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***Religion as a Source of Intellect and Critical Reflection: An Ideal Relationship of Contemporary Research with the Divine Orders***

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**Abstract**

*Scientific research has successfully unearthed hidden truth about the universe that has converted individual life from the Stone Age to the modern technological era. In one way or the other, scientific research and critical thinking have been adapted for knowledge creation in the field of natural, social, and biological sciences. It is scholastically admitted that the research is a vital part of the academic and professional career for which thousands of books have been written to facilitate the attainment. However, the holy Qur'ān along with other religious holy books are providing a solid base logically on divines. The main purpose of this paper is to reveal the extraordinary honour, self-respect, and dominance granted to human over all mortals of the Universe with perception and intellect. It is held that the verses pertain to critical thinking of all contemporary religions act as a promoter to accelerate the stride of man's exertions for eternal success. The study will try to find out the answer to the question that what is the actual concept of reflection and intellect in different religions, and how it can be related to the modern scientific methodologies? The study will identify the relevant verses of the Qur'ān and other contemporary religions on reflection and intellect. A qualitative research method of content analyses has been adopted. Yet for Muslim intellectuals, no such thing would be acknowledged unless it has been proved regarding Qur'ān or Hadith and other religious books. Modern scientific research provides strong bonds with divine revelations, ordering its readers to discover the undiscovered facts of the universe.*

**Keywords:** Intellect, Reflection, Hidden Truth; Strong Bonds and Technological Era.

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## **Introduction**

The universe is a grand scheme of almighty Allah (SWT) in which different roles have been assigned to mankind. Nature sets standards of every creature as giving consciousness, knowledge, and sources as revealed by the Holy Qur'ān. Allah (SWT) has provided specific characteristics and fundamental properties to every existence of this Universe. God has blessed thinking power's abilities to every mankind by utilizing these abilities and attempt to fulfil his essence. By following the footsteps of nature, scientists have discovered incomplete knowledge about the unalterable fundamental properties of all materials of the cosmos and applied them in an integrated form. Hence, to conduct scientific research, the Qur'ān and other holy books offer arguments, critical thinking, observation, and substantiate with examples for those people who use reason. It is acknowledged that cognitive power has enabled every individual to transform his or her life from the Stone Age to the modern technological era. The human mind from the commencement of life had tried to articulate the celestial knowledge with progressive existence. With the help of extrasensory perceptions, man has used reasoning abilities to develop research in science and technology.

Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) drew awareness to this imperative fact such as, "an hour of reflection and meditation is better than a year of supererogatory religious veneration".<sup>1</sup> Hence an influential believer requires physical and mental health supplemented with scientific and technical competence to grasp the purpose of life. To inculcate intellect and reflection in man, Qur'ān has persuaded by its numerous verses as: "Oh mankind; He has made subservient to you whatever present in the heavens and whatever present in the earth. Surely there are signs for those who reflect."<sup>2</sup> At another place Qur'ān says: "He is who created for you (for your Service), O Mankind all that it is in the earth."<sup>3</sup>

The scientific methodology has been formed by the evolution of research related to the incidences in natural sciences. In consequence, it has given rise to the process of creative thought and intellectual rejuvenation. Time and again, Allah Almighty has

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<sup>1</sup>Isma'īl ibn Muhammad' Kāshf Ajlūnī al-Jarrāhī, *al-Khāfā' wā-Mūzīl al-Ilbās* (Beirut: Rīsalāh Publishing, 2012), 2: 1370.

