

Discussing the Principles of Symbolism Approach and Their Effectiveness in Finding the Meaning of Quranic Symbols

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Abstract

Symbolism is one of the significant literary approaches through which various literary, ideological, and scientific texts are analyzed using its concepts. In this study, the symbolic verses of the Holy Quran are interpreted based on the foundational principles of this approach. The primary aim of this work is to determine the extent of symbolism in the Quranic verses and to understand the various viewpoints regarding the "cognitive" and non-"cognitive" nature of the Quranic language. To achieve this goal, a "descriptive-analytical" method has been employed. The findings of this study indicate that the language of the Quran is generally referential and cognitive, meaning there is a meaningful and clear relationship between the signifier and the signified in the concepts of the Quran. In this regard, the "non-cognitive" perspective of the Quranic language, proposed by some thinkers, is not valid, as the language of this divine text is based on common usage and is not limited to any specific group or time. Furthermore, many verses previously considered "symbolic" in earlier studies are not symbols but perceptual metaphors. However, the representation of a limited number of symbols (while retaining their primary meanings) in some Quranic verses cannot be denied. Therefore, these verses can be analyzed and interpreted based on the essential principles of symbolism, such as the originality of imagination, the authenticity of emotions, elevated literary language, and phonetic arrangement.

Keywords: *Cognitive, Non-cognitive, Quranic Verses, Symbolism, Symbolism Approach*

INTRODUCTION

Symbolism is one of the most important contemporary literary movements, which originated in France in 1855. Given the political and social atmosphere of France (and Europe in general) at the time, this school rapidly developed, reaching its peak in the 1880s and 1890s. This literary-artistic movement was not confined to Europe; within a short period, it spread to the literature of countries like England, the United States, Spain, Russia, Turkey, and many others. In Persian literature, symbolism began in the early 20th century with the publication of *Qoqnu* (The Phoenix) by Nima Yushij. Nima did in Persian poetry what the symbolists had done in French and European poetry before him. Like the symbolists, he rebelled against the conventional poetic forms and removed the constraints of traditional Persian meters. After Nima, other poets and intellectuals, such as Akhavan Thalith, Ahmad Shamlou, Houshang Ebtehaj, and many contemporary Iranian poets, experimented with this form of poetry. In Afghanistan, symbolism began after the 1950s, influenced by Nima's poetry. Poets and intellectuals, such as Wasef Bakhtari, Abdul Latif Nazemi, Abdul Latif Pedram, and others, presented their social-political experiences within this framework. Following them, younger poets and writers continued this path, creating symbolic poems and stories. Symbolism, however, has deep roots and a long history in Persian literature. Even before Islam, traces of this literary art can be observed in the poetry of the Parthian period (Pahlavi language). For example, *The Tree of Asurik* is a symbolic text. Furthermore, the spirit of this literary movement can be clearly seen in Persian mystical literature. The poems of Attar Nishapuri, Sanai Ghaznavi, Rumi, Nasir Khusraw, Abdul Rahman Jami, Hafez, and thousands of other poets and mystics are symbolic.

Similarly, in the prose works of Persian mystical literature, such as Kalila and Dimna and Marzban Nama, literary symbols have been widely reflected. However, symbolic poetry began systematically with Nima and has since attracted many followers in the realm of Persian language and literature.

Since the formation of Symbolism, numerous studies have been conducted based on its principles and concepts across various societies and cultures. In the field of Persian language and literature, many religious and literary texts have been described and analyzed based on the principles of Symbolism. Furthermore, some religious scholars, drawing from the principles of this movement, have introduced the language of religion and the Quran as a symbolic language, while others have opposed this view. The main issue addressed in this study is the identification and explanation of the central principles of the literary theory of Symbolism and the assessment of the extent of symbolism in certain Quranic verses based on these principles. Although some research has been conducted on the symbolic nature of Quranic verses, such as the article *"The Role of Allegory and Symbolism in Quranic Stories: A Review and Critique of the Theory of the Imagination's Role in It"* by Majid Maaref and Fatemeh Taghiyan (published in 2019), ambiguities and questions still persist on this topic. If these questions remain unaddressed, the cognitive and non-cognitive nature of the Quranic language will remain unclear. Therefore, in order to find an answer to this issue, we will critically examine and evaluate the opinions and views of different groups that have expressed opinions regarding the language of the Quran. Thus, the main objective of this study is to identify and explain the key principles of Symbolism and to determine the extent of symbolism in the language of the Quran. Its secondary objective is to understand the heterogeneity of viewpoints regarding the "cognitive" and "non-cognitive" nature of the Quranic language and to explore the role of symbolic principles in interpreting symbolic Quranic verses. Based on these objectives, the research will address the following questions: What are the core principles and concepts of literary Symbolism? To what extent are the principles and concepts of Symbolism applicable in analyzing symbolic Quranic verses, and why are there differing opinions about the symbolic nature of the Quranic verses?

conducted on the symbolic language in the Quran and its role in representing religious concepts reveals profound differences between previous studies and the present research. One of the most significant studies in this field is the article "Allameh Tabatabai and Symbolic and Insha'i Language in the Quran" by Mohammad Rezaei and his colleagues (2014). The findings of this study indicate that religious language is divided into two major categories: cognitive (which refers to reality and describes facts) and non-cognitive (which does not refer to reality and does not describe facts). This research argues that considering religious texts as symbolic relies on a non-cognitive linguistic approach. However, according to Tabatabai, Motahhari, and a group of Islamic scholars, religious and Quranic language is cognitive, reality-oriented, and meaningful.

