



The Need for Contemporary Understanding of the Qur'ān: Considering Scientific Method (*al-manhaj al-‘ilmī*)

Thameem Ushama
Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Science
International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM),

Abstract

Realizing the need for contemporary understanding of the Qur'ān by exploring scientific method or approach, the paper analyzes issues with regard to the Qur'ān's inimitable ellipticism. It highlights some of the aspects of the inimitable features of the Text including the views of some Muslim scholars with regard to the use of scientific method and deals with a discourse on contemporary scholars' criticism of the scientific inimitable features of the Qur'ān. It examines conservative, contemporary, moderate and modernist approaches of interpreting passages relating to signs of the universe (*al-āyāt al-kawniyyah*) along with brief justifications articulated by both proponents and opponents. It recommends the most appropriate approach or method to have contemporary understanding of the Qur'ān.

Keywords: Inimitability, Approach, Conservative, Modernist, Moderate

Abstrak

Kesedaran tentang perlunya pemahaman semasa terhadap al-Qur'ān dengan mengambil kira pendekatan atau kaedah saintifik. Kertas ini menganalisis isu yang berkaitan dengan sifat eliptisisme Qur'ān's yang tidak dapat ditiru dan menggariskan beberapa aspek yang berkenaan dengan ciri yang tidak dapat ditiru termasuk pendapat para sarjana Muslim berkenaan penggunaan kaedah saintifik. Selain itu, wacana kritikan sarjana semasa tentang ciri yang tidak dapat ditiru itu juga akan dikupas. Kertas ini juga akan melihat pelbagai kaedah seperti konservatif, kontemporari, sederhana dan moden yang digunakan untuk mentafsir ayat-ayat al-Qur'ān yang mempunyai kaitan dengan alam semesta (*al-āyāt al-kawniyyah*) di samping justifikasi ringkas yang diujahkan oleh penyokong dan penentang penggunaan kaedah saintifik. Pendekatan atau kaedah yang paling sesuai akan disarankan untuk memperoleh pemahaman semasa dalam al-Qur'ān.

Kata kunci: Ketidaktiruan, Pendekatan, Konservatif, Modenis, Sederhana

Introduction

Contrary to a number of intellectually unfounded allegations and harsh criticisms engineered by a number of critics of the Qur'ān on the concept of its inimitable ellipticism, it is still in the firm belief of Muslims that the Qur'ān is not only the Word of God, but it is a miracle whose passages are referred to as *āyāt* in Arabic. According to Arabic philologists, one of the meanings of the word *āyah* is a miracle. However, critics especially the Orientalists argue that Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him)¹ was greatly influenced by Judeo-Christian traditions, and thus included in the Qur'ān

a number of wonders drawn from Bible.²

On the other hand, the Qur'ān asserts that Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) was unlettered (*al-ummī*) and he neither read nor wrote (a book) except that he transmitted verbatim what was received by him from his Lord- the Creator, and that he was not aware of the past events, histories and circumstances, nor even the knowledge of other civilizations such as Greek and Roman, cultures and earlier scriptures. Firmly acknowledging that insuperable literary style of the Qur'ān is an evidence to its divine origin, Muslims are too far from skepticism and they believe that the Qur'ān was revealed in an inimitable style, unmatched with any human endeavor.

Claiming that God has bestowed on human being (*insān*) the faculty of thinking and reasoning (*‘aql*), enabling him to contemplate and reflect on His magnificent creations in the universe, He

*Corresponding author: Thameem Ushama,
Department of Usul al-Din and Comparative Religion,
Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge, International
Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), Gombak Selangor
E-mail: thameem@iium.edu.my

ultimately made it subservient (*taskhīr*) to him. Obviously, God did not leave man to act on his own but guided him through His revelation (*wahy*) in order to regulate his life and socio-political and economic order of the society. The results of His guidance, as we know, are known as the Qur'ān, like which human beings cannot produce regardless of time and space as asserted by God.

Among a number of remarkable features of the Qur'ān, inimitability is a crucial phenomenon referring to miraculous nature as well as uniqueness of the Text that conforms to the truth and quite often verified by human reasoning and science. According to exegetes, inimitability is inclusive of linguistic, intellectual, rhetorical, scientific, eloquent, literary and stylistic features of the Qur'ān, although there is emphasis on linguistic and rhetorical aspects in the works of classical exegetes.

Realizing the need for contemporary understanding of the Qur'ān through a scientific method or approach, the paper analyzes issues with regard to Qur'ān's inimitable ellipticism. Its first section highlights some of the aspects of the inimitable features of the Text including the views of some Muslim scholars with regard to the use of scientific method. The second section deals with a discourse on contemporary scholars' criticism of the scientific inimitable features of the Qur'ān. The third section examines various approaches of interpreting passages relating to signs of the universe (*al-āyāt al-kawniyyah*) along with brief justifications articulated by both proponents and opponents.

Inimitable Features of the Text

Referring to Qur'ān's inimitable features, Muslim scholars and exegetes argue that they exist in totality. According to some scholars, inimitable features of the Qur'ān can be classified into:

First, linguistic, rhetorical and eloquent inimitability (*al-i'jāz al-lughawī al-bayānī al-naẓmī*),

Second, doctrinal, devotional, moral and legislative inimitability (*al-i'jāz al-'aqdī wa al-ta'abbudī wa al-Akhlāqī wa al-tashrī'ī*),

Third, historical, pedagogical, psychological, economic, administrative, and informative inimitability (*al-i'jāz al-tārīkhī wa al-tarbawī wa al-naḥṣī wa al-iqtisādī wa al-idārī wa al-i'lāmī*),

Fourth, scientific, and technological inimitability (*al-i'jāz al-'ilmī wa al-taqnī*),

Fifth, literary, inscriptional and arithmetical inimitability (*al-i'jāz al-'adadī al-raqmī al-ḥisābī*).

The concept of inimitability in preserving the Text from distortion or loss or other attempts and much more have been mentioned by many Muslim scholars.³

Scientific Inimitable Ellipticism in the Qur'an: Selected Scholars' View

Comprising numerous passages referring to the cosmos and its constituents in terms of created things-both animate and inanimate beings, the Qur'ān presents a brief description of formative stages of the universe, its growth and development, cosmic manifestations and divine patterns, followed by heavenly and celestial bodies. Through such descriptions, the Qur'ān demonstrates that everything deduced from the knowledge of signs of the universe can be treated as lessons ('*ibrah*). It also makes people comprehend and realize God's All-powerful attribute and derive wisdom from it, conceptualize what has been directed in terms of belief in God, be a witness to perfection of His Attributes (*ṣifāt*) and Actions (*af'āl*) - Who is God-the Glorious and the Majesty-the Creator-the Initiator-the Shaper-the Designer Who created the entire universe with His knowledge, power and wisdom.

