

Knowledge within the intellectual tradition of Islam

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Abstract: Knowledge has been misconceived and is equated with information. This study, based upon primary sources, explains that knowledge from the ideational system of Islam is the consciousness of high order of reality and truth lying behind the signs spread throughout the working of the universe. Knowledge is the identification and realization of the Highest Reality, its magnificence and power and submission to His will. In the context of the physical objects, it makes humans aware of the origin, structure and the function which an object performs and how it can be used for the comfort and benefit of humanity. Hearing, sight and heart are the significant means of acquiring knowledge. If one applies them in an appropriate way and goes through the process of *tawassum* (ability to understand the signs of nature) to *tadhakkur* (remembrance” of God), one acquires the knowledge closer to reality. There are three levels of knowledge according to the degree of certainty: knowledge by reference (*‘ilm al-yaqġn*), knowledge by perception (*‘ain al-yaqġn*) and knowledge by intuition (*‘aqqa al-yaqġn*).

Keywords: Heart (fuad), *tawassum*, *tadhakkur*, *‘ilm al-yaqġn*, *‘ain al-yaqġn*, *‘aqqa al-yaqġn*.

Introduction

Knowledge makes it possible for human beings to understand the realities and complexities of life and of the world. Allah (SWT), in His infinite mercy, bestows this quality on human beings. Allah (SWT) created Adam (AS), breathed His spirit into him and taught him the science of naming all things (*‘ilm al-asma‘a*) (al-Qur’an, 2: 30, 31; 32: 7-9; 38: 71-72). Thus, human beings are endowed with life and knowledge. Thus, life without knowledge loses meaning and potentiality. This is why the acquisition of knowledge is considered the foremost duty of Muslims. The Prophet (SAW) made the seeking of knowledge “obligatory upon every Muslim” (cited in Muhammad Ali, 1983: 39). Those who possess knowledge and are involved in the acquisition and transmission of knowledge are considered noble and superior to others. The Qur’an reads: “Allah will raise up to

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(suitable) ranks (and degrees) those of you who believe and who have been granted knowledge” (58: 11). The Prophet (SAW) also said: “The learned ones are the heirs of the prophets – they leave knowledge as their inheritance; he who inherits it inherits a great fortune” (cited in Muhammad Ali, 1983: 38-39). Similarly, al-Ghazz li, the famous Muslim scholar, highlighted the excellence of knowledge in human life and made its acquisition mandatory for the believers (Faris, 1988).

Knowledge in Islam denotes a higher form of consciousness that enables human to identify and understand the highest Reality that is the Lord of the universe as well as the nature of His creation (al-Qur’an, 7: 54; 10: 3). Knowledge enables humans to know objects and events, their structure, their coming into being, their working and the purpose they serve. Humans have to apply their faculty of understanding, ponder over them, draw inferences and understand the reality and truth that lie behind them. Humans, with the help of knowledge can identify the greatness and prominence of the Lord, surrender to Him, follow His commandment and lead life according to His guidance.

Knowledge acquaints humans with truth and, in case of their own existence, with the meaning of life and motivates them to make all possible efforts to achieve it. The purpose of life is not to acquire material wealth but the most precious thing is to seek the pleasure of the Lord and achieve the final goal of life. To a knowledgeable person, As ‘Abdullah Y suf ‘Ali (1991: 1183) explains, “the Hereafter is the real thing He does not build his hope on the vanities of the world, but on Allah’s Grace and Mercy. Such a man is “endued with understanding” and receives Allah’s message with fervour and alacrity.”

Knowledge, from an Islamic perspective, has many facets including human world consisting of his existence and its operation and phenomenal world consisting of the universe, its objects and working. It exposes how they exist and relate to each other, what role they play, what result they produce and what force operates within them that make them active and potential. Thus, knowledge is the consciousness of the highest form of reality and truth that instills the sense of good and bad, right and wrong among humans so that they lead a dignified life in the world. In the phenomenal world, knowledge exposes the constitution of an object, its function, the purpose it serves and explores how it can be used to facilitate human life.