Another study in this domain is the article "Symbolization of Quranic Concepts Related to Women in the Mystical Interpretation Attributed to Ibn Arabi," published by Mohammad Reza Haji Esmaeili and his colleagues in 2015. The findings of this article reveal that one of the prominent symbols depicted in the Quran is "woman," which is particularly evident in the story of Mary and Jesus (PBUH). Additionally, the article "The Status of Allegory and Symbolism in Quranic Stories: Analyzing and Critiquing the Theory of Fantasy Infiltration" by Majid Ma'arif and Fatemeh Taghavian (2019) addresses this issue. This research emphasizes that considering certain Quranic stories as allegorical does not imply their fictional nature or lack of factual representation; rather, it signifies a particular form of expression and representation. Another relevant work is the study by Seyyedeh Azam Mousavi-Zad, titled "Symbols and Visual Signs in Quranic Verses and Their Relationships from a Graphic Perspective." The findings indicate that, across various cultures and languages, metaphors and symbols are employed to convey

concepts in a beautiful, eloquent, and engaging manner. This artistic approach is also delicately embedded in the Quran, where metaphorical and symbolic language is utilized to enhance the comprehension of meanings. Similarly, Seyed Abolqasem Hosseini, in his article "Realistic Representation of Symbols in Quranic Stories," argues that interpreting Quranic verses as symbolic requires rational and textual evidence. However, even when a story's symbolic nature is confirmed, it should not be equated with mere imagination. Other relevant research includes "Symbolism: Artistic Applications and Its Decline" by Shahab Zamani and "The Symbolism of Light and Color in Iranian-Islamic Mysticism" by Nasser Nikbakht and Seyed Ali Qasemzadeh. These studies, along with numerous other works, have all been published in Iran. However, within the literary and cultural domain of Persian-Dari language in Afghanistan, no independent study has been identified that explicitly examines symbolism. This research gap underscores the significance of the present study, which can be considered a pioneering and foundational investigation in this field within Afghanistan, distinguished by its content, subject matter, and spatial-temporal variables.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a descriptive-analytical approach to examine the symbolic language in the Quran. Initially, the required sources were collected from libraries and reputable academic databases. These sources were then subjected to an in-depth study and note-taking process to extract relevant data. The gathered information was subsequently analyzed using content analysis, following the principles of Symbolism. This methodological approach ensures a systematic and objective examination of the symbolic elements in Quranic texts, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of their meanings and implications. By combining descriptive and analytical methods, this research aims to provide a well-grounded interpretation of the symbolic representations within the Quran.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This research is framed within the approach of "Symbolism," a literary movement that emerged in France. Among the founders of this movement are Charles Baudelaire, Stéphane Mallarmé, Arthur Rimbaud, and Paul Verlaine. The factors that contributed to the formation of this literary movement include both social and philosophical influences. According to Behnamfar and Sencholi Jadid (1397: 51), Bergson "criticized reason and elevated inner intuition, emphasizing the significance of feelings, thus providing the artistic foundation for the Symbolists and making it one of the distinctive features of the Symbolist movement." The young artistic and literary generation of Europe in the late 19th century revolted against both social life and the ancient Western civilization, expressing their discontent with its components. Alongside these motivations, the social-political isolation of French artists and poets, as well as their exposure to and influence from prevailing philosophies in India, China, and Japan (which emphasize focusing on particular objects as a way to access deeper and more profound meanings) are other reasons behind the emergence of this literary movement. Thus, this approach can be considered a form of rebellion and struggle against the disordered society of France and other nations, with its proponents hiding their desires and aspirations behind symbols.

Symbolism, in essence, was a reaction against realism, naturalism, and scientific materialism in the latter half of the 19th century. Philosophically, Symbolism adhered to idealism, drawing inspiration from metaphysics and prioritizing imagination over thought. The

mysterious pessimism of Schopenhauer also had a significant impact on Symbolist poets. The retreat from reality and the immersion in the world of imagination among Western poets reached such an extent that the Symbolist poet came to believe that poetry begins where the connection to reality is severed (Mohammadi and Nazari, [n.d.]: 3).

Nevertheless, Symbolism was one of the most influential literary and artistic movements of the 19th and 20th centuries. In addition to its impact on poetry and literature, this approach significantly influenced other artistic fields, including theater and cinema. The best examples of Symbolist plays can be found in the works of the Belgian playwright Maurice Maeterlinck (مدینه کریمی 1394)

Theoretical Foundations of Research

This study has been conducted within the framework of the "Symbolism" approach. Symbolism refers to a literary movement that emerged in France. Among the founders of this school are Charles Baudelaire, Stéphane Mallarmé, Arthur Rimbaud, and Paul Verlaine. The factors leading to the formation of this literary movement include both social and philosophical contexts. As Bergson, "by criticizing reason and exalting inner intuition, and by giving primacy to emotions, provided the artistic substance for the Symbolists and made it one of the defining features of the Symbolist school" (بهنامفر et al. 1397). The young literary and artistic generation of Europe in the late 19th century rebelled against the social life and the ancient civilization of the West, expressing their aversion to its elements. Alongside these motivations, the widespread social and political isolation of French artists and poets, as well as their familiarity with and influence by the prevailing thoughts in India, China, and Japan (which consider a focus on minor objects as a fundamental path to accessing a world of profound and great meanings), can be regarded as other causes of the emergence of this literary movement. Similarly, this approach can be considered a form of rebellion and resistance against the disordered society of France and other nations, where its followers concealed their aspirations and desires behind symbols.

The Symbolist approach, in fact, emerged as a reaction against the realist, naturalist, and scientific materialist schools of thought in the latter half of the 19th century. From an intellectual standpoint, Symbolism followed the philosophy of idealism, which draws inspiration from metaphysics and places more emphasis on imagination than on thought. The mysterious pessimism of Schopenhauer also had a profound influence on Symbolist poets. The withdrawal from reality and the turn toward the world of imagination had reached such heights among Western poets that the Symbolist poet believed that poetry begins when it breaks ties with reality. (مدینه کریمی and مینو محمدی n.d.)

