Chapter II
The Islamic Concept of Knowledge
Meanings of Knowledge

Knowledge does not have specific definition or interpretation which satisfies or suits human understanding in a uniform way. Infact, there are numerous and diverse meanings or expositions correspond to nature and functions of "knowledge". Knowledge is heterogeneous exercise; a paramount phenomenon, apparently varying in substance encompasses the nature of all that which man feels, finds and reacts.

Etymological Meaning

The origin of word "knowledge" from etymological point of view has been taken as an existing fact without reference to the history of its uses. However, the word "knowledge" is etymologically related to Greek "novisse", Latin "cognoscere" means to know by the sense.¹

There is an observation by Socrates which reflects the belief that "knowledge" is identical with sense perception, seemed to Socrates a position that was incapable of withstanding the slightest critical scrutiny. The contention that the contents of each man’s knowledge are private to himself is not only inconsistent with the possibility of such general knowledge as is implied in being aware of sense objects themselves, but is irreconcilable with the most obvious facts involved in the use of language as the expressions of thought and with the assumptions which every admittedly makes that on somethings he is wiser than others and some on something's others are wiser than he.²

Bertrand Russell analyses the nature of knowledge in etymological context as:

"There are two sorts of knowledge: knowledge of things and knowledge of truths. Both rest upon acquaintance as its foundation. Though acquaintance by introspection, we are not only aware of things, but we are often aware of being aware of them. When I see the sun, I am
often aware of my seeing the sun; thus
my seeing the sun is an object with
which I have acquaintance. Similarly we
may be aware of our feeling, pleasure or
pain, and generally of the events which
have been in our minds. This kind of
acquaintance, which may call self-
consciousness, is the source of all our
knowledge of mental things. It is obvious
that it is only what goes on in our own
minds that can be thus known
immediately. What goes on in the minds
of others is known to us through our
perception of their bodies, that is,
through the sense-data in us which are
associated with their bodies. But for our
acquaintance with the contents of our
own minds, we should be unable to
imagine the minds of others, and
therefore, we could never arrive at the
knowledge that they have in minds. It
seems natural to suppose that self-
consciousness is one of the things that
distinguishes men from animals: animals
we may suppose, though they have
acquaintance with sense-data, never
become aware of this acquaintance, and
thus never known of their own
existence”.

Epistemological Meaning

Studying philosophy which Henderson in his book
"Introduction to the Philosophy of Education", asserts, is a
disciplined and guarded exercise of fundamental problems
which man has ever faced, concentrates specifically on the
theory of knowledge involves an area of philosophy called
‘epistemology’. The origin of the word ‘epistemology’ is from two Greek words
episteme (knowledge or science) and logos (knowledge or
information). The ancient Greeks believed that a person
becomes wise by knowledge and understanding. Plato in his
"Republic" stresses that love of knowledge makes man wise and live wisely was the ideal of human life in those times. He writes:

"He who has a taste for every sort of knowledge and who is curious to learn and is never satisfied may be justly termed as philosopher".6

For classical Greek philosophy, knowledge (episteme) stands in contrast to opinion. The highest form of knowledge is wisdom (sophia) which is knowledge of the whole for Plato.7 Aristotle gave intuition a significant role in this activity.8 Some scholars in a religious adaptation of Plato's doctrine of recollection claimed that men have total knowledge in their souls, but it has been rendered inoporative through the fall of man. They held that the fall separated men's soul from his reason.9 Locke distinguishes knowledge into three types: Intuitive, demonstrative and sensitive.10

Funk and Wagnells standard Dictionary summarizes the word "knowledge":

1. "A result or product of knowing; information or understanding acquired through experience, practical ability or skill.

2. Information; learning; specifically, the cumulative culture of the human race.

3. The clear and certain apprehension of truth; assured rational conviction.

4. The act, process, or state of knowing; cognition.

5. Any object of knowing or mental apprehension; that which is or may be known; the knowledge; also actual or possible range of information."11
The above mentioned exposition of word "knowledge" encompasses:

"acquaintance, apprehension, cognition, cognizance, comprehension erudition, experience, information, intelligence, intuition, learning, light, lore, perception, recognition, scholarship, science, wisdom". 

**Western Exposition of Knowledge**

The western philosophers have tried to develop a theory of knowledge to account for the source, basis and certainty of knowledge. From Greek to modern times various theories of "knowledge" poured into discuss and analyze. The analysis of few philosophers is discussed concisely to contemplate on the concept of "knowledge" from a specific point of view.

**Rene Descartes**

Descartes (1596 – 1650) is one of the prominent figures of rationalist school of knowledge. He began his study with sweeping and stormy 'doubt'. To establish any fixed and permanent article of knowledge, asserts Descartes that we must begin with the foundation and root out every presupposition and assumption to which from our childhood we may have been accustomed. He emphasizes that we must not only doubt, therefore, of the existence of the things of sense, since senses often deceive. Descartes accepts that sense-perception is not a valid source of knowledge. He finds foundations of knowledge in terms of certain procedures of human reasoning and knowledge could not be discovered in sense-experience but only is some mental realm:

"Doubting implies thinking which necessitates the existence of the thinker. If I think I must exist, cogito ergo sum; I think, hence I am".

Descartes assimilation of 'Doubt theory' with the proposition of cogito ergo sum, (I think, therefore, I am) is the first and most certain of all that occurs to one who philosophies in an orderly manner. Hence this proposition became the basic principle for
Descartes on which he erected the whole edifice of his philosophy. From this very principle he proved the existence of a perfect being, i.e. God, existence of the external world, human soul, etc.\textsuperscript{16}

Intuition is the significant dimension of Descartes theory of knowledge. He believes in the existence of self on the basis of intuition. Descartes says that the self is that which thinks, that is "a thing that doubts, understands, affirms, denies, wills, refines, that imagines also and perceives".\textsuperscript{17} A thing which does all these must be soul, a spiritual substance whose principal attribute is thought.\textsuperscript{18}

Contrary to other sources of knowledge Descartes' gives a higher status to intuition as a valid source of knowledge. Explaining his viewpoint he says:

"Intuitive Knowledge is an illumination of the mind, light of God whatever it pleases Him to show it by a direct impress of the divine clarity on our understanding, which in this is not considered as an agent but simply as a receiver of the rays of divinity. Whatever we can know of God in this life, short of miracle, is the result of reasoning and discursive inquiry. It may be deduced from the principles of faith which is absurd it may come from the rational ideas and notions we have, which even at the clearest are only gross and confused on so sublime a topic. Consequently, whatever knowledge we have or acquire by way of reason is as dark as the principle from which it is derived and infected with the uncertainty we find in all our reasoning's. I agree that our intuitions are somewhat obscured by the souls mingling with the body."\textsuperscript{19}

Descartes strong contention is that by inspecting the one truth ('I think, therefore I am') he can discover a rule or criterion about all truths. To him, 'what is clearly and distinctly conceived is true'.\textsuperscript{20} He held the view that true knowledge is clearly within us in the form, of innate ideas of right and wrong contained in the mind which we do not acquire, but are born with.\textsuperscript{21}
John Locke

John Locke (1632-1704), and many empiricists have rejected rationalist claim of certainty and began with sense-experience as the source and basis of knowledge. This theory of knowledge rests on two thoughts: 1) There are no innate ideas; 2) that all our knowledge springs from experience. Locke and other philosophers of this school of philosophy states that experience is the primary source of human knowledge. For that it relies on the assertion that when human beings are deprived of the various kinds of experiences, they do not know any truth, regardless of its clarity. They begin there awareness and knowledge as soon as they begin their practical lives. Their knowledge widens as their experiences widens, and their knowledge becomes varied in kind as their experiences take on different forms. Experience is the only basis of sound judgment and general criterion in every field. Even those judgments that the rational doctrine alleges be necessary knowledge must be subject to empirical criterion, and must be admitted in accordance with the determination of experience.

