

## **FIRE SYMBOLISM IN THE HOLY QUR'ĀN ANALYSIS OF CONTRARY CONNOTATION**

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### **Abstract**

The study of Symbolism not only helps to develop better understanding of the meanings of the Qur'ānic themes but also promotes Qur'ānic literature. This article analyses "fire" as a Qur'ānic symbol that represents a variety of literary and contextual meanings and interpret all its indications discussed in the precious text of Holy Qur'ān. The significance of fire symbolism can be evaluated from its usage in the Qur'ānic text more than any other symbol. It has a unique position in the Qur'ānic style to signify directly conflicting concepts. To assimilate opposing connotations of the "fire" in different situations, Zepetnek's model of ideological inclusion (theory of comparative literature) has been followed. This is a model that allows the acceptability of diversified literary and contextual meanings of a single term. This model is adapted by various researchers and its adaptability, appropriateness and practicability is overall accepted. Thus, this model is apt for verifying different meanings of the "fire" from the text of Holy Qur'ān like, cool and hot, war and peace (Safety), comfort and torment, creation, and annihilation of Jinn, sacrifice and punishment, guidance and misguidance, blessing and infliction, construction and destruction, life, and death. In view of this model, the Qur'ānic text having "fire" symbolism and its contrary connotation has been observed.

**Key words:** Fire, Symbolism, Contrary, Connotation, Zepetnek, Inclusion, Holy Qurān

### **1. Introduction**

The study of literature, either Qur'ānic or human, may be incomplete without illustrating or explaining symbolism. By dint of its non-scientific

subject-matter, literature is usually supposed to be focused on abstract ideas which need literary symbols to interpret their meanings. The study of symbolism, in this way, provides new avenues for a pluralistic analysis of symbols. Sometimes, the meanings of literary symbols are opposite to each other. This article examines contrary connotation of fire symbolism with reference to its usage in the text of the Holy Qur'ān. The variety of connotations in the Holy Qur'ān has made lexical meaning of this term almost insignificant.

Intrinsically, the fire is one of the four commonly known basic elements of universe (Fire, Water, Earth, and Air), the result of combustion, a chemical reaction. It consists of carbon dioxide, water vapour, oxygen, and nitrogen. Extrinsically, the fire provides modes of explanation in the most varied domains. It is thus a privileged phenomenon which can explain anything. It shines in Paradise and burns in Hell. It is cookery and it is catastrophe. It is a pleasure for the good and punishment for those who play with it. It is good and also bad.

The term “fire” has been used for nearly two hundred times in the Holy Qur'ān. The Fire as a symbol has two basic functions. At one hand, it elucidates intangible spiritual concepts, symbolic ideas, notions, and perceptions of human life as Abdullah says, “Our duty here is to prepare ourselves for the true life, the life that comes after this life. From this point of view there is an allegorical meaning to all experiences that we have while on earth. This life is the medium by which our future life is decided.”<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, it offers two conflicting meanings in different situations. One meaning of fire is an antonym to other meaning. Zepetnek’s approach (elaborated in section: 5) of ideological Inclusion relates contrary meanings of fire in a single unit.

## **2. Objectives**

- To demonstrate contrary connotation of Fire Symbolism
- To explore opposite meanings of “Fire” in the Holy Qur'ān.
- To examine the appropriateness of Zepetnek’s model of ideological inclusion.

## **3. Review of Literature**

Many scholars have tried to examine symbolism through choosing symbols from the text of the Holy Qur'ān. It is neither possible nor the

scope of this article to overview all or even majority of researchers who explored symbolism with reference to the textual information of the Holy Qur'ān. Their research is primarily focused on symbols like, water, food, trees, animals, birds, fire, and the parts of human body. Symbolic meanings of such elements from material world have been analysed from specific angle through keeping in view the comments of scholars either from Qur'ānic studies or from Arabic literature. That is why, symbolism could not be developed as an approach to analyze major Qur'ānic themes. However, some researchers' contribution is still admirable.

