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Rationalism and Criticism in The Qur'ān: An Analytical Study from Modern Books of *Tafsīr*

Sohirin M. Solihin,* Noor Mohammad Osmani,** and Mohd. Shah Jani ***

Abstract: The paper attempts to reveal the significance on the use of intellect and criticism in Muslim theology to prove validity of the revelation particularly which is related to the truth and justice. This could be conducted by exploring the views of *mufasssirrūn* and contemporary Muslim scholars in giving the exposition toward the Qur'ānic verses focusing on the prohibition of blind fanaticism. The emphasis is closely linked with Muslim activities with an attempt of achieving the progress in their lives. We found that creative thinking and the use of intellect is inseparable from the concept of reading as reflected within the first revelation given to the Prophet (pbuh). It is not simply to read the text rather it deals with rationality to confirm with the concept of the truth which may come from human thought. Hence, the revelation appeals to its adherents to observe the use of rationalism and criticism to confirm the validity of certain thought.

Keywords: rationalism, criticism, reading, revelation, the Qur'ān and contemporary Muslim scholars

Abstrak: Kertas kerja ini bertujuan menerangkan kepentingan penggunaan akal dan kaedah kritikan dalam teologi Muslim untuk membuktikan keabsahan sesuatu wahyu, khasnya yang berkaitan hal-hal kebenaran dan keadilan. Ianya dilakukan dengan mengeksplorasi pandangan ilmuan tafsir dan para sarjana Muslim kontemporer dalam mengulas makna ayat al-Qur'ān, dengan keutamaan diberikan kepada larangan bersikap fanatik buta. Penekanan ini secara langsung memperlihatkan hubungan diantara aktiviti-aktiviti seorang Muslim dan usaha untuk mencapai kemajuan dalam kehidupan. Kajian ini mendapati bahawa berfikiran kreatif dan menggunakan sepenuhnya akal fikiran mempunyai hubungan rapat dengan konsep “membaca” seperti yang ditemukan dalam wahyu pertama Nabi Muhammad SAW. Ianya bukan sekadar membaca teks secara literal bahkan menggalakkan pendekatan rasional dalam menentukan kesahihan sesuatu kebenaran melalui berfikir. Wahyu mendorong agar manusia menggunakan akal secara kritikal dalam menentukan kebenaran sesuatu pemikiran.

Kata Kunci: rasional, pemikiran kritis, wahyu, membaca, Qur'ān dan ilmuan Islam kontemporari.

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Introduction

The use of intellect is closely related with the concept of reading and seeking the knowledge. These two things are interrelated in which the separation between the two will end up with nihilism. Seeking the knowledge through reading should be conducted with the use of rationalism and critical analysis. From Muslim theological angle, reading should go beyond textualism and broaden it into the realm of contextualization. Muslim scholars came out with theoretical framework on significance of cosmic reading to identify the greatness of Lord of the Universe. It needs to be conducted with the use of rational approach in which the mind represents the greatest gift from God to humanity distinguishing them from the rest of all living beings. Mankind should think critically in all aspects of activities to come up with finding the truth. The revelation is concerned with the use of rationalism to avoid the falsehood and deception. It is viewed by many scientists that conducting activities without the use of creative thinking will end up with nothingness. Thus, the revelation nullifies blind fanaticism as it will not give benefit to promote the progress of development. However, human beings must have awareness that intellectual thinking has limited capacity in determining the truth. Hence, the revelation gives guidelines on the use of rationalism which should not go beyond the limit.

The objective of study attempts to expose the use of rationalism in grasping the message of the revelation. It also analyzes the importance of applying the Qur'ānic guidance in term of logical thinking. The problem lies that in certain cases Muslims might think that the message given to the Prophet (pbuh) is merely linked with spirituality. It highly emphasizes on the use of rationalism in all dimension of human activities. Since the Qur'ān represents the book of guidance, then, it will be much of advantageous to analyze the verses related to the use of mind as an alternative of giving solution on the problem that a person may encounter. In addition, there is scarcity of work on the use of rationalism by referring to the views of contemporary exegesis.

In this study, we employ the method of deductive analysis from the views of contemporary Muslim scholars in the field of Qur'ānic exegesis which emerged in the twentieth century that elucidates the verses with the use of sociological approach instead of focusing on literal understanding. The scope of the study is limited in analyzing the interpretation of verses on cosmic verses (*ayāt al-kawniyyah*). The Significance of study lies on how humanity should take benefit from the Qur'ānic guidance pertaining the use of intellect.

