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The Noble Qur`an

36. Has the Qur`an been altered?

The popular opinion amongst the Shi`ite and Sunni scholars is that no alteration has taken place in the Qur`an, and the Qur`an that is in our hands today is the very same Qur`an that had been revealed to the Noble Prophet (s.a.w) – to the extent that not even a single letter or a word has been added to it or deleted from it.

Some distinguished Shi`ite scholars – ancient and recent – who have explicitly attested to this reality, are:

1. Sheikh Tusi, renowned as Sheikh al-Taifah, who has presented a lucid, explicit and conclusive discussion on this matter at the beginning of his famed commentary, al-Tibyan.
2. Sayyid Murtaza, one of the most celebrated 4th century (Hijri) scholars of the Twelve-Imam sect.
3. The Chief of the Traditionists, Muhammad b. 'Ali b. Babwaih al-saduq, while mentioning the beliefs of the Twelve-Imam sect, states: “Our belief is that no alteration has taken place in the Noble Qur`an.”
4. The distinguished commentator al-Tabrisi too, in the introduction of his commentary, has presented a vocal discussion in connection with this issue.
5. Kashif al-Ghita, one of the eminent later-generation scholars.
6. Muhaqqiq Yazdi, in his book al-'Urwatul Wuthqa, has reported the opinions of a great number of Shi`ite jurists regarding non-alteration of the Qur`an.
7. It has been reported that numerous other great scholars like Sheikh Mufid, Sheikh Baha`i, Qadhi Nurullah and other Shi`ite scholars also harboured this belief and opinion.

Preponderantly, great and celebrated Sunni scholars too hold this belief.

It should be pointed out that some Shi'ite and Sunni scholars of Hadith, whose knowledge with respect to the Noble Qur'an was deficient, have reported the occurrence of alteration in the Qur'an. Nevertheless, by means of explanations on the part of great scholars of both the sects, this false belief has been discarded.

Sayyid Murtazha, replying to the book al-Masail al-Tarablasiyat, says: "The veracity of the Qur'an is so evident that (the certainty of) it is similar to (the certainty of) the knowledge that we possess with respect to the well-known cities of the world, great historical events and popular books."

In the aforesaid example, can a person ever harbour doubts about the existence of cities like Makkah, Madinah, London or Paris, even though he may have never travelled to these cities? Can one ever deny the Mongol invasion of Iran, or the French Revolution, or for that matter World Wars I and II?

Why can one not deny the above? It is because all these have reached us as a result of successive transmissions and narrations. Similarly the case is similar with the verses of the Noble Qur'an and we shall discuss this topic further a little later.

If biased individuals have attributed this belief to the Shi'ites with the intention of sowing discord amongst the Shi'ites and Ahlus Sunnah, the books of great and celebrated Shi'ite scholars are sufficient to prove false their claims.

It is not strange that a person like Fakhr Razi, who is known to us as a person displaying a particular bias and partiality with issues relating to the Shi'ites, under the discussion pertaining to verse 9 of Suratul Hijr, says:

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ

"Surely, We have sent down the Reminder (the Qur'an) and surely, We (Ourselves) shall be its Guardian"

is evidence to prove false the claims of the Shi'ites that there has occurred alteration and addition and deletion in the Noble Qur'an!

It ought to be expressly stated that if his allusion is towards the great and renowned Shi'ite scholars and researchers, then it should be known that none of them have ever possessed such a belief and opinion; and if his allusion is towards a weak and an unauthentic view existing amongst the Shi'ites, a similar view is prevalent amongst the Ahlus Sunnah too – one, which is neither recognized by them nor by us.

The renowned researcher Kashif al-Ghita in his book Kashf al-Ghita declares:

لَا رَيْبَ أَنَّهُ (أَيُّ الْقُرْآنِ) مَحْفُوظٌ مِنَ النُّقْصَانِ بِحِفْظِ الْمَلِكِ الدِّيَّانِ كَمَا دَلَّ عَلَيْهِ
صَرِيحُ الْقُرْآنِ وَ إِيْجْمَاعُ الْعُلَمَاءِ فِي كُلِّ زَمَانٍ وَ لَا عِبْرَةَ بِنَادِرٍ.

“There is no doubt that the Qur`an has been protected from any reduction (and alteration) as a result of Allah's protection – as is indicated by the explicit statements of the Qur`an and the consensus of the scholars in every era; and any opposition (to this belief) by a handful of individuals carried no significance and authenticity.”¹

The history of Islam has seen numerous such inappropriate attributions, which only originate as a result of prejudice. We do know that the cause of some of these misunderstandings have been due to the enemies, who used to create such issues in an effort to ensure that no unity is established within the ranks of the Muslims.

The state of affairs reached such a stage that the renowned author from the Hijaz, 'Abdullah 'Ali al-Qasimi, in his book al-Sira', while criticizing the Shi'ites, says:

الشيعية هم أبداً أعداء المساجد و لهذا يقل أن يشاهد الضارب في طول بلادهم
و غرضها مسجداً.

“The Shi'ites have always been the enemies of mosques and for that reason if a person were to travel the length and breadth of Shi'ite cities, he would come across very few mosques!”

Reflect hard! For here in the Shi'ite inhabited cities we tire ourselves counting the mosques which are found in the streets, bazaars, lanes and even by-lanes and at times there are so many mosques in one place that some people clamour out: Enough! Let us focus on other things too. Despite this we find this renowned author asserting things, which, for those of us residing in these regions, only serve to evoke laughter, and so what Fakhr Razi has ascribed to us should not cause too great an astonishment.²

37. How is the Qur`an a miracle?

In connection with the greatness of the Noble Qur`an, we begin by quoting a few statements from some of the renowned personalities and also from those individuals, who have been accused of standing up to combat the Qur`an.

1. 'Abu al-'Ala Mu'arri (accused of attempting to challenge the Qur`an) says: “It is a matter of consensus amongst all the people – Muslims and non-Muslims alike – that the book that Muhammad (a.s) has brought, has subjugated the intellects and till today, no one has been able to bring forth the like of it. The

style of this book does not tally with any of the styles that have been prevalent amongst the Arabs, such as oratory, 'rajaz'3 poetry, rhymed prose of the clergy etc.

The superiority and the attraction of this book is of such high calibre that if one verse from it is placed amongst the words of others, it would shine out like a radiant star in a pitch-black night!"

2. Walid b. Mughairah al-Makhzumi – He was well known for his prudence and good management amongst the Arabs who used to benefit from his acumen and managerial skills to solve their social problems in the Pre-Islamic era. It was for this reason that he was called:

رِيحَانَةُ قُرَيْشٍ.

"...the crème de la crème of the Quraish."

When he heard the first few verses of Suratul Ghafir from the Noble Prophet (s.a.w) he appeared in a gathering of the tribe of Bani Makhzum and said: "By Allah! I have heard a speech from Muhammad, which resembles neither the speech of humans nor that of the fairies."

وَإِنَّ لَهُ لِحَلَاوَةً وَإِنَّ عَلَيْهِ لَطَلَاوَةً وَإِنَّ أَعْلَاهُ لَمُتْمِرٌ وَإِنَّ أَسْفَلَهُ لَمُغْدِقٌ وَإِنَّهُ
لَيَعْلُو وَلاَ يُعْلَى.