<sup>2</sup> Al-Qur'ān 45:13

<sup>3</sup> Al-Qur'ān 2:29

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mentioned signs of His power and strength for those people who are wise enough.<sup>4</sup> All these Qur'ānic verses establish a flawless theory of research based on immaculacy and perfection of divine knowledge.<sup>5</sup>

Man has been blessed with necessary faculties to fulfil the temporal and religious tasks. The ability of thinking makes a man different from other creatures of the Universe. Critical thinking opens up new avenues of academic research and creates sufficient grounds for intellectuals. Salahuddin Ahmed wrote *Duties of Muslims Reflection on the Qur'ān*, which is a significant contribution towards Islamic literature, but the study did not extensively elaborate the concept of *reflection* and intellect in order to make an analogy with scientific investigations. Babar Azim's book *In Pursuit of Self*, his greater emphasis laid on the demand of a scientific form of religious knowledge. Reconstruction is the need in order to understand the rational Islamic teachings and traditions. The author did not mention that reconstruction is not possible without critical thinking. Muzaffar Iqbal produced *Islam and Science: Exploration of the Fundamental Questions of the Islam and Science*. The writer has comprehensively described the relationship of all-natural sciences with Islamic discourse, but he did not describe the connotation of *reflection* and intellection, critical thinking in religious context. *Islam in Various Perspective* written by Dr. Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri, is an elaboration of all socio-political and religious aspects in context of Islam. Critical thinking occupies little attention of the author. Steven Schuster wrote *The Critical Thinking, Plato, Socrates and Aristotle*, he did not make a religious analogy of critical thinking with the Bible Verses. Shashi Tharor has produced a tremendous treatise entitled *why I am Hindu* is a true justification of intellection and reflection. The author did not make a comparative analysis of religious orders with modern research. *Religion as Critique: Islamic Critical Thinking from Macca to Market Place*, wrote a masterpiece to highlight Muslim's contribution in invention and innovations. The writer intrepidly exposed the reasons why Muslims are lagging behind in different spheres of life.

The current qualitative study was based on analogical exploration of the divine orders of four basic contemporary religions in comparison between *reflection* and *intellect*. Different verses were collected in their religious books randomly while keeping

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<sup>4</sup> Al-Qur'ān 3:191

<sup>5</sup> Al-Qur'ān 67:30

in mind that the context of the verses should show that it is a religious obligation to perform that specific act. After segregation of those verses firstly Islamic verses, similar verses were explored. Translation of verses were written in English. Then the context of the selected verses is compared according to the concept of *reflection* and intellect. The analysis was done using narrative approach.

### **Qur'ānic views about (Reflection) *fīker* and (Intellect) *aqāl***

As mentioned earlier, there are hundreds of verses that express about cosmology, astronomy, human and natural sciences. These verses illuminate the knowledge about the earth, sun, moon, planet, twilight, navigation system, expansion of the universe, the big bang theory and age of the universe, etc. The people of intellect and reason possess precise knowledge. These are the people of perception who apply their minds towards the greatness of almighty's creatures. Qur'ān has mentioned those people in different grades. However, the reason enables the prudent person to enter into the valley of remembrance and guidance. Allah (SWT) calls those people '*tazākkūr*' by mentioned more than two hundred times in Qur'ān. He says that once the prudent person from the valley of remembrance when enters into the valley of the constructive world which is '*tadābbūr*' has been mentioned 8 times in the Holy Qur'ān with all its derivatives. Similarly, the person travels from constructive intellect, *tadābbūr* to prudence *tā'qūl* and realistic understanding which has been mentioned 49 times in the Holy Qur'ān that enables the person to meditate in the science of Qur'ān and to become the person of *tafākkūr*. Then he starts contemplating, pondering about the science of God.

It is interesting to note that the word *tafākkūrr* has been mentioned 18 times in the Holy Qur'ān to enable the man to enter into the valley of *Al-Bseerā* insights, which makes the person open the sense which is *shā'oor*. Similarly, it is stated that the person having sense and awareness enters into the valley of *ilm* which is the ocean of knowledge that has been mentioned 855 times in the Holy Qur'ān. It enables him to reach the doors of gnosis *Al-mā'rīf*, which leads a man to reach 'eeqan' and ocean of perfection. However, when the person enters into the ocean of firmness, he becomes one of *mūtāween* and such a person possesses a firm belief in God and unto His creations.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Jamal Ahmed Badi, "*Tafākkūr from Qur'anic Perspective*," *Tafakkur* 3 no. 1 (2001);38.