Rashidi (2011)<sup>2</sup> emphasizes the importance of Qur'ānic symbolism and suggests that whenever the words are insufficient to express religious facts, the symbols are the best tools of expression. Either there is Qur'ānic concept or the states of Ṣufism, or Gnosticism, symbolism facilitates in expressing the inexpressible facts or realities. Symbolism is supposed to be based on social or cultural values. The Islamic culture with its roots in Qur'ānic education has symbols which represent the concepts like, virtue, vice, purity, enlightenment, blessing, purgation, anger, pride, damnation, salvation, eternity, generosity, transcendentalism, etc. The symbols in Muslim societies have their own varieties particularly based on their local traditions. The use of symbols is an approach to abstract ideas, but their meanings may be different from society to society.

Rafe (2020)<sup>3</sup> introduces a system of precise index-based multiple patterns matching, which identifies Qur'ānic verses in any text and recognizes them. In order to ensure exactness, the symbols or signs of Arabic accent are completely removed from the input text. Then a unique process (set of rules) changes the detected threads into indicators and detects Qur'ānic verses by focusing on indicators consecutiveness. To increase the search speed or accelerate the function of this system, the stored threads in databases are decreased at a large scale. Such a technological system based on electronic symbols to detect or locate Qur'ānic verses in a text may help to understand the meaning of Qur'ānic symbols.

Sheikh and Dixit (2015)<sup>4</sup> discuss the medicinal plants mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān. According to this study, nearly 19 plant species belonging to 18 families have been mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān. These plants have special medicinal properties. The second part of this study is comparatively more important. In this part, the plants mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān are discussed which symbolize Qur'ānic concepts relating to human welfare and sacredness associated to Holy places, food, and

practices. The Holy plants such as fig, olive, date palm, and pomegranate, the fragrance plant such as zinger, basil and camphor and nutritious plants like, onion, garlic, and lentils. All plants mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān represent human welfare in one form or the other.

Schum (2018)<sup>5</sup> analyzes the bird symbolism, particularly focusing on Hoopoe (hudhud). This is perhaps the same bird (hudhud) mentioned in the Holy Qur'an who represented kingly authority of Hazrat Suleiman ('*Alaih As-Salām*) (Solomon). As a solar symbol, it has been associated with kingship, familial holiness, and wisdom. Its body is believed to possess powerful magical and medicinal properties. Schum claims that Hoopoe (hudhud) is the central character of Farid-ud-din 'Attar's (*Rahmat Allah 'alaih*) poem, "The Conference of the Birds". He argues that, instead of developing independent tradition of literature related to Hoopoe, the Muslim world drew upon and continued ancient and antique traditions.

Gasimova (2015)<sup>6</sup> examines the intertextual use of Qur'ānic text in the depiction of facial features, specifically in the Sufi symbolism of the eyes in classical Azeri Turkic Sufi poetry. At first, the article explores linguistic, historical, and geographical boundaries of this tradition. Then the manifestation of holy scripture is traced in human face. Gasimova's research reveals about fifty Qur'ānic themes discussed in the poetry of poets like, Imad-ud-din Nasimi (d. 820), Mirza Jihan Shah Haqiqi (d. 871) and Shah Ismail Khatai (D. 930) (*Rahmat Allah 'alaih*). Gasimova's argument on the symbolism of the eyes is focused on its different examples like eye-man, eye-heart, eye-murderer, eye-magician, eyelashes, eyelid, tears, and glances.

Achrati (2003)<sup>7</sup> explains hand and foot symbolism through examples from the history and the text of Holy Qur'ān. He opines that, symbolism of hand and foot have as long history as that of human being. They assumed different religious and literary forms. Achrati also explores in historical times, their ethnographic and mythological expressions. He also examines the way these symbolisms reorganized in the Qur'ānic text to fit strictly in the meaning of monotheism. He believes that, only a multidisciplinary approach can relate these symbols to linguistic traditions of the eastern and southern coasts of the Mediterranean Sea.

