

# SCIENTIFIC CONTEMPORARY IN AL-QURAN INTERPRETATION: AN REVIEW FOR AL-SHA'RAWI METHOD IN TAFSIR AL-SHA'RAWI

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## Abstract

Syeikh Muhammad Mutawalli al-Sha'rawi is a renown Egypt nativity scholar for his knowledge credibility in numerous fields. His activeness in the field of da'wah and social has leaped him as a renowned contemporary da'ie murabbi. His approach concerning the current philosophical interpretation in al-Quran comprehension is a noble effort in integrating ma'na and isyarah comprised in al-Quran which is in line with the current scientific. Currently he gives new aspiration upon community reformation towards the authentic Islamic teaching as Muslim community is enchained with the culture as well as knowledge secularism and liberalism. The summit of al-Sha'rawi battle on ennobling Islamic law is visible via his masterpiece entitled Tafsir al-Sha'rawi. Early analysis shows that he applied approach of *al-Ilmi al-Naqli al-Ijtima'ie* methodology in interpreting al-Quran by using combination of numerous scientific elements such as divine science, social science and natural science in which were already comprised in his tafsir. Thus, it is justified to be highlighted to the community so that his knowledge would be able to exist in terms of future framework for current knowledge urbanization besides unveiling current scientific of al-Quran prospect. Hence, this article will pursue al-Sya'rawi's scientific method that has been applied in his tafsir.

**Keywords:** Scientific al-Quran, I'jaz al-Quran, Sheikh Muhammad Mutawalli al-Sha'rawi, Tafsir al-Sha'rawi, Modern Islamic Mufassir.

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## 1.0 Introduction

Current reality is corresponding with present knowledge advancement. This can be observed through the thinking pattern shift of the community which was a result of two main motive<sup>2</sup> that are; *Firstly*, knowledge acquisition gained from experience which is obtained as it is without any particular motive. *Secondly*, the knowledge that is constructed on the motive of curiosity through the analysis process established from the theoretical knowledge and expanded via the constant practical knowledge.

Initially, these two main motives produce various knowledge concepts. For instance knowledge concept in Islamic optic has evolved as a result of two main empirical bases which are al-Quran dan al-Hadith<sup>3</sup>. In contra with the knowledge concept that was proposed by the West scholar that was only rationale oriented: it is the only methodology used to entangle the truth.<sup>4</sup> This is totally the opposite way of Islamic knowledge tradition with tawhidic foundation whereby Islam does not oppose academic decoration that gives input of competitive excellence in nature. Moreover, it also encourages to entangle as well as comprehend those in various dimensions with the purpose to acquire authentic fact and to contribute towards resolving global difficulties.<sup>5</sup>

This is what has been conveyed by Zaini Ujang through an excerpt of Jonathan Lyons' book entitled *The House of Wisdom: How the Arabs Transformed Western Civilization* which has stated the success of intellectual Islamic thinking in various fields has given enormous contribution in knowledge growth and global tranquility.<sup>6</sup> Thus, this situation demonstrate former Islamic scholar thinking pattern was not only based on theoretical knowledge but also practical in nature to produce an authoratitative discovery corresponding with the current

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<sup>2</sup> According to Ahmad Tafsir; nevertheless, in order to acquire the methodology in knowledge, it is initially a threshold of the built-in inquisitiveness in man's creation. See work of Ahmad Tafsir, *Filsafat Pengetahuan Islami, Pandangan Keilmuan UIN, Wahyu Memandu Ilmu* (Islamic Knowledge Philosophy, UIN Academicians Perspective, Divine Revelation Guide Knowledge), (Bandung: Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, 2006) 18.

<sup>3</sup> Sidek Baba, *Memahami Konsep Penguasaan Ilmu Pengetahuan: Ke arah Ummat Hadhari* (Understanding Concept of Knowledge Mastery: Towards Hadhari Follower), (Kuala Lumpur: Yayasan Ilmuan, 2010) 168-169.

<sup>4</sup> Ziauddin Sardar has given detailed elaboration on the concept of Islamic knowledge in the optic of Islam as well as the West; he has made 15 comparisons between the contexts of Islamic and the West knowledge. See Ziauddin Sardar, *Explorations In Islamic Science* (London and New York: Mansell, 1989) 95-97.

<sup>5</sup> Alias Azhar, *Peranan Pemikiran Saintifik Dalam Pembinaan Hukum Islam Semasa di Malaysia* (Scientific Thinking Role in Islamic Law Development in Malaysia), (Proceeding Proposal of Seminar Hukum Islam Semasa Peringkat Kebangsaan on 28-29 September 2005, University of Malaya Kuala Lumpur, 2005) 1-10.

<sup>6</sup> Zaini Ujang, *Menghayati Budaya Ilmu, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia* (Penerbit UTM, 2009) 14. Also see Jonathan Lyons, *The House of Wisdom: How the Arabs Transformed Western Civilization* (London New York and Berlin: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2010) 55-57.

advance. This is what *Hujjah al-Islam* Al-Ghazali has attempted to deliver in his work entitled *Ihya' 'Ulumuddin* whereby he had mentioned the requirement of Muslim to master the knowledge of *Syar'iyah* and *Ghair Syar'iyah* meanwhile Ibn Khaldun inferred those as *al-Ulum al-Naqliyyah* dan *al-Ulum al-'Aqliyyah*.<sup>7</sup>

### 1.1 Science Islamization

It is undeniable that the existence of science terminology is spread through the West civilization for the last four centuries. The prominent names such as Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543), Francis Bacon (1561-1629), Kepler, Galileo (1564-1642), Isaac Newton and many others had blushed the West science splendidly.<sup>8</sup> Yet, Islam was the main pioneer of scientific discovery before the existence of West civilization. The proud of former Islamic science advancement was insufficient if we compare it with the current intellectual growth. This is due to the fact that recent sciences terminologies are unlike the former work of Islamic scholar during its splendid science era. It can be observed through the total separation of intellectual and spiritual elements in developing human being civilization that was pioneered by the secularist.<sup>9</sup>

There is no doubt that human being need science and technology to develop the world perpetually. The potential of developing science and technology is can only be developed by human being because they are the one who is competent to comprehend the restricted worlds' nature. Their capability to understand the world scientifically, systematically, logically, objectively and then the science as well as technology itself led them to administrate this world adequately.

