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ANALYTICAL STUDY OF THE INANIMATE SIGNS OF NATURE FROM "DECIPHERING THE SIGNS OF GOD" BY ANNEMARIE SCHIMMEL IN LIGHT OF THE HOLY QURAN AND SAYINGS OF THE HOLY PROPHET (PBUH)

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ABSTRACT

Scholarly study of Islam has attracted lots of people within years. The German Orientalist Annemarie Schimmel deeply explained the divine characteristics of nature and culture in several Religions, cultures, traditions and especially in Islam. She takes her beginning stage to the most straightforward indications of God, regular peculiarities like stones, dust, water, fire, creatures and their utilization in Strict and representative language. Then, at that point, she continues on toward more subtle signs. These signs are discussed in Holy Quran with great importance. It shows us that nothing that happens in the universe or nothing that exists in the universe is without a meaningful purpose. It can be considered that Annemarie Schimmel has done detailed and captivating work in this regard. So in making and admonishing people to find and believe in decoding the divine characteristics of nature and culture, her work is really commendable. It is crucial to mention that only non-living elements have been taken out from said book in this article. An analytical approach is made to explain

the uniqueness of this topic keeping the authors perspective as an influence. These natural elements are also being discussed in light of Holy Quran and in what contexts they are being mentioned in Holy Quran in the first place. A very informative and considerably interesting approach has been presented in this article.

Annemarie Schimmel is quite famous for her literary work as an orientalist. Her scholarly and pedagogic approach towards the Islamic history and culture has attracted so many Muslims and Non-Muslims. The very similar approach has been used in her book "Deciphering The Signs of God; A Phenomenological Approach to Islam". The focus in this article will be upon the first part of book's name; deciphering the signs of God. Infact, only the non-living natural signs of Allah Almighty and their nature in Islam and other religions will be shed light upon. These signs will be discussed in light of Holy Quran and some famous commentaries of Holy Quran.

INTRODUCTION OF THE AUTHORESS

German orientalist and researcher Annemarie Schimmel was well-known for her substantial writings on Islam, particularly Sufism. She spoke Arabic, Persian, Urdu, and Punjabi in addition to German, English, and Turkish, and her interests covered the entirety of the Muslim world. She interpreted Persian, Urdu, Arabic, Sindhi, and Turkish verse, as well as in excess of fifty books and many expositions on Islamic writing, otherworldliness, and culture.

Early Life

Schimmel was a conceived protestant from a working class however refined family in Erfurt, Germany ¹.

Her faith through her evolution in the field of Islamic history and culture evolved as the time passed. From a protestant who did not believe much in religion evolved into a person that acquired more knowledge about Islamic World than so many renowned Muslim scholars of her time did.

Her dad Paul was a mailman and her mom Anna was follower of a family with associations with Global Exchange. Her young life home was loaded up with writing and verse despite the fact that she didn't come from a scholarly family ².

She wrote for herself that her early time period was like that:

"Once upon a time there lived a little girl in Erfurt, a town in central Germany. A town that boasted a number of gothic cathedrals and was the centre of horticulture. The great medieval mystic Master Eckhart preached there. The little girl loved drawing and reading but hated outdoor activities. She was the only child, born rather late in her parents lives, they surrounded her with measureless love and care" ³

This represents the whole beginning of her life and what sort of environment contributed to her upbringing.

Scholarly Career of Annemarie Schimmel

Schimmel had a turning ease in her life when she was named The Teacher of History of Religion at Ankara College. She went through there 5 years showing Turkish and turned into the first ladies as well as first Non-Muslim to show philosophy at scholarly level. In 1967 she initiated the Indo-Muslim examinations program at Harvard College and stayed on the personnel there for the following a quarter century. In 1992, upon her retirement from Harvard, she was named Teacher Emerita of Indo-Muslim Culture. During this period, she was likewise a privileged teacher at the College of Bonn.⁴

During her scholarly journey, she wrote many books on a large number of scale. Her work in every book is commendable. As an orientalist, she did not stick to the conventional means of criticism just like orientalist of her age did. Rather she evaluated Islam with a completely different and appealing approach. Infact the purpose pf her life was to generate and develop understanding about Islam among her inner self and masses.

