

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

يَرْفَعُ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ

وَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ دَرَجَاتٍ

**Allāh exalts those of you who
believe and those who are given
knowledge to high ranks**

Holy Qur'ān (58 : 11)

MESSAGE OF THAQALAYN

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Editorial

In the Name of Allah

From the day the Prophet pronounced the famous expression *Yā Abā al-Hasan ammā anta wa Shī‘atuka fī al-jannah* (O’ Abā al-Hasan! Indeed, you and your Shī‘ahs are in paradise - *Sunan Dar Qutni*), the term Shī‘ah has come to be used exclusively for the friends and followers of Imam ‘Ali (‘a). Thus it is clear that the word Shī‘ah was in use in the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad (S), as testified by several similar expressions (*hadīth*) which have been recorded diligently by all authoritative Sunni scholars.

The pride of position that Imam ‘Ali (‘a) enjoys is not surprising. Apart from the *ahādīth* we find in authentic works of all denominations of Islam concerning the creation of the light of Muhammad (S) before the universe came into existence and the Prophet’s emphasis *Ana wa ‘Aliyyun min nūrin wāhid* (I and ‘Ali are of the same light), the earthly expressions of the Imam himself on his being abreast with divine revelation and the orderly sequence of its descent, through the blessed tongue of the Prophet, confirm these facts. For instance, in the sermon known as *Qāsi‘ah*, the Imam says:

When I was only a child he took me over... Every year he used to go in seclusion to Mount Hirā, where I used to see him but no one else ever saw him... I used to see and watch the effulgence of divine revelation and message and breathed the fragrance of

Prophethood. When the (first) revelation descended on the Messenger of Allah (S) I heard the moan of Satan. I asked: O' Messenger of Allah (S) what is this moan? He replied, "This is Satan who has lost all hope of being worshipped. O' 'Ali ('a) you see all that I see and you hear all that I hear, except that you are not a Prophet, but you are a vicegerent and you are surely on (the path of) virtue."

The prominent personality of the Commander of the Faithful, Imam 'Ali ('a), among the companions and followers of the Prophet and among the memorisers and reciters of the Holy Qur'an, need not be repeated in the editorial. Nor does space permit us to recount his selfless efforts and sacrifices, his ubiquitous presence and his being at the forefront on all scenes of the struggle. Time and again the Prophet emphasized his merits and those of his Ahl al-Bayt and elaborated to the people on the different aspects of his transcendental personality so as to guide them towards God and deliver them from darkness. The Prophet said in clear terms: *Inna 'Aliyyan ma'a al-Qur'an wa al-Qur'anu ma'a 'Ali lan yatafarraqā hattā yaridā 'alayya al-hawz* (Indeed, 'Ali is with the Qur'an and the Qur'an is with 'Ali, the two will never separate even when they return to me at the pool). The Imam says in this regard:

By Allah, I am aware of all divine revelations, regarding which and whom they were revealed. The Lord has bestowed me an all-perceptive heart and an all-inquisitive tongue. (*Ghurar al-Hikam*, no. 5632).

In fact, he personified the Qur'an, and as he says, he was the *Kitāb-Allah al-Nātiq* and *Kalām-Allah al-Nātiq* (vocal Qur'an) On another occasion he says:

Whenever the *āyahs* were revealed, the Prophet used to beckon me towards him and dictate me (to write) the *āyahs*, and explain and expound to me the *muhkam wa mutashābih*, the *nāsikh wa mansūkh*, the *khāss wa 'āmm*... (*al-Itqān*, Suyūti).

He pledged not to put on the cloak on his shoulders, except for the prayer, until he had compiled the Qur'ān between two covers (*mushaf*).

A study of his sayings, including the valuable book *Nahj al-Balāghah*, establishes beyond an iota of doubt that like the Holy Qur'ān Imam 'Alī ('a) was the barometer of guidance and justice. As the famous saying goes concerning his eloquence and the timeless wisdom of his expressions: "The words of 'Alī are above the words of mankind and second only to the revealed Word of God."

The current issue of *Message of Thaqalayn* has focused on these facts, as well as the intellectual and scientific heritage of the Ahl al-Bayt and their authority (*marja'iyat*) in laying the firm foundations of the Islamic system, with reference to role of Imam Muhammad al-Bāqir ('a) and Imam Ja'far al-Sādiq ('a) in grooming a generation of scholars who are regarded as leading lights of some sects of Islam. Mention could be made in this regard of Abū Hanīfah and Mālik bin Anas who were students of Imam Sādiq ('a), and of Mālik's student Muhammad bin Idris Shāfi'i, who in turn was the teacher of Ahmad bin Hanbal.

To wound up the editorial of this special issue we draw the attention of our readers to a famous couplet from Shāfi'i—several among his verses in praise of Imam 'Alī ('a), Hazrat Zahrā' ('a), Imam Hasan ('a) and Imam Husayn ('a):

*Yā Āl-a Bayt-i Rasūl-i Allah hubbukum farzun min Allah fi al-
Qurān anzalahū
Yakfikum min 'azīm al-fakhr annakum man lam yusalli
'alaykum lā salāta lahū*

O Ahl al-Bayt of the Messenger of Allah! Your love is binding on us as the Qur'ān says.

This honour is sufficient proof of your position; Whoever does not salute you in the daily prayer, his prayer is invalid.

Editor-in-Chief

The *Marja'iyat* of the Ahl al-Bayt for Islamic Scholars

Dr. 'Abd al-Karīm Bī-Azār Shīrāzī

Translated by: Sayyid 'Alī Shāhbāz

The *marja'iyat* or authority of the Ahl al-Bayt in matters of religion is the common point shared by all denominations of Islam, and this could be an ideal platform for resolving issues of difference among the jurisprudential schools. By *marja'iyat-i 'ilmī* (scholarly authority), we mean the common point on which all Muslims are unanimous and to which all issues of difference could be referred, especially in the domain of ideological and legal (*shar'ī*) matters, where the authority of the Ahl al-Bayt is the only instrument for expounding the realities of the Holy Qur'ān and the *sunnah* of Prophet Muhammad (S), in view of the Word of God:

“O' you who believe! Obey God and obey the Prophet and those vested with authority from among you; and then if you have dispute about anything refer it to God and the Prophet if you believe in God and the Last Day (of Judgement). This is the best and the fairest way of ending (the dispute).”(4:59)

It is obvious from the wording of the above *āyah* that “refer it to God” means reference to the Book of God, and in instances where the *āyahs* of the Holy Qur’ān need to be properly expounded, the reference has been made to the Prophet.

“And We revealed not unto you (O Prophet) the Book but that you may explain unto them that which they differ about...” (16:64)

In the light of this *āyah*, Prophet Muhammad (S) was the source of scholarly authority (*marja’iyyat*) for Muslims of his days, and according to all denominations of Islam, he duly introduced Imam ‘Ali (‘a) and the other Imams of his blessed Household (Ahl al-Bayt) as the legatees of his knowledge with the words (cited here from *Sahīh Muslim*, *hadīth* 2408, on the authority of Zayd bin Arqam):

“...I am about to receive a messenger (the angel of death) from my Lord and will respond (would bid goodbye to you); but I am leaving among you two weighty things (*thaqalayn*); the first is the Book of Allah wherein is guidance and light, so hold fast to the Book of Allah and adhere to it; and (the second are) my Ahl al-Bayt, I remind you by God (of your duties) to my Ahl al-Bayt, I remind you by God (of your duties) to my Ahl al-Bayt, I remind you by God (of your duties) to my Ahl al-Bayt, he repeated it three times.” When Zayd was asked who were the Prophet’s Ahl al-Bayt, he said: Those to whom *sadaqah* is forbidden. [Imam] ‘Ali [‘a] and his descendants...).

This famous *hadīth* which adds that Muslims will never go astray if they hold fast to the *thaqalayn*,¹ has been widely recorded in the *sihāh* (authentic) works of the Sunni Muslims on the authority of over 33 prominent companions of the Prophet. According to contemporary Egyptian scholar, Shaykh Muhammad Abū Zuhrah, the *Hadīth al-Thaqalayn* is proof and document of the imamate of the Ahl al-Bayt and their authority in the fields of knowledge and jurisprudence.²

Another leading Sunni scholar, Dr. Muhammad 'Abduh Yamani, writes:

The authentic (*sahih*) *hadith*: “*innī tārikun fikum al-thaqalayn kitāb Allah wa 'itrātī* (I am leaving behind among you two weighty things, the Book of God and my progeny)”, as recorded in the authoritative *hadith* literature of Sunni Muslims, is a confirmation of the fact that the Ahl al-Bayt possess the scholarly authority for all Muslims, and are the model, and the living example in the field of knowledge, probity and adherence to Islam in its pristine purity as promulgated by their ancestor Prophet Muhammad.³

The Rector of al-Azhar, Shaykh Mahmūd Shaltūt (1958-1963) – referring to certain variations of this *hadith* in Sunni sources where the word *sunnatī* (my practice) has been substituted for *'itrātī* – notes the unanimity between *sunnah* and *'itrah*, and writes:

Hadith al-Thaqalayn has come in different variations with the words “the Book of God and my progeny (*'itrātī*)” mentioned in some of them. Without a doubt *sunnah* is the same code to which the Prophet and his noble progeny adhered.⁴

Martyr Ayatullah Murtazā Mutahhari has an interesting incident to relate in this regard:

We were studying in Qum when we came across issues of the new magazine *Risālat al-Islām* published by Dār at-Taqrīb, where an article by a Sunni scholar quoting the *Hadith al-Thaqalayn* wrote: “the Prophet said: I am leaving behind among you the *thaqalayn*, the Book of Allah and my *sunnah*...” The Late Grand Ayatullah, Sayyid Husayn Burūjirdī, who dealt with profound prudence in such matters, instructed an erudite student by the name of Shaykh Qawām Weshnaweh'ī to browse through Sunni sources and extract this *hadith*, which, in over 200 of the authoritative Sunni books quotes the Prophet as saying: “I am

leaving behind among you two weighty things, the Book of Allah and my progeny (*'itrati*).” It was not the purpose to say that the Prophet even in one instance had not said the “Book of God and my *sunnah*”. Since there is no incompatibility between the two versions “Book and my *sunnah*” and “Book and my progeny”, in view of the fact that the progeny is for clarifying the *sunnah*. Likewise, it is not the question whether it is right to refer to *sunnah* or to *'itrah*, for the simple reason that it is the progeny (*'itrah*) which is the real reflector of the *sunnah*, since the progeny is the repository of all aspects of the Prophet’s *sunnah*. The Prophet by stressing “the Book of God and my *'Itrah*” actually meant to say that Muslims should learn about his real *sunnah* from his progeny. Thus, the Prophet’s words: “I am leaving behind among you the Book of God and my progeny (*'itrati*)”, are an indivisible part of his *sunnah* in view of the fact that this is a clear *hadith* from him. In short, Shaykh Qawām Weshnaweh’i compiled a treatise in this regard which was sent to Dār al-Taqrīb in Egypt. Dār al-Taqrīb duly published and distributed the treatise.....⁵

According to Ayatullah Muhammad Wā’iz-Zādeh Khurāsāni, who is a vocal advocate of Islamic unity:

Grand Ayatullah Burūjirdi was of the opinion that the Shi‘ites (in the inter-Islamic dialogue) should focus on the scholarly *marja’iyyat* of the Ahl al-Bayt instead of raising the issue of the caliphate of Imam ‘Ali (‘a) which is a historical question related to the past. It is obvious that if the Shi‘ites content themselves by stressing the *marja’iyyat* of the Ahl al-Bayt on the basis of the documented evidence of *Hadith al-Thaqalayn*, they will be able to overcome the absurd enmities and gather all Muslims on the platform of the beauties of the theological expression of the Prophet’s progeny and the glorious *fiqh* of the Ahl al-Bayt.⁶

The Scholarly *Marja'iyat* of Imam 'Alī ('a)

Anas bin Mālik narrates, that Prophet Muhammad (S) addressing Imam 'Alī ('a) said: “*anta tabyīnun li-ummatī mā ikhtalafū fihi ba'dī* (you are the elucidator for my *ummah* in what they differ after me).”⁷

One of the important duties of *imāmah* (leadership) and *wilāyah* (divinely-entrusted authority) is guardianship of the Holy Qur'ān and the scholarly heritage of the Prophet and their proper transmission to the '*ulamā*' and scholars as well as elucidating the differences that are likely to crop up among the *ummah*. The importance of this duty becomes more clear when we see that many a conqueror has emerged victorious on the battlefield against big countries only to be vanquished by the culture of the conquered people and compelled to propagate their beliefs and customs. An evident example in this regard are the military victories of the Mongols over the Muslims. Soon these fierce conquerors were conquered by Islam and the Holy Qur'ān, and became devout Muslims and propagators of faith.