The Concept of *Iqrā'*

It is beyond any doubt that the Qur'ān greatly emphasizes on significance of seeking knowledge to develop human civilization. Moḥammad Ṭanṭāwī Jawharī was obsessed to produce Qur'ānic commentary with an attempt to galvanize Muslim ummah to embark in pursuit of knowledge. He ensures that most part of the Qur'ān deals with natural sciences (Muhammad Husein al-Dhahabī, 1425H/2005, pp.342-343). He criticized Muslim scholars who put more emphasis in the writing of jurisprudential aspect. More than 750

verses of the Qur'ān, he said, deal with various branches of sciences (Muḥammad Ḥusein al-Dhahabī, 1425H/2005).

From the inception, the revelation requires mankind to use the intellect through seeking the knowledge and science. The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was required to read although he was as an illiterate. This can be found in this following evidence which says,

Proclaim! (or Read!) In the name of thy Lord and Cherisher, who created.
Created man, out of a (mere) clot of congealed blood: Proclaim! And thy
Lord is Most Bountiful, He Who taught (the use of) the Pen, Taught man
that which he knew not (Q, 96:1-5)

The purpose of reading is to identify the truth. The Angel Gabriel forced the Prophet (pbuh) to read in the name of Lord (*bi ismi rabbik*) in which, God possesses positive characters and represents ultimate perfection. Thus, everything mentioned in the Qur'ān should be considered as the absolute truth. The religious doctrine given to the Prophet (pbuh) is to confirm on the existence and greatness of God. As the Prophet (pbuh) was requested to read in the name of Lord, then, when we read the Qur'ān it must be preceded with *bi ismillāh*. It was in the cave of Hira when for the first time the Angel Gabriel communicated the revelation to the Prophet (pbuh) in which he refused it due to his illiteracy. However, God decreed to make him as a Prophet to guide mankind through the revelation given to him. God granted all humanity with intellect to be utilized as vital instrument to reach into high level of civilizational progress. The command of reading given to the Prophet (pbuh) was aimed at training humanity to confirm the greatness of God and to offer thankfulness through worship. This indicates, Sha'rāwī holds, an appreciation on God's mercifulness to human beings (Muḥammad Mutawwalī al-Sha'rāwī, 1997, pp.41-43).

Cosmological Reading

Other dimension of reading through *Iqrā'* (read in the name of your Lord) is not only confined to religious text. It includes exploration on natural resources. Muslim scholars in the field of *tafsīr* came out with division of reading into textual and cosmological reading ('Abdul Ḥamīd Abū Sulaymān, 1409H/1989), pp.38-39). The first deals with all kind of reading with the use of rationalism. This could be the main part of methodology of criticism with the purpose of identifying the truth. However, when they read the text of revelation they have to believe in the whole content as it represents the absolute truth. This can be referred to these following verses,

This is the Book; in it is guidance sure, without doubt, to those who fear
Allah (Q, 2:2).

In more vivid way, God mentions about the truthfulness of the message given to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) in which the verse says,

This Qur'ān is not such as can be produced by other than Allah; on the contrary it is a confirmation of (revelations) that went before it, and a fuller explanation of the book wherein there is no doubt from the Lord of the worlds (Q, 10: 37).

So, cosmological reading also deals with exploration with the sole aim of observing the greatness of Lord of the universe. The Qur'ān invites the mind to study the universe as mentioned in these following verses which says,

Soon will We show them Our Signs in the (furthest) regions (of the earth), and in their own souls, until it becomes manifest to them that this is the Truth. Is it not enough that thy Lord doth witness all things? (Q, 41: 53).

According to Sheikh Ṭanṭāwī, the verse urges all believers to reflect on everything that God created in this universe. The above evident is the appeal from God which needs to be responded by all humanity to ponder upon the universe which consists diversity of creation such as the sun, moon, stars and the whole planets. In addition, there a lot of thing as phrased within the term of horizon (*al-afāq*) which could be in the form of mountainous places which represents the signs (*al-āyāt*) on the greatness of the Lord and the weaknesses of humanity. In certain cases God demonstrates His power such as making the earth shake due to the occurrence of earthquake, tornado which could devastate the ecological environment. Moreover, there is diversity of agricultural product which, again, shows the mercy of God toward humanity. All of those things are meant to invite human beings to offer thankfulness and obedience toward His rule and regulation as stipulated with the message given to the Prophet (pbuh), he said (Muhammad Sayyid Ṭanṭāwī, 1977, Vol.12, p.366).