Faith of Schimmel

Schimmel was frequently addressed by her Muslim as well as non-Muslim profounder and devotees regardless of whether she was a Muslim. In answer such questions, she liked to give a quibble however explaining reply by saying that:

"Just the individuals who are uncertain about whether they are great Muslims or not can truly be great Muslims"⁵

Selected Work of Schimmel:

- And Muhammad Is His Messenger: The Veneration of the Prophet in Islamic Piety (367 pages). Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985.
- Mystical Dimensions of Islam (512 pages). Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975
- The Triumphal Sun: A Study of the Works of Jalaloddinn Rumi. London: East-West Publications, 1980.
- I Am Wind, You Are Fire: The Life and Work of Rumi. Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1997. Reissued as Rumi's World: The Life and Works of the Great Sufi Poet. Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2001.
- Islam: An Introduction (166 pages). Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992.

It is her distinguished and well elaborated work that got her so much fame and respect in both Western and Eastern civilizations. Her commendable work paved ways for so many other theoretical options for Islam.

Introduction of Book

Individuals are habitually encouraged by the Heavenly Qur'an to "take a gander at the indications of god," which are covered "in the skylines and in

themselves." to draw nearer to the certified center of Muslim religion, this book utilizes a phenomenological way to deal with concentrate on the secrets of Islam.

The most straightforward indications of God's regular events like rocks, plants, and creatures, as well as their application in strict and representative language are Schimmel's beginning stage. She go on with less apparent pointers including sacrosanct overall setting, ceremonial ways of behaving, methods of love, the holy individual, and social request. She inspects how every individual responds to the heavenly secret as she attracts to a nearby. This is an intriguing assessment of Islamic practices and convictions that likewise gives a careful and exhaustive record of the phenomenology of Islam. It draws on both antiquated traditional texts and contemporary writing as well as the writer's broad individual experience.

This book offers a special and insightful viewpoint on the intricate and varied aspects of Islam. It is a ground-breaking investigation into the metaphors and symbols found in Islamic mysticism and theology. Schimmel's phenomenological method of analyzing religion enables a thorough investigation of all of its facets, from its historical origins to its modern manifestations. While some readers may not agree with all of the author's interpretations and conclusions, her thoughtful and thought-provoking analysis adds significantly to the ongoing discussion about Islam and its place in the world. The academic tone and dense prose of the book may be difficult for some readers to engage with. All in all, "Deciphering the Signs of God" is a book that everyone who wants to learn more about this extensive and varied tradition should read.

Highlighting the importance of this book, William Chittick says:

"This is one of Schimmel's most important books. It sums up a lifetime of scholarship on Islam and, more importantly, it puts her understanding of Islam into a phenomenological framework that will readily be appreciated by scholars and students of other religious traditions. It will be looked back upon as a landmark in bringing Islamic Studies into the mainstream of religious studies."⁶

Contents of the book

The said book by Schimmel includes following chapters:

Introduction

1. Sacred Aspects of Nature and Culture
2. Sacred Space and Time
3. Sacred Actions
4. The Word and the Script
5. Individual and the Society
6. God and His Creation; Eschatology
7. How to Approach Islam

Going through these chapters, Schimmel talks about the diversity of natural elements around us and how these elements are a clear picture of divinity.

Limitation of Research

Before discussing the natural elements and signs of God, let me elaborate the fact that the study of "Deciphering the signs of God" is limited to a part of its 1st chapter only where inanimate signs are being discussed by Annemarie Schimmel.

Signs of Divinity in Nature

Holy Quran is the word of Allah Almighty and the most sacred miracle bestowed upon Holy Prophet (PBUH). Holy Quran is for all mankind and it contains information and guidance for every aspect of life be it worldly affairs or spiritual matters. In the Holy Quran, Allah Almighty calls upon human beings to look around and observe the signs of Allah Almighty because everything we see, everything we feel, everything we imagine has a force backing its creation. Allah Almighty is the divine force behind these living and non-living elements, thoughts and imaginations we own. So it is very important to observe these elements and praise His (SAW) attributes. This is one of the purposes of Schimmel in writing the book in discussion.

Schimmel starts the book with a verse of Holy Quran which is of great essence and hold heavens and earths in its depth.

