

An Approach to the Essence of *Tasbīh* Through the Lens of Qur'anic Imagery and Narrative Explication

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Abstract

The Holy Qur'an introduces all creatures and possible beings in existence as glorifiers (*musabbiḥāt*) of the Divine. Numerous verses emphasize that the cosmos, in its totality and universality, is composed of components that, without exception, are perpetually engaged in *tasbīh* (glorification). The nature and essence of *tasbīh* as one of the most significant Qur'anic concepts has been widely discussed among scholars of the Qur'an. The two primary perspectives in this regard are the theory of *tasbīh ḥālī* (attitudinal or metaphorical glorification) and *tasbīh qālī* (verbal or literal glorification). Relying on a descriptive-analytical method, this study seeks to examine the true nature of this profound concept and propose a third viewpoint. This is achieved through the lens of imagery—one of the mechanisms employed by the Qur'an to elucidate its intended meaning. The findings indicate that the Qur'an itself, through its illustrative techniques, effectively conveys its message regarding *tasbīh* to the reader. As a third perspective resulting from the approach derived from Qur'anic imagery and narrative corroboration, *tasbīh* is understood as the motion and dynamism of existence—a perpetual and purposeful movement throughout the entire cosmos, including all its components and particles.

Keywords: *Tasbīh* (Divine Glorification), Qur'anic Imagery, Purposeful Motion and Dynamism, Life, Perpetual Becoming.

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1. Introduction

The subject of *Tasbīh* (glorification of God), as one of the key concepts in the Holy Qur'an, has long been a focus of attention for exegetes and Qur'anic scholars, resulting in numerous works dedicated to its study. On the other hand, the topic of "imagery in the Qur'an" has, in recent years, gained traction among researchers as a novel approach in Qur'anic studies, with scholars examining the images and symbols employed in the Qur'an from various perspectives.

However, to date, there is no existing research that adopts the specific approach of this study—namely, one that systematically explores the relationship between the concept of *Tasbīh* and Qur'anic imagery, seeking to derive the meaning of a specific term (here, *Tasbīh*) through correlating the textual expressions used for it with the imagery presented in the Qur'an.

2. Statement of the Problem

Imagery in the Qur'an is a significant subject in the field of Qur'anic studies, one that has garnered considerable contemporary attention. Due to its vital role in conveying concepts and values, it is employed as a novel approach for attaining a deeper understanding of Qur'anic discourses. Through this technique, the Qur'an depicts profound doctrines and sublime themes in the form of exquisite and unparalleled scenes, rendering abstract concepts tangible and perceptible to human understanding.

Among the important and enlightening topics within the Qur'anic worldview is the concept of *Tasbīh* (divine glorification). The Qur'an considers all beings in the contingent world, without exception, as participants in a universal act of *Tasbīh*. The verse, "And there is not a thing but that it glorifies Him with His praise" (Qur'an 17:44), indicates that all of existence and everything that exists as a "thing"—from the smallest particle in the vast expanse of the cosmos to the most exalted beings across the hierarchy of existence—is engaged in *Tasbīh*. Consequently, every "thing qua thing," by virtue of its very thingness, is considered a glorifier (*musabbih*) of God Almighty.

The prevailing perspectives on *Tasbīh*, which are primarily divided into the two main categories of *tasbīh ḥālī* (attitudinal or metaphorical glorification) and *tasbīh qālī* (verbal or literal glorification), have attempted to explain the nature and modality of this glorification. However, fundamental questions regarding the essential nature of *Tasbīh* remain. Therefore, the proposition of these two views cannot be considered the final word on the subject. Focusing on the role of imagery in the Qur'an, this study seeks to answer the following questions:



1. Which aspect has been predominantly emphasized in the two main theories concerning *Tasbīh*, and what critique can be leveled against this emphasis?

2. What role does imagery play in elucidating Qur'anic teachings?

3. How does the mechanism of imagery demonstrate the essential nature of *Tasbīh*, and what meaning and concept does it thereby convey?

Accordingly, the present research aims to examine the manifestations of Qur'anic imagery in explicating the concept of *Tasbīh*. It seeks to demonstrate how the Qur'an itself, by utilizing the tools and techniques of imagery and by presenting scenes and aligning them with specific interpretations, imbues this term with its distinct meaning and concept.

3. Background of the Research

The subject of *Tasbīh* (glorification of God), as one of the key concepts in the Holy Qur'an, has long been a focus of attention for exegetes and Qur'anic scholars, resulting in numerous works dedicated to its study. On the other hand, the topic of "imagery in the Qur'an" has, in recent years, gained traction among researchers as a novel approach in Qur'anic studies, with scholars examining the images and symbols employed in the Qur'an from various perspectives.

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The Concept of *Tasbīh*

Tasbīh is a verbal noun of the *taf'īl* form (pattern II) derived from the root *s-b-ḥ* (*sabaḥa*). Lexically, it denotes swift movement through water or air. In the Holy Qur'an, this meaning is employed metaphorically for:

the movement of the stars: "Each swimming in an orbit" (Qur'an 21:33)

the running of horses: "And those that run with panting breath" (Qur'an 79:3),

and moving swiftly about a task: "Indeed, for you by day is prolonged activity" (Qur'an 73:7).

According to *al-Rāghib al-Isfahānī*, *Tasbīh* also means to proclaim the transcendence and purity of God Almighty, its essence being a swift passage in the worship of God. (*Al-Rāghib al-Isfahānī*, *Al-Mufradāt fī Gharīb al-Qur'ān*, Dār al-Qalam, Damascus, p. 392.)

The late 'Allāmah Muṣṭafawī considers the core meaning of the root *s-b-ḥ* to be "movement" (*ḥarakah*). He qualifies this by describing it as a movement along the path of truth, free from deviation or weakness, involving two dimensions: the direction of movement toward truth and the



state of being free from deficiency. (Al-Muṣṭafawī, Al-Taḥqīq fī Kalimāt al-Qur'ān, vol. 5, Markaz Nashr al-Kitāb, Tehran, p. 25.)

Ibn al-Athīr al-Jazarī, while explaining the meaning of *Tasbīḥ*, also refers to two aspects: swift movement toward God and a sense of lightness or vigor in worship. (Ibn al-Athīr, Al-Nihāyah fī Gharīb al-Ḥadīth, vol. 2, Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, Beirut, p. 331.)

In general, any smooth or effortless movement—such as a ship sailing through the sea, stars moving across the sky, and even sleep or rest—can be described by the root *sabaḥa*. (Nāder 'Alī, Ta'wīl Mufradāt al-Qur'ān, Intishārāt-i 'Ilmī, Tehran, 1388 AH, p. 122.)