The command is to study the universe in the whole horizons and even within their physical appearances till the truth manifests. The word *al-āfāq* (lit. horizon) includes the skies and earth and the intellect should ponder upon the creation of planets, rotation of the day and night to come into the belief and follow the divinity. Moreover, it requires to reflect on the process of human creation starting from the sperm up to the conception of pregnancy and the delivery from the womb of their mothers (‘Āshūr, 1984, p.25). So, the purpose of reading, in reality, is to reflect on environmental condition, planets and galaxies to follow *Sunnatullāh* (rules of Allah) which, at the end, could find the clear evident that those things could not possibly exist without the will of God (Rāzī, 1420H, p.573).

Sayyid Quṭb gives special emphasis in giving interpretation on that verse in which, according to him, human beings could reveal various scientific findings on what God provided in the universe. Through modern technology they confirm complimentary rotation between earth, moon, and the sun. In fact, he said, it is just small matters within grandeur of God's un-contestable power. The reading through *āyāt al-kawniyyah* is attempted to admonish humanity to offer thankfulness through obeying the divine rules (Quṭb, 1412H, p.331).

In view of this, the Qur'ān also requires them to study physical aspect of human beings as it says,

On the earth are signs for those of assured Faith. As also in your own selves: Will ye not then see? And in heaven is your Sustenance, as (also) that which ye are promised. Then, by the Lord of heaven and earth, this is the very Truth, as much as the fact that ye can speak intelligently to each other (Q, 15:21-24).

In giving the exposition toward the above evident, again, Sayyid Qutb is of the view that God appeals human beings to use their intellects to discover everything on earth and uniqueness of the creation. Those kind of things are aimed at giving the assurance on the greatness of the Creator that deserves to be offered the worship and obedience. They can witness the newest thing in creation of God which keeps on changing. They could reveal different types of colors, shape and even some other things which relates to the secret behind of those creation. The viewing through the use of intellect will open up the way of behavioral thinking pertaining to human weaknesses and their indebtedness toward the mercy of God. When they reach into high level of thinking through seeking the knowledge, they will discover something which indicates the greatness of Lord of the universe and to believe what is mentioned in the revelation. Those who read the verse with depth of thinking will come out with the conclusion that whatever God provided is really unique. They can see the planets with all kinds of stars and other objects such the sun and the moon. Those planets move within their own galaxies. The sun never changes in term of size and even the level of hotness and without it, all plantation will not grow. Likewise, God sent down the rain from the skies to become the source of all living beings (Qutb, p.3378). In nutshell, scientists and scholars have to reflect on God's creation with the use of intellect to admit the greatness of God who provided facilities for their own benefit

Critical Thinking

Criticism is inseparable from the use of rationalism. The thing which needs to be discerned is that human being is granted with the intellect (*'aql*) to make him different from the rest of all living beings (Ghazālī, p.13). It is the dignity (*karāmah*) that God granted to them with an aim of promoting virtuous deeds with the use of divine guidance instead of following fancy desires.

We have honoured the sons of Adam; provided them with transport on land and sea; given them for sustenance things good and pure; and conferred on them special favours, above a great part of our creation (Q, 17:70).

The verse deals with the dignity of mankind that God granted to them. They could travel throughout the ocean without facing the danger. It is different from the attitude of unbelievers in which whenever face danger during the trip in the ocean, they will remember God but when safely arrived the destination, they disbelieve in Him. At the same time, it shows the confirmation on the status of dignity of mankind by granting

them the intellect and bounties. In addition, God grants to the progenies of Adam the competency to travel on land and the sea and gave the favour above any other creatures (Darwazah, 1383H, p.407).

In Islam, the intellect occupies the highest significance in human life. They must utilize it in accordance to the rule and principles stipulated in the divine message. The creation of ‘*aql*’ is meant to comprehend the truthfulness of the message. The second aspect is to support their lives in this world. God make compulsory to all believers to govern their lives with religious principles through obedience toward His legal concept (Māwardī, 1986, p.17. The significance of using the intellect can be referred to the tradition which says,

Everything must be done based on principles, and the main principle of the work of a person is based on the use of intellect. Only through the use of mind a person would dedicate his life to worship God. In view of this, disobedient a person will say in the Day of Judgment, ‘Had we but listened or used our intelligence, We should not (now) be among the Companions of the Blazing Fire’ (Q, 67: 10).

The use of rationalism should come out with good conduct and activities to be devoted as form of worship (‘*ibādah*’). As far as the concept of worship is concerned, it should not be understood in the realm of spiritual practices. Human activities should comply with spirit of goodness to maintain quality of culture (Taymiyyah, 1987M/1408H, p.76). Moreover, it should reflect sense of justice in all sphere of live in interacting with the whole of mankind. This is in fact, the main purpose of human creation as reflected in this verse,

I have only created Jinns and men, that they may serve Me (Q, 51: 56).

