PROFESSIONS & OCCUPATIONS

Handicrafts and Industry:

It is now abundantly clear from the previous discussion that the man earns income and livelihood from divine-gifts in the form of natural resources, e.g., vegetation and mineral deposits, which are mostly used after having been turned, modified and altered. For example, sheep-hair is turned into wool which is used to fabricate varied types of dresses; the iron serves as the raw material for manufacturing different kinds of equipments, tools and weapons; wood which can be used in its raw form for fire could be carved into small boats to giant ships. It can also be used as building material and furniture, so on and so forth.

This redesigning and reshaping of raw material into finished products by using what is known an industrial skill that man possesses, enhances the benefits and advantages of the former.

There are clear references in the Quran to not only common handicrafts but also to industries meant for manufacturing big and small equipments out of iron. These Ayat, serve as a source of industrial history of the past on the one hand, and derive the message home, that Muslims be engaged in industrial activities on the other hand.
It must be highlighted that Quran presents octogenarian Noah (Peace be upon him) as an engineer building ships and giant boats.

"And he was building ship".  
(Quran XI:12)

What kind of ship?

"Comprising wide wooden planks and nails."

But We bore him On an (Ark) made of Broad planks and caulked With palm-fibre.  
(Quran LIV:27)

The large size of the ship is described in peculiar ways:

"The ship was drifting with its passengers in the waves like a mountain."
(Quran XI:42)

So the Ark floated With them on the waves (Towering) like mountains, And Noath called out To his son, who had Separated himself (from the rest): "O my son! embark With us, and be not with the Unbelievers!"
(Quran XI:12)

It means the Noah’s ship was as large as modern ship. Daud (Biblical David) (Peace be upon him) is presented as deft manufacturer moulding and recasting iron in different useful forms. He is guided by Allah in this way
(Quran XXXIV:22)

The period of Sulaiman (Peace be upon him) is painted as that of industry manufacturing different Kind of big or small wares.
(Quran XXXIV:22)
The story of Zu al-Qarnain also refers to the use of iron sheets, melted copper, leaded wall:

He said: "(The power) in which My Lord has established me is better (than tribute): Help me therefore with strength (And labour): I will Erect a strong barrier Between you and them: "Bring me blocks of iron." At length, when he had Filled up the space between The two steep mountain-sides, He said, "Blow (with you belows)" Then, when he had made it (red) as fire, he said: "Bring me, that I may Pour over it, molten lead."

(Quran XVIII:16)

Clay Industry:

The Quran quotes the Pharaoh as instructing his minister Haman too build a minaret:

Pharaoh said: "O Chiefs! No god do I know for you But myself: therefore, O Haman! light me a (kiln To bake bricks) out of clay, And build me a lofty Palace, that I may mount up To the god of Moses: But as far as I am concerned, I think (Moses) is a liar!"

(Quran XXVIII:20)

Isa (Biblical Jesus Christ) (Peace be upon him) has been shown making toys and birds out of clay.

“And (appoint him) An apostle to the Children Of Israel, (with this message): “I have come to you, With a Sign from your Lord, In that I make for you Out of clay, as it were, The figure of a bird, And breathe into it, And it becomes a bird By God's leave: And I heal those Born blind, and the lepers, And I quicken the dead, By God's leave; And I declare to you What ye eat, and what ye store In your houses. Surely Therein is a Sign for you If ye did believe.

(Quran III:43)
Glass - Industry:

During the time of the Prophet Sulaiman (Peace be upon him) buildings use of glass is very well mentioned:

She was asked to enter The lofty Palace: but When she saw it, she Thought it was a lake Of water, and she (tucked up Her skirts), uncovering her legs. He said: "This is But a palace paved Smooth with slabs of glass." She said: "O my Lord! I have indeed wronged My soul: I do (now) Submit (in Islam), with Solomon, To the Lord of the Worlds."