4. The Dichotomy of the Language of Being and the Language of Utterance in the Hermeneutics of *Tasbīḥ*

Within the discourse of Qur'anic exegesis and Islamic scholarship, two principal hermeneutical approaches have emerged concerning the concept of *Tasbīḥ* (divine glorification). One school of thought interprets *Tasbīḥ* through the ontological framework of "the language of being" (*lisān al-ḥāl*), consequently classifying it as metaphorical. Conversely, another scholarly perspective understands it through the prescriptive framework of "the language of utterance" (*lisān al-qāl*), thereby categorizing it as literal.

4.1 *Tasbīḥ* as the Language of Being

Proponents of this view maintain that the *Tasbīḥ* (glorification) of beings other than humans consists of their inherent disposition (*al-dalālah al-ṭab'iyyah*) pointing to their Creator and His transcendence beyond all imperfections. According to this position, the meaning of creatures engaging in *Tasbīḥ* is that the very state of all beings testifies to God's absolute holiness (*subūḥiyyah*) and His transcendence beyond any defect in His essence, attributes, or actions (Muṭahharī, Majmū'ah Āthār, vol. 26, p. 345).

As expressed by 'Allāmah Ṭabrisī, the seven heavens, the earth, and all their inhabitants are perpetually engaged in God's *Tasbīḥ* through their language of being. Since they all indicate the existence of their Creator and His sublime attributes, it is as if they verbally declare God's freedom from any partner. There is no existent being that does not glorify God in this manner, for they are all contingent (*ḥādith*) and created (*maṣnū'*), and every created entity necessarily implies a Creator (*ṣāni'*) who is Himself uncreated (Ṭabrisī, Majma' al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān, vol. 6, p. 644).

Among the evidence cited by proponents of this theory is the absence of knowledge and awareness in inanimate entities. As Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī states:

"A morally responsible being (*mukallaḥ*) glorifies God in two ways: First, through speech and utterance, such as saying *Subḥān Allāh*. Second,



through its very state indicating God's oneness, sanctity, and invincibility. However, beings such as animals, which are not morally responsible, or entities like inanimate objects, which lack life, glorify God only through the second method. This is because verbal *Tasbīh* requires consciousness (*shu'ūr*), the faculty of speech (*nuṭq*), knowledge, and perception—attributes whose existence in inanimate objects is impossible" (Rāzī, *Al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, vol. 20, p. 175).

The foundational premise of this viewpoint's adherents is, first, that verbal *Tasbīh* necessitates knowledge (*ilm*) and consciousness (*shu'ūr*), and second, that non-sentient beings lack such attributes. The logical conclusion is thus the denial of verbal *Tasbīh* for such entities, restricting their glorification to involuntary *Tasbīh* expressed through the language of being.

4.2. *Tasbīh* as the Language of Utterance

Proponents of this perspective maintain that all particles and beings in the universe possess a form of perception and consciousness, and are aware of their own act of *Tasbīh*, even if we cannot comprehend it. According to their belief, just as humans articulate *Tasbīh* verbally, the external reality of the universe—including inanimate objects, plants, animals, and humans—likewise glorifies the Divine through both the language of utterance and the language of being, sanctifying His essence from all imperfections (Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, vol. 1, p. 69).

Mullā Ṣadrā also affirms this reality, contending that every existent entity possesses a degree of perception and awareness proportionate to its ontological rank. Thus, the attribution of *Tasbīh* to such beings is literal (*ḥaqīqī*), not metaphorical (*majāzī*) (Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, *al-Ḥikmah al-Muta'āliyah*, vol. 6, p. 117).

Similarly, Imam Khomeini, emphasizing the same principle and affirming the literal nature of *Tasbīh*, elucidates in his commentary on the first verse of Sūra Ḥadīd:

“The noble verse indicates the *Tasbīh* of all beings—even plants and inanimate entities—and to restrict this to rational beings stems from the veiled understanding of certain intellectuals.” (Imam Khomeini, *Sharḥ-i Chihil Ḥadīth*, p. 655)

Advocates of this view of *Tasbīh* support their position with numerous scriptural and rational proofs, asserting that the *Tasbīh* of all creatures is literal. By “literal,” they mean that each being glorifies God in its own distinct language and through its own mode of speech—even if their interpretations vary regarding the nature and manner of that speech (Aram, *Sho'ur va Tasbih Keyhani dar Negah-e Qur'ani va Adabi*, Baharestan-e Sokhan, Spring & Summer 2011, No, 17, pp. 206-227).



4.3 Critical Examination of Both Perspectives

A significant critique applicable to both the theory of *tasbīh ḥālī* (attitudinal or metaphorical glorification) and *tasbīh qālī* (verbal or literal glorification) is that, despite their interpretative differences, their proponents share a common foundational principle: they regard *Tasbīh* essentially as a verbal invocation (dhikr), belonging to the category of uttered speech (*lafẓ*). This implies that they understand *Tasbīh* as a form of divine sanctification and praise that necessarily requires linguistic articulation and possesses an audible component. By accepting and focusing on the aspect of speech and utterance in *Tasbīh* as a general principle, they have engaged in discourse on how this verbal, speech-like invocation can be attributed to both sentient and non-sentient beings, thereby delving into issues such as knowledge and consciousness in various types of entities. Similarly, translators, operating on this same basis, often use the phrase "they say *tasbīh*" in their renderings to convey this concept.

A pivotal point for reflection is whether the definition of *Tasbīh* is confined merely to verbal invocation, or whether broader dimensions can be acknowledged for it that are not necessarily dependent on audible expression and uttered words. Although numerous narrations mention the utterance *Subḥān Allāh* being heard from creatures, the textual content of these reports cannot necessarily be taken as fully and exhaustively explaining the complete concept of *Tasbīh*. It appears that the Qur'anic principle of the universality of *Tasbīh*, along with narrations that introduce it as one of the four foundational principles of Islam (Majlisī, *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 55, p. 5), emphasize a reality far greater than the mere repetition of words. This indicates that the concept of *Tasbīh* is vastly extensive and multidimensional, reaching far beyond verbal remembrance. For a more comprehensive understanding of *Tasbīh*, it is necessary to pay greater attention to other dimensions of this concept based on the verses of the Qur'an and the narrations from the Impeccable Imams. (Mohammad Rerza Aram, *Sho'ur va Tasbih Keyhani dar Negah-e Qur'ani va Adabi*, Baharestan-e Sokhan, Spring & Summer 2011, No, 17, pp. 206-227).

In this research, we aim to, while acknowledging the perspective of the proponents of 'real' *Tasbīh*, also propose an alternative understanding of *Tasbīh*. This is a concept whose quality and modality the Qur'an itself unveils through its mechanism of imagery.

5. The Role of Imagery in Elucidating Qur'anic Teachings

Given the significance of imagery (*al-taswīr*) in the Qur'an as a tool effective across various dimensions, it is necessary to first address two fundamental topics.