The revolution brought about by Islam was transformation of faith and culture which, more than military encounters, required scholarly and cultural battles. Imam 'Alī ('a) was aware of this vital factor, and after the passing away of his cousin the Prophet, he decided to compile the Holy Qur'ān and vowed that until he had not written down the heavenly scripture he would not put the cloak around his shoulders to leave the house, except for the performance of the prayers.⁸ Accordingly, on the basis of all that had been taught to him by the Prophet concerning *nāsikh wa mansūkh* (abrogator and abrogated), *muhkam wa mutashābih* (clear and allegorical) and *zāhir wa bātin* (esoteric and exoteric) of the Holy Qur'ān, he expounded and elaborated to his sons, Imam Hasan ('a) and Imam Husayn ('a), and to such peerless disciples as 'Abdullah bin 'Abbās, 'Abdullah bin Mas'ūd and several other companions of the Prophet. Imam 'Alī ('a) thus groomed a generation that would

not only counter the cultural attacks and reply to the ideological controversies raised by scholars of the conquered nations, but would also cater to the jurisprudential and judicial needs of jurists and explain in the most rational manner the principles of belief and various other issues of the Islamic culture to the newly-converted Muslims.

Imam ‘Alī (‘a) and Science of *Tafsīr* (Exegesis)

A glance at the exegesis of the Holy Qur’ān proves beyond doubt that Imam ‘Alī (‘a) is the doyen of all exegetes. The eminent Egyptian scholar Jalāl al-Dīn Suyūṭī (d. 911 AH) says that among the caliphs, most of the narrations are from Imam ‘Alī bin Abī Tālib (‘a).⁹ Ibn ‘Abbās, from whom much of the *hadīth* concerning the exegesis of the Holy Qur’ān has been narrated, was the cousin and student of Imam ‘Alī (‘a). As mentioned by the 6th century AH Mu‘tazalite scholar, Ibn Abī al-Hadīd, when Ibn ‘Abbās was asked about his knowledge compared to that of his cousin (the Imam), he replied: “It is like a drop of rain in front of a vast ocean.”¹⁰

The students of Imam ‘Alī (‘a) in the science of exegesis later flowered into founders of schools of Qur’ānic exegesis in Mecca, Medina and Kufa.

Imam ‘Alī (‘a), Inventor of Arabic Grammar

In order to safeguard the beauty of language of the Holy Qur’ān and to prevent distortion in its style and its unmatched eloquence, Imam ‘Alī (‘a) trained and assigned Abū al-Aswad Dualī to formulate Arabic grammar under his supervision. Later, Abū al-Aswad, by benefitting from what he had learned of the science of grammar from the Imam, regulated the syntax of the Holy Qur’ān by fixing vowels and diacritical points (*i‘rāb*).¹¹

Imam 'Alī ('a) and the Science of *Qirā'ah*

The pioneers in the science of *qirā'ah* or proper recitation of the Holy Qur'ān, such as Abū 'Umar and 'Asim bin 'Abd al-Rahmān Salmī Fārsī, say that they learned this art from Imam 'Alī bin Abī Tālib ('a).¹²

Imam 'Alī ('a) and the Science of Theology

Ibn Abī al-Hadīd says in the introduction to his renowned commentary on the *Nahj al-Balāghah*: “The science of theology (*kalām*) and doctrinal beliefs (*i'tiqādāt*), which are a superior branch of knowledge, have been extracted from the wording and expressions of Imam 'Alī ('a).” Irbili writes in *Kashf al-Ghummah fī Ma'rifah al-A'immah* that the leaders of the theological schools such as the Ash'arites, Mu'tazalites, Shi'ites and even the Kharijites, trace their theological roots to Imam 'Alī ('a).¹³

Imam 'Alī ('a) and the Science of *Fiqh*

In addition to the *Imāmī* jurists, whose principles of *fiqh* are directly from Imam 'Alī ('a), all other founders of juristic schools trace their science to the Imam. For instance, Ahmad bin Hanbal learned *fiqh* from Shāfi'ī who was a student of Mālik bin Anas and Muhammad bin Hasan and the latter was taught by Abū Hanīfah, who along with Mālik bin Anas, had acquired the principles of this science from Imam Ja'far al-Sādiq ('a), the direct successor of the knowledge of Imam 'Alī ('a).¹⁴

Imam 'Alī ('a) and the Science of Eloquence

As is evident from the *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Imam 'Alī ('a) is the leader in the field of eloquence and beauty of language. This book which is a treasure trove of wisdom, among other things, contains the rules of administration and Islamic polity. The sermons, letters and aphorisms of Imam 'Alī ('a) are considered as

a living miracle for all those wishing to quench their intellectual thirst.

Imam ‘Alī (‘a) and Esoteric Knowledge

Dr. Abū al-Wafā’ Ghunaymī al-Taftāzānī of Cairo University who is a sufi elder, writes in his introduction to the 11 century AH scholar Shaykh Hurr al-‘Amili’s celebrated work, *Wasā’il al-Shī‘ah*:

Sufi leaders and elders such as Rifā‘ī, Badāwī, Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī and ‘Abd al-Qādir Gilānī, who are considered among the prominent Sunnī ‘*ulama*’, attribute their schools (*tarīqah*) to the teachings of some of the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt and through them to Imam ‘Alī (‘a) and Prophet Muhammad (S). The Prophet’s saying: *Ana madīnah al-‘ilm wa ‘Alīyyun bābuhā* (I am the city of knowledge and ‘Alī is its gateway) has special significance for gnostics and their emphasis on esoteric or spiritual sciences which they consider as real knowledge and maintain that except for Imam ‘Alī (‘a) no one possess this characteristic.

In most Sunnī books there are ample proofs that Imam ‘Alī (‘a) was the repository of esoteric knowledge. For example, when ‘Umar ibn al-Khattāb while touching the *Hajar al-Aswad* at the Holy *Ka’bah*, said: “I know that you are a mere stone without any benefit or harm. If I had not seen the Prophet kissing you, I would never have kissed you.” Imam ‘Alī (‘a) immediately said: “It does benefit and cause harm. God has deposited the covenant with the world of creation in this stone, and this stone will bear witness on the Day of Resurrection in the favour of those who adhered to their covenant.” On hearing this ‘Umar ibn al-Khattāb said: “O Abā al-Hasan! May God make me not live in the land where you are not present.”¹⁵

This account proves that the *marjai'yyat* and imamate of Imam 'Alī ('a) was recognised and accepted without the least doubt by even the caliphs.

Source of Knowledge of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a)

The following are the sources of knowledge of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a).

1. The Holy Qur'ān: On the basis of numerous *hadīth*, the Ahl al-Bayt are the *Ahl al-Dhikr* (16:43), well versed in the knowledge of the Holy Qur'ān and are its authoritative exegetes.

2. Prophet Muhammad (S), whose famous *hadīth* reads: "I am the City of Knowledge and 'Alī is its Gateway."

3. The Predecessor Imam.

4. Awareness and Personal Experience.

Marja'iyat of Imam 'Alī ('a) For the Prophet's Companions

The Holy Qur'ān says: "*So ask the People of the Reminder (Ahl al-Dhikr) if you do not know.*" (16: 43)

Abū Ja'far Muhammad bin Jarīr al-Tabarī writes in his exegesis *Jāmi' al-Bayān* on his chain of authority that when this āyah was revealed, Imam 'Alī ('a) said: "We are the *Ahl al-Dhikr*."¹⁶

Ibn Qayyim writes that the prominent companions of the Prophet used to refer to Imam as the *Ahl al-Dhikr* and the expert on the Holy Qur'ān, and would seek clarifications for their doubts.¹⁷

Ibn 'Asim quotes the first caliph Abū Bakr as saying: "O Muslims, this 'Alī ('a) is the legatee of the Prophet's knowledge; whoever doubts his righteousness is a hypocrite."¹⁸

The second caliph 'Umar would give preference to the views of Imam 'Alī ('a) over that of all other companions of the Prophet. He issued standing orders that as long as Imam 'Alī ('a) was in the mosque no one had the right to express any *fatwā* (legal opinion). During the meetings of the council 'Umar would turn to Imam 'Alī

(‘a) for the final opinion and used to say: “Speak, for you are the most knowledgeable and most meritorious of the Prophet’s companions.”¹⁹

Whenever the caliphs and the Prophet’s companions as well as the jurists of Syria and Iraq found themselves in ideological dead end they would refer to Imam ‘Alī (‘a). There are numerous instances when the caliphs and the companions, after issuing their *fatwā* would retract it when they found it in contradiction to the opinion of Imam ‘Alī (‘a), and would immediately endorse the Imam’s views.²⁰

Ibn Qudāmah Maqdisī in his work *al-Mughnī*, quotes ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Abbās as saying: “*idhā thabata lanā ‘an ‘Alī (‘a) qawlun lam na’ūdūhu ilā ḡhayrih* (whenever a saying of [Imam] ‘Alī (‘a) was ascertained for us we would never turn towards others).”²¹

Marja’iyyat of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) Among Jurisprudential Schools

The accounts from Imam ‘Alī (‘a) have been related in the five following ways:

1. Through the Infallible Imams.
2. Through Sunni *muhaddithīn* (traditionists).
3. Through Imāmī Shi‘ite accounts such as *kutub al-arba‘ah* (the four authoritative books of *hadīth*).
4. Through Zaydī sources (*al-Majmū‘ al-Fiqhī*, *Musnad* of Zayd bin Imam Zayn al-‘Abidīn (‘a), *Amālī* and *Bahr al-Zakkhār*).
5. Through Ismā‘īlī narratives (e.g. *Kitāb Da‘ā’im al-Islām* of Qāzī Nu‘mān al-Misrī).

The references and documents of the leaders and jurists of the various sects of the Ahl al-Sunnah are so exhaustive in this field that recently Dr. Muhammad Rawwās Qal‘ahjī of Syria has collected the accounts cited as authoritative by jurists of the four Sunni sects (Hanafī, Mālikī, Shāfi‘ī and

Hanbalī) as well as others, in an encyclopaedia under the title of *Mawsū'ah Fiqh al-Imam 'Alī bin Abī Tālib* ('a).²² For his part, Ayatullah Wā'iz-Zādeh Khurāsānī of Iran has extracted from 250 authoritative Sunnī works 10,000 *hadīth* on the merits of the Prophet's Ahl al-Bayt ('a).