According to researchers, the Qur'ān contains more than *one thousand* passages referring to clear message of the cosmic signs, in addition to a number of other passages which are somewhat nearer to them. To them, the Qur'ān almost represents a brief encyclopedia of scientific knowledge and quite often it provokes contemplation of its contents, especially His incommensurable signs (*al-ishārāt al-kawniyyah*) generation after generation, on which there is no dispute among Muslim scholars. The specialists (scientists) discover the established realities of the cosmos mentioned in the Book of Allah according to what has been confirmed in terms of realizing the divine promise about which the Lord mentions in passage *Fuṣṣilat*: 53.⁴ Commenting on this passage, Muhammad Asad articulates that "through a progressive deepening and widening of their insight into the wonders of the universe as well as through a deeper understanding of man's own psyche-all of which points to the existence of a conscious Creator."⁵

The stand of Muslim scholars is self-evident with regard to those cosmic signs mentioned in the Book of Allah with a difference of opinion by other scholars. In spite of the existence of such insignificant diversified views, it is still obvious that the Qur'ān represents an *encyclopedia of human knowledge in the field of cosmic studies*

which is today known as pure and applied sciences. Al-Ghazālī (d. 505 H) was the first of those who illustrated this issue in his *Ihyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* and *Jawāhir al-Qur'ān*. He discussed a number of distinguishing features that the Qur'ān comprises entire sciences. According to him, representations of the inimitability refer to everything that the Qur'ān consists of and that every science emerge from it, including the sciences of astronomy, astrology, medicine and others. Many Muslim scholars followed al-Ghazālī and made concerted efforts to justify the use of scientific method (*al-manhaj al-'ilmī*) in interpreting the Qur'ān which of course relies on employing the knowledge of a number of pure and applied sciences in interpreting signs of the cosmos inherent in the Text in spite of dissimilar views held by some scholars.⁶

Al-Rāzī's *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb* was the first exegesis that contained full of explanations of the scientific and philosophical issues, particularly relating to astronomy, other sciences and arts which were well-known in his time about which he had in-depth knowledge.⁷ In his *al-Jawāhir fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-karīm*, Ṭaṭṭāwī Jawharī attempted to interpret the Qur'ān in conformity with the spirit of the contemporary age. He discusses issues related to various studies of the universe and its ramifications in terms of celestial bodies, worlds of animate and inanimate beings, manifestations of the cosmos, and divine patterns or laws in order to provide evidence to readers on the eternal Book of God.⁸

Indeed, Ṭaṭṭāwī criticizes Muslim scholars and intellectuals for their negligence of scientific approach to understanding the Qur'ān and blames their jurisprudential and rhetorical approaches to it while understanding its inimitable ellipticism. He raises a question as to why Muslim scholars have compiled thousands of books on jurisprudence (*fiqh*) while the Qur'ān does not contain more than one hundred and fifty passages on jurisprudential issues. He asks as to why compilation of the jurisprudence was given priority in the Muslim intellectual history, while efforts to compile works on the natural phenomena of the Qur'ān were insignificant even though there are more than seven hundred passages dealing with natural phenomena in it.⁹

Commenting on top priority accorded to compilation of the jurisprudence, Ṭaṭṭāwī contends that even though the passages on inheritance are limited, it became an important discipline in mathematics, while seven hundred passages referring to the cosmos is given a little or almost no importance. Thus, he reiterates that this is the era of

science; era of visibility of Islam; era of intellectualism, and era of miraculous achievements.¹⁰ Hence, he shows his concern as to why not Muslim scholars of today deal with passages of signs of the universe in a way that our predecessors have dealt with the science of the law of inheritance. He also adds that it is indispensable for contemporary Islamic education system to be innovative and to move forward for the development of curriculum, keeping in mind that science of the rhetoric is not the end of sciences of the Qur'ān, but it is science of the Qur'ān's articulation of the entire disciplines of knowledge.¹¹ This implies that the educational curriculum of the institutions of higher learning of the Muslim nations must be comprehensive, i.e. it should include a serious study and research on various passages related to signs of the universe using scientific method-benefitting from pure and applied sciences.

In his exegesis, Ṭaṭṭāwī is not only contented with the study of the passages and deduce meanings from them from the perspective of different contemporary studies, but rather resorts to its various kinds such as numerous aspects of plants, animals and cosmic manifestations, experimental measures like utilization of philosophical opinions in different intellectual or scientific schools.

Like scholars of the past, exegetes (*mufasssīrūn*) of Ṭaṭṭāwī's age also regarded scientific method of interpreting the Qur'ān as a digression in explaining some of the passages of the Qur'ān without having to meet legislative and faith related issues tracing to the fact that the Qur'ān was not revealed except to spread the laws amidst people. They held the view that essentially the Qur'ān was the book of guidance, book of doctrine, devotion, morality and transaction, and it was the treasure of religion in which man was unable to put any authentic rules for governance. This observation of the exegetes leads us to express our (contemporary) point of view that they did not understand the true objectives (*maqāṣid*) of the Qur'ān. Of course, they were conservatives and not foresighted.

Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā writes in an introduction to his *tafsīr al-Manār* that Fakhr al-Rāzī has devoted enough space by referring to mathematical, physical, natural and other sciences prominent in his period, such as Greek astronomy, astrology and others.¹² Some of the contemporaries imitated him, especially Shaykh Ṭaṭṭāwī precisely

aiming at the same thing in terms of various contemporary sciences and arts.¹³

In spite of several exegetes' denial to employ scientific method both in the past and present, many Muslim scholars believe that signs of the cosmos referred to in the Book of Allah, i.e. passages related to some of the aspects of this universe explain, establish and confirm that Allah is the Creator of this universe and the Initiator of the existence; it is the absolute truth and a manifestation of Qur'ān's inimitability which is not perceptible to experts of different fields of pure and applied sciences except for those who are firmly established in knowledge until they realize that the Qur'ān is inimitable with wide encyclopedic knowledge of humanity, generation after generation, as indicated in passages of *Ṣād*: 7-8.¹⁴ Referring to this passage, 'Abd Allāh Yūsuf 'Alī remarks that "there may be many things which we in our "muddy vesture of decay" may not fully understand or take in. If we only follow the right path, we shall arrive at the Goal in the Hereafter and then everything will be clear to us."¹⁵

Proceeding from the above philosophy and objectives, a number of publications discussing the issue of scientific inimitability in the Book of Allah flooded the academic market. Among the most famous works in the past was *Kashf al-Asrār al-Nūrāniyyah al-Qur'āniyyah fīmā yata'allaq bi al-ajrām al-Samāwiyyah wa al-Ardiyyah wa al-Haywānāt wa al-Nabātāt wa al-Jawāhir al-Ma'diniyyah* authored by Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Iskandarānī al-ṭabīb who was one of the scholars of the thirteenth century of *hijrah*. This book deals with mysteries and secrets of the Qur'ān in relation to heavenly bodies, earthly sciences, animal and plant sciences as well as the essence of mineralogy.¹⁶

Towards the beginning of the twentieth century, 'Abd Allāh Fikrī, a former minister of education of Egypt wrote a thesis in which he compared some of the modern studies of astronomy with some of the texts of the Qur'ān.¹⁷ In addition, books such as *al-Islām wa al-ṭibb al-ḥadīth* by 'Abd al-'Azīz Ismā'īl and Riyāḍ al-Mukhtār, *Mu'jizat al-Qur'ān fī waṣf al-kā'ināt* and *al-Tafsīr al-'ilmī li al-āyāt al-kawniyyah* by Ḥanafī Aḥmad, *Fī sunan Allāh al-kawniyyah* and *al-Islām fī 'aṣr al-'ilm* by Muḥammad Aḥmad al-Ghamrāwī, *I'jāz al-Qur'ān fī 'ilm ṭabaqāt al-ard* by Muḥammad Aḥmad Ibrāhīm, *al-'Ulūm al-ṭabī'iyyah fī al-Qur'ān* by Yūsuf Marwah, *Aḍwā' min al-Qur'ān 'alā al-insān wa nash'at al-kawn wa al-ḥayāt* by 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Khaṭīb, *al-Qur'ān wa al-'ilm* by Aḥmad Maḥmūd Sulaymān, *Min ishārat al-'ulūm fī*

al-Qur'ān al-karīm by 'Abd al-'Azīz Sayyid al-Ahl, *Muḥāwalah li fahm 'aṣrī li al-Qur'ān* by Muṣṭafā Maḥmūd, *Tafsīr al-āyāt al-kawniyyah* by 'Abd Allāh Shaḥātah, *al-Islām wa al-'ilm al-tajrībī* by Yūsuf al-Suwaydī, *al-Qur'ān tafsīr al-kawn wa al-ḥayāt* by Muḥammad al-Afīfī, *Khalq al-insān bayn al-ṭibb wa al-Qur'ān* by Muḥammad 'Alī al-Bār, and *The Bible The Qur'ān and Science and What is the Origin of Man* by Maurice Bucaille.

