

The Perception of Worldly Life in the Holy Quran: A Cognitive Approach

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Abstract

The cognitive approach is of great importance in contemporary linguistic studies, not only because of its novelty but also because it is based on an interdisciplinary approach to the phenomenon. This article addresses the concept of the worldly life in the Qur'anic conception with a cognitive approach, trying to reach two things: the true meaning of life and the way to present this meaning. The study concluded that all the metaphorical models formed a single outcome that worked to clarify the real concept of worldly life in the Qur'anic conception.

Keywords: *The Holy Qur'an, Conceptual Metaphor, Cognitive Linguistics, Worldly Life.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The eighties of the last century witnessed the birth of a new theory in interpreting metaphor with Lakoff and Johnson through their book "Metaphors We Live by." This theory was founded on a new vision that tracks metaphor back to the brain, thus becoming a cognitive mechanism based in thought, as Lakoff and Johnson say,

"If we are right in suggesting that our conceptual system is largely metaphorical, the way we think, what we experience, and what we do every day, is much a matter of metaphor". (George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, 2003)

It is what we live by and what we think of. This proposal led to the decline of the classical conception of metaphor, as it was viewed - over centuries - as a linguistic phenomenon, a sign of genius, accessible to writers but not to other common people. Aristotle expressed this by saying:

"The greatest thing by far is to have command of metaphor. This alone cannot be imparted by another; it is the mark of genius". (Z. Kovetse, 2010)

Therefore, it remained linked to creative poetic and literary works because of its aesthetic added value to the text, which made it alternative to its counterparts. Lakoff and Johnson expressed their different view from what was previously prevailing by saying:

"We see metaphor as essential to human understanding and as a mechanism for creating new meaning and new realities in our lives. This puts us at odds with most of the western philosophical tradition, which has seen metaphor as an agent of subjectivism and, therefore, as subversive of the quest for absolute truth". (George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, 2003)

2. CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR

The definition of metaphor: In the cognitive linguistic view, metaphor is defined as understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain (...) The conceptual domain from which we draw a metaphorical expression to understand another

conceptual domain is called the source domain, while the conceptual domain that is understood is called the target domain” (Z. Kovetse, 2010)

This means that we understand the conceptual domain (A) in terms of the other conceptual domain (B), by applying conceptual projection based on a set of fixed analogies between the units in the source domain and the units in the target domain. (Atia Ahmed Solaimane 2014)

Accordingly, metaphor is formed through the process of projecting a source domain, which is usually tangible and clear, onto a target domain, which is usually abstract, so the abstract domain is understood in terms of the tangible domain.

This proposal is based on the interactive experimental tendency. Through the body’s interaction with experiences and objects, it acquires new experiences, employing the characteristics of objects and entities to understand abstractions based on these tangible objects and entities.

Thus, metaphor contributes to figuring out the concepts. It is a cognitive mechanism by which humans understand the abstract world. Metaphor according to this proposal is:

“the way we conceptualize one mental domain in terms of other” (George Lakoff, 1992)

As for what is achieved on language level, they are metaphorical expressions, and based on this, it can be said that metaphorical expression is a way of speaking, while conceptual metaphor is a way of thinking. (Mohamed Saleh Albouamrani, 2016)

This article discusses the concept of worldly life in the Holy Qur’an, trying to access its contents through the cognitive approach.

3. THE WORLDLY LIFE IN THE QUR’AN:

In many of its verses, the Holy Qur’an celebrates life as a space for worship and endeavor to achieve prosperity on earth, and as an inevitable passage to the afterlife. In most cases, the name of this life was coupled with the word “world” in the form “life in this world”, or the word “worldly” like in the form “worldly life”, to distinguish it from another life, which is a part of the general Islamic conception and is named in Islamic discourse “the afterlife”, and we will adhere to using the term the “worldly life” to describe it for the rest of this article to avoid confusion.

Because the Holy Qur’an was revealed in a clear Arabic language, according to the Almighty’s words in Surah Ash-Shu’ara, verses 192-195(The Trustworthy Spirit has brought it down * Upon your heart, [O Muhammad] - that you may be of the warners * In a clear Arabic language).