The concept of knowledge

Knowledge, according to Murtada Mutahhari (2012:8) “... the knowledge itself is not in need of a definition; one must only explain knowledge by means of clearer expression. Knowledge means awareness, and awareness needs no definition.”

This has not stopped scholars from defining it. Franz Rosenthal (2007: 52-69), after surveying the Arabic religious literature, found thirteen broad definitions of knowledge ranging from cognition, perception, and belief to “intuition coming from outside or as the result of introspection.” These definitions are based on the general impression, the way the term is used by scholars and on the explanation of particular subject with knowledge.

Rosenthal notes that knowledge is expressed in Arabic language as *‘ilm*, though *‘ilm* is very comprehensive and exhaustive and refers to the idea that is the basis of the ideational system of Islam. To quote:

Arabic *‘ilm* is fairly rendered by our “knowledge”. However, “knowledge” falls short of expressing all the factual and emotional contents of *‘ilm*. For *‘ilm* is one of those concepts that have dominated Islam and given Muslim civilization its distinctive shape and complexion. In fact, there is no other concept that has been operative as a determinant of Muslim civilization in all its aspects to the same extent as *‘ilm* (Rosenthal, 2007: 1-2).

The term *‘ilm* “stems from a root comprising three letters, *‘ayn-lam-mim*, giving rise to *‘alam* whose basic meaning is that of *‘alĒmah*, meaning “way sign” or “a trace (or a mark) by which something is known” (Ismail, 2014: 11-12). Way sign or mark is important to identify and locate the destination. It guides a traveller to know and reach the destination where he wants to go. The way sign or mark used to play very significant role in the lives of the people of Arabian Peninsula. Those who had knowledge of the way sign or mark were wise as they could reach the destination without any difficulty and could not be misled. This is, in fact, the relation of *‘ilm* with the wellbeing of people. Rosenthal (2007: 10) explains:

...the connection between “way sign” and “knowledge” is particularly close and takes on especial significance in the Arabian environment. For the Bedouin, the knowledge of way signs, the characteristic marks in the desert which guided him on his travels and in the execution of his daily tasks, was the most important and immediate knowledge to be acquired. In fact, it was the kind of knowledge on which his life and well-being principally depended.

Thus, the actual meaning and the connotation behind the term *‘ilm* is to understand the “signs” or “Ēyahs”, the characteristic marks spread throughout the universe in its composition, in its working and in the operation of human life. The Qur’an repeatedly stressed that “Allah created the heavens and the earth in true (proportion): verily in that is a sign for those who believe” (29: 44, 24), “who

know” (30: 22). The Qur’an, further clarifies that “in the creation of the heavens and the earth, in the alteration 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” (2: 164; 21: 33; 45: 3-5), and in the process of event where “Allah makes the clouds move gently then joins them together, then makes them into a heap? – then wilt thou see rain issue forth from their midst and He sends down from the sky mountain masses (of clouds) wherein is hail: He strikes therewith whom He pleases and He turns it away whom He pleases. The vivid flash of His lightning we-nigh blinds the sight” (24: 43) there are signs for those who know, ponder, reflect, believe and are wise. These signs or “*Ēyahs*” guide those who ponder over, reflect on them and have knowledge to identify the force, creativity, controlling power and the grandeur of the Lord, submit to Him and follow His guidance in living with fellow beings. *‘ilm*, in fact, refers to the identification and realization of the higher and truer form of reality that lies behind the signs and *Ēyahs* manifested by the Lord in the working of the universe impressing upon humans to comprehend it, apply it to their practical lives and give them a meaning and success.

The other aspect of *‘ilm* is manifested by the three letters, *ain-lam-mim*, they are also “the root for another widely used term, *‘Ēlam* which refers to the entire universe comprising not only all that is around us, but also whatever is in us, which can be studied and known” (Ismail, 2014: 12). It indicates two important facts. First, the information which a human draws and infers, and the consciousness which he develops from the signs or *Ēyahs* manifested by the Lord are universal and not limited to a particular region and a group. The signs are themselves universal and show the fundamental principles according to which objects work, events take place and the universe functions. Moreover, as knowledge (*‘ilm*) evinces the higher form of reality and truth, so they cannot be limited to and confined in one place, group, culture and society. They do not depend upon particular culture and the historicity of a society, but are applicable to all human beings and are universal. Thus, the important feature of knowledge in Islam is that it is not “context-dependent” and “constrained by social factors”, but it is applicable to entire humanity as it reflects the reality and truth.