Empiricists raise the question how, and then does the mind acquire ideas? According to them ideas which are due to experience, is in itself twofold, on the basis knowledge is obtained. It is either the perception of the external objects through the special senses, in which case it is named sensation; or it is the perception of the internal operations of the soul, in which case it is named the internal sense, or better, reflection. Sensation and reflection furnish the understanding with all its ideas. These faculties are to be regarded as the single window by which the light of the ideas falls into the camera obscura of the mind. The external objects supply the ideas of sensible qualities; the internal object again, the life of the soul supplies the ideas of its own operations. John Locke in his explanation of the subject divided the acquisition of ideas, in the simple and complex. Simple ideas are such as the mind receives from elsewhere, in the same manner as a mirror receives the images of the objects presented to it. They are partly such as reach the mind through a single sense, as ideas of colour through sight, of sound through hearing etc. simple ideas constitute the
materials as it were the letters, of all our knowledge. By means of various combinations of simple ideas, forms the complex idea. Immanuel Kant

Kant (1724-1804), in his 'Critique of Pure Reason' advocated relative theory of knowledge. He tried to bring about reconciliation between an idealistic rationalism, characterized by a belief in the primacy of thinking being over experience, and an empirical sensualism. Kant took the position that 'sensations' are the only source of our knowledge of objects in the empirical world. However, he viewed sense experience as conditioned by the constitution of human mind, which in his opinion, contained certain forms of cognition or understanding by which the fleeting impression of the senses are absorbed, co-ordinate and integrated. Among these forms and categories of cognition indigenous to the human mind he listed the concepts of space, time and causality, as well as the preposition of mathematics. All these he considered not as products of experience but as priori categories brought by the knowing observer to the data of senses. The combinations of man's intellect and curiosity have provided him with irresistible motivations to know and understand the nature of his environment and the causes of its creation. Analyzing the reason as a source of knowledge, Kant argues that reason although has limitations, is yet superior to experience as the source of knowledge. His point is that experience by no means the only field to which our understanding can be confined. Experience, says Kant, gives us nothing but separate sensations and events which may alter their sequence in the future. It is mind, an active agent, which moulds and co-ordinates sensations into ideas and transforms the chaotic multiplicity of experience into the ordered unity of thought. Elaborating his view point he elucidates by example how perceptual knowledge of objects passes into that of conceptual. Sensation, he says, is merely the awareness of a stimulus; we have a taste on the tongue, an odour in the nostrils, a sound in the ears, a flash of light on the retina, but all this is the raw, crude beginning of experience. It is not yet knowledge but if these sensations group themselves about an
object in space and time, say this apple, there is now awareness not so much of a stimulus as of a specific object. Here is now a perception and sensation has passed into knowledge. Thus Kant clears the point that sensations come to us through varied channels of sense. There is the co-coordinating power that receives them and moulds them into sense and that is 'Mind'. Kant maintains that sensation is unorganized stimulus, perception is organized sensation. Perceptions without conceptions, says Kant, 'are blind' He argues that pure or theoretical reason is applicable only to phenomena that appears to such experience; objects of faith—a free and immortal soul, benevolent Creator can never be proved by reason

**The Islamic concept of Knowledge or Ilm**

Islam has cogitated 'man' as a vicegerent of God on this planet and it is by virtue of this position that he has been given the power to discern and discriminate, and to top everything, made him free and self-controlled so that he could develop his potentialities, and use them in the exercise of his judgment. This power and authority is divine gift conditioned with 'Iman' and 'amal-i-salih' which occur so often that the two are like conceptual twins. The Islamic concept of knowledge initiates its journey from 'Iman', complete faith and discourages all forms of suspicion. Islam looks upon knowledge as the central means to salvation of the soul and to the attainment of human happiness and prosperity in this life as well as in the hereafter. The first part of the testimony of faith in Islam, "La ilaha illal'lah" (there is no God but Allah) is a statement of knowledge concerning Reality This statement what is popularly known in Islam as the principle of 'Tawhid' or Divine Unity. To possess a consciousness of Divine Unity is to affirm the truth that God is one in His Essence, in His Attributes and Qualities, and in His works. One important consequence of affirming this central truth is that one has to accept the objective Reality of cosmic unity. As a source of knowledge Islam is empathetic in maintaining that all things in the universe are interrelated in a web of cosmic unity through the cosmic laws governing them. Infact, the Quran strongly argues that cosmic unity is a clear proof of divine unity. The Quran thus reveals:
"If there were in the heavens and in the earth, other God besides Allah, there would have been confusion in both but glory to Allah, the Lord of the throne: (High is He) above, what they attribute to him."41

Thus Islamic concept of knowledge, integrates the rational, empirical, relative, intuitive etc, in an organic whole. The primary source of Islamic knowledge is "the Quran" a Holy Book of divine guidance, the word of Allah. The secondary source is the Hadith or traditions delivered in the language of Prophet of Islam. Distinction between these two primary sources of Islamic knowledge is that while the former is the text, the later is its annotations or explanations in detail with reference to context. Both these sources have attributed 'knowledge' with 'Ilm'. The Holy Quran itself elucidates the relationship between these two sources in one way or the other:

"He it is who hath sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth".42

The expositions of Quranic injunctions is thus one of the main responsibilities of the Prophet of Islam is to stimulate the attention of the people to think, to ponder, to learn etc. It has been made also clear that it is not only the book which was revealed to the Prophet of Islam but 'wisdom' was also vouchsafed to him:

"And we have revealed to thee the Reminder that thou mayest make clear to people that what is sent for them, and that they may give thought". 43

"And Allah reveal unto thee the Book and the wisdom and teaches thee that which thou know not. The grace of Allah towards thee hath been infinite."44

"Assuredly Allah conferred a favour on the believers when he rose unto them an apostle from amongst themselves reciting to them His revelations and purifying them and teaching them the Book and the wisdom" 45.
Above quoted verses of the Quran bears ample testimony to the fact that fountain-head of true guidance is the Prophet of Islam. Since, he has been entrusted with the responsibility of showing the mankind the right path and the way of salvation, as desired by the Almighty Allah. He is the trusted Messenger of Allah on earth and it is through him that mankind has been able to know His will with all its implications. So, all the words and deeds of Prophet are, indeed, the perfect expressions of the highest wisdom ever conceivable. His leadership is divinely inspired and none can be called a Muslim who does not accept this basic doctrine of the Holy Quran.

"Say (O Prophet, to mankind): If you love Allah follow me; and Allah will love you and forgive your sins, Allah is forgiving, Most Merciful." 46

In the Islamic theory of knowledge, the fundamental source of "knowledge" is Allah. He taught Adam the names of all things. 47 There are numerous names of varied nature relating to His Knowledge: (Al-Aleem) The knowing, (Al-Hakeem) The wise, (Al-Khabeer) The Aware, (Al-Samee) The Hearing, (Al-Baseer) The Seeing, (Ash-Shaheed) The witness, (Al-Raqieb) The Watcher, (Al-Batin) The Knower of hidden things, (Al-Muheen) the guardian of over all. 48 Thus, Allah's knowledge is absolute and is not conditioned by time and space. Man knows only to that extent to which Allah's plan intends to reveal. 49 Islamic theory of faith makes the point clear that man's knowledge is not infallible or self sufficient. Therefore, man can not formulate successful system of life without Divine guidance. 50 In the Islamic system of knowledge, as has been explained earlier primary source of knowledge is Allah. The Holy Quran has defined this point in varied ways:

1) "Truth comes from God alone, so be not of those who doubt". 51

2) "There are three degrees of knowledge:
Knowledge by inference, knowledge by perception, knowledge by intuition. 52
3) "Man has been given the knowledge which angles do not possess".53
4) "Knowledge of the phenomenal world is not an illusion but a blessing for which man must be thankful".54