Thinking ethic with scientific bases is necessary to realize part of the world phenomenon but premier acclaim towards only science has caused in domination of this knowledge towards

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<sup>7</sup> This concept that was proposed by Imam al-Ghazali and Ibn Khaldun is actually an integral and holistic knowledge concept within tawhidic framework in which according to Ismail al-Faruqi, it is the essence of Islamic civilization that unites various knowledge fields from the outside in which also acknowledged by Islam. See Nanat Fatah Natsir, *Merumuskan Landasan Epistemologi Pengintegrasian Ilmu Quraniyyah dan Kawniyyah dalam Pandangan Keilamuan UIN, Wahyu Memandu Ilmu* (Summarizing Epistemology Layers Integration of Quraniyyah Knowledge and Kawniyyah in UIN Academics Perspective, Divine Revelation Guide Knowledge), (Bandung: Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, 2006) 1. Knowledge emphasis can be observed through a debate under specific topic that was discussed deliberately in details by Imam al-Ghazali in his work. See Ghazali Muhammad, *Mukhtasar Ihya' 'Ulumuddin*, Irwan Kurniawan, (Terj.), *Mutiara Ihya' Ulumuddin* (Pearl Ihya' Ulumuddin), (Bandung: Penerbit Mizan, 2008) 23-40.

<sup>8</sup> Shabeer Ahmad, *Development of Science and Technology in Islamic History* (Riyadh: Dar al-Salam Publisher, 2008) 10.

<sup>9</sup> Louis Leahy, *Jika Sains Mencari Makna* (If Science Search Meaning), (Yogyakarta: Penerbit Kanisius, 2006) 70.

every aspect of present human life. Each knowledge discipline including the knowledge of science social and literature required an explanation via scientific approach if it want to be acknowledged comprehensively. This fact affected the community to neglect religion, culture, custom and daily code of ethics which resulted them to be a follower of *scientism*<sup>10</sup>. It is a belief that generate science as an ideology as well as main objective of their life till it produce blind faith mankind that have vague guide regarding objective of life, a downfall of religion sanctity, social institution, marriage, customary code of ethics and environment destruction. This is the consequences once science was developed without religion and mankind pure values which has caused them to be blinded. Albert Einstein has quoted:

*“science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind”*<sup>11</sup>

Thus in confronting present millenium challenges, knowledge called as *ghair syar’iyyah* knowledge and *al-Ulum al-Naqliyyah* need to be revised and interpreted using contemporary Islamic knowledge advancement. Adaptation of science and technology progress in *Islamic studies* education context is essential in order to be assimilated with recent society need<sup>12</sup>. Along with main sources axis which are al-Quran and al- Hadith<sup>13</sup>, dynamic amalgamation effort in comprehending tawhidic verses is necessary to face multi-dimentional challenges in order to highlight Islamic teaching as comprehensive, universal and flexible.<sup>14</sup> This is due the

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<sup>10</sup> The terminology exist when there is contradiction between the theory of earth rotates within its axis and earth as the center of universe which is pioneered by Greek philosopher; Pythagoras. This theory has been considered by the church as a faith dogma and finally, a conflict take place between the West intellect (scientist) and the church before the *Renaissance* era. This conflict led to the birth of secularist ideology at the West which separated science from the church faith. A worst situation occurred when a total separation was done by the scientism who opposed all religion because they claimed that religion did not match with the critical and scientific mind. Louis Leahy, *op. cit.*, p. 70. Bertens, *Panorama Filsafat Moden* (Modern Philosophy), (Jakarta: Penerbit Teraju, 2006) 23. See too Reza A.A, *Filsafat dan Sains; Sebuah Pengantar* (Philosophy and Science; An Introduction), (Jakarta: Penerbit Grasindo, 2008) 297.

<sup>11</sup> Albert Einstein, *Albert Einstein, On Cosmic Relegion and Ather Opinions and Aphorism* (New York: Dover Publication Inc., 2009) 43. See too Walter Isaacson, *Einstein, His Life and Universe* (New York: Simon & Schuster Publisher, 2007) 390.

<sup>12</sup> An example of highlighted issue by Rew Martin in his composition: according to him, the importance of knowledge integration and anthropology approach in comprehension of Islam need to be developed in present society context so that the comprehensiveness of dynamic Islam is highlighted in all aspects. Other than avoiding the West scholar claim in which accusing Islam as inflexible religion. Thus, the application towards Islamic comprehension needed to be more proactive to develop Islamic scientific thinking framework. See Rew Martin, “*Religion and development I: Anthropology, Islam, transnationalism and emerging analyses of violence against women*” *Journal Progress In Development Studies*, V. 11, Issue 1, 2011) 69. See too Alias Azhar, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

<sup>13</sup> Unlike the knowledge revolution growth in West optic whereby the West academic tradition progressed after the scientist and West scholar separated from faith idealism ideology via secularism process.<sup>13</sup> Alias Azhar, *op. cit.*, p 14.