The second fact inferred from the word *‘Ēlam* is that the whole world, the animate and inanimate objects that lie in it and the principles according to which the world functions and the way its constituent elements contribute to maintain and strengthen the system in serving the purpose for which it was created, are all the signs or *Ēyahs* of the Lord. Persons who have knowledge, who are wise, who ponder, reflect and understand what is hidden behind those *Ēyahs* and what

message they convey to human beings and how humans can apply it to their lives and take advantage of them. They comprehend the purpose of the creation of the world and their own existence and try to obtain it. The Qur'an clarifies that "not for (idle) sport did we create the heavens and the earth and all that is between" (21: 16). The whole world is an open book, the knowledgeable persons explore it, understand its secret, take advantage of it and make their lives success. (Ismail, 2014: 12) observes:

Since '*alam* was a term originally used for anything instrumental and indicative in the obtainment of the knowledge of something else, these signs or *Āyāt* taken as a totality are referred to in that tradition as *al-Ēlam* (the Cosmos; the Universe; the World-of-Nature), theologically defined as "everything other than God which points to Him". The entire Universe, in short, is an open, grand, created Book, comprising Divine Signs and Symbols.

Thus, '*ilm* in the intellectual tradition of Islam is the consciousness of cardinal principles relating to reality and truth inferred and drawn from the signs and sigils spread throughout the heavens and earth applicable to entire human beings for making their lives meaningful and worthwhile.

Means of acquiring knowledge

Islam presents a distinct way of acquiring knowledge. Generally, senses are considered as means of acquiring knowledge. God has given humans five senses: sight, hearing, taste, touch and smell, which acquaint them with the external world. It is said that when we apply senses to know any object, we directly come in touch with it and get information closer to reality. The senses are considered very significant in scientific investigation and, according to positivist epistemology, they are the only sources of acquiring knowledge. It is a reductionist view and not consonant with Islamic epistemology. There are other sources of knowledge like insight, intuition, introspection, empathy and revelation (Momin, 2001: xvi). The senses are, no doubt, important to acquire knowledge, but they are not sufficient to have different degrees and complete knowledge of an object. They should be supplemented with another important source of knowledge that is intellect or rational faculty.

The senses provide general information about a phenomenon which is not sufficient to understand its complete nature, composition and function. What is needed, as Mutahhari (2012) observes, are analysis, abstraction and generalization, which are possible by intellect or rational faculty to have complete

knowledge of an object. Analysis helps classify things into different categories according to certain criteria. Some objects can be measured while others cannot be so measured. Many things may fall into quantitative category, others into qualitative category and still others are auxiliary (neither of quantity nor quality) nature. Abstraction is the mental activity. It is the thinking of the quality and condition of intangible things and speculating their role and impact. Abstraction leads to thinking and discernment, which are necessary for the development of knowledge. Generalization is the notion and characteristics obtained by inference from the observation of particular type of objects and events. It denotes the traits common among the similar phenomena. It is possible by intellect and not by senses.

Evidently, senses are the important tool or means of acquiring knowledge but are not sufficient. Islamic ontology sets forth that the Lord of the universe bestows upon humans faculty of understanding consisting of the senses, intellect and a distinct and unique heart (al-Qur'an, 16: 78; 32: 9; 23: 78; 46:26) so that they would comprehend the truth, identify what is right, just and good and differentiate them from what is wrong, unjust and bad. These are, in fact, means or tools of attaining knowledge. The Qur'an spells out that man was ignorant when he was in the womb of his mother, but, "He gave you hearing and sight and intelligence and affection that ye may give thanks (to Allah) (al-Qur'an, 16: 78).

