

## **Metaphorical Representation of Faith (Imaniyat) in Holy Quran and Modern Linguistics**

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### **1. Introduction:**

Traditionally, the studies and analyses of metaphor have been conducted in the context of rhetoric, literary studies and literary works. Hence, it was mostly associated with figurative language, considered only a type of “artistic embellishment”, and something different from everyday language.(1) Charteris-Black regards metaphor as “a linguistic representation that results from the shift in the use of a word or phrase.”(2) In this context, Ross suggests metaphor as “giving the thing a name that belongs to something else”.(3) However, the empirical work from cognitive science in the last two decades is the most important advancement in metaphor theory. It shows that metaphor is not only a linguistic figure, or a rhetorical device, but it forms an essential part of people’s everyday imagination, thought and reason.(4) Many psychological and linguistic studies have discovered a wide variety of spheres of human experience (e.g., causation time, spatial orientation, anger, , understanding, ideas, , understanding, etc.) to reveal the incidence of various metaphorical systems in our daily thought, as these ideas are manifested in people’s everyday verbal expressions.(5) Metaphors provide us with new insights. They involve creative imagination to achieve a new point of view thus helping in reorganizing, emphasizing and suppressing the primary subject. This rearrangement determines the subject’s relevance the degree of relevance.(6)

### **3. Research Objectives:**

Metaphors related to beliefs and faith and used in the *Holy Qur’ān* as a persuasive tool for both believers and nonbelievers are varied in types and different in their functions. These metaphors are used to persuade nonbelievers to have faith in God and, at the same time, to strengthen the faith of believers in God just as metaphors relating the natural phenomena fulfill two opposing functions. On the one hand, they act as heralds of goodness for believers of God, His messages and His messengers. On the other hand, they act as a warning of punishment for those who disbelieve in Him and reject His messages and deny His messengers. This study sets out to investigate and analyze metaphors used to describe faith and

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beliefs in different verses of the Holy *Qur'ān*. Its purpose is to determine the conceptual level of metaphors in the *Qur'ān*, and to ascertain how metaphors serve to facilitate the understanding of one conceptual domain, typically an abstract. It attempts to understand the power and influence of metaphor in the *Qur'ān* and to explore the role of metaphors in creating images in the readers' minds, and their role in convey the meaning indirectly.

#### 4. Definition of Metaphor:

The word metaphor is derived from the Greek word "metaphora" meaning "to transfer" or to "carry over"(7). Aristotle says of metaphor first, that it "consists in giving the thing a name that belongs to something else".(8) The Dictionary of Literary Terms defines metaphor as, "a figure of speech in which one thing is described in terms of another.... a comparison is usually implicit; whereas in a simile it is explicit".<sup>9</sup> as "a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is literally denoting one kind of object or idea, is used in place of another to suggest a likeness or analogy between them". (10)In this respect, Ross views metaphor as "giving the thing a name that belongs to something else."(11) In the famous Arabic Dictionary, *Tājul'urūs min jawāhir al-qāmūs*, the word 'metaphor' means 'to borrow something for a short time, or to lend something to someone for a short time'(12).*Al-Jurjānī* (400 – 471 or 474 A.H.) (died 1078 AD) holds that metaphor gives an added meaning of the word besides the dictionary or the literal meaning, thus adding to the rhetorical and aesthetic quality of the text.(13) *al-Jāhiz* among the experts in rhetoric who defined metaphor but has not mentioned metaphor under the study of rhetoric. According to *al-Jāhiz*, metaphor is a word or expression used *ghairmūzūlahū* meaning due to some similarity and along with that a pattern and behavior also exists. In short, metaphor is a type of comparison like a simile but more comprehensive than a simile(14)(Simile is an expression used to compare one thing with another in one aspect is called simile. Analogy is a simile in which the reason of similarity is evident in many aspects is called analogy. Metaphor is an expression created with a combination of figuration and simile).Simile mentions both '*mushabba*' (the one that is compared) and '*mushabbabihī*' (the one with which the first is compared) .However, metaphor omits one of these. Therefore, we can say metaphor is a more poetic figure of speech.

A metaphor is more concise and comprehensive than a simile and analogy and this is the main difference between the two. In a metaphor, words shift from their original place for a purpose i.e. they take up an allegorical meaning instead of the surface meaning which results in conciseness and brevity in a piece of work e.g., if one says, '*Alī* is a lion', it means *Alī* has achieved the height of bravery, meaning he is extremely brave. On the other hand, '*Alī* is brave like a lion' means *Alī* is brave but his

bravery is lesser as compared to that of a lion and lion is greater in might and bravery than *Alī*. In other words, a metaphor in a way changes the stature of the thing being compared to another with that of the other.