5) "Whoever is given knowledge has indeed been given abundant good".55

6) "Only those people will be given higher ranks who have faith and who possess knowledge".56

7) "Can those who possess knowledge and those who do not possess knowledge be on equal footing".57

8) "O my God, Increase me in knowledge"58

The Islamic concept of knowledge initiates a manifold dialogue on the role of man, his association with the universe and its Creator. Who created the physical and metaphysical worlds which includes all things i.e. the visible, the invisible, the unseen and the hidden of the physical and the metaphysical in nature and, including man and the design of his thinking capabilities for acquiring the knowledge of physical sciences. The concept of knowledge in the Quran, as seen above, is quite comprehensive. Wan Muhammad nov wan Doud in his book “The concept of knowledge in Islam”, observes: “As a corollary to its divine authorship, the Quran, apart from pointing to the sources of knowledge external to it, is itself a major source of knowledge. Its reference to the historical, metaphysical, sociological, natural, and eschatological phenomena and events must be necessarily true either literally or metaphorically. Muslims derive systems and sub systems of knowledge and culture from the Quran. ‘The most authentic document’ on the subject of science (for which the Quran is catalyst) is to be found in Badr-al-Din Al Zarkashi’s al-Burhan Fi Ulum Al Quran from which Jalal-al-Din Suyuti obtained much of the materials for his al-Ilqan Fi Ulum Al Quran, in which he stated that there were more than three thousand systems of knowledge derived and systematized by Muslims from the Quran.”59
Meanings of Ilm

The Encyclopedia of Islam, New Edition (London) defines the word 'Ilm' as knowledge, the opposite of *djahl* 'ignorance', is connected on the one hand, with *hilm*, and on the other hand with a number of terms such as, *mirifa*, *fikh*, *hikmah*, *shu'ur*. The *ilm* is further associated with *alima*, *ta'allama*, *arafa*, etc.\(^6^0\) The *muthakallimun*, who make the distinction between ilm and marifa used the first term in referring to the composite and the universal, and *m*ārīfā for objects which are simple and particular.\(^6^1\) The Encyclopedia of Islam, further interprets the word Ilm that on theological plane another difference concerns the relation between ‘Ilm’ and ‘Amal’.\(^6^2\) Thomas Patrick Hughes in his treatise, ‘A Dictionary of Islam’, defines the word ‘Ilm’ means to know. It is knowledge of religion as expressed in “the Book” (Quran) and “Sunnah” (Traditions), and is of two kinds, ‘Ilmul-Mabadi, elementary knowledge, or that relating to the words and a sentences of the Quran and Hadis; and Ilmul Maqasid, perfected knowledge, or that relating to faith and works, as taught in the Quran and Hadis. There is also Ilmul Mukashafa, revealed knowledge, or that secret knowledge, or light, which shines in to the heart of the pious Muslim, where by he becomes enlightened as to the truths of religion. This spiritual knowledge is also called Ilmul Haaqiqah, or the knowledge of truth.\(^6^3\) The Quran as the basic source of Islamic concept of knowledge attaches much importance to Ilm in multi-dimensional perspective. According to one estimate it has been used 750 times in the Quran.\(^6^4\) Franz Rosenthal, in his valuable work ‘Knowledge Triumphant’ listed 107 definitions from various source books.\(^6^5\) Philip K. Hitti defines Ilm (concept of Knowledge in Islam) in the following words:

"The Arabic words for Science (Ilm) like its English correspondent etymologically means 'knowledge'. It may be used in the broader sense to mean knowledge systematized with reference to general truths and laws or more specifically, to refer to knowledge as it relates physical word in which case it is known as physical or natural science.\(^6^6\)"

Modern Muslim educational thinker Syed Muhammad-al-Naquib al-Attas in his research paper presented in work
conference on Muslim education at Mecca has discussed the concept of Ilm in Islam specifically with reference to current trends in different systems of education:

"There have been many expositions on the nature of knowledge in Islam, more than in any other religion, culture, and civilization, and this is no doubt due to the pre-eminent position and paramount role accorded to al-Ilm by God in the Holy Quran. This exposition though apparently varying in substance, encompass the nature of knowledge in its totality. There have been distinctions made between God's knowledge and the knowledge of man about God, and religion, and the world, and things sensible and intelligible; about spiritual knowledge and wisdom. Thus, for example, knowledge has been understood to mean the Holy Quran; the Revealed law (Sharia); the sunnah; Islam; Faith (iman); spiritual knowledge (Ilm-al-Ludunniyy); Wisdom (Hikmah); and Gnosis (Marifa); also generally referred to as light; thought; science (specific Ilm to which the plural: 'Ulum is applied'); Education."  

The Quranic words 'Tafakkur' and 'Taskheer' is significantly attributed to Ilm or knowledge. In an article professor Abdus salam has said:

"Tafakkur is the reflection, and discovery of laws of nature (science). Taskheer is the acquiring of mastery over nature (through technology)"

Coming to the meaning to the term it is to be noted that the word taskheer stands for making subservient to or forcing something into a workable design. Some commentators like Maulana Moudoudi thinks that it embodies a sense of forced subservience.

The Holy Quran manifests the incauculable importance of knowledge in the back drop of the other word of multiple origin 'Hikmah'. So knowledge is wisdom it is a great favour of Allah to man. The Quran affirms:
“Who ever is given wisdom, has indeed received abundant wealth; but none except the men of understanding are mindful.”

Abu Hurairah said, the Prophet said:
“The word of wisdom is the lost property of the believer; so wherever he finds it, he has better claim on it” (Tirmidi)

As reported by Abdullah ibn Masood, Prophet said;
“There shall he no envy but emulate two: the person whom Allah has given wealth and the power to spend it in the service of truth, and the person whom Allah has granted knowledge of the things and he judges by it and teaches it to others” (Bukhari)

Molvi Muhammad Ali analysis the above mentioned hadith:
“The word in the original is Hikmah which may be rendered wisdom or knowledge, mean the knowledge of things and the doing of good. The desire to have knowledge is here made akin to the desire to possess wealth which is a natural in every human heart, and this is made clear that the acquisition of knowledge is an important as that of wealth, and every human being should acquire both.

In the Prophet’s tradition, the word ‘Adaba’ is also attributed to knowledge and education. Noted Muslim educational thinker Syed Muhammad al-Naqiib al-Attas defines it in the context of an important Prophetic tradition.

“The aim of education in Islam is to produce a good man. What is meant by good in our concept of ‘good man’? The fundamental element inherent in the concept of education and knowledge in Islam is the inculcation of adab (Ta’dib) for it is adab in the all inclusive sense I mean, as encompassing the spiritual and
material life of a man that instills the quality of goodness that is sought after.

Education is what the Prophet; (pbuh), meant by adab when he said: "My lord, educate (Addaba) me and made my education (Ta'dib) more excellent".

The Encyclopedia of Islam, New Edtion, Netherlands's (1967) describes the word 'adab as, 'The oldest meaning of the word is: it implies a habit, a practical noun of conduct with the double connotation of being praiseworthy and being inherited from one's ancestors. The evolution of this primitive sense accentuated on the one hand, its ethical and practical content, on the other 'adab' came to mean 'high quality of soul, good upbringing, urbanity and courtesy', in this acceptation corresponding to the refining of bedouin ethics and customs as a result of Islam. Adab in the sense was a equivalent of the Latin urbanites, the civility, courtesy, refinement of cities. The word also kept it's meaning of etiquette of eating, drinking, dressing etc. However from the first century of the hijra, adab, in addition to this ethical and social meaning, acquired an intellectual meaning." Adab came to imply the sum of knowledge which makes man well acquainted with the art of oratory and on the corresponding sciences: rhetoric, grammar, lexicography, matrices etc.