The famous bibliographer Ibn al-Nadīm (4th century AH) writes:

Once a person, on getting a reply to his query from the jurisprudent Shāfi'ī, retorted that the answer seemed in opposition to the saying of Imam 'Alī bin Abī Tālib ('a). Shāfi'ī said: "If you could prove it that Imam 'Alī bin Abī Tālib ('a) said as you claim, I am ready to put my face on the soil, admit my mistake, retract my statement and revert to his saying."²³

Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī, in volume one of his exegesis *Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, commenting on legal issues as inferred from *Sūrah al-Fātihah*, cites the fifth evidence concerning the recitation of *Bismillah al-Rahmān al-Rahīm* during prayer in a raised voice:

It has been ascertained on the chain of frequency (*tawātur*), Imam 'Alī ('a) used to recite *Bismillah* in a raised voice. Whoever follows Imam 'Alī bin Abī Tālib ('a) in his religion is thus truly guided and the proof in this regard is the saying of the Prophet: "*Allāhumma adri al-haqqa ma'a 'Alī, haythu dār* (O Allah! Turn truth with 'Alī, wherever he turns)."²⁴

Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī then cites the versions of Anas bin Mālik and Ibn Mufazzal against recitation of *Bismi Allah...* during prayer, and after comparing and contrasting these statements with that of Imam 'Alī ('a), says:

Even if we were to express doubt in other matters, we can never doubt this issue, since it is preferable to act upon the statement of Imam 'Alī ('a) in view of his position and proximity to the Prophet compared to Anas and Ibn Mufazzal.²⁵

Many of the prominent jurists of Kurdistān in their chain of authorization (*ijāzah*) of *hadīth* through Qutb al-Dīn al-Rāzī, Qutb al-Dīn Shīrāzī, Kātib Qazwīnī, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, Muhammad al-Ghazzālī, Abū Tālib al-Makkī and Ma'rūf al-Karkhī, trace their sources to the Prophet's 8th infallible successor Imam 'Alī bin Mūsā al-Rizā ('a), and thence directly to the Gateway of the Prophet's Knowledge, Imam 'Alī bin Abī Tālib ('a). From Imam Rizā ('a) upwards there is remarkable unanimity in all these Sunnī chains of transmission, and with slight variation of words they read as follows:

From al-Murtazā al-Imam 'Alī al-Rizā ('a), from his illustrious father Imam Mūsā al-Kāzim ('a) – from his father and his ancestors before him – from the Chief of the Pathways of the Confluence of the Two Seas (*majma' al-bahrayn*), Imam al-Mujtabā Sayyidunā al-Imam al-Hasan ('a), from his father, the Source of Authority (*manba' al-wilāyah*), the Argument of God (*Hujjat Allah*) Sayyidunā al-Imam 'Alī al-Haydar, peace and salutations upon him, and he is *karram Allah wajhah* (God has glorified his face), who imbibed sciences and knowledge from the Sea of Knowledge, the Master of all who preceded him and will come after him (*Sayyid al-awwalīn wa al-ākhirīn*), the source of sincerity and purity, Sayyidunā Abī al-Qāsim, Muhammad al-Mustafā (S).

The Hanafis and Imam 'Alī ('a)

The Hanafis, in reply to the objections of the Mālikīs and Hanbalīs who claim that contrary to the Iraq-based Abū Hanīfah their schools grew in the Prophet's city (Medina), say that the charge against them of taking shape far from the Prophet's tradition, holds no water since Kufa was the capital of the Gateway of the Prophet's Knowledge, Imam 'Alī bin Abī Tālib ('a).

Interestingly, Hanafī jurists maintain that in case of contradiction between the opinions of Abū Hanīfah and his two

disciples Abū Yūsuf and Muhammad bin al-Hasan Shaybānī, the opinion of the teacher takes precedence unless the opinion expressed by the disciples is based on the authority of narration from Imam 'Alī ('a), since in such a case, the opinion on the virtue of Imam 'Alī's ('a) account, should enjoy absolute precedence.²⁶

Likewise, several legal opinions (*fatāwī*) of the Hanafis are based on the accounts of Imam 'Alī ('a). For instance, the recitation of *Sūrah al-Hamd* on the authority of Imam 'Alī ('a) during the first two *rak'ah* of the daily prayer is considered obligatory.²⁷

The Mālikīs, in accordance with the School of the Ahl al-Bayt, do not fold their hands and keep them stretched sideways during the prayer. When Mālik ibn Anas was asked why his *fatwā* forbids the folding of hands during prayer as the other schools do, he replied: "I have seen the leaders of the Ahl al-Bayt (Imam Muhammad al-Bāqir ['a] and Imam Ja'far al-Sādiq ['a] pray with hands open and stretched sideways."

Ahmad ibn Hanbal in his book *Musnad* has a section on the merits of Imam 'Alī ('a) and has related nearly 3000 *hadīth* from him.

The historian Ibn 'Asākir, writing on the life of Imam Zayn al-'Abidin ('a), quotes Abī Hāzim as saying:

I have not seen a Hashimite more meritorious and more aware of jurisprudential issues than (Imam) 'Alī bin al-Husayn ('a).²⁸

Shāfi'i, the founder of a school of jurisprudence of the same name, says:

'Alī bin al-Husayn ('a) was the most knowledgeable in jurisprudential matters among the people of Medina and was an authority on *hadīth*.²⁹

'Abdullah bin 'Atā' narrates:

I have not seen scholars so humble before anyone except in the presence of Imam Muhammad al-Bāqir ('a). I saw (in his

presence) Hakam bin ‘Utbah, who despite his scholarly awe among his people, appear like a small pupil in front of his teacher.³⁰

Abū Hanifah says that he did not meet anyone better versed in jurisprudence than Imam Ja‘far al-Sādiq (‘a).³¹

Mālik ibn Anas says:

For long I used to visit (Imam) Ja‘far bin Muhammad (‘a) and I always found him in one of the three states; he was performing the prayer, was fasting, or reciting the Qur’ān. No eye has seen, no ear has ever heard and no heart has ever felt a person more knowledgeable, more devout and more pious than Ja‘far bin Muhammad (‘a).³²

Scholarly Authority of the Alids among Islamic Schools

The scholarly authority of the Alids or descendants of Imam ‘Ali (‘a), other than the infallible Imams, is profoundly evident not only among the Shi‘ite schools but also among all other Islamic schools and sūfi orders. An example in this regard are the following persons who trace their descent to Imam ‘Ali (‘a) and are revered among the various Sunnī sects for their scholarly authority:

Sayyid Mahmūd Alūsī of Baghdad, the author of *Tafsīr Rūh al-Ma‘ānī*; Sayyid Rashīd Rizā of Egypt, the author of *Tafsīr al-Manār*; Sayyid Muhammad bin ‘Alawī Mālikī al-Hasanī of Mecca, the author of over 20 books on Mālikī *fiqh* and school of thought; Sayyid ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Hasanī al-Gilānī, the founder of the Qādiriyyah sufi order whose followers extend from India, Pakistan and Afghanistan to parts of Yemen and Africa; Sayyid Shāh Ni‘matullah Walī of Kirmān, the founder of the Ni‘matullāhī order; Sayyid Ahmad Badāwī al-Husaynī of Tanta, whose followers known as Tantāwī are found in Egypt and Sudan; Sayyid Ahmad bin ‘Alī al-Rifā‘ī, the founder of the Rifā‘iyyah order of Egypt;

Sayyid Ahmad bin 'Alī Hanafī al-Misri, the head of the Shi'rāniyyah order of Egypt; Sayyid Muhammad 'Uthmān Mir Ghani al-Māliki, the author of *Tāj al-Tafāsir*, who was from Central Asia and whose followers are found today in Sudan; Sayyid Mansūr 'Alī Nāsif al-Husayni, the author of *Tāj al-Jāmi' lil-Usūl fi Ahādith al-Rasūl* which is regarded as one of the best Sunnī *hadīth* compilations; Sayyid Abū al-Hasan al-Nadawī of India, the author of *Māzā Khasira al-'Alam bi-Inhitāt al-Muslimīn* and Dr. Sayyid Muhammad Tantāwī, the Dean of al-Azhar University of Cairo which is considered among the prominent training centres of the Sunnī School.

The Scholarly Authority of Imam Hasan's ('a) Descendants in Yemen

The people of Yemen accepted Islam at the hands of Imam 'Alī ('a) when he was sent there by Prophet Muhammad (S). During his brief stay the Imam taught them the dynamics of Islam and influenced them with his personality which led to the birth of jurisprudential schools in Yemen. Later, with the migration of the Imam's descendants to Yemen (especially after the abortive uprisings of the descendants of Imam Hasan ('a) against Abbasid tyranny and the end of the shortlived state of the jurispudent and scholar, Muhammad bin Ibrāhīm al-Tabātabā in Kufa),³³ the scholarly authority of Imam 'Alī ('a) and the Ahl al-Bayt became widespread and is still revered in this land. Among the Al-i Tabātabā, who in addition to their political status, became authorities in Yemen in the fields of knowledge, jurisprudence and theology, mention could be made of the following personalities:

1. *Tarjumān al-Dīn Abū Muhammad Qāsīm bin Ibrāhīm al-Rassī*³⁴ *al-Tabātabā'i* (170-244 AH). A pious and ascetic man, he was thought to be a Zaydī and is considered the founder of the Qasimī branch of *fiqh*. He wrote a book refuting the theories of the fatalists and those attributing form and shape to Almighty God. He

left seven sons, all of whom became authorities and whose books can be found in the libraries of Europe.³⁵

2. *Abū al-Hasan Yahyā bin Husayn al-Tabātabā'ī* (245-298 AH). A gifted scholar, jurist, poet, and leader of the Zaydis, he launched an uprising in Yemen against Abbasid rule in 280 AH and assumed the title of *al-Hādī ilā al-Haqq* (Guide towards the Truth). His influence spread to other parts of Arabia and his name was read during sermons in Mecca. He was a prolific writer and among his works mention could be made of *al-Istidlāl 'alā Risālah Muhammad (S)*, *Tathbūt Imāmah Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī bin Abī Tālib ('a)* and *Jāmi' al-Ahkām fī al-Halāl wa al-Harām*.³⁶

3. *Abū al-Qāsim al-Murtazā li-Dīn Allah Muhammad bin Yahyā al-Hādī* (299-322 AH). He came to Yemen with his father whom he succeeded as leader of the Zaydis. He was a statesman and scholar and the author of 16 books including an exegesis of the Holy Qur'ān. His descendants, the Banī Ataj migrated to Māzandarān Province of Iran, while another branch known as Banī al-'Assāf settled in Isfahan.³⁷

During the 12 centuries of the rule of Zaydī Imams in Yemen, several scholars, researchers, theologians (*mutakallimin*), traditionists (*muhaddithīn*), jurisprudents and men of literature – most of whom were the direct descendants of Imam Hasan ('a) – rose to prominence and enriched Zaydī culture. Some of them are:

1. *Husayn bin Badr al-Dīn bin Muhammad* (582-662). He was a descendant of Yahyā al-Hādī and was an expert in *hadīth*, *fiqh*, and jurisprudence. He authored the books *Shifā' al-Awām fī Ahādīth al-Ahkām (hadīth)* and *al-Taqrīr* in six volumes in the field of *fiqh*.³⁸

2. *Husayn bin Muhammad bin Badr al-Dīn* (d. 663 AH). He was a jurisprudent and *muhaddīth* whose students became some of the prominent scholars of Yemen.³⁹

3. *Dahmā'*. The daughter of the Zaydī ruler (Imam) Yahyā bin Murtazā (d. 837 AH) and the sister of his successor Mahdī

Ahmad bin Yahyā. She was a jurispudent, researcher, scholar and poet. She was married to Sayyid Muhammad bin Abī al-Fazā'il and wrote a 4-volume commentary on her brother's work *al-Azhār*.⁴⁰

4. *Ahmad bin Salāh al-Sharafī* (975-1055 AH). He was descended from Qāsim al-Rassī and was a prominent jurispudent, historian and researcher.⁴¹

5. *Ahmad bin Muhammad Luqmān* (d. 1029 AH). A descendent of the Zaydī ruler (Imam) Mahdī Ahmad bin Yahyā. He was a reseacher and expert in literature, jurispudent and related fields. Among his works are *Sharh al-Kāfil (fiqh)* and *Sharh al-Tahzīb* on al-Taftāzānī's book on logic.⁴²

6. *Hasan bin Ahmad Jalāl* (1014-1048 AH). He was related to the famous jurispudent of his time Ahmad Nāsir and was an outstanding jurispudent, scholar and poet himself.⁴³

7. *'Abdullah bin Ahmad al-Sharafī*. A prominent scholar of the 11th century AH, he wrote the exegesis of the Holy Qur'ān titled *Masābih al-Tafsīr* in 6 volumes.⁴⁴

8. *'Abdullah bin 'Amir bin 'Alī al-Hasanī* (d. 1061 AH). A paternal cousin of the Zaydī ruler (Imam) Mansūr Qāsim bin Muhammad, he was a poet and scholar whose work on Islamic schools of *fiqh* is titled *al-Tasrīh bi'l-Madhhab al-Sahīh*.⁴⁵