<sup>14</sup> See Alias Azhar, *Aplikasi Elemen Saintifik Dalam Pengajian Syariah di Malaysia* (Scientific Element Application in Syariah Studies in Malaysia), (Ph.D Thesis, Department of Fiqh & Usul, Islamic Studies Academy, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, 2007) 1.

complex difficulties in which occur within various aspects in the society. This has lead scholars to think efficiently, creatively, critically<sup>15</sup> and proactively in order to solve the issue,<sup>16</sup> without neglecting *ma'thur* sources. This is where the writer realise the genuine importance in al-Quran implied meaning revision based on present society situation which had scientific characteristic preference. Formerly, academician and Islamic scholars prefer to translate al-Quran using *Ma'thur*, *Ra'yi* and *Isyari* based on the situation at that particular time. Thus, a new approach is needed in comprehending al-Quran context in accordance with recent advancement which is to integrate science and technology in comprehending al-Quran. It is not to put a total belief in the West science but instead, constructing estimation and shift in scientific discovery to be islamasized according to Islamic framework that is *ta'abbudi* and *tawhidic* in nature.<sup>17</sup>

This is also one of the effort of present Islamic scholar such as Prof. Dr. Zaghlul al-Najjar<sup>18</sup>, Dr. Zakir Naik<sup>19</sup>, al-Zindani<sup>20</sup> and others which has been realised as well as higlighted to the

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<sup>15</sup> Critical thinking has been discussed a lot by numerous scholars particularly among the educator whether the Islamic academician or the West. It is one of the two neuroscience studies aspects: critical and creative thinking. These two aspects of studies are part of cognitive operation applied by human to find out meaning. Roger Sperry and Ornstein discovered that human brain is divided to two parts which are Hoka (Right brain hemisphere) and Hoki (Left brain hemisphere). Both has crucial parts and the difference of them are the Hoki has function to produce scientific thinking critically and the Hoka produces scientific thinking creatively. See Mohd Fauzi Hamat, *Penerepan Pemikiran Kritis Menerusi Silibus Pendidikan Islam, Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah (KBSM): Kajian di SMKA Negeri Melaka* (Application of Critical Thinking Via Islam Education Syllabus, ssssIntegrated Secondary School Curriculum (KBSM): A Study in SMKA Malacca), (Journal Afkar Department of Aqidah & Islamic Thinking, Islamic Studies Academy, University of Malaya. Bil. 8, Ed. April 2007) 209.

<sup>16</sup> This situation is also reviewed by Rosnani Hashim in her works' introduction. See Rosnani Hashim, *Educational Dualisme in Malaysia* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1969) 1-3.

<sup>17</sup> Alias Azhar, *op.cit.*, h. 2. See also Dr. Muhammad Sayyid Tantawi review on debate of ethics regarding al-Quran al-Karim. Muhammad Sayyid Tantawi, *Adab al-Hiwar fi al-Islam*, Mohd Nor Mamat (trans.) *Adab Dialog Dalam Islam* (Dialogue in Islam), (Kuala Lumpur: Institut Terjemahan Negara Malaysia Berhad, 2008) 158-170.

<sup>18</sup> His outstanding personage was highlighted with an outcome of a website: <http://www.elnaggarzr.com> which downloaded almost whole of his work whether article, book, journal or news excerpt. Although his expertise is more towards geology aspect (micropalaeontology), but his personage was outstanding as he is able to produce various research in I'jaz 'Ilmi (integrate scientific discovery with al-Quran knowledge). For instance we can see a website at <http://www.sunni-news.net> dated on 11 October 2011; he has been recognized as excellent *Islamic Scholar* for his adaptation of scientific knowledge into the field tafsir al-Quran. This recognition is one of his qualified achievements as the figure selection upon the lists of Islamic Personalities via this website is based on restricted criteria. See website [http://www.sunni-news.net/en/articles.aspx?selected\\_article\\_no=13445](http://www.sunni-news.net/en/articles.aspx?selected_article_no=13445), dated on 10 October 2011. See too <http://www.elnaggarzr.com>.

<sup>19</sup> Dr. Zakir Naik was born on 18 October 1965; he is a medical doctor as well as an expert in comparative religion. Actively involved in Islamic preaching and is a founder of Islamic Research Foundation (IRF) which is an active organization that owned a media channel in Mumbai India. He started actively in the field of da'wah when he had inspired by Ahmad Deedat methodology: he integrates scientific discovery in describing Islam to the society. See [http://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zakir\\_Naik](http://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zakir_Naik) 20 January 2012.

<sup>20</sup> His name is Abdul Majid al-Zindani. He is born on 1942. According to Daniel Golden in his composition, he stated that al-Zindani is an academician and charismatic Yemen politician. As a founder of Iman University in Yemen, it is unquestionable if his opinion not only affecting the present fact. Moreover, it is threatening

society in order to comprehend the importance of al-Quran content via scientific approach. They are not only well-known among the present Islamic scholars, but also prominent all over Europe because of their numerous contribution in the scientific qurani reflection aspect<sup>21</sup>.

Yet as we unveil current society fanaticism upon science perception, technology definitely unseparable from science and it is a doctrine that needed reconsideration. This is due to the issue that as we discussed about science terminology; we need to consider science methodology, organisation, objective, research priority, policy, science as a faith, science and military, science and technology, as well as science education. We shall not restricting science only as either a research methodology, empirical methodology, particularly experimental<sup>22</sup> methodology or science comprehension as chemistry, physic and life science subjects as these have become doctrines since the school level.<sup>23</sup>

All of the science components that have been mentioned before are crucial aspects in our daily life and every aspect of life must be placed within religion domain. If the components are in debate within Islamic scope, it is called as Islamic Science.<sup>24</sup> This is the issue to be highlighted throughout this study whereby the author examines interpretation proposed by Syeikh *Muhammad Mutawalli Al-Sya'rawi* via his interpretation in his work *Tafsir al-Say'rawi*. It is not a rigid al-Quran interpretation which interpret al-Quran classically. Yet most of the scholar are unaware of al-Sya'rawi use of scientific *al-'Ilmi al-Naqli al-Ijtima'i'*<sup>25</sup>

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bigger power such as United States until he was labeled as al-Qaeda agent because of his direct voice in revealing the truth. See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abdul\\_Majeed\\_al-Zindani](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abdul_Majeed_al-Zindani) 20 January 2012.