Zargar (2014)<sup>8</sup> interprets "Water" as a Qur'ānic symbol which stands for many different concepts. In the image of water, the reader can see life, knowledge, and purity, which reflects symbolic heritage of Islam. Water as a paradise represents pleasure and state of being free from material compulsions. Water as original beauty has several different

connotations like, unaffected (permanent shape), unaltered (permanent colour) and unbothered (not replaced with another compound). It is primary substance for life (basic element of life for animals and plants). The composing elements of body are earth, water, heat, and moisture. Water as knowledge (water in the dream signifies knowledge), Water as Unity in Multiplicity (two types of water, sweet and salt-water in similar form). Similarly, the water is also symbolically considered as ritual purifier, and symbol of selfless sympathy.

Elkouche (2014)<sup>9</sup> introduces the Camel with reference to the verse of Holy Qur'ān, "*Do they not look at the camels, how they are made*"<sup>10</sup> The symbolic description of camel and its possibility to pass through the eye of a needle, apparently a metaphorical expression, has been a subject of controversy regarding its symbolic interpretations or exact meaning. Elkouche has discussed it along with Qur'ānic imagery. In the Holy Qur'ān it is declared,

*"To those who reject our signs and treat them with arrogance, no opening will there be of the gates of heaven, nor will they enter the garden, until the camel can pass through the eye of the needle: such is our reward for those in sin"*<sup>11</sup>

Elkouche, interprets the image of the camel and the eye of the needle, and concludes his argument that the entry of unbelievers in the paradise is as difficult as the entry of camel into the eye of needle.

Hassan (2014) describes symbolic significance of food. He suggests that eating is a matter of faith in Islam. It has four different aspects. At first, the food is either *ḥalāl* (lawful) or *ḥarām* (unlawful). The Muslims are supposed to avoid unlawful food. The second aspect is fasting in the Holy month of Ramaḍān (Ramazan). Third aspect is the slaughtering of sheep during Ḥajj and Eid-ul-Aḍha. And the fourth is, expiation (*kaffārah*), by which the Muslims compensate for their unfasted days in Ramaḍān. The slaughtering of sheep has greater symbolic importance. It is an acknowledgement of the unique sacrifice of Hazrat Ibrahim (*'Alaih As-Salām*) who opted to sacrifice his son. The expiation (*kaffārah*) is symbolically attached to social harmony. Since freeing a slave is not possible, feeding the poor and clothing them are good options.

Mentak (2014)<sup>13</sup> analyzes the Tree as a Qur'ānic symbol. It is an interesting image which is not focused by majority of readers. The tree in the Holy Qur'ān is used to represent some concept, idea, or way of

life. A positive concept is signified by good tree and negative idea by bad tree as mentioned in the Qur'ānic text.<sup>14</sup> The Lote tree, according to Mentak (2014) is symbolically used for extreme boundary. Nobody knows the nature of Lote tree which is near the garden of refuge (However it is not mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān). The tree also represents immortality,

*“But Satan whispered to him; he said, “O Ādam, shall I lead thee to the tree of eternity and to a kingdom that never decays?”<sup>15</sup>*

The tree appears to be one of the major Qur'ānic symbols which stands for a variety of ideas. Keeping in view existing scholarship on different Qur'ānic symbols, fire symbolism needs to be explored from the text of Holy Qur'ān with contrary connotations.

#### **4. Fire Symbolism**

Symbolism, according to Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary, is “the use of symbols in art, literature, films etc. to represent ideas”. Michael Ferber expounds ‘the Fire’ as a symbol and suggests that its importance is based on its different forms like, “the sun and stars, lightning, volcanoes, sparks from int, burning logs on a hearth, candles, oil lamps, conagratons of a city or forest, that its symbolic meanings in literature are as manifold as the forms a ame may take.”<sup>16</sup> In this way, the fire as a symbol appears to be the rich material for discussion simultaneously in science, religion, society, and literature.