The Qur'anic verse 16: 78 mentions hearing, sight and heart as the means of acquiring knowledge. Hearing and sight, in fact, represent all the senses. The other three means: touch, taste and smell no doubt help us to know objects but not most significantly. Ears and eyes are mentioned because they are most effective in the pursuit of knowledge and most of the things we know by them. However, the Lord bestowed upon human beings senses to acquire the first-hand knowledge of the external world, to comprehend the realities of the world and to mould lives accordingly. The Qur'an also mentions one thing beyond the senses, that is heart (*fu'Ed/af'idah*). *Af'idah* is the plural of *fu'ad*, which means the heart. 'Abdullah Y'Esuf 'Alf (1991: 658) translated the word *af'idah* as "intelligence and affection." He explains that the "word for 'heart' in Arabic speech imports both the seat of intelligent faculties and understanding as well as the seat of affections and emotions" ('Ali, 1991: 834). Mawd'Edf (2010: 565) translated it as "thinking hearts." Heart in Islamic epistemological framework is not only the centre of emotion and affection but also the centre of intellection. Most importantly, the heart is imbued with consciousness of good and evil and influences the senses, intellect and action. If heart maintains its purity and is active, it impels the senses and intellect to comprehend the truth, think in right direction and act accordingly.

In case there is disease in heart (al-Qur'an, 2: 10) or it is hardened (al-Qur'an, 2: 74), it adversely affects the means of acquiring knowledge and actions, and fails to understand the truth. The Qur'an at several occasions exhorts that if man's heart is purged with goodness, his thought and actions are also in accordance with the will of the Lord. Otherwise, he has heart but he does not think, He has the senses but he does not get true information (al-Qur'an, 7: 179; 22: 46). Thus, the heart has the capacity of understanding good and evil and motivates other faculties to act in right direction that is to adopt good and reject evil. The mystics always lay stress on the purification of the heart in order to reflect upon the world better. The purity of the heart means that it is not corrupted with undesired desires and ambitions. The heart is thus, a tool or means of acquiring knowledge.

Some Western scholars, particularly Blaise Pascal (1623-1662), William James (1842-1910), Alexis Carrel (1873) and Bergson (1859-1941) also regard the heart as a tool of knowledge (Cited by Mutahhri 2012: 38). Bergson lays more emphasis on the heart than others and considers it as the only tool for knowledge. He does not find any role of the senses and the intellect. The other extreme view is of Plato and Descartes (1596-1650) who consider intellect as the tool for knowledge rejecting the senses. They view that knowledge can only be acquired by the intellect and not by any other means. Islam recognizes all the faculties (senses, intellect and heart) of understanding, each operating in different areas. For example senses cannot think, they can only provide data on the basis of which intellect thinks on the guidance of the heart and comes to certain conclusion. All these faculties need to be combined to have true knowledge of the world. If one is sincere, truthful and maintains the purity of the soul and heart, the Lord guides them, "give them light; grant wisdom to them so as to discern and understand well the truth of life" (Mutahhari, 2012: 43). The Qur'an (29: 69) proclaims: "And those who strive in our (cause) – We will certainly guide them to Our Path. Verily Allah is with those who do right."

The Creator created man in the best mould (al-Qur'an, 95: 4). He bestowed upon human special abilities and that too to a particular extent so that they could discharge their duties and perform their responsibilities thrust upon them in the best possible way as the Creator wants. The most important thing is that humans would identify and acknowledge the Providence, Greatness, Grandeur and Sovereignty of the Lord, completely submit to His will, understand the difference between virtues and vices, follow the righteous way and establish the kingdom of the Lord on earth. For this, the Lord moulds human nature in a distinct way and invests in his consciousness the special characteristic of understanding of good and evil and benefit and harm so that he would embrace good and shun away evil.

MawdĒdi (2010: 1289) interprets the “enlightenment as to its wrong and its right” as follows:

This has two meanings. First, that the Creator has embedded in man’s nature tendencies and inclinations towards both good and evil. Second, that God has impregnated every person’s subconscious with certain notions of good and evil: that good and evil deeds are intrinsically different, and are not of equal worth; that while *fujĒr* (immorality) is condemnable, *taqwĒ* (avoidance of evil) is praiseworthy, etc. These ideas are not foreign to man. On the contrary, his nature is quite profoundly acquainted with them. This is because man’s Creator has endowed him with an innate capacity to distinguish between good and evil.