(Quran, XXVII:19)

Cloth Industry:

Things like blankets and tents have been referred to in this Ayat:

It is God Who made your habitations Homes to rest and quiet For you; and made for you, Out of the skins of animals, (Tents for) dwellings, which Ye find so light (and handy) When ye travel and when Ye stop (in your travels); And out of their wool, And their soft fibres (Between wool and hair), And their hair, rich stuff And articles of convenience (To serve you) for a time.

(Quran, XVI:14)

There is also description of summer - dresses and armours:

It is God Who made. Out of the things He created, Some things to give you shade; Of the hills He made some For your shelter; He made Garments to protect you From heat, and coats of mail To protect you from your (mutual) violence. Thus does He complete His favours on you, that Ye may bow to His will (in Islam).

(Quran, XVI:14)
Silk Industry:

One can also find references in the Quran to silk. Dress of the dwellers of paradise is mentioned in the following words:

*God will admit those who believe and work righteous deeds, To Gardens beneath which Rivers flow: they shall be adorned therein with bracelets Of gold and pearls; and Their garments there Will be of silk.*

(Quran, XXII:17)

*Upon them will be Green Garments of fine silk And heavy brocade, And they will be adorned With Bracelets of silver; And their Lord will Give to them to drink Of a Wine Pure and Holy.*

(Quran, LXXVI:29)

*For them will be Gardens Of Eternity; beneath them Rivers will flow: they will Be adorned therein With bracelets of gold, And they will wear Green garments of fine silk And heavy brocade; They will recline there in on raised thrones. How good the recompense! How beautiful a couch To recline on!*  

(Quran, XVIII:31)

From the above verses pigment and dyeing could also be inferred.

Jewellery and ornaments:

Beside colourful and pretty dresses, ornaments made up of gold, silver, and pearls have found mention in the Quran at several places:
For them will be Gardens Of Eternity; beneath them Rivers will flow: they will be adorned therein With bracelets of gold, And they will wear Green garments of fine silk And heavy brocade; They will recline there in on raised thrones. How good the recompense! How beautiful a couch to recline on!

(Quran XVIII: 15)

**Carpet and furniture making:**

For house furnishing carpets and furnitures are basic things. The Quran outlines the comforts and ease of the paradise in the following words:

Therein will be Thrones (Of dignity), raised on high, Goblets placed (ready), And Cushions set in rows, And rich carpets (All) spread out.

(Quran, XIII: 16)

**Leather Industry:**

At several places in the Quran there are references to the use of animal - skin Ahadith also mention the existence of tanneries in Arabia. Once the Prophet advised people to make use of even the dead goat or sheep's skin as only the dead's meat was prohibited.¹

**Shoe-Industry:**

It is a very old industry. Musa (peace be upon him) had been asked by Allah to put off his shoes before he entered the sanctuary of Tur mountain.

¹ Al-Bukhari, Kitab al-Zakat.
“Verily I am thy Lord! Therefore (in My presence) pull off thy shoes thou art in the sacred valley Tuwa.”

(Quran, XX 16)

Negus, the Abyssinian king had sent one pair of black leather socks to the Prophet (S A W ) as gift, which were accepted and used by the Prophet. There are traditions clarifying the kind of shoes the Prophet used. Isa B. Tahman reports that Anas showed him one pair of shoes made up of leather without fur, which belonged to the prophet (S.A.W.).

Ibn Aun says that he went to a shoe-maker in Makkah to get his shoes repaired. He repaired the shoes in the same pattern as he had seen the Prophet’s shoes which was in possession of Fatimah bt 'Abdullah b. Abbas.

Toy-making:

It has already been shown that Jesus Christ could design toys out of clays.

Aishah reports that the Prophet (S.A.W.) once saw some toys in her chamber and asked her to name those objects which were dolls and a horse with two wings her explanation made the Prophet (S.A.W.) smile.