In the Lord Almighty speech to His Obligated servants, the worldly life, which is in Islamic conception an insipid life and a test arena like a bridge to the afterlife -not a place of residence, is represented in different ways that stimulate mind consciousness until it bypasses its unawareness due to lengthy familiarity and figures out the actual meanings of the worldly life so that the obliged servants develop a kind of balance between the worldly life and the afterlife.

The Almighty says in Surah Al-Qasas, verse 77: (But seek, through that which Allah has given you, the home of the Hereafter; and [yet], do not forget your share of the world. And do

good as Allah has done good to you. And desire not corruption in the land. Indeed, Allah does not like corrupters.)

Worldly life was mentioned repeatedly in the Holy Quran sixty-four times in sixty-one verses, and after a deductive investigation of its connotations, it turns out that it falls within two categories:

- The first category is depicting worldly life as an arena for events, activities, and situations, totaling twenty-one times.
- The second category is depicting worldly life as an entity or object with possibly many variants, totaling forty-three times.

The study relies on analyzing some example verses to reveal their underlying conceptual metaphors.

4. THE WORLDLY LIFE IN THE HOLY QUR'AN: A COGNITIVE APPROACH

The study's deductive investigation of Qur'anic verses that referred to worldly life concluded that the term was depicted in some verses based on vital processes related to plants. In other words, plant was used metaphorically to refer to the worldly life.

4.1. The plant metaphor: The worldly life is a plant:

Lord Almighty says in the Qur'an: (Know ye (all), that the worldly life is but play and amusement, pomp and mutual boasting and multiplying, (in rivalry) among yourselves, riches and children. Here is a similitude: How rain and the growth which it brings forth, delight (the hearts of) the tillers; soon it withers; thou wilt see it grow yellow; then it blossoms then crumbles away. And in the Hereafter is severe punishment and forgiveness from Allah and approval. And what is the worldly life except the enjoyment of delusion.) Surah Al-Hadid verse 20.

In this verse, many underlying metaphorical expressions are found from different conceptual fields but they are spatially close, forming what is known as a metaphor cluster. (Elena Semino, 2000) These metaphors emerge from the ontological field that gives us "ways of viewing events, activities, emotions, ideas, etc., as entities and substances". (George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, 2003) The Holy Qur'an has depicted for us the worldly life in a realistic, sensory way through what people see periodically on this earth.

It is the life cycle of a plant from the time it was a seed until it became a fruitful plant, and this field is well known to Arabs and other nations and is linked to their culture and life experiences, and it enables the understanding of the abstract in terms of the tangible thing.

Based on this, it can be said that the major underlying metaphor framing this holy verse is the metaphor: (life is a plant), then come the smaller conceptual metaphors to compose the major metaphor: (life is a plant), which goes through stages: sowing, sprouting, blossoming, yellowing, and becoming debris, which correspond to the image of worldly life and its situations regarding the vanishing of its bliss, the speed of its expiration and demolition, the stages of life from youthful to old age and the death, and the situation of the individual in each of these stages.

This can be shown through the analogies between the two fields of images, the target domain, which is the worldly life, and the source domain, which is the plant in this holy verse, as follows:

Source domain, plant,	Target domain, worldly life
Earth —————	mother's womb
Plant after rain —————	birth
Farmers —————	those who seek the worldly life and benefit from it
Sprouting —————	childhood
blossoming —————	young people
Yellowing —————	Aging
Becoming debris —————	Death

The metaphor, (life is a plant), extends to other verses of the Holy Qur'an, where it begins with drops of water descending from the sky and then ends in pieces scattered by the winds as if they had never existed before. Here is an example from the Holy Qur'an: (Set forth to them the similitude of the worldly life: It is like the rain which we send down from the skies: the earth's vegetation absorbs it, but soon it becomes dry stubble, which the winds do scatter: it is (only) Allah who prevails over all things.). Surah Al-Kahf, verse 45, and the Qur'anic verse: (The example of worldly life is but like rain which We have sent down from the sky that the plants of the earth absorb from which men and livestock eat - until, when the earth has taken on its adornment and is beautified and its people suppose that they have capability over it, there comes to it Our command by night or by day, and We make it as a harvest, as if it had not flourished yesterday. Thus do We explain in detail the signs for a people who give thought.) Surah Yunus, verse 24. What unites the two verses is the analogy between the two forms of life; worldly life and the life of plants, that is, the analogy with the stages of worldly life, starting from birth, childhood, and youth, to the stage of getting old and death.

