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The Practical Dimensions of Contemplating on the Qur'an in the Thought of Muhammad al-Ghazali: A Study Based on His Book (The Five Thematic Axes of the Qur'an)

الأبعاد العملية لتدبر القرآن الكريم في فكر محمد الغزالي من خلال كتابه (المحاور الخمسة للقرآن الكريم)

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Article abstract:

Islamic scholars have established that understanding the Holly Quran constitutes the primary level of the responsibility incumbent upon Muslims toward the Quran, with contemplation (tadabbur) as its highest level, followed by the obligation of acting upon it. The complete and perfect way of engaging with the Holly Quran is achieved through the integration of understanding, contemplation, and practical application. From this stand point, the present paper seeks to reveal the core tenets supporting the practical methodology of Quranic contemplation. The study adopts Muhammad al-Ghazali's approach as a model, as al-Ghazali was among contemporary thinkers who focused on issues of Quranic understanding and interpretation—particularly thematic exegesis (tafsir mawdu'i)—and went beyond mere interpretation to urge his readers to pay attention to the Quran's practical dimension, making it a methodology for life. The study specifically examines his book The Five Principles of the Holy Quran, considering it to present a concise summary of his vision on this subject.

Key words: *Muhammad al-Ghazali, Holy Quran, Contemplation (tadabbur), interpretive methodologies, thematic exegesis.*

ملخص المقال :

تقرر بين علماء الشريعة أن فهم القرآن الكريم يعتبر أولوية ضمن المسؤولية المطلوبة من المسلمين تجاه القرآن، والدرجة الأعلى هي (التدبر)، تليها في المقام درجة العمل به التي هي أوجب، وكمال التعامل مع القرآن الكريم يكون بالاقتران بين الفهم والتدبر والعمل. من هنا تعمل هذه الورقة على تكشيف أهم المبادئ التي يتكئ عليها منهج التدبر العملي للقرآن الكريم، وقد اختارت الدراسة منهج محمد الغزالي نموذجا في هذا السبيل؛ إذ أن الغزالي من المفكرين المعاصرين الذين اهتموا بقضايا فهم وتفسير القرآن الكريم، خاصة التفسير الموضوعي للقرآن الكريم، ولم يكتف بالتفسير فقط وإنما أراد أن يحث قراءه على الانتباه إلى البعد التطبيقي للقرآن، وجعله منهجا للحياة، واختارت الدراسة كتابه (المحاور الخمسة للقرآن الكريم)، باعتباره قدم خلاصة رؤيته لهذا الموضوع.

كلمات مفتاحية: محمد الغزالي، القرآن الكريم، التدبر، مناهج التفسير، التفسير الموضوعي.

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Introduction

The soundest methods for engaging with the Holy Qur'an address essential principles that foster understanding it and enable learners to draw upon it in building their character. This is because understanding the Qur'an is a function that transcends its civilizational and da'wah role beyond reciting its letters, by placing the Qur'an in the position of guidance and direction in the Muslim's life.

Among the methodologies for engaging with the Qur'an comes the methodology of tadabbur (contemplation), constituting a fundamental level in the Muslim's engagement with the Book of Allah. On this matter, al-Zarkashī states: "Reciting the Qur'an without tadabbur is detestable, and upon this was based the hadith of 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Amr: 'He does not comprehend who recites the Qur'an in less than three [days]" (al Zarkashī, 1404 AH/1984 CE, p. 455). Moreover, true contemplation (tadabbur) is not limited to mere cognitive understanding alone but is tightly linked to action, as the later guarantees the effectiveness of Allah's Book in the Muslim's life.

Tadabbur of the Holy Qur'an transcends mere comprehension of its verses and surahs; rather, it focuses on sound understanding, not as an end in itself, but as a starting point for applying the Qur'an to reality so that it fulfils the purpose for which it was revealed: to serve as the ruling authority in the Muslim's life, in obedience to the saying of God Almighty: ﴿And whoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed—then it is those who are the disbelievers﴾[al-Mā'idah 5:44]. Therefore, it becomes clear that searching for a practical methodology of tadabbur is neither a luxury nor superfluous, but the core duty of the Qur'an's reciter.