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However, despite clear identifications, the Muslims are encouraged to verify the truth, towards enlightenment. The will of the Muslims to avoid the knowledge-seeking is also contributing much in this regard. Although success and prosperity in life demand discipline in thoughts and deeds, the moment, when a man abandons the discipline in life, renders the whole activity fruitless. The same principle applies to the thought process and intellect. Hence religion is too based on some rules about the creations of the creator. It is believed the Muslims, who are the believers of Quran and can find many encouragements to pursue scientific research endeavours based on reasoning. Reason says that 'I don't accept any system without the creator and there is no existence of anything without the creator'. No institution of the world can function without an organized system of rules and regulations serve as the identity of the system which cannot be challenged by any other authority.<sup>7</sup>

Almighty Allah (SWT) sent His Prophets for the guidance of mankind and enlightened them on the commandments so that humanity can be guided with those commandments from the education of the Prophets. Humanity can act upon to lead a successful life. When the believers observe these commandments in life, attitude, ideologies, and philosophies they become the identity of becoming the believer of Almighty Allah. Through His Prophets, Allah (SWT) has given us the divine books to order us the divinely revealed injunctions and laws of Allah (SWT). His insertion of exposure as a source of demonstrable social scientific facts side by side (or should we say over and above) with sensory experiences, and mental dispensation, it introduces new confrontations that Muslim social scientists have to deal with in a rather eccentric fashion. The whole orbit of knowledge comprised of religion, but also includes all-natural and scientific laws. Allah (SWT) has empowered us with a sense of discrimination to recognize what is fair & unfair and to carry out research in the fields of the natural environment. Religion has blessed humanity with the social, moral, and religious values to declare a dignified servant of God. Islam ordains to acquire knowledge in all fields of life which are considered beneficial for humanity. **Qur'ān states, "*Indeed we have honored the children of Adam*".**<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Zakir Nike Speech was delivered on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2012. An Atheist argued on the religion and the existence of God. youtube[https://www.youtube.com/results?search\\_query=%23Religion](https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=%23Religion).

<sup>8</sup> Al-Qur'ān 17:70

However, the research in the Islamic perspective is immensely rich which by all means leads to benevolent purposes. It encompasses all aspects of human life, e.g., social, political-religious individual, and collective. In this regard, pragmatism seems to be the keynote. Qur'ān and the Sunnah are declared as the first two primary sources while the third source is “*ijtihād*” or (deductive logic) for the quest of temporal and religious knowledge. The basic principles of the Qur'ān and Sunnah do not change while “*ijtihād*” is an ever-dynamic process through history to the contemporary world. Qur'ān has met the needs of countless brilliant scientists, scholars, and saints. Through the use of abilities of mind, Qur'ān draws attention that simply being aware of the creation of oneself is not enough until the true objective of life is not fulfilled.<sup>9</sup>

Similarly, the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) says, “O Allah, I pursue refuge from the information which is not benefitted, from the temperament that does not think about the distress of (Allah), from the heart that does not impression satisfied and the entreaty that does not react.”<sup>10</sup> It explores for the coherent practicalities in Islam might be observed to have begun with the Prophet himself. His constant prayer was; “Allah (SWT), grant me the awareness of the definitive nature of the things”. In a well-known verse of Qur'ān, it is stated, “and to those who apply we show our pathway.”<sup>11</sup> Islam emphasis on the concept of right path is for those people who are true seeker and don't follow blindly without judging its validity.

Man is blessed with complete liberty of motive, will, and intention. Therefore, he could earn whatever he intends to earn without coercion or external pressure. Since every act of man is pre-evaluated and pre-assessed by calculating human conduct. It will be prospectively exposed and will confirm the perception of divine knowledge.<sup>12</sup> Qur'ān is not confined for a temporary purpose. It is agreed that its constitutional theory serves the demand of all times, socio-cultural and technological settings.

In the construction of the heaven and the earth and the interchange of night and day and stargazing that take place in the ocean for the assistance of

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<sup>9</sup> Salahuddin, Ahmed, *Duties of Muslims Reflecting on the Qur'ān* (Lahore: Mufti Lines Books, 2014), 2.

