



## Examination of Intellectual Metaphor in Tafsir Kashshaf by Zamakhshari

<sup>1</sup>Hassan Rezaee Haftador, <sup>2</sup>Gholam Abbass Rezaee Haftador, <sup>3</sup>Somayyah Barzeen

<sup>1</sup>Hadith and Qur'anic Sciences Department, University of Tehran, Iran

<sup>2</sup>Arabic Language and Literature Department, University of Tehran, Iran

<sup>3</sup>Arabic Language and Literature Ph.D Student, University of Tehran, Iran

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### ABSTRACT

*Tafsir Kashshaf* is one of the most well-known sources of rhetorical exegeses. It aids in understanding the literary beauty and profound concepts of the Quran. The intellectual metaphor (*majaz 'aqli*) is among the rhetorical devices that Zamakhshari utilizes in his exegesis. In view of the paramount importance of intellectual metaphors in the Quran and the substantial role they assume in Quranic interpretation (*ta'wil*), especially in Mu'tazilah exegeses, the present study aims to examine various aspects of this concept including its definition, equivalent terms, examples in *Tafsir Kashshaf*, the significance of intellectual metaphors according to Zamakhshari as a Mu'tazilah exegete, and links (*'alaqah*) between intellectual metaphors and their senses. This research shows that Zamakhshari has interpreted many ambiguous (*mutashabih*) verses of the Quran in a figurative or metaphorical sense. He makes use of the terms "metaphorical attribution" (*isnad majazi*) and "metaphor in attribution" (*majaz dar isnad*) to indicate intellectual metaphors.

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## INTRODUCTION

Among the abundant variety of Quranic exegeses, *Tafsir Kashshaf* by Zamakhshari is distinctive in that it exposes the literary and rhetorical beauty of the Quran, endeavoring to demonstrate, in practice, the miraculousness of the Quran in terms of eloquence and rhetoric. Zamakhshari gives special consideration to intellectual metaphors (*majaz 'aqli*) as a rhetorical device. It is one of the rhetorical devices employed profusely in the Quran and performs an important role in presenting concepts in the Quran. According to Jurjani, the intellectual metaphor is a treasure among the riches of rhetoric (Jurjani, 1989:295).

The existence of metaphors in Arabic is undeniable. Taking a broad view, there is no conflict among ancient literary scholars and their successors in the belief that metaphors are part and parcel of the Arabic language as well as of the Quran. The only difference among them is that though ancient scholars did utilize or make references to the metaphor in their works, they did not make use of rhetorical terminology regarding this matter. Also, they did not define or delimit the concept of metaphor. However, scholars in later centuries have in fact discussed the concept in great detail.

The Mu'tazilah extensively utilized metaphors, especially intellectual metaphors, in their exegeses. As a Mu'tazilah exegete, Zamakhshari is no exception. He interpreted many verses that were antithetical to the Mu'tazilah principles figuratively, eschewing the apparent meanings of the text. Not only did he bring metaphors into service, he also made use of other rhetorical devices for his interpretations such as analogy (*tamthil*), imaginative representation (*takhyil*), metonym (*mushakilah*), and *laff wa nashr* (which is a rhetorical device similar to chiasmus) in order to achieve the aims of his school of thought (Sawi Juwayni, 1968:93-130). It must be noted that Zamakhshari was an exponent of Jurjani's principles of rhetoric. Zamakhshari practically demonstrated these principles in the exegesis of the Quran with the aim of drawing attention to its miraculousness. He discussed these principles and expanded on them in his works. He added to the body of knowledge regarding rhetoric in areas that Jurjani did not examine. Utilizing the views of Jurjani and complementing them with his own ideas, he examined aspects of literary analysis that go beyond Jurjani's rhetorical framework.

This descriptive-analytical article aims at examination of intellectual metaphors according to the views of Zamakhshari as a Mu'tazilah exegete in *Tafsir Kashshaf*. The questions of this research are as follows.

- Has Zamakhshari presented any new ideas on the subject of intellectual metaphors?
- What is the status of intellectual metaphors in Tafsir Kashshaf?

- What new links ('alaqah) between intellectual metaphors and their senses are discussed in Tafsir Kashshaf?

In order to understand the concept of intellectual metaphors as well as their significance in Tafsir Kashshaf, some basic explanations are required.

#### *Terminological definition of majaz:*

The root of the term *majaz* is "j, w, z". The original meaning of the word is conduit (Farahidi, vol. 2, 1990:164; Ibn Manzur, 1994:313; Jawhari, 1974:490; Qirwani, vol. 1, 2000:266; Ibn Athir, vol. 1, 1939:58). From the distant past, scholars understood the concept of *majazas* well as its significance and function in conveying meaning. Perhaps Aristotle was the first to define the meaning of metaphor as the transference of a name from one meaning to another (Aristotle, 1953:58). In the terminology of rhetoricians, a metaphor is a word that is used in a sense other than its main one. In this case, there must be a relationship or link between the main sense and the utilized sense (Jurjani, 1991:304-342; Khatib Qazwini, 2008:262; Sakaki, 1937:170; Taftazani, 1987: 353).