The meanings of “fire” according to Ferber “are not only manifold but sometimes ambiguous: what warms can burn; what illuminates can dazzle and blind. Fires are found on earth, in heaven, in hell, and in purgatory; they bring life and death; they can kill by burning up or by burning out.”<sup>17</sup> (The power of fire as suggested by Ferber, appears to be an exaggeration. It may represent Zoroastrians' perspective). The opposing connotation of the term “fire” in the text of the Holy Qur'ān suggests that the devices of rhetorical style of the sacred text aptly evoke emotions within the readers or audience like any work of literature composed to achieve specific effects. Therefore, it is important to explore the text of the Holy Qur'ān to highlight the contrary meaning of fire symbolism with different effects on readers in different situations.

The Fire may represent several ideas which sometimes appear to

be conflicting to each other. The fire stands for purification, renewal of life, energy, protection, visibility, destruction, the medium for conveying messages. It may symbolize spiritual power, transcendence, illumination, manifestation of holiness, the breath of life, inspiration, and enlightenment. “Fire and flame can both typify the heart. Both are ambivalent as being either divine or demonic, creative, or destructive; they are the means of devouring all created things to return them to original unity. Both represent truth and knowledge as consumers of lies, ignorance, illusion and death and as scorchers of the impure.”<sup>18</sup>

The fire is such a unique symbol which can be used to explain anything either religious or social. The opposite meanings of “the fire” make it unique. It is perhaps the only symbol simultaneously used for a variety of concept. In this way, the Holy Qur’ān confirms its meaningfulness, and the poets, writers and debaters exploit its connotations for their own specific purposes. Bachelard rightly observes, “In comparison with the intensity of fire, how slack, inert, static, and aimless seem the other intensities that we perceive. They are not embodiments of growth. They do not fulfil their promise. They do not become active in a flame and a light which symbolize transcendence.”<sup>19</sup>

## 5. Contrary Connotation of Fire Symbolism in the Holy Qur’ān

For the sake of juxtaposing conflicting or contrary meanings of “fire” in the text of the Holy Qur’ān, Zepetnek’s theory of comparative literature has been followed. It provides necessary framework for putting side by side two different meanings of “fire” in their specific context. Zepetnek’s model of comparative study is based on his assertion about comparison as “theoretical, methodological as well as ideological and political approach of inclusion”<sup>20</sup>. It has been followed by a number of researchers in comparative analysis of literary forms and terms.

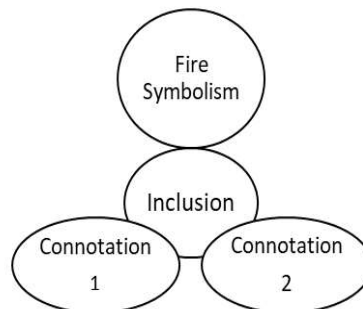


Figure: 1.0

Inclusion may be interpreted as a logical activity to facilitate two different meanings of one literary term and place them together under the umbrella of symbolism. However, the effectiveness of “Inclusion” as a model of research may depend on its existence as goal-oriented (to achieve particular goal), reciprocal (shared by both sides), equality of both participants, objective analysis, and retention of individual position by both participants (words being juxtaposed). As fire symbolism is a literary term, its two contrasting meanings, if placed side by side, will have impact on its readers more than any other literary interpretation of the text of Holy Qur’ān.