Allah Almighty says:

سَنُرِيهِمْ آيَاتِنَا فِي الْأَفَاقِ وَفِي أَنفُسِهِمْ حَتَّىٰ يَتَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ ۗ أَوَلَمْ يَكْفِ بِرَبِّكَ أَنَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ ⁷

"We will give them Our indications in the universe and inside themselves until it turns out to be obvious to them that this 'Quran' is reality. Is it insufficient that your Master is an Observer over all things?"

Allah Almighty has repeated this truth over and over again throughout the Holy Quran for believers to firm their faiths and for non-believers to follow the right path. Schimmel says that for a Muslim, very sign could be the "ayah" of Holy Quran since everything reflects divinity.

Some other signs that Allah Almighty presents in Holy Quran are given in the following verses:

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ إِذَا أَنْتُمْ بَشَرٌ تَنْتَشِرُونَ وَأَلَّهُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ كُلٌّ لَهُ قَانُونَ ⁸

"One of His signs is that He made you from dust, then, observe! you are people spreading over 'the earth'... .. And to Him have a place that large number of in the sky and the earth — all are dependent upon His Will"

According to Schimmel, they all demonstrate the existence of a real God who created everything. The 'horizons', or the created cosmos, are just one place

where these indicators can be found. They can also be found in our souls, or in our capacity to comprehend and admire others, in human inquisitiveness, in love, and in all that we may feel, think, or experience.

The world resembles a tremendous book where people with the capacity to see and hear God's signs could track down them and be driven by their appearance to the Maker Himself. Through and in the signs, sexy and otherworldly levels unite, and by grasping and deciphering them, one might have the option to understand the insight and force of God. One will likewise appreciate that, as the Koran more than once states, God shows through relationships, stories, and resemblances to draw the human heart past the outside, fringe countenances of creation.

Because one must remember that only sensory experiences may disclose the spiritual parts of existence. As Schimmel says:

" The breeze becomes recognizable just anyway the improvement of the grass, as the nineteenth-century Indo-Muslim essayist Ghalib sings; the buildup which we could see from far in the desert covers the rider who stirs it up; and the foam chips on the external layer of the ocean feature the unimaginable pit. These signs are essential, for the human heart longs to get a short glance at the Grand — regardless of the way that God is past all designs and imaginative psyche — however one cravings to 'contact' the Numinous power to a great extent or another: does one not deliberately kiss the copy of the Koran in which God's assertion is recorded?"⁹

In simpler words, Schimmel says that the senses Allah Almighty provided us with are supposed to be use to attain the closest levels toward divinity. Be it living or non-living signs, everything that we feel with our five senses hold a meaning and our job is to discover that meaning following a divine path towards Almighty Allah.

Inanimate Nature

In the Quran, Allah Almighty cites some of His creations as signs, including the winds, stones, fire, rain and clouds etc. As a result, they are evidence that Allah is their creator and did not create them by accident. Following are some of the very inanimate elements or signs of nature created by Allah Almighty.

Stones

Schimmel initiated her conversation about inanimate nature with stones. She believes that stones are of great importance in Islamic as well as other Semitic religions. The interest with stones, which is exemplified in the Hebrew Scriptures by the story of Jacob and the stone of Bethel, has persevered from the beginning of time. In the old Semitic religions, stones, particularly those of unmistakable shape, were believed to be blessed with power.

The mystical abilities of stones also captivated the interest of Turkic people. Rituals to invoke rain often involve the use of stones, particularly jade.

Strangely shaped stones that are occasionally thought to represent the resting sites of saints can still be seen in Syria and Palestine, the locations of the ancient Semitic stone worship. Roll stones in Syria are said to impart some of their "power" to the body they are rolled over.

Stones mentioned in Holy Quran

Allah Almighty has mentioned some of the precious stones in Holy Quran as well. He (SAW) says:

ءَاثُونِي رُبْرَ الْحَدِيدِ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا سَاوَىٰ بَيْنَ الصَّدَفَيْنِ قَالَ أَنفُخُوا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَعَلَهُ نَارًا قَالَ ءَاثُونِي أُفْرِغْ عَلَيْهِ قَطْرًا¹⁰

Bring me blocks of iron!" Then, when he had filled up "the gap" between the two mountains, he ordered, "Blow!" When the iron became red hot, he said, "Bring me molten copper to pour over it."