In any case, Symbolism was one of the most influential literary and artistic movements of the 19th and 20th centuries. This approach, in addition to poetry and literature, had a significant impact on other artistic fields, including theater and cinema. Some of the best examples of symbolic plays can be found among the works of the Belgian playwright Maurice Maeterlinck. (مدینه کریمی 1394)

Symbol and Symbolism

The word "symbol" in Persian-Dari is referred to as "symbol" in English and "ramz" in Arabic. A symbol denotes something or a sign that both represents its tangible existence and embodies meanings beyond its physical and empirical reality. Symbolism, however, is the art of using symbols for anything that can be imagined. According to one view, "a symbol is a form of metaphor, but with the difference that in a metaphor, there is one subject (the referent), and with its removal, the metaphor remains intact. However, in a symbol, there may be multiple referents, and with their removal, the symbol emerges. Therefore, after simile and metaphor, the symbol represents the third rhetorical category along the line of resemblance" (Hamidian, 2002: 142). In this study, a symbol refers to the comprehension and interpretation of invisible realities through images or signs. In this sense, a symbol applies to any sign that reflects certain attributes. As

Fotouhi (2016) stated, a symbol is a linguistic sign used to shape abstract and conceptual ideas and express personal experiences (309). In other words, a symbol represents broad concepts and significant meanings through minor elements, but these minor images are so vivid and lively that they captivate the mind. Hence, a symbol serves as a form to demonstrate a truth or purpose without directly indicating it (Haji Esmaeili et al., 2015: 4). Accordingly, a symbol refers to something that, while pointing to itself, also represents larger meanings. For instance, the "olive tree" in Qur'anic verses, besides its literal meaning, symbolizes peace and friendship (ثروت منصور 1385).

According to Carl Jung, a symbol typically transcends the surface level of words and delves into the essence of truth and the profound meanings embedded in society. Thus, a symbol is connected to human needs (Mohammadi & Nazari, [n.d.]: 1). Symbols, in fact, acquire meaning through social conventions and are often learned through direct education. Essentially, symbols form one of the fundamental elements of myths (Mohsenian Rad, 2006: 194). The foundation of European Symbolism lies in the rediscovery of the essence of poetry (Ballo, 2006: 5). The formation of symbols is not a conscious process but emerges from intuition and the subconscious. At times, symbols are shaped or influenced by the depths of dreams. (Jung, 1999: 69).

Symbolism, in its precise sense, is the expression of extraordinary emotions, language intertwined with allusions, absurd, ambiguous, inaccurate images, and misty imagination (Mikó, 1984: 122). With this understanding, Symbolism can be seen as a bridge between the visible world and the unseen world, artistically represented. (مرتضى حيدري 1394) In summary, a symbol can be recognized by the following characteristics:

- Something that represents something else or refers to another concept. For example, the "rooster" is a symbol of freedom in Aryan culture.
- A distinct unit of expression that represents an abstract idea and can be studied as a unit.
- An arbitrary or conventional sign (a trait, a diagram, or a letter) associated with a specific field of knowledge (such as mathematics, physics, language, etc.) to represent actions, quantities, elements, and qualities used in writing or diagrams.
- A natural and non-conventional sign whose meaning can change. (علی اکبر محمدی 1396)

Fundamental Principles of the Symbolist Approach

The Symbolist approach is based on several fundamental concepts that are essential for understanding the goals and meanings of this literary school. These principles are as follows:

• **Primacy of Imagination:** Imagination is one of the most important principles of Symbolism. Adherents of this movement never spoke about real life or their personal experiences. In the philosophy of this approach, the fixed form of material objects is not described; rather, the swift passage of time, seasons, and life itself are depicted. In other words, the law hidden within existence and nature is illustrated. Symbolists consider nature to be nothing more than a moving imagination. They believe that objects are not fixed entities but are things that we perceive through our senses. They exist within us— in fact, they are ourselves. (رضا سيد 1391 حسینی).

Symbolists argue that nature and objects are vessels that display human spiritual life. As they say, by portraying natural landscapes, humans reveal the secrets of their own souls. For instance, "coldness" in the poetry of Akhavan represents tyranny and oppression:

"They do not want to answer health, Heads buried in collars, No one dares to raise their head, speak, or meet friends; Eyes can only see what's before them, For the path is dark and slippery. And if a hand of kindness reaches out to someone, with reluctance, the hand is drawn back into the sleeve, for the cold is bitterly burning..." (Akhavan Thaleth, 1955: 109).

In Symbolist poetry, two key elements— "dream" and "imagination"— are prominently reflected, altering the essence of objects at their very core. (مرضیه زارع 1390)

The presence of emotion and imagination cannot be limited to poetry and literary stories alone. A study of religious, discursive, ideological, and media texts shows that these forces are reflected widely across various forms, including even in a series of verses from the Qur'an. For instance, consider the phrase "دعاء عريض" (a wide prayer) in verse (51) of Surah Fussilat; it is an emotional expression where "prayer" is likened to something expansive and broad. Similarly, in verse (54) of Surah Al-A'raf, the night is personified, depicted as yearning for the day, even though, on the surface, night appears to be still and calm.

Attention to Ambiguity: Eliot considers ambiguity crucial for poetry. According to him, one should not oppose poetry; instead, one should surrender to it, allowing its meaning to emerge freely (Mir Sadeghi, 2009: 300). Symbolists view mystery and ambiguity as foundational principles of poetry. They argue that poetry, like music, should be full of ambiguity and secrets. It should not present a clear-cut message; rather, through rhythm and the use of human imagination, the meaning of the poem should be discoverable. From their perspective, poetry is not painting; it is the expression of spiritual states. It is impossible to judge that one interpretation of a poem is truer than another; such judgments are not possible (Seyed Hosseini, 2012: 545). The image that a symbol presents through its code and ambiguity is laden with meanings and concepts that have the potential for extensive interpretation. Therefore, due to its multilayered meanings and content, the audience cannot be a general one. Symbolism distances itself from common perceptions and a simplistic understanding, shifting toward a more personalized approach to perception and a desire for the unreachable and unattainable goals. (علی اکبر محمدی 1396).

