



The place of Thought & Insight in the Islamic Texts

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ABSTRACT

Civilizations are distinguished from each other based on their cultural pattern and perceptions as products of thoughts that have significant effects on the nations' progresses. The present paper is the result of a brief account on the restoration and progress of Islamic thought and insights that the great Islamic reformers and thinkers, particularly in recent centuries admit that the thought school of the Moslem people has deteriorated and has become a factor in their backwardness in all areas in the world. Although the scientific advancement of the world is indebted to Islam and the Moslems; therefore, we have tried to define the place of thoughts and insights in Koran verses and traditions inherited from the flawless descendants of the Prophet and Islamic saints in our approach to detect factors that acted as barriers against advancement of proper thought and achieve suitable and useful ways along with the opinions and ideas of Islamic and Non-Islamic great thinkers,as our era is the era of progresses, changes and evolutions in all grounds. As Imam Sadegh (peace be upon him): "Everything has a leader and the thought is the leader of mind." Kaafi/Vol. 1/ Page 19

KEYWORDS: Koran, thought, insight, progress, barriers to progress, freedom of thought

INTRODUCTION

The importance of thought and insight in human life is so great that it has been named as the main line that separates man from other creatures. In fact, apart from "thought and insight" element, man will be nothing than some slight differences in his physical members and organs that are also common in all animals. This is a great gift of God to man by which, man can learn science and acquire spirituality and moral virtues to reach perfection. Flourishing of mind in the Shiite thought started in the time of Great Prophet (praise be upon him and his descendent) of Islam and Ali (peace be upon him). This quality was reinforced during Imam Sadegh. The support shown by the Imams towards theology and rational discussions caused the growth of thought and rationalism of the Shiite to its peak. According to the western scientists in Strasburg Studies Society, *it should be admitted that the Islamic world had much greater preparation for scientific renaissance than Europe and the tolerance of Islamic era allowed the emergence and acceptance of scientific facts. On the other hand, in 15th century and by the fall of the Constantinople, followed by 16th and 17th centuries environment, the rest of world could not bear listening to scientific facts.*

One of the researches of that society aimed at studying the 12-Imam Shiite religion, including research on Imam JafarSadegh. Those scientists called the ideas of Imam JafarSadegh as genuine and the great Imam as a genius in sciences. They admitted that there is no scientific issues that Imam had not addressed. In one of the studies on astronomy, he writes: "It must be said that if he is not the pioneer of modernism in all sciences, he is surely a pioneer on astronomy and by "modern" we mean the new era that is the source of enlightenment of science in Europe." The Thinking Brain of Shiite World/ Pp 315-317.

How beautiful it is to fly to the high peaks of mountains of love and faith, to the shiny top of progress of science and knowledge, to the firm height of dignity and authority of human identity, all together and standing by each other.

Epistemology of thought and insight

Since Koran is descended in Arabic language; thus, the Arabic linguistics should be seek in learning what the word actually plans to convey. Then, the viewpoints of Koran experts must be studied to reach the meaning of Koran.

Morphology of the term "thought"

- Thinking, contemplation
- Meanings that are implied in mind
- Exercising the idea and insight to learn and see realities, lessons, etc.

Thought: Employing idea on an object (Raqeb, Almonjad, Lexicon of Koran, Alraed, Arabic language, Contemporary Arabic –Persian Dictionary, A Research on Words)

RaquebEsfahani has a very beautiful definition of thought and insight that says, "Only when an image is emerged in heart, it could be called thinking, it is for this reason that traditions says, *Think about God as God is greater than could be pictured in mind.* Nahjolfasaha/ 389.

The interpretation which is given by Raqeb on the word "thought" has employed the meaning behind the above-mentioned Hadith. It is the very meaning which is defined by philosophers and great thinkers for the term "thought":

That is, thinking means to ride the horse of memories and insight in a mental image in targeting a tangible objective item. The return of thought from that object is memory and this back and forth of thought for proving the objective and tangible item is called thinking and essentially, as long as there is no mental print in human, thinking and insight on it would be baseless; and since man could make no image of the being of God in his own mind; therefore, thinking about Him becomes impossible; however, it is possible to think on and about the effects and signs of the created objects as tangible ones and find out about the effective existence in the whole being and universe, we can achieve cognition.

All these wonderful pictures on the walls and doors of existence

Not more than a figure one could be on wall if he thinks not

Sa'di

Ultimately, it could be said that “thought” means “the contemplation and activities of mind” and one could return to the definition given by Raqeb, that thought is a force that takes the learner towards the learning and in the opinion of some philosophers, the truth of thinking and insight is a compound of two drives and movements, a movement towards the introductions to any subject and then, a movement from those introductions to the results and it is the sum of those two movements that cause cognition and perception of objects, as called thought.