Over 3,500 distinct minerals have so far been identified. Like the quartz, feldspar, and mica found in granite, the majority of them unite to form rocks. Agate, opal, jade, and other semiprecious stones are included in this family of minerals termed gems, along with four precious stones. These stones were highlighted in Holy Quran long ago.

In another verse, Allah Almighty says:

كَأَنَّهُنَّ الْيَاقُوتُ وَالْمَرْجَانُ¹¹

"Those "maidens" will be "as elegant" as rubies and coral"

Rubies are created under intense pressure and heat deep inside the earth, like many other gemstones. Corundum is created when aluminum and oxygen atoms are crushed. Rubies and their distinctive color are made possible by this mineral and the presence of chromium. As far as coral is concerned, while free-swimming coral hatchlings stick to lowered rocks or other hard surfaces along the edges of islands or landmasses, coral reefs are first shaped. Reefs foster one of three essential trademark structures when the corals expand and develop. This extinctive and rare phenomenon has been mentioned in Holy Quran before even scientists began to discover these elements.

Other than these minerals, Allah Almighty has mentioned "Black stone of Kaaba" as discussed by Schimmel in her book. The stone holds great importance in Islam. Schimmel says, according to mystical approach that "The Black Stone is God's right hand", initially stone was white but it gradually turned black because sinners touch it every year.

In another verse, Allah Almighty says:

وَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ طَيْرًا أَبَابِيلَ تَرْمِيهِمْ بِحِجَارَةٍ مِّن سِجِّيلٍ¹²

"For He sent them flocks of birds, that pelted them with stones of baked clay"

This ayah refers to the incident of "Al-fil" when a man named Abarha tried to demolish the Kaaba with the help of elephants. So, Allah Almighty sent a flock of birds with pebbles in their mouths to save the Kaaba. The birds rained down the stones on Abarha and his army from which they were wounded and killed. This way, Allah Almighty protected the Kaaba from disbelievers by means of stones.

Similarly, so many other examples are quoted by Schimmel from Holy Quran where Allah Almighty has mentioned stones of different categories.

Stones used by Holy Prophet (PBUH)

Holy Prophet (PBUH) also used different stones as rings. He (PBUH) also recommended wearing some stones to people.

It is narrated by Ibn e Umar that

أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ اتَّخَذَ خَاتَمًا مِنْ ذَهَبٍ أَوْ فِضَّةٍ، وَجَعَلَ فَصَّهُ مِمَّا يَلِي كَفَّهُ، وَنَقَشَ فِيهِ مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ. فَاتَّخَذَ النَّاسُ مِثْلَهُ، فَلَمَّا رَأَوْهَا قَدِ اتَّخَذُوهَا رَمَى بِهِ، وَقَالَ " لَا أَلْبَسُهُ أَبَدًا ". ثُمَّ اتَّخَذَ خَاتَمًا مِنْ فِضَّةٍ، فَاتَّخَذَ النَّاسُ خَوَاتِيمَ الْفِضَّةِ. قَالَ ابْنُ عُمَرَ فَلَيْسَ الْخَاتَمُ بَعْدَ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَبُو بَكْرٍ ثُمَّ عُمَرُ ثُمَّ عُثْمَانُ، حَتَّى وَقَعَ مِنْ عُثْمَانَ فِي بئرِ أَرِيْسَ.¹³

"Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) wore a gold ring or a silver ring and set its stone towards the center of his hand and had the name 'Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah' engraved on it. Individuals additionally began wearing gold rings like it, yet when the Prophet (ﷺ) saw them wearing such rings, he discarded his own ring and said. "I won't ever wear it," and afterward wore a silver ring, whereupon individuals too began wearing silver rings. Ibn 'Umar added: After the Prophet (ﷺ) Abu Bakr wore the ring, and afterward 'Umar and afterward 'Usman wore it till it fell in the Aris well from 'Usman."

According to this and many other "Sahih" hadiths, Holy Prophet (PBUH) used Silver rings and prohibited Gold. As far as spiritual gemstones are concerned, they were also used by Holy Prophet (PBUH) as it is mentioned in the following narration by Hazrat Ayesha (A.S) that Holy Prophet (PBUH) said:

قال تختتموا بالعقيق فانه مبارك¹⁴

"Wear Aqeeq, (Agate or Carnelian), of course it is a blessing for you."

Aqeeq is thought to have a variety of mystical and spiritual advantages, including warding off evil, boosting bravery and strength, enhancing health and wellbeing, and boosting wealth and prosperity.