Various specific words and terms inspite of their applicability in Islamic concept of knowledge, the word 'Ilm' finds its pivotal and creditable place in the Holy Quran and Ahadith. Knowledge in Arabic convey through the terms al-Ilm, al-marifa, al-shu’ur (awareness) but the Ilm in the Islamic world view is of the highest importance because it is one of the divine attributes. Thus the epithets that are applied to God are al-Aalim, al-Alim and al-Allam, all of which signify the meaning the omniscient. In this pretext, it is important to note that the words 'Ilm' and its derivatives have occurred 805 times; the word albab (minds) has occurred 16 times; and the word "Aql" (reason) and its derivatives have accurred 49 times in the Holy Quran.

Again it is equally important to note that God made Adam superior to the angles on the basis of knowledge. The
following verses of the Holy Quran clarifies the point "And He taught Adam the names of all things; then He placed them before the angles, and said" "Tell Me the name of these if you are right."
They said: Glory to thee: of Knowledge
We have none, save what thou hast taught us: in truth it is thou who art perfect in knowledge and wisdom."
He said: "O Adam! Tell them their names."
Allah said: Did I not tell you that I know the secrets of heaven and earth, and I know what ye reveal. And what ye conceal.
And behold, we said to the angles:" Bow down to Adam." And they bowed down"
Not so Iblis: he refused and was haughty.

Two important conclusions can be drawn from the above verses. First, by ordering the angles clearly demonstrated the dignity of the high office of knowledge. Here it is worth mentioning that they possessed less knowledge than that granted to Adam. Secondly, it is also made quite clear that true wisdom consists in complete surrender to the will of God. Therefore, the action of the angles in prostrating themselves before Adam on the order of God was based on wisdom. But on the other hand, Iblis, who refused to abide by the order of God considering himself to be superior to Adam, was discarded and condemned as proud infidel. In other words, it can be said that in these verses God had demonstrated the triumph of knowledge over ignorance and warned against the evil consequences of not practicing wisdom in life which consists in complete surrender to the will of God.

One of the significant dimension of Islamic Concept of knowledge is its acquisition which is incumbent on every Muslim but even the messengers of God were directed by Allah for the same, inspite of being the most exemplary members of human society. The Holy Quran illustrates illuminating story of the Prophet Moses: Moses and his companion once, were in search of the learned man whom God had informed them. After strenuous efforts and great patience they found the man. The Quran describes beautifully:
"So, they found one of our servants
On whom we had bestowed mercy from over
selves
And whom we had taught knowledge
from our own presence.
Moses said to him,
"May I follow thee, on the footing that thou teach
me something of the (Higher truth, which thou
hast been taught?)"
The other said, "verily. Thou will not be able to
have patience with me!
" For how canst thou have patience about
things which are beyond your knowledge?"
Moses said,
" Thou wilt find me; if Allah so will, truly patient:
nor shall I disobey thee aught.
The (man) said,
" if then thou wouldst follow me, ask me no
questions about any thing until I myself speak
to thee concerning it" 80

Eminent Islamic scholar Abdullah Yousuf Ali in his
commentary on the Holy Quran explains above cited ayats as:

"One of our servant: his name is not mentioned in the
Quran, but tradition gives it as Khidhr. "Khidhr" means
"Green". His knowledge is fresh and green, and drawn out of
the living sources of life for it is drawn from Allah's own
knowledge. He is a mysterious being, who has to sought out.
He has the secrets of some of the paradoxes of life, which
ordinary people do not understand, or understand in a wrong
sense. Khidhr had two special gifts from Allah: 1) mercy from
Him and 2) knowledge from him too. The first freed him from
the ordinary incidents of daily human life; and the second
entitled him to interpret the inner meaning and mystery of
events. Moses, not understanding the full import of what he
was asking, makes a simple request. He wants to learn
something of the special knowledge which Allah had bestowed
on Khidhr.81

While accompanying with the humble man and continue
traveling together, the Prophet Moses acquires knowledge. He
got acquainted with the taste of knowledge which he does not know.

Imam Baidawie comments on the significance of the ayats as:

"1. Man should always peruse knowledge.
2. Man should show humble obedience to those who import knowledge to him.
3. Man should observe courtesy and etiquette when discussing".  

Imam Sayooti explores this very incident of Prophet Moses and his contemplative association with the man (Khidhr):

1. "Travel, in pursuit of knowledge is extremely desirable.
2. A learned man must further his knowledge.
3. A student should, make means for his travels which is not contrary to placing trust in the providence of God.
4. A student must show humbleness to his tutor even the later he below him in rank and station in life.
5. The one offers knowledge has the right to excuse himself in doing so if he feels that his student is unable to absorb and benefit from the knowledge.
6. A person should express his doubts in advance in mutual matters.
7. A person has the right to place conditions upon the person who wishes to follow him or benefit from him. Once a condition is made, it is obligatory to fulfill it.
8. Man is not reprimanded for forgetfulness and faults arising from lack of memory".

Inspite, of the fact, the knowledge of Allah, through his messengers rank in highest in Islam and in the domain of religion. The Quran itself tells us that whole universe is a Book of knowledge regarding God. Persian poet Sheikh Saidi has interpreted this idea as:
The universe indeed is a vast complex of natural phenomena with their complexities, precision’s and natural laws. The advancement of knowledge in these fields as emphasizes the Holy Quran to greater comprehension’s about the position of man and his relation to his Creator.

**Areas of Ilm**

Dictionary of Islam has illustrated systematically areas of ‘Ilm’ and has classified the knowledge of religious subjects and knowledge of secular subjects as:

"Ilmul Adal; (The science of philology). It is the science by which one guards against error in the language of Arabs, with respect to the words and with respect to the writing, the science of polite writing is classed under twelve heads:

1) Lugah, lexicology; 2) Sarf, accident; 3) Ishtiqaq, derivation; 4) Nahaw, syntax; 5) Ma’ani, sense or meaning; 6) Bayan, eloquence; 7) Aruz, prosody; 8) Qafiyah, rhyme; 9) Rasmu’l-khatt, calligraphy; 10) Qarzushshir, verification; 11) Insh’u-n-nasr, prose composition; 12) Muhaazarah, dictation.

Ilmu’l-Akhalaq , Ethics; Ilmul’- Aktaf, the science of divining by the shoulder blades of sheep. It was the custom of the ancient Arabs to place the shoulder-bone of a sheep in the sun, and to examine it, and so divine by it marks future events in the same way as by the science of palmistry. Ilm’l-Aqa’id, The knowledge pertaining to religious beliefs. Ilm’l-Asma, the knowledge of the name, titles, attributes of God. Ilmu’l- Batin the mystic science; the same as tasawuf. Ilmu’l- Falak, the science of astronomy. Ilm’l- Fara’iz, the law of inheritance. Ilmu’l- Fiqh, jurisprudence; and the knowledge of all subjects connecting with practical religion. Ilmu’l- Hadis, the science of the traditions. Ilmu’l- Hindasah, The science of geometry. Ilmu’l- Hikmah, or Ilm’l- falasafa, (Philosophy). Ilmu’l- Hisab, (Arithmetic). Ilmu’l- llahiyat, A knowledge of divinity. Ilmu’l- Insha, the art of literary composition. Ilmu’l- Jabr, (Algebra).
Ilmu'l-Kaff, the science of Palmistry. Ilmu'l- Mantiq, (Logical science). Ilmu'l Milahah, the nautical art. the science of enabling and navigating ships. Ilmu'l-I-Musiqa, the science of Music. Ilmu'l-Usul, the science of the roots, or fundamentals of religion of Islam, namely, of the Quran, Ahadis, Ijma, and Qiyas. Ai-Ilmu'l-Yaqin, certain knowledge; demonstration; a religious life; a knowledge of truth. Ilmu'N- Nabatat, (Botany). the knowledge of the use of the herbs. Ilmu'l-Nujum, Astrology. Ilmu'r-Ramal (Geomancy). a pretended divination by means of lines on the sand (raml). Ilmu'r-Riyazah (Mathematics). it is divided into four sections:

1. hindasah, geometry; 2) hi'ah, astronomy; 3) hisab, arithmetic; 4) musiqa, music; Ilmu's-simiya individual (natural magic), chiromancy, palmistry. Al-ilmut-tabi, (Natural philosophy). Ilmul-tajwid, the science of reading Quran correctly. Ilmul-tasawuf, the mystic or contemplative science. Ilmul-tashrifh, the science of anatomy. Ilmul-tawarikh, the study of chronology, history. Ilmul-tibb, the science of medicine. 