According to Baudelaire, truth is hidden from the eyes of ordinary people, and only the poet, with their perceptual capacity, can feel and comprehend it through the interpretation and deciphering of symbols and signs. (سبیماد داد 1390). The following poem exemplifies ambiguity. Its meaning is accessible only to those who understand its symbols, making it unsuitable for the general reader:

هول بر پنجره می‌کوبد مشت باز توفان شب است
شعله می‌لرزد در تنهایی باد توفان مرا خواهد کشت

"Again, the storm of the night, Fists knocking against the windowpane. The flame quivers in solitude, the storm will kill me".

The Symbolist poet strives to introduce the unknown world to the audience using symbolic language. The poet seeks the absent flower, not the present one. Clearly, this absent flower has no specific name, so the poet cannot mention it by name. Instead, it must be described to be understood and felt. (سیروس شمیس 1394). Thus, the atmosphere in Symbolist poetry and stories is eerie and ambiguous. In this literary style, descriptions refer to phenomena that are initially incomprehensible. Even after multiple readings, the text may still fail to reveal its true nature. (مدینه کریمی 1394) The main purpose of creating poetry and art within the Symbolist approach is to displace fear, ambiguity, mystery, a preference for autumnal themes (rain, mist, darkness of night), and strangeness.

Consider the poem "Vowels" by Arthur Rimbaud:

A black A, a white E, a red I, a green U, a blue O
Oh vowels, one day I will sing your hidden birth,
A, dark bays, a black crest, and shiny flies
Buzzing around the stench of corpses.
E, simplicity of steam and tents

The spears of natural ice, towering white kings, the tremor of women's parasols. (رضا سید 1391 حسینی).

In contrast to the principle of ambiguity, the audience of the Qur'an is the general public. This is because the language of the Qur'an is based on the common, everyday understanding.

Although in some cases it differs from common usage, for example, in many verses, literary devices (such as metaphors, allusions, similes, and metonymies) are used for clearer understanding. However, the language of the Qur'an does not encompass ambiguity and meaninglessness in the way it is defined in Symbolist approaches, especially in the religious Symbolism of Paul Tillich. A closer look at verses (195 of Surah Ash-Shu'ara and 4 of Surah Ibrahim) reveals this distinction. However, some thinkers, such as Soroush and Shariati, consider the language of the Qur'an to be mysterious and imbued with ambiguity. These thinkers are influenced by the ideas of William Alston, John Hick, and Paul Tillich, who view the language of Qur'anic verses as non-literal and lacking concrete reality. This will be discussed in greater detail later. (Paul Tillich 1958)

Introspection: One of the most prominent features of the Symbolist movement is its emphasis on introspection and the severing of connections with the external world. Symbolists believe that poetry begins where reality is disconnected. (علی اکبر محمدی 1396). Followers of this approach were deeply immersed in subjectivism, viewing everything through the prism of their dreamy, imaginative states. (بابایی، سعیده 1399). As such, they sought to distance themselves from external reality and to focus more on the subjective reality of the mind. (علی اکبر محمدی 1396).

In Symbolist poetry and art, symbols typically refer to truths beyond their immediate form. For example, the flag of a country is a symbol of greatness and power, while a red light serves as a symbol of danger. An important characteristic of symbols is their power to convey meanings that transcend their immediate existence. In art, these symbols are capable of communicating aesthetic dimensions that go beyond their surface meaning. However, some symbols have not just a logical relationship with their transcendent truths, but also a generative relationship. For instance, the connection between the stars and religious leaders, or the relationship between a deserted well and the solitary commoner, is not merely logical but also organic. (رضا سید حسینی 1391).

Thus, Symbolism can be seen as an attempt to break through the surface of the imagined world, whether these imaginations exist within the poet's own emotions or represent an "idea" in the Platonic sense, constructing an idealized, supernatural world that human beings long to reach. To transcend the surface reality, Symbolists often employ the fusion of images. (چارلز، چدویک n.d.).

Pessimism: Another fundamental aspect of the Symbolist movement is the sense of pessimism towards the world and life. The roots of this pessimism can be traced back to the influence of the 19th-century German philosopher **Arthur Schopenhauer**, who viewed human life negatively, seeing it as filled with suffering and evil. For Schopenhauer, death was seen as the only means of liberation from this painful existence. This philosophy had a profound effect on Symbolist artists, enveloping their works in a halo of despair and melancholy. As Nasser Khosrow writes:

*“Look, when the command of the devil appeared, the command of the Creator vanished
in the creation”*
(ابراهیم ظاهری 1394 and جهان گیر صفری)

In Khosrow's poetry, the *devil* symbolizes two things: the *evil soul* and the *tyrannical ruler*.

For poets nurtured in such a pessimistic philosophical outlook, nothing was more suitable than a foggy and ambiguous backdrop in which the sharp, decisive lines of life are obscured, and no environment was more fitting than the half-darkness of moonlight. (رضا سید حسینی 1391). A sample of this pessimism is reflected in the poem by Mossadegh:

“I am a bird of fire / Burning with the sparks of this rebellious love... / Oh, woe / Gale-force winds, floods, and lightning rush from every direction / No more hope for what should come... / Let the rain fall / A foreboding rain / In the depths of the night / This endless night / As

if night will never end...”
(حمید مصدق 1386).