In addition to the above collections, several conference proceedings on the scientific inimitability of the Qur'ān and the Prophetic Traditions have been published including many other articles in academic journals. The above is from one perspective. From another perspective, this scientific method is presented positively and at some other time negatively. It is criticized to the extent that miracles of the Qur'ān essentially refer to rhetorical dimensions as felt by a number of experts of Arabic language from the very day of hearing its first passage that it has a clear indication between the Word of Allah and the word of human being. Quite often it is claimed that Islam should be understood in the way it was presented and explained by the Prophet (peace be upon him) who was one of the witnesses to its style.

In spite of all these discourses including severe criticisms, a large number of scholars have manifested their mastery by writing on the scientific inimitability of the passages of the Qur'ān and convinced others endorsing this method eventually resulting in the establishment of the Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs (*al-Majlis al-a'lā li al-shu'ūn al-Islāmiyyah*) in Egypt at the beginning of 1960s with the formation of a number of research clusters consisting of scholars of the Qur'ān, exegetes, Traditionists, jurists, legal experts, Arabic philologists and its litterateurs, historians and a number of thinkers in various fields of human knowledge. They made concerted efforts, studied and analyzed the issues in several seminars which took place for many years eventually producing a brief *tafsīr* entitled *al-Muntakhab fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-karīm*. It is written in contemporary literary style. It is easier to perceive the meaning. It is clear in expression and far from jurisprudential, doctrinal and sectarian differences of the words and phrases.

Secrets of life and mysteries of the universe are indicated in the margins of *al-Muntakhab fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-karīm* in addition to scientific discoveries which were unknown except in recent years. This is the remarkable feature of this *tafsīr*. It incorporates useful information in its introduction. It is not possible to realize the meaning except the

Qur'ān had indicated it, because it is not the word of a human being, but the word of the Creator Who has promised in passage *Fuṣṣilat*: 53.¹⁸

Inimitable Features of the Qur'ān: A Critique

Before presenting exegetes' stance in this contemporary age regarding the passages pertaining to the cosmic signs (*al-ishārāt al-kawniyyah*) in the Qur'ān, especially those passages which contain some information of some of the aspects of the universe such as heavens, earth, sun, moon, stars, galaxies, constellations, mountains, stones, rivers, seas, oceans, winds, clouds, rains, waters, thunders, lightening, stages of evolution in human development, animal kingdom, human reproduction, vegetable kingdom, fruits and many others, it is appropriate to refer to some of the scholars of both classical and contemporary periods who are opposed to the use of the term *mu'jizah* and its derivatives in pointing out the incapable state of a human being in producing something like the Qur'ān or something similar to it with all unique characteristics that the Qur'ān contains, because it is the word of Allah and was revealed with His magnificent insuperable style understood by human beings not only at the time of revelation but also in every age after the Prophet's (peace be upon him) demise.

The opponents' evidence against the use of the term *mu'jizah* and its derivatives is based on the rationale that the word is not used in the Text with the widely conceived meaning of today, nor it is found in the authentic traditions of the Prophet (peace be upon him). The derivatives such as *'ajaza*, *mu'jizīn*, *mu'ajizīn*, *'ajūz*, and *a'jāz* are used in the Qur'ān in a number of chapters. They are *al-Mā'idah* : 31, *al-An'ām* :134, *al-Anfāl*: 59, *al-Tawbah*: 2-3, *Yūnus*: 53, *Hūd*: 19-20, *al-Naḥl*: 46, *al-Ḥajj*: 51, *al-Nūr*: 57, *al-Shu'arā'* : 170-171, *al'Ankabūt*: 22, *Sabā'*: 5, 38, *Fāṭir*: 44, *al-Ṣāffāt*: 134-135, *al-Zumar*: 51, *al-Shūrā*: 31, *al-Aḥqāf* : 32, *al-Dhāriyāt* : 29, *al-Qamar*: 20, *al-Ḥāqqah*: 7, and *al-Jinn*: 12.

This argument is not only unacceptable but deplorable and it should be rejected because the expression *i'jāz al-Qur'ān* has been used from the beginning of the first century of *hijrah*; the *'ulamā'* among the Companions and the Successors did not have objections to the use of this expression in spite of the fact that it was not used with the current purport in the Qur'ān or *Ḥadīth* literature. Theoretically, every expression of the Qur'ān's passages ascertains certain conditions of inimitability as it fully verifies the expression of *al-mu'jizah* leading to the objective of establishing the

authority against those who deny the concept as well as the expression, because God realizes the goal in affirming the truth of what is in the Qur'ān.

'Ulamā's Stand on the Scientific Inimitability

Obviously, intellectual discourses regarding the permissibility of interpreting passages of signs of the universe (*al-āyāt al-kawniyyah*) on the basis of contemporary scientific knowledge continue until today. Muslim scholars have contrasting views on its permissibility and a number of dissimilarities are found between narrow minded, broad minded and moderate scholars. Their viewpoints are briefly analyzed in order to offer a clear understanding on this issue. Their views are categorized into conservative, contemporary, moderate and modernist approaches.

Conservative Approach

The proponents of this category reflect narrow mindedness in their arguments, that interpretation of the Qur'ānic passages dealing with the universal signs in the Text from the perspective of human knowledge is one of the kinds of *al-tafsīr bi al-ra'y* which, according to them, is not permissible. Such scholars take refuge in the *ḥadīth* of the Prophet (peace be upon him) that whoever uttered that which emanated from his mind or from his imaginative impression or conjectured deliberately on the basic tenets and principles, he would be a blameworthy, erroneous, and unacceptable exegete. They also refer to the *ḥadīth* which cautions that whosoever spreads lies deliberately about the Prophet (peace be upon him) shall have his abode in the Fire; whoever expresses his opinion about the Qur'ān shall have his abode in the Fire; and whoever expresses his opinion on the Qur'ān, he is at fault. Furthermore, they quote the sayings of Caliphs Abū Bakr and 'Umar, in addition to a statement traceable to Sa'īd ibn al-Musayyib and 'Ubayd Allāh ibn 'Umar to substantiate their point of view of rejecting this methodology of interpreting the passages.

The proponents of this stand also differ that *al-ra'y* in the *ḥadīth* meant desire and not logical opinion or reasoning built upon clear, evident and acceptable authority and it is an interpretation without proper knowledge. They also differ and call upon not to resort to *ijtihad bi al-ra'y*. They only put their trust in *al-ma'thūr* (process of transmission) which implies that what has been transmitted on the authority of the Prophet (peace be upon him) directly or from the Companions or the Successors. Responding to this theory, several Muslim scholars hold the view that the Prophet

(peace be upon him) did not object to this interpretation and quote passage *Ṣād: 29*¹⁹ in support of their contention strongly refuting the claims of this category of scholars.

The meaning of passage *Ṣād: 29* as well as many other passages lead us to the inference that the Qur'ān calls for *tadabbur* (reflection, contemplation) and *tadhakkur* (recollection, remembrance) of the passages and discern their true meanings. The Qur'ān also reproaches those who do not reflect on the meanings of such passages and do not reach proper conclusions in passages *al-Nisā': 82-83*²⁰ and *Muḥammad: 24*.²¹ Al-Ghazālī has taken this purport as evidence to permit interpretation of the Qur'ān based on *al-ra'y*, i.e. *al-ijtihād*. He emphasized that these passages indicate that understanding the meaning of the Qur'ān has several dimensions and they also provide justifications for interpretation of such texts based on *ijtihād*.

