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Chapter 3: Holy Qur'an and the Holy Books

The Philosophy of the Revelation of Divine Books

We believe that for the guidance of man, God sent down several divine books, among which we may name: the Sohof given to Noah, the Law given to Moses, the Gospel given to Jesus Christ, and the Holy Qur'an given to Muhammad.

Were these books not sent, human beings would have been led astray, falling afar off from the natural path of piety, ethics, and straight path of truth. Such divine books, like the clouds of mercy, have rained upon the plane of the hearts, bringing to fruit the seeds of knowledge, wisdom and virtues "The Messenger (Muhammad) believes in that which is revealed to him from his Lord, and so do men of faith. They all believe in Allah, His angels, His books, and in all His Messengers. They say: "We make no distinction between any of the prophets." They also say: "We hear the prophets and we obey our Lord!"

"We beg Your forgiveness that to you end all the road." (Holy Qur'an, 2:285)

Unfortunately through long elapse of time, many of the scriptures have been tampered with, and altered to some extent, by the interference of some ignorant and unauthorized people, resulting in the replacement of some wrong thoughts and immoral ideas. Among these an exception is the Glorious Holy Qur'an, which has remained unaltered and is exactly in the same way as it was when revealed by the Almighty; and it has always been shining like the bright sun, throughout the ages and the nations, alighting the hearts.

Holy Qur'an, Is the Greatest of the Miracles Of The Prophet

We believe the Holy Qur'an is the greatest and the most important one, among the many miracles of the Prophet of Islam; not only for its eloquence, fluency, vividness and expressiveness, but rather for other important aspects and wide dimensions of the book, about which broad descriptions have been given by the experts in their books.

We believe that no one can ever bring a book like the Holy Qur'an, even not a chapter comparable to it! This is because the Holy Qur'an frequently asks the doubtful to do it if they can, and all who have endeavored have failed!

"Say: If the whole of mankind and Jinns gather together to make out a book like this Holy Qur'an, they could not do it even if they back up each other with help and support." (Holy Qur'an, 17:88)

"If you are in doubt of what we have revealed to our servant (Muhammad), then produce only one chapter comparable to this book; and call your witnesses or helpers to help you, if there are any besides Allah to assist you; if what you say be true. But if you fail to do so, and certainly you will fail, then fear the Fire whose fuel is man and stones prepared for the unbelievers." (Holy Qur'an, 2:23)

We believe that age will not make the Holy Qur'an old and out of fashion; but rather its miraculous points and views shall appear more and more clearly, and its greatness shall become more evident to the world. We have a tradition narrated by Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s) that: "God has not made the Holy Qur'an to answer a certain age or distinct group of people. It shall always remain fresh, new and lively."

Holy Qur'an is Not Altered At All

We believe that this book, the Holy Qur'an which is now at the hands of the Muslims, is the exact and unaltered copy of that which was revealed to our prophet Muhammad nothing less and nothing more .A group of trustworthy scribes chosen by the prophet himself took note of the revelations from the very beginning up to the end, and Muslims had it a duty of must, to read and recite the verses by day and night. A large group of Muslims committed the book to memory and a group of them had it on the scrolls.

Those who had the book in their memory and those who could recite it for the others, had always had a very respectful position among the believers. Such customs and else, prevented the least amount of changes or any alteration to take place in the book. Additionally God Himself has promised and guaranteed to look after His book and keep it safe and secure until the end:

"We have without doubt, sent down the Qur'an, and We will assuredly guard it." (Holy Qur'an, 15:9)

All the learned and researchers in Islam, whether Shia or Sunni, agree that even the slightest alteration has not been made to this Holy Book. Some literate persons, discuss some rare and obscure tradition (hadith) that may mean that some changes have taken place, but the highest majority of those who have the knowledge of Islam, reject that, taking it be false and the mistake of some unaware commentators. Such improvident who lack forethought, by such false ideas strike upon the validity of the most important Divine Book, in contrast to the belief of all the learned Muslims of different sects, which maintain that the Holy Qur'an is unaltered for the least word. These unwise friends, water the mills of the enemy through

their ignorance and bring into question the book which is sent by Allah, and has been promised to be guarded by Allah.

If we carefully study the ways that the book was revealed to the prophet and collected by the chosen scribes, and how it was guarded, written, memorized and recited by so many firm and true believers, no doubt remains as to any alteration or the change of even an epsilon in the whole work. On the other hand, of the imaginary or assumed Holy Qur'an with some alteration, not ever a copy exists anywhere, or in any hand, so as to differ with the famous Holy Qur'an which all the Muslims hold as their sacred divine book. Today the Holy Qur'an is found in every house and in every library.

Even those Qur'ans written several hundred years ago are kept in our museums and those in the non-Islamic countries too, and no one can find the least differences in all the existing Qur'ans throughout the world. Today the roads to investigations are open to all, and anyone who doubts, may look for it himself and make sure that the Holy Qur'an has not been altered in the least.