Koran, Thought and Insight

The goal of sending Koran to men is to contemplate and think. The element of “thought/insight” is among elements which are on top of teachings of the sacred religion of Islam. There are more than three hundred verses in which not only the Muslim but all people are called to think and reason.

1. Calling to think

From the view of Koran, this sacred book could be divided into two general sections:

Self verses (knowing the self) and the universal verses (world, history and knowledge on divine traditions and systems), some of their attributions are as follows:

- 1) Koran has reminded the great place of thinkers and contemplators in various forms (Zomar/9, Mojadela/11).
- 2) Koran has invited man to think about the creation and contemplate on their own being (Ale-Emran/191).
- 3) In many verses, with no exclusion in calling people to think, Koran gives rational arguments, not only aiming its mere worship by the force of faith, but into the reasoning, and argues with the nonbelievers (Hood/35, Anbia/22, and Momenun/91).

Of course, there are many verses in Koran that could be quoted as calling us to think about the creation world and the created beings of God, such as Hashr/21, Ra'd/3 & 40, Nahl/120, Jassia/130, Momenun/60 & 80, Rome/ 21, 24, 28...and since naming all those verses is beyond the main purpose of this text; that is, a brief accounts on the importance of thought and insight in Koran, we just quote few examples of them.

1. Praise and appreciating the thinkers

There are verses in Koran that speak of appreciation and praising the wise and those who engage in thinking, teaching and learning, in order to develop a suitable model and pattern to encourage other people, particularly the faithful individuals to think. For example, verses on masters of doors to open into exploration, thinkers, reason seekers...As an example, in SurehZomar, verses 17 and 18, Koran says, “Those who listen to others to seek truth and follow the best, it is for them that God shows the path and they are the wise people.”

The word “Lobb” (Arabic) means pure wisdom and deep thinking. In verses that consist the word “Lobb” it really instructs, stimulates, encourages and greatly praise of thinking and contemplation. Teaching and educating 179-201.

Koran not only reminds the great place of the wise, sees thought as a screen for man to differ good from bad, to fin what are the trivial and what are the important ones and choose or take from them. Ibid 89.

1. Blaming those who neglect thinking

By studying this book of guidance, we come along with tens of verses that questions people for not thinking, as the origin of each perfection and perception prosperity is thinking and contemplation.

Koran asks, “Do you not think?” Anaam/50

And in cases, it says, “Do not they use their thoughts and reasons?” Alrome/8, A'raf/184.

In another instance, it blamefully addresses people as, “How you call people to good deeds while you forget your own doings while you read the book of God, why you do not think in it in depth?” (Baqara/44)

2. Looking down at staying away from thought

There are verses in Koran that equal not-thinking to evil and open the discussion of language that implies swearing and call those who pass divine signs and do not think about them or withdraw from contemplation in them like the deaf and blind and as the worst of the creatures. “Those nonbelievers who show deafness in hearing the word of truth and are dumb in speaking of the truth are those who do not perceive the truth and they are the worst of creatures before God.” Anfal/22. Koran calls them lost even more than animals, “Do you believe that they have ears to hear or seek reason; it is not so as they are as lost as the animals even worse than them.” Forqan /44

These verses show that thought and contemplation is the key of knowledge and unlocker of treasures of perfection and sciences.

Calling, encouragement and urging to think, and blaming and despising the attitude of not thinking shows the extraordinary value of proper thought and healthy insight in Islam.

Thinking from the viewpoint of traditions and quotes from the Saints (*Ravayat*)

Islamic narrations and Hadith as one of the four sources of Islamic jurisprudence and the invaluable treasure of the Saint leaders show most emphasis on the issue of thought and insight and this is so important for the great leaders of our religion that has received the term of the “greatest service to God”.

By a focused review on those traditions and quotes from the Saints it becomes clear that each one reveals a truth based on a particular core as some of them note the virtue and place of thought in the value system of Islam and some others address the issues of thought and some other speak of the results of thought. Followings are examples of each category.

• The virtue of thought

Imam Sadeq says, “There are reasons and guidelines for everything and the guideline of a wise person is his thought and insight.” He gives such a great value to thinking that in some Ravayat, he is quoted of “one hour thinking is better than sixty years of prayers.” Kaafi/Vol. 1/P. 191, Bahar/Vol. 2, P. 251, Nahjolfasaha/2059.