### 5. The Components of Metaphor:

Linguistically, there are three components of a metaphor: topic, vehicle and ground. Topic is the entity referred to, and vehicle is the notion to which this entity is being compared. The base in which this comparison is being made is called the ground. Knowles and Moon also identify these three components. They state that metaphor constitutes the metaphor (a word, phrase, or longer stretch of language); its meaning (what it refers to metaphorically); and the similarity or connection between the two(15). These three components have been referred to as vehicle, topic and ground. Richards is right both to point out that the word "metaphor" is sometimes used to signify what he means by "vehicle," and sometimes to mean the symbiosis resulting from the conjunction of tenor and vehicle, and that "metaphor," in the sense of this symbiosis, is impossible without just such an interaction of tenor and vehicle.(16)

For example, in the *Qur'ānic* verse “*And the hair of my head doth glisten with grey*”<sup>17</sup>, the spread (eruption) of the whiteness of hair (old age) has been compared with the spread of fire in the woods, inflaming (*ishti ‘āl*) has been borrowed for meaning (*intishār*) i.e. anxiety. Fire here is the entity to which the likeness is established, old Age is the entity which is likened and the similarity between ‘fire’ and ‘old age’ is the reason for establishing the metaphorical relationship between them.(18)

### 6. Metaphor: Its Uses, Benefits and Functions:

Linguists, semanticists and discourse analysts use the definition of metaphor as a "power of transfer" to achieve different functions. Lakoff and Johnson(19) initiated the theory of “Conceptual Metaphor”, a new draw near to metaphor analysis. This theory was developed in their later works(20). Lakoff and Johnson affirm that metaphor is a matter of everyday life experience rather than a matter of language and argue that metaphor permeates "our way of conceiving the world" and is reflected in our "language, thoughts, and actions" and influences the way people think or act. They regard metaphor as an source to understanding the world. It is a useful stylistic device to relate something which is not well-known with something which is known, so as to bring out its meanings. According to this definition, *Suyūṭī*(911/1505) in his well-known book “*al-Itqan fi ‘ulum al-Qur‘an*” enumerates the following benefits of metaphors:

1. They express *Khaṭf* (the imperceptible, the hidden).
2. They clarify the concept of something which is ambiguous.
3. They give concrete shape to abstract things.

4. They are used to exaggerate. (21)

### **6.1 The above discussion of the functions of metaphor underlines the following points:**

- 1- Metaphor is a way of transmitting one's understanding of the world and thus it can influence our language use, thoughts and actions.
- 2- Metaphor helps to understand non-physical forms by comparing it with physical forms.
- 3- Metaphor is a device used to convince others of one's points of view.
- 4- Metaphors give us new insights. They require creative imagination to gain a new point of view which succeeds in emphasizing, suppressing, and reorganizing the primary subject. This reorganization determines what is to be viewed as relevant and to what degree. (22)
- 5- Metaphor can be examined within the sphere of pragmatics, instead of semantics, to understand not what is said but what is intended i.e., metaphor can be studied to not just analyze the forms but also functions of expression.
- 6- Metaphor helps to express one's stance as it influences our experience of the world and the way we transfer them to others.
- 7- Classically, metaphor is used for rhetorical embellishment.

### **8. Qur'ānic Metaphors of faith:**

It is evident that the *Qur'ān* keeps on increasing the interest of its reader gradually through the use of delicate metaphors, similes and analogies and thus keeps on enhancing the thirst for reading more. Through the proper use of metaphor, a sea of meaning is embodied in a single word, which not only gives aesthetic beauty to the language thus giving pleasure to the reader; it also facilitates the understanding of the concept being introduced. This quality of *Qur'ānic* language thus makes the *Qur'ān* an 'ocean of rhetoric' (23). It is also observed that there were certain occasions during the revelation of the *Qur'ān* when certain styles were used more than others for some reasons. The major ones seem to be two; the first is to show the Arabs at the early stages of Islam when Arabic poetry was presented with a strong challenge from the *Qur'ān* on the linguistic level. The second is to attract the Arabs and non-Arabs to embrace Islam. We can see from the following verse how the *Qur'ān* uses metaphors to create figurative expressions and produce its own forms of discourse in which an argument is introduced. Metaphor is common in the *Qur'ān*, but its use in scripture takes on a special meaning because of the creedal presumption that the entire *Qur'ān* is the

direct articulation of God.(24)The researcher attempts in the following part to explain the concepts of metaphors employed in the following verses of the holy *Qur'ān*. For each verse, there will be a detailed explanation.