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2 Al-Bukhari, Kitab al-Taharah
3 Ibid., Kitab al-Jihad
5 Abu Daud, Sunan
Construction - Industry:

The Quran mentions some of the earlier people as experts in mountain-carving, stone-designing, and pillar-making. People of Thamud have been described in the Quran as:

And with the Thamud (People), who cut out (Huge) rocks in the valley?  
(Quran, LXXXIX:30)

"And remember how He Made you inheritors After the 'Ad people And gave you habitations In the land: ye build For yourselves palaces and castles In (open) plains, and carve out Homes in the mountains; So bring to remembrance The benefits (ye have received) From God, and refrain From evil and mischief On the earth."

(Quran, VII:74)

In the story of 'Ad the Quran draws a picture of a unique town.

Of the (city of) Iram, With lofty pillars, The like of which Were not produced In (all) the land?  
(Quran, LXXXIX:30)

The same kind of vivid description we can find in the story of Saba.

There was, for Saba, Aforetime, a Sign in their Home­land - two Gardens, To the right and to the left, "Eat of the Sustenance (provided) By your Lord, and be grateful To Him: a territory fair and happy, And a Lord Oft-Forgiving!"

(Quran, XXXIV:22)
These are only few examples quoted from many others in the Quran, which reminds the humankind to be grateful to Allah for his grace and favour.

*It was we who taught him the making of coats of mail
For benefit, to guard you from each other's violence:
Will ye then be grateful?*

(Quran, XXI:17)

The Prophet Muhammad also encouraged his people to adopt one or the other professional art as a means of livelihood. He once said:

"None eats better than what one acquires with one's own hands. Daud, a prophet of Allah used to earn his income with his own hands".\(^6\)

**Dexterity:**

What matters much in the industry, manufacturing and handicrafts is the durability and beauty. Islamic economics emphasizes on these principles. The Prophet (S.A.W.) is reported to have advised his people in these words:

"Allah has declared beauty as essential element of every act - even when you kill someone (for right cause) Kill him generously and when you slaughter an animal, do it kindly and beautifully."\(^7\)

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\(^6\) Muslim & Ibn Maja Chapter - I
\(^7\) Muslim, Sahih
In *Sahih* of Muslim there is another Hadith:

"Allah is perfectly beautiful and likes beauty."^8

Bukhari has recorded in his *Sahih* a tradition which reflects that the Prophet (S.A.W.) liked good appearance and beauty.

Umm Khalid bt. Khalid b. Saeed reports that once some pieces of cloths were presented to the Prophet as gifts which included an exquisitely embroidered black sheet. The Prophet (S.A.W.) presented the sheet to me and said: "Umm Khalid! how beautiful it is!". In another version of the same tradition Umm Khalid is reported to have said: "The Prophet (S.A.W.) touched the embroidered designs and said how beautiful it is, how beautiful it is."^9

The Prophet instructed the Muslim manufacturers and designers to ensure beauty and durability in their products as much as possible. Aishah reports that the Prophet said:

"Allah likes that you make your products durable."

A famous Hadith says that once the Prophet instructed his people to rectify the curve of a grave, stressing the point.

"When making something make sure that it looks good."

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^8 *Muslim, Sahih*

^9 *Al-Bukhari, op cit*, Kitab al-Libas

^10 Ibid
Al-Tabarani has recorded that someone asked the Prophet (S A W) if the rectification of the shape of the grave would benefit the dead. The Prophet answered:

"No, Neither benefit nor harm but it will look good to the eyes of those alive."\(^{11}\)

Banu Israel had been asked to sacrifice a cow with beauty.

_They said "Beseech on our behalf Thy Lord to make plain to us Her colour." He said "He says A fawn-coloured heifer, Pure and rich in tone, The admiration of beholders!"

(Quran, II 1)

The Quran also speaks of the perfection of everything that Allah has created.

_Thou seest the mountains And thinkest them firmly fixed. But they shall pass away As the clouds pass away (Such is) the artistry of God, Who disposes of all things in perfect order for He is Well acquainted with all that ye do_

(Quran, XXVII 20)

**Trade and Commerce:**

Finish-products from the factory, agricultural produces from the farm, woods from the forest, and mineral deposits from the mine are required to be transported to the market, where the things turn more

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\(^{11}\) Al Bukhari _op cit_ Kitab al-Libas
valuable than at their original place. Man is too weak physically to transport material from place to place. He, therefore, has invented various means of transportation.