"So announce glad tidings to My Servants, to those who listen to My precepts, and follow what is the best in them. Those are the ones that Allah has guided and those are endued with understanding." Holy Qur'an, 39: 17

Today in our religious schools the knowledge of the Holy Qur'an is extensively taught, and one of the most important of our lessons in this field is the inability to change the Holy Qur'an.

Holy Qur'an and the Spiritual And Physical Needs of Humans

We believe that whatever is needed in spiritual and physical dimensions of man is fundamentally found in the Holy Qur'an. All the governmental and political tenets, all the social principles, the bases of symbiosis, the fundamentals of war and peace, the elements of judgments and economics, and whatever is needed, can be traced in the Holy Book and extracted for use, so as to alight the space of human life:

"And We have sent down to you the book, explaining all things; It is a guide, a Mercy, and Glad tidings to Muslims." (Holy Qur'an, 16: 89)

This is why we believe that Islam is not distanced from politics and diplomacy. This belief requires the Muslims to rule over themselves, so as to revive the precious Islamic values in their societies, leading towards justice and equity. A Muslim must be just and fair to his enemy as he shows justice to friends:

"O Believers! Stand up firmly to hold justice, and be as a witness to Allah, even against yourselves or your parents or your kins, and whether it be against rich or poor for God is preferable to all that follow not your lusts, lest you swerve. If you fail to do justice, verily Allah is aware of all that you do." (Holy Qur'an, 4: 135)

***"O Believers! Stand up firmly for the sake of Allah, and bear true witness, and let not the hatred for other men, turn you away from doing justice. Deal justly. Justice is nearer to piety. Have fear of Allah. He is aware of all that you do."* (Holy Qur'an, 5:8)**

Recitation, Contemplation and Action

We believe that the recitation of the Holy Qur'an is the best of worship, because it inspires the reciter to think and to contemplate, where by actions may result.

The Holy Qur'an addressing the Prophet Muhammad says:

***"Keep vigil all the night (in prayer) except for a few hours, half the night, more or less; and with measured, and in rhythmic tone recite the Holy Qur'an."* (Holy Qur'an, 73:2- 4)**

And addressing all the Muslims, Holy Qur'an has:

***"Read you the Holy Qur'an as much as you can."* (Holy Qur'an, 73:20)**

***"Do they not contemplate the Qur'an, (so as to catch its meanings) or their hearts are locked up?"* (Holy Qur'an, 47:24)**

***"And We have indeed made the Holy Qur'an, easy to understand and remember. Then is there anyone who may receive admonition?"* (Holy Qur'an, 54:17)**

***"And Holy Qur'an is a book which We have revealed as a blessing: So follow it, and be righteous, so that you receive God's Mercy."* (Holy Qur'an, 6: 158)**

Therefore those who read Holy Qur'an, without any contemplation and action, lose a lot for ignoring two main important elements (thought and act) and grasping only one (reading).

The Deviating Discussions

We believe that some mysterious hands have always tried to deviate and swerve Muslims from contemplation and thought over the verses of the Holy Qur'an. The Omayyad and BaniAbbas dynasties engaged the Muslims on void disputes, to answer the questions: 'whether the Holy Qur'an is old or new? Is it created or is eternally old as God?' Such prolonged controversies divided the united Muslims into rival groups altercating and fighting each other. Today we know that a lot of blood has been shed as a result of such nonsense arguments and quarrels, for nothing.

While anyone with common sense can answer that easily: If by Holy Qur'an, the paper and ink, the cover and the painting is meant, it is certainly created and is something new. On the other hand if by Qur'an the meaning is the aim, it is certainly among the knowledge of God, and since God's Attributes are not apart of His substance, one may say that Holy Qur'an is as old as God Himself.

But the inhumane, merciless governors attempted to keep Muslims busy on these useless subjects; and nowadays too, we see that the same thing and similar affairs happen in Muslim societies, so as to keep them aside from contemplating and thinking.

Rules and Regulations of Commentating on the Holy Qur'an

We believe that the words of the Qur'an should commonly be taken for their fundamental meanings and not for their connotations, with the exception of some, that clear reasons prove them to mean otherwise. The verses in the Holy Qur'an should never be commentated on the basis of conjectures or self-interests. As an instance when we read in Holy Qur'an:

"And he who was blind in this world, will be blind in the hereafter (next world), and most astray from the path (of salvation)." (Holy Qur'an, 17:72)

We are sure enough that 'blind' in this verse does not mean, sightless. It rather means someone who has lost his sense of understanding and judgment, and not him who has lost his sense of sight. This is because there are many who are blind, virtuous and truthful. But on the contrary, there are many who can see well with their eyes, but who are out of mind and their hearts are locked up and cannot use even their common senses. As another example we may consider the following verse about the enemies of Islam:

"The parable of those who reject faith is that of a man (i.e. the prophet) who calls an animal that can hear nothing except a shout or cry. Deaf, dumb and blind are they, and void of wisdom. (They understand nothing)." (Holy Qur'an, 2:171)

It is evident that those heretics, who are addressed here, were not deaf, dumb or blind. We then may conclude that they were mentally such. We also read such verses in our Holy Qur'an:

"The hands of God are widely out stretched." (Holy Qur'an, 5: 67)

"O, Noah! Construct the ark under Our (Allah) eyes." (Holy Qur'an, 11: 37)

We do not understand that God has physical hands or eyes. We rather take hands to mean God's power and the eye to mean His knowledge. This is because any material or matter consists of parts and needs time and space, as well as direction and is of course perishable. The God Almighty is far Greater and beyond having such attributes. We never take the fundamental meaning of such words as mentioned above.

"We sent not any Messenger, except to teach in the language of his own people, in order to clear things for them." (Holy Qur'an, 14:4)

The Danger of Self-Commentaries

We believe that self-commentary of (Holy Qur'an, i.e. to use one's own views and interests in comments) is a very dangerous attempt in relation to the Holy Qur'an, and of course one of the great sins. Through a tradition, God says: "He who commentates on any words with his own views and self-interest does not believe in Me!"

Evidently had he been a believer, he would not commentate on the words of Sahih Tirmidhi (pg 304), it is written that the prophet has said: "He who commentates on the Holy Qur'an by his lusts, and on the basis of self-interest, or what he knows not, he should prepare himself to join the fire of Hell."

By self-commentary we mean to describe or explain the Holy Qur'anic verses by one's own point of view. Such a commentator is not a follower of the Holy Qur'an; He rather tries to make us to follow his lusts and conjectures. If the gates of self-commentaries were to be kept open to the Holy Qur'an, the sacred Book will lose importance and soon will be of no value among all, because everyone could then seek to compare and conform his false ideas to the Holy Qur'an, as evidence. Also, self-commentary is also in contrast with the accepted rules and regulations of Arabic literature and linguistics.

The likening of Quran's verses to one's fancies and conjectures will cause deviation and swerving in the straight path of the book. Self-commentary consists of several branches, among which, to confront the self-interests is one. To make it short, the unreasonable grasp of the fundamental meaning of the word of the Holy Qur'an and self-commentary of the Book, may lead to deviation from the truth, and both ways will keep the believer far apart from the excellent commandments and blissful teaching of the Glorious Holy Qur'an.

The Prophet's Methodological Way (Sunnah), Is Taken From the Book of God (Holy Qur'an)

We believe that no one should say the Book of God is enough for our guidance, ignoring the true traditions that we have received as to what the prophet said or how he behaved. For these traditions may serve to explain the realities, and clear the meanings of some of the more difficult verses in the Book to show us better the roots and branches of our religion This is because the Holy Qur'an has declared that the words, and the methodological way (Sunnah) of the prophet should serve as an example for us; as that of God's.

"So take whatever the Messengers assigns to you, and deny yourselves that which he withholds from you, and fear Allah, for Allah is strict in punishment." (Holy Qur'an, 59:7)

"It is not becoming to a believer, whether man or woman, when a matter has been decided by Allah and by His Messenger, to have any option. If anyone disobeys Allah and His Messenger he

is on a clearly wrong path." (Holy Qur'an, 33:36)

"He (i.e. Mohammad) does not speak out of his own fancy, His speech is none except that which is inspired to him from God. (i.e. what he says is none but inspired revelation)." (Holy Qur'an, 53:2)

Those who are indifferent to the sunnah of the prophet are in fact ignoring the Holy Qur'an and the inspired revelation. Of course whatever is related to the prophet must be clearly proved: That, it really was said by the prophet, and it is not forged. We cannot easily accept whatever is ascribed to the prophet to be truly from him!

Imam 'Ali(a.s) in one of his speeches collected in the famous book named Nahjul Balagha, has said: "So many lies were forged and ascribed to the prophet so much that one day he got up and said to an audience. `He who ascribes a lie to me should prepare himself to take his place in the Fire of Hell'." A similar tradition is also written in the famous book Sahih Bokhari.

We believe that the traditions and orders of the innocent Imams are all taken from the prophet, through their fathers, and are all to be obeyed. There is a famous tradition related by successive witnesses: "I have left among you two heavy things to prevent you being misled: The Book of Allah and my nearest kin(family)"

On the other hand, whatever the saints have said, are narrations from the prophet. The prophet foresaw the future and to solve its problems, laid the key in the hands of his nearest kins and The Book of Allah. How can a true Muslim ignore such a firm and important narration? If the above tradition was considered precisely, our present difficulties in faith, comments, and the disputes in jurisprudence, would not exist.

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