Through numerous works, Muhammad al-Ghazālī outlined the best approach for engaging with the Qur'an, including *How Do We Engage with the Qur'an?*, *Glimpses into the Holy Qur'an*, *The Battle of the Mushaf in the Islamic World*, *Toward a Thematic Interpretation of the Holy Qur'an*, and *The Five Axes of the Holy Qur'an*. The sum of his intellectual output links the Qur'an to the Muslim's lived reality. Mustafa Wintin explains: "This school was worthy representing Islam truly…[teaching] how to investigate to reach the causes by by which phenomena are ordered in life and regulated according to the laws God has deposited in the cosmic order. But Muslims quickly abandoned these methodologies for abstractions—indeed, the metaphysical matters—relieved of researching their depths by revelation" (Wintin, 1422 AH/2001, pp. 22-23).

Muhammad al-Ghazālī likewise outlined his comprehensive methodology: "The Qur'an must be recited contemplatively and consciously, understanding each statement precisely. Continuous study of the Qur'an is required: recitation, understanding, *tadabbur*, and discernment of Allah's *sunan* in souls and horizons, the constituents of civilizational testimony, knowledge of commandments and rulings, types of encouragement and deterrence, promise and threat, and the like of what Muslims need in order to resume their lost role" (al Ghazāli, 1984 CE, p. 28).

Research Problem

This paper investigates the intellectual efforts of Muhammad al-Ghazālī, aiming to develop a practical methodology that realises this value: making Qur'an a core driver of the Muslim behaviour and interaction with reality. This begins with awareness of existence and the Creator, progresses through the role as a servant (abd) of Allah, and culminates in exploring the foundations of civilizational *sunan*. It draws on al-Ghazālī's *The Five Axes of the Holy Qur'an* to clarify this approach, answering: What are the practical dimensions of tadabbur (contemplation) of the Holy Qur'an in al-Ghazālī's thought, as presented in this book?

Study Objectives

This paper pursues three main objectives, summarised as follows:

1. To clarify the meaning and necessity of practical tadabbur (contemplation) of the Holy Qur'an.
2. To elucidate the features of a practical methodology for engaging with the Holy Qur'an, as derived from Muhammad al-Ghazālī's *The Five Axes of the Holy Qur'an*.
3. To guide Qur'an students toward practical approaches in dealing with the Qur'an, especially those alined with the requirements of the contemporary era.

1. Book Description

Muhammad al-Ghazālī wrote *The Five Axes of the Holy Qur'an* to perform tadabbur (contemplation) of Allah's Book through an innovative methodology. In this work, al-Ghazāli uses the characteristics of thematic interpretation (*al-tafsīr al-mawḍū'ī*) of the Qur'an to derive its five central axes, encompassing the whole of its subject matter and the Muslim's life. In his book, al-Ghazālī highlights two key dimensions: the centrality of faith (*al-īmān*) as the Qur'an's primary theme; and confronting doubts (*al- shubuhāt*) about Islam—whether regarding its foundations (*uṣūl*), its creed (*'aqīdah*), or its legal rulings (*aḥkām ash-shar'iyyah*). He refutes these through numerous examples, framed by practical, reality grounded reading of the Qur'an.

He titles the first axis "Allāh, the One and Only," outlining parameters of Islamic tawḥīd (Monotheism), its proper understanding (Fahm), its connection to the cosmic order, culminating in submission to the absolute uniqueness of Allah's power and governance over the universe. He refutes atheistic claims by linking observable cosmic realities to tawḥīd as the ultimate truth. Starting from *al-jabr wa-l-qadar* (determinism and free will), he grounds his discussion in Qur'anic guidance, supplemented by certain modern scientific findings.

In the second axis, titled "The Cosmos as a Sign of its Creator," al-Ghazāli deduces that the Qur'an's subject matter revolves around the cosmos as a manifest sign (ayah) of its Creator. In this axis, it reinforces how the Qur'an supports the first axis's tawḥīd by repeating verses that demonstrate how existence points to divine reality. This truth, al-Ghazālī argues, manifests only when the Qur'an's truths are brought into action and application. The Qur'an thus calls first for embodying Islam's teachings excellently, then proclaiming them skilfully —any shortfall in either defames Islam. (al Ghazālī M. , 1409AH., pp. 58-61). In this axis, al-Ghazālī outlines key concepts for the Qur'ān specialist, drawn from the Qur'an to foster awareness of: the reality of spirituality *(al-rūḥāniyyah)* and when it hinders active faith (*imān*); and the concept of positive seclusion (*al-'azl al-ijābī*), which ties reflection and contemplation with productive and effective action. He asserts that work and movement overcome lethargy and idleness, concluding with examples from the doctrine of resurrection (*al-ba'th*), which here serves a powerful motivator for action.