Personalities associated with various mystic orders in Islamic history, in detail had discussed, interpreted and analyzed the concept of 'Ilm'. Famous Scholar, great mystic and chief of the Suharawardi order, Sheikh Shahabudin Suharawardi in his famous and reputed treatise "Awaril-ma'arif", classifies 'ilm' in three kinds:

"Ilm is a light from the candle of prophecy in the heart of faithful, whereby he gaineth the path, (a) to God, (b) to the work of God, (c) to the order of God. Aql is a natural light whereby becometh distinguished good from evil. 'Ilm' and Aql are necessary for each other. Ilm is of three kinds: (i) Ilm-i-tauhid, knowledge of the unity of God. (ii) Ilm-i-ma'rifat knowledge of the work of the God:
In respect of annihilation.
In respect of creation.
In respect of propinquity (to God).
In respect of distance from God.
In respect of making alive.
In respect of putting to death.
In respect of dispersing.
In respect of assembling.
In respect of reward.
In respect of punishment.
In respect of other things.
(iii) Ilm of the orders "Shari'at.

Sources of Knowledge from Islamic point of view

The combination of man's intellect and curiosity have provided him with irresistible motivations to know and understand the nature of his environment and the causes of its creation. The concept of human consciousness, in view of Islam revolves around all these basic questions of life. Since man has no hand in his existence, he would be equally helpless to realize the reason for such existence unless he is oriented by the power that causes him to exist, that is God. So, knowledge is an intense and close communication between knower and known. Four sources of knowledge are recognized, through which we get all our knowledge, whether it is about material things or non-material things, living beings or the non-living, human beings or animals, these are:

1. Revelation
2. Intuition
3. Sense experience
4. Reason or intellect

Revelation

Revelation in Islamic epistemology is called prophetic experience. A prophet usually as a rule, is always guided by a special kind of divine intuition, the inspiration or the revelation or the 'wahy'. The word 'wahy', however, is also used in the Holy Quran in its common and special sense meanings, and likewise. The Holy Quran describes:

"And thy lord inspired the bee to built its cells in hills, on trees, or in men's habitations". 87

"And the earth throws up her burdens (from within) and man cries (distressed). What is matter with her? On that day will she declare her tidings: for that thy Lord will have given her inspirations". 88
In these verses at one place the word 'Auha', inspiration is used for a bee which is living thing and at the other place it is used for the earth, a non-living being. So ordinarily 'Awha' and 'Wahyun' means the message put in to the mind or the heart or the command or direction convey to an object.

But in its specialized sense, the 'Wahy' (revelation or inspiration) is the term used for divine intuition by which only a Prophet is guided. As God speaks to Prophet of Islam:

"We have sent thee inspiration, as we sent it to Noah and the messengers after him".89

In the revelation or prophetic experience, intuition is at its highest level and is directly guided by the God. According to Islamic concept of knowledge all inspired knowledge of a prophet, his every word and action is guided by the revelation:

"Nor does he say (aught) of (his own) Desires. It is no less than inspiration sent down him."90

The theological conception of revelation in Islam is that God is the source of all kinds of knowledge. He alone is the source of wisdom, goodness, justice and mercy. He guides, instructs and teaches the prophets in several open and mysterious ways. His knowledge and wisdom are unfathomable and inexhaustible. The knowledge and wisdom, bestowed on a Prophet, emanate from the Divine source because He alone creates plans and directs all human and natural affairs as He wishes. No body can question Him and scrutinize His plans:

"Say (O prophet) if the ocean where ink (were with to write out) the words of Lord, sooner would the oceans be exhausted than would the words of my Lord, even if we added another ocean like it, for its aid. Say: I am but a man like yourself (but) the inspiration has come to me, that your God is one God: whoever expects to meet his Lord, let him work righteousness, and in the worship of his Lord, admit no one as partner".91
The Holy Quran as a fundamental source of Islam repeatedly mentions that knowledge in all its manifestations enmates from Allah. The Quran, literally means reading consistently, is a Book of guidance to those "Who are righteous, who believe in the unseen, are steadfast in prayer (i.e. higher value of truth, equality, justice, sincerity, etc.) and spend out. What we have given to them; and who believe in revelation to thee (O prophet)."

Again the Quran is no doubt, a declaration on all matters, it covers the whole sphere of human life and this is the claim advanced by it: "Nothing have we omitted from the Book", "and we have revealed to you a Book explaining all things". Revelation as a prime source of knowledge throws light in detail on the creation of man, his society, civilizations, races, tribes and classes and rise and fall of nations. According to the Quran these are signs, ayat, for a people that are wise must ponder and take inspiration from them. Knowledge through revelation in Islam pertinently signifies the view point that every divinely inspired new idea, suggestion, thought, scientific invention, equalitarian social order, discovery of truth is a revelation because it adds to human knowledge. The universe, the earth, the heavens, the sun and the moon, day and night, light and darkness, change of seasons, are all revelations and signs for those who have wisdom and insight: who have eyes to see, ears to hear, hearts to feel and minds to reflect and understand. The Quran again emphasizes its nature of revelation that every stream, river, cloud, wind, or rain which brings life to dead land is a revelation; and transformation of every society into an ideal society. The Quran stimulates the attention of a reader as:

"Behold in the creation of heavens and the earth; in the alternation of the night and day; in the sailing of the ships through the ocean for the profit of the mankind; in the rain which God sends down from the skies; and the life which He gives there with to an earth that is dead; in the beasts of all kinds that He scatters through the earth; in the changes of winds and the clouds which they trial like their slaves between the sky and the earth; here indeed are signs, ayat, for a people that are wise."
So far as commencement of revelation is concerned, there is a most widely quoted tradition. The tradition relates the gripping scene that took place in the cave of mount Hira, while the Prophet was meditating. There according to the tradition, an angle appeared unto him saying:

"Read! (O Prophet)"
The Prophet replied, I do not know how to read
Then Prophet described how the angel embraced him tightly. On releasing him the angel repeated, "Read! The Prophet said." ‘I do not know how to read’. The Prophet went on to say, he hold me for the second time with all his might, then releasing me saying, "Read!"
I said," I do not know how to read".He then embraced me for third time. After releasing me he said,
Read in the name of thy Lord and Cherisher
Who created.
He created man out of a (mere) clot
Of congealed blood.
Read And thy lord
Is most bountiful;
He who taught
(the use of) the pen
Taught man that which
he knew not." 98

commenting on the above verses of the Holy Quran, Sheikh Muhammad Abduhu makes the following remark:

"There is not a more eloquent statement nor a more decisive evidence of the superiority of reading, writing and knowledge in all its aspects for the introduction of God’s book and commencement of Revelation." 99

Abdullah Yousuf Ali comments as,

"Allah teaches us new knowledge at every given moment. Individuals learn more and more day by day; nations and humanity at large learn fresh knowledge at every stage. This is even more noticeable and important in the spiritual world. All our
knowledge and capacities come as gift from Allah".  