"His speech possesses a special sweetness and an exceptional beauty. The top of it (like the fruitful branches of a tree) is full of fruits and the bottom of it is (like the roots of an ancient tree) firm and strong. It is a speech that shall prevail over everything and none shall prevail over it."4

3. Thomas Carlyle, the renowned historian, in respect of the Qur`an says: "If we cast one look at this holy book, we observe that salient realities and characteristics of the secrets of existence have been so nurtured in its contents that its greatness and truthfulness becomes plainly manifest – and this is a great distinction, which is specific only to the Qur`an and not seen in any other scientific, political or financial work.

Yes, some of the books do tend to deeply affect the mind of the reader – however, this just cannot be compared to the influence and effect of the Qur`an. As such, it must be said: "The fundamental distinction of the Qur`an and its basic tenets lies in its truthfulness, pure sentiments, salient topics and the important themes – none of which provide room for any kind of scepticism and uncertainty – and in the fact that it encompasses all the virtues and excellences that bring about human perfection and happiness, and very clearly defines and illustrates them all."5

4. John Davenport – the author of the book, *An Apology for Mohammad and the Koran*, writes: “So exempt, indeed, is the Koran from these undeniable defects, that it needs not the slightest castigation, and may be read, from beginning to end, without causing a blush to suffuse the cheek of modesty itself.”⁶

He also says: “It is universally allowed to be written with the utmost purity and elegance of language in the dialect of the tribe of the Koreish, the most Noble and polite of all the Arabs, but with some mixture, although very rarely, of other dialects. It is, confessedly, the standard of the Arabian Language, and abounds with splendid imagery and the boldest metaphors ... and is generally vigorous and sublime.”⁷

5. Goethe, the German scholar and poet says: “The Koran is a work with whose dullness the reader is at first disgusted, afterwards attracted by its charms, and finally irresistibly ravished by its many beauties.”⁸

On another occasion, he writes: “For years on end priests, lacking cognizance of Allah, had held us back from comprehending the realities of the Noble Qur`an and the greatness of the person who had brought it – Muhammad (s.a.w) – yet, as we have treaded the path of knowledge and science, curtains of ignorance and baseless prejudice moved aside from before us and very soon this indescribable book (Qur`an) attracted the world towards itself – profoundly influencing the knowledge and science of the world – eventually becoming the pivot of thoughts and ideas of the people of the world!”

He also says: “Initially we had turned away from the Qur`an but it was not long before this book attracted our attention towards itself leaving us baffled and amazed in a measure that compelled us to bow our heads in submission before its lofty and scientific laws!”

6. Will Durant – the famous historian says: “The Qur`an has generated within the Muslims such self-esteem, justice and piety that the like of it has not been witnessed in any region of the world.”

7. Jules La Beaume – the French thinker and writer, in his book *An Explanation of the Signs*, states: “The people of the world came to acquire science and knowledge from the Muslims, who acquired them from the Qur`an, which is an ocean of knowledge, and caused streams (of knowledge) to flow from it in the world, for mankind...”

8. Another orientalist, writes: “It is mandatory for us to acknowledge that natural, astronomical, philosophical, mathematical sciences, which have seen a boom in Europe, are mainly due to the blessings of the Qur`anic teachings and as such, we are indebted to the Muslims – in fact, Europe, in this regard, is one of the cities of Islam.”

9. Doctor Laura Veccia Vaglieri – a professor in the University of Naples – in her book *The Rapid Growth of Islam*, writes: “The divine book of Islam is one example of a miracle. It (Qur`an) is a book, which cannot be imitated. The style and modes of the Qur`an do not have any literary precedent. The influence that this style has upon the soul of man is a result of the distinctions and excellences that it possesses. How can this miraculous book be a work of Muhammad (s.a.w), who had been an unschooled Arab?

In this book we observe treasures and reservoirs of knowledge which is beyond the ability and capacity of the most intelligent individuals, greatest philosophers and strongest political and legal personalities. And it is because of these aspects that the Qur`an just cannot be the work of an educated or a learned person.”⁹¹⁰

One of the things which proves the authenticity of the Qur`an and its revelation by Allah is the fact that there is no contradiction or discrepancy in the entire Qur`an. To understand this reality, consider the following explanation: The mentality of man is constantly in a state of change. The Law of Development – under normal circumstances – envelopes man, his thoughts and mentality, and with the passage of time, tends to change his ideas and speech.

If we reflect carefully, we shall observe that the works of a writer are never similar and uniform; even in one book, the start and the end are seen to possess variations – especially so if a person finds himself in the midst of great and important events – events, which would establish the foundations of an all-encompassing ideological, social and doctrinal revolution. Such a person, however much he may try to maintain uniformity in his works, would never be successful – especially if he is unschooled and fostered in an environment that is totally backward and undeveloped.

However, the Qur`an, which has been revealed over a period of 23 years under various conditions, in various environments and in accordance with the corrective and educative needs of man, is a book which deals with a variety of topics. It is unlike other ordinary books that confine themselves to just one topic like politics, society, philosophy, law or history; rather, it is a book that, at times, talks about Unity and the mysteries of creation, at other times about decrees, laws, customs and etiquettes, and on occasions about the past nations and their shocking histories, and about advices, admonitions, worship and man's relation with Allah – and as Doctor Gustav Lebon puts it: “Qur`an, the divine book of the Muslims is not restricted to religious teachings only but also contains political and social rulings for the Muslims.

A book possessing such features would normally not be free of contradictions and discrepancies. However, when we witness that despite these aspects all its verses are in complete harmony with each other and without the slightest discrepancy, contradiction or asymmetry, we can safely surmise that this book is not a product of human thoughts, rather it is a book that has been sent down by Allah, a fact which has been emphasized by the Qur`an itself.”¹¹¹²¹³

Verses 12 to 14 of Suratul Hud once again stress the miraculous nature of the Qur`an and declare that this is not an ordinary speech and also not a consequence of human thoughts; it is a divine Revelation, which finds its origin in the Infinite Knowledge and Power of Allah. For this reason it puts forth a challenge and dares the entire world to pick up the gauntlet and step forward to combat it (by bringing the like of it). In view of the fact that the contemporaries of the Noble Prophet (s.a.w) and all the communities that have existed, till today, have failed to stand up before this challenge – expressing their willingness to face every other difficulty in trying to put Islam down but shying away from endeavouring

to combat the Qur`an by bringing the like of it – it is plainly evident that basically such a task was – and is – beyond the ability of man. And is miracle something other than this?