In conformity with the above comprehensible passages and their objectives, al-Ghazālī has declared interpretation based on *al-ra'y* as permissible in order to unveil the truth from the Qur'ān according to one's own individual reasoning and understanding. And if there is any exaggeration in the process of exercising this means which may bring forth results that are unacceptable to the '*ulamā'*' corresponding to the objectives of the Qur'ānic passages in terms of guidance needs to be looked into.

Muslim scholars have realized the need for *ijtihād* in interpreting the Text; however, they have restricted such an intellectual exercise by propounding some conditions and pre-requisites including a few methods. Among the methods, [1] linguistic method (*al-manhaj al-lughawī*) which is concerned only with the evidence of the words, modes of expressions; their styles, and numerous linguistic studies, [2] rhetorical method (*al-manhaj al-bayānī*) which shows its concerns in illustrating places of the majestic beauty in the stylistic features of the Qur'ān and the study of linguistic elements in words, and [3] jurisprudential method (*al-manhaj al-fiqhī*) which specifically concentrates on developing legal rulings and juristic opinions.²²

On the other hand, some of the exegetes have indulged in innovations by integrating those methodologies into one known as encyclopedic method (*al-manhaj al-mawsū'ī*) or comprehensive method (*al-manhaj al-jam'ī*). Some other exegetes called on to interpret the Qur'ān thematically implying that all inter-related and relevant passages of various chapters are brought together under one theme, then interpreted with evidence tracing to the

rule that some of the passages can be interpreted by some other passages. This method is known as interpretative thematic method (*al-manhaj al-mawdū'ī fī al-tafsīr*) which is predominantly practiced by contemporary exegetes.

Arguments for Rejecting Scientific Method

Employing scientific method in interpreting the Qur'ān, especially for those passages related to signs of the universe has been disapproved by some of the *mujtahidūn* for quite some time. Some linguists and philologists have attempted to confine the issue of inimitability to 'the challenge' that no one among the Arab rhetoricians would be able to reach the state of producing something similar to the Qur'ān.

The rejecters claim that if at all there are elements of scientific inimitability, understanding every aspect of inimitability would be impossible by human beings according to the standard set by the Qur'ān; they will have the possibility of their reasons and means to convey its reality as mentioned in the Qur'ān or to accomplish its substance and true nature. This is because what the linguistic meaning of inimitability of the Qur'ān requires is confirmation of the failure and incapacity of the creatures in the direction which challenges them. The Qur'ān challenges them towards this direction of the knowledge that it has corroborated their weakness. However, if the acquired knowledge reaches towards something out of that, then the element of the 'challenge' will become null and void and ineffective.

Proceeding from this understanding, the linguists add that a parable in passage *al-Isrā': 88*,²³ refers to a parable of the rhetoric, coherence, style and eloquence only and not the parable of other issues. Theoretically, it is clear that the 'challenge' that appears in this passage poses to produce the like of the Qur'ān or at least one chapter like it which is comprehensive in the form and the subject matter, rhetoric and contents.

Indeed, materials of Jewish and Christian origin penetrated the Islamic heritage through the door of a number of predecessor's interpretation of those passages pertaining to signs of the universe in the Text on the basis of what was available in Genesis of the olden days. This was a great mistake because God wanted to entrust people to make concerted efforts to discover matters concerning realities of this universe generation after generation. It is obvious that signs of the universe mentioned in the Text synoptically which the people of every age understand its proper purport out of several probable purports. Those purports will be expanded

continuously with the increase of the scope of human knowledge in the fields of pure and applied sciences through the process of integration without any contradiction. This is what is advocated by the proponents and exponents of Islamization of human knowledge and Relevantization of Islamic heritage.

Many religious people at different times asked several questions about the beginning of life, development of the universe, creation of man, and many others. They also engaged in asking when it happened. How it came to an end? And what are its reasons? Likewise, they posed many other questions about the secrets of existence. They brought these issues to people and eventually mixed the truth with falsehood, the realities with imaginations and the knowledge with superstitions. They were involved in spreading untruths consciously or unconsciously.

It has been established that the Qur'ān is eternal and it is not subject to change while a large quantity of experimental sciences is subject to change and development. What is known as true knowledge today was not the same yesterday? Likewise, what is acceptable as true knowledge today may not remain the same tomorrow? Perhaps, today's valid knowledge will be invalid tomorrow. What is useful today may be harmful tomorrow? Relevant issues of present era may become irrelevant after sometime. Proceeding from this perspective it is argued that it is not only inappropriate but irrelevant to refer to the experimental knowledge while interpreting the passages, because the established interpretation of the Text is not subject to alteration or modification or comprehension in the light of modern scientific data, as science is relative.

It has been argued that the Qur'ān is a revelational declaration from God illustrating the reality, whereas a number of experimental sciences are regarded to be a human attempt to arrive at the truth or reality. According to them, it is not conceivable to have a concrete vision of the word of God in the framework of human endeavours, as it is not allowed to have victory for the Book of Allah over the acquired human knowledge, because the Qur'ān is the word of God and it is the authority on mankind, knowledge and its people. And to add further, there is no need to prove its superiority using man-made or experimental knowledge in their point of view.

Another argument presented is that the experimental sciences are moulded to achieve materialistic goals denying metaphysical aspects, and transcendental dimensions without having belief in one God-the Creator. The majority of

those who work in the field of astronomical sciences have their own stand which is very clear with regard to the issue of having belief in God, angels, books and messengers, the dooms day and divine pre-measurement of good and bad, the life in the interim world, resurrection, judgment, and the eternal life in the afterlife either in Paradise eternally or Hell-fire for ever. Of course they tend to reject these things.

Responses to Rejecters of Scientific Method

The arguments provided by rejecters of scientific method in interpreting passages relating to signs of the universe have been briefly referred to. Since those arguments are impactful, a number of counter arguments are provided by responding to rejecters of scientific method which may inspire them and others who wish to know more about the issue, in order to review their stand or their justifications, and consider endorsing scientific method in interpreting the passages relating to signs of the universe.

Those philologists and linguists, who confine inimitable features of the Qur'ān to its coherence, co-relationship, style, eloquence, and rhetoric, claim that in addition to its challenge for Arabs in which they excel and reach perfection, forgot that the Qur'ānic challenge was not meant for Arabs alone, but for the entire *jinn*s and mankind, individual or collective. Not all of mankind and *jinn*s know the Arabic language, besides understanding its eloquence. The claim of several philologists is that parables or similes that appear in the Text as a challenge are parables of eloquence and coherence. It is regretful to note that there are huge prejudices or misunderstandings with regard to merits of the Qur'ān, because Muslims' faith in inimitability of the eloquence of the Qur'ān and its coherence recognizes that eloquence remains as its framework and not its content.

It is pertinent to take note that the content is more significant than its framework. The content of the Qur'ān is *al-dīn* with four basic pillars: '*aqīdah*, '*ibādah*, '*akhlāq*, and '*mu'āmalāt* in addition to what appears in it in terms of narratives of earlier prophets and civilizations, unseen information, metaphysical phenomena, message to human soul, indications of cosmic order, economics, and administration, and a challenge to human beings and *jinn*s together, and the Qur'ān's safeguarding from its distortion. Thus, the Qur'ān is regarded as a miracle of the Prophet (peace be upon him) until the Doms Day. Not only it is the point to ponder but also to seriously consider that the 'challenge'

that took place was holistic with the whole of its contents inclusive of all dimensions and not based only on its structure or eloquence or coherence or rhetoric, as has been the general understanding for quite some time.

Notwithstanding the above, it has been argued that several exegeses of the Qur'ān utilized a number of *isrā'iliyyāt* narratives in interpreting passages dealing with signs of the universe, because the stock of knowledge in various fields has been grilled today, as compared to the past experience. Whoever has used or benefitted from the sources of *isrā'iliyyāt* in his exegesis from the very beginning had in fact indisputably committed an error in his interpretation of the Text. Those who employ the established truth of knowledge and oft-repeated visible things in explaining those passages today will definitely reach the true understanding of the purport, which was not possible to have been perceived in the past due to absence of certain fields of knowledge as compared to contemporary times.