### **7.1.Ahdināṣirāṭ al mustaqīm:**

Show us the straight path,(25)

According to the Muslim scholars, the most obvious and authentic meaning of 'ṣirāṭ' is 'to devour something'. This is used perhaps because when people walk on an often trodden path, they devour it figuratively. Here, it means the path of truth.(26) In the light of *Qur'ānic commentaries*, one comes to know that the word *ṣirāṭ* has a vast and comprehensive meaning. However, according to a majority of Muslim scholars, it means (*dīn*) religion. As mentioned in the *Qur'ān*:

But We have made the (*Qur'ān*) a Light, wherewith We guide such of Our servants as We will; and verily thou dost guide (men) to the Straight Way,(27)

It is also described in this manner in *al-Qur'anwalā ' taq 'ud ū wabikullīṣirāṭ. وَلَا تَقْعُدُوا بِكُلِّ صِرَاطٍ* And squat not on every road(28) and also mentioned in this way *Ahdināṣirāṭalmustaqīm*(29)The right and straight path, which signifies that *islām* as a religion is right.(30)The verse teaches a prayer for the right understanding of the religion Islām.

### **The significance and purpose of the word *sīrāṭ*(path in) *Tafsīrī* literature:**

Such a straight, clean path that helps go in the direction of (*haq*)/truth, what is right and is a source of attaining God's love and nearness.

*ImāmRāzī (d:606)* states the significance of the right path in two respects: Every one offering prayers is a believer who's been guided to the right path (*Islām*), so why does he ask for a thing which he already has? It's because God's graces are unending and limitless. Moreover, it means asking for perseverance on the right path and insightfulness, because a creature is dependent on God under all circumstance, all the time. He is not master of any profit or loss and gain or harm to his self. It is rather God who is the Master of his fate. Therefore, God taught him to ask for His guidance day and night and keep praying for perseverance and the ability to remain on the right path. The *Qur'ān* says: (And they submit:) 'O our Lord, let not our hearts deviate after You have honored us with guidance and grant us Mercy especially from Your Presence. Truly You alone are the Great Bestower.(31) The ranks and the gradations of God's qualities and knowledge are infinite and the one who offers prayer prays for the next rank of knowledge to the one he is on right now. In short, he is asking for a progression in his righteousness.(32) Allah adds to the guidance of those who are guided aright. And in the sight of your Lord, the lasting pious deeds are better in respect of reward and (also) more valuable in terms of end result.(33)

According to numerologists, A straight line is the smallest line or route among all winding or non-straight lines between any two points. Therefore, the metaphor of the straight path has the following connotations:

- It is the smallest and the nearest path or route to truth.
- It is free from fear or troubles and is peaceful.
- It is the one taking to the destination.
- It is the path free from distractions, curves or twists.(34)

This metaphor has also been used in another context. one who ponders remembers about the *pulṣirāt* (according to Muslim, the bridge through which the righteous will pass before entering paradise) and he knows that all the *sharī'a* will appear in the form of *pulṣirāt* on the Day Of Judgment. Those who walk on it easily will tread upon that easily on that day(35).

This metaphor also shows that the right path in fact is a collection of beliefs, instructions, commandments, manners and ethics meaning thereby the knowledge of the true reality of God, prophet hood, universe and society that takes one towards success in this world and the hereafter. It is called the right path because it is similar to the sensual or physical path in that it also takes one to the destination like the physical path. So this is allegorical or symbolic treading that man determines for and is described as a physical treading that becomes a source of taking one from one point to another. Therefore, God teaches us to ask for His help and guidance so that He supports us in overcoming our mundane desires so that we consume all our efforts in knowing the instructions of *sharī'a* and make ourselves act on the ways that lead us to the success in this world and the hereafter.(36)

According to *Jarīr*, the metaphor *ṣirāt* refers to (*dīn: path*) because *dīn* guides one to earn rewards and avoid punishments as if it is a path that takes the one who treads on it to the concept of peace and resurrection and leads to the abode of peace and prosperity(37). Just as it is impossible to go from one place to the other without a path, it is impossible for man to find his ultimate destination without the right understanding of the religion *Islām*. Therefore, it has been termed as a path or way to follow. It is further verified by another *qirāt* in which the author of *Tafsīr Kashāf* has interpreted the word *ṣirāt* as devouring or gulping down, meaning the straight and right path which God Himself has opened for His men, which is nearer and easier than those surrounding it with winds and curves coined and devised by those who have gone astray or who lead people astray. This path is not only present since the beginning of the universe. It is also a source of reaching God.