<sup>21</sup> If we observed the history, Qurani scientific terminology is a new term in tafsir al-Quran studies discipline. Its emergence began when the Islamic scholar tend to adapt West philosophical science for all purposes as well as to avoid West scholar claim upon al-Quran comprehensiveness which is miraculous in nature and not the work of Prophet p.b.u.h. We also need to view that there was an attempt to revive Islamic science by several scholar and Islamic figures for instance Jamaluddin al-Afghani, Muhammad Abduh, Rashid Redha, Muhammad Iqbal and Sayyid Ahmad Khan, yet these figures tend to debate science philosophy according to socialism and Sufism perspectives. See Baharuddin Ahmad, (1994), *Falsafah sains Daripada Perspektif Islam* (Science Philosophy from Islamic Perspective), Kuala Lumpur, Dewan Bahasa Dan Pustaka, p. xiv.

<sup>22</sup> As applied by prior scholars such as Galileo Galilei (1564-1642), William Gilbert (1544-1603), Isaac Newton (1642-1727), and James Clerk Maxwell (1831-1879), Albert Einstein was completely utilizing this method too.

<sup>23</sup> Abdul Latif Samian (2009), *Al-Quran dan Sunah Dalam Falsafah Sains* (Al-Quran and Sunnah in Philosophy of Science), in Mohd Yusof Hj Othman (ed.), *Wacana Sejarah dan Falsafah Sains Dan Masyarakat* (Discourse of History and Philosophy of Science and Society), (p. 313-314). Kuala Lumpur : Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* p. 314.

<sup>25</sup> This *al-'Ilmi al-'Aqli al-Ijtima'i'* concept is based on authors' estimation upon al-Sya'rawi interpretation approach in interpreting al-Quran verse because when Syeikh al-Sya'rawi interpreting a verse, he examined the verse via scientific dimension (such as society science, education science and other science components) and then it was interpreted logically in which suits the context of the verse interpretation based on the situation and society needs for the global significance.

approach in describing al-Quran verses that contain the element of Divine Science, Social Science and Natural Science<sup>26</sup> which is constructed based on his own observation throughout his active involvement in various field of knowledge.

Using his epic work entitled *Tafsir al-Say'rawi*, author will try to examine his methodology and approach in describing al-Quran content via scientific approach. Finally, it is expected that the results of early observation towards al-Sya'rawi methodology will uncover Islamic academic credibility in relation to interaction with contemporary academic based on maqasid al-Quran.

## 2.0 Syekh Muhammad Mutawalli al-Sya'rawi as Icon of Islamic Scientific *Mufasssir*

### 2.1 Biography

His name is Muhammad Mutawalli al-Sya'rawi. His renown nickname; 'Amin' was actually originated from his father. His father was asked the reason he chooses his son name which is al-Sya'rawi and then he answered 'amin'.<sup>27</sup> He was born on 15<sup>th</sup> April 1911 which is equivalent to 17 Rabi' al-Thani 1329 Hijrah at Daqadus<sup>28</sup>; a small village located at Mayyit al-Ghumar area, district of al-Daqhiliyyah.<sup>29</sup> He was also known as Abu Sami as his eldest child name is Sami.<sup>30</sup> On the night when he was born, his father had a dream of al-Sya'rawi delivering sermon on rostrum. This has been a good sign that came along with the birth of al-Sya'rawi.<sup>31</sup> He passed away on 22<sup>nd</sup> Safar 1419 Hijrah which is equivalent to Wednesday at June 1998. He had contributed towards the global community as an proficient scholar for 87 years.

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<sup>26</sup> Yahaya Jusoh (2007), *Pendidikan Falsafah Sains Al-Quran* (Philosophy of Al-Quran Science Education), Penerbit Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, pp.19-21.

<sup>27</sup> Al-Munsyawi et. al. (t.t), *al-Syeikh al-Sya'rawi wa Hadith al-Zikrayat*, (The Stories and Memories of al-Syeikh al-Sya'rawi), al-Qaherah: Dar al-Fadhilah, p. 10.

<sup>28</sup> Daqadus is a small village in Egypt located at al-Daqhiliyyah area, Markaz Mayyit Ghumar approximately 75 kilometer from Qaherah town. Originally, the village name is in Rome language which is Otokotos (اوتوكوتوس) but when the Arabs entered Egypt, they pronounced the village as Daqadus (دقدوس). Al-Idris (t.t), *Abu Abdullah Muhammad Ibn Muhammad Mutawalli Ibn Abdullah Ibn Idris; Nuzhah al-Musytaq fi Ikhtiraq al-Afaq*, al-Qaherah: Maktabah al-Thaqafah al-Diniyyah, p.313. See too al-Bayumi et. al.,(1999), *Muhammad Mutawalli al-Sya'rawi, Jaulah fi Fi Fikrah al-Musi'I al-Fasih*, al-Qaherah: Maktabah al-Turath al-Islami, p.13. In *Mu'jam al-Buldan*, the name of the village was known as 'Qadus'. See too Yaqut al-Hamawi (1955), *Mu'jam al-Buldan* (Dictionary of Countries), J. 2. Beirut: Dar Sodir, p 458.

<sup>29</sup> Al-Munsyawi et. al., (t.t), *op. cit.*

<sup>30</sup> Umar Ya'qub Jamil al-Solih (2009), *Madrasah al-Syeikh al-Sya'rawi fi al-Tafsir (al-Syeikh al-Sya'rawi Methods in Tafsir)*, Amman: Dar al-Arar li al-Nasyr wa al-Tauzi', p.171.

<sup>31</sup> Muhammad al-Baz (1998), *Muhakamah al-Sya'rawi: Syeikh al-Sya'rawi Ma Lahu wa Ma 'Alaihi*, Qaherah: Maktabah Madboula al-Soghair, pp. 165-166.