Similarly, **Shamlou** uses the symbolic words *night* and *sea* in the following poem:

“Night / has called out with its bloody throat / the sea sits cold / a branch in the darkness
of the forest cries out towards the light.”
(احمد شاملو 1382)

In this poem, *night* symbolizes a dark society, *the sea* represents the silent masses, and *the branch* symbolizes an enlightened and knowledgeable individual. Shamlou uses these symbols to express his despair and alienation towards the oppressive society he lives in.

Breaking the Language Form: Symbolists emphasized that the rules of grammar should not be rigidly adhered to in literary works. They rejected traditional grammatical norms and argued that words in literary works should be arranged not based on grammatical rules, but according to the poet's emotional state. As a result, Symbolism rejects direct expression (A Philippide 1966). Symbolists sought to distance literature from the masses and prevent it from becoming banal, returning it to its original purpose—addressing the minds of creative and exceptional individuals. (قاری محمد رضا n.d.).

From the Symbolist perspective, each reader interprets a work of art based on their own understanding and emotions. Therefore, the goal is to create works that are not universally understood, but rather are open to various interpretations, depending on the reader's emotional and intellectual state. (علی اکبر محمدی 1396). To this end, Symbolists sought to free poetry from its traditional forms. They disrupted the typical twelve-syllable line, which was the main structure of French poetry, and instead created various forms of verse, including short, long, and irregular lines. The unity of a poem was no longer based on its form, but on the unity of thought and imagery that ran through it. Symbolists, thus, created free verse. The first poet to use this form in France was Arthur Rimbaud. (رضا سید حسینی 1391).

In this view, the language of poetry breaks down and operates in an unconventional manner. The ordinary person is unable to grasp the meaning of Symbolist poetry. As Mallarmé and other Symbolist poets wrote works whose meaning could only be understood by themselves. Sometimes even the Symbolists themselves were unable to fully comprehend the symbols in their poetry and works. The prevailing belief is that “*symbols are not created by the conscious will of an individual. They are formed by societies through the 'collective unconscious'*” (میر نصیری منصور 1396, صدری, سیده سعیده).

In some Qur'anic verses, we can observe a form of linguistic breaking, which aligns with the concept of Symbolism. Verses such as 112 of Surah An-Nahl, 175 of Surah Al-Baqarah, and 37 of Surah Yaseen provide examples of this claim. These verses do not describe the realities directly but rather allude to them in ways that can be interpreted symbolically.

As stated, Symbolism can be seen as an art of expressing thoughts and emotions not through direct description or clear comparisons, but by hinting at their nature and using symbols to evoke feelings and thoughts in the reader's mind. (چارلز، چدویک، n.d.).

Authenticity of Emotion: Symbolism is rooted in sensory symbols and metaphors. It cultivates emotions and feelings and creates imaginative poetry. It relies on inspiration, fostering solitude and stillness without agitation or excitement. (Anon 1976). Thus, for Symbolists, attention to the senses is crucial. Smells, colors, sounds, and the feelings these elements evoke can serve as signs and symbols that the artist uses to convey an ambiguous message to the audience. For them, the conveyance of feeling is paramount, not the description of it. As a result, sensory elements often blend together. For example, Rimbaud assigned colors to sounds. Perhaps the most important feature of a Symbolist work is its authenticity of emotion. (مدینه کریمی 1394).

The principle of emotion and feeling is widely represented in Symbolist literary and artistic works. Thus, Symbolists strived not to present a logical or moral message but to create

an emotional state in which symbolic elements were used to express those feelings. In Persian literature, this is reflected in numerous examples. For instance, consider this excerpt from Forough Farrokhzad:

“ I dreamt that someone was coming / I dreamt of a red star / I dreamt of that red star / when I wasn't dreaming / someone is coming... / someone who is like no one else”... (فروغ فرخزاد 1379)

The principle of emotion, beyond literary and artistic works, can also be observed in Qur'anic verses. There are many verses in the Qur'an where emotion and feeling are prominently conveyed. Consider this verse:

“If We had opened to them a gate from the heaven, and they were to ascend through it, they would have said: ‘Our eyes have been dazzled; rather, we are a people bewitched.’” (Al-Hijr, 14-15).

Similarly, in verse 168 of Surah Al-Baqarah, a sense of motion is depicted, where Satan leads people astray:

“Satan promises you and commands you to commit immoralities...” (Al-Baqarah, 168).

Musicality of Poetry: In the Symbolist movement, the musicality and rhythm of poetry and language are of paramount importance. The Symbolists aimed to blend poetry and music because music, like poetry, operates through an indirect language and directly connects to human emotions, without necessarily conveying a specific message. For this reason, Symbolists placed significant emphasis on the musicality and inner rhythm of poetry. Stéphane Mallarmé, for example, believed that poetry, before being composed of meaningful words and chains of meaning, is intrinsically aligned with sounds. In his view, combinations of speech that are beautiful but meaningless hold more value than combinations that are ugly but meaningful. (انوشه، حسن 1376).

Music, in its figurative use, carries the ambiguity that the Symbolists sought, while lacking the precision that words must necessarily possess. The Symbolists' desire for vagueness and fluidity in music led them to depart from the rigid and mechanical rules of French poetry. The Symbolist poet relies more on the power of words and the musical, rhythmic quality of their combinations than on their ideological content. (بازرگان، ابراهیم 1395).

The musicality and rhythm of words and sentences are also one of the beauties of the Qur'an, which can be described through phonological figures (e.g., alliteration). Phonological figures in the Qur'an should be considered as the most inseparable units of phonemes. Phonemes, which include consonants and vowels, when repeated or harmonized, contribute to the cohesion and musicality of the text. For example, the verse:

“They wear garments of fine silk and brocade, facing each other” (Ad-Dukhan, 53).