There is no conflict between the universe and the Qur'ān as the book of divine guidance, directions and instructions, and a constitution of doctrine, devotion, morality and transaction. It is a book of heavenly legislation comprising a comprehensive system of life, and in between the contents a number of profound scientific indications and signs which provide evidence on the majesty of the Creator, His power in initiating the creation, His power in destroying what has been created and His power to bring everything afresh. There is evidence for Oneness, uniqueness, everlastingness and absoluteness of the Creator, Who is above of all His creatures, thus proving His unquestionable absolute authority, power and prerogative. These things are in addition to the fact that signs of the universe in the Qur'ān remain a dynamic proof from Allah-the Creator of the universe and the Initiator of the existence. This must be definitely the truth because there is no one who is All-Knowledgeable about the creation except the Creator Himself.

Had Muslims been conscious of this reality since olden days, they would have discovered proper avenues of cosmic studies that we perceive today in an enlightened manner out of the knowledge in the field of pure and applied studies of the sciences that indications on the universe in the Book of Allah are profound in terms of expressions and comprehensive in terms of purports, uninterrupted and stable in terms of evidence and unveiling in terms of numerous

sciences for a number of years. This is confirmed evidence which is neither disputable nor deniable except by an infidel that the Qur'ān can not be a product of mankind but it is the word of God-the Creator.

As for the statement that indications of the universe have completed its rendition in a synoptic manner, it is one of the truths of the rhetorical and scientific inimitabilities of the Qur'ān. This is because that every scientific sign or indication or reference that appears in the Text is one of the forms of inimitability of conciseness and precision in terms of expression and legal rulings in meanings and comprehensiveness in purports.

A group of predecessors have realized the need for such an intellectual approach to the issue of scientific inimitability of the Qur'ān. In the forefront was al-Zarkashī who wrote in his *al-Burhān fī 'ulūm al-Qur'ān* that whatever out of evidence, proof, indication, partition, and limitation found in the Text is among something of the intellectual and auditory information except that the book of Allah speaks about it. However, Allah has brought the Qur'ān in accordance with the tradition as stated in passage *Ibrāhīm*: 4.²⁴ From here, it becomes obligatory for Muslim scholars in every age and every generation to constitute a group that can collect scholars of one specialization starting from Arabic language and its literature, *Ḥadīth* and its sciences, *fiqh* and its principles, scholasticism, and its rules by taking into account the concept of *asbāb al-nuzūl*, *al-nāsikh* and *al-mansūkh*, interpretation of the Qur'ān based on transmission and independent legal opinions or reasoning of the exegetes. Then they should be inspired to refer to passages of the indications of the universe available in the Qur'ān. Every group which specializes should make an attempt to understand the Text in the light of various sciences and their branches, should study based on logical rules and regulations with divine guidance and divine methodology which Allah has gifted to those who are sincere among His devotees. Hence, the arguments in favour of inadmissibility of interpreting the established by the changeable are naïve because the solid meaning of the text in the understanding is unique for the book of Allah.

Contemporary Approach

The proponents of this category have embarked on the argument that reference to the cosmic signs in the Qur'ān is aimed at providing logical or empirical evidences to the existence of Reality, deriving lessons leading people to experience proper guidance. Hence, proponents of this

approach have resorted to a systematic arrangement of passages relating to signs of the universe and started classifying them into different applied sciences. Then, they propelled their courage towards this direction to the extent of declaring that the Qur'ān comprises all sorts of knowledge and sciences and thus it is necessary to comprehend those signs of the cosmos referred to and interpret them from the perspective of those terminologies used in the respective sciences. Then, some of them spent their efforts by affirming that all realities of the applied sciences which man has invented or derived theoretically about the regions of the cosmos are available or in existence in the Qur'ān, thus providing evidence by quoting passages *al-An'ām*: 37²⁵ and *al-Naḥl*: 89.²⁶

Discussing the concept of knowledge and religious experience, Allama Iqbal refers to a number of passages related to natural phenomena and universe in the Qur'ān and argues that they instill empirical attitude in men. While articulating the purpose of the Qur'ān, Allama Muhammad Iqbal says,

The immediate purpose of the Qur'ān in this reflective observation of Nature is to awaken in man the consciousness of that of which Nature is regarded a symbol. But the point to note is the general empirical attitude of the Qur'ān which engendered in its followers a feeling of reverence for the actual and ultimately made them the founders of modern science. It was a great point to awaken the empirical spirit in an age which renounced the visible as of no value in men's search after God.²⁷

The above quotation leads us to contemplate and reflect on the significance of those passages that the Qur'ān refers to in terms of natural phenomena which should be understood on the basis of scientific knowledge.

Moderate Approach

Those who are classified as moderate Muslim scholars acknowledge that the Qur'ān is essentially a book of divine guidance. Its primary objective is call people to have correct understanding of the creed, command them to perform obligatory devotional practices, engage them to manifest commendable moral behavior and character, and conduct socio-economic transaction between people with proper administration of justice and bestow beneficence. This leads to an implication that the Qur'ān is an irrevocable source of

constitution for the life of mankind in addition to it being a source of knowledge, worldview and civilization. Human being is required to obey the commandments of the Creator and conduct regular affairs of life in line with His will as enshrined in the Text. Likewise, signs of the universe (*al-āyāt al-kawniyyah*) mentioned in the Qur'ān are presented as a reminder with His absolute power, His amazing and admirable design in His creation, His all-embracing knowledge and His perfect Attributes and Actions except that it remains as illustrations from Allah-the Creator of the universe and the Originator of the existence.

It is obvious from their approach that all those signs of the universe are really true; they are harmonious with the laws of Allah and His patterns in the universe and well established in their indications and meanings, no matter how much extensive the periphery and scope of human knowledge are, and neither there is clash or contradiction nor diminution and nor even disorder or disarray as it is testified by Allah in passage *al-Nisā'*: 82.²⁸

It is explicit from the above discourse that it is obligatory for Muslims, regardless of time, space and constraints to reiterate and study profoundly and carefully those passages of signs of the universe and benefit from each and every kind of foreordained knowledge in interpreting them, demonstrating various dimensions of their inimitable features, confirming belief of the believers and successful call of non-Muslims through the language understood by them, refuting slander of slanderers, and ascertaining the firmly established reality that the Qur'ān is definitely the word of Allah in His divine clarity, with His radiating brilliance and truth which emanates from every alphabet, word and passage of the Text of Qur'ān.

The proponents of this moderate school provide illustrations to substantiate their viewpoint in favour of employing scientific methodology in interpreting the Text. First is mobilization of all signs of the universe mentioned in the Book of Allah to receive useful, constructive and absolute knowledge. In this regard, the first five passages of *sūrat al-'Alaq* imply a declaration or a call for it and restrict its means, motivate humanity to contemplate on the creation and exhibit logical reality, which has not been realized except after several centuries, such as creation of man from congealed blood. It is the reality that man could not perceive over the centuries, except after the scientific discovery by using microscopic magnifying glass in the seventeenth and eighteenth

centuries. On this issue Allah says in passages *al-'Alaq*: 1-5.²⁹

Second is that the Qur'ān asserts the role of human beings' intellect and makes it obligatory to realize the necessity of treating, delineating and introducing the universe and acquiring true and useful knowledge from it, and in the process of obtaining it through a better understanding of the Book of Allah, where the truth is not only regulated but established. Human being's role of exploring such a thing is mentioned in passage *al-Isrā'*: 36.³⁰

Third is that the Qur'ān rejects unhealthy practices such as blind imitation, inflexibility or rigidity in observing the hereditary or traditional incorrect opinions or rulings based on desire or conjecture or speculation and requires human beings to deduce rulings based on intellectual evidence which is no longer open to discussion or review.