Indeed, the first revelation of the glorious Quran was the divine proclamation on knowledge (Ilm). This proclamation has significant position in the history of knowledge. Syed Hussain Nasr has eloquently described this phenomenon:

"Taken as a whole the Quran is like existence itself alike the universe and the beings who move through it. It contains all the elements of universal existence and for this reason is in itself a universe in which a Muslim places his life from beginning to end. Being composed of words the composition of the Quran naturally leads to the symbolism of pen and tablet that is so well-known in Islam. According to many Hadiths, God also wrote the inner Reality of all the things on the guarded tablet (al-lawhal Mahfuz) before the creation of the world a symbolism which has played an important role in Islamic cosmology. The pen symbolizes the word, the Logos, the Intellect, and the Tablet universal substance so that it can also be asserted from this point of view that 'It is by the word that all things are made'. In metaphysical sense, then the Quran contains the prototype of all creation. It is the pattern upon which things are made. That is why in Islam one distinguishes between Quran that, 'written' and composed (tadwin) and a Quran which is ontological and pertains to cosmic existence (takwini). This is not to say that there are two Quran but that metaphysically, the Quran has an aspect of knowledge connected with its text as a book and an aspect of being connected with its inner nature as the archetypical blueprint of universe".
As analyzed by Syed Hussain Nasr that God is the centre of all sources of knowledge and is “connected with its inner nature as the archetypical blueprint of universe”. So, in the Islamic system of knowledge, to know and understand the nature of man’s knowledge of God assumes significance and catches our imagination. It reveals the fact that connotations and concept of God is beyond the purview of philosophical interpretations. The Quran as a revealed Book throws light on this subject:

“Allah is He, than whom there is no God; who knows all (all things) both secret and open; He is, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

Allah is He, than whom there is no God; The sovereign, the Holy one, the source of peace, The Guardian of Faith, the Preserver of safety, The Exalted in Might, the irresistible, The justly Proud.

Glory to Allah! Above the partner, they attribute to Him. He is Allah, the Creator, the Originator, the Fashioner. To him belong the Most beautiful Names: whatever is in the heavens and on earth, both declare His praises and Glory: And is exalted in Might the wise”.102

In the above verses the terms predicated of God refer to Him, in fact, a sensible explanation which otherwise is difficult to understand straight forwardly or analogically. God’s self disclosure is perfectly plain formalization of the fact that God makes him self known to man in diverse ways. It is an attempt free from paradoxical expression and fulfils the intelligible parameters of man. So the most adequate mode of self-disclosure to man must be the human made necessarily. Abdullah Yousuf Ali comments:

“We have the general attributes, which give us the fundamental basis on which we can form some idea of Allah. We start with proposition that there is nothing else like Him. We think of his unity; all the varying and conflicting forces in creation are controlled by Him and look to Him and we can never get a true idea of Him unless
we understand the meaning of unity. His knowledge extends to every thing seen and unseen, present and future, near and far, in being and not in being: Indeed, these contrasts, which apply to our knowledge, do not apply to him, Khalaqa is the general term for creation, and the author of all creation is Khaliq. Baraa implies a process of evolving from previously created matter or state. The author of this process is Bari-u, the originator. The Sawwara implies giving definite Form or colour, so, as to make a thing exactly suited to a given end or object: hence the title Musawir, Fashioner for this, show the completion of the visible stage of creation.  

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad finds it quite necessary that revealed knowledge should occupy key position in the system of Knowledge. He felt that all the levels of human learning are restricted, for their operation. Therefore, he needs a superior level of understanding to introduce him to super-sensible realm of the Reality. So, revelation or Wahy is the supreme faculty guiding man in this direction.”

Revealed knowledge interestingly has created no doubt ontologically an institution of faith of the amplification of the ‘Kalimah’ ‘La illaha illal Allah’ (There is no God but Allah) is the acknowledgement of the absolute uniqueness of God. It would reflect in the unity of the man’s individual life provided acquisition of knowledge make him fear God:

“Verily, only those who possess knowledge  
Among his servants truly fear Allah”.  

This verse of Holy Quran clearly signifies the implications of revealed knowledge that the fear of God is the true fruit of knowledge and is one of the most important basis of Islam. It is from here that Islam considers knowledge as a necessity and not as a luxury. It is therefore, obligatory upon a devout Muslim to be well acquainted with knowledge; knowledge of God, of universe and of man. Prophet of Islam has taken the
cognizance of the above mentioned ayat in very interesting style in one of his traditions:

"The superiority of scholar over the devout is like my superiority over one who is lowest in rank amongst you". He then recited the verse: "Those of his servants who are scholars fear Allah". 106

By the way of knowledge which produces fear of God, man reaches the realms of monotheism. For the purpose of monotheism in faith or for the specific purpose for man to reach the highest point possible, Islam has encouraged the pursuit of knowledge. Because of the extremely elevated position of knowledge and the learned people, the Lord, especially asked His messenger who is an ideal example for man to say the following:

"O my lord! Advance me in knowledge". 107

Consequently, the prophets of God, who were the best of men, who endowed with knowledge and wisdom? God taught Adam the nature of all things. 108 Prophets Lut, 109 Yousuf, 110 Dawud and Sulyman 111 were given knowledge and wisdom. Musa and Isa 111 who were taught book and wisdom. It's worth while to note that revealed knowledge as an important source of knowledge vouchsafed to prophets reflects the comprehensive and all inclusive character of the Islamic concept of knowledge. As a custodian of revealed knowledge Prophet of Islam has been elevated a special status, model for the human society consistently supported by the Quran.

INTUITION

Intuition is another important source of knowledge after revelation or 'wahy' in Islam i.e. system of knowledge. Revelation in itself is the highest and the most reliable among intuitive sources. Infact, the Holy Quran directs mankind and especially ahli_Iman to obey prophets

"O ye who believe! Obey Allah, and obey the apostle." 113
The Quran in a natural way explains the intellectual validity of revelation and intuition as sources of knowledge. And every intuition has intellectual content. For this reason, Quran has declared about prophets as:

"Thou are not by the grace of Thy lord, mad or possessed."\textsuperscript{14} "your companion is neither astray nor being mislead, nor does he say (aught)" of His own Desire. It is no loss than inspiration sent down to him."\textsuperscript{15}

Intuition is a doctrine that in perception truth or external objects are known immediately by the mind without reasoning; and immediate insight.\textsuperscript{16}

The intuitive knowledge is different from the conceptual one, because it arises from an immediate fusion of mind with reality. It is different from the knowledge gained by sense perception in the sense that it is knowledge by being and not by senses or by symbols. In intuitive knowledge the object known is seen not an object outside the self, but as a part of self. As Dr. Radhakrishnan has put it. "It seems to be the only true and direct knowledge we have":\textsuperscript{17}

Descartes explains that intuition means an intellectual activity or vision of such clarity that it leaves no doubt in the mind. Intuition gives us not only clear notions but some truths about reality, as for example that I think I exist, and that a sphere has a single surface.\textsuperscript{18}

Unlike logical or intellectual knowledge, intuitive knowledge corresponds of an idea with something other than itself. Al-Ghazzali avers that intuitive knowledge is quite valid and valuable. And intuition arises only when we breakdown the shell of our private, egoistic existence, and get back to the primitive spirit in us from which our intellect and our senses are derived.\textsuperscript{19}

Intuitive knowledge is possible only when the individual is fully alive and balanced. Seeing in its true sense can be done only when our inner being is harmonized and this inner harmonization of self stops, a man is blind though he has two eyes. The Holy Quran declares:

"And on their eyes is a veil".\textsuperscript{20}
"And they have eyes where with they see not, and ears, where with they hear not. They are like cattle, may more misguided".\(^{121}\)