The stone is said to provide protection from negative energies and promote feelings of happiness and contentment. Some believe that this stone has the power to heal physical ailments such as headaches or stomach pains. Additionally, this stone is known for its ability to increase concentration levels which can lead to improved mental clarity and focus. Improved concentration

also leads to increased productivity which can foster success in all aspects of life¹⁵.

These benefits of Aqeeq are scientifically proven.

Dust

Mother Nature is capable of generating both biological and inorganic stuff out of nothing, whether as fully formed objects or merely as raw materials. Any intricacy of energy, spirits, and life can be created by soil, as well as any number of realms, realities, stars, etc. Earth has the ability to make something real as long as it can be described as an object. It is the part of Schimmel's discussion on inanimate signs of God. Even though soil or dust in itself are non-living components but they hold such unimaginable powers that they can generate almost every sort of living components. It is one of the greatest signs of Divinity.

Dust mentioned in The Holy Quran

The word dust has been mentioned in Holy Quran 17 times but always in almost same context. Be it the creation of humankind or its end, dust has been the main character in every verse of the Holy Quran.

Allah Almighty says:

وَأِنْ تَعْجَبْ فَعَجَبٌ قَوْلُهُمْ أَءِذَا كُنَّا تُرَابًا أَعْنَاءُ لَفِي خَلْقٍ جَدِيدٍ¹⁶

'Presently, ' on the off chance that anything ought to stun you 'O Prophet', it is their inquiry: "When we are diminished to tidy, will we truly be raised as another creation?"

Non-believers often confuse the verse of creation with dust and verse of creation with water. These are two different stages of creation of humankind. The creation with dust is about the creation of Hazrat Adam (AS), whereas the creation with water is about the rest of humanity created through Hazrat Adam (AS). There is no such thing as contradiction in the verses of Holy Quran as it is mentioned in another verse:

يُحَاوِرُهُ أَكْفَرْتِ بِالَّذِي خَلَقَكَ مِنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ ثُمَّ سَوَّاهُ رَجُلًا¹⁷

"Do you distrust in the Person Who made you from dust, then 'developed you' from a sperm-drop, then, at that point, shaped you into a man?"

According to some commentators, Allah Almighty has used two words in different verses. The first one is "Tin" and the second word is "Turab". If we study these words in depth, they both own complete different meanings and it is said by Imam Raghīb:

الطين التراب والماء المخلوط وقد يسمى بذلك وان زال عنه قوته الماء¹⁸

"Mud is dirt when mixed with water and it may be called that even if the strength of water is removed from it"

So the combination of dust and water is called "tin". Similarly, "Turab" is called soil.

As for the creation of human being, Dr. Tahir ul Qadri have discussed following chemical stages of human creation which differentiate in forms of dirt:

The study of the Qur'ān reveals that human life, before its consummation passes through the following seven stages ¹⁹

1. Inorganic matter
2. Water
3. Clay
4. Absorbable clay
5. Physically and chemically altered old mud
- 36 Creation of Man
6. Dried or highly purified clay
7. Extract of purified clay

The detailed discussion about creation of mankind is not necessary here and so it will not be further presented here.

Pure Soil for Ablution

Allah almighty has discussed another important aspect of soil which is its use for ablution. It is mentioned in The Holy Quran as:

فَلَمْ تَجِدُوا مَاءً فَتَيَمَّمُوا صَعِيدًا طَيِّبًا فَامْسَحُوا بِوُجُوهِكُمْ وَأَيْدِيكُمْ ²⁰

"And If you cannot find any water, then do tayammum with pure earth,"

Holy Prophet (PBUH) says about the pure soil in following narration as:

فُضِّلْنَا عَلَى النَّاسِ بِثَلَاثٍ جُعِلَتْ صُفُوفُنَا كَصُفُوفِ الْمَلَائِكَةِ وَجُعِلَتْ لَنَا الْأَرْضُ كُلُّهَا مَسْجِدًا وَجُعِلَتْ تَرَبُّبَتُهَا لَنَا طَهُورًا إِذَا لَمْ نَجِدِ الْمَاءَ ²¹

"Our lines have been made like the columns of the holy messengers and the entire earth has been made a mosque for us, and its residue has been made a purifier for us on the off chance that water isn't accessible."