#### *Types of Metaphors:*

Rhetoricians classify *majaz* into two types as follows.

#### *Literal Metaphors:*

These are metaphors in which a word is used in a sense other than its original. There must be link between the word and the sense in which it is utilized as well as indications demonstrating that the main sense of the word is not intended (Fadili, 1997:208).

#### *Intellectual Metaphors:*

Intellectual metaphors are metaphors in which an action is attributed to something other than its true agent. In this case also, there must be a link between the word and the sense in which it is utilized as well as indications showing that the main sense of the word is not intended (Khatib Qazwini, 2008:98; Sakaki, 1937:185; Jurjani, 1989:227-8). This explanation is indicative of the difference between true and metaphorical attributions. Specifically, true attribution is attribution of an action to its true agent whereas metaphorical attribution signifies attribution of an action to an agent other than the true agent. In the case of the latter, indications must exist to demonstrate that the attribution is metaphorical (Jurjani, 1991:346-7). According to Taha Husayn, Jurjani was the first to discover intellectual metaphors (Taha Husayn, 1939:29). However, examination of books by scholars prior to Jurjani such as Sibawayh, Farra', Mubarrid, Ibn Fars, and Ibn Jinni shows that all have examples of this type of metaphor in their works (Sibawayh, vol. 1, 1938:169; Farra', vol. 2, 1998:15-6; Mubarrid, vol. 1, 1999: 79; Ibn Fars, 1977:368; and Ibn Jinni, vol. 3, 1998:198) though they have not explicitly stated the term *majaz 'aqli* (intellectual metaphor) to say nothing of the extensive discussions by Jurjani. Therefore, contrary to Taha Husayn's opinion, the intellectual metaphor is not an innovation of Jurjani. However, it must be said that he did label and expound on the idea, and differentiate between it and literal metaphors.

#### *Equivalent Terms:*

In books on rhetoric, various names are presented for the concept of *majaz 'aqli* including the following.

#### *Metaphor in Attribution (majaz dar isnad) or Metaphorical Attribution (isnad majazi):*

Zamakhshari was the first to utilize these terms for the intellectual metaphor (Zamakhshari, vol. 1, 2006:37). The reason for this naming is that this type of metaphor is mostly found in attributive relationships; for instance, the relationship between an action and its agent or a subject and its predicate (Ibn Ya'qub Maghribi, 1925:231).

#### *Metaphor in Affirmation (majaz dar ithbat) or Metaphor in Clause (isnad dar jumlah):*

Fakhr Razi gave this name to the concept (Razi, 1989:172). In this case, the word *ithbat* means affirmation or perhaps attribution. It does not mean "prove" as opposed to "deny" or "positive" as opposed to "negative," and therefore it does not indicate that this type of metaphor must be utilized in positive sentences.

#### *Relational Metaphor (majaz nisbi):*

This naming is based on the fact that this type of metaphor obtains in the area of relations between words not words themselves (Zamlakani, 1964:106).

*Combinational Metaphor (majaz tarkibi):*

Subki (Subki, vol. 1, 1925:230-1) elected this term due to the fact that this type of metaphor occurs in the combination of subjects and verbs in the active voice, subjects and predicates in Arabic nominative sentences, and other combinations (Ibn Ya'qub Maghribi, vol. 1, 1925:232).

*Intellectual Metaphor:*

This is the most well-known term for this concept. The reason for this naming is that in order to understand this type of metaphor, thought is required (ibid, 231). Perhaps the best term is metaphorical attribution or metaphor in attribution as stated by Zamakhshari since this designation clearly indicates the reality of this type of metaphor. The term both denotes that the rhetorical device in question is attributive and also that it is figurative. The other terms are somewhat vague.

**MATERIAL AND METHOD***Metaphorical Devices in the Mu'tazilah School:*

One of the most outstanding rhetorical characteristics of Mu'tazilah exegeses is that they have extensively utilized the concept of intellectual metaphor. For instance, they have metaphorically interpreted many ambiguous verses that seemed to be indicative of absolute determinism, physical attributes for God, or evil acts by God. The main reason the Mu'tazilah showed such consideration for rhetorical devices in general and metaphors in particular was to serve the objectives of their school of thought, i.e. to defend their views and beliefs (Qassab, vol. 1, 1985:347). They endeavored to attain an understanding of the Quran through rhetoric which distinctly differed from interpretations of other schools of thought, particularly the Mushabbahah, Jabriyyah, and Asha'irah. The introduction of *Tafsir Kashshaf* makes it clear that Zamakhshari showed special regard for not only rhetorical aspects of the Quran but interpretation of verses according to Mu'tazilah thought as well (Zamakhshari, vol. 1, 2006:17-8).

*Zamakhshari's Influence on the Intellectual Metaphor:*

In order to defend their views, the Mu'tazilah made use of various devices including the intellectual metaphor. The influence of this school upon the concept of intellectual metaphor, specifically in *Tafsir Kashshaf*, is discussed below.