The picture of worldly life presented previously in verse 20 from Surah Al-Hadid was initiated with the metaphor (worldly life is but play and amusement), and it concluded with the metaphor (severe punishment and forgiveness from Allah and approval), then the commentary came with a conceptual metaphor that shows the reality of the worldly life in the Islamic conception, which is (And what is the worldly life except the enjoyment of delusion).

The initial metaphor presented in verse 20 from Surah Al-Hadid is: (life is play) in the Almighty's saying: "The worldly life is play and amusement," and its elements can be defined as follows:

Source domain, the game,	Target domain, the worldly life
Movement —————	seeking livelihood
Excitement —————	enjoying life's pleasures
Competition —————	arrogance that may lead to war
Opponents —————	people
Scoring —————	increasing money and children
Game over —————	death

His statement: “The worldly life is play and amusement.” In this part of the verse, the worldly life corresponds to the conception of the game playing arena. What is established is that activities are generally viewed as a substance (George Lacoff and Mark Johnson, 2003) so dropping the concept of the playing substance is inevitable because playing is an abstract concept that cannot be captured except with a tangible conception, such as the conception of substance.

This image is confirmed in the Almighty’s saying: (What is the worldly life but amusement and play? but verily the Home in the Hereafter, - that is life indeed, if they but knew.) Surah Al-Ankabut, verse 64. And the Almighty saying: (And the worldly life is not but amusement and diversion; but the home of the Hereafter is best for those who fear Allah, so will you not reason?) Surah Al-An’am, verse 32.

This understanding is supported by what is stated in the rest of the verse: “pomp and mutual boasting and multiplying, (in rivalry) among yourselves, riches and children.” in which the concept of arena extends to the structure of the worldly life, as well as the concept of substance to the structure of the rest of the activities, which are, respectively: pomp, boasting and multiplying. These five characteristics mentioned in the verse are arranged according to the age of the person. Playing is the stage of childhood, amusement is the stage teen aging, pomp is the stage of youth, boasting is the stage of elderly, and reproduction is the stage of old age. (Muhammad Al-Tahir bin Ashour, 1984)

After that, the Holy Qur’an depicts how fast the worldly life ends like the end of the life cycle of a plant, through the metaphor of personification; which allows us to understand a large number of experiences related to non-human entities through human incentives, characteristics, and activities, (George Lacoff and Mark Johnson, 2003) so we see what was non-human as human, which is demonstrated by the Almighty’s saying, “Here is a similitude: How rain and the growth which it brings forth, delight (the hearts of) the tillers; soon it withers; thou wilt see it grow yellow; then it blossoms then crumbles away.” where planting was personified through the various stages of its growth, by making it something that the farmers look at with admiration and it is also an entity that booms and then dries yellow and collapses.

Then He concludes with the reward in the afterlife, which is either forgiveness or punishment, by saying: “And in the Hereafter is severe punishment and forgiveness from Allah and approval.” This verse builds a metaphor (work and reward) and its elements are:

Source domain, work,	target domain, reward
Worker —————	slave
Boss —————	Lord Almighty
Work —————	the entirety of a person’s deeds in the worldly life, both good and evil
Fees/penalties —————	approval / punishment
Receiving —————	on the Day of Resurrection.

This part of the verse builds the metaphor of a vessel, where the afterlife is a vessel containing materials: punishment, approval, from Lord Almighty, through the comparison between the worldly life and its pleasures with what Lord has on the Day of Resurrection. In the afterlife, there is either punishment or approval from Lord and satisfaction, and the fact is that however long a human’s life is, it passes in the blink of an eye.