5.1. Imagery as a Mechanism for Elucidating Qur'anic Teachings

In the Noble Qur'an, imagery is employed as a powerful and effective tool for elucidating meanings and rendering them tangible before the audience's very eyes. In numerous instances, to impart awareness and knowledge to the minds of people living within the limited corporeal realm (*dā'irat al-mulk*), and to explain the sublime transcendental realities (*al-ma'ārif al-malakūtiyyah*) and to present and prove the most complex topics—even if those realities bear no relation to matter and the sensible world—God has used pictorial expression. The imagery of Paradise and Hellfire, with their various attributes and characteristics, is an example of elucidated realities portrayed through images, which the human mind, confined to the narrow corporeal sphere, has no other means of accessing.

Sayyid Quṭb, by presenting his theory of artistic imagery in the Qur'an and authoring his book *Al-Taṣwīr al-Fannī fī al-Qur'ān* (Artistic Imagery in the Qur'an), succeeded in drawing attention to the images created within the Qur'an while meticulously examining the spiritual connection between these images and the concepts intended by God. As the main proponent of the theory of "Artistic Imagery in the Qur'an," he believed that the Qur'an, in all areas, uses the best means of expression, namely, imagery (cf. Sayyid Quṭb, *Taṣwīr al-Fannī fī al-Qur'ān*, p. 12).

From the perspective of Islamic philosophers, the human perceptual faculties consist of external senses (*al-hawās al-zāhirah*) and internal senses (*al-hawās al-bāṭinah*). Unlike the external senses, the internal senses are not corporeal or material; rather, they receive, synthesize, and employ the forms (*ṣuwar*) derived from the external senses. Among the internal perceptual faculties is the faculty of imagination (*al-quwwah al-khayāl*), which plays a significant role in epistemological discussions. This faculty is the repository for the data of the common sense (*al-ḥiss al-mushtarak*) and the forms present within it; hence, it is also called *al-muṣawwirah* (the formative faculty). It can be said that this faculty can recreate a sensible object in its absence. This means that the limited boundaries of external sense perception are expanded through this internal sense, enabling humans to experience higher horizons (cf. Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, *Al-Ḥikmah al-Muta'āliyah*, vol. 8, p. 314).

Drawing upon this element, Sayyid Quṭb believed that imagery is a stage wherein the mind, according to its own capabilities and capacities, and using the available 'copy' as raw material, presents its own perception, vision, understanding, feeling—in short, its own perspective—of that event or form (cf. Sayyid Quṭb, *Taṣwīr al-Fannī fī al-Qur'ān*, p. 12).

According to Sayyid [Quṭb], the "image" is not something created by the reader or researcher of the Qur'an; rather, it is something that the Author of



the Qur'an, through the Qur'an itself and by a specific mechanism utilizing its letters, words, and compositions, creates within the mind of the reader or researcher. Therefore, in Sayyid's view, "imagery" is fundamentally an act of the Qur'an and its unique compositional style, not an act of the reader or researcher.

He believed another crucial characteristic of Qur'anic "imagery" is its multidimensional nature. Through instruments such as diction, sentence structure, the musicality of words, and the method of treating a subject, all facets of these images can be perceived. Consequently, the images in the Qur'an are not flat or two-dimensional, such that a superficial and cursory glance at their outward form could suffice for comprehending their essence and entire reality. Instead, the outward form and appearance of these images serve as a means to access their deeper, more internal and subjective dimensions (Sayyid Qutb, *Al-Taṣwīr al-Fannī fī al-Qur'ān*, pp. 13-19).

In his view, "imagery" is the supreme instrument in the Qur'an's methodology. Through imagery, the Qur'an renders abstract concepts tangible. These images not only animate the mind of the audience but also engage their emotions, to the extent that the listener finds themselves within the heart of the narrative, becoming a spectator of the described scenes (Sayyid Qutb, *Al-Taṣwīr al-Fannī fī al-Qur'ān*, p. 59).

Āyatullah Ma'rifat, endorsing this perspective, maintains that the Qur'an, through the power of its "imagery," bestows life and movement upon beings and the phenomena of existence. The pen of the Qur'an has touched nothing without breathing life into it, as if the entire universe within the panels depicted by the Qur'an is alive, and all phenomena of existence are in motion (Ma'rifat, *Al-Tamhīd fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, vol. 5, p. 341).

Some scholars are of the opinion that what Sayyid Qutb has presented enables researchers themselves to extract and utilize this treasure, benefiting from it through their own human conscience and perception (Ṣubḥī Ṣālīḥ, *Mabāḥith fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, p. 320).

the argument while keeping it accessible.

5.2. Artistic Harmony in the Correlation of Image and Expression

This study proceeds from the premise that in the Qur'an, every word, by its essential reality, inherent philosophical purpose, and original coinage, conveys a specific meaning and concept, and the Qur'an itself employs various methods and mechanisms to elucidate them. Among these, imagery is one such mechanism utilized by the Qur'an to clarify its intended meaning—a mechanism that simplifies the comprehension of spiritual and intelligible matters for the audience. By employing this technique, the Qur'an weaves words and phrases in such a way that they become



visualized, animated, and imbued with life in the mind of the recipient, transforming into a beautiful, tangible, and perceptible image.

Sayyid Qutb discusses the subject of imagery in the Qur'an from various angles and by proposing multiple components. One such component is his focus on the aspect of "artistic harmony," which itself can be examined from different perspectives. Within the scope of this research, we are primarily concerned with the aspect of "the harmony between the image and the vocabulary used." This focus aims to uncover the true essence of the concept of *Tasbīh* by examining the harmony between the expression *Tasbīh* and the processed images. It should be clarified that the artistic dimension of imagery is of secondary concern in this study; the primary objective is to deduce the concept of *Tasbīh* through this imagery.

The focus of this inquiry is the unique harmony and precise correlation that the Qur'an employs in its use of a word and the concept it intends to convey. For instance, the Qur'an, through imagery set in diverse contexts, depicts a concept of motion, journeying, movement, and circular—yet purposeful—rotation. To depict this, it employs the root *s-b-h* (*sabaḥa*), which itself evokes this very meaning. Then, elsewhere, using the same root, it attributes the concept of *Tasbīh* to all particles of existence. This suggests a fundamental congruence between these presented images and the expression *Tasbīh*, which should be instrumental in understanding the concept of *Tasbīh* itself.

It can be argued that to elucidate the concept of *Tasbīh*, the Qur'an uses words that themselves play a role in that very elucidation. The processing of an image—such as the depiction of celestial orbits in the sky, conveying the notion of a specific type of movement pursuing a particular purpose—coupled with the use of a word like *Tasbīh*, which, by evoking the meaning and image of a swimming-like motion, plays a distinctive role in this imagery. This technique not only constitutes one of the Qur'an's inimitable expressive miracles but can also greatly assist in understanding the meaning and true essence of the word *Tasbīh*.