9. *Ibrāhīm bin Muhammad bin Qāsim* (d. 1145 AH). The grandson of the Zaydī ruler (Imam) Muhammad al-Mu'ayyid, he was a prominent jurispudent and historian who authored *Tabaqāt al-Zaydiyyah*.⁴⁶

The Scholarly Authority of Imam Hasan's ('a) Descendants in Iraq

Imam 'Alī's ('a) shifting of his seat of caliphate from Medina to Kufa in 36 AH turned Mesopotamia into a centre of scholarly authority of the Prophet's progeny and laid the foundation for development of the schools of theology, jurisprudence and exegesis of Iraq. This land (the cradle of human civilisation where Adam lies

buried and where Enoch and Noah lived and preached) became a centre of gravity for descendants of the Ahl al-Bayt and their followers who contributed to the development of Islamic sciences in various fields. When Muhammad bin Ibrāhīm al-Tabātabā, launched his uprising against Abassid rule in Iraq and established his shortlived political authority, the Prophet's descendants and their followers migrated from the Hijāz and took up residence in Kufa, Basra and Baghdad. They initiated scholarly activities and soon several scholars, jurists and men of letters shot into prominence from among them. One of these Hasani Sayyids who settled in Basra was Muhammad bin Ibrāhīm bin Sulayman bin Qāsim al-Rassī who was known as al-Tūzūn and whose descendants were consequently called Banī Tūzūn. Of the scholars of the Hasani branch of Sayyids who earned reputation as Islamic authorities, the following stand out more prominently:

1. *Abū al-Mu‘ammar Yahyā bin Muhammad bin Qāsim bin Muhammad (d. 478 AH)*. He was a grammarian, theologian, poet and geneologist.⁴⁷

2. *Abū Muhammad Ja‘far bin Muhammad al-Tahāmī al-Makkī bin Ismā‘īl bin Ahmad Nāsir bin Husayn bin Qāsim al-Rassī*. He was a Gnostic, scholar and poet.⁴⁸

3. *Jalāl al-Dīn Abū Ja‘far Muhammad bin Tāj al-Dīn ‘Alī bin Muhammad bin Ramazān Ibn Tiḡtaqā (660-709 AH)*. A descendent of Qāsim al-Rassī, he was a historian, poet and scholar, who served as Naqīb al-Sādāt in Iraq and wrote the famous book *al-Fakhri*.⁴⁹

Scholarly Authority of the Al-i Tāwūs in Hillah

This family of prominent scholars derives its surname from their ancestor Abū ‘Abdullah Muhammad bin Ishāq, known as al-Tāwūs (the Peacock) because of his strikingly handsome appearance but rather awkward feet. A scholar of repute and *Naqīb al-Sādāt* in Hillah and Sur in Iraq, Muhammad al-Tāwūs was descended on his father's side from Imam Hasan (‘a) through

Dāwūd bin Hasan al-Muthannā and on his mother's side from Imam Husayn ('a) through a daughter of Imam Zayn al-'Abidin ('a). His descendants, the Al-i Tāwūs, succeeded to his position of *naqīb* in Hillah and for several generations produced outstanding scholars, of whom the following could be mentioned:

1. *Razī al-Dīn 'Alī bin Mūsā (589-664 AH)*. Known by the family epithet of Ibn Tāwūs, he was an outstanding scholar excelling in *hadīth*, history, jurisprudence, theology and literature. He refused all official positions proposed to him by the Abbasid court in Baghdad including the post of *wazīr*, although he tried to avert bloodshed and destruction during the Mongol attack of Hulaku Khan. In 660 AH, on the insistence of the great scholar Khwājah Nasir al-Dīn al-Tūsī, he reluctantly accepted the post of *Naqīb al-Sādāt* and died four years later. He was known for his munificence and once gave away as charity 90 percent of his total property. He wrote over 30 books including *Iqbal al-'Amāl*, *al-Yaqīn bi-Ikhtisās 'Alī 'alayh al-salām bi-Imrah al-Mu'minīn*, *al-Luhūf 'alā Qatlā al-Tufūf*, *al-Istifā' fī Tārīkh al-Mulūk wa al-Khulafā'* and *Kashf al-Muhjah*.

2. *Jamāl al-Dīn Ahmad bin Mūsā (d. 673 AH)*. He became *Naqīb al-Sādāt* on the death of his elder brother, and among his students was the celebrated scholar 'Allāmah Hasan bin Yūsuf al-Hillī. He wrote several books, one of which is *al-'Ayn al-'Ibrah fī Ghaban al-'Itrah*.

3. *Ghiyāth al-Dīn 'Abd al-Karīm bin Ahmad (648-693 AH)*. Like his father and uncle, he was a gifted scholar and held the position of *Naqīb al-Sādāt*. He was also a good poet and wrote a valuably researched book ascertaining the site of burial in Najaf of Imam 'Alī ('a) under the titled *Farhah al-Qurrā' bi-Sarhat al-Gharrā'*.

Notes:

1. Ibn Hanbal, Ahmad, *Musnad*, vol. 2, p. 114 & vol. 2, pp. 366-7; Hākim, al-Nayshābūrī, *al-Mustadrak 'alā al-Sahīhayn*, vol. 3, p. 109. al-Darimi: *al-Sunan*, vol. 2, p. 431. al-Tabarānī, *al-Mu'jam al-Kabir*, vol. 5, p. 185. al-Tirmidhī, *al-Sunan*, vol. 5, p. 662.

2. Abū Zuhrah, Muhammad, *al-Imām al-Sādiq*, p. 199.

3. 'Abduh Yamānī, Muhammad.

4. Shaltūt, Shaykh Mahmūd, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, p. 129, Dār al-Qalam.

5. Mutahhari, Murtuzā, *Imāmat wa Rahbarī*, Tehran: Intishārāt-i Sadrā, pp. 74-75,

6. Wā'iz-Zādiḥ Khurāsānī, Muḥammad, *Nidā-yi Wahdat*, Tehran: Majma' Jahānī Taqrīb, p. 275.

7. Hākim al-Nayshābūrī, *al-Mustadrak 'alā al-Sahīhayn*, vol. 2, p. 122; al-Hindī, al-Muttaqī, *Kanz al-'Ummāl*, vol. 6, p. 156.

8. Ibn 'Abd al-Birr, *al-Istī'āb*, p. 1109. Tabrisī, *al-Ihtijāj*, p. 239.

9. Al-Suyūtī, Jalāl al-Dīn, *al-Itqān*, chapter 80, *Tabaqāt al-Mufasssīrīn*.

10. Ibn Abī al-Hadīd, *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah*, vol. 1, pp. 18-19.

11. *Atwār al-Thiqāfah*, vol. 2, p. 35; *Tabaqāt al-Nahwiyyīn*, vol. 7, p. 14.

12. Ibn Abī al-Hadīd, vol. 1, p. 21.

13. Al-Irbilī, *Kashf al-Ghummah fī Ma'rifah al-A'immah*, vol. 1, p. 131.

14. Ibn Abī al-Hadīd, vol. 11, p. 18.

15. This *hadīth* has been narrated by almost all companions, Shaykh Mansūr 'Alī Nāsif, *al-Jāmi' al-Usūl fī Ahādīth al-Rasūl*, Cairo, 1352 AH, vol. 2, p. 149.

16. Al-Tabarī, Abū Ja'far Muḥammad bin Jarīr, *Jāmi' al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, vol. 17, p. 5.

17. Ibn Qayyim, *I'lām al-Muqī'in*, vol. 1, pp. 12-15.

18. Ibn A'tham Kūfī, *al-Futūḥ*, vol. 1, p. 97.

19. *Tabaqāt al-Shīrāzī*, p. 42.

20. Ibn Qayyim, *I'lām al-Mūqi'in*, vol. 1, p. 12; 'Abd al-Rahim, Dr. Muhammad, *al-Madkhal ilā Fiqh Imam 'Alī ('a)*, Cairo: Dār al-Hadith, p. 22.
21. Qal'ahjī, Dr. Muhammad Raddās, *Mawsū'ah al-Fiqh al-Imam 'Alī bin Abī Tālib ('a)*, Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, p. 6.
22. *Ibid.*
23. Ibn Nadim, *al-Fihrist*.
24. Al-Rāzī, Fakhr al-Dīn, *Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, Beirut: Dār Ihyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, pp. 204-205.
25. *Ibid.*
26. Qal'ahjī, Dr. Muhammad Raddās, *Mawsū'ah al-Fiqh al-Imam 'Alī bin Abī Tālib ('a)*, Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, p. 5.
27. Marghināni, *al-Hidāyah fī Sharh Badāyah al-Mubtadī*, Beirut: Dār al-Arqam, vol. 1, p. 83.
28. *Siyar A'lām al-Nubalā'*, vol. 4, p. 394.
29. Ibn Abī al-Hadid, *Sharh Nahj al-Balāghah*, vol. 15, p.274
30. Abū Na'im Isfahāni, *Hulyah al-Awliyā'*,
31. *Tahdhīb al-Kalimāt*, vol. 5, p. 79; *Manāqib Abī Hanīfah*, vol. 73.
32. *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, vol. 2, p. 104.
33. *Dā'irah al-Ma'ārif-e Bozorg-e Islāmī* (The Great Islamic Encyclopedia), vol. 2, p. 56. Ibrāhīm al-Tabātabā (the father of Muhammad who founded the shortlived state in Kufa) was 4th in line of descent from Imam Hasan. His geneology reads: Ibrāhīm bin Ismā'il Dībāj bin Ibrāhīm bin Hasan al-Muthannā bin Imam Hasan ('a).
34. *Ibid*, p. 58. He was born in Medina and lived near Mount Rass and subsequently acquired the epithet of al-Rassi.
35. *'Umdah al-Tālib*, p. 175; *Dā'irah al-Ma'ārif Tashayyu'*, vol. 1, p. 341.
36. *Dā'irah al-Ma'ārif-e Bozorg-e Islāmī*, vol. 2, pp. 59-60.
37. *Ibid*, p. 60.
38. *Ibid*, p. 63.
39. *Ibid*, p. 63.
40. *Ibid*. p. 63; *A'lām al-Nisā'*, vol. 1, p. 14.

41. *Ibid.* p. 63.
42. *Ibid.* p. 64.
43. *Ibid.* p. 64.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 64.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 64.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 64.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 65.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 65.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 65.

Wisdom of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) – The Main Pivot of Islamic Unity

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The issue of *marja’iyyat-i ‘ilmī* for Muslims has been widely discussed and debated for centuries and its importance among the Muslims has been steadily growing as the time factor distances them from the period of the revelation of the Qur’ān and the era of the Prophet (S). Needless to say, it is of prime importance that all Muslims strive in earnest towards arriving at a common strategy of approaching this subject which plays a most pivotal role in ensuring the unity of the Islamic *ummah*. Keeping in view that the Glorious Qur’ān as well as the *sīrah* and the *sunnah* of the noble Prophet of Allah (S) are the two main unifying pillars for all Muslims, it is the *marja’iyyat-i ‘ilmī* or scholarly authority that interprets the Qur’ān and extracts Islamic laws from the Divine Book. However, Islamic scholars have comprehended certain matters from different angles and this fact has resulted in some major differences in the laws pertaining to Islamic beliefs and *fiqh*. The same problem shows up in matters concerning the Tradition of

the Prophet (S). Consequently, it is unfortunate that the *marja'iyat-i 'ilmī* is one of the most crucial issues on which Muslims have yet to agree.

This discussion focuses on the *marja'iyah* of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) in accordance with the Prophet's *sunnah*, sourcing its arguments from the Sunni encyclopedias of *hadīth*, jurisprudence, and the history of Islam.

A study of the issue of *marja'iyah* in the Qur'ān and the *hadīth* reveals that all the related texts emphasize on the *marja'iyah* of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a), and although there may be some doubtful *ahādīth* over which there is dispute among the Muslims, we have overlooked those for the purpose of this study and have instead focused on the ones on which there is agreement.