## 2.2 Al-Sya'rawi Life and Education

Brought up at Daqadus village; it is Egypt ancient village with a calm environment as well as adherent villagers of Islamic teaching had been one of the virtuous value incentive embedded inside Syeikh al-Sya'rawi.

Even both of his parents were busy farmers, his father never neglected his children education especially Syeikh al-Sya'rawi education. Syeikh al-Sya'rawi also has been trained to love knowledge since he was a kid. At a young age, his father sent Syeikh al-Sya'rawi to house of a prolific Islamic scholar or Islamic scholar that has produced works which is Syeikh 'Abd al-Majed Basha to pursue informal al-Quran knowledge.<sup>32</sup> His great ability was seen when he had memorized 30 juzu' al-Quran at the age of 11 which is during 1922.

After al-Sya'rawi completed al-Quran memorization, he pursued his education via official education system at *Madrasah al-Aulawiyyah* or known as *Ma'had Ibtidai al-Azhari*, Zaqaqiz on 1926 at the age of 15. After al-Sya'rawi graduated his study on the primary level, his father send him to the secondary level at *Ma'ahad al-Thanawi al-Azhari*, Zaqaqiz.

His determination in pursuing knowledge is acknowledged when al-Sya'rawi received the excellence award in the graduation ceremony in 1936.<sup>33</sup> His love of pursuing knowledge was unstoppable as in 1937, he has further his bachelor degree studies at al-Azhar university specializing in the Arabic language field (كلية اللغة العربية) until he graduated in 1941 achieving *marhalah mumtaz* (excellent). Al-Sya'rawi has been awarded Doctor of Philosophy Degree in which qualified him to be a lecturer at that time.<sup>34</sup>

## 2.3 Works, Contribution and Award

Al-Sya'rawi has given enormous contribution in spreading Islamic teaching especially at the Middle East as well as worldwide generally and there is a need to be explored so that the knowledge given will give benefits to the future generation. If we examined his dozens of

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<sup>32</sup> If we take a look at Egypt community tradition, they will send their children at their young age to the house of *Kuttab* or Islamic scholar which produces works to pursue al-Quran knowledge. Rola Muhammad Ahmad Husin (2000), "*Manhaj Syeikh Muhammad Mutawalli al-Sya'rawi fi al-Quran al-Karim*", (Dissertation of Fiqh & Law Faculty at Ali-Bayt University, Jordan), p. 21. See too Muhammad al-Baz (1998), *op. cit.*, pp. 24-25.

<sup>33</sup> Al-Bayumi (t.t), *Muhammad Mutawalli al-Sya'rawi Jaulah fi Fikrah al-Musi'I al-Fasih*, , Qaaherah: Dar al-Misriyyah al-Bananiyyah, pp. 13-18.

<sup>34</sup> Rola Muhammad Ahmad Husiin (2000), *op. cit.*, p. 21.



works that he had produced<sup>35</sup>, it was abundant to prove his struggle that is not only in preaching<sup>36</sup>, but also in the field of writing. His competence in uniting Islamic and current knowledge is outstanding and can be witnessed via his works.

Among his prominence works<sup>37</sup> are :

- *Tafsir al-Sya'rawi*<sup>38</sup>
- *'Aqidah al-Muslim*
- *Al-Fatawa*
- *Al-Tarbiyyah al-Islamiyyah*
- *Al-Hijrah al-Nubuwwah*
- *Al-Isra' wa al-Mi'raj*
- *Syarh Mu'jizat al-Anbiya' wa al-Mursalin*
- *Mu'jizat al-Quran al-Kubra*
- *Al-Islam Hadathah wa Hadharah*

Throughout his life, al-Sya'rawi had been given trust to uphold various positions whether inside or outside the country, for instance:

- A lecturer at Ummu al-Qura University, Arab Saudi in 1950 and visiting lecturer at Malik 'Abd al-'Aziz University from 1951 until 1960.<sup>39</sup>
- Al-Azhar College Manager in 1964.<sup>40</sup>
- While in 1965, al-Sya'rawi hold the position of Genaral Affair Head al-Azhar University.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Terminology of his work realization was a revision version during his life selected from the lecture recording, forum either on television, radio, at mosques where he was invited as invited lecturer guest. The proactive characteristic owned by his children and disciple to publish most of his lecture recording in text has benefited the Muslim until today. Since the beginning of his work publication, al-Sya'rawi never put any condition as well as took any honorarium from the producer. Instead, he gave permission to the book publisher to publish as much as possible of his delivered lecture.<sup>35</sup> According to Prof. Dr Muhammad Rajab al-Bayumi, his disciples are uncountable in total because whomever following his lecture, he is considered as his pupil. See 'Abd al-Mu'iz 'Abd al-Jazar et. al., (1998), *op. cit.*, p. 96

<sup>36</sup> He delivers lecture and talk at mosques actively. His career peak as da'ie is when he was invited to deliver a religious lecture in a show called 'nur 'ala nur' produced by Ahmad Farraj at Egypt TV station. The community world widely followed his lecturer through this channel.

<sup>37</sup> From the author observation, he had produced a total of 82 works that covers various field of knowledge. Umar Ya'qub Jamil al-Solihi (2009), *op. cit.*, p. 196. 'Abd al-Mu'iz 'Abd al-Jazar et. al., (1998), *op. cit.*, p.99.

<sup>38</sup> This tafsir of 24 volumes has been published by *Akhbar al-Yaum* Publisher, Qaherah on 1991.

<sup>39</sup> Muhammad Yasin Jazar (1990), *'Alim 'Asrihi fi 'Uyun Ma'asirihi*, al-Qaherah: Maktabah al-Turath al-Islami, p. 14.