Even today, this call of the Qur`an still rings in our ears and this eternal miracle still invites the entire world towards itself, challenging all the knowledgeable and scientific circles to combat it, not only with regards to eloquence – beauty and attractiveness of speech – but also with respect to its contents – sciences which, in that period, had been hidden from man; laws and rulings that guarantee prosperity and deliverance for the human species; statements and explanations that are free from contradictions, discrepancies and prevarications; historical accounts that are free from myths, exaggeration and idle talks – and the like.¹⁴

Sayyid Qutb, in his commentary, *In the Light of the Qur`an*, has reported that some materialists, who had presented themselves at a convention of orientalists in Russia in 1954, in a bid to fault the Qur`an, said: “This book cannot be the outcome of the thoughts and ideas of one man – Muhammad – but it must be the result of the efforts of a large group of individuals! Moreover, it also cannot be believed that all of it had been written in the Arabian Peninsula, rather, it is certain that parts of it have been written outside it!”¹⁵

They found themselves helpless – since they, on the one hand, on the basis of their reasoning which revolved around the rejection of the existence of Allah and Revelation, always sought a material explanation for every thing, whilst on the other hand were unable to accept the Qur`an to be the product of the thoughts of an individual within the Arabian Peninsula – they had no other option except to come up with this ridiculous theory of ascribing it to a group of individuals from within and outside the Peninsula – a notion which history rejects entirely.¹⁶

38. Is the miracle of the Qur`an confined to its eloquence only?

Without any doubt the miracle of the Qur`an is not restricted to its extraordinary eloquence, beauty of speech and the conveyance of meanings – as some of the ancient commentators had believed – but in addition to this it is also a miracle with respect to the scientific facts contained within it, which it presented at a time when they were unknown. Furthermore, the rulings and the historical accounts were unadulterated by myths, superstitions and errors – without the existence of any kind of contradiction and discrepancy in them.

In fact, according to some commentators, the specific tone of the words of the Qur`an are also miraculous in nature.

Various interesting testimonies have been mentioned to support this claim, one of them being the following incident, which occurred with Sayyid Qutb, the renowned commentator, who states as follows: I shall not narrate to you the incidents that have occurred with others but only that, which took place with me and had been witnessed by six people (five others in addition to myself).

We were six Muslims, who were traversing the Atlantic Ocean on an Egyptian ship, heading for New York. There were 120 passengers, but we were the only Muslims on board. On Friday we decided to offer our Friday prayers in the vessel that was in the middle of the Atlantic; in addition to performing our religious obligation, it was also our intention to present an exhibition of Islamic fervour and zeal before one Christian missionary, who continued with his missionary work even within the ship – especially since he was even keen to convert us to Christianity!

The captain of the ship, an Englishman, granted his approval that we establish the congregational prayers on the ship's deck and in addition, even permitted the ship's personnel, all of whom were Muslims from Africa, to join us in the prayers. They were overjoyed since this was the first time that the Friday congregational prayer was being offered on a ship.

I began reciting the sermon and led the congregational prayers and interestingly enough, the non-Muslim passengers had gathered around us, watching the performance of this Islamic obligation with interest.

After the completion of the prayers a large number of passengers came forward to congratulate us upon our performance of the religious obligation, but amongst them was a lady – a Christian from Yugoslavia, who, as we came to know later, had managed to escape from the horrors of Tito and Communism – who was extra-ordinarily influenced by the congregational prayers to the extent that tears flowed down her face and she could barely control herself.

She spoke simple English and in a voice which sounded greatly impressed and filled with a special humbleness and veneration. She asked us: “In which language did your priest orate?” (She was under the impression that the prayer must necessarily be established by a priest or a clergy as is the case in Christianity, but very soon we made her realize that every Muslim could perform this Islamic ritual.) We then informed her that we spoke in Arabic.

She said: “Despite the fact that I could not comprehend a single word of what you said, I could discern quite plainly that these words possessed a mystical resonance and tune. But more importantly and that which extra-ordinarily attracted my attention was that in the speech of your leader there were certain sentences, which appeared to be more distinguished and illustrious than the others, and they seemed to possess an exceptionally deep and influencing tone such that they induced tremors within my body. Surely, these sentences were something different. I think your leader, while delivering these sentences, had been filled with The Holy Spirit!”

After a little reflection we realized that these sentences were the verses of the Qur`an, which I had been reciting in the sermon and in the prayers. This issue shook us to the core and made us realize that the special tone and resonance of the Qur`an possesses such influence and effect so as to tremendously influence and inspire a lady, who could not even comprehend a single word of it. 1718

39. How do we know they have not brought the like of the Qur`an?

In verse 23 of Suratul Baqarah we read:

وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِّمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلَيَّ عَبْدِنَا فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِّن مِّثْلِهِ

“If you are in doubt about what We have sent down to Our Servant (Muhammad), then produce a Surah (chapter) like it.”

The question that arises here is: How do we know that they have not brought the like of the Qur`an?

A look at the history of Islam would provide the answer to this question. This is because within the Islamic nations, during and after the life of the Noble Prophet (s.a.w) – even in Makkah and Madinah – there lived fanatic and stubborn Jews and Christians, who seized every opportunity to impair the strength of the Muslims.

In addition, amongst the Muslims too there lived a group of pseudo-Muslims, whom the Qur`an has named as 'hypocrites' and who shouldered the responsibility of spying for the foreign powers (like the one which has been narrated in history regarding the monk Abu 'Amir and his cohorts from amongst the hypocrites of Madinah, and the manner of their association with the Roman Empire, eventually resulting in the construction of Masjid al-Dhirar (Mosque of Dissension) in Madinah and the occurrence of that peculiar incident, which the Qur`an has referred to, in Suratul Taubah).

Undoubtedly, if this band of hypocrites and that group of hard-hearted enemies, who used to scrupulously follow the affairs of the Muslims and welcome anything and everything that could be used to the detriment of them, had managed to lay their hands upon such a book, they would have surely strived – to the maximum extent possible – to publicize it in order to overwhelm the Muslims, or they would have, at the very least, endeavoured to preserve it.

For this reason, history has gone on to record the names of even those individuals, about whom there could exist the remotest of possibilities that they might have endeavoured to combat the Qur`an. Some of them are as follows:

The name of 'Abdullah b. Muqaffa' has been mentioned in this regard and he is said to have written the book al-Durrah al-Yatimah for this very purpose.

However, this book is presently with us and has even seen several editions in print but it does not

contain the slightest indication or reference to suggest that it was authored for this purpose. We fail to comprehend how they have attributed this issue to him.

The name of the poet, Mutanabbi – Ahmad b. Husain Kufi – is also included in this group and it is stated that he had claimed prophethood for himself. However there are numerous proofs, which indicate that his claims were probably more due to his highflying nature, a deprived family background and love for rank and position than anything else.

Abu al-'Ala Mua'rri, has also been accused of this task, but despite the fact that stinging anti-Islamic statements have been narrated from him, he had never claimed to contest the Qur`an; on the contrary, he has to his credit made interesting statements regarding the greatness of the Qur`an.

However, Musailamah Kadhdhab – from the region of Yamamah – was indeed of those, who stood up to challenge the Qur`an. He has authored some 'verses', which are more of a recreation and amusement than to deserve any serious attention. We present below a few sentences from them:

In opposition to Suratul Dhariyat, he has presented the following sentences:

والمبذرات بذرا و الحاصدات حصدا و الذاريات قمحا و الطاحنات طحنا و
العاجنات عجنا و الخابزات خبزا و الثاردات ثردا و اللاقمت لقمأ أهالة و
سمنأ

“By the peasants and the farmers! By the harvesters! By the separators of chaff from the wheat! By the separators of wheat from the chaff! By the makers of dough! By the bakers! By the soppers (those who crumble bread in broth)! By those who pick up the soft and oily morsels!”¹⁹

يا ضفدغ بنت ضفدغ، نقي ما تنقين، نصفك في الماء و نصفك في الطين، لا
الماء تكدرين و لا الشارب تمنعين

“O' Frog the daughter of frog! Call out as much as you desire! Half of you in the water and half of you in mud; Neither do you make the water muddy nor do you prevent one from drinking the water!”²⁰²¹

40. What do al-Huruf al-Muqatt'ah (The Broken Letters) of the

Qur`an mean?