The Quran mentions about various modes of transportation and land and sea routes marked for trade from one country and to the other.

And they carry your heavy loads To lands that ye could not (otherwise) reach except with Souls distressed: for your Lord Is indeed Most Kind, Most Merciful.

(Quran, XVI:14)

With the mention of sea-trade-routes the Quran has sought to attract attention to the possibility of its frequent use. Floating on the sea-surface have been likened in the Quran to mountains:

And among His Signs Are the ships, smooth-running Through the ocean, (tall) as mountains.

(Quran, XLII:25)

Muslims have been advised in no uncertain term to make use of shipping, sea-trade routes and travel by sea as important means of production, income and livelihood.

It is He who has made the sea subject, that ye may eat thereof flesh that is fresh and tender, And that ye may extract there from ornaments to wear; And thou serest the ships Therein that plough the waves, that ye may seek (thus) Of the bounty of God And that ye may be grateful.

(Quran, XVI:14)
Man is physically as inferior to powerful waves of the sea as a tiny straw floating helplessly on its surface. But man has controlled the ocean by applying his unique intellectual power, which is mentioned in the Quran as an honour.

*We have honoured the sons of Adam; provided them with transport on land and sea; Given them for sustenance things good and pure; and conferred on them special favours, Above a great part of our creation.*

*(Quran, XVII:15)*

To assess the extent of impact of these Quranic teachings on Arabs and other Muslims it is quite pertinent to have a cursory look at the history of their involvement in shipping and trade journey by sea in both pre-Islamic and Islamic era.

Before the emergence of Islam Arabs of peninsular Arabia had little knowledge of sea, sea-route, boat or ships. It were the Romans who controlled the sea with none as rivals. Therefore Muslims from Makkah had reached Abyssinia by a Roman ship in the first migration.

Until the time of the second caliph Umar al-Faruq there was no significant attention towards using water/sea as a means of transportation as the entire force had been devoted to territorial annexation. One tradition has it that Umar wrote to Amr b. al As upon the victory of Egypt to write back to him about the sea and related matter.

"Sea is a giant creature, to ride upon which is like an insect on a log".
In view of this comment the caliph stopped the Muslims from venturing into the ocean.\textsuperscript{12}

Once, in a letter, Muawiyah wanted to be briefed about the sea from Umar, but the caliph did not take note of it and stressed other matters instead, such as repairing of decrepit fortresses, re-arranging the standing troops, appointing sentinels on strategic points.

Muawiyah, had to work hard to convince the third caliph Uthman to invade those territories that could be approached only through water. He was able to get permission only on the condition that more troops were recruited to remain stationed along the coastal areas.\textsuperscript{13}

He invaded Cyprus in 27 A.H. via sea route with a naval army which included, among other great and senior sahabah, Ubadah b. Al Samit and Abu Zarr al-Ghifari, with no success. But in 33 A.H. he ventured into the sea surrounding Cyprus once again with a naval fleet of 500 and captured the island.\textsuperscript{14}

Like farming industry and transportation the Quran also sheds light on trade and means of trades. Significance of trade is quite clear from these Quranic instructions.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{12} Ibn Sa'd, has recorded this tradition pertaining to the Prophet's son, Ibrahim
  \item \textsuperscript{13} Ibn Sa'd, al-Tabaqat al-Kubra
  \item \textsuperscript{14} Al-Baladhun, Futuh, al-Buldan, p 128
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
O ye who believe! Eat not up your property among yourself in vanities: But let there be amongst you traffic and trade by mutual good-will: Nor kill (or destroy) yourselves: for verily God hath been to you Most Merciful!

(Quran, IV:5)

Sahabah are reported to have understood the instructions in this ayat as getting engaged in trade activities.  

In Surah Quraysh there is obvious reference to Qurayshite’s commercial journeys in summer and winter, as main source of their livelihood.