The consensus is that tayammum is required when there is a paucity of water or the ability to use it. There are prerequisites for the requirement, including adulthood, sanity, the absence of menstrual or lochia blood, the passing of time, a lack of water or the inability to use it, and the absence of any obstructions over the limbs or other obstacles.

Use for Dust for other Traditional Beliefs

Schimmel highlight the use of dust as sacred symbols in different cultures and traditions of Islam. For instance, dust from Hazrat Ali (AS) entombment places in Karbala and Najaf was put in some Shiite lords' sepulchers in India (like the Gol Gunbad in Golconda), and Iqbal's catacomb in Lahore got some residue from Maulana Rumi's burial chamber in Konya because of the Indo-Muslim savant writer's serious worship for the archaic Persian supernatural artist.

Schimmel claims that in light of major areas of strength for them association with dust from such places, numerous guests to an Indo-Pakistani sanctuary, assuming will have been given dried flower petals and burial chamber residue, and they will have faithfully gulped it since they trust it to be unadulterated and sacred.

Water

All living things on earth require water in a limit to work. It is protected to guarantee that the presence of water makes Earth the main planet equipped for supporting life. Schimmel defines it as another sign of divinity which holds great importance and different meanings in different cultures and traditions.

Water mentioned in Holy Quran

Almighty has used the word "Water" 63 times in Holy Quran. He (SAW) has mentioned water in different contexts in the Holy Quran. It is considered the origin of creation of a living being.

Allah Almighty says:

وَاللَّهُ خَلَقَ كُلَّ دَابَّةٍ مِنْ مَّاءٍ²²

" Also, Allah has made from water each living animal"

It is no surprise that a grown up human being's composition consists of more than 60% water and he cannot survive more than a few days without in taking it. Furthermore, He (SAW) urges man to remember his modest beginning as a liquid despised (semen) as he continues to describe creation. An appeal to humanity's propensity for forgetting and becoming conceit.

He (SAW) says:

نَمْ جَعَلَ نَسْلَهُ مِنْ سَائِلَةٍ مِنْ مَّاءٍ مَّهِينٍ²³

" Then He made his relatives from a concentrate of a modest liquid "

Allah Almighty divides water into its various characteristics. He distinguishes the many types of water, describing rain as pure water, spring water as sweet, ocean as salty and bitter, and water that pours from rocks. The attributes of Allah Almighty are also portrayed in these themes of water as well.

Water in the form of Rain

Rain is one of the most important natural phenomenon to take place on earth. Allah Almighty has mentioned this phenomenon in several verses of Holy Quran:

وَأَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَخْرَجَ بِهِ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ رِزْقًا لَكُمْ²⁴

" What's more, He sends down downpour from the sky, making organic products develop as an arrangement for you"

Rain is most definitely a procedure through which every living thing evolves and thrives. Allah SWT emphasizes that it is He who causes the rain and turns arid area into fertile ground that yields food. It is by His benevolence that rain falls, giving people access to clean drinking water and lush green pastures for livestock. Allah Almighty provided man with lovely mountain water to enjoy and made it abundantly clear that rain is beyond human control and issued a warning that He (SAW) has the power to stop it.

Importance of Water in light of sayings of The Holy Prophet (PBUH)

Water is the essence of life and a very precious entity. Religion Islam has highlighted its important considering it a great deal for survival of every living thing. Given the importance of water, the Holy Prophet (PBUH) has defined it as a source of charity,

It is narrated that Saad bin Ubaidah said:

قَالَ قُلْتُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ أَيُّ الصَّدَقَةِ أَفْضَلُ قَالَ " سَقَى الْمَاءِ "²⁵

" I said: 'O Messenger of Allah, what noble cause is ideal?' He said: 'Giving water to drink.'

In another narration, it is said by Saad bin Ubaidah:

قُلْتُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ إِنَّ أُمِّي مَاتَتْ أَفَأَتَصَدَّقُ عَنْهَا قَالَ " نَعَمْ ". قُلْتُ فَأَيُّ الصَّدَقَةِ أَفْضَلُ قَالَ " سَقَى الْمَاءِ ".²⁶

" O Messenger of Allah, my mom has kicked the bucket; will I give in foundation for her benefit?' He said: 'OK.' I got out: 'Whatever sort of cause is ideal?' He said: 'Giving drinking water.'