### 5.1. Cool and Hot

The fire denotes two different conditions opposing to each other. Although the qualities (adjectives) cool and hot have contrasting meanings yet they are represented by a single term, “Fire”. In poetry, the poetic license allows a poet to give new meanings to existing words under the umbrella of symbolism. Similarly, the study of Qur’ānic text as a literature helps to understand symbolic meanings of fire with a conflict. In the Holy Qur’ān, the fire represents “cool” as translated by Abdullah Yusuf Ali,

*“O Fire! be thou cool, and (a means of) safety for Abraham!”<sup>21</sup>*

Symbolically the fire has been divided into two opposing types, the fire of Allah (cool on Ibrahim) and the fire of Nimrod, they said: *“Burn him.”<sup>22</sup>*

The fire is supposed to be hot enough to burn,

*“Those who reject our Signs, We shall soon cast into the Fire: as often as their skins are roasted through, We shall change them for fresh skins, that they may taste the penalty: for God is Exalted in Power, Wise.”<sup>23</sup>*

The statements *“Burn him”* and *“Be thou cool”* may be semantically opposite but the symbol (fire) representing both ideas simultaneously shows incomparable literary grandeur of the Qur’ānic style. It presents opposing concepts in such a way that their presence becomes interdependent. Although the Holy Qur’ān is neither a book of



literature nor it is supposed to be a literary composition, yet the use of figurative language makes it appealing to human emotions more than any literature. Zepetnek's model of ideological inclusion (Figure 1.0) provides necessary guidelines for juxtaposing the terms Cool and Hot and unites them in the body of the fire.

### 5.2. War and Peace (Safety)

War and Peace are apparently opposite situations. It appears to be surprising if the opposites are represented by a single term. Such an ideological inclusion as suggested by Zepetnek (Figure 1.0) may be possible only through literary symbolism. The fire symbolism in the text of the Holy Qur'ān may represent war and peace simultaneously. The Qur'ānic text at one hand asserts,

*“Amongst them we have placed enmity and hatred till the Day of Judgment. Every time they kindle the fire of war, God doth extinguish it; but they (ever) strive to do mischief on earth. And God loveth not those who do mischief.”*<sup>24</sup>

On the other hand, the fire gives the message of peace and safety. The Qur'ānic statement emphasizes,

*“O Fire! be thou cool, and (a means of) safety for Abraham!”*<sup>25</sup>

The fire as a symbol represents opposite concepts and provides conditions for their juxtaposition.

### 5.3. Light and Darkness

Fire symbolism appears in the text of the Holy Qur'ān more than any other literary device. It seems to be a tool to represent opposite phenomenon. The terms, light, and darkness may have many connotations and their interpretations may lead to completely opposite directions. However, the fire as a symbol, may represent both terms and pave the way for establishing a link or conceptual connection through Zepetnek's model of ideological inclusion (Figure 1.0). The Qur'ānic text clearly supports this assumption,

*“Their similitude is that of a man who kindled a fire; when it lighted all around him, God took away their light and left them in utter darkness. So, they could not see.”<sup>26</sup>*

The fire illuminates the area where it is kindled. At the same time, it represents darkness (hell),

*“Of those who reject faith the patrons are the evil ones: from light they will lead them forth into the depths of darkness. They will be companions of the fire, to dwell therein (Forever).”<sup>27</sup>*

#### **5.4. Comfort and Torment**

Ease and luxury are supposed to offer great temptation for human being. The torment on the other hand is hardly welcomed until a serious issue or noble cause may exist behind it. The term “fire” may represent both conditions under the umbrella of Qur’anic symbolism. The “fire” suggests its meaning as comfort, relief or well-being as stated in the Holy Qur’ān, *“And have you seen the fire that you ignite? Is it you who produced its tree or are We the producer?”<sup>28</sup>* The fire producing tree is perhaps a reference to such trees which produce fire if two of their pieces are rubbed together. Before the creation of matchsticks such trees (commonly grown in Arabian desert) could have served as matchsticks. The fire gives comfort in cold weather. It is used to cook meal and keep human body warm.