Hajj which is a purely devotional matter has been described in the Quran in a way that there appears the accommodation of both religiosity and worldly affairs. Allah says:

\begin{quote}
It is no crime in you If ye seek of the bounty of your Lord (during pilgrimage). Then who ye pour down from (Mount) ‘Arafat, Celebrate the praises of God at the sacred monument, And celebrate His praises as He has directed you, even though before this ye went astray.
\end{quote}

(Quran, II:198)

Abdullah b. Abbas, explaining the above Ayah says that in the pre-Islamic period Ukaz, majannah and Dhu al-majaz were three famous market places which served as centres for the nationwide trade during the Hajj season. When the Arabs entered Islam, they

\footnote{Al-Baladhun, Futuh al-Buldan, p. 153}
considered these trade activities undesirable. Then this Ayah came down to correct the attitude.\textsuperscript{16}

With the expansion of Islamic rule over a vast territory beyond the Arab frontiers, the people became less and less involved in trade transactions during Hajj until it stopped totally. Once a freed slave of Umar Abu Saleh surprisingly asked his master: "O the leader of believers! Did you all get engaged in trade activities during the Hajj seasons in the past?" 'Umar said:

"Hajj was the season for our earning"

Ahadith also emphasize on business and commercial activities. That the Prophet (S.A.W.) and the most senior sahabah including the four pious caliphs were also involved in trade is clear proof for the trade to be significant and desirable.

The position of businessman could be assessed from this Hadith.

"Honest and trustworthy traders will be included in the category of prophets, most truthful people and those martyred in the cause of Allah."

A Hadith stresses not only the profitability of trade in garments but also highlights its psychological dimensions.

\textsuperscript{16} Al-Tabari, Tafseer, vol. VIII, Explanation of the Ayah quoted above.
"Undertake the business in garments as this trade helps people achieve prosperity and pleasure."\textsuperscript{17}

Islamic economics defines trade as the most important source of livelihood.

"Out of ten parts of sustenance the trade covers all but one "\textsuperscript{18} Business is a very crucial part of national life.

"Had the trade system not been there in place, you would have become burden and dependent on others."\textsuperscript{19}

Many Fuqaha have discussed at length the issue whether agricultural activities are more important from economic point of view or trade. Imam al-Saakhsi (d. 448 A.H.) while touching upon this question has quoted the Prophet's Hadith:

"The best is the one who is the most useful to the people."

Imam infers the following conclusion from this Hadith:

"A profession which widely benefits mankind is superior."\textsuperscript{20}

**Manual Labour:**

Now the discussion will be made on another source of livelihood i.e. labour. Whether it is a men or an organization or a factory or a mill, everywhere there is the need of other men or men's

\textsuperscript{17} Kanzul Ummal, Kitab al- Buyu vol II p 199
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid, p 192
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid, Fazi-al-Kasab, vol II p 217
\textsuperscript{20} Al-Sarakhsi, Al-Mabsoot, vol 30, p 259
physical or mental capability to be benefited from. As a matter of fact, labour is itself an asset or wealth like cash and other kinds of movable or immovable property. The Quran explains labour as an asset. Musa (Peace be upon him) had served as shepherd for his wife's live-stock for a number of years, in place of the dower to be paid to the wife. Shueb (Peace be upon him), Musa's father in law had explained to Musa:

He said: “I intend to wed One of these my daughters to thee, on condition that Thou serve me for eight years; But if thou complete ten years, It will be (grace) from thee. But I intend not to place Thee under a difficulty: Thou wilt find me, Indeed, if God wills, One of the righteous.”

(Quran, XXVIII:20)

Labour is of two kinds: physical and mental. Separate discussions will be made over both of them.

Physical labour:

It is an easy means of earning with no capital or monetary investment being involved, which is known through various nomenclature manual work, service or employment. Quran presents two prophets one as labourer and the other as employee respectively. Shueb (Peace be upon him) agreed to employ Musa (Peace be upon him) to look after his live stock on the condition that:
He said: "Be that (the agreement) between me and thee: whichever of the two terms I fulfil, let there be No ill-will to me. Be God a witness to what we say."