<sup>10</sup> *Kitāb Al-Dhīkr*, (Book Pertaining to The Remembrance Of Allah, Supplication, Repentance And Seeking Of Forgiveness) translation Sahih Muslim, Book 35, Hadith No. 6568. Chapter 17: Refuge From The Evil Of What One Has Done And What One Has Not Don.

<sup>11</sup> Al-Qur'ān 29:69

<sup>12</sup> Qadri, *Islam in Various Prospective*,58.

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the individuals and what Allah (SWT) referred down from heaven water from life to the earth after its death and transmission them from each animal and the release of the breeze and the clouds conquered between the sky and the earth are symbols for individuals who comprehend.<sup>13</sup>

The verse envisages the peculiar configuration of advanced scientific technology. Most consecrated and most glorifies is He who has the enormous manner of delightful specialty in the form of galaxies in the heavenly space and made the sun in it a light-generating and heat produce lamp and an unblemished moon in the cosmological system. The Qur'ānic verses about *FKr* (Intellect) and *GhQL* (Reflection) that act as a booster to accelerate the pace of man's knowledge.

No	Related instructions found in Qur'ān	Related Verse	Brief Meaning of the Verse
1.	Qawmīyyaātafakkārūn	(13:3), (45:13)	There are signs in the creation of earth and heaven for those who reflect.
2.	Mahdān, Dahāhā, Sutīhāt, Bisāt, Lakūm	(20:53), (79:30), (88:22), (71:19)	Allah asks us to reflect on how he has spread out the earth for us.
3.	Yatāfākkarūnā	(3:191)	Allah (SWT) has not created anything without a purpose.
4.	Mur'īdūnā	(12:105)	For those people who do not give any heed to the signs.

<sup>13</sup> Al-Qur'ān, 2:164



5.	Sakhkhārā	(45:13)	Allah (SWT) has subjected to us all that in heaven and earth as a favor and kindness from Him.
6.	Rabbānāmakhālqtahādhabātīla	(3:191)	Those who reflect upon the formation of the heavens and the earth conclude that their Lord did not create them in vain
7.	lī-qawmīyayātafākkārūn	(16:10)	Allah (SWT) Asks people who comprehend to reflect upon His signs around them.
8.	Kūllīththāmārāt	(16:10)	Allah (SWT) sends down rain from the sky and from the earth which brings forth vegetation, olives, palms, vines, and all kinds of fruit.
9.	Yātafākkārūn	(16:44)	Allah (SWT) sent down the Qur'ān to the Prophet(s) for mankind so that people reflect upon it.
10.	, Sharābūn, Shīfā' un -līn'nās	(16:69)	They produce a drink

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			which is natural healing for men and a sign for those who reflect.
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Allah asks us: “Will you not reflect?” (6:50). All these verses, in one way or the other, provided clear signs to mankind. However, the concept of *FKr (Intellect) and GhQL (Reflection)* can only be related to modern scientific methodologies if they can be judged rationally. To be a good Muslim, one can utilize modern research technologies for the service of Islam by avoiding its negative features such as religious and moral rootlessness.<sup>14</sup>

### Perspective of Critical Thinking in Hinduism

Gnana Vibh, a religious book in Hinduism, according to some verses of this book about divine orders of the religion. “Yadā yadā hī dhārmāsya glānīr bhavātī bharātā abhyūthhānām adhārmāsya tadātmānām sṛjāmy ahām”<sup>15</sup> It means, whenever and wherever there is a reject in pious practice, O successor of Bharata, and a principal rise of irreligiousness at that time I incline myself. Words of this religious book describe that Bharata will come in this universe when evil shall increase and nobody ready to come in religious worship. Another verse: “Parītranāyā sadhūnām vīnasāyā ca dāskṛtām dhārmāsamsthāpanārthayā sambhāvamī yūge yūge”<sup>16</sup> It means to deliver the religious and to obliterate mischief-maker, as well as to reinstate the ideologies of religious conviction, I appear epoch after epoch. According to book **Gnana Vibh**, the **Bharata** again re-establish the basic principles of holy religion and appear with full powers and preach the religious message with their worshipers. During the historical battle (Kuruksheetra) between **Pāndavās and Kauravās**, His Embodiment Lord **Krishna** told **Arjuna** about the times He came in this world as an **Avatar** for the rights of his devotees.