Fourth is that the Qur'ān honours those who have acquired the knowledge. Even though this concept of honoring is interpreted to be referring to only religious scholars, it is still not wrong to argue that among them are the '*ulamā'* of the science of the universe who understand the truth. Reference to it is found in a number of passages including *al-Zumar*: 9,³¹ *al-Mujādilah*: 11,³² *Āl 'Imrān*: 18,³³ and *Fāṭir*: 28.³⁴ The two passages, "Seest thou not that Allah sends down rain from the sky? With it We then bring out produce of various colors. And in the mountains are tracts white and red, of various shades of color, and black intense in hue. And so amongst men and crawling creatures and cattle, are they of various colors. Those truly fear Allah, among His Servants, who have knowledge: for Allah is Exalted in Might, Oft-Forgiving" (Qur'ān, *Fāṭir*: 27-28), appear after parading and examining a number of scenes of the universe in the Text confirm that it too includes the '*ulamā'* of the science of the universe as well.

Fifth is that an intensive appeal is made to man to reflect upon Qur'ān's message and other creations including camels as how they are made. Such of His commands are stated in passages *Yūnus*: 101,³⁵ *al-A'rāf*: 185,³⁶ *al-Ankabūt*: 20,³⁷ *al-Dhāriyāt*: 20-21,³⁸ and *al-Ghāshiyah*: 17-20.³⁹

In their stand, the moderates seem to be on the right track because the Qur'ān blames those heedless people for their mode of thinking and approaches to passages pertaining to heavens and the earth, because they turn away from them without proper contemplation or intellectual attempt to explore the truth. The most pertinent one among a number of passages found in this context is *Yūsuf*: 105.⁴⁰ The Qur'ān describes about those

heedless people that they are like cattle, nay worst than them; their destiny is that they will be punished with the hell fire due to their negligence and non-consideration of the call of Allah. On this, the Qur'ān states in passage *al-A'rāf*: 179.⁴¹

The moderates also discuss the necessity of utilizing the scientific knowledge to understand the purports of the passages of signs of the universe in the Book of Allah to link the Qur'ān constantly between the faith in Allah and His theory of creation as stipulated in passages *al-Baqarah*: 164,⁴² *Āl 'Imrān*: 190-191,⁴³ *al-An'ām*: 75,⁴⁴ and *Ghāfir*: 57.⁴⁵

Modernist Approach

Those scholars belong to this category have peculiar view in understanding the meaning of the Qur'ān. They advocate hermeneutics and western historicism in understanding the revelation. "Historical Islam and "Normative Islam" are used by them, especially Fazlur Rahman. According to this School, historical Islam refers to the Tradition of the Prophet, while normative Islam matches the divine origin of revelation. It is believed that the function of historical Islam is to guide man to understand the meaning of the Qur'ān based on those historical contextual settings. Fazlur Rahman, a principal advocate of this School, argues that his approach is purely cognitive and this he characterized as an "intellectual *jihād*" technically called *ijtihād*.⁴⁶

Another strange theory has been advocated by Mohammad Arkoun where he applies hermeneutics. He also applies historical approach.⁴⁷ He believes that historicity should be applied to the heritage of the entire mankind, including Islamic. Thus he uses this method in dealing with the Qur'ān. He also believes that it will not harm the Qur'ān.⁴⁸ Arkoun considers that "his historical critical study as part of *ijtihād* activities, which, in some way, may make the conventional modes of thinking, but nevertheless will enrich the history of thought and give a better understanding of the Qur'an."⁴⁹

In addition to using historical criticism, Mohammad Arkoun also recommends the use of multidisciplinary methodologies to prepare ground for a new Qur'ānic hermeneutics. He does not mind to apply this methodology even though this was developed based on western philosophical and ideological foundations. As such, he does not offer any reverence to the Qur'ān and treats it like any other book authored by men. Consequently, he does not regard the Qur'ān as a revelation from God, but

as any other historical event, like physics and biology.⁵⁰

Arkoun identifies three levels for interpreting the Qur'ān. Later he modified these levels. His modified levels are [1] the Historical-Anthropological Interpretation, [2] the Linguistic and Literary Interpretation, and [3] the Theological-Exegetic Interpretation. What is important at this juncture is that the whole exercise is to rewrite the history of the Qur'ān, thus challenging the early official collection of the Qur'ān, including its authenticity. Arkoun also believes that some portions of the text might have been lost or modified during the transcription.⁵¹ Having mentioned the historical background of the Text based on his unique approach without considering the views of the majority Muslim scholars and exegetes, Arkoun concludes that the Qur'ān is subject to arbitrary historicity.⁵² Eventually, he argues that the *mushaf* does not deserve the status of sacredness and the Muslim orthodoxy has raised it to the status of divine speech of God.⁵³

It seems that the modernists do not discuss whether or not the scientific methodology can be used to understand the message of the Qur'ān. Their arguments lead us to conclude that they are only concerned to reject the divine nurture of the Text by applying western historicism and other Western methodologies including hermeneutics. The modernists do not contribute to the true understanding of the Qur'ān, but rather create confusions in the Muslim minds. Hence, contemporary Muslim intellectuals should disregard this approach.

Arguments in Favor of Scientific Inimitability

The proponents of scientific inimitability of the Qur'ān present a number of justifications in support of their theory. They wholeheartedly defend scientific inimitability of the Text. Towards achieving their aim, they establish that the Qur'ān was revealed to man so that he understands its fundamental aims, purposes and messages. They also contend that passages dealing with signs of the universe would not be accurately or truly comprehended based on linguistic framework alone, especially their objectives and significances, scopes and necessities from comprehensive Qur'ānic evidence and totality of knowledge.

They believe that the call for understanding the concept of scientific inimitability becomes one of the most appropriate means of the contemporary age, which is the age of knowledge, science, technology and information that remarkably

admires people with their advanced knowledge of numerous branches of disciplines. Under the shade of amazing and rapid scientific and technological advancements, abandoning the majority of the religious people, rejecting the concept of creation and role of the Creator, denying the concept of resurrection and judgment, and existence of paradise and hell and others among the metaphysical phenomena are taking place, because the understanding of these elements are greatly distorted in the doctrines of other societies. Due to distorted understanding of the concept, those who favour scientific inimitability are not satisfied with the conservatives, fully or partly. According to them, they are influenced to the extent of blind obsession without even a minimum degree of discernment and obsessed with blind fanaticism. And they harshly criticize the truth and its followers who represent Islam, as their biased predecessors did with regard to the mission of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Hence, nothing remains with Muslims of this contemporary age except by resorting to rational means of scientific inimitability to scientifically convince humanity of the purity and divine origin of the Qur'ān.

In principle, civilizations integrate a number of useful things from others and do not conflict or reject. An element of positive outlook has been practiced, although there are some frustrations and differences. Even then, in this era of globalization and post-modernization, the modern, secular materialistic civilizations push Muslims from their peak of knowledge to the ditch leading to intellectual dependence or slavery or backwardness. With their scrap of morality combined with strong materialistic currents infused with egoism and superiority complex mindset, the proponents of modern western civilization superimpose their culture on other civilizations, especially the non-Western or non-European. One such example of an inhuman and wild attempt was the illegal and unethical Zionist occupation of Palestine- the land of Islam in the first half of the twentieth century. This has thrown its people to a state of permanent sufferings and hardships over six decades living in refugee camps for nearly three generations in addition to brutal tortures of its inhabitants in Lebanon and other Middle Eastern countries.