While this specific perspective and correlation, as emphasized in this study, is not explicitly found in the works of Sayyid Qutb, the core concept of imagery, of which he was a pioneering theorist, can serve as our guide in this endeavor.

6. The Strategy of Imagery in Elucidating *Tasbīh*

A crucial principle that must not be overlooked is that the concepts intended in the Qur'an correspond to truths and realities. Since the Qur'an's primary objective is guidance for the purpose of reaching the ultimate goal—namely, God Almighty—it is inconceivable that its use of language would focus merely on the words themselves without correlating them to



their essential truth or to external realities. Therefore, in elucidating a concept, the Qur'an never relies solely on linear exposition, especially when dealing with a concept as vast and profound as *Tasbīh*, which permeates and affects all components of existence. Consequently, the Qur'an employs multiple components to elucidate a concept, thereby presenting knowledge worthy of its grandeur. One such component is the powerful tool of imagery.

Investigating the issue of *Tasbīh* in the Qur'an through the lens of imagery is a strategic approach that appears to enable the proposal of a third perspective, supplementing the two previously mentioned ones. This implies that *Tasbīh* can be more comprehensive than just the categories of *ḥālī* (attitudinal) and *qālī* (verbal), and can encompass another meaning. From the viewpoint of this study, *Tasbīh* can also be considered as a purposeful act and operation. Explicit evidence in the Qur'an supports this. What is examined here, within the scope of this article, are several verses that, in the estimation of this research, present images which are instrumental in understanding the meaning of this reality and help us attain knowledge of that immense concept.

6.1. The Qur'an's Imagery in Elucidating the Concept of *Tasbīh* through the Correspondence of Image and Expression

It has been established that "visual representation" holds a distinctive place as one of the expressive methods employed in the Qur'an and is counted among the miraculous aspects manifest in the Qur'anic text. This method is also capable of creating a connection between the text and its intended objective, as well as between the concepts it utilizes and the images it creates. Among these connective dimensions is the relationship between the manifestations of the Qur'an's imagery in elucidating a concept named *Tasbīh*, select examples of which, expressed through the method of visual representation, are presented below.

6.1.1. Manifestations of Qur'anic Imagery Through the Celestial System and Structure in Elucidating the Concept of *Tasbīh*

This section addresses the visual manifestations of the system and structure of the celestial bodies and the connection and harmony in correlating these images with the expression *Tasbīh* to decode its profound meaning.

In a passage from *Sūrah Anbiyā'*, while expounding the system of *Tawḥīd*, the Qur'an speaks of the design of a firm structure within the cosmos:

"And it is He who created the night and the day and the sun and the moon. All float (*yasbahūn*), each in an orbit." (Qur'an 21:33)



An examination of this verse, which uses the word *yasbaḥūn*, and its surrounding context, reveals the depiction of unparalleled, multifaceted imagery. At times, it even creates one image within another. The movement and rotation of the sun and the moon, which the Qur'an illustrates using the root *s-b-ḥ* (*sabaḥa*), and the image processed in these verses, can serve as a guide to the connection established between the presented image and the expression *Tasbīḥ*.

The context of the verses first depicts a group of people who, heedless of the natural phenomena of the heavens and the earth, night and day, life and death—which they encounter daily—have drawn a veil of disbelief over their sight. In their neglect of the coherence and harmony of these phenomena, especially their neglect of the sky and the alternation of night and day, they have buried their heads in the hard shell of the earth; their horizon does not extend beyond it. It is as if they are unaware of the passage and rotation of time, the passing of this era, and the moment of departing the earth.

God addresses them not directly, but with the phrase: "Have those who disbelieve not considered that the heavens and the earth were a joined entity, and We separated them...?" (Qur'an 21:30). The use of this phrase implies that these established principles and laws of existence should have been seen and pondered. Therefore, whoever fails to consider and reflect upon them is addressed with the phrase "those who disbelieve" and is accused of disbelief. This address descends upon them from the very heavens they have neglected: "Do they not see that this earth and sky are not separate?" As if, just as their eyes are closed and they do not see, God also overlooks them and does not address them directly.

This context continues the preceding passage, which, across several verses, speaks of the oneness of God and the denial of partners or offspring for Him—something which, had it been true, would certainly have caused corruption: "Had there been within them [the heavens and earth] gods besides Allāh, they both would have been ruined." (Qur'an 21:22). Imam al-Ṣādiq (as), citing this verse, considers the interconnectedness of design and the perfection of creation as proof of God's oneness and, consequently, the absence of corruption (Al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq, *Al-Tawḥīd*, p. 250). The Qur'an itself uses this same reasoning as proof for *Tasbīḥ* and the transcendence of God Almighty: "So exalted is Allāh, Lord of the Throne, above what they describe." (Qur'an 21:22). It is for this reason that in the verse "that the heavens and the earth were a joined entity, and We separated them" (Qur'an 21:30), to explain the unity of creation and the Lordship over existence, it speaks of the heavens and the earth being joined, in order to



present it as proof of unity in Lordship and, consequently, the absence of corruption.

The preceding verses had reminded us of the truth that this heaven and earth, about which one is expected to reflect, were not created in vain:

"We did not create the heaven and the earth and what is between them for sport." (Qur'an 21:16)

Therefore, the context of the verses reminds the disbelieving person (the one who conceals the truth) that the heaven and the earth were once a joined entity:

"Have those who disbelieve not considered that the heavens and the earth were a joined entity, and We separated them...?" (Qur'an 21:30)

Subsequently, the verses speak of appointing "water" as the source of life for everything:

"And We made from water every living thing. Then will they not believe?" (Qur'an 21:30)

Then, once again returning to the sky with the phrase, it draws attention to the cosmic signs:

"And it is He who created the night and the day and the sun and the moon. All float (*yasbaḥūn*), each in an orbit." (Qur'an 21:33)

The verses in this sequence paint a picture of a space that appears like a boundless ocean, with the sun and moon swimming and circulating within it like small and large fish. It is a dynamic and moving image, and through the use of the word *kull* (all), it includes all related components in this dynamism. Then, in a sudden shift, the verses divert the mind from the expanse of the celestial ocean towards the subject of death and the impermanence of this world, thereby establishing a profound connection with the phrase "all swim in an orbit" and the passage of time.

Thus, the *siyāq* (context) of the verses, within the imagery they create of the heavens and the earth, the sun and the moon in motion, and the creation of *al-layl* (the night) and *al-nahār* (the day)—which are effects of this motion—also generates a depiction of a complete life cycle. This imagery commences from "We made every living thing from water" (Qur'an 21:30) and proceeds to "Every soul will taste death" (Qur'an 21:35). In this manner, a portrait is sketched between the two stages of *ḥayāt* (life) and *mamāt* (death), which become interlinked with the emergence of night and day and the revolution of the sun and the moon, serving as a reminder of the motion and journey of humanity, accompanying the cycle of night and day.