In mystic experiences, intuition is technically called Ilham. This very experience of knowledge is common to all human beings. But the level of intuitive knowledge and understanding requires a requisite effort and struggle. Then here consciousness is at its full and simultaneous realization. The Quran says:

"And those who strive in our (cause) we all certainly guide them to our paths: for verily Allah is with those who do right".\(^{122}\)

"Allah is the protector of those who have faith; He will lead them forth into light from the depth of darkness".\(^{123}\)

As mentioned before intuitive knowledge is result of immediate non-conceptual experience. It is highly objective and is not subject to interpretation of sense-data. The Quran explores the nature of human stimulation with divine response, because the response is the test of the presence of conscious self:

"And your Lord saith; call Me I respond to your call".\(^{124}\)

"And when My servants ask to concerning Me, then I am right into them and answer the cry of him that crieth unto Me".\(^{125}\)

According to Al-Ghazzali there are various grades of knowledge. One of the higher grades is knowledge learned based on deduction and reflection. But the highest knowledge is gained through 'Mukashafa'.\(^{126}\) He further maintains that the proper activity of reason is intuition. Thought is a form of activity imposed upon reason by the necessity of the senses, in a world of time and space, and finite and temporal nature of thoughts is conditioned by these limitations. Thus thought and intuition, according to Al-ghazzili is the higher form of intellect, when the intellect is freed from the limitations of the senses.\(^{127}\)
Allama Iqbal's ideas on this subject seem running closely to the ideas of Al Ghazzali:

"Nor is there any reason to suppose that thought and intuition are essentially opposed to each other. They spring up from the same root and complement each other. The one grasps Reality piece meal, the other grasps it in its wholeness. The one fixes its gaze on the eternal, the other on the temporal aspect of Reality. The one is present enjoyment of the whole of Reality; the other aims at traversing the whole by slowly specifying and closing up the various regions of the whole for exclusive observation. Both are in need of each other for mutual rejuvenation. Both seek visions of the same Reality which reveals itself to them in accordance with their function in life. Infact, intuition, as Bergson rightly says, is only a higher kind of intellect".128

SENSE EXPERIENCE

Knowledge through sense organs are another important source of acquainting knowledge. As a matter of fact human being can not be sure of anything except that which is perceived through our sensorial reactions. Through sense-perception man establishes a direct connection between him and the object perceived. In the Holy Quran, it has been explained that whatever is in heavens and earth has been for the control of human being!129 For this very purpose the Holy Quran has emphasized for research and investigation. This source of knowledge is discursive and obtained through deductive and inductive reasoning or both. Man has indeed, discovered this world and derived a benefit from it through senses. The only ground of knowledge of a person of a conscious being before him is the physical movement similar to his own, from which he infers the presence of a conscious being. To affirm the presence of a conscious self is response for which the Holy Quran speaks:

"And your Lord Saith; call Me I respond to your call."130

The glory of human experience lies in the fact that it is self-critical and also critical of the knowledge that it acquires. Islam attaches great significance to sensory knowledge; it wants to discover a basis for a realistic regulation of life. The Quran, at
many places, has directed man to observe the universe and through sense perception, account and reckon the Reality:

"Verily in the creation of the heavens and the earth, in the succession of the night and of the day, are signs for men of understanding, who's standing, sitting and reckoning, bear Allah in mind and reflect on the creation of the heavens and of the earth, and say: Our Lord! Thou have not created this in vain." ¹³¹

The signs of nature could be taken from the features of beauty, power, and utility of man himself leading to an appeal to man's own intelligence and wisdom.¹³² The most striking everyday phenomenon resulting from the inner relation of the heavens and the earth is the alternation of the day and the night:

"Behold! In the creation of the heavens and the earth; in the alternation of the Night and the Day; in the sailing of the ships through the ocean for the profit of mankind; in the rain which Allah sends down from the skies, and life which He gives therewith to an earth that is dead; in the beasts of all kinds that he scatters through the earth; in the change of the winds and the clouds which they trial like their slaves between the sky and the earth are indeed signs for those who understand."¹³³

The acquisition of knowledge through senses as envisaged in the Quran as a significant source of knowledge must be supplemented with an insight, to awaken in man consciousness of that of which nature is regarded as a symbol.

"And it is he who hath ordained the stars for you that you may be guided thereby in the darkness of the land and the sea. Clear have we made our signs to men of knowledge."¹³⁴
"Observe what is in the heavens and in the earth, do you not observe? Do you not think: do you not contemplate"?  

Al-Ghazzali observes the subject as:

"To begin with, what I am looking for is knowledge of what things really are, so I must undoubtedly try to find what knowledge really is. It was plain to me that sure and certain knowledge is that knowledge in which object is disclosed in such a fashion that no doubt remains along with it, that no possibility of error or illusion accompanies it, and that the mind cannot ever entertain such a supposition. Certain knowledge must also be indubitable; and this infallibility or security from error is such that no attempt to show the falsity of the knowledge can occasion doubt or denial, even though the attempt is made by some one who turns stones into gold and rod into serpent. Thus I know that ten is more than three. Let us suppose that some one says to me: 'No three more than ten and in proof thereof I shall change this rod into serpent; and let us suppose that he actually changes the rod into a serpent and, and that I witness him doing so. No doubt about what I know are raised in me because of this. The only result is that I wonder I precisely how he is able to produce the change of doubt my knowledge there is no trace."  

In one of his reputed lectures entitled "Knowledge and religious experience", Allama Iqbal contemplates on this source of knowledge and attempts to derive inspiration from the Quran as a primary source of Islamic concept of knowledge, to apply to the entire spectrum of human experience:

"The Quran, recognizing that the empirical attitude is an indispensable stage in the spiritual life of humanity, attaches equal importance to all the regions of human experience as yielding knowledge of the ultimate Reality which reveals
its symbols both within and without. One indirect way of establishing connexions with the reality that confronts us is reflective observation and control of its symbols as they reveal themselves to sense-perception; the other way is direct association with that reality as it reveals itself within. The naturalism of the Quran is only a recognition of the fact that man is related to nature, and this relation, in view of its possibility as a means of controlling her forces, must be exploited in the interests, not of unrighteous desire for domination, but in the nobler interest of a free upward movement of spiritual life. In the interests of securing a complete vision of Reality, therefore, sense-perception must be supplemented by the perception of what the Quran describes as ‘Fuad’or ‘Qalb’, i.e., heart.”

Intellect or Reason

Intellect or Reason has been contemplated also an important source of knowledge. It is intellect which authenticates man with pre-eminence and differentiates him from other all sorts of creation. Reasoning involves logical concepts. It is obtained through the process of analysis and synthesis. In Islamic concept of knowledge commonly used word ‘Aql’ is employed as an inherent rational faculty of man, which distinguishes him from animals, because it is the source of the kind of knowledge of which animals are incapable. From the Quranic point of view, it is concerned with understanding of the phenomenal and the spiritual realities. It apprehends, generalizes and forms concepts. It is this ‘Aql’ that looks towards the transcendental world and receives knowledge from the knowledge of the only and Ultimate Reality-Almighty Allah.

It might be appropriate to mention another useable word in Islamic concept of knowledge is ‘Hikmah’. Hikmah primarily signifies what prevents or restraints thoughtless behaviour. So it comes close to that of ‘Aql’. In the Quran, God is called ‘Ahkam-ul-Hakimin’ which means of who possess the attribute of wisdom. Wisdom is the God’s bounty to the believers. Generally speaking, the Quran associates wisdom with the revelation. Thus the Quran and all other revealed
scriptures is described as the Books of wisdom (al-Kitab-al-Hakim) and the message of wisdom as (Dhikral-Hakim).