At the onset, let us refer to certain verses from the Glorious Qur'ān that confirm the indisputable authority of the Ahl al-Bayt.

1- Allah Almighty says: "...so ask the People of the Reminder (Ahl al-Dhikr) if you do not know" (16: 43 and 21: 7).

The exegesis of Ibn Jarīr al-Tabarī quotes Jābir al-Ju'fī as saying that when this verse was revealed, Imam 'Alī ('a) stated: "We are the People of the Reminder (the Qur'ān)".¹

Hārith bin 'Abdullah al-Hamdanī says:

I asked 'Alī ('a) about the verse, '*so ask the People of the Reminder*', to which his reply was: 'By Allah we are the followers of the Reminder, we are the people of wisdom, and we are the source of interpretation and revelation'.²

2- Allah Almighty says: "...none knows its Qur'ān's interpretation except Allah, and those who are firmly rooted in knowledge (*al-rāsikhūn fī al-'ilm*)..." (3: 7)

Without a doubt, this is the reference to the Ahl al-Bayt, as mentioned by different exegetes of the Holy Qur'ān, since none

were “firmly rooted in knowledge” than the “Gateway of the City of Knowledge” Imam ‘Ali ('a) and his infallible descendents.

Imam ‘Ali ('a) says in this regard:

“Where are those who falsely and unjustly claimed that they are deeply versed in knowledge, as against us, although Allah raised us in position and kept them down, bestowed upon us knowledge but deprived them, and entered us (in the fortress of knowledge) but kept them out. With us guidance is to be sought and blindness (of misguidance) is to be changed into brightness.”³

3- Allah Almighty says: “...and whoever has knowledge of the Book.” (13: 43)

Abū Sa‘id al-Khudrī is quoted as having said:

I asked the Prophet of Allah (S) who this *āyah* referred to, and he replied, ‘My brother, ‘Alī bin Abī Tālib’.⁴

4- Allah Almighty says: “Allah only desires to keep away uncleanness from you, O people of the House! And to purify you a (thorough) purifying.” (33: 33)

This *āyah* has been explained by the Prophet (S) in these words: “My Ahl al-Bayt and I are cleansed and pure of sin.”⁵ Besides, the Prophet (S) has also said: “Myself and ‘Alī, Fātimah, and Hasan and Husayn, and nine of the descendants of Husayn are pure and infallible.”⁶ This verse of purification indicates the special divine favour bestowed upon the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) by keeping them away from pitfalls and delusion, such that they serve as great human exemplars and stand out as the final word in times of dispute among secondary sources.

5- Allah Almighty says: “Say (O Muhammad to mankind): I do not ask of you any reward for it (for conveying the message of Allah) but love for my near relatives...” (42: 23)

A narration of ‘Abdullāh bin ‘Abbās mentions that when the Prophet (S) was asked who were the ‘near relatives’ in this verse

referred to, he replied: ‘Ali and Fātimah and their two sons.’⁷ Sa‘id bin Jubayr is quoted to have said: “The ‘near relatives’ are Muhammad’s (S) Household.”⁸

This verse draws the hearts and the intellects towards the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a), and stresses that a sincere feeling of loyalty towards the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) is itself the reward for the followers of this faith.

Moreover, the verse which states: “*Say: If you love Allah, then follow me, Allah will love you ...*” (3: 31), also implies that there is a direct relationship between ‘love’ and ‘obedience’.

Some of the outstanding incidents and the famous sayings of the Prophet which confirm the prime position and authority of the Ahl al-Bayt in relation to the *ummah*, after him are as follows:

1- The *Hadīth al-Kisā’* (The *Hadīth* of the Cloak) clearly defines who the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) are. Ibn ‘Abbās is quoted to have said:

“The Prophet of Allah (S) spread a cloak over ‘Alī, Fātimah, Hasan, and Husayn (‘a) and recited: ‘Allah only desires to keep away uncleanness from you, O people of the House! And to purify you a (thorough) purifying’.” Umm Salamah has said: “When the (aforementioned) *āyah* was revealed, the Prophet of Allah (S) prayed for ‘Alī, Fātimah, Hasan, and Husayn and covered them with a Khaybarī cloak and said, ‘My Lord, these are my Ahl al-Bayt, keep them away from uncleanness and keep them clean and pure.’” Then Umm Salamah asked the Prophet (S): “Am I also one of them (the Ahl al-Bayt)”, to which the Prophet answered: “You are very good, but no (you are not one of the Ahl al-Bayt).”

This *hadīth* has been quoted very widely through Umm Salamah by such people as ‘Atā’ bin Yasār, Abū Sa‘id al-Khudrī, Abū Hurayrah, Hakīm bin Sa‘d, Shahr bin Hawshab, ‘Abdullah bin Mughayrah, ‘Atā’ bin Abī Riyāh, ‘Amarah bin Ahzā and ‘Ali Zayn al-‘Ābidin. However, there is also another *hadīth* quoted through

'Āyishah which Safiyyah bint Shaybah al-'Awām bin Hawshab and Jami' bin 'Umar have narrated through 'Āyishah, which is as follows:

“The Prophet of Allah (S) left home early one morning, covering himself with a ...(sic) made of black wool. Then Hasan bin 'Alī arrived and went under that covering; then Husayn joined them, following which Fātimah, joined in their company; (and) then 'Alī, too, entered into the covering; then the Prophet (S) recited: 'Allah only desires to keep away uncleanness from you, O people of the House! And to purify you a (thorough) purifying .”

Many of the Prophet's (S) companions have narrated this *hadīth*, including Abū Sa'id al-Khudrī, Abū Barzah, Abū al-Hamrā', Abū Ya'lā Ansārī, Anas bin Mālik, Barā' bin 'Āzib, Thawbān, Jābir bin 'Abdullah Ansārī, Zayd bin Arqam, Zaynab bint Abī Salamah, Sa'd bin Abī Waqqās, Sabīh the retainer of Umm Salamah, 'Abdullah bin Ja'far, 'Umar bin Abī Salamah, 'Umar bin al-Khattāb, as well as others, and all their narrations unanimously emphasize that the Prophet (S) referred to “'Alī, Fātimah, Hasan, and Husayn ('a) as his Ahl al-Bayt”. Most of the documents related to this particular *hadīth* have been extracted from the *sihāh* of the Ahl al-Sunnah and their encyclopedias of *ahādīth*.⁹

2- The *Hadīth al-Thaqalayn*, too, confirms that the term “*itrah*” in the *hadīth* refers directly to the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) and testifies to their comprehensive *marja'iyah*. The Prophet (S) has stated: “I am leaving behind among you, two valuable things; and if you hold fast to them, you will never go astray after my departure. One of them is greater than the other. The Book of Allah, which is the divine rope that hangs down from the skies on to the earth, and my *itrah*, (which is), my Ahl al-Bayt. These two will never be separated from each other even when they return to me at the pond of *Kawthar*. Thus, beware how you treat them after I am gone.”¹⁰

The *Hadīth al-Thaqalayn* has held the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) in the same category as the Glorious Qur’ān. This *hadīth* has been quoted by thirty-three companions of the Prophet (S), including Abū Ayyūb Ansārī, Abū Dharr Ghifārī, Abū Sa‘īd Khudrī, Abū Shurayh Khuzā‘ī, Abū Qudāmah Ansārī, Abū Hurayrah, Umm Salamah, Anas bin Mālīk, Khuzaymah Dhū al-Shahādatayn, Sa‘d bin Abī Waqqās, Zayd bin Thābit, Salmān Fārsī, ‘Abd al-Rahmān bin ‘Awf, ‘Umar bin al-Khattāb, and ‘Amr bin ‘Ās.¹¹ Some Sunni scholars have deduced that this *hadīth* refers to the *marja’iyyah* of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a), only in the field of jurisprudence. According to their interpretation, the *hadīth* “does not imply political leadership, but instead, refers to leadership in the fields of jurisprudence and knowledge”.¹² In this article, we are not about to discuss the implications of this *hadīth* and shall content ourselves with the fact that both the Shi‘ite and the Sunni schools are in agreement over the supremacy of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) in the field of knowledge. According to a researcher, one hundred and eighty-five Sunni scholars and jurists have stated that the term, “*‘itrah*”, in the phrase “*kitāb Allah wa al-‘itrah*”, refers to the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) whom the Prophet had defined time and again in his explanations of the *Hadīth al-Thaqalayn* and the *Hadīth al-Kisā*.¹³

3- Anas bin Mālīk has quoted the Prophet (S) as saying to Imam ‘Alī (‘a): “After me, it will be you who will clarify matters when disputes arise.”¹⁴ This *hadīth* is a very clear proof verifying the authority of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) in matters of knowledge.

4- Salmān Fārsī has quoted that the Prophet of Allah (S) said: “The most knowledgeable person after me is ‘Alī bin Abī Tālib.”¹⁵

5- It has been recorded that the Prophet (S) had asked Fātimah (‘a): “Are you not happy that I have married you to the foremost and the most knowledgeable of the Muslims?”¹⁶

6- 'Abdullah bin 'Abbās quotes that the Prophet (S) said: "The stars in the sky save people from drowning (in seafaring) and my Ahl al-Bayt save them from discord."¹⁷

7- Abū Dharr Ghifārī quotes the Prophet (S) as having said: "Beware! my Ahl al-Bayt among the people are like Noah's ('a) Ark whoever boards it is saved and whoever stays away from it is drowned."¹⁸

8- Imam 'Alī ('a) says: "Verily, we the Ahl al-Bayt are the most knowledgeable about what Allah and His Prophet (S) have said."¹⁹

9- Imam 'Alī ('a) says: "We are the tree of Prophethood (*nabuwwah*) and the heart of messengership (*risālah*), and we are the place where the angels, descend and we are the mines of knowledge, and the fountainheads of wisdom."²⁰

10- Jābir Thamarah quotes that the Prophet of Allah (S) said: "Religion (*Dīn*) will prevail until the Day of Resurrection (or in other words), there will be twelve *khulafā'* for you, all of whom shall be from the Quraysh."²¹ 'Abdullah bin Mas'ūd is reported to have stated that some people questioned the Prophet (S) regarding the number of the *khulafā'* of the *ummah*, to which his answer was: "They are twelve in number, equal in number to the chiefs of Banī Isrā'il."²² There is a large number of *ahādīth* that can be sourced back to the various Islamic schools, all of which carry the same meaning, in spite of some apparent differences in their wordings. All Muslims unanimously agree that the number of successors, or *khulafā'*, or *umarā'* (pl. of *amīr*), or Imams after the noble Prophet (S) is twelve, all of which belong to the Quraysh.

All the aforementioned narrations that have been extracted from original Sunnī sources²³ have generally been verified on the basis of Qur'ānic *āyahs* and *ahādīth*, and hold valid scientifically.

The Sources of the Knowledge of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a)

The reliable *ahādīth* pertaining to the sources of the knowledge of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) include the following:

In explanation of the verse, “...and whoever has knowledge of the Book” the noble Prophet (S) explains that it is in reference to ‘Alī bin Abī Tālib (‘a).²⁴ And in the words of Imam ‘Alī (‘a): “I am the one who possesses the knowledge of the Book.”²⁵ Imam Husayn (‘a) says: “We are the ones who possess the knowledge of the Book and its practical explanation lies with us.”²⁶ There is also a *hadīth* of the Messenger of Allah (S) that says: “Alī will be the one who will teach people the interpretation of the Qur’ān and other matters that they are unaware of after me.”²⁷ One of the sayings of Imam ‘Alī (‘a) states: “Ask me matters concerning the Book of Allah, because there is not a single *āyah* regarding which I know not if it has been revealed in the day or the night, or whether it was revealed in the plains or the mountain.”²⁸ ‘Abdullāh bin Mas‘ūd says: “The Qur’ān was revealed upon seven letters and there is not a single letter of these which does not have an exoteric and an esoteric meaning and ‘Alī bin Abī Tālib (‘a) is the knower of the exoteric and esoteric meanings of these letters.”²⁹

Imam ‘Alī (‘a) guides the Muslims to be in communication with the Glorious Qur’ān, and in his most eloquent words says: “This is the Qur’ān, so be in communication with it, and although it will never (actually) speak in words, I am informing you to be aware that it contains the knowledge of things to come.”³⁰ The core of the matter, therefore, is that access to all the *hadīth* concerning the real understanding of the Qur’ān is only possible through the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a). This is mainly because their first source of knowledge was divine Revelation (*wahy*) and they are the sources of *marja‘iyyah* for the Muslims in the perfect extraction of the meaning of the Qur’ān.