Therefore, although the *siyāq al-āyāt* initially constructs an image of the earth and the heavens and the motion of the celestial bodies (*kawākib*), due to the specific phrase «يَسْبَحُونَ» / "they swim (or float in an orbit)", it



incorporates human beings as a part of that boundless nature, which is affected by night and day and the passage of time, making them partners in this very course.

In this passage, the verses, in one scene, assemble the heaven and its celestial spheres into a single system, and in another scene, they depict an imagery between *hayāt* and *mamāt*. Thus, they expand the imagery to the vastness of the cosmos and all its beings, so that commensurate with its expanse, the concept of «تسبيح» / *tasbīḥ* and its essence finds meaning and flows through all components and dimensions of existence. An intellectual movement, accompanied by *tadabbur* (profound reflection) upon these verses and images, is necessary to link the concept of *tasbīḥ*—derived from the orbiting of the moon, the sun, the stars, and other celestial elements of which the earth is a part—to the human journey from birth to death. By speaking of the impermanence of life on earth, it once again directs humanity towards the heaven: “And We did not grant immortality to any human before you” (Qur’an 21:34), thereby constructing an imagery that is not initially apparent in the *prima facie* reading of the verses.

Imam al-Riḍā (‘a), in a tradition cited by the author of *Majma‘ al-Bayān* and transmitted from *Tafsīr al-‘Ayyāshī*, states:

"... And regarding the statement of the Almighty, *Lā al-shamsu yanbaghī lahā an tudrika al-qamara wa lā al-laylu sābiq al-nahār*' (It is not for the sun to overtake the moon, nor does the night outstrip the day) (Qur’an 36:40), it means the day has already outstripped it. Then He said, *wa kullun* (And all) – referring to the sun, the moon, and the stars – *Fī falakin yasbahūn* (float, each in an orbit). They travel within it with effortless motion (*inbisāt*), and anything that extends or moves freely within something is indeed swimming (*sabaḥa*) within it, from which the concept of 'swimming in water' is derived. The verb *Yasbahūn* is used with the *wāw* and *nūn* [indicating the third person masculine plural] because the action is attributed to them in a manner that is characteristic of human acts, just as He said, *mā lakum lā taṭīqūn* (Why do you not speak?) (Qur’an 37:92) when describing them with the attribute of one who is rational. And Ibn ‘Abbās said: *Yasbahūn* means each one of them flows in its orbit, just as the spindle rotates within the whorl." (Al-Ṭabarsī, *Majma‘ al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qur’ān*, vol. 8, p. 665)

This tradition contains two significant points. First, every entity in the cosmos moves within a specific orbit (*falak*), and this motion is dependent on the system in which the entity is placed. Thus, the tradition emphasizes the relationship between an entity and its environment. This is analogous to a fish swimming in water, which demonstrates the fish's complete dependence on its aquatic environment. Consequently, the application of



the concept derived from the verb *tasbīḥ* (to glorify, to swim) to *kull* (all/each) indicates that all components and particles of existence which engage in this cosmic motion (*musabbihāt*) are in a state of 'swimming' and journeying, interacting with a vast, boundless environment as part of a larger, integrated system. Therefore, it can be argued that the noble verse portrays the motion of the sun and the moon across the expanse of the heavens – a motion encapsulated in the term *tasbīḥ* – as a specific manifestation of this universal law of systemic journeying.

The second point is the use of the *wāw* and *nūn* in the verb *yasbahūn*, which is the form used for rational, sentient beings (*jam' al- 'āqil*). This grammatical choice, in addition to potentially affirming the possession of a perceptive faculty and suggesting a conscious dimension in the cosmic *tasbīḥ* of the universe, also directs attention towards the *tasbīḥ* of the most potent and supreme rational being (*dhū al- 'aql*), namely, the human. In other words, humanity, as the most rational being in existence, must inherently derive a greater share and a more profound manifestation of *tasbīḥ* within the sphere of existence than any other entity or creature. This implies that human *tasbīḥ* must be a more specific and elevated form compared to that of the other glorifying beings.

A similar connection and imagistic harmony, employing the concept of *tasbīḥ*, is established in Sūrah Yāsīn between the 'flowing' (*jary*) of the sun and the 'measuring' (*taqdīr*) of the moon's stations:

“And the sun runs [its course] toward a resting place for it. That is the determination of the Exalted in Might, the Knowing. (38) And the moon – We have determined for it phases, until it returns like the old date stalk. (39) It is not for the sun to overtake the moon, nor does the night outstrip the day. They all float, each in an orbit.” (36:38-40)

The context (*siyāq*) of these verses in Sūrah Yāsīn begins with the reprimanding phrase *a-lam yaraw* (Have they not seen...?) (36:31), speaking of the gathering of all beings in the presence of God – denoted by the divine plural pronoun *nā* (We) – in the verse 'wa-in kullun lammā jamī'un ladaynā muḥ'ḍarūn' (“And indeed, all of them will yet be brought present before Us.”) (36:32). It then describes the dead earth that is revived, causing seeds to sprout, yield fruit, and by divine decree, producing gardens of palm trees and grapes, with gushing springs flowing from it – all attributed to God using the pronoun *nā* (as in *akhrājnā*, We bring forth; *qadarnā*, We decreed) (36:33-35). Then it extols the Creator of all pairs, engaging in *tasbīḥ* (36:36), thereby linking the progression from dead earth to life, growth, and fruition to the *tasbīḥ* of God. After depicting these earthly images, the discourse shifts to portray images of the heavens, pointing to the flowing of the sun and the moon's passage through its



stations – all revolving within their ordained orbits under divine decree, without outstripping one another. Again, in line with the concepts previously discussed, it uses the phrase *wa kullun fī falakin yasbahūn* (36:40). The subsequent mention of ships and their passengers (36:41-42), which again evokes notions of journeying, motion, and floating, serves to portray another dimension of this comprehensive imagery.

6.1.1.1. Image within an Image: A Further Manifestation of Coherence and the Connection of Expressions with Imagery

The same visual connection present in these verses can be established between the expressions “We made every living thing from water” (Qur’an 21:30) and “They all float, each in an orbit” (Qur’an 36:40). This is because the meanings of ‘water’ and ‘swimming’ are intrinsically linked, allowing us to understand that *kull shay* (everything), which is entirely *ḥayy* (living), is simultaneously *musabbih* (glorifying/swimming) within its own *falak* (orbit).