*Consideration of Reason and its Effects on Intellectual Metaphor:*

Linguistic matters, rhetoric, and metaphors are not directly related to reason or logical principles; rather, they relate to the conventions of language. However, the Mu'tazilah have associated reason and related principles with all things, even linguistic matters. In their exegeses, they rigorously adhere to rational principles. In explanation, if the superficial sense of the text does not agree with rational principles, they deviate from the apparent meaning of the text and utilize ta'wil and figurative interpretation (Alam al-Huda, vol. 2, 1983:300). As a Mu'tazilah exeget, Zamakhshari has adopted the sole criterion of reason for his work since it is the belief of the Mu'tazilah that as defenders of Islam against opponents, they must draw on thought and rationales for explaining Quranic verses. In this regard he asserts that in matters of religion, one must walk under the banner of reason and must not be content with the sayings of others (Zamakhshari, 1994:46).

In several parts of his exegesis, he points out that he gave precedence to reason over Sunna and consensus of authorities (Zamakhshari, 2006, see interpretations of the following Quranic verses: 42:52, 34:13, and 12:111). In the exegesis of many Quranic verses, he acts as a polemicist thinker. "And the people of Moses made, after [his departure], from their ornaments a calf... (7:148)". For example, under the exegesis of the verse above, he declares the following: "One may ask why God declared that Moses's people made the statue whereas only Samiri had made it. There are two reasons. First, God attributed this to Moses's people since one of them had done it and that person lived among them. In the same manner, one might say that the Bani Tamim tribe said this or did that even though the speaker or performer was only a single individual among them. Moreover, they wanted him to build the statue and approved of this act. Therefore, you could say that they were in agreement in this regard. Second, the intent is that all of them elected it as their deity and worshiped it (Zamakhshari, vol. 2, 2006:120)".

As can be seen, like other Mu'tazilah exegets, Zamakhshari drew on the concept of intellectual metaphor when the superficial meaning of the text did not comply with reason (see also interpretations of 9:92, 52:32, 19:66, and 10:14 in Zamakhshari, 2006).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *Links between Intellectual Metaphors and Their Senses in Tafsir Kashshaf:*

In intellectual metaphors, the action is not attributed to the true agent but to something else. This other thing must have a kind of connection to the true agent of the act. This connection is called the link (*'alaqah*) of the intellectual metaphor (Suyuti, 2000:71). In his exegesis, Zamakhshari discussed these links; the new links he discussed are examined below.

### *Generality:*

Sometimes instead of attributing an action to the true agent, who is part of a larger group, the action is attributed to the whole group (Zamakhshari, 2006; see interpretations of verses 7:148 and 19:66). This concept is somewhat related to the synecdoche rhetorical device "So they hamstrung the she-camel and were insolent toward the command of their Lord... (7:77)".

Regarding interpretation of this verse, Zamakhshari has stated the following "In this verse, the act of hamstringing is attributed to all the people since they all desired it even though only some of them carried out the deed. In the same manner, one might say to a whole clan, "You did this," even though only one of them may have done the deed (Zamakhshari, 2006:94)".

### *Association:*

Sometimes instead of attributing an action to the true agent, it is attributed to something that is closely associated with the agent "Except his wife. We decreed that she is of those who remain behind (15:60)". Regarding the foregoing verse, Zamakhshari states: "One may ask why the angels attributed divine ordainment, which is specifically an act of God, to themselves and did not say (*qaddar allah* – God has ordained). The answer is that they are extremely close to God and no other possesses such proximity to Him. In a similar manner, a king's entourage may say, "We have established this policy" or "We commanded thus" even though the policymaker or issuer of commands is the king only. Thus, they make as if they are not discrete entities (Zamakhshari, 2006:454)".

### *Effect:*

Sometimes instead of attributing an action to the true agent, it is attributed to its effect "...so their transaction has brought no profit... (2:16)". On the preceding verse, Zamakhshari states the following "Making profit and suffering loss are attributable to merchants, not transactions or business. Therefore, it must be attributed to the merchants themselves (i.e. hypocrites). However, it is metaphorically attributed to the effect of the work merchants carry out, i.e. their transaction (Zamakhshari, 2006:66)". In this verse, the verb *rabihat* (to make profit) is attributed to transaction (the effect of the merchants' work), instead of the merchants themselves, who are the true agents.

### *Conclusion:*

The intellectual metaphor occupies a prominent place in Tafsir Kashshaf. In fact, it can be stated that Zamakhshari has utilized intellectual metaphors as a device to serve his Mu'tazilah beliefs. Usage of reason is one of the principles of the Mu'tazilah school, leading Zamakhshari to turn to the concept of intellectual metaphor in explanation of many Quranic verses which initially seemed contrary to reason. The innovations of Zamakhshari in *Tafsir Kashshaf* include new links for intellectual metaphors such as generality, association, and effect.

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