The concept of worship which covers human activities is given vivid description in this verse which says,

Say: truly, my prayer and my service of sacrifice, my life and my death, are (all) for Allah, the Cherisher of the worlds: No partner hath He: this am I commanded, and I am the first of those who bow to his will (Q, 6: 162-163).

The prayer occupies the highest rank of worship which cannot be ignored. The testimonial witness known as *al-shahādah* for instance, is sufficient to be uttered once throughout the life which indicates the level of belief of a person. The fasting can also be ignored once a person is unable to do it due to the illness or age. Likewise, the obligation of zakāh can also be ignored due to the poverty of a person. Performance of pilgrimage can also be ignored when someone have no means of affording the trip. The obligation of prayer was given directly from God during the time of ascendancy (*al-mi‘rāj*) to the heaven in Yerusalem. Hence, even a person is sick he has to perform it while he is laying down on bed etc. The second part of prayer as contained within the verse relates with different aspect of performance that is different from conducting the pilgrimage. It is in

the form of camping in the mount of Arafah and also moving around the Ka'bah known as *al-tawāf*. In addition, the whole activities throughout the life and even the death is to be attempted to please God (Sha'rāwī, 1997, 4020-4021).

The spirituality in Islam includes the devotion of someone's activities for the cause of goodness based on divine regulation to maintain peace in the community. Human beings should expose themselves as God's slave and to act as a caliph. This is, in fact, the real purpose of the creation of human beings as mentioned in this verse which says,

O David We did indeed make thee a vicegerent on earth: so judge thou between men in truth (and justice): nor follow thou the lusts (of thy heart), for they will mislead thee from the Path of Allah: for those who wander astray from the Path of Allah, is a Penalty Grievous, for that they forget the Day of Account (Q, 38: 26).

The function of caliph as contained in the above evident is to ensure the goodness and establish justice. It is also related with system of governance in which humanity should not give any judgment simply to follow the desire ('Āshūr, pp.243-244).

The critical thinking in Islam is to enable a person distinguish between the truth and false. Hence, from the first moment the Prophet (pbuh) was given the task to convey the message, he was ensured to do it with clarity to negate all the things which contradicts intellectual thinking (Ghazālī, 1424H/2004M, p.16). He was given the task to convey the message on the basis of clarity in accepting the truth as the verse says,

Say thou: this is my way: I do invite unto Allah, on evidence clear as the seeing with one's eyes, I and whoever follows me. Glory to Allah and never will I Join gods with Allah (Q, 12: 108).

This deals with methodological system in accepting the truth. It can only be confirmed through the conviction when a person believes in the message of revelation. To dispel the doubtful he must use the intellect to confirm the truth of religious doctrine. Thus, a believer should negate all kinds of superstitious belief as it contradicts the fact and reality (Sha'rāwī, 1997, p.7125)

It is obvious that the task of human beings is to establish justice and to refrain from following their desire which will cause the bankruptcy. There are different words that require humanity to use their mind which signifies method of critical thinking through cosmic reading with the aim of identifying the truth on the existence of their Lord and to offer obedience to Him. The word *al-naẓr* is also used to see the planets on the sky as the verse says,

Say: "Behold all that is in the heavens and on earth"; but neither Signs nor Warners profit those who believe not (Q, 10 : 110)

Sheikh Rashīd Riḍā is of the view that the verse requires humanity to utilize their intellect to ponder upon the whole horizon of the sky and the earth revealing secret of the creation. He said that human beings are given two options either to follow the truth or false and faith or polytheist. They are equipped with the mind to analyze thoroughly on what God provided in the universe to follow the truth and to ignore the falsehood. The faith can be attained by the proper use of rational thinking through pondering the whole universe. A person will find something unique in His creation. To come up with the right way of thinking, he holds, God assigned the Prophet (pbuh) to guide them into the right way of thinking which could lead into the truthful of belief. He said further that the function of religion is to guide the principle of utilizing the mind which could lead them into the truth. To get more clarity in the exposition of the verse we quote the whole of the statement which says, 'O the Prophet (pbuh)! Tell them to those people who are willing to accept the guidance to ponder with the use of eyes on what are in the skies and earth which represents the clarity of God's sign that includes the Sun and the moon, stars and other planets, the rotation of the day and night, the presence of clouds and the rains, winds and water fallen from the sky, ocean and rivers, trees and fruits, different colors of fish in the ocean and animals on earth. All those things that you see with your eyes shows the might of God (creator of the universe) and also the oneness of divinity which deserves to be worshipped and offer obedience. The verse also urges to think rationally on what God created about themselves through the beauty of physical appearance showing unsurpassed competency of God. The verse concludes with strong question, are all those signs insufficient to lead them into the acceptance of the truth to become believer? (Rida, p.396)

Even they are urged to ponder upon their creation to come to the consciousness on greatness of their Lord as the verse says,

Now let man but think from what he is created! He is created from a drop emitted (Q, 86 : 56).