Similarly, the fire is used to denote the pain, suffering, or torment. The Holy Qur’ān affirms that those who do not believe in the day of judgement or reward, *“The Day they will be tormented over the Fire. (And will be told), “Taste your torment. This is that for which you were impatient.”<sup>29</sup>* Although the concepts of comfort and torment are mutually conflicting, yet their symbolic meaning provides necessary justification for their association in Zepetnek’s model of thematic inclusion (Figure 1.0). It is perhaps the use of symbolism which makes the style of Qur’anic text a rich source of inspiration equally for readers and researchers of linguistics and literary stylistics.

#### **5.5. Creation and Annihilation of Jinn**

The term “fire” in the text of the Holy Qur’ān has been cited for

more than once, as a raw material for the creation of Jinn. One of the verses of the Holy Qur'ān declares in first person (we), *“And the jinn We created before, of intensely hot fire.”*<sup>30</sup> The second description is in third person (he), *“And He created the jinn of a flame of fire.”*<sup>31</sup> However, third description is in Iblis's words, *“I am better than him. You created me from fire and created him from clay.”*<sup>32</sup> In the light of Qur'ānic verses, El-Zein elaborated the composition of jinn, *“It is characterized by a brilliant flame of very high intensity mixed with smoldering wind and has a special Arabic name, mārij, which means “mixed with”. It is almost as if the jinn were composed of hell itself or are a living hell.”*<sup>33</sup>

The fire also represents Annihilation of Jinn. The obliteration of jinn is cited in the Holy Qur'ān along with human being.

*“And if We had pleased, We would certainly have given to every soul its guidance, but the word (which had gone forth) from Me was just: I will certainly fill hell (Fire) with the jinn and men together.”*<sup>34</sup>

The fire also signifies eternal dwelling place for misleading Jinn. The Qur'ānic text confirms,

*“And on the day when He shall gather them all together: O assembly of jinn! you took away a great part of mankind. And their friends from among the men shall say: Our Lord! some of us profited by others and we have reached our appointed term which Thou didst appoint for us. He shall say: The fire is your abode, to abide in it, except as Allah is pleased; surely your Lord is Wise, Knowing.”*<sup>35</sup>

The connotation of fire as a material for the creation and annihilation of jinn shows that the opposites can be united (Figure 1.0) only through symbolism.

## 5.6. Sacrifice and Punishment

The fire as a symbol offers contrasting connotations like sacrifice and Punishment. Sacrifice is a voluntary act (positive in meaning) but punishment is a penalty (negative in meaning). Sacrifice is “an act of

giving up something especially for the sake of someone or something else or something offered as a religious act.”<sup>36</sup>, Punishment, on the other hand, is “the act of making a wrongdoer suffer: the state of being made to suffer for wrongdoing, or the penalty for a wrong or crime.”<sup>37</sup> The sacrifice is explained in the Holy Qur’ān, They said:

*“God took our promise not to believe in an messenger unless He showed us a sacrifice consumed by Fire (From heaven).”  
Say: “There came to you messengers before me, with clear Signs and even with what you ask for: why then did you slay them, if you speak the truth?”*<sup>38</sup>

The fire, for punishment, is repeatedly used in the text of the Holy Qur’ān. An explicit example of fire as a punishment is,

*“They will want to get out of the Fire, but they will not be able to. They will have an everlasting punishment.”*<sup>39</sup>

Similarly, the Qur’ānic verse states,

*“They will say, ‘Our Lord, give him who brought this on us double the punishment in the Fire!’”*<sup>40</sup>

Although the meanings of sacrifice and punishment are contrasting to each other yet through following Zepetnek’s model (Figure 1.0) their link under fire symbolism, an umbrella term, could be established.