“Arjuna asked when and why do you visit us as an Avatar “?”

<sup>14</sup> Muhammad Mumtaz Ali, *Critical Thinking: An Islamic Perspective* (Malaysia: Thinkers Library, 2008), 169.

<sup>15</sup> A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, *Bhagvad Gita As It Is*, 4:7, 201-203.

<sup>16</sup> Bhaktivedanta, SLOKA 8.

Here these verses of Holy Shrimad Bhagavad Geeta which are the words of the SUPREME stating that whenever there are wrongful deeds, sins much more beyond the horizon, people start killing each other for their own sake and happiness, no law and order, the right is eliminated and the wrong is dominated, no regards for the religion and no worshipping of GOD but the devil that is the millennium the era where I will descend to protect my devotes and create a new order for their rights and fight against those evil miscreants responsible for such atrocity who claim themselves to be GOD. With my presence, I will heal the wrong to right and guide the principles of religion whenever I am needed.

### **Critical Thinking in Sikhism**

In the holy book of Sikhism Guru Granth Sahib, mentioned that about divine orders of religion as follows: “By His command, bodies are created; His authority can’t be disrobed”. These verses show that the body of a human is created by God for a specific purpose under orders and no one can bypass the orders of him in the universe. “By His command, souls come into being; by His authority, magnificence and magnitude are obtained”. Under his orders, the soul of the human being is working/serving for the development of the human body and acted for the glory of his God orders. “By His authority, some are elevated and some are little; by His written control, hurt and happiness are obtained”. “Some, by His Command, are blessed and pardons, others, by His command, wander pointlessly everlastingly”. God tests his followers in different ways and levels for the obedience level. Sometimes, give high levels and sometimes ordinary tests in the form of pain and loss in life. God protects all his followers and also showers blessings on them if they are good and do services for his humanity. “Everyone is subject to His control; no one is away from His command.” Everyone in this universe lives under his command and control and no one can exceed his power and further than his orders.

“O Nanak, one who understands His control, does not speak in ego”.

“Air is the Guru, water is the father, and earth is the great mother of air”.

“Day and night are the two nurses; in whose lap all the world is at play”.

God says that in the above verse that O Nanak, everyone in the universe follows his orders, so do not misbehave with others. All facilities are under the orders of God in different forms and all things act as specific purposes.

### Critical Thinking and Reflection in Christianity

In the Bible, the Religious holy book of Christianity, “The Lord thy (your) God will raise to thee (you) a Prophet of thy (your) nation and thy (your) brethren (group) like unto (until) me: him thou (you) shalt hear:<sup>17</sup> In these verses, it was explained that God has sent Hazrāt Esā (Allāh-e-Salaām), who was one of the members of that specific place and God sent Hazrāt Esā (A.S) to guide humanity and God ordered the countrymen to listen to Hazrāt Esā (A.S). “As thou desired of the Lord thy God in Horeb, when the congregation got together, and said, Let me not hear anymore the voice of the Lord my God, neither let me see any more this exceeding great fire, lest I die”.<sup>18</sup> This is bestowing to all that you inquire of the LORD your God at Horeb (Mount Sinai) on the day of the congregation, saying, ‘Let me not listen to the power of speech of the LORD my God again, nor notice this immense fire any longer, so that I will not pass away.’ “I will rise them a prophet out of the midst of their comrades like to thee: and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I shall facilitate him.” God said that He sent and rose Hazrāt Esā (A.S) like and among other countrymen. Hazrāt Esā (A.S) was sent to talk about the one God and God said that Hazrāt Esā (A.S) will say what God will tell him. “And my hand shall be upon the prophets that see vain things, and that divine lies: they shall not be in the council of my people, nor shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel, neither shall they enter into the land of Israel, nor you shall know that I am the Lord God.”<sup>19</sup> I will move up my fist against all the prophets who see forged revelation and make a lying prophecy, and they will be expelled from the people of Israel. I will blemish their names from Israel’s evidence books, and they will never again set foot in their land. Then you will recognize that I remain the independent LORD. “Like all things of his divine power which appertain to life and godliness, are given us, through the knowledge of him who hath called us by his proper glory and virtue”. Considering that His heavenly authority decided to us everything about life and religiousness, over the correct information of Him who called us by His magnificence and distinction. “By whom he hath given us most great and precious