Al-Ghazālī explains that the Qur'an's third axis centres on Qur'anic stories (*al-qasas al-qur'ānī*). He affirms that their creedal (*īmānī*) and educational (*tarbiyyī*) objectives (*maqāṣid*) begin with religion's reality as a unifying value across all prophetic messages. The Qur'anic stories, he argues, emphasise the unity of the prophets' religion and their messages' goals. This religious unity should be the most important remedy for fanaticism's plague— whether sectarian, tribal, or racial—that infiltrates souls and minds. The psychological disposition fostered by the Qur'anic text, according to al-Ghazālī, is one that constantly recalls the unity of the object of worship and the unity of the nation (the ummah), in both past and present, as well as the equality of all creatures in their servitude to God Almighty.

Al-Ghazālī further emphasises that resurrection and recompense (*al-ba'th wa-l-jazā'*) — one of the Qur'an's key themes— forms the fourth axis. He explains that the Qur'an presents the doctrine of resurrection not abstractly, detached from action and behaviour, but as manifesting in a set of qualities and moral traits whose presence defines true faith therein. Among these key traits, he notes, are scrupulousness regarding the rights of Allah (*huqūq Allāh*) and rights of His servants (*huqūq al-'ibād*), especially public rights. Al-Ghazālī

concludes this axis with a thematic exegesis (*tafsīr mawḍū'ī*) of Sūrat *al-Wāqi'ah*, reinforcing the core truth he has established herein.

Al-Ghazālī concludes by presenting *lata'if Qur'āniyyah* (Qur'anic subtleties)—educational and legislative (tashrī'ī)—that enumerate qualities and actions Allah loves or dislikes. The Qur'an inculcates in the Muslim the constant awareness of Allah's pleasure (*riḍā*) and displeasure (*sakhaṭ*) in all actions, training him to seek the former and remain ever-cautious of the latter. Al-Ghazālī relies, in collecting these passages, on the methodology of *al-tafsīr al-mawḍū'ī* (thematic interpretation) of the Qur'anic verses.

From the foregoing, al-Ghazālī regards these five axes as encompassing the Qur'an's central themes, with *tadabbur* (contemplation) serving as the path. This paper employs inductive analysis of al-Ghazālī's book to extract the core elements for adoption.

2. Faith from Conception to Actualization

In *The Five Axes of the Holy Qur'an*, Al-Ghazālī stresses a fundamental Qur'anic principle: the articles of faith remain fragmented without linkage to human refinement (*tazkiyah*) and active engagement with existence. This recurs across all axes.

3.1 The Qur'an Dispels Doubt about itself

The Muslim starts from a creedal (*aqīdī*) presupposition: the Qur'an's perfection and divine attribution are beyond all doubt. He then faces rational challenge in his lived reality (*waqī*)—internal or from sceptical campaigns targeting Islam's sources and values. This challenge shifts the Muslim from emotional to rational, proof-based (*burhānī*) faith—as Malik Bennabi notes on the encounter between Western and Islamic civilizations, amid colonial superiority campaigns, which compelled the Muslim to confront his own self, uniqueness, and backwardness (Bennabi, 1423 AH/2002 CE, p. 48). Here, al-Ghazālī stresses that the Qur'ān's self-discourse affirms its inimitable truth (*i'jāz*): falsehood cannot approach it from before or behind, appealing to both reason(*'aql*) and heart (*qalb*) to grant the believer tranquillity (*sukun*). Thus, achieving serenity through emotional and rational conviction (*yaqīn*) is *tadabbur's* primary objective.

Al-Ghazālī holds that this awareness grants the believer serenity but also shields against the maze of abstract disputation separated from action— a trap many Muslims fall into, which he considers an obstacle to the Qur'an's practical dynamics. Al-Ghazālī confirms: "If only Muslims derived their doctrines, both in conception and in expression, solely from the Qur'an! Then they would have found relief and would have granted relief. Some enthusiasts of argumentation have not hesitated to indulge excessively in noisy disputes over creedal issues, misleading themselves and others… There is no safeguard from all these pitfalls except adherence to the Qur'anic methodology and walking along its established paths" (al Ghazālī M. , 1409AH., p. 13). Adherence to the Qur'anic method in establishing its own authority avoids endless disputation and quarrelsome debate.