The word *al-tafakur* (lit. to reflect) is also used inviting mankind to reflect on the universe as it can be seen in this verse,

Do they not reflect in their own minds? Not but for just ends and for a term appointed, did Allah create the heavens and the earth, and all between them: yet are there truly many among men who deny their meeting with their Lord (at the Resurrection)! (Q, 30 : 8).

The verse was addressed to the polytheists of Makkah who did not use their mind to ponder upon the creation of the heaven and the earth. It is in the form of question why they were so heedless to use logical thinking and to believe in the hereafter. It is beyond any skeptical that those heaven and earth would attract them to believe in God and life in the hereafter. Logical thinking is closely linked with the use of mind which should end up to confirm the truth of revelation. It is given the hint on attitudinal thinking of humanity in which many of them refute to believe in the message given to the Prophet (pbuh) ('Āshūr, 1984pp.51-52).

In other place, the word *al-tadabbur* is also used to denote reflection pertains to the signs of God as mentioned in this verse,

(Here is) a Book which We have sent down unto thee, full of blessings, that they may meditate on its Signs, and that men of understanding may receive admonition (39 : 29).

Rashīd Riḍā downgrades the intellectual thinking which could not produce the positive result. To get more clarity we quotes his statement which says,

Is it not the greatest humiliation and crime for this religion when its followers cannot see the sign of God as the Qur'ān directs them to reflect in order to come out with the positive lesson? Is it not a great calamity for the religion when its leaders abandon the knowledge and sciences, which expose the law of Allah and His signs through His creation and weaken the essential teaching of this religion to contradict the Qur'ān that appreciates the reflection? Such kind of people in fact insists to follow their tradition without cogent argument and simply follow the tradition before them (Riḍā, 1972, p.52).

He said in further,

The person who does not know the secret of these phenomena (*al-kā'ināt*), could not see the signs of God in that creation. This is because he ignores the function of intellectual as a tool of comprehension. All phenomenon should become the signs of His existence for those who use their reason. Those who could not see the causes that lead to know the wisdom and to distinguish advantages from disadvantages, prove accuracy through evidences and the laws (*al-sunnan*) on the basis of system showing His mercies and the right to be worshiped, and due to the achievement of intellectual (*al-a'ql*) in the field of knowledge which gives perfection to make Him as the single entity (*al-tawhīd*), they would be considered as those who associate God with others. They use minimum level of rationalism which will only cause into ignorant (Riḍā, 1972).

The book is full of guidance, virtues and information on different aspect of knowledge and science. In addition, it has the method of curing the deceases that is related with the physiological and mental crisis. Whenever a person suffers from mental problem he must refer to the guidance of revelation. Moreover, it is linked with the legal concept to come out from the problem that humanity may face during the interaction with others. Economic system, ecological and environmental preservation are among the thing in which humanity should observe to maintain equilibrium and peace. Hence, it requires the intellect to analyze thoroughly the content of the message and the wisdom behind the sending down of the revelation to the Prophet (pbuh) to gain the happiness of life. In view of this, textual reading of the revelation with the use of thinking is more beneficial than reading without understanding the meaning (al-Sa'dī, 1420H/2000M), p.712.

The area of reflection expands to different fields such as mountains, ocean, physical aspect of human beings and the heavens. The Qur'ān also concerns using the mind to explore the beneficial things contained in the bottom of the ocean to be utilized for the betterment of life. This can be seen in this verse,

He has made subject to you the Night and the Day; the Sun and the Moon;
and the Stars are in subjection by His Command: verily in this are signs for
men who are wise (Q, 16 : 12).

The viewing is not just normal seeing rather it should be accompanied with deep reflection of mind as mentioned in this verse,

And do they not see that We do drive Rain to parched soil (bare of
herbage), and produce therewith crops, providing food for their cattle and
themselves? Have they not the vision?