These narrations highlight the importance of Water in Islam and how one should be very careful in using water. It should neither be taken for granted nor it should be wasted by any means.

Schimmel discusses another historical aspect of water which in its spiritual background that goes back to the formation of Holy site of Zamzam.

Highlighting the importance of Zamzam, Holy Prophet (PBUH) said:

مَاءَ زَمَزَمَ لِمَا شَرِبَ لَهُ 27

" The water of Zamzam is for anything that it is plastered for"

We must then realize the importance of water and value it as a life-giving substance for which many people in the world are praying for. Moreover, water is the sign of purity and it is considered sacred in the eye of every sect, every religion on the phase of earth.

Fire

Fire, which is a byproduct of combustion, a chemical reaction, is one of the four fundamental elements of the universe that are most frequently recognized (along with Water, Earth, and Air). It is made up of nitrogen, oxygen, water vapor, and carbon dioxide. The fire offers explanations in the broadest range of fields extrinsically. As a result, it is a special phenomenon that can explain anything. It sparkles in Heaven and blazes in Hell. Both cooking and calamity are involved. It is a reward for those who behave well and a penalty for those who abuse it. It is both excellent and awful.

The implications of "fire" as indicated by Ferber "are complex as well as at times equivocal: what warms can consume; what enlightens can stun and daze. Fires are tracked down on the planet, in paradise, in heck, and in limbo; they bring life and demise; they can kill by wearing up or by wearing out anything." 28

But in general, opposite to water, Schimmel says that fire is associated with negative powers in almost all traditions of Islam. In the Holy Quran, it represents the wrath of Allah Almighty and is used mostly as hellfire. It is a sign of torment and suffering. It represents the "Jalal" of Allah Almighty and is another unprecedented sign of divinity. On the other hand, it also represents comfort and calmness, it is a source of light and source of creation for some "beings".

Fire mentioned in Holy Quran

The word fire has been mentioned in The Holy Quran for around 200 times. Mostly to warn the believers and disbelievers. Allah Almighty says:

وَاتَّقُوا النَّارَ الَّتِي أُعِدَّتْ لِلْكَافِرِينَ 29

" Monitor yourselves against the Fire ready for the skeptics."

In another verse, Allah Almighty says:

وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فَسَقُوا فَمَأْوَاهُمُ النَّارُ كُلَّمَا أَرَادُوا أَنْ يَخْرُجُوا مِنْهَا أُعِيدُوا فِيهَا وَقِيلَ لَهُمْ ذُوقُوا عَذَابَ النَّارِ الَّتِي كُنْتُمْ بِهَا تُكَذِّبُونَ 30

However, with respect to the individuals who are insubordinate, the Fire will be their home. At the point when they attempt to escape from it, they will be

driven once again into it, and will be told, "Taste the Fire's torture, which you used to deny."

Ibrahim (AS) and Fire

The story of Ibrahim (AS) and fire is one of the signs of divinity. It represents Allah Almighty's hold over every phenomenon that takes place anywhere.

Allah Almighty says:

قُلْنَا يَا نَارُ كُونِي بَرْدًا وَسَلَامًا عَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ³¹

We requested, "O fire! Be cool and safe for Abraham!"

Schimmel expresses that no doubt, God can change the consuming fire into a rose-garden, as He (SAW) accomplished for Abraham, for whom fire became 'cool and lovely' when Nimrod had projected him into it.

This verse of Holy Quran is one of the finest examples of symbolism used to attract the reader as it is said:

"The statements "Burn him" and "Be thou cool" may be semantically opposite but the symbol (fire) representing both ideas simultaneously show incomparable literary grandeur of the Quranic style. It presents opposing concepts in such a way that their presence becomes interdependent. Although the Holy Quran is neither a book of literature nor it is supposed to be a literary composition, yet the use of figurative language makes it appealing to human emotions more than any literature"³²

Fire and the creation of Jinn

Fire also represents the element of creation. Jinn and Shaitan were created with fire. Schimmel says that because of this element of fire, most Islamic traditions and folk cultures believe that evil things and creatures generate from fire and they can be formed using black magic around fire.