### **7.3. For, with Him are the keys to the things that are beyond the reach of a created being's perception: none knows them but He.**

*Mafātīḥ*, i.e. (Keys), *Mafātīḥ* has been borrowed for divine matters as if they are hidden treasures. Thus the verse means the keys to the unseen treasures. These meanings are also metaphorical because the source of reaching the treasure is the keys(38). The invisible world has been

compared to the things that have been kept very safe and securely in lock and key so that access to it is only through the key and the one who does not have the key( a hint towards man's limited knowledge) , can never access the treasure i.e. *ğāib*.(39)*Miftāḥ al ġāib* (Key of the treasure of the heaven or invisible world) refers to God's knowledge which is a source of reaching all known things and possessing that means His knowledge encompasses every *ğāibī* (invisible) thing as if that *ğāibī* (invisible) thing of invisible world is His possession and He has the power and authority over it. (40)

The beautiful metaphor explicitly clarifies the vast expanse and scope of Allah's knowledge. God's is the Being Who knows everything and no one shares that knowledge with Him. If anyone says something on the basis of his experience and knowledge, that is also granted to him by God, and is not on the basis of his own knowledge because Allah's knowledge encompasses the whole universe and this knowledge is of the sort which has no flaw.

Verily, with God alone rests the knowledge of when the Last Hour will come: and He [it is who] sends down rain; and He [alone] knows what is in the wombs: whereas no one knows what he will reap tomorrow, and no one knows in what land he will die. Verily, God [alone] is all-knowing, all-aware(41). The signs of the advent of The Day Of Judgment have been reported by the Holy Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h) but the knowledge of when it would take place exactly is possessed by God alone. It is neither shared by any prophet nor by any angel.

- 1) The exact knowledge of rainfall rests with God alone. Man can only make an estimate by signs, observations and experience and it has been observed that the estimate sometimes proves to be right and sometimes wrong. Even the announcements and declarations by the department of meteorology prove to be wrong sometimes.
- 2) The gender of the child in a mother's womb can only roughly be estimated but whether this child is fortunate or unfortunate, beautiful or ugly, black or white, nobody can tell nor find out except God.
- 3) No human being knows whether he'll be alive tomorrow or not and if alive, what he will do or what will happen to him. None other than him knows it except God.
- 4) Nobody knows when, where and at what age he will die. Nobody knows whether he will die before fulfillment of his wishes or after it.(42)
- 5) In short, the real knowledge is possessed by God only. Nobody can share this knowledge with Him because this knowledge is like a hidden treasure and if this treasure is or made obvious, it will be as if in somebody's possession and kept with great care and protection and put in lock and key to keep it out of reach of others so that nobody is able to access it because he does not have the source to reach the treasure, i.e. the keys. It is only God's being who not only has the knowledge of the treasure but reaching it also requires God's help and support in all

circumstances and man is stepping onwards on the path to progress on the basis of this limited knowledge and help provided by God but the real source of all knowledge is God alone.

God's knowledge and power has been expressed extremely logically and effectively through a metaphor which is an evidence of the eloquence of the *Qur'ān* which guides the human beings-to-come till the day of judgment that Allah's power and authority is above all else.

**7.5. Every man's fate We have fastened on his own neck: On the Day of Judgment We shall bring out for him a scroll, which he will see spread open. (43)**

It is a subtle metaphor. The word *Ta'ir* (every feathered animal that can fly in the air, i.e., a bird) has been employed metaphorically to signify man's action, because the Arabs used to ascribe good or bad omens to birds.(44) It was a custom among the Arabs to use birds for *Fā'l* (prediction) to find about the future or their fate. So the word *Tā'ir* here connotes a star having a good or bad omen. The verse suggests that God is the Architect of Man's Fate, and so no *Fā'l* can influence or change the fate decreed and decided by Allah Almighty. Man's deliberate actions be they good or bad have been encoded in his destiny, just like a bird (According to Arab norms, what has been written by Allah and what man does *Tā'ir* is taken as a metaphor), which has been sent to him through the nest of unknown fate and providence.(45)

**The word *Tā'ir* has two connotations:**

1. The first is the Arab practice of *fa'l*, the practice of using birds to indicate or predict one's fortune. The Arabs used to relate any creature whether animal or bird, with good or bad omen. Even the birds of prey If the hunt moved from the left side of the hunter to the right side, it was considered to be a bad omen because in this situation the hunter could not throw the arrow without turning. (These superstitions were initially related to hunting but later on the Arabs started applying them to other spheres of life: the bird taking a right direction was supposed to be a bad omen and a left flight was taken as a good omen)(46) On the whole, the Arabs used to take the bird as a bad portent.
2. The second connotation of the metaphor of the bird is man's predestined future or fate.

