



International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Growth Evaluation.

Aesthetic education in the Quran

Sarah Risha

Ph.D., School of International Letters and Cultures, Arizona State University, United States

* Corresponding Author: **Sarah Risha**

Article Info

ISSN (online): 2582-7138

Volume: 04

Issue: 04

July-August 2023

Received: 27-05-2023

Accepted: 16-06-2023

Page No: 221-227

Abstract

Aesthetic education in the Quran article starts with an explanation of the meaning of aesthetic education, when it was developed and the most popular non-Muslim scholars who addressed this field of study in Europe and the United States. Later, some names of Muslim scholars who followed the process of aesthetic education are introduced. Afterwards, the article presents how the Quran started this advanced method of education since the seventh century and discusses the verses of the Quran that deals with this procedure in using sound, vision and cognitive thinking.

Keywords: Aesthetic, critical thinking, diversity, holistic approach, cognition

Introduction

Aesthetic education refers to an educational approach that places a strong emphasis on experiences as a means of fostering personal and intellectual growth. The aim of aesthetic education is to help individuals develop their own emotions, values, and perspectives through understanding the world around them. By engaging with aesthetic experiences, individuals can develop critical thinking skills, empathy, creativity, and a greater appreciation for the complexity and diversity of human practices. It can be integrated into the curriculum as a method of enriching learning experience and promoting interdisciplinary thinking. Generally, aesthetic education represents a holistic approach to learning that recognizes the importance of engaging mind, body, and emotions of a person while Learning (Hepburn, 1980) ^[10]. It emphasizes using senses and practical inquiry the same as in learner-centered method to improve students' research and critical thinking skills.

Exploring popular academic resources reveals that educators of different generations has presented materials on aesthetic education started in ancient times as in Plato, continued to the eighteenth century as in Schiller and in the twentieth century as in the writings of Read and Dewey. These are all well-known scholars who wrote about aesthetic education and the important role it plays in human development. Plato was one of the first thinkers to explore the idea of aesthetic education in his dialogues. He believed that aesthetic education could lead to the development of a virtuous character, and that the arts would help individuals strive for higher levels of moral and intellectual development. Plato, in his dialogues, expressed his belief that the experience of "beauty" could lead to moral and intellectual development. He described the study of the arts as a means of developing a harmonious soul and a just society. He believed that art could be used to awaken the innate sense of beauty in the individual and to cultivate a love of truth and goodness.

Schiller wrote a book *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* in 1954 in which he introduced aesthetic experience as an essential method for the development of a full humanity. Schiller believed that experiencing beauty is essential for the emergence of moral and intellectual virtues, and that fostering aesthetic culture is a step towards advancement of society. He wrote, the method of aesthetic education "is the Fine Arts, and their wellsprings are opened up in their immortal examples" (p. 51). The aesthetic curriculum should be considered "because it is through Beauty that man makes his way to Freedom" (p. 9). He believed that aesthetic education could help individuals cultivate a sense of harmony and balance in their lives.

Herbert Read, a British philosopher and educator, argued in the sixties (1960, 1961a, 1961b, 1966), that aesthetic education is engaged with developing the whole person. He explained that arts are a means of expressing human experience and that aesthetic education should encourage students to develop their own creativity and imagination.

His approach emphasized individualization and the importance of finding the best technique for each student.

In the nineties, John Dewey, an American educator, emphasized on creating problem-solving situations that establish connecting school activities with daily life experiences as one of the best teaching methods (Jackson, 1998) ^[11]. Dewey considered aesthetic education as a process of fostering values and promoting social change. He asserted that education must be based on the principles of experiential learning, inquiry, and reflection. Dewey's approach, focused on problem-solving and the integration of education and society. He believed that aesthetic education is critical for the development of individuals' experiences and their ability to appreciate and participate in cultural life.

These thinkers have contributed significantly to the development of aesthetic education as a field of study and have influenced the ways in which educators and scholars approach the teaching and learning process. The common thread in the ideas of Read, Dewey, and Schiller is the belief that aesthetic education should be an integral part of a holistic approach to education that considers the development of the whole person, including intellectual, emotional, and moral dimensions. They saw aesthetic experiences integrating different ways of learning and fostering creativity, imagination, empathy, and critical thinking skills. In short, and as Pinar wrote in "Understanding Curriculum" 1995, aesthetic education refers to the methods of teaching that work on connecting body, mind, spirit, and emotions to provide learners with the ability to reflect and express their own ideas.