In the beginning of 29 chapters of the Noble Qur`an we come across al-Huruf al-Muqatt'ah (the Broken Letters) and as the name implies, these letters appear to be broken up and separate from one another. They apparently do not seem to convey any meaning.

The Broken Letters have always been considered to be of the mysterious words of the Qur`an. Commentators have presented numerous and varied interpretations for them – new suggestions surfacing with the passage of time and as a result of new research and study on the part of scholars.

Interestingly, we do not find any mention in history that the Pagan Arabs or the polytheists had ever faulted and criticized the presence of these Broken Letters, located at the start of the numerous chapters of the Qur`an, or used their presence to ridicule the Noble Prophet (s.a.w). This fact itself indicates that apparently even they were not completely ignorant of the mysterious nature of these Letters.

From amongst these interpretations, there are some which appear to be more significant and authentic than others, and are also in conformity with the results of the latest research performed in this regard. We dwell on some of the most important of these here:

1. These letters refer to the fact that this divine Book – with all its greatness, which has left all the Arab and non-Arab orators astounded (over its eloquence) and has left scholars helpless and incapable of opposing and challenging it – is composed of these very alphabets and letters, which everyone is aware of.

But, despite the fact that this Book is comprised of these very ordinary letters and alphabets, its words are so well-proportioned and symmetrical, and possess such lofty meanings that they penetrate into the very core of man, filling his soul with admiration and acclaim, and forcing minds and intellects to acknowledge its greatness. The disciplined order of its words and the construction of its sentences are of the highest degree, placing the loftiest of meanings into the moulds of the most beautiful of words, in a manner that has seen no parallel.

Another point that tends to corroborate this meaning is that in 24 of the chapters which begin with the Broken Letters, these letters have been immediately followed up by the mention of the Qur`an and its greatness, and this itself is indicative of the fact that there exists a relation between the Broken Letters and the greatness of the Qur`an. At this juncture we present a few examples of these, as follows:

الر كِتَابٌ أُحْكِمَتْ آيَاتُهُ ثُمَّ فُصِّلَتْ مِنْ لَدُنْ حَكِيمٍ خَبِيرٍ

“Alif Lam Ra (This is) a Book, whose verses are made decisive, then are they made plain, from

the Wise, All-aware."²²

طس تِلْكَ آيَاتُ الْقُرْآنِ وَكِتَابٍ مُّبِينٍ

*"Ta Sin. These are the verses of the Quran and the Book that makes (things) clear."*²³

الم تِلْكَ آيَاتُ الْكِتَابِ الْحَكِيمِ

*"Alif Lam Mim. These are verses of the Book of Wisdom."*²⁴

المص كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكَ

*"Alif Lam Mim Suad. A Book revealed to you."*²⁵

In all of the above, as well as numerous other instances, the Broken Letters have been immediately followed up by the mention of the Noble Qur`an and its greatness.²⁶

2. Possibly, one of the objectives of these Broken Letters was to attract the attention of the listeners and to silence them and invite them to give ear. This is because the mention of these letters, in the beginning of a speech, was something strange and novel for the Arabs and would arouse their curiosity and consequently, they would listen to the speech following these letters.

Incidentally, the majority of the chapters which begin with the Broken Letters are those, which have been revealed in Makkah and we do know that in Makkah the Muslims were in a minority, and the stubborn and obstinate enemies were loath to even listen to the words of the Noble Prophet (s.a.w). At times they would create such uproar that the voice of the Noble Prophet (s.a.w) would be lost in the commotion – a fact that has also been alluded to in some of the verses of the Qur`an (like verse 26 of the chapter Fussilat).

3. In some of the traditions of the Ahlul Bayt G, it has been mentioned that these Letters are a kind of code and an allusion to the Names of Allah. For example (المص) in Suratul A'raf alludes to:

أَنَا اللَّهُ الْمُقْتَدِرُ الصَّادِقُ.

Meaning, “I am Allah, The Powerful, The Truthful.”

As such, each of the four letters is an abbreviated form for one of the Names of Allah.

The act of substituting an extended form with an abbreviated version has been in practice since ancient times, although its use has assumed greater proportions in our times, for we observe numerous instances wherein elongated expressions and names of organizations have been condensed into a small and single word.

It is necessary to mention that these various interpretations for the Broken Letters are in no way contradictory to one another since it is possible for all of them to be intended together – viewing them as various latent and hidden meanings of the Noble Qur`an.²⁷

4. There is a possibility that all or at least some of these Broken Letters possess specific meanings – just as a word encompasses a meaning within itself.

Incidentally, we observe that numerous traditions and many commentators, in connection with the beginning of the chapters 'Taha' and 'Yasin', state that طه (Taha) is in the meaning of يَا رَجُلُ ('O' Man!'). In addition to this, we also come across certain Arab poems, some of which are probably associated with the period co-incident with the onset of Islam or even before it, in which the word 'Taha' possesses a meaning similar to “O' Man!” or something close to it.²⁸

As one reliable source has informed us, a few Western scholars involved in the study of Islamic issues have generalized this notion to include all the Broken Letters and are of the belief that these Letters, located at the start of the chapters, are words possessing a specific meaning, some of which have been pushed into oblivion with the passage of time, while others have managed to reach us.

For otherwise, as they reason, it appears very improbable that the Arab polytheists would hear the Broken Letters, not comprehend their meanings and at the same time not use it as a pretext for mocking and ridiculing – and history has not recorded a single instance where these foolish cavaliers had ever used the Broken Letters as an excuse to react in this fashion.

Although it appears difficult to accept this theory, universally and with respect to all the Broken Letters, its applicability with respect to some of them is quite acceptable; however, this is an aspect that has been an object of discussion in the Islamic sources too.

It is interesting to note that in a tradition from Imam as-sadiq (a.s) we read that 'Taha' is one of the names of the Noble Prophet (s.a.w) and means:

يَا طَالِبَ الْحَقِّ الْهَادِي إِلَيْهِ.

“O' Seeker of The Truth (and) the guide to it.”

From this tradition it can be concluded that 'Taha' comprises of two cryptic letters: ط (Ta), which refers to:

طَالِبِ الْحَقِّ.

“Seeker of Truth”

and هـ (Ha), which alludes to

الْهَادِي إِلَيْهِ.

“The guide to it.”

A final word in this regard is that the word طه (Taha) like يس (Yasin), with the passage of time, has gradually transformed into a proper name of the Noble Prophet (s.a.w) such that the children of the Noble Prophet (s.a.w) are also referred to as آل طه (The Children of Taha) as can be seen in the case of Imam Mahdi (a.s), who has been addressed as يا بن طه (O' Son of Taha!) in Dua' al-Nudbah.

5. 'Allamah Tabataba'i has presented another possibility in connection with the meaning of the Broken Letters – one, which could be regarded as another interpretation for them. The summary of his view is as follows:

When we place the chapters beginning with the Broken Letters under careful scrutiny, we observe that the chapters which begin with the same kind of Letters, contain subject-matter that is similar in nature. For example, in the chapters which begin with حم (Ha Mim), these letters are immediately followed up by the sentence:

تَنْزِيلُ الْكِتَابِ مِنَ اللَّهِ

“Descended this Book (Qur'an) from Allah.” or something similar in meaning.