The infertile land changed into beautiful garden due to the rains that God sent from the skies as token of mercy to all humanity. The water has been declared as the source of all living beings in which without it humanity will be able to survive. The animal and bees eat from the plantation and fruits and humanity could consume agricultural product is due to the sending down of rains. Hence, humanity are required to ponder upon all bounties that God grants to them to maintain their existence and to offer thankfulness by observing spiritual practices (Ṭaṇṭāwi, 1977, p.158)

The invitation to reflect on the phenomena is not only with the use of eyes. It should be based on intellectual judgment and those who view something which could not bring into the belief is condemned by Allah SWT as mentioned in this verse,

Many are the Jinns and men We have made for Hell: they have hearts
wherewith they understand not, eyes wherewith they see not, and ears
wherewith they hear not. They are like cattle, nay more misguided: for they
are heedless (of warning) (Q, 7 : 179)

It is not simply the normal seeing rather it is closely linked with comprehension (*al-fahm*), making clarity (*al-tabaṣṣur*), and knowing in depth (*al-tafaqquh*). The above evident elucidates that most human beings could not comprehend about the truth due to heedless to ponder upon the creation of the universe. In addition, they are unwilling to hear the truth of revelation given to the Prophet (pbuh). In fact, such kind of attitude does not reflect human behavioral conduct instead they are worse than animalism (Zamakhshari, p.179).

Utilization of the Universe

God created the universe as a place of settlement of mankind and all facilities that He provided need to be utilized to promote the goodness and justice. The sun, moon, stars,

ocean, oxygen, animals, and all other living beings are subjugated to them. The sun and other planets give the light, the water falls from the sky make all living beings survive, and even they can make use of it for electricity, through the air human beings can breathe, and the ocean contained so many valuable things which are beneficial for the betterment of life.

When human beings explore resources in the land and in the ocean, it should bring consciousness on the mighty of the Creator and to behave following His norms. Everything they conceptualized in the form of knowledge and sciences to be devoted as actualization of worship. Since they are equipped with the intellect (*'aql*), they should utilize it to explore and conceptualize theory of knowledge to reveal the resources and reflect the greatness of the Creator. The purpose of exploration is not to exploit resources rather to use it for the betterment of all humanity.

The evidences can be found in these verses,

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 which they trail like their slaves between the sky and the earth, (here) indeed are Signs for a people that are wise (2 : 164).

Another verse says,

It is Allah Who hath created the heavens and the earth and sendeth down rain from the skies, and with it bringeth out fruits wherewith to feed you: it is He Who hath made the ships subject to you, that they may sail through the sea by His Command; and the rivers (also) hath He made subject to you (Q, 14 : 32).

Mankind should be grateful to what God granted with great *ni'mah* even without exerting the efforts. These are related to different aspects which become the need of humanity such as animals, fruits, the growth of plantation and even sending down of the rain from the skies. Whenever human beings make the effort to count what have been granted to them in different forms of bounties such as healthiness, the ability of breathing the air, deliciousness of food and drinking etc, definitely they will not be able to do it. The last part of the verse is the hint for unbelievers who refute the truth of revelation given to the Prophet (pbuh) instead of bowing down toward the false deities. On the contrary, believers devote their lives to comply with His rules which characterizes their faith (‘Āshūr, 1984, p.236).

It needs to emphasize here that everything in this universe are to be utilized in accordance with His pattern starting from the small particles such as the bees (*al-Nahl*) and atom (*al-Dhurrah*) up to the biggest one like the sun (*al-shams*) as all of them are subjugated to them. It means all His creations are beneficial to mankind. They are trusted to utilize and observe rules contained in the revelation. The concept of subjugation, among other things, are mentioned in these verses,

It is Allah Who hath created the heavens and the earth and sendeth down rain from the skies, and with it bringeth out fruits wherewith to feed you: it is He Who hath made the ships subject to you, that they may sail through the sea by His Command; and the rivers (also) hath He made subject to you. And He giveth you of all that ye ask for. But if ye count the favours of Allah, never will ye be able to number them. Verily, man is given up to injustice and ingratitude (14 : 33).

God provides everything as means of survival that could lead toward the end to offer gratefulness to Him. The attitude of mankind toward His grace either becomes grateful by observing His rules or disobedient by exposing themselves to make his own rules to be imposed to others. The above evident is strong reminder in which human being should utilize their faculties and mind to reflect deeply in this universe. It requires the mind to view with the use of intellect on different aspects of bounties granted to them. This could be in the form of looking into the skies and earth which are fully incredible. Sun and the moon, rotation of the day and night, of down the rain, the growth of plantation, wave of the ocean, all kinds of fish and even other mining contained in the ocean and all of those things are provided to maintain their survival. At the same time, it reminds all believers to offer gratefulness and offering obedience toward His rules in the revelation given to the Prophet (pbuh). It is unfortunate that instead of offering thankfulness by accepting the rules given to the Prophet (pbuh), the way of using their intellect could not lead them into the faithful commitment (Quṭb, , p.2106).