Allah Almighty has mentioned the creation of Jinn in Holy Quran. He (SAW) says:

وَخَلَقَ الْجَانَّ مِنْ مَّارِجٍ مِنْ نَارٍ³³

And He created jinn from a 'smokeless' flame of fire.

Different commentators have described different definitions of creation of Jinn. However, everyone held the common factor that Jinn are complexly made organisms. In the light of Quranic verses, El-Zein elaborated the composition of jinn as:

"It is characterized by a brilliant flame of very high intensity mixed with smoldering wind and has a special Arabic name, marij, which means mixed

with. It is almost as if the jinn were composed of hell itself or are a living hell"³⁴.

Muslim Scholars have them to be fascinating but also repulsive since they evoke hell. Muslim mediaeval thinkers claimed that the jinn were so deadly that they might really kill. They emphasized that heat is a quality of fire and a means of expressing sentiments. They also attributed powerful emotions, tremendous emotional power, and rationality to Jinn.

Saying of Holy Prophet (PBUH) about Fire

إِنَّ هَذِهِ النَّارَ إِنَّمَا هِيَ عَدُوٌّ لَكُمْ، فَإِذَا نِمْتُمْ فَأَطْفِئُوا مَا عَنْكُمْ³⁵

"This fire is indeed your enemy, so whenever you go to bed, put it out to protect yourselves".

Fire has been considered as a threat in general in light of both Holy Quran and saying of Holy Prophet (PBUH). It is a sign of "Jalal" of Allah Almighty. But it is not a purposeless creation of Allah Almighty. It brings warmth in cold, comfort in discomfort.

Purpose of discussing Inanimate signs of Nature

As mentioned above, we have discussed a few inanimate but very much necessary signs of Allah Almighty. The purpose of studying these signs in light of Holy Quran and sayings of Holy Prophet (PBUH) is to elaborate the fact that Allah Almighty did not create a single stone without bestowing it with a specific purpose in this world and that everything that has ever existed belongs to Allah Almighty. So if a non-living matter has so many purposes, how come the most incredible creatures, the best of all creation, the "Ashraf ul Makhluqat" are being sent without a purpose?

The purpose of presenting all the above mentioned details was to emphasize on the purpose of our creation.

Animate creation of Allah Almighty; Mankind and "Aqal"

We have discussed the inanimate signs of Allah Almighty. Every one of them hold a specific importance and a purpose. So it would be so foolish and unreasonable to think that the bestest of all creation; humans are without any purpose.

It is very interesting to know that all other creatures to ever exist, living or non-living obey Allah Almighty automatically. It is the human who are given the choice to obey or disobey. It is because we've also been given the factor of "Sha'ur". And Allah Almighty calls upon His creation to observe and reason in His signs.

Allah Almighty says:

أَفَلَا يَتَذَكَّرُونَ الْفُرْعَانَ 36

Do they not then ponder in the Quran?
In another verse, Allah Almighty says:

قَدْ بَيَّنَّا لَكُمُ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُعْقِلُونَ³⁷

"We have certainly made the signs clear for you so perhaps you will understand."

Aql is the driving force behind the idea that life is both a gift and a trust that must be used as capital to practice righteousness by adhering to the teachings of the Holy Quran. All the signs of Allah Almighty that have been discussed above demand from us to have a firm observatory sense to experience the best of divine nature. This is not possible without using our intellect.

There are unique of conclusions between Researchers of Islam concerning the physical seat of astuteness. Imam Abu Hanifah and his school believe cerebrum to be halfway the organ of astuteness. This is likewise one of the described assessment of Imam Ahmad b Hanbal, albeit, numerous Hanbali school of law believe that capabilities to be halfway in the heart all things being equal. It is additionally the described perspective on Imam al-Shafi'i.³⁸

Be it heart or mind, Aqal demands us to observe and reason and this is the teaching of Holy Quran as well. All the signs of Allah Almighty have been created for the best of creation to observe and praise the Divine. Every sign holds a specific but unique meaning and purpose which needs to be unfolded. Stones have been in use even before the stone age, fire and water have been labeled as the entities for survival of life. Phenomenon of rain, storms, snowfalls, forest fires, formation of pearls in the deep oceans, creation of corals in the darkness of seas, trillions of millions of tiny living organs present in earth's soil and the living it generates in the most phenomenal ways. All of these are the signs with a reason. The reason is for us to observe and understand these signs.

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