In the chapters which commence with الر (Alif, Lam, Ra), these Letters are immediately followed up by the sentence:

تِلْكَ آيَاتُ الْكِتَابِ

“These are the verses of the Book” or something similar to this.

In the chapters, which begin with الم (Alif, Lam, Mim), these Letters are followed by the sentence:

ذَلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ

“This is the Book, there is no doubt in it” or that which resembles this in meaning.

Thus, it can be speculated that there exists a special connection between the Broken Letters and the contents of the chapters in which these Letters are located – to the extent that, the content and the meaning of Suratul A'raf (for example), which starts with المص (Alif, Lam, Mim, sad) is consistent with the contents and the meanings of the chapters that start with الم (Alif, Lam, Mim) and the chapter ص (sad).

However, it is possible that this relationship may be far too profound for it to be fathomed by any ordinary intellect.

If the verses of these chapters were to be placed alongside each other and subjected to a comparison, it is probable that a new meaning might become manifest for us in this regard.²⁹³⁰

41. Has the Qur`an attested the contents of the Torah and the Gospels?

In numerous verses of the Noble Qur`an we find the expression that 'the Qur`an attests the contents of the previous Books'!

In verse 48 of Suratul Maidah, it says:

وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ

“And We have revealed to you the Book with the truth, verifying what is before it of the Book.”

This has caused some of the Jewish and Christian preachers to consider these verses as an authentication that the Torah and the Gospels have not suffered distortion and alteration, and to say: Undoubtedly, the Torah and the Gospels that are presently with us are not any different from what existed during the time of the Noble Prophet (s.a.w).

Thus, if there has been any alteration, it could only have occurred before the time of the Noble Prophet (s.a.w). But since the Qur`an has attested to the veracity of the Torah and Gospels of the time of the

Noble Prophet (s.a.w) thus the Muslims should formally accept these divine, books as being unaltered and authentic.

Various verses of the Qur`an testify that the signs and attributes of the Noble Prophet (s.a.w) and his religion did exist in those distorted books, which were in the possession of the Jews and Christians then. This is because, the meaning of 'distortion' of those divine books surely does not mean that the entire books are false; rather, portions of the original Torah and the Gospels did exist in those books and still do, and the signs and attributes of the Noble Prophet (s.a.w) did exist within these books and/or other religious books which were in the possession of the Jews and Christians (and even today the glad tidings do exist in them).

Thus, the manifestation of the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w) and his divine Book, in practice, has attested all those signs and attributes since it is in conformity with them.

Hence, the meaning of the statement 'the Qur`an attests the contents of the Torah and the Gospels' is that the attributes of the Noble Prophet (s.a.w) and the Qur`an totally match and conform with what has been mentioned about them in the Torah and the Gospels.

The use of the word تصديق (attestation) in the meaning of مطابقت (conformity) is not restricted to this verse, but is also observed in other verses too, like verse 105 of Suratul saffat in which it is said to Ibrahim (a.s):

قَدْ صَدَّقْتَ الرُّؤْيَا

“You have attested your dream” meaning: ‘Your actions were in conformity with the dream which you had witnessed’.

And in verse 157 of Suratul A'raf, we read:

الَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ الرَّسُولَ النَّبِيَّ الْأُمِّيَّ الَّذِي يَجِدُونَهُ مَكْتُوبًا عِنْدَهُمْ فِي التَّوْرَةِ وَالْإِنْجِيلِ

“Those who follow the Messenger-Prophet, the Ummi, whom they find written down with them in the Taurat and the Injeel...”

Here, the meaning has been mentioned explicitly, i.e., 'the attributes which they observe in him (s.a.w) match those that they have been found in the Torah.

In any case, the above verses only indicate on 'the practical attestation' of the Qur`an and the Noble Prophet (s.a.w) with respect to his (s.a.w) attributes present in the ancient books, and do not suggest that all the contents of the Torah and the Gospels have been affirmed. On the contrary, numerous verses of the Qur`an declare that they have altered and distorted the Torah and the Gospels, and this itself is a firm testimony for what has been stated above.³¹

42. Was the Qur`an collected during the time of the Noble Prophet (s.a.w) or after him?

We do know that the name of the first chapter of the Qur`an is Fatihatul Kitab, which means 'the Opening (chapter) of the Book (Qur`an)', and from various traditions of the Noble Prophet (s.a.w) it can be plainly concluded that this chapter had been familiar, by this very name, during the time of the Noble Prophet (s.a.w) too.

From here we are led to a very important Islamic issue that is contrary to what is popular amongst a particular group, which is of the opinion that the Noble Qur`an existed in a scattered form during the time of the Noble Prophet (s.a.w) and it was during the period of Abu Bakr, 'Umar or 'Uthman that it was gathered together in the form of a book.

The Qur`an, during the time of the Noble Prophet (s.a.w), had been gathered together and possessed the same form and arrangement as we see it today – commencing with this same chapter of al-Hamd. If not for this, there exists no justification for it to be named as the Fatihatul Kitab, for neither was it the first chapter to have been revealed to the Noble Prophet (s.a.w) and nor does there exist any other reason for it to be named so.

Various other evidences also exist, which serve to corroborate this reality that the Qur`an, in the form of a collection and assemblage as it is in our possession today, had been collected during the time of the Noble Prophet (s.a.w) and upon his orders.

'Ali b. Ibrahim narrates from Imam as-sadiq (a.s) that the Noble Prophet (s.a.w) said to 'Ali (a.s): "The Qur`an exists (in the written form) on pieces of silk, paper and the like, and are scattered (so) gather them together. The narrator then adds that 'Ali (a.s) departed from the gathering, collected them in a yellow cloth and put a seal upon it."³²

وَ انْطَلَقَ عَلَيَّ فَجَمَعَهُ فِي ثَوْبٍ أَصْفَرٍ ثُمَّ خَتَمَ عَلَيْهِ.

Another testimony in this regard is that of the renowned Sunni scholar Khwarizmi, who, in his book Manaqib, reports from 'Ali b. Riyah that 'Ali b. Abi Talib (a.s) and Ubayy b. Ka'b collected the Qur`an during the time of the Noble Prophet (s.a.w).

The third evidence is the statement of the renowned Sunni author Hakim, in his book Mustadrak, wherein he quotes from Zaid b. Thabit: “Zaid says: ‘We used to gather the Qur`an from the scattered pieces in the presence of the Noble Prophet (s.a.w) and used to place them (the scattered pieces) in their respective positions according to his orders. However, these written works were still not in the form of a collection (and so) the Noble Prophet (s.a.w) ordered ‘Ali (a.s) to gather them together in one place and asked us to be wary of losing or destroying it.’”

Sayyid Murtaza, the great Shi`ite scholar says: “The Noble Qur`an had been collected, in its present form, during the time of the Noble Prophet (s.a.w).”³³

Tabarani and Ibn ‘Asakir narrate from Shu‘bi that six persons from the Ansar (Helpers) gathered the Qur`an during the time of the Noble Prophet (s.a.w)³⁴ and Qutadah narrates: “I questioned Anas as to who gathered the Qur`an during the time of the Noble Prophet (s.a.w) and he replied: ‘Four persons, all of whom were from the Ansar – Ubayy b. Ka‘b, Mu‘adh, Zaid b. Thabit and Abu Zaid.’”³⁵ Apart from these, there are several other traditions too, but mentioning them would only serve to prolong the discussion.