To elaborate and substantiate this point, one can draw upon the exposition of ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī in *Al-Mīzān*, where, in arguing for the reality of the *tasbīḥ* of all creatures, he states:

“Wherever creation has permeated, knowledge has also infiltrated. Every existent being, to the extent of its share of existence, possesses a portion of knowledge. This statement certainly does not necessitate that we claim all beings are equal in knowledge, or that knowledge is of one single type in all of them, or that they understand everything that a human understands, and that if a human does not perceive their knowledge, it proves they have none.” (Al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī, *Al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qur’ān*, vol. 13, p. 110)

This explanation, in a way, also articulates the *ḥayāt* (life) of all particles of existence. If we assert that wherever creation has permeated, knowledge has also infiltrated, it means that knowledge is considered a corollary of creation. And since knowledge itself is a corollary of life—as knowledge cannot be attributed to anything that is not *ḥayy* (living)—it can be said that creation is equivalent to life. Wherever creation has permeated, life also manifests itself there. Consequently, there is no created entity except that it is *ḥayy*, even though the degree and type of life, just like knowledge, are not uniform or of the same kind for all creatures. This means *kull makhliūq ḥayy* (every created thing is living), or, in other words, *kull shay’ ḥayy* (everything is living).

To this line of reasoning, one can add the verse: “They will say, ‘Our Lord! He who gave us speech has given speech to all things.’” (Qur’an 41:21). The attribution of the quality of *nuṭq* (speech, articulate faculty) to *kull shay’* (everything) can serve as evidence for the life of *kull shay’*,



because *nutq* is also a corollary of life and cannot be truthfully affirmed without the fundamental presence of life. Given that no existent being is devoid of knowledge and *nutq*, it can therefore be asserted that no existent being lacks life. On the other hand, there is no life except that which is derived from the Divine Name *Al-Ḥayy* (The Ever-Living). Thus, the source and origin of all *ḥayāt* is none other than One. It appears that the noble verse “We made every living thing from water” (Qur’an 21:30) also conveys this very meaning.

Thus, *ḥayāt* (life) is also intrinsically linked to *tasbīḥ*. This means that every “shay” (thing/entity), by virtue of its very essence as a 'thing,' partakes in a share of existence (*wujūd*). Whatever has a share of existence is therefore *ḥayy* (living), and this life of it is dependent upon *tasbīḥ* and the perpetual motion it continuously performs. Should it cease this for even a moment, it would lose its *ḥayāt*.

According to Mullā Ṣadrā, the life of every living being is identical to its mode of existence. The mode of existence of a living entity determines the vital effects that emanate from it. The more noble and powerful an entity's existence, the more complete its perception and the firmer its action will be. Furthermore, due to the equivalence (*masāwāqah*) of existence and life, it can be said that every existent is living, and life, just like existence, permeates all beings. (Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, *Al-Ḥikmah al-Muta‘āliyah*, vol. 1, p. 417) In his discussion of life, Al-Jīlī enumerates five types of life, the first of which is "existential life" (*al-ḥayāt al-wujūdiyyah*) that permeates all existents. (Al-Jīlī, *Marātib al-Wujūd wa Ḥaqīqat Kull Mawjūd*, pp. 40-41)

Perhaps the wisdom behind the simile of *mā’* (water) is precisely this permeation and flow of the principle of life through all creatures.

Therefore, “Whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is on the earth” (Qur’an 2:284, et al.), which encompasses all particles of existence, great and small, are all—by virtue of their being 'things' and having existence—*ḥayy*. Since the origin of every life is also from *mā’*, every existent, meaning every possessor of life, realizes that its life is entirely dependent upon *mā’* (ل), and every movement and action within this life is likewise dependent on *mā’*. This can be one profound dimension of the imagery that the Noble Qur'an sketches concerning *tasbīḥ* and its connection to *mā’* (ل).

The imagery depicting the celestial bodies swimming in the heavens is of the same nature, for the existence and life of these celestial bodies are contingent upon the sun and their revolution around it. Should any one of them cease this revolution for a moment or deviate from its orbit, it would undoubtedly be annihilated and perish.



Therefore, it can be said that from the Qur'anic perspective:

1. «كُلُّ شَيْءٍ» / "Everything" (cf. Qur'an 2:29, 6:38), including all those modern sciences do not consider living, is «حَيٌّ» / *ḥayy* (living) and possesses life, simply by virtue of its existence (*wujūd*) and entity-hood (*shay'īyah*).
2. The life of «كُلُّ شَيْءٍ» is from «الْمَاءِ» / *al-mā'* (the water) (Qur'an 21:30), meaning a single, shared element is the origin of life for all components of existence.
3. From the Qur'anic viewpoint, all that is in the heavens and the earth, from the smallest atomic particle to the largest galaxy, is engaged in «تَسْبِيحٍ» / *tasbīḥ*. This establishes an inseparable bond between life and *tasbīḥ*.
4. The «تَسْبِيحٍ» of all glorifiers is «لِلَّهِ» / *lillāh* (for God) (cf. Qur'an 57:1, 59:1, 61:1). This indicates a shared ultimate purpose (*ghāyah*) in this universal *tasbīḥ*, which is God, the Exalted.
5. This shared origin (*mabda'*) and ultimate end (*muntaḥā*) of existence can demonstrate the perfection of the creative act (*ṣan'*) and the connectedness in the management of the cosmos, as was also alluded to in the statement of Imam al-Ṣādiq (as).
6. In one profound expression, this shared Origin and End is the possessor and reality of the Name «الْحَيِّ» / *al-Ḥayy* (the Ever-Living), which was depicted in the journey from the divine «نَا» / *Nā* (We) to the divine «نَا».

The conclusion is that «كُلُّ شَيْءٍ» is «حَيٌّ», shares a common origin, and is, moreover, proceeding towards a single ultimate destination. In this process and journey from origin to destination, all are in a state of «تَسْبِيحٍ». This means that the mere existence and entity-hood of a thing, by virtue of its being «حَيٌّ» and possessing life, necessitates dynamism, motion, and journeying. This understanding elevates the concept of «تَسْبِيحٍ» beyond notions of a static or merely verbal glorification to a dynamic, purposeful, and life-centric movement.

The verses in Sūrah Anbiyā' similarly paint a picture within the preceding imagery, depicting this cyclical movement from birth to death. This is where it immediately announces the absence of immortality in this world: "And We did not grant to any human before your eternity [on earth]." (21:34), and with the phrase "Every soul will taste death." (21:35), it deems every soul a taster of death. At the end of the verse, it speaks of "and to Us you will be returned." (21:35), a return to the same divine «نَا» found in "And We made from water..." (21:30). Thus, it sketches another image connecting the beginning to the end, from «نَا» to «نَا». (we to we).