“Become close to those who show hunger in seeking knowledge and thought as it is wisdom that is uttered from their tongue.” Nahjolfasaha/209

Amirolmomenin Ali; too, says that thought on aspects of works is one of the significant characteristics of a faithful servant, “A faithful servant.....is deep in his thoughts.” GhororolHekam/ Vol. 2/P/ 150. In another saying he calls the place and prestige of mind as the power of thought more than religion and modesty,” Gabriel showed himself to Adam and said, “O Adam, I am being assigned to give you power in choosing among three things, to take one and desert the other two and they are, mind, modesty and religion.” Adam said, “And I chose mind.” Gabriel faced modesty and religion and said, “Now, stand up and leave mind. Those two said, “O Gabriel, we are assigned to accompany mind to wherever it goes.” Gabriel said, “Therefore, you go with mind.” And he then ascended to the heaven. Kaafi/ Vol. 1.

This enlightening Hadith shows that wherever there is mind, both modesty (keeping distance from sin) and religion and serving God are goo; however, there might be prayers and religion without reason while the value of any prayer and religion is for the amount of reason and mind with it. Kaafi/ Vol. 1/P. 19; Baharolanvar/ Vol. 20/P. 319.

Subject of thought

As not all thoughts are good and anticipated, the value of thought is for its subject and results of it. The quotes from the Saints in Islam have significant role in figuring out which thought are healthy and proper. Amirolmomenin Ali says, “There is no prayer than thinking about the creations of God.” Nahjolbalagheh/ P. 677

Same quote is reported from Imam Hassan Askari. Imam Sadegh; too, calls the best thought on thinking about the signs and attributes of God rather than thinking about His essence, “The best prayer is thinking about the greatness of God, His signs, characteristics and greatness.” Kaafi/ Vol. 2, P. 22; Baharolanvar/Vol. 20, P. 251

Imam Sadeq has been quoted as saying, “One hour of thought is better than one full night of prayers.” He was asked to elaborate more and he said, “The meaning of ‘thought’ in this context is like when you pass a debris or a house you could say, ‘where are those who built you? What is happening to you? Why you do not talk?’” Baharolanvar/ Vol. 2/ P. 322; Kaafi/Vol. 1, P. 30.

RESULTS OF THOUGHT

Amirolmomenin Ali says, “Thought and contemplation drives man to goodness and acting good deeds.” GhororolHekam/ 3016

Freedom of thought and mind in Islam

Thought is the basis of Islam, Shiite and humanity. Thought is the talent and its force that must be improved in man and without freedom, it would not grow.

Although there are phenomena that man is prohibited by Islam to think about, such as thinking about the essence and the being of God (of course this prevention is because man's scope is limited and thinking about an infinite by a finite brings nothing than confusion and wanderings) and/or some thoughts that are tools of the devil to confuse man, in general, Islam is in favor of thinking. That is, in view of Islam, a Moslem is both entitled and obliged to accept and believe the principles of religion (Monism, Justice, Prophecy, Imamate and Resurrection) by thoughts and reasoning. Thought is always accompanied by questions and problems. Any thinker should have the opportunity to ask those questions in an open atmosphere and inform other thinkers in order to solve his problems....

Unlike Christianity as it prohibits this territory and calls it as the territory of faith where reason should not interfere, not only in all parts of Koran it is the freedom of thought, but also after urging to think in the signs and verses, discusses the suspicions of the unbelievers. For example, “The non-believers say that life is nothing than this, we will die and we will live and nothing kills us than nature.” Jassia/24 or the suspicions of those who deny resurrection.Ana'am /29...

Of course, one should note that only a thinking that has important role and practical impacts in human growth and improvement is worthy of being called sacred (taken from collection of passages of Advaei, Khorasani, Qirani).

Factors and obstacles in thought and contemplation

In order to progress in thoughts and insight it is necessary to know its factors and obstacles in progress in order to overcome the problems and achieve what we desire by thinking.

»Obstacles in proper thinking

1. Relying on imagination and suspicion than knowledge and certainty: one of the major factors in mind is to follow doubts and imagination instead of the certainties, "Because they do not follow except their suspicion and in recognizing the divine knowledge, and they content themselves to guesses and assessments." Ana'am /116, Jonas/36.
2. To follow egos and libido: Divine Koran calls egoism as one of the factors that causes the bias of mind," Any person is in the ties of his achievements unless the prosperous ones (who have no evil in them)". Modaser/38 and 39, Araf/176
3. Hastiness: Hastiness and uneasiness is one of the biases of thought.
4. Traditionalism: A problem all divine prophets faced; that is, the ignorant people who stick to the ideas of their ancestors, "And when they are told to follow the good Book sent by God, they answer no, but instead, we like to follow the traditions of our fathers. Are they keen to follow the very thing their fathers followed while those traditions did not lead them to righteousness?" Baqara/170
5. Following the majority: The decision of majority could not be proper criteria in decision making. Ankabut/25, Ana'am/117.
6. Charisma followers: Koran calls all people to have independent votes and thoughts and sees the blind following as the cause of cruelty. A'raf/184