(Quran, XXVIII:20)

Divinely - appointed teacher to Musa is shown to have possessed architectural know-how:

Then they proceeded: Until, when they came to the inhabitants of a town, They asked them for food, But they refused them hospitality. They found there A wall on the point of falling down, but he set it up straight. (Moses) said: "If thou hadst wished, surely thou couldst have exacted some recompense for it!"

(Quran, XXVIII:16)

Mental labour:

It refers to all those professions where the role of mind dominates that of the body and physique. Yusuf (peace be upon him) was offered a respectable position by the then Egyptian monarch in the administration:

So the king said: "Bring him unto me; I will take him specially to serve about my own person." Therefore when he had spoken to him, he said: "Be assured this day, Thou art, before our own presence, With rank firmly established, And fidelity fully proved!

(Quran, XII:13)

Yusuf while accepting the offer said: From this instance yet another principle could be derived: One is allowed to apply for a position in the government according to one’s capability, which could
be mentioned explicitly by the applicant and it may not be reprehensible as reference to potential aptitude is a tradition of Yusuf, a Prophet of Allah.

Although honesty and hard-work accompanied by more and more knowledge stand as pre-requisites for both physical and mental labour, they are more relevant and highly essential conditions for the later one.

Knowledge and education form the basis for the entire scheme of life in Islam, including economy. The first message received by the Prophet (S.A.W.) consisted of the significance of reading, as the source and mode of knowledge and education.\(^{21}\)

\[\begin{align*}
\text{Have We not expanded thee thy breast? And removed from thee Thy burden; The which did gall Thy back? And raised high the esteem (in which) thou (art held)? So, verily, With every difficulty, There is relief.}
\end{align*}\]

\text{(Quran, XCIV:1-5)}

At a number of places one could find this clarification in the Quran.

\[\begin{align*}
\text{Is one who worships devoutly During the hours of the night Prostrating himself or standing (in adoration), who takes heed of the Hereafter, and who places his hope in the Mercy of his Lord - (like one who does not)? Say: "Are those equal, those who know It is those who are Endued with understanding That receive admonition.}
\end{align*}\]

\text{(Quran XXXIX:9)}

\(^{21}\text{Kanzul-Ummal, vol. II, Fazl-al-Kasab}\)
Inference could be made from this message that distinction could be drawn between man and man on the basis of the depth of knowledge. Adam, the father of the entire mankind, proved his superiority over angels through his knowledge, which the latter lacked.\footnote{Ibid, Fazl al-Kasab}

The Prophet (S.A.W.) declared that education is obligatory on his followers.

"Acquisition of knowledge is compulsory on Muslims, both male and female."\footnote{Ibn, Maja, Kitab Al-Ilm, vol 1}

He also once said that:

"Verily, I have been sent as educator."\footnote{Al-Darmi, Sunan, Kitab al-Ilm}

In order to have the Muslims educated as much as possible within the shortest possible time the Prophet (S.A.W.), among other things, imposed on the Badr's captives, who were knowledgeable and enjoyed the art of reading and writing, the responsibility of teaching ten Muslim Children each, in exchange for their freedom. This agreement concerning education stands unique and unparalleled in the entire history of war.

Wisdom, which is the extended form of knowledge, has also been described by the Prophet (S.A.W.) as an asset for Muslims.
"Wisdom is a priceless asset of Muslims, who deserves more than anyone else to acquire it from wherever it is available."\textsuperscript{25}

Bukhari and Muslim both have recorded a tradition which links knowledge and wisdom to Halal means of income. Aishah reports that the prophet (S.A.W.) encouraged Muslims to adopt some occupation but looking at the poor asking the people why they abstained from doing an occupation which he himself did, and concluding with the comment:

"By God, I am more knowledgeable and God-fearing than anyone of you."

\textsuperscript{25} Mishkat al-Masabih, Kitab al-ilm.