Imam Alusi, the well known commentator of the Quran, maintains that Hikmah refers to the 'Naqliya' and 'Aqliya' both Aqliya sciences in their real sense, are interpretative of and complementary to those of Naqliya while Naqliya, i.e., the revelations are the locus of intrinsic values, Aqliya, i.e., the rational element in man contains operative values which may undergo change with the passage of time. But the intrinsic values never suffer a change and impart universal character to the moral percepts of Islam.

The Book of Allah does not make a demand to man to believe in blind rather he pursues the mode of thought and conduct for man. The Holy Book appeals to man’s faculties of thinking, reasoning and understanding respectively Tadabbur, Tafakkur and Ta’aqquul.

All prophets were taught wisdom whether they received the scriptures or not. The Prophet of Islam too was granted the same. There are ample references in the Quran in which it has been made clear that it is not only the Quran which was revealed to the Holy Prophet but “wisdom” was also vouchsafed to him:

“And remember Allah’s favour to you and that which he has revealed to you of the Book and wisdom admonishing you thereby”.  

“Assuredly Allah conferred a favour on the believers amongst themselves reciting to them His revelations and purifying them, teaching them the Book and the Wisdom.”

The word (albab) minds has occurred 16 times; and the word ‘Aql’ reason and its derivations have occurred 49 times in the Quran. It speaks an obvious indication which consistently invites man to apply his critical mental faculty to attain knowledge. The Holy Quran in its eloquent style calls upon people to appeal to reason, because reasoning is the most courteous manner:

“Invite (all) to the way of the Lord with wisdom
And beautiful preaching; And argue with them
in the most courteous way." \(^{148}\)

As such reasoning in Islam has been considered a creditable source of knowledge in getting guidance (hidayah) from Almighty Allah in solving our day to day problems and in viewing the insight of the universe for the cause of man.

"Do you not see that Allah has subjected to your (use) all things in the heavens and on the earth" \(^{149}\)

Logical knowledge according to the Holy Quran, enables us to know the conditions of the world in which we live and then ultimately to recognize Allah. The Quran maintains of them who ponder:

"And contemplate the (Wonders of) creation in the heavens and the earth (with the thought)." \(^{150}\)

One cannot, act in right perspective without thinking and knowing properly:

"He will visit scourge upon those who will not understand" \(^{151}\)

"Deaf and dumb and blind, they will not understand" \(^{152}\)

Al-Ghazzali views that knowledge results from the function of intellect or reason (aql). He sometimes uses "Qalb" for 'Aql'; both are used by him for the percipient mind. According to him, institution is nothing but theoretical reason working at the higher plan. Therefore, theoretical reason is different from critical intelligence described by Greek scholars. Theoretical reason, maintains Al-Ghazzali, has given us various systems of knowledge called philosophical sciences (Hikmah) \(^{153}\)

Allama Iqbal visualizes the rational foundation in Islam right from its inception:

"The search for rational foundations in Islam may be regarded to have begun with the Prophet himself. His constant prayer was: 'God! Grant
me knowledge of the ultimate nature of things! The work of later mystics and non mystics rationalists forms an exceedingly instructive chapter in the history of our culture, in as much as it reveals a longing for a coherent system of ideas."
References and Notes

10. Ibid,p.152.
13. Rene, Descartes was born in 1596 at La Haye in Touraine. In his early years, dissatisfied with the prevalent philosophy, the inclination to philosophical and mathematical inquires was too powerful in him. He joined the army for sometime. He made extensive travels. After staying in Paris, abandoned finally his native country in 1629; and he took himself to Holland in order to live there unknown and undisturbed wholly for philosophy and the prosecution of his scientific projects. In 1949, of an invitation on the part of Queen Christina of Sweden, he left it for Stockholm where, he died the very next year, 1650. He wrote books on the philosophy and its allied issues.
19. Ibid; p. 110.
21. Ibid; p. 5.
22. John Locke was born at Wrington in 1632. He was considered the father of modern materialism and empiricism. His early studies were directed to philosophy, and, in particular, to medicine. In the year 1670, at the instigation of some of his friends, he sketched the first plan of his celebrated Essay concerning Human understanding the complete work however, was published only in 1690. John Locke died in 1704.
26. Ibid; p. 42.
27. Immanuel Kant, German philosopher was born in 1724. In the year 1740 he entered the University as a student of theology, but applied himself by inclination to the study of philosophy, mathematics and physics. In the year 1755 he settled at the University as a private lecturer and gave courses of logic, metaphysics, physics, mathematics, and at a latter period, of morals, anthropology. His decisive masterpiece, the critique of Pure Reason appeared in 1781, and was followed by his Kritik of Practical Reason and Kritik of Judgement in 1790. Kant died in 1804.
29. Ibid; p. 83.
30. Ibid; p. 84.
31. Ibid; p. 84.
32. Ibid; p. 84.
33. Ibid; p. 85.
34. Ibid; p. 86.
35. Ibid; p. 86.
36. Ibid; p. 86.
37. Ibid; p. 86.
38. Al-Quran, 2: 30.
42. Abid; 9:33.
43. Ibid; 16:44.
44. Ibid; 4:13.
45. Ibid; 3: 164.
47. Ibid.
49. Al-Quran 2: 255.
50. Ibid; 2: 151.
51. Al-Quran, 3: 60.
53. Ibid; 2:31
54. Ibid; 16:78.
55. Ibid; 2.269.
56. Ibid; 58:11.
58. Ibid; 2: 114.
61. Ibid; p.1133.
62. Ibid; p.1134.
67. "Preliminary thoughts on the Nature of knowledge and the definition and Aims of Education" by Syed Muhammad Al-Naquib Al-Attas, Aims and objectives of
Islamic Education, compiled by S.N.Al-Attas, King Abdul Aziz university Jeddah: 1979,p.29.


70. Al-Quran; 2:69.


72. Ibid; p.32.

73. Ibid; pp.32-33.


76. Ibid; p.175.

77. Al-Attas, S.N. Aims and Objectives of Islamic Education, p.2.

78. Al-Quran; 2: 31-34.


83. Ibid; p.8.


86. Suhrwardi, Shahbuddin, the Awarif-ul-Ma’ Arif (Tr) Lient. Col. H.Wilber froce clark, Taj company Delhi,p.94.

87. Al-Quran, 16:68.

88. Ibid; 99:2-5.

89. Ibid; 4: 163.

90. Ibid; 53-3-4.


92. “From the Arabic Quran, from Qara’a a meaning “to read”. Hence the meaning is “the reading” or the lesson”. (Dictionary of philososphy and knowledge p.284.)


94. Ibid; 6: 38.

95. Ibid; 16:89.
96. Ibid; 32:9.
97. Ibid; 2:164.
111. Ibid; 27:15.
113. Ibid; 4: 59.
114. Ibid; 68:2.
117. S, Radha Krishnan Dr, An Idealistic view of life, p.106.
118. Rafiabadi, H.N, Al-Ghazzali and Western thought, p.140.
120. Al-Quran; 2:7.
121. Ibid; 7:179.
122. Ibid; 29:69.
123. Ibid; 20:257.
124. Ibid; 40:60.
125. Ibid; 2: 186.
127. Al-Ghazzali, Mishkat Ul-Anwar,p.7.
128. Iqbal, S.M. The Reconsntruction,p.3.
130. Ibid; 40:60.
131. bid; 8:190-191.
133. Ibid; 2: 164.
134. Ibid; 2: 165.
137. The Reconstruction, p.15.
139. Ibid; 10:1.
140. Tahir, M.Encyclopaedic Survey of Islamic Culture, Vol.17, p.345
142. Al-Quran; 38:29.
143. Ibid; 3: 190-191.
145. Ibid; 2:231.
146. Ibid; 3: 164.
152. Ibid; 2:771.
154. The Reconstruction;p.3.