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<sup>17</sup> Pauline Viviano, *Book of Deuteronomy*, (London: Society of Biblical Literature, 1982), P-220

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>19</sup> Ibid

promises: that by these you may be made partakers of the divine nature: flying the corruption of that concupiscence which is in the world.”<sup>20</sup>

Throughout these He has specified us his very great and valuable assurance, so that through them you may contribute in the heavenly nature, having fled the dishonesty in the universe grounds by evil desires. "For perverse thoughts separate from God: and his power, when it is tried, reproved the unwise: For intellect will not enter into a malicious soul, nor dwell in a body subject to sins. For the spirit of intellect is benevolent, and will not acquit the evil speaker from his lips: for God is the witness of his reins, and he is a true searcher of his heart and a hearer of his tongue." "For he created all things that they might be: and he made the nations of the earth for health: and there is no poison of destruction in them, nor kingdom of hell upon the earth." He fashioned everything so that it might carry on existing, and the lot He created is nourishing and good. There is no noxious poison in them. No, death does not rule this world.

"Then Jesus was commanded by the Spirit into the desert, to be tempted by the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward he was hungry. And the tempter coming said to him: If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. Who answered and said: It is written, not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceeded from the mouth of God?"<sup>21</sup>

Then the strength led Jesus to the wasteland to be persuaded by the Devil. After expenditure forty days and nights devoid of nutrition, Jesus was starved. Then the Devil came to him and said, "If you are God's Son, order these gravels to crack into bucks. But Jesus answered, "The scripture says, 'human beings cannot live on bucks by you, but require every word that God speaks. For Christians, the central belief is in a person, Jesus, and in all, he taught regarding the meaning of life, as well as the transformation and healing he offered."<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> *The Second Epistle of St. Peter the Apostle*, P-1563

<sup>21</sup> *The Holy Gospel of Jesus Christ*, according to St. Matthew, the Holy Bible stressed upon the importance of logical reasoning and critical thinking. And he may not be tempted by any devil attempt.

<sup>22</sup> Diana L. Villegas, *Spirituality and Belief: Implications for Study and Practice of Christian Spirituality*, *HTS Theologies Studies/Theological Studies* Vol no 55. Issue 1 (2021), P- 4.

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In Christianity, the main belief is based on Jesus' teachings and the way he taught regarding changing the lifestyle and healing at the spiritual level. Jesus preaches the message of God to all their followers of Christianity and ensure them abide by rules and regulations of the Universe as per mention in the holy book.

### Conclusion

Critical thinking and rational process are the basis of modern research, like western thoughts, the basis of Islamic concept provides a proper guideline, the principle under which reliability and authenticity may be testified, multiplied, and finalized for a specific study. Here to bring the end product of the research the same might be extended to another natural, social sciences discipline, and law. In all these disciplines and many others, the Qur'ān provides guidelines regarding aqāl (**Intellect**) and fīker (**Reflection**). The human mind from the inception of life had tried to articulate the Divine knowledge with temporal existence. Though the Qur'ān and other religious holy books are divine, however, for the seekers, it contains a lot of scientific knowledge and indications. In Hinduism, Shirmad Bhagavad Geeta, Supreme stating that whenever is wrongful deeds, sins increase much, people act very wrong, injustice increase in the universe, no one ready to worship God, I will come and protect the humanity and universe. The holy book of Sikhism describes the orders of God how human nature can obtain its orders and its effects on their daily and here and the afterlife. All the above verses of the holy books describe the nature and divine orders of God. God says how humans serve under his divine orders and follow the specified rules.

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