<sup>40</sup> This position was previously held by Syeikh Hassan Ma'mun, see Muhammad Yasin Jazar (1990), *op. cit.*, p. 14.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

- Chosen as al-Azhar ambassador at the Africa in restructuring the system of Arabic language studies there in which it has been affected by France imperialism.<sup>42</sup>
- Minister of Waqaf and Azhar Affair Ministry from November 1976 until 1978. At the same time, he too has been appointed as member of Syura Council as well as a member of Islamic Research Centre at al-Azhar University.

Consequently, his merit and contribution in upholding righteous prestige of Islamic teaching has given al-Sya'rawi recognition from inside as well as outside of the country. Among of them are: Exceptional Egypt Governor award in 1976, Excellent Islamic Figure award from Dubai governance in 1977, Islamic Figure award in conjunction with the 1000 year anniversary celebration of al-Azhar University in 1983 and Special award from Egypt governance in 1988. Plus at the same year, he also received recognition award as Excellent Faith Figure in conjunction with the celebration of Egypt Missionary day.

### 3.0 Tafsir Al-Sya'rawi Introduction

The tafsir is entitled as Tafsir al-Sha'rawi to give an honour towards the author. In the beginning, most of the content are the essence of his lecture for 16 years in spreading da'wah from before and after invited as special guest in a television show '*Nur 'Ala Nur*'.<sup>43</sup> published by Ahmad Farraj<sup>44</sup>. This tafsir was organized by a distinguished bureau operated by Muhammad al-Sinrawi and Abd al-Waris al-Dasuqi whom were al-Sha'rawi disciples. It is published by Akhbar al-Yawm publisher in 1991 after being revised on authenticity of sources and takhrij hadith by Prof. Dr. Ahmad 'Umar Hashim that is a deputy rector of al-Azhar University at that time<sup>45</sup>.

Although al-Sha'rawi interpreted the whole al-Quran verses<sup>46</sup>, yet this tafsir al-Sha'rawi published by Akhbar al-Yawm only covered 23 volumes where it started from the first Surah

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> During his first episode, Al-Sha'rawi explained the topic *Qada' wa Qadar* and *Af'al al-'Ibad* using interesting style of language and this has attracted the interest of listener and audience who was following the lecture in live. Although it was a discussion that is academically in its topic, yet the comprehension and knowledge in understanding Al-Qur'an debate has given him advantages to describe meaning and suitable examples that suits the society at that time.

<sup>44</sup> Rola Muhammad Ahmad Husin (2000), "*Manhaj Sheikh Muhammad Mutawalli Al-Sha'rawi fi Al-Qur'an al-Karim*" (The Methods of *Sheikh Muhammad Mutawalli Al-Sha'rawi* in al-Quran Interpretation), (Dissertation of Fiqh & Law Faculty at Ali-Bayt University, Jordan), p. 23.

<sup>45</sup> Al-Sha'rawi (1991), Tafsir al-Sha'rawi, j. 1, Qaherah: Akhbar al-Yawm, p. 4. See too Muhammad 'Ali 'Iyazi (t.t), al-Mufasssirun Hayatuhum wa Manahajuhum, Tehran: Muassasah al-Taba'ah wa al-Nashr, p. 268.

<sup>46</sup> The remaining Surah that was not published by AKhbar al-Yawm publisher is still kept in nadir collection Arab Saudi governance library. See <http://www.islamweb.net/fatwa/index.php?page=showfatwa&Option=FatwaId&Id=556>. 30 January 2013.

(Surah al-Fatihah) until the sixty two Surah verse 11 (Surah al-Jumu'ah). Meanwhile, 30<sup>th</sup> juzu' was published separately under Dar al-Rayah<sup>47</sup> publisher with a total of 680 pages.

#### 4.0 Writing and Interpretation Methodology Analysis

Through early observation, the author find out Shaykh Muhammad Mutawalli al-Sha'rawi arranged tafsir according to the methodology used by the previous Islamic scholar whereby he started with 39 pages of introduction that discussed his inspiration to produce this tafsir as well as several aspects ulum al-Quran amongst of it is nuzul al-Quran<sup>48</sup>.

Other than that, the application of tahlili methodology is also realised in each proposed debate. He started with each verse of al-Quran interpretation based on surah arrangement and explained surah meaning, words meaning as well as *munasabat* with the former surah. Then, he described verse meaning by realising correlation with related al-Quran verses as well as Prophet P.B hadith and the companion athar.<sup>49</sup>

Interpreting verse or verses cluster, al-Sha'rawi explained using detailed language perspective. Description in terms of grammatical and style of language are always observed in every verse. This is clearly indicate his expertise in Arabic language aspect. When we observe in overall, mostly al-Sha'rawi followed previous mufassir methodology such as Shaykh Muhammad 'Abduh, Rashid Redha and Sayyid Qutb<sup>50</sup>. Through author observation, al-Sha'rawi had tried to propose his own approach in preaching the society towards Islam. Based on methodology of previous mufassir, al-Sha'rawi modified latest approach in his interpretation which is by using scientific *al-'Ilmi al-Naqli al-Ijtima'i* approach in describing al-Quran verses in which has elements of Divine Science, Social Science and Natural Science<sup>51</sup>.

Scientific *al-'Ilmi al-Naqli al-Ijtima'i* methodology that was proposed by him is a revision and comprehension of him regarding traditional as well as current academic. He also took the application current scientific discovery approach (al-'Ilmi) upon al-Quran verses (al-Naqli) to be translated in society application context (Ijtima'i). There is a need to be known, scientific concept of etymology and terminology in this study must not be restricted as only an

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<sup>47</sup> Al-Sha'rawi (2008), Juzu' 'Ammah, Qaheerah: Dar al-Rayah.

<sup>48</sup> Al-Sha'rawi (1991), *op. cit.*, p. 1- 39.

<sup>49</sup> Muhammad 'Ali 'Iyazi (t.t), *op. cit.*, h. 270-271.