The Prophet (S) was the second source of knowledge for the Imams (‘a). The most famous *hadīth* on this matter is: “I am the

City of Knowledge and 'Alī is its Gate, and the entrance to a city is through its gate."³¹ Another *hadīth* in this relation is: "I am the House of Knowledge and 'Alī is the Gate"³², or "I am the House of Wisdom and 'Alī is its Gate"³³. Hākīm has narrated on the authority of Buraydah Aslamī that the Prophet (S) said to 'Alī bin Abī Tālib ('a): "The Lord Almighty has commanded me to stay close to you and not to distance myself from you and to teach you so that you gain awareness, and it is your right by Allah to gain awareness; thus Allah has said: *'That we may make it unto you a Reminder, and that retaining ears might retain it.* (69: 12)"³⁴ When Imam 'Alī ('a) was questioned regarding the fountainhead of knowledge that people had forgotten, he said: "It is the very knowledge that Allah imparted to the Prophet (S), and he in turn imparted the same to me, and prayed that my knowledge be augmented and that it fill my entire being."³⁵ Some *ahādīth* mention that the Messenger (S) transferred the legacy of his knowledge to Imam 'Alī ('a) and that Imam 'Alī ('a) transferred the same to his sons Imam Hasan ('a) and Imam Husayn ('a), following which every Imam ('a) transferred the legacy on to the following Imam ('a). When Imam 'Alī ('a) had asked the Prophet (S) what he would inherit from him, the Prophet said: "The same thing that the preceding messengers had left as legacy: The Book of their Lord and the *sunnah* of their Prophethood." In a *hadīth*, Imam Ja'far al-Sādiq ('a) mentions: "The Lord taught the interpretation of the *halāl* (lawful) and the *harām* (prohibition) to His Prophet (S), and the Prophet of Allah (S) taught them all to 'Alī ('a) in one go."

Imam Muhammad al-Bāqir ('a) stresses that the knowledge in the possession of the Imams ('a) did not have any specific (worldly) source and was instead the legacy of the Prophet of Allah (S), and says: "If we had offered decrees based on our personal thoughts and beliefs, we too would have been among the damned ones; we guide people based on the guidance of the Prophet of Allah (S), and the most pure knowledge is in our possession which

we leave as legacy (for the following Imam) one after another, and which we safeguard like a precious treasure of gold and silver for its rightful heirs.”

Each Imam (‘a) thus attains his knowledge from the Imam (‘a) preceding him. And an Imam (‘a) never acquires his knowledge from anyone else. This knowledge is exclusively the legacy of the Imams (‘a) even though the Imams (‘a) are known to have passed on knowledge to some of their students based upon their aptitudes and their levels of understanding. A lot of material is available on this subject.

There is no doubt that each Imam (‘a) bears certain personal experiences during his own lifetime that that he acquires through specific practical skills. These experiences belong exclusively to the person of each Imam (‘a) and are related to the requirements of the span of the Imam’s (‘a) own specific lifetime, in turn contributing to the mutual heights of perfection of all the Imams (‘a). Thus, although all the Imams (‘a) work towards the same single purpose, the periods of the lifetimes of each one of them call for their own specific tools, approaches and responses. For example Imam ‘Alī (‘a) demonstrated great political acumen and unparalleled battle skills throughout his lifetime, right until his ultimate martyrdom, leaving behind him, the valuable experiences that had been gained from over fifty years of active involvement in politics, warfare, and social affairs through his own unique knowledge and understanding. This experience was inherited by all the other Imams (‘a), and is an important insight that throws light on a correct perception of the lives and the human-ness of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a). The Ahl al-Bayt (‘a), too, are the creations of Allah, with the main difference being that Allah has showered them with the special grace of His Love.

The fact of the matter is that exaggerated versions of the lives of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) have portrayed very unreal pictures as regards their personalities and their knowledge. These

misrepresentations have resulted in neglect and laxity among some Muslims, exposing them to the tragedies of exaggeration and amplification.

It is from this angle that Imam 'Alī ('a) made sure to emphasize on the "human" aspect of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a), stressing the facts that they do not directly possess any knowledge of the unknown and that their knowledge has been inherited from the Prophet (S), through the Grace of the Lord Almighty. Imam 'Alī ('a) says: "Knowledge of the unseen belongs exclusively to Allah, and Allah has imparted all knowledge to His Prophet (S) and the Prophet (S) in turn, imparted it to me."

Imam 'Alī ('a) always sent his curses upon the ones who were in the habit of exaggeration. The rest of the Imams ('a), too, were very against magnification and exaggeration, a clear example of which can be seen in this statement of Imam al-Sādiq ('a), who said: "By Allah! We are mere creatures who have been created and chosen by Allah and no loss and no gain lies in our hands and if there is any mercy, it is all from Him; and if we were to sin, we too would be tormented. By Allah! We do not possess any special rights over Allah and those who follow us will never lose hope in Him. We too will face death, we too will be buried, we too will be resurrected, and we too will be held responsible, and ..."

The Authority of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) in the Field of Knowledge

Interestingly, despite the differences of the various schools of theology and jurisdiction, Islamic scholars have always turned to the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) in order to confirm their beliefs in comparison to the Prophet's companions, the first generation of Muslims who followed them (*tabi'īn*) and the founders of the juristic schools. The various books on *hadīth*, *fiqh*, and history have referred widely to this fact. But for the devious and deceptive political moves of some of the rulers of the Umayyid and the Abbassid dynasties, the

Ahl al Bayt (‘a) would have most certainly continued to retain their exclusive positions within the hearts and souls of the Muslims. The misleading political moves of the rulers had spread their vicious roots so deeply within the Islamic *ummah* that they completely distorted facts and reality.

For the sake of brevity, we shall restrict ourselves to reviewing only sections of the sayings of some of the *sahābah tābi‘in* and *fuḳahā’* (jurists) on the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a). Islamic history witnessed the age of the caliphs following the times of the Prophet (S). And with all the complex uncertainties that cropped up immediately upon the passing away of the Prophet (S), Abū Bakr became the caliph.

It is a well-known fact that Abū Bakr sought the help of Imam ‘Alī (‘a) in matters pertaining to the people who turned apostates and also approached him for clarification on various religious matters.

The second caliph, ‘Umar bin al-Khattāb, most frequently referred to Imam ‘Alī (‘a) on matters pertaining to belief, jurisdiction, and socio-political issues.

‘Umar is quoted to have said to Imam ‘Alī (‘a): “O’ Abā al-Hasan (‘a)! I seek refuge in Allah from having to live in a community devoid of you”, adding, “But for ‘Alī (‘a), verily, ‘Umar would have perished.”

He also said: “O ‘Alī! You are the best in judgement and in issuing decrees. O Lord! Do not descend any difficulty upon me unless ‘Alī is beside me. O’ Abā al-Hasan! May Allah never try me with any difficulty unless you are by my side, and may He never place me in a city devoid of you; I seek refuge from any difficulty in which Abā al-Hasan is not beside me; O’ ‘Alī! May Allah not leave me alive after you.” All these pleas and appeals were because Imam ‘Alī (‘a) was the key to the solution of the most intricate of religious and jurisprudential matters that ‘Umar as well as the Muslims and non-Muslims were faced with.

It was ‘Alī bin Abī Tālib (‘a) who had advised ‘Umar bin al-Khattāb to date the Islamic calendar according to the *hijrah* (migration from Mecca to Medina) of the Messenger (S), a suggestion that ‘Umar accepted, but instead of basing the start of the New Year on 1st of Rabī‘ al-Awwal, the day the Prophet migrated, he chose the pre-Islamic tradition of Muharram. The second caliph had also approached Imam ‘Alī (‘a) for consultation during the war with the Sāsāniān and Roman Empires. Numerous books on *hadīth*, jurisprudence, and history have recorded that the situation was no different during the times of ‘Uthmān bin ‘Affān, who like the earlier caliphs, used to seek out the help of Imam ‘Alī (‘a).³⁶

Moreover, even ‘Āyishah is known to have redirected many people who approached her with questions on religious matters, to Imam ‘Alī (‘a). She would tell them to “hasten towards Ibn Abī Tālib (‘a) and ask him”, or to, “go to ‘Alī (‘a) who is more knowledgeable than I am.”³⁷ Hākīm quotes through Qays bin Abī Hāzim, that a *sahābah* by the name of Sa‘d bin Abī Waqqās had reprimanded a person who was opposing Imam ‘Alī (‘a), in the following words: “Was he [‘Alī (‘a)] not the first Muslim? Was he not the first one to offer prayers along with the Prophet (S)? Is he not the most knowledgeable of all people?”³⁸

History testifies to the fact that the most famous title used for addressing ‘Alī bin Abī Tālib (‘a) was “Imam” (leader). The same also holds true for Imam Hasan (‘a), Imam Husayn (‘a), Imam ‘Alī bin al-Husayn (‘a) as well as the rest of the Imams (‘a). It will not be out of place at this point to quote a eulogy composed by Farazdaq in favour of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a), and particularly on Imam Zayn al-‘Ābidīn (‘a), that reads:

He is from the group (the Ahl al-Bayt), whose friendship is synonymous with faith;

Enmity with them is equal to disbelief while proximity to them is the path to salvation and deliverance;

For the pious, they are the Imams (Leaders), and if we were to ask:

Who are the most excellent on Earth? The answer would be them (the Ahl al-Bayt);

After the remembrance of (the Name of) Allah, is their remembrance, which prevails over the beginning and end of matter.³⁹

Similarly, Abū Nawās has composed the following eulogy in praise of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a):

They are the pure ones with pure raiments and prayers should be offered wherever their names are invoked;

By Allah! He has not created anything of which you are not the chosen ones and He has exalted you among all His servants;

You hold lofty positions and possess the Knowledge of the Book (‘Ilm al-Kitāb) and the hidden meanings of the sūrahs lie with you.⁴⁰

However, Abū Firās Hamdānī has articulated upon the position of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) in even better words, an excerpt of which we quote below in relation with our subject of discussion:

Behold! The worst injustice has taken place against dīn and against truth; and the Fadak which was from the Messenger (S), they distributed among themselves;

... If thinkers were in power and if they had certainty of the Day of Judgement, they would never get angered but for (the cause of) Allah;

And if they were to become rulers, they would never neglect the truth;

Their homes constantly reverberate with the sounds of the Qur'ān while your homes resound with gaiety and song.⁴¹

Statements of this kind are indicative of the general belief held by the Muslims as regards the status that exclusively belongs to the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) of the Prophet. This kind of inclination was not confined to poets and the general masses, but the *fuqahā'* as well as the founders of the juristic schools, too, held the same fond respect for the Ahl al-Bayt ('a). In the words of Shāfi'ī:

On the Day of Judgement, the family of the Prophet ('a) are my excuse (for gaining Divine Mercy), and they are my means to intercession;

I am hopeful that through their mediation on the Day of Judgement, the list of my deeds is handed over to me in my right hand.⁴²

Many of the renowned scholars and jurists belonging to the various Islamic schools have conducted extensive research on the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a), and particularly on Imam Ja'far al-Sādiq ('a). Ibn 'Uqdah has recorded many of the books of these scholars.⁴³ These scholars include Mālik bin Anas, Abū Hanīfah Nu'mān, Yahyā bin Sa'īd, Ibn Jarīh, Sufyān Thawrī, Shu'bah bin Hajjāj, 'Abdullāh bin 'Amr, Rūh bin Qāsim, Ismā'īl bin Ja'far, and Ibrāhīm bin Tahhān. Abū Hanīfah has a famous saying that corroborates the statement: "If not for *fasāhah* and *balāghah* (eloquence and articulacy), verily, Nu'mān (Abū Hanīfah) would have been ruined."⁴⁴ This *fasāhah* and *balāghah* was taught by Imam al-Sādiq ('a) and Abu Hanīfah had the honour of being one of the Imam's ('a) students. All

these sayings denote the depth of the impact of the knowledge of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) in the world of Islam. Yet another example is the saying of Mālik bin Anas, according to whom:

There is no eye, there is no ear, and there is not a heart that beats which is better than Imam al-Sādiq’s (‘a); and all is with the grace of his knowledge, piety, and worship.⁴⁵

Shaykh Abū Zuhrah expresses this reality in the following words:

Abū Hanīfah always quoted Imam al-Sādiq (‘a) and used to think of him as the most knowledgeable of people in times of difficulty and he considered him as the highest authority in matters relating to *fiqh*. Mālik who was himself a teacher and a narrator, contradicted Abū Hanīfah, based on his belief that it was the flawless superiority of the Imam (‘a) as a teacher that was beyond doubt and that no one could ever precede him in attainment of merit. He [the Imam (‘a)] was far superior to all this; he was the grandson of ‘Alī Zayn al-‘Ābidīn (‘a) who was superior to all the people of Medina in every respect like graciousness, generosity, nobility, faith, and knowledge. Ibn Shihāb Zuhayrī and many other followers have been his students. Just like his father, Imam Muhammad al-Bāqir (‘a), he was the cleaver of sciences and was inundated with knowledge.”⁴⁶

Depth of the Knowledge of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) Revealed through Their Debates

The lives of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) were filled with scholarly debates and discussions. They were men of dialogue and taught the same to their followers on the basis of the Qur’ānic teachings and methods. The gatherings that were attended by the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a)

were congregations of debate, reasoning, and logical argument. These gatherings were normally motivated by various reasons and events.