*According to Abū'Ubaīda*, this refers to the Arab practice of calling the bird "*al farasulbakht*" that Whatever man gets in the world be it knowledge, age, earnings, good or bad fortune, has already been decided and that he can get nothing more or less than that. Even the degree, value and condition of all these things is irreversible. In a way, all these predestined, and written things are 'flying towards man', hence the use of the word *Tā'ir*. (47)



So *Tā'ir* implies man's action, his fortune, good or bad omens, fate and destiny.(48) Trying to take out *fā'l*(augury) and trying to foretell the future, amounts to partaking in Allah's doing. The Arabs have been warned against this practice of trying to know what is to take place in the future. Allah is the Creator and the Maker of humans and their destinies, and on the basis of His Superior Knowledge, He has already written all the events that have to take place till the Day of Judgment, and these are eternal.(49)

### **Why is the Human Neck given more Explanations?**

**First:** Aesthetically, Man's neck acquires more beauty, good or bad appearance because of the necklace or chain which adorns it.

**Second:** Fate (obedience or bad fortune) are attached to man's neck like a necklace or collar. His good or bad deeds depend on this and he will be judged according to this on the Day of Judgment. It is based on this metaphor that the Arabs call things which are inseparable as "This thing has become the necklace of a certain person", meaning that the said person cannot get rid of it.(50) Hence Allah tells us of His Supreme wisdom(*hikmat*) vast knowledge and Judgment by implying that whatever man does has already been written down and from which he is inseparable, and he will be judged according to this in both the worlds"

Every man's fate We have fastened on his own neck: On the Day of Judgment We shall bring out for him a scroll, which he will see spread open. (It will be said to him) "*Read thine (own) record: Sufficient is thy soul this day to make out an account against thee.*" (51)

As if Allah Almighty has through His superior knowledge and sagacity written down what each human will do, and this is inseparable from him, and is the basis on which his good or bad fate depends.

### **Conclusion:**

The present paper has tackled the metaphor in the *Qur'ān* that it has shown how the *Qur'ān* is structured around the idea of the variety of meaning of lexical items, and how every correspondence between the two domains of "literal" and "nonliteral" can fit there. The use of such a metaphor makes the reader clarify and define the relationship between object and image. Meanwhile, this process serves two purposes: first, it forces the reader to participate actively in the *Qur'ān* i.e. Consider its message and follow its teachings. Second, it gives him knowledge about something he did not know or only partly knew by making it analogous to something he can imagine. Clearly, the linguistic and rhetorical features of the *Holy Qur'ān* continue to challenge linguists who struggle to convey the intended meaning of the *Qur'ānic* verses. Linguists must depend on a number of dictionaries in both Arabic and English to determine the exact meaning of the words. A linguist must also consult the various commentaries of the *Qur'ān* to obtain the appropriate interpretation of the *Qur'ānic* verses.

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  39. Umar al-Zamakhsharī, Al-Kashshāf an Haqā'iq al-Tanzīlwa'Uyun al-Aqāwīl,(Beirut: Dār al-Ma'arifah, n.d.)vol.2,p.31, RuhulMa'ani, al- Alūsī, Shahāb al-Dīn al-SayyidMuḥammad , Ruh al Ma'ani, ( Beirut: Dār al-Fikr,1997 7, p.170).
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  41. (Q. 31:34)
  42. Salāhudīn Yusuf, AhsanulBayān, ( Lahore:Dār us-Salām ,2000)p. 972-973
  43. (Q.17.13)
  44. Al SābūnīMuḥammad'Alī,SifwatutTafāsīr,(Beirut:Dār al-Qur'an al-karīm,1981) vol. 2, p.154,155
  45. al- Alūsī, Shahāb al-Dīn al-SayyidMuḥammad , Ruh al Ma'ani, vol.5,p.31
  46. Thanā'UllāhMazḥarī,TafsīrMazḥarī (karachi: Dār al-asha'at ) vol. 5, p. 420 see alsoAhsanulBayān, p.678, see also Fakhr al-DīnAbū' AbdAllāhibn'Umar al-Rāzī,Mafatih al-Ghayb also known asTafsīr al Kabīr, (Beirut: Dār al-al kutub al-'ilmiyya ,2000) , vol.19, p.134,135
  47. Mafātīh al-Ghaīyb also known asTafsīr al Kabīr , vol.16, p.155
  48. Al-MufradātfiGharīb al- Qur'an,p.315
  49. TafsīrMazḥarī,Thanā'UllāhMazḥarī,TafsīrMazḥarī (karachi: Dār al-asha'at )vol. 5, p. 420
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  51. (Q.17:13-14)