The Quran promotes education and encourages thinking and using all senses such as sight, smell, hearing, and taste. "Some of the most important medieval Islamic writers whose work reflect aesthetic views and concepts related to architectural and decorative applications are Al-Farabi, Al-Ghazali, Ibn-Khaldun, Ibn Rushd, Ibn Sina, Al Jazari, and Ibn Al-Haytham" (Necipoğlu, *The Topkapı Scroll*, pp. 363–380). For example, Avesinia (980-1037), Ibn Sina in Arabic, one of the most popular Muslim scholars, emphasized on using the five senses as the starting point for learning which is consistent with his belief that humans are rational beings capable of using their intellect to gain knowledge and understanding of the world. Ibn Sina believed that teaching and learning should be focused on developing the individual's faith and understanding of the world. He believed that education should be a lifelong process, and that individuals should continually strive to deepen their understanding of the world and their place in it. Overall, Ibn Sina's philosophy of education emphasizes the importance of using the senses to gain knowledge and understanding, the role of the soul in human intellect and faith, and the importance of education in developing a virtuous and fulfilling life. His ideas continue to influence Islamic education today, as well as the wider field of philosophy and education.

As for the Quran, the holy book of Islam, it emphasizes the importance of aesthetic education and learning throughout its teachings. While there is no specific mention of "aesthetic education" in the Quran, there are several verses and teachings that can be interpreted to relate to this concept as will be explained. Therefore, aesthetic education in the Quran started in the eighth century, when the Quran was revealed. Considerable Islamic literature associated to the arts existed in Islamic countries since that time. A verse in the Quran says: "And among His signs is the creation of the heavens and

the earth, and the diversity of your tongues and colors. In this are signs for those who know" (30:22). This verse indicates that everything in the world encourages people to think and reflect on the nature around them to learn about its beauty and appreciate the power of God. Tzortzis, 2007, wrote in his book "An introduction to the Literacy & Linguistic Excellence of the Quran", that the Quran encourages aesthetic elements:

However often we turn to it (the Qur'an) ... it soon attracts, astounds, and in the end enforces our reverence... Its style, in accordance with its contents and aim is stern, grand, terrible-ever and soon truly inspiring- Thus this book will go on exercising through all ages a most potent influence." (P, 2, Quoted in T.P. Hughes' Dictionary of Islam, p-526)

Vision, hearing and cognition are gifts from Allah that humans should enjoy and be thank full for. For example, "And Allah has brought you out from the wombs of your mothers while you know nothing, and He gave you hearing and sight and hearts that you might be grateful" (16:78). Therefore, some explanations are provided next.

Sound in Quran

The importance of sound in the Qur'an reflects the belief that Allah's words are not just a collection of written texts, but a divine message that is meant to be heard and internalized by believers. Some records indicate that at the time of the prophet, there were only seventeen people who could write and read. This is to say that the culture at that time was an auditory one. Therefore, when Angel Gabriel delivered the first verse: "iqra" (read), the prophet's response was: "I cannot read." However, after each revelation, the prophet would go and repeat each verse to his followers who would memorize them instantly. The oral transmission of the Qur'an from the Prophet Muhammad to his followers, and the subsequent memorization and recitation by generations of Muslims, has ensured the preservation of the original message and has contributed to the strong tradition of Quranic recitation and chanting which specifies the important role sound plays in the Qur'an.

The Qur'an has a distinctive style which influenced people at the time of the prophet until now. At that time, Arabs considered themselves masters and leaders of the Arabic language. Poetry used to be a challenge and forming poetry was a great pursuit. Therefore, they were impressed with the Qur'an's rhythm and its aesthetic qualities to the degree that the non-believers used to clap, sing, shout and talk loudly to lessen its effect while it was recited to them. A popular Arab literary theorist, Ibn Rashiq, wrote "It should be known that Arabs thought highly of poetry as a form of speech. Therefore, they made it the archives of their history, the evidence for what they considered right and wrong, and the principal basis of reference for most of their sciences and wisdom." (Tzortzis, p. 3-4). Forming poetry was a great pursuit and not anyone could do it. In 2007, Guillaume, explained the Qur'an's aesthetic qualities: "It has a rhythm of peculiar beauty and a cadence that charms the ear. Many Christian Arabs speak of its style with warm admiration, and most Arabists acknowledge its excellence. When it is read aloud or recited it has an almost hypnotic effect..." (p. 73-74) A good example of the role sound plays in the Qur'an is the story of how Omar Ibn Al-Khattab, one of the great companion of Prophet Mohammed and the second kalifate, converted to Islam. It is a well know story in the Muslim community. Before Omar became a Muslim, he learned that