Some other debates were simply held as scholarly gatherings and some were conducted at the requests of the rulers, the narrators, or the jurists, who on finding themselves ill-equipped in combating opponents, sought out the help of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a). Some writers who were present in these gatherings even compiled the proceedings of these debates in the forms of special books and used them as their sources of reference.⁴⁷ It is interesting to note in this context that never did the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) find themselves confounded or hesitant during these debates, even though some of the Imams ('a) were very young, like Imam al-Jawād ('a) who took part in highly scholarly debates while he was only nine years old. His memorable debate which made his opponent, the Mu'tazalite ideologue, Yahyā bin Aktham is found in all authoritative books. The excellence displayed by the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) in these scholarly meetings is one more factor that testifies to the fact that it was always the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) that possessed the undisputed *marja'iyah*.

The very first Imam ('a) to participate in scholarly gatherings was Imam 'Alī ('a) who mainly debated with the Jews, the Christians, and the Zoroastrians.⁴⁸ He also debated with Muslims given to dry and rigid thinking and those who opposed his leadership and disputed on this issue. Moreover, Imam 'Alī ('a) always encouraged people to ask questions regarding issues concerning their faith and its laws as well as on matters related to theoretical and practical sciences, often with the words: "*Salūnī qabla an-tafqidūnī* (Ask me before you lose me)."

Both the sons of Imam 'Alī ('a), i.e. Imam Hasan ('a) and Imam Husayn ('a), too, followed in their noble father's footsteps. The most famous debate of Imam Hasan ('a) was the one that he had with a Syrian representative of the rebel, Mu'āwiyah. That man

was carrying with him questions which had been charted out for him by Roman priests and his main intention was to put Imam ‘Alī (‘a) in an awkward situation. However, Imam ‘Alī (‘a) saw through this whole plot and, in turn, assigned Imam Hasan (‘a) with the task of confronting this man, whose questions, the Imam (‘a) skillfully answered.⁴⁹ Another famous debate of Imam Hasan (‘a) was the one he had with Hasan al-Basrī on the issue of *qadā’* and *qadar* (predestination and determination).

Let us now make a brief reference to a few examples of the debates of Imam Ja‘far al-Sādiq (‘a), including the one organized by the ‘Abbasid caliph Mansūr Dawaniqi, in which Abu Hanīfah was overpowered by the Imam’s brilliance. Nu‘mān (Abu Hanīfah) has narrated

I have never come across anyone more authoritative in knowledge than Ja‘far bin Muhammad (‘a). In one particular incident, while the Imam (‘a) was present before Mansūr, the caliph sent for me, asking me to bring along some difficult and complicated questions. I entered their presence with forty questions and found Ja‘far bin Muhammad al-Sādiq (‘a) seated to the right of the caliph. The moment my eyes fell upon the visage of al-Sādiq (‘a) I was overwhelmed with a feeling that I had never experienced before in the presence of Abū Ja‘far (Mansūr). I greeted him and he in turn gestured for me to take a seat. I then turned to look towards Mansūr, who asked al-Sādiq (‘a): O’ Abā ‘Abdullāh! This is Abū Hanīfah. He [Imam al-Sādiq (‘a)] answered in the affirmative and asked me to put forward my questions. On my part, too, I presented the questions one by one, to which al-Sādiq (‘a) would provide answers, always adding: “This is what you have to say, this is what the people of Medina say, and this is what we have to say; and people may follow us or they may follow them, and we may even be opposed by everyone”; In this manner, he provided answers to all the forty questions, forcing me to admit: Did we not

mention that the most knowledgeable of people are those who are also the most aware of the ones who are in dispute with them.⁵⁰

There was also a famous debate that took place between Imam al-Sādiq ('a) and one of the leaders of the *zanādiqah* (atheists) on the various religious sciences, during which the Imam ('a) provided answers to all their questions, as a result of which all of them accepted Islam.⁵¹

Imam 'Alī bin Mūsā al-Rizā ('a), too, had participated in a famous and lengthy debate with a group of Christian, Jewish, Sabeian and Zoroastrian scholars and thinkers, the records of which have been authenticated by historians. These scholars and thinkers were summoned by the *wazīr*, Fazl bin Sahl, on the orders of Ma'mūn, the Abbasid caliph, who asked them to hold a debate with the eighth Imam ('a) in his presence.

The outcome of this debate was that many of those scholars and thinkers converted to Islam at the hands of Imam al-Rizā ('a).⁵² At the end of the session, Ma'mūn himself put forward some questions on the various sciences to the Imam ('a).⁵³ Every answer provided by the Imam ('a) left Ma'mūn astonished and revealed the caliph's intellectual inferiority vis-à-vis the unfathomable depth of the Imam's ('a) knowledge. As a result, a great sense of fear and insecurity took hold of Ma'mūn who sensed that the Imam's ('a) presence could pose a threat to the Abbasid caliphate.

However, an even more astounding debate was the one between Imam Muhammad bin 'Alī al-Jawād ('a) and Yahyā bin Aktham, the chief justice in the court of Ma'mūn, at the time when Imam al-Jawād ('a) was merely nine years of age. This particular debate had been arranged as a result of a challenge between Ma'mūn and his courtiers, over the knowledge of Imam al-Jawād ('a). The prime motive behind this move was to overwhelm the young Imam ('a).⁵⁴ In this debate that had been organized in the presence of Ma'mūn as well as a large number of statesmen, scholars, narrators, and some elders of the Abbasid family, Yahyā

bin Aktham confronted Imam al-Jawād ('a) with a short question. The Imam ('a) gave him a rational answer that left Yahyā so completely dumbfounded that he promptly withdrew from the debate. Thereafter, Ma'mūn asked Imam al-Jawād ('a) to provide the answers to some other questions, which the Imam ('a) did, one by one. This unexpected debacle foiled the devious plot that Yahyā and the other courtiers of Ma'mūn had planned against the Imam ('a).⁵⁵

All these illustrations reveal that the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) were indeed unique in their absolute authority over all issues.

Legacy of the Knowledge of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a)

The Ahl al-Bayt ('a) have left behind a rich heritage of knowledge for the *ummah*, the immense benefits of which their followers have reaped in the past, and which they continue doing today, and shall be able to avail of even in the future. The knowledge of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) was not confined to their own times but is in fact an everlasting heritage, for all times to come - a fact that is very evident through their *ahādith*, sermons, books, and other works - the benefits of which, can be reaped through innumerable ways and means.

Notes:

1. Tabarī, Muhammad bin Jarīr, *Jāmi' al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, vol. 17, p. 5.
2. Hākīm al-Haskānī, *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl li-Qawā'id al-Tafsīl*, vol. 1, p. 432, *hadīth* n. 452; Ibn Shahr Ashūb, *al-Manāqib*, vol. 4, p. 179.
3. *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermon: 144; Ibn Shahr Ashūb, *al-Manāqib*, vol. 1, p. 285.

4. *Shawāhid al-Tanzīl li-Qawā'id al-Tafsīl*, vol. 1, p. 400, *hadīth* n. 422; Sadūq, Muhammad bin 'Alī bin Bābawayh, *al-Amālī*, vol. 3, p. 453.
5. Ibn Kathīr, *al-Badāyah wa al-Nihāyah*, vol. 2, p. 170.
6. Al-Qundūzī, Sulaymān bin Ibrāhīm, *Yanābī' al-Mawaddah*, vol. 3, p. 291, n. 9.
7. Suyūṭī, Jalāl al-Dīn, *al-Durr al-Manthūr fī Tafsīr al-Ma'thūr*, vol. 7, p. 348.
8. *Sahīh al-Bukhārī*, vol. 4, p. 1819, *hadīth* n. 4541.
9. Rey Shahri, Muhammad Muhammadi, *Ahl-i Bayt dar Kitāb wa Sunnat*, pp. 27-50.
10. *Sahīh al-Muslim*, vol. 4, p. 1873.
11. *Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 1874., vol. 3, p. 118; al-Nasā'ī, *Khasā'is Imām Amīr al-Mu'minin*, p. 150.
12. Abū Zuhrah, Shaykh Muhammad, *al-Imām al-Sādiq*, p. 199.
13. Ahmad Husayn Ya'qūb, *al-Khutut al-Siyāsiyyah li-Tawhīd al-Ummah al-Islāmiyyah*, p. 351.
14. Hākīm al-Nayshābūrī, *al-Mustadrak 'alā al-Sahīhayn*, Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 2000/1422, He says: This is an authentic *hadīth* as per the criteria set by the two Shaykhs (Bukhārī and Muslim).
15. Al-Hindī, al-Muttaqī, *Kanz al-'Ummāl*, Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risālah, 1985/1405, 5 Edition, vol. 6 p. 156.
16. *Ibid.*, vol. 6, p. 153.
17. *Al-Mustadrak 'alā al-Sahīhayn*, vol. 3, p. 162.
18. *Farā'id al-Simtayn*, vol. 2, p. 264; *Yanābī' al-Mawaddah*, vol. 1, p. 194; *Al-Mustadrak 'alā al-Sahīhayn*, vol. 3, p.163.
19. Ibn Sa'd, *al-Tabaqāt al-Kubrā*, vol. 6, p. 240.
20. *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermon: 109.
21. *Sahīh al-Muslim*, vol. 3, p. 1453; *Musnad Ibn Hanbal*, vol. 7, p. 410.
22. *Musnad Ibn Hanbal*, vol. 2, p. 55; *Al-Mustadrak 'alā al-Sahīhayn*, vol. 4, p. 546.
23. Hākīm, Sayyid Muhammad Taqī, *al-Usūl al-'Āmmah lil-Fiqh al-Muqāran*, pp. 178-179.

