. (*The Quran* 3: 7)

At every stage of human pursuit, these ayahs will have resemblances with things and phenomena known to them. The exact implications of them are known exclusively to Allah Almighty and he will disclose them in his process and method of unfolding knowledge at the stage in human life and civilization he finds suitable for the purpose through human or non-human agencies he chooses. However, making highly involved *tadabbur* / meditational reflection on all ayahs have been made obligatory for a follower of the Quran. And the ayahs including those described *mutashabihat* have not been revealed without any purpose to serve. Clear-sighted and disinterested *tadabbur* is the method that the Quran recommends for the purpose.

Do they not consider (make *tadabbur* of) the Qur'an (with care)? Had it been from other than Allah, they would surely have found therein much discrepancy. (*The Quran* 4: 82)

Do they not then earnestly seek to understand (make *tadabbur* of) the Qur'an, or are their hearts locked up by them? (*The Quran* 47:24)

There are too many ayahs in the Quran that will make him, if approached in the proper methodology, reflect a lot on the nature of the universe and the diverse phenomena in it and arrive at the right conclusions that will help him understand the nature of the universe and his own predicament in a better light. Quoted below are a few of them:

With power and skill did we construct the firmament and verily we will keep on expanding. And we have spread out the (spacious) earth; and (see) how excellently we do spread out! And of everything we have created pairs that you may ponder over it and reflect. (*The Quran* 51: 47-49)

These ayahs, with the implications that the skies or the universe keep on expanding, that the surface of the earth has been intentionally designed like a bedspread and made comfortable for human habitation, and that everything has been made in pairs, have been revealed to make us ponder on the reciprocity of Allah's ayahs in the Quran and those in nature.

Do not the unbelievers see that the heavens and the earth were joined together (as one unit of creation), before we clove them asunder? We made from water every living thing. Will they not then believe? And We have set on the earth mountains standing firm, lest it should shake with them, and We have made therein broad highways (between mountains) for them to pass through: that they may receive guidance. And We have made the heavens as a canopy well-guarded: yet do they turn away from the Signs which these things (point to)! It is He who created the Night and the Day, and the sun and the moon: all (the celestial bodies) swim along, each in its rounded course. (*The Quran* 21:30-33)

These ayahs contain a good number of clues greatly helpful to the understanding of the universe and its diverse phenomena. The possibility of many of them have been brought to light by modern science. That the skies and the earth, in other words, the universe as a whole, have been a single unit or clot until it took the present shape following a natural phenomenon of splitting up, that the origin of all living things was from water, that mountains play a big role in the equilibrium and balanced posture of the earth, that the highways between the great mountains have been part of the natural design of the surface of the earth, that the sky has a layer that offers a canopy / roof like protection to the earth from everything that may come from outer space and harm it, and that the phenomena of the day and the night and floating or swimming of the sun and the moon in their respective orbits, are all clearly suggested here to encourage the followers of the Quran to go ahead with their explorations.

You see the mountains and think them to be firmly fixed: but they keep moving the way the clouds keep moving: (such is) the artistry of Allah, who disposes of all things in perfect order: for he is well acquainted with all that you do. (*The Quran* 27:88)

Though occurring in a context where situation related to the end of the universe is described, this ayah makes a suggestion that despite the mountains, in appearance, look firmly fixed, they are not so. They are moving in the direction and pattern of the movement of the clouds. If the mountains, known for being the most firmly fixed on the earth, are described moving in the pattern and direction of the winds, what the ayah indirectly suggests is that the earth as a whole is moving in the same pattern and direction. Thus, a great deal of information about the nature of the earth and the related phenomena could be gathered from a concerned reflection of this ayah and proper observation of these natural phenomena:

Furthermore, I call to witness the stations of the Stars,
And that is indeed a mighty swearing if you but knew,
That this is indeed a Qur'an Most Honourable,
In a book well-guarded,
A Revelation from the Lord of the worlds.

Is it such a Message that you would hold in light esteem?

And have you made it your livelihood (portion) that you should declare it false?
(*The Quran* 56: 75-82)

The avowal by "the stations of the stars" in the beginning of these ayahs is described "a mighty swearing." Calling it to witness, Allah is making a statement on the greatness of the Quran. There are scores of avowals in the Quran. But none except this has been described "a mighty swearing." This peculiarity makes one think very concernedly about its significance and implications. Recent scientific disclosures about the phenomena known as "black holes" or the empty wells of great gravitational pulls in the space call for comparison with "the stations of the stars" which literally refer not to existing stars but to the stations or empty wells where stars had situated long in the past.

The followers of the Quran, ever since its revelation in the seventh century, made great breakthroughs in all areas of exploring knowledge and founded all basic sciences and other disciplines of human knowledge and pursuits and made revolutionary leaps in all spheres, and built-up great centers of civilization all over the world until the Europeans took over in the late fifteenth century. Till then, knowledge had been a comprehensive whole and all its branches were mutually complementary. Reciprocity was the character of the relationship among disciplines. But as the Europeans took over the sphere of the pursuit of knowledge and dominated the field in a hegemonic way, they compartmentalized knowledge into mutually exclusive watertight disciplines with no reciprocity of any kind and soon it lost its Quranic foundation and basis and developed a materialistic character. From the height of the divine mission of *tadabbur* and pursuit of the mysteries of Allah's ayahs, pursuit of knowledge condescended to the level of the material instinct for gaining wealth and grabbing power. European Christianity too approved of this as a necessity for survival. Muslim researchers and explorers, over a period of a few hundred years, too found themselves

following the same track. This is a startlingly shocking fact that they have come to realize in the recent years.

The reason for the followers of the Quran to deviate from this most exemplary and superb methodology of pursuing knowledge, apart from socio-political and historical factors, could be identified in their being distanced from the text of Allah's ayahs in the Quran and making *tadabbur* on the reciprocity between Allah's ayahs in the Quran and those in the universe. They, for certain reasons, came to rely more on the literature on the Quran and the books of jurisprudence instead of focusing on the Quran itself.

Followers of the Quran worldwide realize today that the only way before them to regain the past glory is to go back to the methodology of the Quran in the pursuit of knowledge and research. That is the only means left before us to rescue mankind from the confusion, chaos and anarchy that they are landed in because of the deviation in this respect spearheaded by the European materialists. This process, inevitably, demands another task, viz. cleansing and purifying knowledge in all disciplines and areas of learning of the filthy elements and baseless foundations integrated into it over these five centuries. This has to be carried out drawing inspiration from the teachings of the prophet to the effect that knowledge is the lost found wealth of a Muslim that he has to reclaim from wherever he finds it (*Tirmidhi* 2687), that pursuit of knowledge is a divine trust in his hands (*Ibnu Maja* 1/224) and that undertaking the task of pursuing knowledge is an important one among the ways of realizing Allah's pleasure (*Abu Dawud* 1631, *Tirmidhi* 422).

The passion for pursuing knowledge and bringing to light the diverse signs of Allah in nature that help one see the stamp of his signatures in everything is a divine spark present in human individuals in varying degrees. Whoever is blessed with such spark is obliged to be grateful to Allah by blowing into the spark and lighting it up into a flame rather than putting it out unutilized. This process of *tadabbur* on Allah's ayahs, a divine task all are entrusted with, is an individual's roadway to self-actualization and the society's means of development.

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