his sister and her husband became Muslims. So, he was very furious and went to their house to punish them. While waiting at their door, he heard someone reciting the Quran. When his sister opened the door, he screamed at them and then asked about what he heard at the door. They tried to calm him down and asked him to listen to what they were learning. Omar started to listen to them and after they recited a few verses of surah Taha, surah 20 in the Quran, he cried "How beautiful and noble is this speech!" Therefore, Omar became a Muslim by only listening to few verses which reflects its magical effect.

At the time of the prophet Mohammad, even the non-believers would just listen to the Quranic words, talk about its attractive and effect on human mind. Mustafa Sadiq al-Rafi'i states in his "Introducing the Qur'an's Literary Excellence":

Anyone who heard it had no option but to surrender to the Qur'an... every single part of his mind (the listener) will be touched by the pure sound of the language music, and portion by portion, note by note, he will embrace its harmony, the perfection of its pattern, its formal completion. It was not much as if something was recited to him but rather as if something had burned itself into him. (p.5).

This emphasizes that literary structure in the Quran connects it with actual experiences of life.

The rich sound and metrical forms of the Quran add to its beauty and musicality. Muslims believe that the beauty and eloquence of the Qur'an are proof of its divine origin and that it has the power to move hearts and minds. The repetition of verses, the use of rhyming patterns, and the careful placement of pauses and intonations all contribute to the musicality of the text. Muslims are taught to recite the Qur'an with proper pronunciation and intonation, and to listen to it with attention and reverence. Until now millions of Muslims, not Arabs only, work on memorizing the Quran even if they are not fluent in Arabic language and do not understand all what they are reading.

In the Quran, Allah "speaks" to people, and they learn and comprehend His words by listening to Him. The response of Muslims to Allah's command should be, as in the verse, "We hear and obey" (2:285). This is to say that people learn and follow Allah's orders and submit to His rules by using their hearing sense.

Additionally, Muslims concentrate on the correct intonation of the words of the Qur'an to get a better understanding and enjoy its meaning. There is a verse that says, "When the Qur'an is read, listen to it with attention, and hold your peace: that ye may receive Mercy" (7:204). It also requires people to listen to the voices that they enjoy as unpleasant voices might cause stress. Allah says in the Quran "Let your voice low: the harshest of voices is the braying of the ass" (31:19). The importance of sound and melody in the Qur'an reflects the belief that Allah's words must be heard, internalized, and obeyed. The Qur'an's unique language and rhythm are seen as proof of its divine origin and its power to move and inspire believers. Reciting and listening to the Qur'an with attention and reverence is a means of showing respect to Allah and of strengthening one's faith and connection with the divine. Furthermore, the impact of the Qur'an's language and sound extends beyond the time of revelation. Muslims throughout history until now have been moved and inspired by its beauty.

In addition to the historical context, modern listeners of the Qur'an have also reported experiencing a powerful emotional and spiritual response to its recitation. Many have described feeling a sense of awe, peace, and tranquility while listening to its verses. The rhythmic and melodic recitation of the Qur'an is often used in Muslim religious gatherings and can be an important part of personal spiritual practice. The Qur'an is not just a book to be read and understood intellectually, but a living, breathing text that must be experienced and felt through its sound and melody. "It is not rare to observe women and men, poor and rich, educated and illiterate, Eastern and Western, falling silent, staring into the distance, lost in thought, stepping back or even weeping when listening to it" (Tariq Ramadan, 2008, New York Times).

The use of the Qur'an in therapeutic settings has also been explored, with some studies suggesting that its recitation can have a positive impact on mental health and well-being. The impact of the Qur'an on Muslim communities is not limited to its religious significance. It has also played a vital role in shaping the Arabic language and literature, and it continues to influence Arabic poetry, prose, and rhetoric.