### **5.7. Guidance and Misguidance**

The guidance and misguidance are two parallel but opposite meanings of the fire. Guidance “is the act or function of guiding; leadership; direction.”<sup>41</sup> Misguidance, however, “to guide wrongly; misdirect.”<sup>42</sup> The fire has been used to represent guidance in Qur’ānic text,

*“When he (Musā) saw a fire and said to his family, ‘Wait here. I can make out a fire. Maybe I will bring you a brand from it or will find guidance there.’”*<sup>43</sup>

The fire shows Allah Almighty’s intention to lead His prophet to

Himself. The fire is an introductory sign through which the journey of the prophet Musa (*'Alaih As-Salām*) on the path of prophethood is started. Another connotation of the fire is misguidance. The leaders of the people call them to fire. They mislead them to wrong path. The Holy Qur'ān declares,

*"We made them leaders, summoning to the Fire, and on the Day of Rising they will not be helped."*<sup>44</sup>

At one hand, the fire guides to prophethood and ultimately taking responsibility to guide the people, on the other hand, the fire stands for misguidance which ultimately leads to hell or eternal damnation. It conforms with Zepetnek's model (Figure 1.0).

### 5.8. Blessing and Infliction

The fire signifies concurrently the concepts of blessing and infliction. Blessing is "a thing conducive to happiness or welfare."<sup>45</sup> Infliction is however, "something (such as punishment or suffering) that is inflicted (to cause something unpleasant to be endured)."<sup>46</sup> In the light of lexical interpretation of both terms, their meanings emerging from fire symbolism can be explored in the text of the Holy Qur'ān. The Qur'ānic description of blessing through fire symbolism can be highlighted,

*"But when he came to the (fire), a voice was heard: "Blessed are those in the fire and those around: and glory to God, the Lord of the worlds."*<sup>47</sup>

Similarly, the meaning of fire as infliction is clearly mentioned in the Qur'ānic verses,

*"And what can make you know what is the Crusher? It is the fire of God, (eternally) fueled, which mounts directed at the hearts. Indeed, Hellfire will be closed down upon them, in extended columns."*<sup>48</sup>

The unique style of Holy Qur'ān allows varying ideas to be united. Zepetnek's model of comparative analysis (Figure 1.0), in this way, appears to be an appropriate research technique in juxtaposing different connotations of fire with reference to the text of the Holy Qur'ān.

### 5.9. Construction and Destruction

The fire is either used for baking bricks to be used in the construction of buildings or to burn the bricks or stones to be nothing but ashes, Cinders, or Embers. The fire makes the bricks hard and stronger enough to construct buildings. The fire in this case has symbolic as well as real value. The Holy Qur'ān states,

*“Pharaoh said: O Chiefs! no god do I know for you but myself: therefore, O Haman! light me a (kiln to bake bricks) out of clay, and build me a lofty palace, that I may mount up to the god of Moses (Musa): but as far as I am concerned, I think (Musa) is a liar.”<sup>49</sup>*

Another angle to examine the fire is its destructive nature. It is perhaps one of the reasons behind choosing the word “fire” for all types of hell. The fire as a symbol of destruction can be highlighted in many chapters of Holy Qur'ān. The holy Qur'ān states,

*“But if you do not - and you will never be able to - then fear the Fire, whose fuel is men and stones, prepared for the disbelievers.”<sup>50</sup>*

The stones in the fire have symbolic importance. Stones are companions to human being in constructing buildings as human houses. When the houses of disbelievers are transformed into house of fire the stones cannot be dissociated. Only through ideological inclusion (Figure 1.0) the link of constructive and destructive natures of fire can be established.