It shows that the Lord infuses the notion of good and evil, right and wrong in the consciousness of man the centre of which is heart that impels intellect to ponder over them, take decision and motivate other organs to act accordingly. The purpose is that man would understand the gravity of evil and its harm, adopt the piety and the right way, dedicate himself to the guidance of the Lord and spend all his energy and abilities in seeking His pleasure. If a human does so, he will be the true servant of the Lord and come nearer to Him. The Lord will help such person in such a way that all his senses, abilities and organs represent the will of the Lord. The Prophet (SAW) affirms it thus:

Allah’s Messenger (SAW) said, “Allah said, ‘I will declare war against him who shows hostility to a pious worshipper of Mine.’ And the most beloved things with which My slave comes nearer to Me, is what I have enjoined upon him; and My slave keeps on coming closer to Me through performing NawĒfil (praying or doing extra deeds besides what is obligatory) till I love him, I become his sense of hearing with which he hears, and his sense of sight with which he sees, and his hand with which he grips, and his leg with which he walks; and if he asks Me, I will give him, and if he asks my protection (Refuge), I will protect him (i.e. give him My Refuge) and I do not hesitate to take the soul of the believer, for he hates death, and I hate to disappoint him” (SahihAl-Bukhari, 509).

Thus, Islam recognizes the three significant means or tools (senses, intellect and heart) of acquiring knowledge but it depends on how a person uses them and maintains the sanctity and purity of these tools. If they are used to deny and revolt against the authority and sovereignty of the Lord, deviate from His commandment, diverge from the right path, commit vices, promote evils, shed blood of innocent and weak persons, grab privileges and power by immoral and

unsanctioned means, exploit and suppress others for one's personal benefit and satisfaction of one's ego, these faculties will be corrupted and lose their abilities. In case they are used in a right way to understand the truth, acknowledge the authority of the Lord, submit to His will, lead life according to His commandment, adopt piety, treat human beings equal as the servant of the Lord and give others all which one wants for oneself, these abilities will be sharpened and convey the truth.

One may raise objection that what heart and its purity have to do when one studies physical objects with the help of scientific method and discovers its use and utility to make human life comfortable. It is mentioned above that every faculty has different area of operation. Intellect cannot smell and smell cannot think vice versa. In the present case the senses provide data, the intellect analyzes, abstracts and generalizes the nature and composition of the object. The heart plays three roles. First, it comprehends, exposes, highlights and recognizes the excellence and beauty of the creativity of the Lord that how different elements are proportionally, systematically and effectively structured into a system to perform a distinct role. Second, it impresses other faculties that study and discovery will be for the benefit of humanity and not for its destruction. At the same time the physical objects will not be misused and destroyed to create imbalance in the eco system. Third, it provides sincerity and dedication to the person to conduct the study in good faith.

The process of acquiring knowledge

The Lord of the universe has bestowed upon humans faculties of understanding to use them in the right way and comprehend the signs manifested by the Lord. The Qur'an time and again impresses upon mankind to understand the phenomenal world, its working and the force that makes them operate. This requires humans to activate their abilities of understanding to find inspiration in the nature and working of the universe. The Qur'an (15: 75) uses the word "tawassum" that is the ability to understand the signs of the nature." If one observes the phenomenal world in order to draw lessons from them, he will comprehend the truth. The Qur'an explains in clear terms that those who celebrate the praise of Allah standing, sitting, and lying down on their sides and contemplate the wonder of creation, Allah (SWT) gives them salvation (3: 191). It also shows that celebrating the praise of Allah (SWT) opens the door of contemplation. The Qur'an also uses the word "ya'lamEn" that is to ponder over certain subject (30: 7). This will give knowledge of certain thing and acquaint a person with the mysteries of the world. Still other process of understanding is "tafakkur" that is to reflect on things that the Lord has created. A person who reflects gives thanks to the Lord for creating him in perfect form. Generally, tafakkur takes place in four ways:

1. To ponder over the wonders, beauty, splendour and magnificence of the creation of the Lord and His bounties and benevolence on His creatures. It causes humans to express their reverence, love and regard to Him.
2. To ponder over His reward, award, help, guidance and patronage promised by Him to His obedient servants. This enables persons to completely surrender to His will and commandments.
3. To ponder over the punishment promised for those who revolt against His sovereignty and make other than Him their master. This enables person not to commit such severe sin.
4. To ponder over persons who are enslaved by their nafs and ego, always paying heed to them and betrays the commandments of the Lord. This is the shameful act and degradation of humanity. A person who reflects always avoids such type of shameful acts.