In summary, the Qur'an's language and sound play a significant role in its structure and impact on the Muslim community. Its unique style and beauty have moved and inspired Muslims throughout history. Hamza Tzortzis stated in his book *The Inimitable Quran, Introduction to the Literary & Linguistic Miracles of the Quran*:

From a linguistic point of view the Qur'an employs various rhetorical features such as the use of rhythm, figures of speech, similes, metaphors, and rhetorical questions. Also, the use of irony and the repetition of words are a small part of the Qur'an's repertoire of rhetorical devices. Its cohesiveness includes various methods such as parallel structures, phrasal ties, substitution, reference and lexical cohesion. These features provide the bedrock and hang together to create the Qur'an's unique style (p. 11).

Muslim scholars feel that the Qur'an has a profound effect on the listener, beyond its mere linguistic meaning. They believe that the Qur'an has a spiritual and transformative power that can purify the listener's soul and heart, and that the sound of the Qur'an can have a healing effect on the body and mind. It is worthy to note that the Quran was, and still is, the main source of spiritual life. The Qur'an also contains references to sound, including descriptions of the sounds of nature. For example, a verse states, "And thunder exalts (Allah) with praise of Him - and the angels (as well) from fear of Him - and He sends thunderbolts and strikes there with whom He wills while they dispute about Allah; and He is severe in assault" (13:13).

Muslim scholars believe that Allah arranged words in the Qur'an to set up rhythms and sounds to produce best communicative results and to increase the psychological impact. The Orientalist Arberry states: "the rhetoric and rhythm of the Arabic of the Koran are so characteristic, so powerful, and so highly emotive, that any version whatsoever is bound in the nature of things to be but a poor copy of the glittering splendor of the original." (*The Qur'an Interpreted*, volume 1, 1996). In other words, it employs sound to have communicative and aesthetic effect on its reader and listener. Sells states: "...there is a quality to the sound of the Qur'an which anyone familiar with it in Arabic can recognize.

Qur'anic commentators have discussed the power and beauty of this sound...it is one of the key aspects of the science of analyzing Ijaz, miracles, al-Qur'an." Approaching the Qur'an: The Early Revelations, 1999) (Sells, Early Islamic Mysticism, pp. 103-110).

The power of sound and choice of words in the Quran reflects its meaning in a distinctive way that it describes events and produces images as if they were happening in front of the reader.

The utilization of sound in the Qur'an has an expressive role, as in the verse "And by the Night when it is still." (93: 2). The use of 'when it is still' gives a feeling of quietness and peace which nighttime provides. Another example that provides a powerful image is "And the producers of sparks striking" (100: 2). The word in Arabic 'qad-han', gives the impression of strong and loud sound that creates the sense of this image. Some other examples are (20:120), (56:4); (79: 6-7); (80: 33) and (100: 4).

Overall, sound plays an important role in the recitation and listening of the Qur'an, and it is considered a key aspect of Islamic worship and practice. I will conclude this section by what. Arberry described his own experience with listening to the Qur'an: "Whenever I hear the Quran chanted, it is as though I am listening to Music, underneath the flowing melody there is sounding... insistent beat of a drum, it is like the beating of my heart." (Deedat, 2022, Science in the Quran, p. 1). This is to say the Quran uses sound to increase its message effect and create scenery and image for the reader.

Vision in Quran:

The Quran emphasizes the importance of using vision, in both physical and spiritual modes. It urges its reader to look and think about the Divine signs in the world. There are many verses encouraging people to look around and think about the creation of the universe, as in: "Do you not see that God has sent down rain from the sky, whereby have brought out produce of various colors? And in the mountains are tracts white and red, of various shades of colors, and black intense in hue. And similarly, among men and crawling creatures and cattle who all have various colors ..." (35:27-28); "Do you not see that Allah sends down rain from the sky—channeling it through streams in the earth—then produces with it crops of various colors, then they dry up and you see them wither, and then He reduces them to chaff? Surely this is a reminder for people of reason (39:21) and "Say, 'O Prophet, consider all that is in the heavens and the earth!" (10: 101). These verses encourage people to use their physical senses to observe and contemplate the signs of God's existence and power in the natural world. They are stimulating people to observe the beauty on earth whether in the various plants, animals, mountains, colors and shades, or even inanimate objects.