In addition to these traditions that have been mentioned in the Shi`ite and Sunni sources, the selection of the name Fatihatul Kitab for Suratul Hamd is a living testimony for proving this issue.

One Question

At this point the question that arises is: how can we accept what has been stated above when it is popular amongst some of the scholars that the Qur`an had been gathered after the Noble Prophet (s.a.w) (either by ‘Ali (a.s)) or some other individual?

In answer to this, it must be said that what Imam ‘Ali (a.s) had collected was not just the Qur`an but, in fact, was a collection which comprised of the Noble Qur`an, its commentary, occasions of the revelations of the verses and other related issues.

As far as ‘Uthman is concerned, there exists a Qur`an, which indicates that he, in order to prevent discrepancies and differences with respect to the recitation of the Qur`an, endeavoured to prepare a common Qur`an, which possessed (a common) punctuation and manner of recitation (since till that time, punctuation had not been prevalent)

As for the insistence on the part of some, that the Qur`an had not been gathered at all during the time of the Noble Prophet (s.a.w) and it was either ‘Uthman or the first or the second Caliph, who came to acquire this honour, it probably arises out of attempts to extol the virtues and excellences for them. As a result, we find that every group attributed this honour to a particular person and then narrated traditions in his favour.

Basically, how is it conceivable that the Noble Prophet (s.a.w) would overlook such an important task,

whereas he had been mindful of matters that were of much less significance? Is not the Noble Qur`an the Constitution of Islam, the great Book of training and education, and the basis for all Islamic concepts, notions and beliefs? Did the non-collection of the Noble Qur`an during the time of the Noble Prophet (s.a.w) not entail the danger that parts of the Qur`an could be lost or marred and dissensions could arise amongst the Muslims over it?

Apart from this, the famous tradition of Thaqalain, which both the Shi`ites and the Ahlus Sunnah have narrated and in which the Noble Prophet (s.a.w) had said: "I leave behind amongst you two weighty things – the Book of Allah and my Ahlul Bayt," itself proves that the entire Qur`an had been collected in the form of a book.

If we observe the traditions which indicate that the Qur`an had been collected by a group of companions under the supervision of the Noble Prophet (s.a.w), the fact that we differ in the number of individuals engaged in the task, should not be a matter of concern for it is possible that each of these traditions mentions only some of the individuals who had been engaged in the task of collecting and gathering the Noble Qur`an.³⁶

43. What are the 'clear' and the 'ambiguous' verses?

In verse 7 of the chapter Ale 'Imran we read:

هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْهُ آيَاتٌ مُحْكَمَاتٌ هُنَّ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ وَأُخَرُ
مُتَشَابِهَاتٌ

"He it is Who has sent down to you (O' Muhammad!) the Book, of it there are some clear Verses, these are the basis of the Book and others are ambiguous."

The question, which arises here, is: What is meant by the 'Clear' and 'Ambiguous' verses?

The word مُحْكَمٌ has been derived from احكام which means 'to prohibit' and it is for this reason that fundamental and firm issues are called محكم, for they prohibit and repel away destructive factors from themselves. In addition, firm and conclusive talks and ideas, which keep away every possibility of contradiction from themselves, are referred to as محكم.

Thus, the Clear verses are those verses, whose meanings are so clear and manifest that there exists no need for any sort of discussion with respect to their meanings – such as the following verses...

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ

“Say: He Allah is One (alone).”³⁷

لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ

“Nothing whatsoever (is there) resembling the like of Him.”³⁸

اللَّهُ خَالِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ

“Allah (alone) is the Creator of all things.”³⁹

لِلذَّكَرِ مِثْلُ حَظِّ الْأُنثِيَيْنِ

“The male shall have the equal of the shares of two females.”⁴⁰

And thousands of other similar verses – dealing with issues relating to 'Aqid (beliefs), laws and rulings, preaching, history – are all Clear verses.

These Clear verses have been named as Ummul Kitab (Basis of the Book) i.e. they are the basis for the interpretation and explanation of the other verses.

The word مُتَشَابِهٍ (which appears in the verse under consideration) basically means 'a thing, whose various parts are similar to one another'. For this reason, the sentences or words, whose meanings are ambiguous and at times appear to possess several meanings and possibilities, are called مُتَشَابِهٍ. This is exactly what is meant by the Ambiguous verses of the Qur`an – for these are the verses of the Qur`an, which initially and at first sight appear to be ambiguous and possess several meanings (although, after taking into consideration the Clear verses, their meanings become evident and manifest.)

Although commentators have presented numerous possibilities in connection with the meaning of 'Clear' and 'Ambiguous' verses, what we have stated above is not only in total concordance with the original meaning of these two words, but also with the occasion of revelation of this verse, the various traditions which explain the verse and with the verse itself.

This is because in the later portion of the abovementioned verse, we read that certain individuals always utilize the Ambiguous verses as their pretext (to promote their personal motives). It is evident that they misuse those verses, which at first sight appear to possess several meanings and interpretations, and this very fact conveys that مُتَشَابِهٍ (Ambiguous) is in the meaning stated above.

The verses that speak of the Attributes of Allah and the details of the Day of Judgment can be presented as examples of the Ambiguous Verses. Some of these verses are as follows:

يَدُ اللَّهِ فَوْقَ أَيْدِيهِمْ

“The hand of Allah is above their hands”⁴¹,

which is regarding the Power of Allah;

وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

“And surely, Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing”⁴²

which refers to the Knowledge of Allah;

وَنَضَعُ الْمَوَازِينَ الْقِسْطَ لِيَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ

“And We shall set up the balances of justice on the Day of Judgment”⁴³

which speaks of the means of measuring the Deeds.

It is evident that neither does Allah possess hands and ears (meaning a special limb or organ) nor are the Scales for measuring the Deeds similar to what we are accustomed to; rather these are expressions which refer to a universal concept and meaning for Power, Knowledge and Measurement.

It is necessary to mention that محكم and متشابه have also been used differently in the Noble Qur`an. In the first verse of Suratul Hud, we read:

كِتَابٌ أَحْكَمَتْ آيَاتُهُ

“A book whose verses are firmly arranged (together).”

In this verse, all the verses of the Qur`an have been characterized as محكم, denoting that all the verses of the Qur`an are interrelated and in complete harmony with one another.

In verse 23 of Suratul Zumar we read:

كِتَابًا مُتَشَابِهًا

“A Book consistent (in its parts)”, which means 'a book, all the verses of which are consistent and similar to one another with respect to correctness, veracity and authenticity'.

From what we have stated with respect to the Clear and Ambiguous verses it is clear that a truth-seeking person, in order to comprehend the Speech of Allah, has no option other than to place all the verses alongside each other and derive the truth and reality from them.

If at first sight, he faces an intricacy and ambiguity in the apparent meanings of some of the verses, he should clear the vagueness by taking into consideration the other verses of the Qur`an thereby reaching the essence of the verses. In reality, the Clear Verses, from one perspective, are like highways while the Ambiguous Verses are like byways. It is apparent that if a person happens to lose his way in the byways, he endeavours to reach the nearest highway and find his way from there.