The other significant fact in the process of understanding is "Tadhakkur" that is taken to heart or meditate. The Qur'an in verse 38: 29 uses "Tadhakkur" with another word "Tadabbur" that is to ponder over the revelation. Khurram Murad (2013: 77) considers them as the categories of understanding. It is obvious because first a man ponders over a phenomenon, comprehends it then grasps it and takes to heart.

Tadhakkur is the highest form of understanding where a person goes in deep thinking, realize the meaning and purpose of a phenomenon, confirms the truth that lies behind it and takes to heart. Tadhakkur is the attribute of a believer who always dwells upon events and objects, think profoundly and at length, comprehend the idea and its gravity which they manifest and submit to and prostrate before the Lord for giving thanks. It is the purpose of the revelation that a person should strive throughout his life to grasp its meaning, enlighten his mind and soul and make his life worthwhile and meaningful. Khurram Murad (2013: 77) explains:

Tadhakkur, used extensively in the Qur'an, has been translated variously as receiving admonition, deriving advice, remembering, taking heed, and taking to heart. It can therefore be taken to signify the process whereby you try to grasp the general messages and teaching being conveyed by the Qur'an, to find out what they mean for you and what demands they make upon you, to take them to heart, to bring forth corresponding responses of heart and mind and attitudes, to have the will to act in accordance with whatever you find, and, finally, to determine what message you have to deliver to your fellow beings.

Tadhakkur is the easy way to acquire and understand true knowledge of the Qur'an. It does not require high intellect and skill because the Qur'an is made easy to understand. One only requires an inspiration to ponder over the messages conveyed in the Qur'an. The important message that the Qur'an conveys to humans is how to live in this world in proper and righteous way. It is very clear and can be understood easily by tadhakkur. The Qur'anic verse 44: 58 makes it clear: "Indeed we have made it [the Qur'an] easy to [understand] by your tongue [O Prophet] so that men might take it to heart (yatadhakkarĒn)."

Khurram Murad (2013) highlights the importance of tadhakkur in acquiring the true knowledge and understanding of the Qur'an:

It is in the sense of tadhakkur that the Qur'an categorically states that it is easy to understand, it is available to every sincere inquirer if he only comprehends what he is reading and ponders over it. It is to this tadhakkur that the Qur'an invites everyone who can hear, see and think, to be guided by it. (78).

The Qur'an also confirms it:

Indeed we have propounded for mankind all kind of parables in this Qur'an, so that they might understand (yatadhakkarĒn) (39: 27).

The terms (tawassum, y'lamun, tafakkur and tadhakkur) discussed above constitute the process of knowing particularly, the truth that lies behind the working of the universe and the force from which the objects of the phenomenal world get strength to work and play their roles in a distinct way to serve the purpose for which they are created. To comprehend the wonders of the world, it is necessary to activate the faculties of understanding, to be free from the impact of wild desires and ambitions and should sincerely inspire to understand the truth. After activating and refining the abilities, one should sincerely ponder over the nature and function of the world; how it exists and operates and never deviates from its path. This is ya'lamĒn. This process of thinking leads to other stage of the process called tafakkur where one reflects on the object and realize the truth which leads to the stage of tadhakkur to grasp the truth, meditate and take to heart. One absorbs the truth in heart and manifests it by thought and action.

Levels of knowledge

Knowledge, by and large, denotes the correct and definite information of an object and phenomenon. It is of course certain because it relates to truth and truth is always certain. "But, as received by men and understood with reference to men's

psychology certainty may have certain degree" (YĒsuf 'AlĒ, 1991: 1523). There are three levels of knowledge in the ascending scale of certitude (Sharif, 1963: 146): (1) knowledge by inference ('ilm al-yaqĒn), (2) knowledge by perception ('ain al-yaqĒn) and knowledge by intuition (Īaqqā al-yaqĒn). Sharif exemplifies these types of knowledge as "(1) fire always burns, (2) it has burnt John's fingers and (3) it has burnt my finger" (1963: 147).