Some examples of encouraging the use of spiritual mode to seek knowledge and guidance are: "Say: Have you considered if Allah should make for you the night continuous till the day of resurrection, who is a god besides Allah that could bring you light? Will you not then hear?" (67: 13). Here, the Quran refers to the alternation of day and night and the ability to see as signs of Allah's power and authority. Many verses in the Quran encourage learning by seeing and looking around to learn about God's signs as in: "He is the One' Who created seven heavens, one above the other. You will never see any imperfection in the creation of the Most Compassionate.1 So look again: do you see any flaws?" (67:3) and "Indeed, there have come to your insights from

your Lord. So whoever chooses to see, it is for their own good. But whoever chooses to be blind, it is their own loss. And I am not a keeper over you." (6:104). These verses explain that learning by seeing is brain power and it corresponds to Plato's idea of the "vision" of the intellect. It reflects that knowledge may be obtained by the spiritual intelligence in the heart.

The Quran mentions vision in different contexts and with different meanings, highlighting its importance as a blessing from Allah, a metaphor for understanding, a sign of Allah's power, and a test for believers. "Say, 'Are the blind and the seeing equal? Or is darkness and light equal? Or have they attributed to Allah partners who created like His creation so that the creation (of each) seemed similar to them?' Say, 'Allah is the Creator of all things, and He is the One, the Prevailing.'" (Quran 13:16). Blind here is not the actual disability, it refers to those who cannot comprehend Allah's powers and creation on the world around them. This verse highlights the distinction between those who can see and those who are blind and emphasizes the superiority of those who use their vision to recognize the oneness of God and His creative power. Another verse is: "Those who remember Allah while standing or sitting or (lying) on their sides and give thought to the creation of the heavens and the earth, (saying), 'Our Lord, You did not create this aimlessly..." (Quran 3:191). This verse encourages believers to use their spiritual vision to reflect on the purpose and meaning of God's creation, and to seek His protection from the consequences of disobedience.

Sayyid Qutb, a popular Islamic scholar, wrote in his Qur'anic commentary "In the Shades of the Qur'an" (1979):

This world is beautiful, inexhaustibly beautiful. Man may grasp and enjoy this beauty as much as he wishes, and as much as the Creator of this world wishes. The element of beauty in this world is intentional. Perfection of creation results in achieving beauty. The perfection of creation is apparent in the beauty of every organ and every creature. Look at the bee, the flower, the star, the night, the morning, the shades, the clouds, this music pervading the entire universe of beauty and perfection. The Qur'an draws our attention to all this, so we may ponder and enjoy it. Hence: "He Who has made everything which He has created good. He began the creation of man with (nothing more than) clay" (32:7) is a verse which arouses the heart to trace the aspects of beauty and perfection in this great universe." (p. 279).

Additionally, the Quran introduces different aspects of the universe and encourages the reader to admire Allah's creation. There are numerous verses discussing this topic; therefore, a few examples are presented to put forth the idea of using our vision to appreciate and enjoy beauty. In (50: 6-10): "Have they never observed the sky above them and marked how We built it up? and furnished it with ornaments." Note that the verse does not stop at "how We built it up;" it continues "and furnished it with ornaments leaving no crack in its expanse." The verse draws the readers' attention to the fact that Allah created the sky perfectly with no holes, openings, gaps, or cracks, which is one of the signs of its beauty.

In (20:53)"He Who has made for you the earth like a carpet spread out; has enabled you to go about therein by roads (and

channels); and has sent down water from **the** sky." Visualizing the image of earth as gardens is another example of using spiritual vision to draw attention to the beauty of nature around us. Another example is "Then do they not look at the camels - how they are created? And at the sky - how it is raised? And at the mountains - how they are erected?; And at the earth - how it is spread out?; So remind, (O Muhammad); you are only a reminder" (88: 16-21)

In conclusion of this section, it is important to note that "hearing" and "seeing" are part of spiritual intellect that takes place in the heart.