Reference to the Clear Verses as Ummul Kitab (Basis of the Book) is yet another point which serves to corroborate this reality. The word Umm means 'basis' and 'origin' of a thing and this is why a mother is referred to as Umm, for she is the basis of a family and a shelter for the children in times of trouble and distress. Similarly, the Clear Verses are regarded as the basis, foundation and the mother of the other verses.⁴⁴

44. Why are some of the verses of the Qur`an ambiguous?

Why is it that the Qur`an, despite being light and illumination, and a true and manifest speech and a book that has come for the guidance of the general masses, contains the Ambiguous Verses? Why are the contents of some of the verses vague, so as to be misused by those seeking to sow dissension and discord?

This is an issue which is immensely important and thereby calls for great attention. For the most part, it is possible that the following aspects could be reasons for the existence of the Ambiguous Verses in the Qur`an:

a. Words and expressions, which are used by humans for the purpose of interacting with one another, have only been created to fulfil the needs of their day-to-day lives; it is for this reason that when we step beyond the finite boundaries of this material world and the discussion dwells upon, for example, the Creator, Who is Infinite in every respect, we observe very clearly that our words do not possess the ability to hold and convey those lofty meanings.

As a result, we are forced to utilize words, which are non-expressive in various aspects. This non-expressiveness and insufficiency of the words is the cause of a considerable portion of the Ambiguous

Verses of the Qur`an. Verses like:

يَدُ اللَّهِ فَوْقَ أَيْدِيهِمْ

“The hand of Allah is above their hands.”⁴⁵

الرَّحْمَنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوَى

“The Beneficent (Allah) on the 'Arsh' is firm.”⁴⁶

إِلَى رَبِّهَا نَاظِرَةٌ

“Unto their Lord (they will be) attentive.”⁴⁷

and words like سَمِيعٌ (All-Hearing) and بَصِيرٌ (All-Seeing) are some examples of this category, whose meanings become clear and manifest upon consulting the Clear Verses.

Many of the realities (of the world of Existence) are related to the 'other world' or the metaphysical world – a realm, which is beyond the horizons of our thoughts – and being imprisoned in the dimension of time and space, we are unable to perceive the depths of those meanings. The loftiness of the horizons of these meanings and the inability on the part of our thoughts to comprehend such meanings become another reason for many of the verses to appear ambiguous – like some of the verses that deal with Qiyamah and other similar issues.

This is exactly similar to the case of a person desiring to explain the issues of this world to an infant, who is in the embryonic stage in the womb of the mother. If the person does not speak, he has fallen short in his effort to convey the meaning, and if he does speak out, he has no alternative except to mention them in a general and implied manner, since the listener, in those circumstances, does not possess the ability to comprehend more than this.

c. Another of the secrets for the presence of the Ambiguous Verses in the Qur`an is to put to work the mental and reflective machinery of man and to create within him the motivation to ponder and meditate. It is similar to the complex intellectual issues that are propounded to strengthen the mental faculty of scholars in order that they reflect more deeply and profoundly over issues.

d. A further aspect with regards to the presence of the Ambiguous Verses in the Qur`an – an aspect also

corroborated by the traditions of the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) – is that the presence of such verses serves to make apparent the people's intense need and dependence with respect to the divine Imams, prophets and their successors, and the reason that people flock towards these leaders in order to benefit from the knowledge and various forms of guidance that lie in their possession, and in this manner practically acknowledge their leadership.

We can compare this with some of the academic books, which are formulated in a manner such that the explanation of some of the topics contained within them has been placed upon the teachers so that the students, experiencing a sense of dependency with respect to the teacher, do not sever their ties with him altogether, and as a result of this dependency acquire inspiration from his thoughts and ideas in all issues. In the case of the Qur`an, this is a confirmation of the famous testament of the Noble Prophet (s.a.w):

إِنِّي تَارِكٌ فِيكُمْ الثَّقَلَيْنِ كِتَابَ اللَّهِ وَ عِترتي أَهْلَ بَيْتِي وَ إِنَّهُمَا لَنْ يَفْتَرِقَا حَتَّى يَرِدَا عَلَيَّ الْحَوْضَ.

“I leave behind amongst you two Weighty Things; the Book of Allah and my Progeny. And surely, the two shall not separate from one another till they come to me at the Pool.”⁴⁸and ⁴⁹

45. Is Bismillah a part of (every) chapter?

Amongst the Shi'ite scholars there exists no difference of opinion in the fact that Bismillah is part of Suratul Hamd and every chapter of the Noble Qur`an (except Suratul Taubah as shall be mentioned later)⁵⁰. Basically, the presence of Bismillah in the beginning of all the chapters in the text of the Qur`an is itself proof of this issue since we do know that nothing has been added to the text of the Qur`an and the mention of Bismillah, at the start of all chapters, has been prevalent since the time of the Noble Prophet (s.a.w) till today.

However, as far as the Sunni scholars are concerned, the author of Tafsirul Manar has presented a comprehensive collection of their views, which is as follows: “There exists a debate amongst scholars as to whether Bismillah, at the start of every chapter, is a part of the chapter or not? The ancient scholars from Makkah – jurists and the Qur`an–Reciters alike – amongst them Ibn Kathir; those from Kufah, amongst them the Qur`an–reciters 'Asim and Kasa'i; some of the Companions and the Followers⁵¹ of Madinah; Thauri and Ahmad (in one of his two opinions) and so too Shafi'i and his followers – all are of the belief that it is part of the chapter. And similarly the Twelve–Imam Shi'ite scholars and (according to them) the Companions like 'Ali, Ibn 'Abbas, 'Abdullah b. 'Umar and Abu Hurairah; some scholars from the followers such as Sa'id b. Jubair, 'Ata, Zuhri and Ibn al–Mubarik – all have opted for this opinion.”

He then adds: “Their most important proof is that the Companions and those who came after them – despite emphasizing that the Qur`an ought to be purified from everything which is not part of it, for which reason they never mentioned 'Amin' at the end of the (recitation) of Suratul FatiHa – were unanimous in reciting 'Bismillah' at the start of every chapter, except Suratul Baraat.”

He then goes on to state that Malik, the followers of Abu Hanifah and some others considered Bismillah to be a separate verse, which had been revealed to indicate the beginning of the chapters and serve as a separator between them.

He then narrates from Ahmad (the renowned Sunni jurist) and some of the Qur`an-reciters of Kufah that they believed Bismillah to be a part of Suratul Hamd only and not of the other chapters.⁵²

From what has been mentioned above, it can be concluded that a definite majority of the Ahlus Sunnah are also of the belief that Bismillah is a part of every chapter.