'Ilm al-yaqĒn is the knowledge which a man draws from thinking of an object or universe. It is the "certainty resulting from the application of man's power of judgment and his appraisal of evidence" (YĒsuf 'AlĒ, 1991: 1523). This certainty is generally, derived by mind after deep thinking of a fact and phenomenon and conceptualizing them on the basis of their forms and features. YĒsuf 'AlĒ observes:

The first is certainty of mind or inference mentioned here: we hear from someone, or we infer from something we know: this refers to our own state of mind. If we instruct our minds in this way, we should value the deeper things of life better, and not waste all our time in ephemeral things (199: 1690).

This certainty of knowledge is based upon deduction after taking into consideration the working of a system and functioning of an object. "It does satisfy the mind of its certitude, but possesses theoretical certainty at best" (Bakhtiar (1991: 16).

'Ain al-yaqĒn is the knowledge based on human perception of the phenomenal world. It is "the certainty of seeing something with our own eyes. Seeing is believing. This is ... certainty by personal inspection" (YĒsuf 'AlĒ, 1991: 1523). When we live in this world, we confront with objects and events and observe them with the faculties our Lord has given to us, come to certain conclusions and develop knowledge about them. This knowledge possesses certainty because this is first-hand knowledge. The grandeur, splendour and magnificence of the Lord are manifested in the creation of the universe, heavens and the earth and the things that lie between them. At the same time His signs, symbols and attributes are spread at every nook and cranny throughout the world. They invite human to know, observe them and comprehend the ideas and principles they manifest. Humans observe them and develop knowledge about their nature and functioning. The Qur'an instructs humans again and again to observe the phenomenal world to attain the certainty of knowledge. The most important fact is that the Qur'an describes the different communities which denied the authority of the Lord, rejected righteousness and ultimately faced the wrath of the Lord and were

destroyed. One should observe the occurrence of such events, develop knowledge of certainty and take lessons from them.

×aqqa al-yaqġn "is absolute truth with no possibility of error of judgment or error of the eye, which stands for any instrument of sense perception and any ancillary aid such as microscope... This is absolute certainty of assured Truth" (Ali, 1991: 1523). This type of knowledge is derived from inner perception of the self (nafs). It is based on intuition and "an immediate certainty of heart (fu 'ad), without the aid of senses or intellect" (Bakhtiar, 1991:14). Divine guidance comes through this knowledge which is perfect and of high certitude. It is revealed by the Lord to the prophets and constitutes His guidance, and enabled mankind to tread the path of righteousness,

Conclusion

Knowledge within Islamic intellectual tradition is a comprehensive concept encompassing the whole gamut of information; apparent and hidden, about the universe, objects and human life inferred from the signs and ŒyĒhs manifested by the Lord. It enables humans to comprehend the force and vitality that lies behind objects and events and makes them exist and operate in this world in a distinct way serving certain purpose. That vitality is the bounty and gift of the Lord bestowed upon His creatures for performing a role and serving a purpose for which they are created. Knowledge instills the sense of good and evil, right and wrong among human beings by activating the "enlightenment to its wrong and its right" (al-Qur'an, 91: 5) given by the Lord for understanding the Truth, submitting to His will, following His commandments and making their lives worthwhile. In the study of objects knowledge acquaints humans with the origin, structure and the functions they play and how they will be used for the benefit of humanity.

The Lord has given humans the faculties of hearing, seeing and heart for the acquisition of knowledge and comprehending the complexities of the world. Humans should acquire knowledge in an appropriate way through a process. First, they should activate their faculties of understanding liberating them from their wild desires and ambitions (tawassum), then they should ponder over the nature and functioning of the objects and the world (ya'lamĒn). This leads to third stage (tafakkur) when they have to reflect on the ideas which they thought extensively. Lastly, they have to meditate and take to heart. This process enables humans to understand the wonders of the world and intricacies of human life. This is tadhakkur.

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