In this manner, the *siyāq* (context) of the verses in Sūrah Anbiyā' also elevates the meaning of the subject verse beyond mere audible speech or a natural discourse. Through depicting an exemplar and employing the specific word «يَسْبَحُونَ» / *yasbahūn* (they float/swim/glorify) to describe it—instead of any other word—it conveys a meaning that no other word could have possibly carried. In doing so, it activates the mind of the audience to discover the existing connections and correspondences for comprehending the profound concept of «تَسْبِيح».

6.1.2. The Visual Manifestations of the Angels' *Tasbīh*

This section examines the correlation between the imagery depicting the motion and movement of angels and the concept of *tasbīh* in Sūrah Anbiyā' (centered on verse 20) and Sūrah Nāzi'āt (centered on verses 1–5).

"They glorify [Him] night and day, without ceasing" (Qur'an 21:20).

The preceding context of this verse reminds us of the principle that creation is governed by a purposeful system—the heavens and the earth and all that lies between them were not created in vain: "We did not create the heaven and the earth and what is between them in play" (Qur'an 21:16). "Play" (*la'ib*) refers to an action that, while systematic and governed by rules, lacks a meaningful or valuable purpose (Qummī, Farhang-i Vāzhigān-i Qur'ān). Alternatively, it denotes an action in which no correct aim or objective is intended (Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, Mufradāt Alfāz al-Qur'ān, vol. 1, p. 741).

Following this reminder, the verse "To Him belongs whoever is in the heavens and the earth" (Qur'an 21:19) attributes everything within this creation to "Him," employing the possessive *lām* to denote ownership. This ownership is real (*ḥaqīqī*), not conventional (*i'tibārī*), which would become void once its conventional basis expires. Thus, an inseparable, real relationship of ownership governs the heavens, the earth, and all that lies between them and "Him."

The verse then states that those in the station of "with God" never disdain His worship nor grow weary: "And those near Him do not disdain from worshipping Him, nor do they grow weary" (Qur'an 21:19). They are described as engaged in the act of *tasbīh* night and day, without interruption or fatigue: "They glorify [Him] night and day, without ceasing" (Qur'an 21:20).

In this way, the Qur'ān paints a picture of an infinite space where immense, numerous, yet coordinated forces—under the command of a single Supreme Authority—constantly and tirelessly move and operate to manage the affairs entrusted to them. These forces are precisely "whoever is in the heavens and the earth," introduced by the phrase "to



Him" as being under the ownership and authority of the One, "He." Being in the station of "with God," free from all pride and weariness, they perform *tasbīh*; therefore, their *tasbīh* is perpetual, uninterrupted, and free from any languor.

The alignment of the meaning of *tasbīh* with their motion and movement is further supported by subsequent verses, where they are described as "honored servants" (Qur'an 21:26), for servitude is achieved only through absolute obedience. It is at this level of servitude that a servant becomes an "honored servant." Clearly, absolute obedience here is not merely verbal or declarative, as the following verse describes their state through the attribute of "acting": "And they act by His command" (Qur'an 21:27). Moreover, these verses are often interpreted as referring to angels, who are also administrators of divine affairs: "Then those who arrange the affairs [of the world]" (Qur'an 79:5). This description further emphasizes that *tasbīh* transcends mere speech or words and is, in reality, an action and deed.

This imagery is further refined by the notion that forces in existence perpetually revolve around the Sun of the Axis of the Realm of Possibility (God), executing His commands and managing affairs without a moment's pause. The Qur'ān refers to this continuous motion and action in obedience to divine commands and the administration of the world under His absolute ownership and sovereignty as *tasbīh*. Thus, by employing the term *tasbīh*, the Qur'ān establishes a correspondence between the meaning of the word and the function it defines for the angels.

This imagery of angelic motion is further enriched in Sūrah Nāzi'āt with additional attributes:

"By those [angels] who extract [souls] violently, by those who remove [souls] gently, by those who swim [float] [in space], Then those who take the lead, then those who arrange the affairs [of the world]" (Qur'an 79:1–5).

Here, too, the verses depict forces—interpreted as angels—moving to and from. The description of their movements, in accordance with the words used, suggests a swimming-like, swift, smooth, and purposeful motion aimed at administering affairs. While these verses, in one sense, elaborate on the management of affairs, the addition of the beautiful description "by those who remove [souls] gently"—implying being immersed in the fervor, joy, and ecstasy of the ocean of divine love—adds another positive dimension to the previously bustling scene. It portrays a scene full of motion: angels, unrecognizable in their zeal and



indefatigable, with a sense of joy and exhilaration, racing ahead of one another in the path of obedience and fulfillment of divine commands.

In this imagery, the word *sabḥ* (swimming) effectively plays its role in depicting the form and manner of movement. Among all conceivable types of motion, *sabḥ* conveys movements that are swimming-like, smooth, energetic, and purposeful, vividly illustrating the nature of angelic motion.

6.1.3. The Visual Manifestations of the Birds' *Tasbīḥ*

Another dimension of the Qur'an's imagery in correspondence with the term *tasbīḥ* can be traced in Sūrah Nūr, centered on verses 41–42:

"Have you not seen that God is glorified by all in the heavens and the earth, and by the birds with wings outspread? Each knows its prayer and its glorification, and God is fully aware of what they do. To God belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, and to God is the ultimate return" (Qur'an 24:41–42).

Upon closer examination, these verses present a vivid imagery of the flight of *Ṭayr* (birds), which aligns with the concept of *tasbīḥ*. Although the verse initially speaks of the *tasbīḥ* of all "who are in the heavens and the earth," it specifically emphasizes the *tasbīḥ* of birds.

The verse opens with the phrase "Have you not seen," evoking the idea that *tasbīḥ* is perceptible. While the primary addressee is the Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him), the continuation of the verses suggests that *tasbīḥ* can, in principle, be observable. How can the *tasbīḥ* of "all in the heavens and the earth" be visualized? The imagery of a bird in flight between the heavens and the earth serves as a tangible example to elucidate the meaning of *tasbīḥ*. Thus, the Qur'an creates another living scene: a bird soaring with outstretched wings across the sky. This imagery, too, depicts a form of *tasbīḥ*, as among all aspects of a bird's life, only its flight is highlighted in alignment with the act of *tasbīḥ*—a movement and journey that resonates with the concept of "transformational becoming" (*ṣayrūrāt*) at the end of the subsequent verse.

Further reinforcing this interpretation is the phrase "and God is fully aware of what they do," which explicitly emphasizes the "act" of *tasbīḥ*, clarifying that this act is not confined to mere "words." The expression "what they do" indicates that the Qur'an portrays *tasbīḥ* as a dynamic and active deed, not limited to verbal utterance.

One might argue that the specific mention of *Ṭayr* as an exemplar of *tasbīḥ* symbolizes the aspiration to ascend to higher realms and the divine kingdom, much like certain mystics have attributed this quality to the human soul, comparing it to the nature of birds (cf. ʿAyn al-Quḍāt Hamadānī, *Sharḥ Kalimāt Bābā Ṭāhir*, p. 46).