3.2 Stupefaction by Existence's Laws and Events Opposes True Faith

Correct Qur'an reading situates it within its revelatory context and environment, as Allah sent it down as guidance for humanity to worship Him within the framework of its realities. This requires engaging the intellect with cosmic signs (*dalā'il*) and Qur'anic truths (*haqā'iq*), grasping reflection (*tafakkur*) authentically: unifying observable realities to uncover unseen truth (*ghayb*) (al Ghazālī A. , 1402AH/1982EC, p. 425). A

reading unlit by this remains incomplete in meaning and impact. Hence, al-Ghazālī insists on linking faith and tawḥīd to Qur'anic realities confronting ancientpolytheists (today's atheists) (al Ghazālī M. , 1409AH., p. 21).

Qur'an demands *Taddabur* as living remembrance against polytheists' doubts. Al-Ghazālī states: "This cosmos is the primary theatre of our thought and faith's spring. Neglecting cosmos veils servant-Allah link, ignoring Qur'an's call: ﴿Indeed, in the heavens and the earth are signs for the believers. And in your creation and in all that is scattered throughout of crawling creatures are signs… in what speech after God and His signs will they believe? ﴾[al-Jāthiyah 45:3–6] " (al Ghazālī M. , 1409AH., pp. 50-51).

The believer's intellect must undertake a reflective, contemplative "intellectual journey" through the universe and existence (*riḥlah fikriyyah taʾammuliyyah*) through the universe (*al-kawn*) and existence (*al-wujūd*) , by understanding its material and social nature becoming conscious of conflict realities (al Ghazālī M. , 1409AH., p. 62). This, al-Ghazālī argues, guarantees the Muslim intellect's ability to activate faith and discharge vicegerency (*khilāfah*) duty within the world. Such detached reading estranges from Allah. "From this, he concludes that neglecting the universe and failing to study it opens the door to ignorance and misguidance; while Islam builds knowledge on a deep gaze into the universe and continuous inquiry within it. Any science that drifting away from this stream, in his view, is deviation of Greek origin, not an Islamic method, and those who favoured this deviation have harmed Islam and its message—not Islamic" (al Ghazālī M. , 1409AH., p. 53).

3.3 Ethical Conduct as a Practical Manifestation of Tawḥīd

When the Holy Qur'an addresses the issue of faith in Allah, it simultaneously presents a methodology (*manhaj*) for regulating human behaviour, proceeding along three axes: the self (*nafs*, the individual's reality) (*ḥaqīqah*), and the society (*mujtama*) he inhabits. Imam Al-Ghazālī states: "The Qur'an has broadened the circle of tawḥīd inside the *nafs*, so that every person might despair of partners who could shape his future apart from God's will: ﴿Is there anyone who is an army for you, who can help you apart from the Merciful? Indeed, the disbelievers are only in delusion ﴾[al-Mulk 67:20]. Practical tawḥīd, here, completely strips the believer's trust (*tawakkul*)from all others so that he lets go of them, calm and at ease (*sukūn*), while others are humbled by need and supplicate to those they imagine as controllers of their affairs; had their beliefs been true, their conduct would have been different" (al Ghazālī M. , 1409AH., p. 47).

The Qur'anic verses describing for the characteristics and manifestations of the *Day of Judgment* (*yawm al-ākhirah*) converge to imbue the suffering believer endures in this life with transcendent meaning, extending beyond the visible boundaries of this worldly life (*dunyā*). Al-Ghazālī remarks: "The battles of the pen today make a clamour similar to the clashing of weapons in heated warfare, and I have seen newspapers and books filled with darkness and falsehood about Allah and His messengers. I think that a decisive gathering will assemble them and their opponents in a decisive moment. Why does Allah do this? ﴿*So that He might make clear to them what they disagree about, and that those who disbelieve may know that they were liars*﴾ [al-Nahl 16:39]. For this reason, belief in resurrection and recompense (*al-baʿth wa-l-jazāʾ*) are repeatedly mentioned in the Book of God; there is scarcely a *sūrah* that does not include them" (al Ghazālī M. , 1409AH., p. 127).

Within this vigilant reading (*tadabbur*) of the Qur'an, belief in the Day of the Hereafter (*īmān bi-l-ākhirah*) becomes a continuous educational (*tarbawī*) stream from which the Qur'an's reader draws moral and behavioural guidance. It alerts him, as al-Ghazālī indicates, to the critical necessity of preparing for both the near and distant future, and of planning strategically for both wisely, in light of a comprehensive existential outlook (*ruʾyah kawnīyah shāmi lah*) that integrates the realities of lived experience (*ḥaqāʾiq al-waʿy al-ḥissī*) with those of the promised Hereafter. Al-Ghazālī highlights this by citing: ﴿O you who have believed, fear

God and let every soul look to what it has prepared for tomorrow; fear God; indeed, God is fully aware of what you do. And do not be like those who forgot God, so He caused them to forget themselves; those are the defiantly disobedient ﴿[al-Ḥashr 59:18–19] (al Ghazālī M. , 1409AH., p. 129). This perspective positions the Hereafter as the natural extension (*intilāq*) of every action performed in this world, and as the abiding, eternal chapter (*fāṣil*) concluding every human story lived upon this earthly life.