Here, the repetition of the consonant /s/ in the verse enhances its musical quality. Similarly, the repetition of the vowel "a" in the verse:

“When we are dead and have become dust and bones, will we then be resurrected?” (Al-Mu'minun, 82).

This repetition heightens the melodic tone of the verse. The renowned poet Rumi also illustrates the musicality of words with his verses:

من از برای تو خود را همه نیاز کنم. چون ناز را بگذاری همه نیاز شوی

“When you leave vanity behind, you become entirely in need / For you, I make myself wholly in need”.

Likewise, the repetition of syllables and words in Qur'anic verses demonstrates other musical features, such as: “How distant, how distant is what you are promised!” (Al-Mu'minun, 36).

The repetition here adds to the overall rhythm and melody of the verse, showcasing the Qur'an's musical elegance.

The Effectiveness of Symbolist Principles in Analyzing Qur'anic Symbols

The examination and study of symbols based on the principles of Symbolism has become a vital subject in all academic disciplines, as well as in various literary, ideological, discursive, media, philosophical, historical, mythological, linguistic, psychological, and mystical texts. Although the focus on symbols and their analysis initially pertained primarily to literary and artistic works and texts grounded in reason, gradually, this approach has extended to other fields, including religious studies. With the expansion of Symbolism into religious studies, we are now witnessing various opinions regarding the effectiveness and limitations of this theory in the analysis and interpretation of religious texts. In this context, this article discusses the issue of the applicability and ineffectiveness of Symbolist principles in analyzing and interpreting the symbolic verses of the Qur'an. Regarding the symbolic nature of the Qur'anic verses, two main perspectives exist: the cognitive view of the Qur'anic language and the non-cognitive view of the Qur'anic language.

A Non-Cognitive Perspective on the Language of the Holy Quran

The foundations of this perspective are rooted in Paul Tillich's theory of "religious symbolism." According to this view, all religious propositions, except for the statement "God exists," are symbolic. In this theory, religious and Quranic statements are considered non-representational and lacking real-world references. Tillich believes that the Christian belief system is a collection of symbols and in his view, the primary duty of the religious community is to decode and interpret these symbols. As such, Tillich does not attribute significance to the instructional nature of religious language. Therefore, he regards religious language as non-correspondent. In contrast to this view, Islamic teachings reject non-correspondent meanings. If the meanings in Quranic verses were considered non-correspondent, then the language of religion would not be considered epistemic. In such a case, the Quranic verses would lack a real foundation and be regarded as speculative and hypothetical. However, the nature of divine guidance necessitates that its language be comprehensive, clear, and accessible to the general public—a fact that the Holy Quran itself emphasizes.

Despite this, some researchers and Muslims have interpreted the language of the Quranic verses as symbolic and approached their study and interpretation from this perspective. Those who view the language of the Holy Quran as wholly symbolic consider religious language to be non-cognitive (non-epistemic). Thinkers influenced by Tillich's approach view religious statements as symbolic, using "symbol" to mean "sign" or "reference." For instance, Shariati claims that the language of religions (especially the Semitic religions) is symbolic. He sees symbolic language as one that conveys meanings through signs. According to Shariati, the story of Cain and Abel and the offering of sheep and wheat have no objective reality and are purely symbolic. These stories represent the working class and the capitalists and the conflict between the two. (فاطمه تقويان 1398 and مجيد معارف). Similarly, Khulafallah regards stories such as the disciples of Jesus (AS) asking God for the "Ma'idah" (table), the "Aluf" (the story of Ezekiel and those fleeing from death) Abraham (AS) sacrificing birds and resurrecting them, the speech of the ant, the speech of the hoopoe, the story of Cain and Abel, and others as symbolic and metaphorical.

Symbolists of Quranic verses consider symbolism to be the most important feature of religious language. This group believes that concepts like God, the soul breathed into man, the Last Day, revelation, angels, the prophethood of messengers, and their miracles are deeply symbolic realities. Similarly, concepts like the Throne, the Footstool, the Tablet, and the Pen are expressed in symbolic language. (محمد رضا 1943 and حاجي اسماعيلي).

Abdolkarim Soroush also views religious language as a language of wonder and allusion. He states that religion is mysterious and awe-inspiring, and it opposes superficiality. In his view, clarity and superficiality have no place in religion (Mohammadrezaei et al., 2014: 103). Mojtabeh Shabestari is another thinker who considers the language of the Holy Quran symbolic. He claims that the contents of the scriptures, traditions, and narrations are historical data that symbolically represent realities. According to Shabestari, the new science of religion is the study of symbolic religious systems. In this new science, religious language is symbolic, and understanding any religion means understanding a symbolic linguistic system. In fact, Islam, as a reading of religious texts, offers a symbolic and metaphorical explanation. (رضایی اصفهانی and محمدعلی 1389).

Similarly, Ibn Arabi extensively interprets the language of the Holy Quran as symbolic. Wherever possible, he interprets the words of the Holy Quran symbolically and aligns them with his mystical thoughts. His interpretation of verses 48–58 of Surah Ar-Rahman concerning the description of Paradise is an example of symbolic representation based on Ibn Arabi's ideas. He says that the phrase "Qaasirat at-Tarf" (women who gaze only at their husbands) refers to the earthly celestial souls whose gazes do not extend beyond their spiritual ranks (حاجی اسماعیلی and محمد رضا 1943). In this interpretation, Ibn Arabi aligns the description of Paradise with the Paradise of actions he has depicted, describing this Paradise as one where perceivable fruits are available to the fortunate (the mystics). In this interpretation, "Qaasirat at-Tarf" symbolizes the mystic, for only mystics sit on the carpets of perfection. (حاجی اسماعیلی and محمد رضا 1943).