Cognition in Quran

The first glance at the Quran indicates that the Qur'an is a different genre of literature that cannot be developed by human minds. All books deal with a topic, explain, and support it with evidence before moving to the next topic. This is not the case with the Quran as it deals with different topics with no clear system, explains the same discipline several times and each time formulated in a different terminology (Maududi, Introduction to the Study of the Quran, Ch 1). Nonetheless, reading the Qur'an methodically would reflect that it has three main themes: the greatness of Allah, man's aim in life should be to acquire nearness to Him, and each individual action, good or evil, will always bear fruit accordingly. All topics in the Quran are built around these basic messages which are reinforced constantly (Amro Khaled, Koranic Thoughts, p. 11-12). The Quran is not only a book of laws or commandments, but also a book meant to guide man to heaven.

The literary beauty of the language of the Quran reflects its effect on the human mind. The Quran uses storytelling to encourage thinking and learning. One of the stories mentioned in the Quran is about Prophet Abraham when he was contemplating about the creator of the world. Prophet Abraham was looking at sky, moon and sun and questioning if they are God, the creator of the world:

When the night grew dark upon him, he saw a star and said, "This is my Lord!" But when it set, he said, "I do not love things that set. Then when he saw the moon rising, he said, "This one is my Lord!" But when it disappeared, he said, "If my Lord does not guide me, I will certainly be one of the misguided people. Then when he saw the sun shining, he said, "This must be my Lord—it is the greatest!" But again when it set, he declared, O my people! I totally reject whatever you associate 'with Allah in worship'. I have turned my face towards the One Who has originated the heavens and the earth—being upright—and I am not one of the polytheists." (6: 75-79).

As the end Prophet Abraham concluded that whatever rises and sets cannot be all powerful and that the Creator of all these created things was the One God. This story encourages exploring things around us and using our minds to reach actual conclusions. The story of the Queen of Sheba, Bilquis, is another example of how people may have good conclusions through thinking (27: 30- 44).

Cognitive thinking is considered as a moral commitment in Islam. Allah requires people to use our minds and act morally. Many verses end in: "We detail Our Signs for people who know" (6:97), "... people who understand" (6:98) "... people who believe" (6:99)." According to the translator Abdullah Yusuf Ali 2008, God is making a distinction:

Knowing is for people who merely look at the signs in the world around them; understanding is a higher form of cognition, one required to grasp mysteries; and believing is the highest form of cognition, faith, which brings people closer to Allah" (n. 928, p. 318). An example: "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 ... -- (here) indeed are Signs for a people who are wise" (2:164). In other words, Allah in the Quran demands its reader to observe, ponder, think, reflect and questions the creation of the world and the universe as in: "Do they not ponder/reflect on the Quran?" 4:82; 23:68 & 7:184 ...; "the signs in detail for those who reflect": 10:24; 30:21; 39:42; 45:13; 51:49; 51:49; "Do they not reflect in their own minds?" 30:8 & 34:46 ... "and contemplate the wonders of creation" 3:191 "in order that you may consider" 2:219; 2:226; 6:50; 13:3.

Many verses encourage and ask people to look at, study and try to discover the mysteries of the creation of the universe. Some examples are: "The sun and the moon move according to a fixed reckoning." (6:96) "He ordained stages for the moon so that you might learn the method of calculating years and determining time...." (10:5). In these verses Allah asks people to look at the creation of the sun and moon and study their phases according to a static reckoning. Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, 1983, explained "The real meaning of the movements of the sun and the moon according to a fixed reckoning and of the eclipses of both, of the merging of the night into day and the manner of wrapping one of them around the other, can only be known by him who knows the manner of the composition of the heavens and the earth, and this itself is a science (i.e., astronomy)" (Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, The Jewels of the Quran, trans. by Muhammad Abu al-Qasim, 2018, p. 45-48). If people did not look around and think about what the sun or moon would be like, we would never learn about space and conclude the facts we have now. Mustafa Sadiq al-Rafi'I wrote "In the Quran one finds many hints for the scientific facts; and modern science helps us to interpret the meanings of some of the Quranic verses and to discover their facts" (p. 127-129).

The Qur'an asks people to study, ask questions and not to accept anything without thinking. The formation and style of the Qur'an continually indicates the need to think of things and try to connect them together. Some verses are: "**Think** ye to yourselves..." (6:40), "Did ye then **think** that We had created you in jest, and that ye would not be brought back to Us (for account)?" (23:115), "Does Man think that he will be left uncontrolled, (without purpose)?" (75:36), "Do they not think that they will be called to account?" (83:4), "Now let man but think from what he is created!" (86:5) "And certainly We have left a clear sign of it for a people who understand." (29:35).