4. The Qur'an as the Foundation of the Islamic Value System

Al-Ghazālī five core axes of the Holy Qur'an reveal a rich and abundant moral-value content, reflecting its nature as Allah's source of elevated meanings and supreme ideals. What is distinctive, is their coherence forming an integrated Islamic value system, deduced from al-Ghazālī's established outline below.

4.1 The Divine Character of Islamic Values

Imam al-Ghazālī emphasises the necessity of constantly linking the Qur'anic discourse to its Speaker, Allah the Exalted, and the impossibility of reading the Qur'an in isolation from the remembrance (*dhikr*) of His sublime attributes (*ṣifāt ʿulyā*). Thus, he stressed, across the different axes, the issue of proving *tawḥīd* in the Qur'an and elucidating its effect on the life of the individual, the community, the nation, their struggles and challenges (al Ghazālī M. , 1409AH., p. 28).

This encompasses al-Ghazālī's key Qur'anic method: linking Islamic values to what *"Allah loves and what He does not love,"* making this as the governing criterion for believers' actions. He explains: "Among essential meanings of spiritual formation (*tarbiyah*), we must first consider *'Allah loves, and Allah does not love.'* If we are believers eager for His pleasure (*riḍā*), we hasten to what He loves and abandon what He dislikes. Qur'anic texts reveal these as universal principles, and when the human being constantly bears them in mind, achieves soul purification (*tazkiyat al-nafs*) and character elevation across all dimensions of existence. This worship extends everywhere not only within mosques walls" (al Ghazālī M. , 1409AH., p. 160).

Framing Qur'an recitation with constant mindfulness of *"Allah loves and what He does not love"* —as the dominant criterion (*miʿyār*) for its values— ensures awareness of divine supervision (*murāqabah ilāhiyyah*). This supervision guides, regulates, and elevates behaviour, cultivates sincerity of intention (*ikhlaṣ al-niyyah*) and truthfulness (*ṣidq*) in the believer's dealing with Allah and existence, instilling a just scale (*mīzān ʿadl*) to judge matters according to His will (*mashīʾah*). These values render their embodiment worthy of the description *"rabbānī"* (devoted, godly), as Allah states: *"Be rabbāniyyīn through your teacing of the Book and study of the Book"* [Āl 'Imrān 3:79].

Imam al-Ghazālī, conducts a comprehensive survey of Qur'anic passages mentioning "what Allah loves and what He does not love," linking them to foundational behavioural values that shape sound, lordly-divine (*rabbānī*) character. What follows enumerates these passages.

What God Almighty loves	What God Almighty does not love
- Allah loves the penitent and loves the purified. (Value of the purity of the heart through repentance, the purity of the body through cleanliness, and the purity of wealth through avoiding unlawful earnings and recognizing their danger.) - Allah loves the doers of good. (Value of *iḥsān*—God's goodness in creation, and His call upon His servants or worshipers to practice *iḥsān*.) - Allah loves the pious. (Value of *taqwā*.) - Allah loves those who rely upon him. (Value of *tawakkul*.) - Allah loves those who act justly. (Value of justice and fairness.) - Allah loves those who fight in His cause in orderly ranks. (Value of organization and discipline.)	- Allah does not love the transgressors: injustice, tyrany, and the disruption of the natural order of life and society. - Allah does not like those who are self-deluded [or arrogant] and boastful. - Allah does not like the public utterance of evil/hurtful speech except by one who has been wronged - Allah does not love the treacherous and the sinful. - Allah does not love the extravagant and wastful. - Allah does not love the exultant and boastful (*al-farriḥīn*): that is, those whose selves are filled with a corrupt or malicious joy, as illustrated in the story of Qārūn (Korah).