For symbolists, the world of dreams is an example of the use of symbols in the Holy Quran. These dreams are sometimes explicitly referred to as "Manaam" (dream) and sometimes implicitly. The symbols in dreams are logically related to external realities, but their interpretations are unclear and need to be decoded. A good example is the dream of Yusuf (AS), where the symbolic prostration of eleven stars, the sun, and the moon to Yusuf (AS) was a dream whose reality was revealed years later. (فاطمه تقویان 1398 and مجید معارف). Contrary to this view, another group of thinkers disagrees with the non-cognitive perspective on the language of the Holy Quran, whose views we shall explore further.

A Cognitivist Perspective on the Language of the Holy Qur'an

In contrast to the "non-cognitivist" view, several scholars, including Muhammad Abduh, Morteza Motahari, Allama Tabatabai, Wahbah al-Zuhayli, Javadi Amoli, and Misbah, advocate for the epistemic nature of the language of the Qur'anic verses. These thinkers neither view all Qur'anic verses as purely symbolic, like Shariati, Shabestari, Soroush, and Makino, nor do they categorically reject the symbolic nature of certain Qur'anic verses as some, like Ayatollah Makarem Shirazi, do. While they consider the language of the Qur'anic verses to be grounded in reality and reflective of true meanings, they do acknowledge the symbolic nature of some verses, such as the story of Adam and Eve's creation, the angels' prostration to Adam (peace be upon him), Satan's refusal to obey, the disconnected letters in the Qur'an, the casting of devils by heavenly meteors, the opening of the Prophet's heart, and descriptions of the Throne, Tablet, and Book.

These scholars, exercising caution, believe that while most Qur'anic verses convey real meaning, some also possess symbolic elements. As Motahari states, Adam (peace be upon him) undoubtedly existed in a tangible form, yet the Qur'anic language in describing the creation of man, Adam's stay in Paradise, Satan's temptation, Adam's expulsion from Paradise, his repentance, and other related matters is somewhat symbolic and metaphorical. (مرتضی مطهری 1374). He writes, "The Qur'an presents the story of Adam in a symbolic manner. I do not mean that Adam, as mentioned in the Qur'an, is not the name of a person, for Adam certainly existed as the first human being. However, the Qur'an narrates the story of Adam symbolically in terms

of his stay in Paradise, Satan's temptation, greed, envy, expulsion from Paradise, repentance, and so forth" (محمدعلی 1389 and رضایی اصفهانی).

Similarly, Allama Tabatabai regards some Qur'anic verses as symbolic. Like Motahari, he affirms the reality of the creation of Adam and Eve but does not dismiss the symbolic aspects of the story mentioned earlier. According to Tabatabai, Adam (peace be upon him) represents and symbolizes humanity, just as Iblis symbolizes his own kind. The angels who prostrated to Adam symbolize the entire angelic kind, which is inherently submissive to God and does not rebel. Their essence is inferior to that of the perfect human, whereas Iblis and his kind are not of the same nature. (محمدعلی 1389 and رضایی اصفهانی). Tabatabai believes that, in religious language, symbolism and metaphor are sometimes employed, such as when God addresses the earth and the heavens: {Then He turned to the heaven while it was smoke and said to it and to the earth, "Come willingly or unwillingly." They said, "We have come willingly"} (Fussilat: 11).

In the same vein, Ayatollah Ma'rifat has also confirmed the symbolic nature of certain Qur'anic verses. For example, he considers the story of Adam's creation and his vicegerency to be symbolic. (محمدعلی 1389 and رضایی اصفهانی).

It is important to note that the metaphors and symbols found in the Qur'an should not be interpreted as mere imaginary symbols, whether related to theology, eschatology, or stories. Therefore, the metaphorical or symbolic nature of certain dimensions of these narratives does not necessarily imply their unreality. Qur'anic symbols are accompanied by clues that prevent misinterpretation of the text's meaning as false. (فاطمه تقویان 1398 and مجید معارف).

Critique of Cognitive and Non-Cognitive Views on the Language of Quranic Verses

Thus far, we have identified two key perspectives on the symbolism in the language of the Holy Quran. In this section, we aim to analyze and critique these views from various angles.

Artistic imagery and the use of literary devices are critical tools in expressing "sensory-imaginative" states and conveying "abstract mental meanings." Numerous literary and artistic techniques are showcased within the Quranic text. For example, "images in the Quran participate through the color, movement, and rhythm of the words in depicting sensory imagery, which appeals to the eyes, ears, emotions, imagination, intellect, and conscience" (سید قطب 1389). Consider the sensory image in verse 40 of Surah Al-A'raf, where the phrases "the gates of heaven being opened" and "a camel passing through the eye of a needle" are two artistic-literary images. These are expressed through sublime language in a sensory-artistic image.

Similarly, the depiction of abstract concepts through physical and tangible forms is another artistic aspect of the Quran. In many Quranic verses, natural phenomena, inanimate objects, and psychological states are personified. This means they are endowed with emotions and characteristics similar to humans. Look at verse 18 of Surah At-Takwir, where the word "morning" is personified as a living being. This construction is essentially a metaphor, and what it linguistically represents is the cognitive metaphor "morning is a living being" because one of the characteristics of a living being is to breathe. Similarly, in verse 4 of Surah Al-Fajr, "night" moves like a moving entity. The conceptual metaphor derived from this verse is "night is a moving being." In addition to "morning" and "night," which are personified in the above verses with metaphorical implications, the word "hell" is likened to a human being in verse 30 of Surah Qaf. Similarly, in verse 208 of Surah Al-Baqarah the word "peace" is likened to a container into which believers must fully enter. All these verses point to the metaphorical nature of the Quranic language. However, these metaphors are not just literary; they belong to the category of cognitive metaphors. Similarly, in verse 11 of Surah Fussilat, "earth" and "heavens" speak with God Almighty.