There are many verses in the *Qur'an* calling people to ponder and study the signs of Allah in the universe. Some examples are as in: "Have they ever reflected on the wonders of the heavens and the earth, and everything Allah has created, and that perhaps their end is near? So, what message after this 'Quran' would they believe in?" (7: 185), "And in your own creation, and whatever living beings He dispersed, are signs for people of sure faith." (45:4), "Have they not then looked at the sky above them: how We built it and adorned it 'with stars', leaving it flawless?" (50: 6), "and the mountains—how they were firmly set up; and the earth—how it was levelled out?" (88: 19 & 20). Tabataba'i, 1988,

wrote:

“The Quran invites reflection about heavenly signs, the brilliant stars and the differences in their conditions and the systematic order that governs them. It encourages meditation concerning the creation of the earth, seas, mountains, the creation of plants and animals, human beings, and their inner world. Thus, it invites to a study of natural and mathematical sciences and all other fields, the learning of which is in the interest of humanity and brings felicity to human society” (The Quran in Islam, p. 96.).

In fact, the main reason for the glorious period of Islamic civilization was due to the Quran asking and encouraging the reader to look at and study nature. Early Muslim scholars did study nature and worked hard trying to uncover the concealments of creation to prove to the world Allah's wisdom and power. One example of these Muslim scholars is Al-Biruni (973-1048) who studied physics, mathematics, natural sciences and was one of the first to develop a system to measure the Earth's radius. He explained that the reason behind his scientific studies and research is this verse: “...And reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: our Lord! You have not created this in vain...” (3:191) (Mohammad, M.N. and Abdullah, F., 2016, 4(1):1) ^[16].

Another form of cognitive thinking that the Quran introduces is argumentation and providing proofs as argumentation would help to structure logic. An example is: “Who originates creation” then repeats it, “and who gives you sustenance from heaven and earth? (Can there be another) God besides Allah”, “Bring forth your argument, if ye are telling the truth!” (27:64). In addition, the Qur'an draws attention to the danger of accepting information without supporting evidence as in “And follow not that of which you have not the (certain) knowledge of...” (17:36). Some other verses ask the reader to ask for proof as in “Say: Bring your proof if you are truthful” (2:111). On many instances, the Qur'an debates with the nonbelievers and refer to stories of other prophets to try to convince them.

Thus, the Quranic view of knowledge and education propels human intellect to pursue the promptings of human curiosity to delve deep into the process of creation (khalaq), pervading through the universe, and to discover the laws of nature, the ingenuity of creation, which branch out in innumerable ways in the microcosmic invisible sphere of the visible world and to uncover the principles of statics-com dynamism of the physical universe; so as to reach ultimately to the bed-rock of the Divine control in perfect discipline of each and everything of the universe. (Khan, 2002, p. 26) ^[14].

In the Qur'an there are many verses mentioning Allah's signs followed by: “do they/you listen/ ponder/see/reflect”? Some scholars noted that people would find these verses at the most in each five pages which reflects the encouragement of using our cognition and not just to read.

Another verse is: “We will show them Our signs in the universe and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that this 'Quran' is the truth. ...” (41: 53). In this verse Allah is telling people that they can find some of His signs as the creator in space, in Arabic “Al-Afaaq.” These signs people just learned about recently and are still discovering through modern technology. This is to say that people would never learn new things about the world around them without using

their cognitions and senses. For example, “Indeed, in the creations of heavens and the earth, and the alteration of the night and day are signs for those of understanding.” (3: 190). Note that the word ‘sign’ here refers to identifying the metaphysical characteristic of the world and the ones who would recognize it are ‘those of understanding.’ It is the same as the reader spend some time thinking about what he is reading and reflecting on it. “Such distance invites an aesthetic transformation that demystifies the taken for granted, the naturalized understanding of knowledge and the world” (Pinar, Understanding Curriculum, p. 605). This aesthetic experience prompts investigations to support sense-making and understanding the world around us. In conclusion, for Arabs, the language of the Quran is considered as a miraculous language that no one can match, and its legendary quality played a major role in the spread of Islam (Navid Kermani, 2006, p. 110). In Islamic history, Prophet Mohammed's cousin, Ali ibn Abi Talib, said “The beauty of the language is the eloquence of the hand and flexibility of mind.”