4.2 The Ethics of Seekers of the Hereafter

Imam al-Ghazālī devotes a distinct section in Qur'anic stories titled "The ethics of seekers of the Hereafter." This study treats it separately as *tadabbur* distinguishes *"Hereafter-connected"*from *"world-connected"* humans. The first is the mark of the truly believing person, and the second is the mark of the disbeliever or of one who is heedless of the true nature of existence. God Almighty says: *"Men whom neither trade nor sale distracts from the remembrance of God, the establishment of prayer, and the giving of zakāh; they fear a Day when hearts and eyes will be overturned, that God may reward them for the best of what they did and increase them from His bounty. And God provides for whom He wills without measure. And those who disbelieved—their deeds are like a mirage in a desolate plain which the thirsty man supposes to be water, until when he comes to it he finds it to be nothing, and he finds God with him, and God settles his account in full; and God is swift in reckoning"* [al-Rūm 30:37–39].

Mindful contemplation (tadabbur) of the Holy Qur'an must within this framework of distinguishing Hereafter-seekers' ethics from others', so the reader becomes aware of the existential dimension beyond mere servitude, grasping their required moral traits. This way consciousness marks the boundary qualifying one for *rabbāniyyah*. Al-Ghazālī identifies distinctive values characterising seekers of the Hereafter, setting them apart from worldly seekers. He observes: "masses rush worldly arenas like wild beasts, seizing wealth and status without fearing forbidden or seeking lawful—indistinguishable from wilderness beasts! These deny God and Judgment Day; only sound faith changes their conduct. Hereafter-believers live differently: avoiding doubtful matters to protect their religion and honour, prioritising Hereafter over worldly concerns. They understand deeply Allah's saying: *'And this present life is nothing but diversion and amusement, and indeed the Abode of the Hereafter— that is the true life; if only they knew*' [al-'Ankabūt 29:64] " (al Ghazālī M. , 1409AH., p. 130).

Seekers of Hereafter integrate daily behaviour with servitude (*'ubūdiyyah*) to Allah. Ordinary habits become worship and devotion. They treat worldly life Hereafter field, using limited time for eternal harvest. No effort wasted, no time squandered securing Allah's pleasure. Qur'an nurtures this in reflective readers. Qur'an contrasts do not reject worldly life, but Allah severed worldly attachment distracting from existence's reality (al Ghazālī M. , 1409AH., pp. 130-131).

Loving Hereafter, viewing world as sown field, Qur'an shapes Muslim of high aspiration (*himma 'āliya)* according to his conceptions and deeds. Conceptions embrace comprehensive existence, uniting the unseen (*ghayb*) and the perceptible, holistic life vision. Actions energetically sow produce energetically, embracing difficulty, rejecting lowly arenas (al Ghazālī M. , 1409AH., p. 132).

Holy Qur'an delineates moral ascents from base traits to noble virtues linked to a great reward and a generous recompense for those who adopt them. If, by chance, a person combines with his Islam a bad manner; then the fault lies in the individual, not in Islam itself. The present turning-away of Muslims from their religion or faith is caused by the decline of the status of the noble minded among them, and through

this decline have the Muslims themselves regressed. Muslim apostasy stems from noble minded decline causing communal regression. Blame lies not with Islam, rulings; sources—as Amir Shakīb Arslān states it: "Those responsible for this decline are the Muslims, not Islam; the readers, not the Book; the carriers, not the message. It is they who have lost kingdoms, forfeited ancient glory, and inflicted this harm upon the Sharī'ah and Qur'anic principles." (Arslān, 1428 AH/2008 CE., p. 99).

4.3 A Methodology for Engaging with Qur'anic Stories

Qur'anic stories (*al-qaṣaṣ al-qurʾāniyyah*) transcend mere historical records, serving divine messages embedded within each narrative. The Qur'an, as the final scripture sent to guide humanity in this worldly life, cannot reasonably fall into the trap of hollowness that offers nothing new to humankind in fulfilling its mission. Thus, al-Ghazālī places the Qur'anic story among the five axes of the Qur'an, emphasising that those engaging in recitation or contemplation must constantly be aware these stories carry spiritual, educational, and moral dimensions requiring contemplation (al Ghazālī M. , 1409AH., p. 90). Stories contexts reveal divine wisdom (*ḥikmah ilāhiyyah*). Surrounding verses emphasise specific meanings. Meanings diversify across recounting (al Ghazālī M. , 1409AH., pp. 83-84).

Qur'anic stories teach that the past connects to the present through the constancy of human nature and essence (*fiṭrah*). The origins of good and roots of evil remain constant across time (al Ghazālī M. , 1409AH., p. 90). Al-Ghazālī remarks: "Hollywood's carnal desires mirror ancient slave markets; colonialism's horrors equal Pharaohs' tyranny despite refine titles." Civilizations rose on dazzling scientific progress and amazed nations with their knowledge and superiority; they transgressed against themselves and others, shutting ears to the calls of reformers. ﴿So what did their earning avail them? ﴾؟ ﴿[Ghāfir 40:82] " (al Ghazālī M. , 1409AH., p. 91).