<sup>50</sup> Al-Sha'rawi (1991), *op. cit.* Ibid. 271.

<sup>51</sup> Yahaya Jusoh (2007), *Pendidikan Falsafah Sains Al-Quran*, (Philosophy of Al-Quran Science Education) Penerbit Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, pp. 19-21.

experimental science research. As mentioned before, it involved all science operation for instance in the work of *Rasail Ikhwan al-Safa* (10<sup>th</sup> century of Masihi), science has been divided to three general categories which are<sup>52</sup>;

- i. Propaedeutic Science
- ii. Islamic Law and Religious Science
- iii. Philosophical Science

Propaedeutic Science has been divided into nine distinguished fields. Among of it are reading, writing, business, measurement, agriculture, biography and history. Meanwhile Islamic Law and Religious Science have been divided into six. This science is equal to the religious knowledge as being comprehended currently. While philosophical science is divided into four main parts which are; (a) mathematical propaedeutic, (b) logical, (c) natural science and (d) natural metaphysic (natural theology). This is evidently indicated that Islamic science tradition is unlimited to the aspect of *al-Kawniyyah* only, but encompassing the whole knowledge debate as described before<sup>53</sup>.

Science also has been defined as discovered knowledge via scientific methodology. In modern science context, the methodology is basically considered as the only empirical and mathematical approach. Even though a few scholars did not agree with this classification, yet author preferred to be based on Koestler opinion<sup>54</sup>. For example, he has revealed the fact about approach variety in scientific methodology (such as via dream, inspiration and mystical practice which is the non-scientific approaches) whereby has been applied by science figures in the modern science progress. Even though if we observed carefully, this recent scientific methodology terminology has only emphasized four intellectual activities: (i) Observation, (ii) Generalisation, (iii) Description and (iv) Prediction.

Whereas, if we examine via early civilization tradition especially Islamic civilization, empirical, mathematical and logical methodology concepts are a part or proportion of Islamic academic elements<sup>55</sup>.

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<sup>52</sup> Franz Rosenthal (1965), *op. cit.*, p. 55.

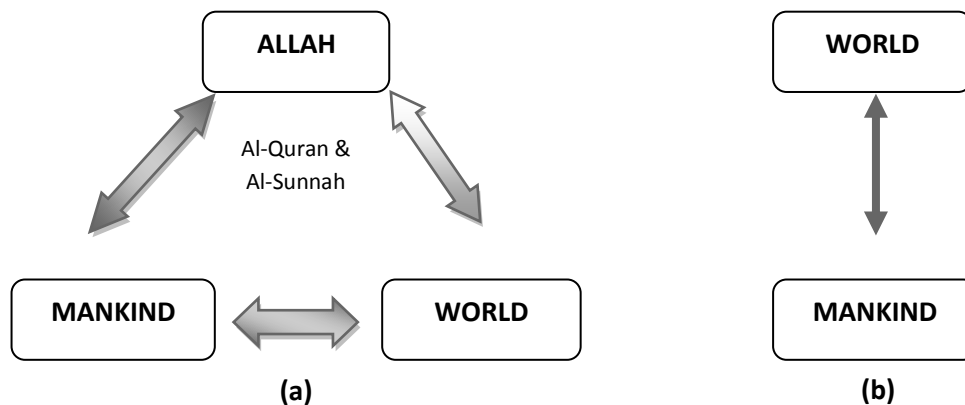
<sup>53</sup> Hairudin Harun (2007), *Daripada Sains Yunani Kepada Sains Islam* (From Greece Science to Islamic Science ), c. 3, Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya, p. 6.

<sup>54</sup> [Arthur Koestler](#) (1990), *The Sleepwalkers: A History of Man's Changing Vision of the Universe*, United Kingdom: Penguin Book, p. 532.

<sup>55</sup> This situation has been debated critically by George Saliba in his work that discussed how Islamic science has become a foundation towards science splendour in Europe (Renaissance). See George Saliba (2007), *Islamic Science and the Making of the European Renaissance*, Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, p. 1-40.

Principal techniques or methodologies of Islamic science discussed methodology variety that allows human acquire reality information. Islamic scientific methodology also recognized non-empirical methodology such as dream and gnostic methodology or *kahsf* as alternative scientific methodology. It is once practised by renown scientists such as Ibn Sina who doing *i'tikaf* or meditating to pursue inspiration in order to solve science problem. Then, he also applied praying methodology as a scientific methodology and then meditating<sup>56</sup>. Here, we can comprehend that Islam is integral within the application scope and the adaptation.

Hence, it can be concluded that al-Sha'rawi approach in his interaction with contemporary academic while interpreting al-Quran is a latest approach. This matter is a basic principal that he upholds as he tries to islamically reforming the society as well as revising contemporary knowledge so that the society will be able to comprehend al-Quran essence based on current progress. In other ways, he placed revealed knowledge as the foundation in deriving scientific element application to comprehend al-Quran. The figure below shows two contemporary science model.



**Figure 1.0** Basic entity of (a) framework of *tawhidic* and (b) framework of non- *tawhidic*

Within this *tawhidic* framework, there are two entities which are al-Quran and Prophet P.B.U.H Sunnah. Both entities are acceptable by the Muslims as reference and main resources of knowledge which gives guideline and life rules either individually or collectively. Through this model science we acquire *tawhidic* science characteristic with the essence of al-Quran in developing epistemology and methodology as well as science activity. Therefore based on these entities, al-Sha'rawi try to apply the contemporary scientific element while interpreting al-Quran for comprehensive public interest.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*, p. 7.