For Muslims, the Qur'an is speaking to all people, at all times and everywhere. It is not only for the people in Saudi Arabia where Islam started. The Quran addresses all humankind, especially to “people who think”. It asks the readers, over and over, to watch, reflect and question. It dedicates considerable space to defining the attributes of Allah; but at the same time stresses knowledge and reason as important and valid as faith itself.

Today, the Qur'an continues to have a profound impact on people around the world. Its message of peace, love, and tolerance transcends time and cultural barriers, and its aesthetic qualities continue to charm and inspire those who hear it.

References

1. Philips B. Tafseer Soorah al-Hujuraat: A commentary on the 49th chapter of the Quran. International Islamic Publishing House; c2020. [cited May 2023]. Available from: <https://www.slideshare.net/docsforu/tafseer-soorah-al-huijuraat-by-dr-abu-ameenah-bilal-philips>
2. Al-Ghazali AH. The Jewels of the Quran. Translated by Abu al-Qasim M. Routledge & Kegan Paul; c1983-2018. p. 45-48.
3. Al-Rafi MS. I'jaz al-Qur'an wa al-balaghat al-Nabawiyyah. c1965. p. 127-129.
4. Arberry AJ. The Quran Interpreted; c1988.
5. Ali AY. Translation of the Quran; c2008.
6. Deedat A. Science in the Quran. c2022;1. [Cited 2023]. Available from: <https://www.islamawareness.net/Science/science.html>
7. Khaled A. Koranic Thoughts - Khawater Kora'niah; c2005.
8. Guillaume A. An introduction to the literary excellence of the Quran; c2007. p. 73-74.
9. Necipoğlu G. The Topkapi Scroll—Geometry and Ornament in Islamic Architecture. Santa Monica: Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities; c1995. p. 132.
10. Hepburn RW. The inaugural address: Wonder. Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary. c1980;54:1-23. [cited June 7]. Available from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4106778>
11. Jackson PW. John Dewey and the Lessons of Art. Yale University Press; c1998. [cited Feb 2023]. Available

- from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt32bwqn>
12. Kerdeman D. Aesthetic experience and education: Themes and questions. *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*. 2005;39(2):88-96.
 13. Khan MA. Origin and development of experimental science. Dhaka; c1997. Imam Gazzali: *Al Mustasfa min ilm al-usul*, 1322 H.
 14. Khan MA. The concept of knowledge in the Quran. *Humanomics*. 2002;18(3):26.
 15. Maududi. Introduction to the study of the Quran. [cited March 2023]. Available from: <https://www.iium.edu.my/deed/quran/understand.html>
 16. Mohammad MN, Abdullah F. Al-Biruni: A Muslim critical thinker. *International Journal of Nusantara Islam*. 2016;4(1):1.
 17. Navid Kirmani. Poetry and language. In: Rippin A, editor. *The Blackwell Companion to the Qur'an*. New Jersey: Blackwell Publishing; c2006. p. 110.
 18. Necipoglu G. The Topkapi Scroll—Geometry and Ornament in Islamic Architecture. Santa Monica: Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities; c1995. p. C A 90401-1455.
 19. Qutb S. *In the Shades of the Qur'an*; c1979.
 20. Read H. Education Through Art. John S. Keel; 1969. *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*. 1969;3(4):47-58.
 21. Schiller F. *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*; c1954.
 22. Sells M. Approaching the Qur'an: The Early Revelations. *Early Islamic Mysticism*; c1999. p. 103-110.
 23. Tabataba'i S. *The Qur'an in Islam: Its Impact and Influence on the Life of Muslims*; c1988. p. 96.
 24. Tzortzis H. *The Inimitable Quran: Introduction to the Literary & Linguistic Miracles of the Quran*; c2007. [cited 3 Aug 2023]. Available from: https://www.islam21c.com/wp-content/uploads/132230_an_introduction_to_the_literary_and_linguistic_excellence_of_the_quran.pdf
 25. William FP, Slattery P, William MR, Peter MT. *Understanding Curriculum: An Introduction to the Study of Historical and Contemporary Curriculum Discourses*; c1995.