The Holy Qur'an affirms believers participate in spanning humanity from Adam to earth's final inhabitant. They bear the prophetic trust (*amānah*), carrying meanings past generations struggled for and future generations will inherit. (al Ghazālī M. , 1409AH., p. 92).

5.The Qur'an as a Source for the Components of Civilisation

Inductive reading of *The Five Axes of the Holy Qur'an* reveals its foundational role the concept of desired Islamic civilisation. It urges reviving Qur'anic civilizational as a practical guide for Muslims in fulfilling mission and civilizational roles. al-Ghazālī's key aspects follow.

5-1 Tawḥīd as the Law of Existence and the Framework of Life

Deep contemplation (tadabbur) of the Holy Qur'an makes the Muslim characterised by *rabbāniyyah*. It reveals this to the Muslim community and Islamic civilisation. Al-Ghazālī summarises that civilization becomes truly divine (*rabbānī)*: no action except per Allah's will, no deed except seeking His pleasure. He explains: "The *rabbāniyyah* distinguishing Muhammad's nation (ummah) grounds its wakeful activities and sleeping visions." Islamic civilisation rises on faith making Allah every striving's aim. Contemporary "humanistic" civilisation contrasts sharply. Humanism needs Allah to avoid selfishness; *rabbāniyyah* is true humanism in truth and goodness" (al Ghazālī M. , 1409AH., p. 158).

Qur'an establishes Islamic civilisation as *rabbāniyyah*—meaning its creed (*ʿaqīdah*) governs its philosophy of its existence. In the Qur'ānic consciousness, *tawḥīd* (the oneness of God) is the law of existence and organising principle of life (Barghūth, 2019, p. 162). Humans exist by Allah's will to submit (*istislām)* to Him. Muslim civilisation derives value from servitude (*ʿubūdiyyah*) and obedience to God Almighty. All the prophets, without exception, Prophets derive authority solely as devoted slaves seeking Allah's satisfaction (al Ghazālī M. , 1409AH., p. 29).

Tawḥīd-awareness compels Qur'an reciters to internalise divine values before civilizational tools. Islamic civilization begins with *insān al-tawḥīd*, not production." Al-Ghazālī observes: "The remedy, before it becomes training the hands in precision, must first be the illumination of hearts from within by love of God and love of what He loves: ﴿And God loves the doers of good﴾ [Āl 'Imrān 3:134] " (al Ghazālī M. , 1409AH., p. 78).

5.2 The Qur'an as the Foundation of Cosmic Knowledge

Science across all branches forms civilisations' backbone. But contemplation (*tadabbur*) of Qur'anic verses reveals knowledge extends beyond individuals to comprehensive civilisation. Qur'an's readers must therefore recognise science and knowledge are not only practical, methodological values, serving as the procedural basis upon which civilizations rise, but also two values of faith and worship. Indeed, Placing knowledge in this dual frame is what confers on it centrality and priority in any discussion of the causes and conditions of civilizational emergence, for science is the fortress that protects civilization from threat, and it is from science that the grounds of civilizational strength and steadfastness are drawn. For this Etaib barghouth states: "Divine will decreed that the human project of vicegerency on earth would be governed by fixed laws and consistent traditions (sunan) made accessible to human beings, and that every material condition needed to harness these laws and traditions would be granted, so that human beings could fulfill their succession on earth" (Barghūth, 2017, p. 63).

Al-Ghazali highlights this through Qur'anic contemplation . In this selected passage from *The Five Axes of the Holy Qur'an*, he offers a striking elaboration of the reality that must be kept in mind when engaging with the Book of God Almighty. He remarks: "How it grieves me that prophets forged iron, perfected weapons of war, and that the righteous trained in archery and hitting the mark; righteous built fortifications and military ramparts… yet our own 'righteous' know nothing of such things…!"
Was Shu'ayb joking when he was told: ﴿Indeed, make your armour perfect and carefully measure in the weaving﴾ [Saba' 34:11]?
Was Dhū-l-Qarnayn joking when he fired the furnaces, smelted metals, and erected a line of strong fortifications?
Was Muhammad al-Fātiḥ joking when he moved ships over land and tightened the siege on his enemies?
As for those who regard the sciences of the cosmos and of life as parasitic upon the religion of God, and who imagine that worship consists only in handling prayer beads and moving their beads with hollow words—such people are blind, insignificant beings" (al Ghazālī M. , 1409AH., p. 59).