As for the metaphor of commenting on the worldly life by His saying, Glory be to Him concerning the worldly life, Lord Almighty says: “And what is the worldly life except the enjoyment of delusion.” He depicts for us the state of life through the metaphor of “fake enjoyment,” as shown by the following diagram:

Source field, false enjoyment. Target field, the worldly life
 Personal belonging ————— All the pleasures in this world
 adornment ————— enjoyed by person along for lifetime
 Fake ————— It will not benefit him on the Day of Resurrection.

This part of the verse stems from the metaphors of substance and personification, as the Holy Qur’an depicts the worldly life as substance/enjoyment, and it is also an entity that controls man, as it is an entity that deceives. What confirms this image is its presence in other places in the Holy Qur’an in His saying, the Almighty: (let not the worldly life delude you and be not deceived about Allah by the Deceiver.) Surah Fatir, verse 05. And the Almighty said: (let not the worldly life delude you and be not deceived about Allah by the Deceiver.) Surah Luqman, verse 33. In the last part of the previous verse, two types of metaphor were combined: the metaphor of substance and the metaphor of personalization, forming what is known as the extra figuration. (Elena Semino, 2000)

The Holy Qur’an has projected a tangible perception onto the worldly life as an abstract conception, which means that the metaphors based on this verse have not departed from the ontological field derived from our physical experiences, which give us additional foundations for understanding abstractions through tangible objects, and what unites these micro-metaphors (local- metaphors), (Z. Kovetse, 2010) is the metaphor: “life is a plant” as we noted earlier.

Lord Almighty says: (Every soul shall have a taste of death * And only on the Day of Judgment shall you be paid your full recompense * Only he who is saved far from the Fire and admitted to the Garden will have attained the object (of Life) * For the worldly life is but goods and chattels of deception.) Surah Al Imran, verse 185.

Similar to the previous verse, this verse builds a group of minor conceptual metaphors that belong to the ontological metaphorical field, where events are treated metaphorically as things, activities as substances, and situations as vessels as mentioned previously, and this concept is in the perception of abstract things creates an entity through which interaction takes place. (Suleiman Attia Ahmed, 2014) Death in part (01) of the verse corresponds to substance/food, which is a substance that is tasted, and the same applies to recompense, Garden, fire, attaining, and goods in the rest of parts (02), (03), and (04). The Holy Qur’an has given these abstractions a material existence through which we can imagine them by depicting them with materials that have a realistic presence in our life experiences.

In Part (03), God Almighty made Heaven and Hell vessels, and the winner is a substance in this vessel, and he is the one who was taken out of the vessel of Fire and entered into the container of Garden.

In Part (04), He personalized the worldly life and made it an entity that deceives and tempts the man with the pleasures and desires. Accordingly, we deal with these abstractions as having material existence in our reality, and we look at them on this basis. (Suleiman Attia Ahmed, 2014)

The metaphor underlying this verse is the metaphor of (work and a reward), which is justified by part (02) of the verse: “be paid your full recompense” It is, as we note, similar to the metaphor of (work and reward) in the previous verse and with the same elements; The image of work was borrowed as a human activity agreed upon between the worker and the employer in exchange for a known and agreed-upon price, and the image of wages with which the Almighty God will reward people according to their obedience and disobedience on the Day of Resurrection. This picture becomes clearer through the analogies that we establish between the two fields. The source field which is work and the target field is the reward according to the same previous scheme: The Boss /Lord Almighty, the worker/slave, the job /worship and obedience, fees /Paradise, and day of receiving the salary/Day of Resurrection.

This metaphor extends to other places in the Holy Qur’an, including the Almighty’s saying: (Verily, Allah has purchased of the believers their lives and their properties; for the price that theirs shall be the Paradise.) Surah Al-Tawbah, verse 111. This verse explains what is required of the servant, which is to offer his money and himself to God Almighty in exchange for a known reward, which is Paradise.

Then another metaphor comes in the third part of the previous verse to provide illumination of the scene in the Almighty’s saying: “have attained the object,” which you build as a metaphor (the race and competition).