»Factors of proper thinking

1. Giving clear evidences and reasons: In divine Nahjul-Balaghah, Aye 125, "Call people to the path of God by giving good evidences and advise and argue with them with best manner. Definitely, your God has domination over those who are lost and has more knowledge on those who found righteousness." Implies that accepting any claim depends on giving clear evidences.
2. Scientific support: Science is the essence of thought and gaining knowledge on any phenomena comes afterward. Thought is not possible without knowledge; therefore, commanding to think is commanding to gain its capital (knowledge and science) too, "We give those examples for people; although no one understands the truth of them except those who think in the roots and facts of the issues." Ankabut/43
3. Deep insight: If thoughts are scattered and shallow, they will yield no results; on the other hand, if it is based on readings, tests and careful assessments, it will be very fruitful and useful. Amirolmomenin Ali says, "Think and be deep to the extent that covers caution and reason and make decision when everything becomes clear to you." Kaafi/ Vol. 2/336
4. Giving up prejudice: Seeking truth is pure from dogmatism and blind prejudice. Loghman advises his son as "Bow before truth to be the wisest among people." Kaafi/ Vol. 1/P. 19.

Approaches

1. Supreme goals

In order to have progress in thought and contemplation, one should peruse greater goals and view them as parts of life. (Dill Carnegie)

2. Motivation for progress: We should create motif for progress "The thoughts of thinker work automatically". Ernest Dimmea

1. Scientific freshness and passion

An extraordinary passion and eagerness to acquire science among Moslems was one of the effective factors in the enlightenment during Imam Sadeq. The era of Imam Sadeq was the time of mental movements and revolutions. The effective factors of that passion could be listed as follows:

- 1) The environment was fully religious and people had religious motifs.
- 2) Different races had arrived into the Islam world and they had backgrounds of thinking and sciences.
- 3) Islam was international and wherever there is Islam, it is the very home. Renovation and flourishing/ 67, 68

2. New movements (Innovation)

Koran calls itself a constant innovator that never stops bringing new thoughts "God is innovative in everything."

Alrahman/29

Innovation in thoughts and values could drive society to moves and revive dynamism and keenness to seek progress, "In your works seek new ways and fresh thoughts". Grand Leader of Islamic Republic.

3. Creativity

Creativity is one of the major aspects of progress in thoughts and contemplation. One of the common techniques in emergence of creativity and activating thought is mental movement techniques in groups. (Six hats for thinking) P/19.

4. Correct and constructive critique thought

This type of thinking has the approval of Almighty God in Koran and quotes from the Saints, "Accuse your minds as trusting them unconditionally is wrong. That is, accuse them of being wrong so you would not trust only on your mind. Then seek advice of the wise friends; as truly most mistakes are emerged from sole trust to your own mind and as soon as one proceeds in a decision, some of his progresses would be correct and some would be but only mistakes." GhororolHekam/ Vol. 1 P 267, Journal on Teaching Methodology and Viewpoints of Socrates, P/ 40.

5. Mental Engineering

A generation should be raised to have outstanding characteristics, such as with perspective, beliefs, and privileged, idealistic, passionate with positive thoughts, physically fit, serious readers in all aspects of personal and social duties, innovative and flourishing in thought and deeds/ Pp 98-99

6. Attention to rich Islamic resources:

We are wandering in the banks of great waves of science and knowledge of Koran and the Ahlebeyt's treasures. Therefore, there should be proper bridges between our generation and the invaluable and rich treasures of those waves so every individual could benefit from the rich Islamic sources as far as he is able to do so.

7. Establishment of a scientific and divine environment

Establishment of this environment could provide ground of proper thinking and perspective.

Conclusion

In this paper we found out that:

- 1) In view of Koran, the highest criteria in recognizing human virtue than other creatures of physical world is thought, reasoning and contemplation.
- 2) If the power of thought and ideas flourishes and revives in an individual, he can learn knowledge and use it in service of perfection.
- 3) Without mental development, there will be no potential to progress and life without thinking and mindfulness neither advances nor survives and its expansion is associated with power of thinking. The experiences and observation of any person show that.
- 4) By thought in Islam's view, it is not merely acquiring science and shallow knowledge; but, it calls a kind of thought that would enlighten man's soul to understand the truth of his being and the goal-orientation of the world and to reach knowing God.
- 5) As Imam Kazem says, "There is a sign for everything and the sign of a wise person is thinking and the sign of thing is silence." Baharolanvar.

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