Muslim civilizational defense requires two lights: science and knowledge; and faith and education that shape his character.

Combining faith and reason would transform Muslim civilisation. Al-Ghazālī, in this context, draws a comparison between the Muslim who abandons the light of both reason and faith; and the one who clings to them. Al-Ghazālī continues: "Muslim claiming Islam lacks reason's light or faith's certainty— recitation without understanding, worship without action." Non-Muslim conquered space, while the others are victims of intellectual deficiency, innate deficiency, hollow advocacy, self-satisfaction, and blaming others. Is it possible to promote Islam when this situation is widespread? The answer is No.The upper hand is better than the lower hand, and those who lag behind civilizational and economic progress, when they stretch out their hands asking, cannot expect others to admire them or convert to their religion!" (al Ghazālī M. , 1409AH., p. 70).

Richard K. DeMartino, explaining what blind imitation has wrought upon the Islamic nation, even though he is affiliated with an "advanced" civilization: "The drive toward modernization initially arose from the desire to imitate Western military and economic modernization, and on the whole it has been a failure and a source of anxiety. It has created a wide rift between traditionalists and modernists, for modernization necessarily involves importing foreign values and behavioural patterns. While modernists tend to advocate comprehensive imitation of Western society in its concepts and practices, traditionalists urge that from the Western experience one should selectively take only those aspects held to be compatible with Islam—namely, science and technology Western imitation created traditionalist-modernist rift, importing foreign values" (Dkmijian, 1412 AH/1992 CE, p. 57).

5-3 Awareness of the Nature of Civilizational Conflict through the Qur'an

in a civilizational Qur'an reading requires struggle, since the challenges of today mirror past ones, differing only in form. Al-Ghazālī notes Qur'anic verses, especially stories, contain indication on the nature of civilizational struggle from creation onward. (al-Ghazālī M., 1409 AH, p. 77)

Truth requires strong voices; silence lets falsehood triumph over the truth and its people. He states: "I draw attention to a truth about the nature of the struggle between good and evil: when good is only a passing thought or a weak whisper in the soul, and evil is a rushing, overpowering flood, then good must be defeated. When truth is a faint voice or a rejected melody, while falsehood arrives as a loud roar or a pleasant tune, truth must again be defeated. Islam's rituals mobilise collective strength" (al Ghazālī M. , 1409AH., p. 77).

Civilizational struggle reveals civilizational material progress does not accompany moral progress. Imbalanced civilisations lose. Al-Ghazālī stresses: "Western science advances materially but spiritually weakens— indifferent to God, rejecting clergy, serving greed and arrogance" (al Ghazālī M. , 1409AH., p. 91).

Muslim must integrate Qur'anic values with material strength. Muslims inherit unique Qur'anic capacity. Al-Ghazālī notes: "modern succeeds via Qur'anic cosmic study, but moral poverty turns success into threat."

In the Qur'anic worldview, the cosmos is of great value. This value derives from its role as a sign of the Creator. Allah built it brick by brick in truth, and its regions are ordered by firm laws in which the divine glory appears in its most splendid form: ﴿I did not create the heavens and the earth and what lies between them except in truth and for a specified term﴾[al-Aḥqāf 46:3] " (al Ghazālī M. , 1409AH., p. 54).

Conclusion:

This paper concludes contemplation requires real-world engagement, avoiding abstract isolation. Al-Ghazālī provides guiding features yielding a practical contemplation methodology. Its main features are

1. Qur'an Reading realises faith shaped behaviour, goals, ethics; existence vision through action.
2. Faith regulates intellect and soul, harmonising with cosmic realities—transforming disputation into harnessing existence.
3. Qur'anic verses form integrated value system of value system requiring holistic recognition.
4. Qur'anic verses establish that their own standard for evaluating matters is a *rabbānī* (godly) one: harmony with Allah's will and pleasure.

5. People of faith possess distinctive morals from resurrection awarness, recompense, reward. Accordingly, Hereafter verses build moral values.
6. Qur'anic stories establish values, not mere history,. They connect past challenges to present problems through shared remedies.
7. Qur'an founds Islamic civilisation; *tawḥīd* is its foundation and source.
8. Muslim civilizational defense requires science and knowledge combined with faith and education in shaping personality.

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