Method of Criticism

It may arise the question with regard to the significance of criticism. Other word which may have similar connotation is analytical and opposition. The sense of criticism emerges apparently due to skepticism of a person which causes doubtful with regard to certain theoretical thinking. He becomes critical after knowing the defect. Islam urges critical thinking with sole aim of showing the weakness to come out with better outcome and achievement. Hence, Muslims should not be allergic to hear criticism rather should be thankful as long as it is conducted with good purpose. By hearing negative statement from others, it could give motivation to make improvement.

Islam encourages its adherents to be equipped with knowledge to avoid them from crisis resulted from the ignorance. When a person involved in polemic and dispute with an ignorant for instance, he is reminded to take good stand instead indulging with him which could, at the end, caused conflict. Such reminder is given to keep away from ignorant as

the verse says, ‘And the servants of (Allah) Most Gracious are those who walk on the earth in humility, and when the ignorant address them, they say, "Peace!"’

A believer should behave with humbleness, simplicity, and helpful to others. When *jahil* person talk to him negatively, he should keep himself away from using harsh word rather to opt the kind words to make peace (Rāzī, 1420, p.480) The Qur’ān condemns those who follow ideas or doing something without knowledge. This is attempted, among other thing, to avoid falsehood. Then, it is imperative for person to have knowledge prior doing any job to achieve excellent result. Muslims should not do the job without knowledge as there will be great consequences. The negative result is not limited in this world. In the hereafter all those faculties given by God such as hearing (*al-sama’*), viewing (*al-baṣr*), and intelligence (*al-fuād*) will be accountable on what they did during the lifetime. This is reminder to all believers as contained in this verse,

And pursue not that of which thou hast no knowledge; for every act of hearing, or of seeing or of (feeling in) the heart will be enquired into (on the day of reckoning) (17: 36).

Imam Zamakhsharī is of the view that the above verse is the warning to humanity to take extra precaution in using the intellect. They should not accept anything without the use of rationalism. In another word, men of thinking should not copy from others without proper knowledge and understanding (Zamakhsharī, 1407H pp.449). While Sheikh Ṭantāwī criticizes those who make any judgment on different aspect of knowledge without proper analysis and investigation. Such kind of attitudinal policy, will be sued in the Day of Judgment with humiliation from God asking their responsibility on the use of hearing, seeing and what they ever revolved in their hearts in terms of ascertaining thoughtful decision (Ṭantāwī, 1977, p.350).

God will denounce the improper hearing and viewing through the organ (ears, eyes, and heart) that He granted to them to distinguish the truth from the false.

Purpose of Criticism

The purpose of criticism is to return someone into following the truth and justice enabling him to build up cultural progress. Only through the sound of civilizational development human beings would be elevated into higher status as contained in this verse,

O ye who believe! When ye are told to make room in the assemblies, (Spread out and) make room: (ample) room will Allah provide for you. And when ye are told to rise up, rise up: Allah will raise up, to (suitable) ranks (and degrees), those of you who believe and who have been granted (mystic) knowledge. And Allah is well acquainted with all ye do (Q, 58:11).

It is worth noting the view of Mohammad Natsir (1908-1993), former Prime Minister of Indonesia with regard to the use of rationalism which characterize what so-called

‘modern man’. According to him, Islam brings the character of revolutionary zeal against rigidity, exclusiveness, and blind imitation. It gives the direction of critical thinking by rejecting what was inherited by earlier generation. This can be referred to the verse which says,

When it is said to them: "Follow what Allah hath revealed:" They say: "Nay! We shall follow the ways of our fathers:" What! Even though their fathers were void of wisdom and guidance? (Q, 2: 170).

The revelation encourages the use of mind and the above evident is the condemnation on behavioural thinking of Arabs who did not want to follow the truth of revelation given to the Prophet (pbuh). Instead of using the logical argument, they simply resorted to the tradition of forefathers regardless of right or wrong. In fact, the acceptance of faith should be conducted with the use of rationalism instead of blind fanaticism. When polytheists refused the truth of the message, it means they were trapped in falsehood and ignorance (al-Sa’dī, 1420H/2000M, p.202).

God humiliates those who are against the use of logical thinking which becomes the main obstacle for achieving the progress. The message given to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is attempted to achieve goodness on earth. The Qur’ān gives indication on those who follow the tradition without the use of reason which is considered as the biggest gift from God. Natsir refers to the verse which condemns those who do not use the intellect as the verse says,

Lo Abraham said to his father Azar: takest thou idols for gods? for see thee and thy people in manifest error (6: 74).