Unfortunately, enemies have overthrown Muslims' all material means making it difficult for them to defend their lands, goals, properties, religion and even their sacred place - Bayt al-Maqdis. Such an overthrowing exercise is on the rise uninterrupted with well planned hi-tech

conspiracies leading to occupation of Muslim lands including Iraq and Afghanistan, to state a few. Hence, nothing remains with Muslims to work for success and protect their Religion in this age of Westernization of Muslim minds.

Currently, both Islam and Muslims are portrayed as antagonists to progress, science, technology and development and even world peace. They are negatively projected in the information Medias as well as entertainment industries without any truth in it. Globally, unfair propaganda against Muslims is on the rise. It can even be asserted that those who are consistently engaged in this propaganda are the Zionists, agents of the crusading forces and enemies of religious beliefs. Unashamedly, they disseminate a number of untruths and fabricate rumours against those who are involved in presenting Islam as extremists or militants. In totality, they deny the divinity of Islam. They disagree with Revelation of the Text. They reject God's authorship of the Qur'ān. They disbelieve in the institution of prophethood. They deny the absolute Reality. The life is viewed as meaningless. Post-modernism contributes a lot to destroy the transcendental truth and reality.

Likewise, all forms of Islamic presentations, propositions, argumentations, articulations, justifications, illustrations, explanations, elucidations, manifestations, cultures and traditions are either fully or partly rejected. The only irrevocable and indisputable means that can successfully, logically, rationally and scientifically convince their reason, make them realize the truth and contemplate the reality, is presenting Islam by affirming and establishing the scientific inimitability of the Qur'ān through academic, argumentative, logical, clear, and eloquent ways and methods with absolute commitment to maintain global peace and forge religious harmony between Islam and other religions, enabling constructive dialogues among various civilizations and faiths to avoid clashes or conflicts or contradictions and dispel incompatibilities and improbabilities.

Another tragedy is that the world of today moves towards a direction of great disaster and catastrophe. The scientific and startling technological developments excessively instigate them to destroy and endlessly annihilate other communities in the absence of true, authentic religious consciousness, moral commitment, and character building, which make them to preserve the rights of God and rights of human beings. The only and unique outlet from such a tragedy is to call people towards the true faith or religion. Among the most significant means or methods of the call is to

use and utilize materials available in the Book of Allah and the Traditions of the Prophet (peace be upon him) in terms of clear scientific inimitable features and elements that are scientifically proven in the recent years and decades.

Unfortunately, Muslims have neglected a lot in communicating about God and his Messenger. They have shortened the message of God. They have confined the issues to only certain dimensions. They introduced superstitious and innovative elements in interpreting the Text. They were not comprehensive and holistic in their Qur'ānic presentation. They overwhelmingly concentrated on highlighting theological or sectarian issues or doctrinal differences or legal disagreements. They have given over-emphasis to legalistic issues and messages. They have spent a lot in discussing the dogmatic or doctrinal issues. Later, their successive generations spent their energy in articulating issues relating to scholasticism and mysticism. They were under the impression that conveying the Message in Islam refers to communication or dissemination of these selected aspects only. Consequently, they only harvest fruits of those narrow minded attitude and shortsighted efforts of presenting Islam in terms of destructing wars in every land of Islam like Palestine, Iraq, The Sudan, The Balkans, Kashmir, Chechnya, Afghanistan, Southern Philippines, Somalia and other places.

In the midst of conspiracies such as unfair arrests, unproven criminal charges, total humiliation and disfigurement of reputation by labeling them as resorting to terrorism, Muslims cannot go ahead with dignity and honour with their heads raised. They also cannot forget those people's repulsion of Islam and Muslims in every nook and corner of the world. What is happening today for Muslims is not far away from their minds in terms of humiliations, trials, tribulations and violations of every aspect of human rights in terms of unfair imprisonment, mostly without trial in different parts of the Muslim world and the West.

Indeed, in the Traditions on the issue of scientific inimitability of the Qur'ān and Patterns of the Prophet (peace be upon him), there is stimulation for Muslims' intellect. The existence of scientific inimitability in the Text is a motivating cognitive force for creative thinking and contemplation, an encouragement for re-conquest and recuperation of the concern for science and technology in which the global Muslim community is greatly backward over the recent years when the industrialized world has tremendously advanced to the extent that knowledge has multiplied every five

years. The technology undergoes tremendous change every three years approximately. Hence, the chasm of division has become too wide between Muslims and others in the field of science and technology and is increasing the gap day by day. This trend has reached the state of a great shock and danger making Muslims impoverished in the field of science as the abyss is on the rapid rise.

It is pertinent to note that this scientific knowledge has never been known in the beginning of European renaissance except after malicious campaigns between the Church and students of physical or natural sciences. Eventually, these centuries long campaigns had come to an end with the defeat of the Church once and for all. The entire acquired sciences gained momentum in the West with pure materialistic goals and aspirations denying metaphysical phenomenon. The *dīn* was rejected along with its concepts like spirit, morality and values. The West has advanced intellectually, scientifically, and technologically without understanding the divine message revealed for humanity in this life. The life comprises the greatest disasters as mentioned by God in passage *al-Bayyinah*: 1.⁵⁴

Indeed, the Qur'ān was revealed to people as a Message of warning as mentioned in passage *Ibrāhīm*: 52.⁵⁵ This passage conveys that the Qur'ān is the Message for every human being, in every place and at every time and the Lord has confirmed it. God further addresses His Prophet (peace be upon him) in passage *al-An'ām*: 19.⁵⁶ If there is a way that the Arabs could understand the Qur'ān by means of linguistic inimitability, then there must be a way for non-Arabs to understand the Qur'ān in other than the way of linguistic inimitability, as mentioned in passage *al-Anfāl*: 42.⁵⁷

Conclusion

The above discourse obviously leads us to reach the conclusion that among the four approaches the moderate approach is the best as the Muslim *Ummah* is in a dire need for contemporary understanding of the Qur'ān with special reference to scientific inimitable ellipticism, using scientific method. This will help people understand the true purpose of the Qur'ān and eliminate ambiguities, fabrications and misconceptions. Those who disagree with the divine origin of the Qur'ān can be put in the right track and they will be able to realize the truth of the contents of the Qur'ān, if the scientific inimitable features of the Text are highlighted and explained using modern scientific knowledge and methodology. What is crucial is to

offer an opportunity to contemporary humanity to realize the truths about the Qur'ān and this can be achieved only if Muslim scholars, scientists and intellectuals use scientific approaches to explain the message of the Qur'ān as we discussed above. The International Islamic University Malaysia's philosophy and mission undoubtedly motivate scholars of revealed knowledge and scientists to sit together and discuss issues of mutual interest in order to achieve the objectives of the *Ummah*.

¹ Muslims utter 'peace be upon him' when they write or hear any name of the Prophet. This will not be repeated in the subsequent pages.

² Refer to the following works to know more about Orientalists views about this issue. George Sale, *The Koran: Commonly called Al-Qur'ān, with a Preliminary Discourse* (First Published, 1734), 2 volumes, (London: Fredrick Warne, 1899), 50; See also: William Muir, *Life of Mahomet* (London: Smith, 1860), vol. 3, 100; W. Stobart, *Islam and its Founder* (London: S.P.C.K., 1876), 108; See also: Richard Bell, *The Origin of Islam in its Christian Environment* (London: Macmillan, 1926), 96; See also: M. Rodinson *Muhammad* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Book, 1977), 94; Richard Bell, *The Origin of Islam*, 96; Rodinson, *Muhammad*, 96; J. N. Anderson, ed. *The World Religions* (London: Frank Cass, 1965), 56 and, 77; Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad, Prophet and Statesman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1948), 15; Philip K. Hitti, *Islam and the West* (Princeton: n.p., 1962), 14; J. L. Menezes, *The Life and Religion of Muhammad, the Prophet of Arabia* (London: Sands, 1911), 161; See also: J. Gardner, *The Faiths of the Worlds* (New York: Hapher, 1941), vol. 2, 279; K.W. Morgan, ed. *Islam Interpreted by Muslims* (London: Ronald Press, 1958), 56.