We present below a few of the traditions that have been narrated by means of the Sunni and Shi'ite chains of narrators (and confess that mentioning all the traditions that exist in this regard is beyond the scope of this work and more suited to a full-fledged jurisprudential discussion on the issue.)

i. Mua'wiyah b. 'Ammar, one of the companions of Imam as-sadiq (a.s) says: “I asked the Imam (a.s): 'When I stand for prayers, should I recite 'Bismillah' in the beginning of Suratul Hamd?' The Imam said: 'Yes'. I questioned him once again: 'When al-Hamd is completed and I have to recite another chapter after it, do I have to recite 'Bismillah'? Again he (a.s) said: 'Yes.'”⁵³

ii. Dar Qutni, a Sunni scholar, upon the authority of an authentic chain of narrators reports that a person approached Imam 'Ali (a.s) and asked: “What is the 'al-Saba' al-Mathani?”⁵⁴ The Imam (a.s) replied: “It is Suratul Hamd.” The person said: “(But) Suratul Hamd has (only) six verses.” Whereupon he (a.s) said: “Bismillahir RaHmanir RaHim is also one of its verses.”⁵⁵

iii. Baihaqi, the renowned Sunni narrator, upon the authority of an authentic chain of narrators reports from Ibn Jubair that Ibn 'Abbas said:

إِسْتَرَقَ الشَّيْطَانُ مِنَ النَّاسِ، أَعْظَمَ آيَةٍ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ.

“Satan has tried to steal the greatest verse of the Qur'an away from the people, and that is Bismillahir RaHmanir RaHim (an allusion to the fact that they do not recite it at the start of the Surahs.”⁵⁶

Apart from all the above, the conduct of the Muslims had always been to recite Bismillah at the start of every chapter while reciting the Qur`an, and it has been established – by means of successive narrations – that the Noble Prophet (s.a.w) too used to recite it. How is it possible that the Noble Prophet

(s.a.w) and the other Muslims would recite something that was not part of the Qur`an and persevere in this act of theirs?

The notion that some people have stated about Bismillah being an independent verse and a part of the Qur`an but not a part of the chapters, is one which appears to be feeble and baseless. This is because the meaning and contents of Bismillah indicate that it is for starting or initiating a task and not that it possesses a meaning that is independent. In reality, this is intense rigidity and bias that in order to prop up their opinion they present forth every conceivable possibility and consider a verse like Bismillah – whose meaning screams out aloud that it is a beginning for that which is to come later – to be an independent verse, totally unrelated with that which is before and after it.

The only plausible objection, which the opponents possess in this regard is that when the verses of the chapters of the Noble Qur`an are computed – with the exception of Suratul Hamd – Bismillah is usually not taken into account; rather, the verse which follows it, is regarded as the first verse.

The answer to this objection is clearly provided by Fakhr Razi in his commentary Tafsir al-Kabir when he says: “There is no harm if 'Bismillah' is the first verse, by itself, in Suratul Hamd, and a part of the first verse, in the other chapters of the Qur`an.” Thus, for example, in Suratul Kauthar,

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ . اِنَّا اَعْطَيْنَاكَ الْكَوْثَرَ

in its entirety, shall be considered to be one verse.

In any event, this issue is so plain that it is reported that once, during his reign, Mu'awiyah did not recite Bismillah during a congregational prayer. After the prayers some of the Muhajirin (The Emigrants) and the Ansar (The Helpers) confronted him and said:

اَسْرَقْتَ اَمْ نَسِيتَ؟

“Have you stolen (Bismillah) or have you forgotten it?”^{57& 58}

46. Why is it forbidden to give the Qur`an to a disbeliever?

Giving the Qur`an to a non-Muslim is forbidden on condition that such an act becomes cause for its disrespect and violation of its esteem, but if we know that a non-Muslim truly intends to study about Islam and thus desires to analyze the Qur`an, not only would it be permissible to give him the Qur`an but

it might even become obligatory; those who have prohibited giving the Qur`an to a non-Muslim did not intend the prohibition for such a case.

Consequently, great Islamic circles insist that the Qur`an should be translated into various languages of the world in order that the invitation towards Islam reaches those who seek the truth and yearn for reality.⁵⁹

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1. The commentary A'la al-Rahman, pg. 25
 2. Tafsir-e-Namunah, vol. 11, pg. 18
 3. A particular manner of reciting epic verses.
 4. Majma' al-Bayan, vol. 10, Under Suratul Muddaththir
 5. From the introduction of the book Sazmanha-e-tamaddun-e-Imparaturi-e-Islam.
 6. An Apology For Mohammad And The Koran
 7. Ibid.
 8. Ibid.
 9. The Rapid Growth of Islam – assistance has been taken from the book, The Qur`an and the Final Prophet for the above discussion in connection with the miracles of the Qur`an.
 10. Tafsir-e-Namunah, vol. 1, pg. 135
 11. The Qur`an and the Final Prophet, pg. 309
 12. Suratul Nisa, Verse 82 (Tr.)
 13. Tafsir-e-Namunah, vol. 4, pg. 28
 14. Tafsir-e-Namunah, vol. 9, pg. 42
 15. In the Light of the Qur`an, vol. 5, pg. 282
 16. Tafsir-e-Namunah, vol. 11, pg. 410
 17. In the Light of the Qur`an, vol. 4, pg. 422
 18. Tafsir-e-Namunah, vol. 8, pg. 289
 19. I'jaz al-Qur'an of Rafi'i
 20. From The Qur`an and the Final Prophet.
 21. Tafsir-e-Namunah, vol. 1, pg. 133
 22. Surat Hud (11), Verse 1
 23. Suratul Naml (27), Verse 1
 24. Surat Luqman (31), Verse 1, 2
 25. Suratul A'raf (7), Verse 1,2
 26. Tafsir-e-Namunah, vol. 1, pg. 61
 27. Tafsir-e-Namunah, vol. 6, pg. 78
 28. Majma' al-Bayan in the discussion regarding the first verse of the Surat Taha.
 29. Tafsir al-Mizan, vol. 18, pg. 5, 6
 30. Tafsir-e-Namunah, vol. 20, pg. 346
 31. Tafsir-e-Namunah, vol. 1, pg. 210
 32. Tafsir-e-Namunah, vol. 20, pg. 346.
 33. Majma' al-Bayan, vol. 1, pg. 15
 34. Muntakhab Kanz al-'Ummal, vol. 6, pg. 52
 35. Sahih Bukhari, vol. 6, pg. 102
 36. Tafsir-e-Namunah, vol. 1, pg. 8
 37. Suratul Ikhlas (112), Verse 1
 38. Suratul Shura' (42), Verse 11

39. Suratul Ra'd (13), Verse 16
40. Suratul Nisa (4), Verse 11
41. Suratul Fath (48), Verse 10
42. Suratul Baqarah (2), Verse 224
43. Suratul Anbiya (21), Verse 47
44. Tafsir-e-Namunah, vol. 2, pg. 320
45. Suratul Fath (48), Verse 10
46. Surat Taha (20), Verse 5
47. Suratul Qiyamat (75), Verse 23
48. Mustadrak Hakim, vol. 3, pg. 148
49. Tafsir-e-Namunah, vol. 2, pg. 322
50. Note by Translator
51. Companions of the companions of the noble Prophet (S).
52. Tafsir al-Manar, vol. 1, pg. 39-40
53. Al-Kafi, vol. 3, pg. 312
54. The Seven Oft-Repeated (verses) (Tr.)
55. al-Itqan, vol. 1, pg. 136
56. Sunan of Baihaqi, vol. 2, pg. 50
57. Sunan of Baihaqi, vol. 2, pg. 49. Hakim has also mentioned this tradition in his book Mustadrak, vol. 1, pg. 233, and has regarded it as correct and authentic.
58. Tafsir-e-Namunah, vol. 1, pg. 17
59. Ibid., vol. 19, pg. 417

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