Human beings should use logical thinking to attain the progress to confirm on the existence of God. The Prophet Ibrahim (pbuh) downgraded his father who worshipped idols which contradict the logical thinking as there is worthless. Natsir ensures that the message given to the Prophet (pbuh) invites the intellect to explore the rule of God within the cosmos. God created the whole universe for human settlement and to manifest the mission as vicegerent. Natsir supports his arguments by referring to the verse which says,

And He has subjected to you, as from Him, all that is in the heavens and on earth: behold, in that are Signs indeed for those who reflect (45: 13).

Since God provides facilities in this world, then, the task of human beings is to utilize it by observing His rules by following goodness and justice in their lives. Socio-economic development is a part of the duty to attain the goodness with the ultimate goal to attain God’s pleasure. The progress of science and technology should be devoted as a means to establish justice and balance of life as actualization of *ihsan* (lit. goodness) by undertaking the best quality of deeds. He refers to the verse which says,

But seek, with the (wealth) which Allah has bestowed on thee, the Home of the Hereafter, nor forget thy portion in this world: but do thou good, as Allah has been good to thee, and seek not (occasions for) mischief in the land: For Allah loves not those who do mischief (28: 77).

Whatever the facilities that human beings got in this world, they should not neglect the duty to worship the Lord to make close to him and performing good deeds. The way to seek the livelihood, it should be at the equal level of effort in offering obedience to Him. They have to make sure that the worldly matters should not make themselves forgetful to fulfill the duty toward the Lord. They have to treat others in good way as God treat them with mercifulness. Moreover, they should not create mischievousness on earth as such behavior will keep them away from gaining His mercy toward them (Marāghī, 1946p.94)..

Natsir regards that Islam is concerned with human problem across geographical, ethnicity, and racial boundaries. The Prophet (pubh) sent different letters to the kings of Egypt, Persia, and Ethiopia offering the solution on human crisis. The Prophet (pbuh) did not confine his concern on own his environment in Arabia rather it went beyond Arabs regions. The religious doctrine given to him did not only emphasize on material progress which can be achieved through the use of rationalism. It is also concerned with the destiny of mankind in the hereafter.

The other aspect of the use of intellect, according to Natsir, is related with time management. It should be utilized in proper manner based on daily agenda to cultivate the goodness and to reap the fruit in the hereafter. Muslims never bother with the slogan 'time is money' that eulogize materialism rather to assert on doing righteous deed (*'a'māl al-ṣalīh*). In fact, compulsory task to perform five times daily prayer is related with training process for a Muslim to utilize the time in proper way. He supports his argument with the use of this evident which says,

We have made the night and the day as two (of our) Signs; the sign of the night have we obscured, while the sign of the day we have made to enlighten you; that ye may seek Bounty from your Lord, and that ye may know the number and count of the years: all things have we explained in detail (17: 12.)

Rational thinking must be in line with organizational planning to achieve the good deeds and progress throughout human activity. The concept of *iḥsān* (lit. goodnees) is not confined in charitable works to help those who are in needs and the deprived people. It includes organizational planning to achieve the progress of socio-economic development. Natsir criticizes the excessive use of logical thinking as if the mind is the only source of solution. The divine message given to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is to guide humanity to handle their problem. As God created the universe to be benefitted by mankind, in return, they should be grateful by offering obedience toward His law and to establish justice. It is worth noting that intellectual capacity cannot make any assessment on what will be happening in the world. Muslims should believe in the ultra-power from God. Whatever

calculation that a person could make, it would only be workable with God's permission. To claim that human intellect could predict all events and control the world, it goes beyond the limit. Whatever the power that a person might possess, it should be considered as grace of God and, in return, they have to offer obedience toward His rules (Puar, 1978, p.261)

Conclusion

It is wrong to claim that the revelation becomes the stumbling block of the progress in term of socio-economic and even political development. The message given to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) urges its adherents to the use of intellectualism. The absence of using intellectualism will only be responsible for the emergence of backwardness of the society in all dimension of human activities. Islam does not recognize what so-called dogmatism either related with theological or legal concept. The Prophet (pbuh) trained the Makkans to think rationally for thirteen years instead of involving in superstitious belief which contradicted the reality. In the legal aspect, the truth of the message are in line with scientific finding. To mention only the few, the concept of fasting is not solely for the benefit of spiritual aspect rather it is closely linked with the maintenance of physical fitness. The continuous digestion of food in the belly of human will be more effective after it adjourns through fasting throughout the days. The regressive of the Muslim Ummah in many fields which could not compete with other nation, is apparently due to improper use of the intellect as required in the revelation.

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