Since the term "each" in the verse encompasses all "who are in the heavens and the earth," it can be said that the act of *tasbīḥ*, in the sense of purposeful motion and movement, applies to all its manifestations. This universality of *tasbīḥ* reflects a common principle of life and motion shared by all beings.

Thus, the verse captures attention by presenting a dynamic and vivid imagery of birds—a sight visible to all—and links this imagery to the word *tasbīḥ* to imbue the term with meaning. It then connects this motion and journey with the phrase "and to God is the ultimate return," establishing a spiritual link between *tasbīḥ* and "transformational becoming" (*ṣayrūrāt*), thereby elucidating one of the most profound principles of existence. This transformational movement must occur within human existence so that human *tasbīḥ* transcends its external dimension and ascends to an internal, more profound level—a *tasbīḥ* of the soul. As ‘Allāmah Javādī Āmulī explains in defining "journey" (*sīr*) and "transformational becoming" (*ṣayrūrāt*):

"The difference between *ṣayrūrāt* (with *ṣād*) and 'sīr' (with *sīn*) is that *sīr* denotes motion, present in all earthly and celestial bodies. In contrast, *ṣayrūrāt* signifies transformation and evolution—a process of becoming, progressing from one state to another, from one station to a higher one" (Javādī Āmulī, *Ṣūrat va Sīrat-i Insān dar Qur'ān*, p. 99).

The importance of reflecting on these verses and their implications is so paramount that those who disregard and neglect them are reproached and characterized by the trait of disbelief.

Thus, we come to understand that the words of the Qur'an are not lifeless, and the purpose of its specific expressions and terminology is not merely to convey abstract meanings. Rather, the Qur'an creates with words. It engages in ontology through imagery. It enhances knowledge through ontology, thereby guiding humanity. By purposefully employing words and crafting vivid imagery, the Qur'an elucidates profound concepts to reveal truths that play a pivotal role in human guidance. It speaks of *tasbīḥ*, whose components—the sun, the moon, the earth, the celestial spheres, the night, and the day—encompass all that can be conceived within this realm. For what can be imagined that lies beyond its scope?

This appears to be a Qur'anic method: by presenting multidimensional imagery, it engages the mind and stimulates thought, urging one to move beyond a linear reading of the verses, to benefit from their generative potential, and to grasp deeper meanings and concepts through its vibrant and dynamic portrayals.



7. The Role of Narrative in Elucidating the Formative Mechanism of *Tasbīh* (The Motion Paradigm)

In depicting the concept of cosmic *tasbīh*, the Noble Qur'ān employs an innovative and profound technique of imagery. This expressive method presents intellectual and intangible concepts of *tasbīh* through sensory and dynamic symbols—such as the glorification of birds, mountains, angels, and celestial bodies. Based on an analysis of the structure of these Qur'ānic images, *tasbīh* is not confined to verbal or declarative expression; rather, it possesses an existential and universal nature manifested in the dynamism and perpetual motion of existence. These images function as a universal language of "actuality," unveiling a profound metaphysical truth within the structure of the cosmos and revealing that existence abides in a state of constant remembrance and motion.

In the course of interpreting and ontologically elucidating these Qur'ānic images, a narration from 'Alī b. Ibrāhīm al-Qummī, under the verse "There is not a thing that does not glorify Him with praise" (Qur'ān 17:44), serves as a key explanatory support. This narration, by explicitly stating that "the very motion of everything constitutes glorification of God, the Almighty," (al-Qummī, *Tafsīr al-Qummī*, vol. 2, p. 20) provides a functional and philosophical definition of *tasbīh*. This profound statement, in fact, explains the structure and mechanism governing the Qur'ān's imagery: while the Qur'ān refers to *tasbīh* through the language of art and allegory (the communicative dimension), the narration uncovers and elucidates the fundamental and intrinsic principle governing universal *tasbīh* by highlighting the pivotal concept of *ḥarakat* (dynamism) (the ontological dimension).



A systematic correlation between these two sources of knowledge leads to an important conclusion in understanding the reality of *tasbīh*: the Qur'ānic images do not merely serve a literary or metaphorical function; rather, they are visual and symbolic representations of the very formative motion defined in the narration as the universal rule and metaphysical truth of *tasbīh*. By enumerating diverse manifestations (multiplicity of forms), the Qur'ān familiarizes humanity with the vast phenomenon of *tasbīh*, while the narration, by focusing on the keyword "motion," points to the structural unity governing all these manifestations. From this perspective, *tasbīh* possesses two interconnected dimensions:

- a) A formative, dynamic reality encompassing all existence, and
- b) The artistic manifestation of this reality through Qur'ānic imagery.

This reading introduces existence as a living, dynamic whole in which every particle is in constant motion along its path of innate becoming and perfection. This, in turn, amplifies the "inward" (*anfusī*) responsibility of human beings to harmonize their existential motion with the universal symphony of *tasbīh*.

Conclusion

Tasbīh as one of the epistemological matters frequently emphasized in the Qur'ān, constitutes a profound reality that encompasses every "thing qua thing" in existence.

In the present study, employing a descriptive-analytical method and utilizing the Qur'ān's tool of imagery, certain verses depicting *tasbīh* have been examined. It has been concluded that the Qur'ān, by applying the expression *tasbīh* in the context of specific imagery, effectively conveys its message regarding the meaning and concept of *tasbīh* to the reader. This meaning is reflected in verses that employ the motion of the sun, the moon, the stars, birds, and angels as examples to elucidate this concept. The narration, "The very motion of everything is *tasbīh* of God, the Almighty," aligns with this direction and, as an ontological and explanatory testimony, clarifies the philosophical foundation of the Qur'ān's artistic imagery.



Therefore, the true meaning of *tasbīh* is motion, movement, journey, and ceaseless dynamism that flows through all components and particles of existence—from a single atom to immense galaxies. In other words, existence in its entirety, with all its parts, is in constant journey and motion at every moment, and each component, while participating in that overall motion, also possesses its own particular movement. Thus, all components—whether encompassing or encompassed—exhibit a manner of journey and motion, and no particle in existence is static or immobile. This principle also indicates the vitality of all parts of existence.

This meaning, which appears to be a third dimension complementing the verbal and practical aspects of *tasbīh*, represents a living, dynamic, and yet coherent system. Although it appears to possess numerous determinations and multiplicities, it simultaneously has a definite origin and destination, governed under the shadow of a single whole—reflecting functional monotheism (*tawḥīd al-af`ālī*). This truth is also operative and pervasive in the human existential system.

Consequently, verses that are often interpreted in isolation can be interconnected and viewed coherently from within, leading to a better understanding of the order of the universe—with all its complexities—and the single divine governance (*rubūbiyyah*) presiding over it.



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