Source domain, race Target domain, competition

Opponents ————— servants

The field of competition ————— obedience to God

Agreed upon work ————— worship and obedience.

Winning/reward ————— being kept away from Hell and entering Paradise

This image is present in another verse of the Holy Qur’an in the Almighty’s saying: (And hasten to forgiveness from your Lord and a garden as wide as the heavens and earth, prepared for the righteous) Surah Al Imran, verse 133, and His Almighty said Glorious: (Race toward forgiveness from your Lord and a Garden whose width is like the width of the heavens and earth, prepared for those who believed in Allah and His messengers. That is the bounty of Allah which He gives to whom He wills, and Allah is the possessor of great bounty.) Surah Al-Hadid, verse: 21. “hasten” and “race” in the two verses to depict the race towards forgiveness and winning Paradise.

Then the verse concludes in Part (04) with the metaphor of the personification for the embodiment of life as an enjoyment/something, but it is like fake jewelry. This is how Lord Almighty depicts to us the short-lived worldly life. He tells us at the beginning that every soul will taste death, and everyone who is upon it will perish, and the Lord Almighty, the Possessor of majesty and honor, will remain.

Then mankind will be resurrected on the Day of Resurrection, and Lord will reward the creatures for their deeds, great and mean, big and small, many and little. No one will be wronged even an atom’s weight (Ibn Kathir, 2000), and for this reason the Almighty said: “And only on the Day of Judgment shall you be paid your full recompense”, and victory will be for the one who “Only he who is saved far from the Fire and admitted to the Garden will have attained the object (of Life)”

Then the commentary comes to express the beginning of the journey, which is the worldly life, to portray it to us as enjoyment, which is a fake enjoyment. This metaphor extends to multiple places, where Lord Almighty depicts to us that the worldly life is a temporary and short-term enjoyment, and what is with Lord is better, as in His saying: (And whatever you have been given is an enjoyment of the life of (this) world and its adornment, and that (Hereafter) which is with Allah is better and will remain forever. Have you then no sense?) Surah Al-Qasas, verse 20 And in the Almighty's saying: (But you prefer the present life even though the Hereafter is better and more lasting.) Surah Al-A'la, verse: 16 and 17.

What is noted about the metaphors used in the previous verses is that they were repeated in more than one place, and this indicates the unity of the Islamic vision of the worldly life, which leads us to believe that what links the minor metaphors mentioned in the previous verses is the major metaphor: "adornment is fake." This appears in the analogies between the two areas; adornments and the worldly life as follows:

Source domain, adornment.	Target domain, worldly life
Ornament ————— the worldly life	
The one who wears ornament ————— the slave	
Ornamental items ————— human desires	
Fakeness ————— expired goods	

A group of metaphors has emerged from this major metaphor that supports its pattern belonging to the ontological metaphorical field, as it is dominated by the metaphor of material taken from life experiences. Where the perception of worldly life was linked to the falsity, deception, and speed of disappearance of material things, it was also linked in other places to the humanity of individuals through the metaphor of personalization; Some of its manifestations have been identified as stand-alone entities with to express the extinction of the worldly life and its short-lived age, and all of these borrowed things are doomed to demolition.

5. CONCLUSION

Through our analysis of the perception of the worldly life in the Holy Qur'an, this study finalizes to the following findings:

- The perception of the worldly life in the Holy Qur'an is characterized by the fast loss of its pleasures.
- Most of the metaphors that built the perception of the worldly life come from the ontological metaphorical field, especially those related to the metaphor of substance, which suggests that the perception of the worldly life is linked to the falsity, deception, and speed of disappearance of material things.
- One of the metaphors built to imagine the worldly life is the metaphor of personification that make them stand-alone entities, which also refers to demolition and disappearance, as these borrowed things are all short-living.
- The unity of the Islamic perception of the worldly life in most verses, the majority of them have the perception of the worldly life as false enjoyment, which resulted in similarities at the level of minor metaphors in several places in the Holy Qur'an.

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