## 5.0 Interpretation Analysis

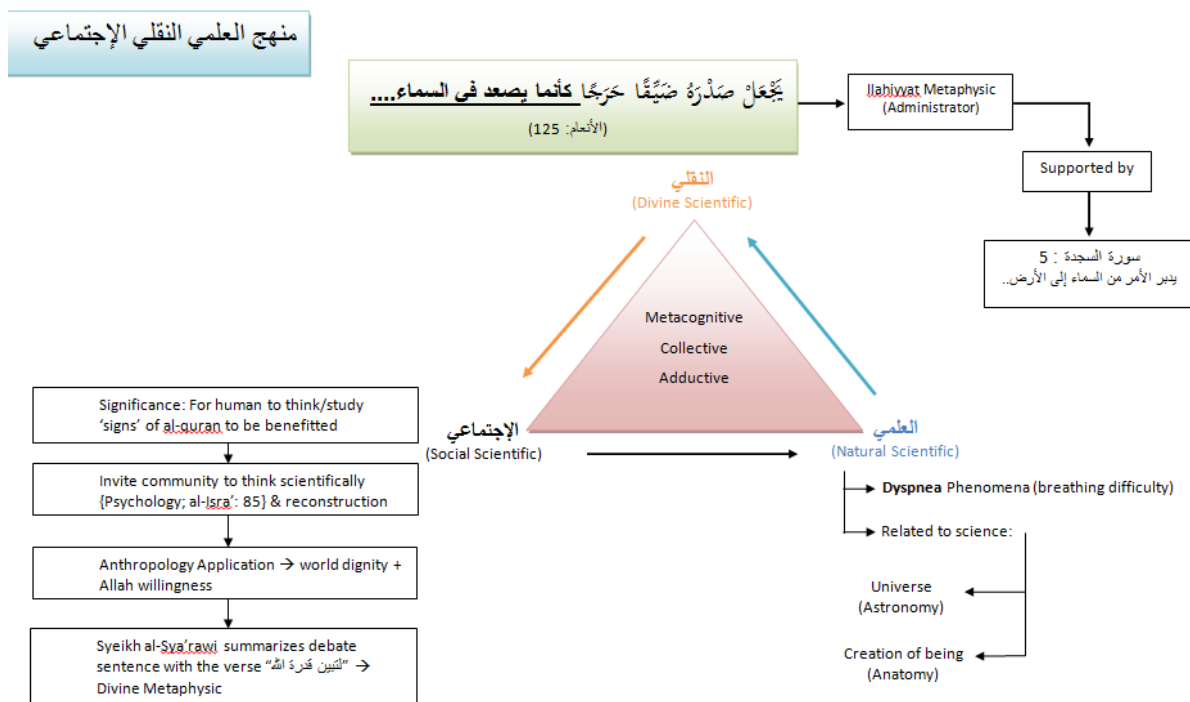
When al-Sha'rawi interpret Surah al-An'am verse 125 :

وَمَنْ يُرِدْ أَنْ يُضِلَّهُ يَجْعَلْ صَدْرَهُ ضَيِّقًا حَرَجًا كَأْتَمَّا يَصْعَدُ فِي السَّمَاءِ ۖ

Meaning: “those whom He willeth to leave straying, He maketh their breast close and constricted, as if they had to climb up to the skies.”

Surah al-An'am (6): 125

When al-Sha'rawi interpret this verse, in the beginning he also used former mufassir approach which are application of etymology and terminology in each word from the verse. Yet, what is interesting from his interpretation methodology is from the methodology dimension and correlation approach of each verse with related scientific element discipline. In short, the author summarized his interpretation based on figure 2.0 belows:



**Figure 2.0.** description of scientific application element in tafsir al-Sha'rawi

*Firstly*, according to the language perspective on the early interpretation after each word description<sup>57</sup>, al-Sha'rawi explained the phrase ‘those whom He willeth to leave straying’ by Allah is just like ‘their breast close and constricted, as if they had to climb up to the skies’.

<sup>57</sup> Al-Sha'rawi (1991), *Tafsir al-Sha'rawi*, j. 7, Qaherah: Akhbar al-Yawm, p. 2932.

He described this matter according to natural scientific perspective (I'jaz 'Ilmi) which is by relating it with Dyspnea phenomena (breathing difficulty) such as scientific scholar discovery that stated the implication upon this phenomena is painful hardship. This is because he interpreted the word (حرجا) as الحجز عن الفعل which means seperating an act<sup>58</sup>. He relates the word 'constricted' when someone is in the air, there will be imbalance; it is just like an existance of 'attraction' to the left, right, above and below which caused 'extreme' crowding. The affecting impact will cause 'seperation' with normal humanity stability which is oxygen deficiency<sup>59</sup>.

**Secondly**, al-Sha'rawi description by associating al-Quran evidences among of it are Surah Hud verse 12, Surah al-Nahl verse 127 as 'binder' and 'support' to verify Allah as the universe ruler. This element was encompassed in divine metaphysic. What was meant by metaphysic is numerous proverbs indicated by Allah in al-Quran are the subjects beyond human expectation. Yet, the knowledge growth encourage human continuously to study concealed 'wisdom'.<sup>60</sup>

**Thirdly**, based on al-Sha'rawi main methodology to Islamasize the society, the author think al-Sha'rawi tried to bring out the society from the outdated thinking for society development. Due to this proverb verse significance, we can observe the importance of knowledge mastery for Muslims in order to find out 'sign' incorporated in al-Quran domain. It is also to invite reflection by scientific approach. The approach that he used is a metocognitive, abductive as well as collective application methodology in the debate reconstruction in accordance with society context.

## **5.0 Conclusion**

In short, mufassir methodology discovery that uses different approach from former mufassir which gives benefits towards the Muslim particularly within recent intellectual growth context. This situation not only highlights al-Sha'rawi credibility as a contemporary Islamic scholar, it also placed Islam as a flexible and global religion in embracing current issues. Hence, the author has stand that research and investigation upon concealed wisdom in verse al-Quran are necessary to be continued and developed especially when observing recent scientific progress which has transformed numerous current human *welstanchaung*.

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<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.* p. 2932-2933.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*p. 2931.

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