Although scholars such as Tabataba'i have considered the words "heavens" and "earth" symbolic, they are not symbolic but cognitive metaphors. Since the "conceptual metaphor theory" (which is a modern theory) was not taken into account, the above personified words and

concepts were interpreted as symbols. Similarly, in verse 16 of Surah An-Nahl, mountains and stars were considered symbols of prophets and guides, whereas they are, in fact, cognitive metaphors. Despite this, some of the scholars we previously encountered have regarded these verses as symbolic Quranic propositions. However, our findings show that these concepts cannot be classified as symbolic because they possess source and target domains with inter-domain mappings. Therefore, these verses can easily be interpreted and evaluated within the framework of conceptual metaphor theory.

Nonetheless, the representation of symbols in the Quranic verses cannot be entirely denied. For instance, the disjointed letters of the Quran, the dream of Joseph (peace be upon him), the stoning of stars, etc., while having real meanings, also have symbolic forms. However, the language of these symbols is not obscure or ambiguous as Tillich and symbolists claim; rather, it is clear and based on knowledge. Thus, the language of the Holy Quran cannot be considered entirely symbolic as Tillich and his followers assert, nor can symbolism in Quranic verses be completely disregarded as some structuralist interpreters suggest.

The language of some Quranic verses cannot be generally considered symbolic because the Quranic language is neither non-cognitive nor unrelated to reality. If the Quranic language were deemed entirely symbolic, this book would lose its value, and nothing but conjectural and implicit meanings would remain. Such a perspective would, in fact, question the purpose of religion and the Quran, which is to guide humans toward eternal life. Therefore, accepting symbolism in all Quranic propositions creates the following challenges:

- The Quran would only offer conjectural and uncertain meanings. This view implies that the Quran would lose its guiding role and its ability to lead people to happiness, which contradicts the fundamental purpose of the Quran's revelation (Sajjadi, 1385: 350).
- Attributing a “non-cognitive” language to the Quran opens the door for contradictory interpretations of the religious text. In such a case, who could claim that the Quran is a guide for human salvation? This contradicts the fact that the Quran’s style is based on the common language of people. (محمد علی 1389 and رضایی اصفهانی). Moreover, the Quran repeatedly declares in various surahs that its language is reality-based, non-metaphorical, and in accordance with common understanding. Hence, the Quranic language cannot be easily regarded as symbolic.
- The teachings transmitted from the Prophet (PBUH) through the Quran and Hadith are sometimes mutawatir (consecutively transmitted) and sometimes accompanied by reliable indications. Moreover, the context of the revelation and transmission of these verses and narratives is documented in historical exegeses. (محمد علی 1389 and رضایی اصفهانی). Thus, if the language of Quranic propositions is deemed entirely symbolic, these narratives and teachings would lose their meaning and knowledge-giving capacity.
- Many verses and Hadiths transmitted from the Prophet (PBUH) are explicitly clear in meaning. Hence, they do not possess any mysterious or symbolic aspects.
- Quranic propositions that do not describe God and His attributes (such as those related to beliefs, praiseworthy and blameworthy human traits, individual and social ethics, the states of the afterlife, worship rulings, transactions, pilgrimage, etc.) cannot be considered symbolic in the conventional sense discussed by Tillich.

Moreover, symbolism cannot be generalized to all Quranic verses since most Quranic propositions are either declarative or imperative.

However, a text as beautiful and meaningful as the Holy Quran cannot be entirely devoid of symbolism. The Quran is a text in which various forms of artistic devices can be found, one of which is the symbol. Yet, the symbols represented in Quranic propositions do not indicate the non-cognitive or non-knowledge-giving nature of the Quranic language but rather demonstrate

its artistic and technical expression. At the same time, the extensive reflection of literary devices such as symbols further attests to the miraculous nature of the Quran.

CONCLUSION

Imagination, emotional expression, the use of artistic and elevated language, introspection, ambiguity, pessimism, and rhythmic language are considered some of the most important principles of the "symbolism" approach. Numerous literary, scientific, and ideological works have been critiqued and evaluated based on these principles. Some researchers have even applied these principles to the interpretation of Quranic verses, leading to debates among different groups. While some have emphasized the significance of these concepts in interpreting symbolic Quranic verses, others have denied their role in the process of studying Quranic verses. The conclusion reached by this research is that the Holy Quran, as a divine and sacred discourse, is a text endowed with elevated language, adorned with various literary and rhetorical devices. The reflection of literary devices such as metaphor, simile, allusion, metonymy, symbol, and others play a prominent role in conveying the meaning and message of Quranic propositions. From this perspective, the language of the Holy Quran and the literary devices represented within it cannot be easily described and analyzed as simple literary techniques. This is because Quranic symbols, while symbolic, also represent reality. For instance, the concept of charity, while symbolizing benevolence and humanity, is also a tangible reality. Thus, the language of the Holy Quran, while literary, is based on common understanding, as it is not exclusive to any specific social or cultural group. Therefore, the language of the Holy Quran is cognitive and knowledge-based, with its message being clear and comprehensible to all nations and times. Moreover, this research does not support some of the findings of previous studies. In earlier research, literary devices were often conflated, with metaphors being mistaken for symbols, and vice versa. For example, Tabataba'i considered the cognitive metaphor "and by the morning when it breathes" (Quran 81:18) as a symbol. This could be attributed to two reasons: (1) many of those who researched Quranic symbols were not experts in literature, and (2) they were either unaware of the conceptual metaphor theory or neglected it in their analysis. As a result, most verses previously labeled as symbolic in earlier studies have been identified as cognitive metaphors in this research. In light of the above discussion, principles such as elevated language, the primacy of emotion, the primacy of rhythm, and imagination are among the fundamental concepts of symbolism, through which the symbols represented in the Quranic verses can be described and analyzed.

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