### 5.10. Life and Death

It appears to be more interesting but complicated nature of the fire to represent life or means of life at one hand and death or extermination of the means of life on the other. The fire out of green tree shows the presence fire in life. The plants are living organism and production of fire through rubbing two parts of a tree (specific fire producing tree) indicates the existence of fire along with water. The tree functions as a matchstick. The stoves kindled with that fire are used to cook meal and other activities of life. The Holy Qur'ān asserts,

*“The same Who produces for you fire out of the green tree, when behold! you kindle therewith (your own fires).”<sup>51</sup>*

The second aspect of fire symbolism is death. The fire-whirl can be deliberated as one of the best examples. It is developed when the wind is created by wildfire which may turn into a whirlwind of fire. It usually kills through burning and destroys almost everything in its surroundings including basic means of life. The Holy Qur’ān explains,

*“Would one of you like to have a garden of palm trees and grapevines underneath which rivers flow in which he has from every fruit? But he is afflicted with old age and has weak offspring, and it is hit by a whirlwind containing fire and is burned. Thus, does God make clear to you [His] verses that you might give thought.”<sup>52</sup>*

The destruction or death of the means of survival through fire is symbolically discussed to interpret the significance of life after death. The situation of a person who devotes his life for the riches of this world is like that old man whose source of income is turned to ashes too late in life to create a new one. The opposites have been associated through ideological inclusion (Figure 1.0).

## **6. Discussion**

The study of fire symbolism with reference to the textual information from the Holy Qur’ān is primarily focused on three basic points, i.e., contrary connotation, fire as a Qur’ānic symbol, and Zepetnek’s model of ideological inclusion. Contrary connotation can be regarded as a fundamental and one of the major defining features of symbolism. While choosing concrete examples for abstract ideas the writer is usually interested in keeping in view the reader’s need, intellectual capacity, and level of motivation. The reader’s need, either physical, social, or spiritual, motivates him to explore the allegorical meaning of concrete symbols. His intellectual and motivational levels determine the extent to which the reader will pursue the meaning of symbols to comprehend the writer’s real message.

Contrary or conflicting meanings of fire are interesting but their interpretation on one page of the text is really challenging. If something

is good at the moment, it can hardly be declared bad at the same time. If one concept is signified by one word its opposite concept must be shown by another term. Even if one word is used for a single idea it may also have other meanings, but its own negation is apparently impossible. The Fire can stand even for its direct opposite. It makes it unique in the world of symbolism. It stands for heat and at the same time for coldness, light, and darkness, and even good and bad. The connotation of fire can be classified into many groups and surprisingly every group at least two words represent “fire” but their meanings are mostly contrary to each other.

The fire as a Qur’ānic symbol has been extensively explored. The fire has been used for a variety of meanings. In the text of the Holy Qur’ān, it promotes the concept of enlightenment at one hand and represents damnation on the other. It stands for creation and also for destruction. It disseminates simultaneously, the idea of happiness and also anger, construction and destruction etc. Its overall meaning, almost dominating a major part of Qur’ānic text is punishment. The use of the term “fire” for about two hundred times in the Holy Qur’ān confirms the status of “the fire” as a Qur’ānic symbol.

To establish the link of two opposing ideas with their mother term “the fire” Zepetnek’s model of comparative study has been followed. The appropriateness of Zepetnek’s model of ideological inclusion appears to have been confirmed. It has been established that this model can be followed in any comparative study of abstract ideas, including religious, social, political, and literary themes. Previously, the model has been followed mostly in literary studies, however, it meets necessary criteria for research methodology appropriate in Qur’ānic, biblical, Buddhist, and mystical studies.

## **7. Conclusion**

Fire Symbolism in the Holy Qur’ān: An Analysis of Contrary Connotation, is the study fire symbolism used in the text of the Holy Qur’ān. An analysis of Contrary connotation of fire symbolism through dividing it into ten opposing pairs like, Cool and Hot, War and Peace (Safety), Light and Darkness, Comfort and Torment, Creation and Annihilation of Jinn, Sacrifice and Punishment, Guidance and Misguidance, Blessing and Infliction, Construction and Destruction, and Life and Death, shows that, “the fire” is a major symbol which overwhelmingly dominates



the text of Holy Qur'ān. Basic objectives of this study have been achieved. It can be safely concluded that the style of the Holy Qur'ān exclusively accommodates the contraries under the umbrella of symbolism.

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