³ Zaghlūl Raghīb al-Najjār, *Qaḍīyyat al-i'jāz al-'ilmī* ('Ammān, Jordan: Jam'iyyat al-Muḥāfaẓat 'alā al-Qur'ān al-Karīm, 2006), 7. The author would like to acknowledge that the majority of the ideas discussed in this paper are drawn from the above book.

⁴ "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?"

⁵ Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'ān* (Gibraltar, Dar al-Andalus, 1984), 738.

⁶ Zaghlūl Raghīb al-Najjār, *Qaḍīyyat al-i'jāz al-'ilmī*, p. 11.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Zaghlūl Raghīb al-Najjār, *Qaḍīyyat al-i'jāz al-'ilmī*, p. 14.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ “This is no less than a Message to (all) the Worlds. And ye shall certainly know the truth of it (all) after a while.”

¹⁵ ‘Abdullah Yūsuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'ān: Text Translation and Commentary* (Maryland, U.S.A: Amana Corporation, 1989), 1178.

¹⁶ Zaghālūl Raghīb al-Najjār, *Qaḍiyyat al-i'jāz al-'ilmī*, p.16.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ “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?”

¹⁹ “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.”

²⁰ “Do they not consider the Qur'ān (with care)? Had it been from other than Allah, they would surely have found therein much discrepancy. When there comes to them some matter touching (public) safety or fear, they divulge it. If they had only referred it to the Messenger, or to those charged with authority among them, the proper investigators would have tested it from them (direct). Were it not for the Grace and Mercy of Allah unto you, all but a few of you would have fallen into the clutches of Satan.”

²¹ “Do they not then earnestly seek to understand the Qur'ān, or are their hearts locked up by them?”

²² Zaghālūl Raghīb al-Najjār, *Qaḍiyyat al-i'jāz al-'ilmī*, p.15.

²³ “Say: “If the whole of mankind and Jinns were to gather together to produce the like of this Qur'ān, they could not produce the like thereof, even if they backed up each other with help and support.”

²⁴ “We sent a Messenger except (to teach) in the language of his (own) people, in order to make (things) clear to them. Now Allah leaves straying those whom He pleases and guides whom He pleases: and He is Exalted in power, Full of Wisdom.”

²⁵ “They say: “Why is not a Sign sent down to him from his Lord? “Say: Allah hath certainly power to send down a Sign: but most of them understand not.”

²⁶ “One day We shall raise from all peoples a witness against them, from amongst themselves: and We shall bring thee as a witness against these (thy people): and We have sent down to thee the Book explaining all things, a guide, a Mercy, and glad tidings to Muslims.”

²⁷ Allama Dr. Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Malaysia: Masterpiece Publications Sdn. Bhd., 2006), p. 13.

²⁸ “Do they not consider the Qur'ān (with care)? Had it been from other than Allah, they would surely have found therein much discrepancy.”

²⁹ “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.”

³⁰ “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).”

³¹ “Is one who worships devoutly during the hours of the night prostrating himself or standing (in adoration), who takes heed of the Hereafter, and who places his hope in the Mercy of his Lord (like one who does not)? Say: “Are those equal, those who know and those who do not know? It is those who are endued with understanding that receive admonition.”

³² “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 Knowledge: and Allah is well-acquainted with all ye do.”

³³ “There is no god but He: that is the witness of Allah, His angels, and those endued with knowledge, standing firm on justice. There is no god but He, the Exalted in Power, the Wise.”

³⁴ “...Those truly fear Allah, among His Servants, who have knowledge: for Allah is Exalted in Might, Oft-Forgiving.”

³⁵ “Say: “Behold all that is in the heavens and on earth,” but neither Signs nor Warners profit those who believe not.”

³⁶ “Do they see nothing in the government of the heavens and the earth and all that Allah hath created? (Do they not see) that it may well be that their term is nigh drawing to an end? In what message after this will they then believe?”

³⁷ “Say: “Travel through the earth and see how Allah did originate creation: so will Allah produce a later creation: for Allah has power over all things.”

³⁸ “On the earth are Signs for those of assured Faith, As also in your own selves: will ye not then see?”

³⁹ “Do they not look at the Camels, how they are made? And at the Sky, how it is raised high? And at the Mountains, how they are fixed firm? And at the Earth, how it is spread out?”

⁴⁰ “And how many Signs in the heavens and the earth do they pass by? Yet they turn (their faces) away from them!”

⁴¹ “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).”

⁴² “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.”

⁴³ “Behold! in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of night and day, there are indeed Signs for men of understanding. Men who celebrate the praises of Allah, standing, sitting, and lying down on their sides, and contemplate the (wonders of) creation in the heavens and the earth, (with the thought): "Our Lord! not for naught hast thou created (all) this! Glory to thee! give us salvation from the penalty of the fire.”

⁴⁴ “So also did We show Abraham the power and the laws of the heavens and the earth, that he might (with understanding) have certitude.”

⁴⁵ “Assuredly the creation of the heavens and the earth is a greater (matter) than the creation of men: Yet most men understand not.”

⁴⁶ Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), 7-8

⁴⁷ Arkoun, “Rethinking Islam today,” *Mapping Islamic Studies: Genealogy, Continuity and Change*, ed. Azim Nanji (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1977), p. 221.

⁴⁸ Arkoun, *The Unthought in Contemporary Islamic Thought*, p.89. This is taken from Abdul Kabir Hussain Solihu “Historicist Approach to the Qur’ān: Impact of Nineteenth Century Western Hermeneutics in the Writings of Two Muslim Scholars” Unpublished PhD thesis, International Islamic University Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, 2003, p. 189.

⁴⁹ Mohammad Arkoun, *Min al-Ijtihād ilā Naqd al-‘Aql al-Islāmī* (London: Dār al-Sāqī, 1991), pp. 79-80. This quote is taken from Abdul Kabir’s thesis as mentioned above.

⁵⁰ Mohammad Arkoun, *Tārīkhīyyat al-Fikr al-‘Arabi al-Islāmī*, Trans Hāshim Šālīḥ (Bayrut: Matkazz al-Inmā’ al-Qawmī, 2nd edn., 1996), p. 284.

⁵¹ Arkoun, *al-Fikr al-Uṣūlī wa Istihālat al-Ta’šīl: Naḥwa Tārīkhīn Ākhar li al-Fikr al-Islāmī*. Trans Hāshim Šālīḥ (London: Dār al-Sāqī, 1999), pp. 53 and 63.

⁵² Arkoun, “Rethinking Islam today,” p.241.

⁵³ Arkoun, *The Unthought in Contemporary Islamic Thought*, p. 51.

⁵⁴ “Those who reject (Truth), among the People of the Book and among the Polytheists, were not going to depart (from their ways) until there should come to them Clear Evidence.”

⁵⁵ “Here is a Message for mankind: let them take warning there from, and let them know that He is (no other than) One Allah: let men of understanding take heed.”

⁵⁶ “Say: "What thing is most weighty in evidence?" Say: "Allah is Witness between me and you: this Qur’an hath been revealed to me by inspiration that I may warn you and all whom it reaches. Can ye possibly bear witness that besides Allah there is another god?" Say: "Nay! I cannot bear witness!" Say: "But in truth He is the One Allah, and I truly am

innocent of (your blasphemy of) joining others with Him.”

⁵⁷ “Remember ye were on the hither side of the valley, and they on the farther side, and the caravan on lower ground than ye. Even if ye had made a mutual appointment to meet, ye would certainly have failed in the appointment: but (thus ye met), that Allah might accomplish a matter already enacted; that those who died might die after a clear sign (had been given), and those who lived might live after a clear sign (had been given). And verily Allah is He Who heareth and knoweth (all things).”