24. *Shawāhid al-Tanzil li-Qawā'id al-Tafsīl*, vol. 1, p. 40, *hadīth* n. 442.
25. Narrated by Salmān Fārsī, Saffār al-Qummī, Abū Ja'far, *Basā'ir al-Darajāt*, vol. 21, p. 216.
26. Narrated by Isbagh bin Nubātah, Ibn Shahr Ashūb, *al-Manāqib*, vol. 4, p. 52.
27. Narrated by Anas bin Mālik, *Shawāhid al-Tanzil li-Qawā'id al-Tafsīl*, vol. 1, p. 39, *hadīth* n. 28.
28. Ibn Sa'd, *al-Tabaqāt al-Kubrā*, vol. 2, p. 338; Suyūti, 'Abd al-Rahmān, *Tārīkh al-Khulafā'*, p. 218; Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīkh Demashq*, vol. 3, p. 21.
29. Abū Na'im Isfāhānī, *Hulyah al-Awliyā'*, vol. 1, p. 65; *Yanābī' al-Mawaddah*, vol. 1, p. 215.
30. *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermon: .
31. Narrated by Mujāhid from Ibn 'Abbās and according to Hākim al-Nayshābūrī (vol. 3, pp. 339-340, *hadīths* nos. 4695, 4696 & 4697) the sanad of this *hadīth* is authentic. Khatib Baghdādī has recorded it through four different chains (refer to *Tārīkh Baghdād*, vol. 4, p. 384, vol. 7, p. 172, & vol. 11, pp.48-49). Also mentioned by Ibn Athīr in *Usud al-Ghābah*, vol. 4, p. 22.
32. Muhibb Tabarī, *Riyādh al-Nazrah*, vol. 2, p. 193.
33. Tirmidhī, *al-Sahīh*, vol. 3, p. 299.
34. Hākim al-Nayshābūrī,
35. *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermon: 128.
36. Mālik bin Anas, *al-Muwatta'*, p. 36.
37. Al-Nasā'ī, *al-Sahīh*, vol. 1, p. 32.
38. *Al-Mustadrak 'alā al-Sahīhayn*, vol. 3, p. 499.
39. Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-A'yān*, vol. 6, p. 96.
40. 'Uyūn Akhbār al-Rizā, vol. 2, p. 143. Ibn Shahr Ashūb, *al-Manāqib*, vol. 4, p. 366.
41. *Dīwān Abī Firās Hamdānī*, pp. 197-206.
42. Ibn Hajar, *al-Sawā'iq al-Muhriqah*, p. 108.
43. Ibn 'Uqdah Zaydī, *al-Rijāl*, quoted by Sayyid Muhsin al-Amīn al-'Amīlī in *A'yān al-Shī'ah*, vol. 1, p. 661.
44. *Tuhfah al-Alūsī*, p.8;
45. *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, vol. 2, p. 104.

46. Abū Zuhrah, Muhammad, *al-Imām al-Sādiq*, p. 3.
47. Tabrisi, Fazl bin Hasan, *al-Ihtijāj*.
48. Taghlibi, 'Irāsh ah-Tayjān, p. 566.
49. *Al-Ihtijāj*, pp. 267-269.
50. *Manāqib Abi Hanīfah*, vol. 1, p. 173.
51. *Al-Ihtijāj*, pp. 331-335.
52. *Ibid.*, pp. 415-425.
53. *Ibid.*, pp. 332-425.
54. Hakīm, Sayyid Muhammad Taqī, *al-Usūl al-'Ammah lil-Fiqh al-Muqāran*, p. 183.
55. *Al-Sawā'iq al-Muhriqah*, p. 204; *Ihtijāj*, p. 444.

Exegesis of the Qur'ān – the Heritage of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a)

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In the Glorious Qur'ān, Allah has repeatedly referred to His Last Messenger (S) as the interpreter and the elucidator of His Divine Book and has clearly indicated that the main or at least one of the main purposes of the Revelation of the Qur'ān is served through it being explained for the benefit of humanity. To quote some evidences, the Glorious Qur'ān says: “...and We have revealed to you the Reminder that you may make clear to mankind what has been revealed to them, and that haply they may reflect” (16:44) or “And We have not revealed to you the Book except that you may make clear to them that about which they differ...” (16:64).

It is in this manner that the Prophet Muhammad (S), received the great and honourable responsibility of interpreting and explaining the Glorious Qur'ān from His Creator and pursued the noble task of guiding humanity by explaining the Qur'ān and its lofty meanings to mankind.

The Prophet (S) who never spoke anything without the direct consent of His Lord, time and again emphasized on the existence of a profound and inseparable relationship between the Qur'ān and his Infallible Ahl al-Bayt ('a). He, thus, insisted on conveying this message to one and all, at different times and on different occasions, such that no room for any doubt or denial remained.

The *Hadith al-Thaqalayn*

The famous *Hadith al-Thaqalayn* is one of the scores of golden maxims regarding the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) that have been inherited by us from this noble personage. The authenticity of this *hadith* is so undeniable that even if no other *hadith* of the Prophet (S) were available on the reality of the relationship between the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) and the Qur'ān, it would suffice to convince the seekers of truth into submitting to the reality of the parity between the Qur'ān and the Ahl al-Bayt ('a).

Ahmad bin Hanbal, the founder of the Hanbali school of *fiqh*, has quoted this Prophetic *hadith* from Zayd bin Arqam, the famous companion of the Prophet (S) as follows:

One day, in a place known as the Ghadir Khum situated between Mecca and Medina, the Prophet (S) halted and began to deliver a sermon. After praising the Lord, and offering some advises to those present, he said: "O' people! Know that I am indeed a human being like you, will soon receive a messenger (angel of death) of my Lord and will respond (die), but I am leaving among you two invaluable things; the first of the two is the Book of Allah, wherein is guidance and light and guidance; so take the Book of Allah and hold fast unto it." After advising and encouraging the people to hold unto the Qur'ān, the Messenger (S) added: "And (the other invaluable thing that I am leaving behind) my Ahl al-Bayt; I remind you by Allah (of your duties) concerning my Ahl al-Bayt, I remind you by Allah concerning my Ahl al-Bayt." (he repeated this sentence thrice).¹

A Few Words on the Authenticity of This *Hadīth*

Ibn Hajar bin Ahmad bin Muhammad al-Haythamī, a great Sunnī scholar, commenting on the numerous versions of this *hadīth*, says:

This *hadīth* has been narrated in numerous versions from twenty odd companions of the Prophet (S).²

He further mentions that a large number of the Prophet's companions (*ashāb*) have narrated the mentioned *hadīth* from the Prophet (S). While some of these narrators had heard the *hadīth* during the *Hajjah al-Widā'* (Farewell Pilgrimage) and on the Plain of 'Arafah, and had consequently narrated it. There were yet a number of others who had heard this *hadīth* at the memorable Ghadir al-Khum gathering. There were also some companions who said that they had heard this *hadīth* from the Prophet (S) during the last days of his noble life. Finally, another group has mentioned that it was while returning from Tā'if, that the Prophet (S) had delivered a sermon in which he mentioned the *Hadīth al-Thaqalayn*.

After reporting the existence of various narrations concerning the *Hadīth al-Thaqalayn* by a number of companions, Ibn Hajar goes on to explain the reason for their differences in terms of time and place. In his words:

All the differences that exist regarding the time and the place of the deliverance of this *hadīth* by the Prophet (S) indicates that the Qur'ān and the *'itrah* and the tie between them were so important to the Messenger (S) that he took the opportunity at various times to declare this reality to one and all.³

The late 'Allāmah 'Abd al-Husayn Aminī, the author of the monumental 11-volume work *al-Ghadīr*, writes about the authenticity of this *hadīth* in these words:

The authorities as well as the memorizers (*hāfīz*) of *ahādīth* are unanimous over the authenticity of this *hadīth*.⁴

Similarly, the late grand Ayatullāh Sayyid Husayn Burūjirdi has written these words as regards this *hadīth*:

Besides the Shi‘ite scholars (and their chains of authority to the infallible Imams), this *hadīth* has also been narrated by thirty-four of the male and female companions of the Prophet (S), and more than a hundred and eighty of the great and renowned Sunni scholars and narrators of *hadīth* (*muhaddithīn*) have quoted this *hadīth* in *sunan* books as well as in their *hadīth* compilation, along with authentic documentation.⁵

A Glance at the Contents of the *Hadīth al-Thaqalayn*

In the same manner that the authenticity of the *Hadīth al-Thaqalayn* has been indisputably verified, the contents of the *hadīth*, too, possess such a powerful and clear message that whosoever has studied it and has pondered upon it has clearly discovered the deep relation between the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) and the Qur’ān.

To keep our discussion brief, we shall quote the sayings of only a few of the Sunnī and Shi‘ite scholars on this subject:

1. After going through all the *ahādīth* containing the term *Thaqalayn*, and after scrutinizing the existing differences in the contents of the various versions of this *hadīth*, Ibn Hajar had arrived at some conclusions as regards the analyzing and interpreting of the *hadīth*. For instance, he writes:

From the numerous narrations of this *hadīth*, and particularly from such sayings of the Prophet (S) as, “Be careful how you treat these two after me”,⁶ “I advise you to be kind towards my ‘*itrah*”,⁷ and “I remind you by (of your duties) Allah concerning my Ahl al-Bayt”,⁸ one can realize that great emphasis has been laid on

extending affection towards the Ahl al-Bayt ('a), being kind towards them, and showing respect and reverence toward them.⁹

Ibn Hajar then adds:

The sayings of the Prophet (S) which mention, “Do not overtake those two and do not lag behind the two of them, in both of which cases you shall be doomed”, and “Do not try to teach them, because they [the Ahl al-Bayt ('a)] are indeed more learned than you”? Indicate that from amongst the Ahl al-Bayt ('a), those who are eligible to receive high positions and religious responsibilities hold priority over the rest. And keeping in view that the Prophet (S) had clearly announced this position in favour of the Quraysh, and since from among the Quraysh, only the members of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) possessed the highest qualities that distinguished them from the rest, therefore, the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) are more deserving and eligible than the others.¹⁰

Ibn Hajar writes in conclusion:

From all that has been mentioned thus far, it becomes apparent that the three points that have been related, viz. the emphasis on showing affection, respect, and kindness towards the Ahl al-Bayt ('a), their superiority over the others, and will hold true until the Day of Judgement.

In the *ahādith* stressing on holding fast unto the Ahl al-Bayt ('a), the point that has been indicated is that in the same manner that the Qur'ān will last until the Day of Judgement, and that the need to hold on fast unto it is eternal, the Ahl al-Bayt ('a), too, deserve to be adhered to until the Day of Judgement.¹¹

2. In the preface of his Qur'ānic exegesis, al-Shahristānī, a renowned Sunnī theologist and exegete, after expressing great happiness at the opportunity of going through and studying the unique sayings of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) as a result of which he had succeeded in discovering certain hidden secrets of the Glorious

Qur'ān, explains the relation between the *'itrah* and the Qur'ān in the following words:

[The Prophet (S)] endowed the Glorious Qur'ān to the pure bearers of his *'itrah* and the relaters from among his pure and illuminated companions. They recite the Qur'ān in a manner worthy of it and contemplate upon it, thus, the Qur'ān is the legacy of the Prophet (S) and his *'itrah* are his heirs, and they are one of the two invaluable things... (sic) The companions of the Prophet (S) were all of the unanimous opinion that the knowledge of the Qur'ān was exclusive to the Ahl al-Bayt ('a), because they had asked (Imam) 'Ali bin Abī Tālib, time and again, 'Have you the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) been bestowed with anything besides the Qur'ān', indicating that they unanimously conceded that the knowledge of the Qur'ān and the knowledge of its revelation and interpretation was exclusive to the Ahl al-Bayt ('a).¹²

3. 'Allāmah Sayyid Muhsin Amin al-'Amili has collected and written about the various ways in which the *Hadith al-Thaqalayn* has been quoted in the authentic Sunnī sources, and as regards their contents he says:

"The (numerous versions of the) *Hadith al-Thaqalayn* indicates the parity between the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) and the Qur'ān from various aspects that are as follows:

- Keeping in view that the Prophet (S) has drawn parity between the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) and the Qur'ān, and since the Qur'ān is perfect and infallible, therefore the Ahl al-Bayt ('a), too, are free from error and sin.

- Like the Qur'ān, the Ahl al-Bayt ('a), too, are the esteemed legacies of the Prophet (S) among the people.

- The command of the Prophet (S) as regards holding fast unto the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) is at par with his command to stick fast to the Glorious Qur'ān. The very fact that the Prophet issued such a command testifies to the authenticity and the validity of the sayings

and the actions of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a), if not, the need for issuing the mentioned command would not arise.

- In the same way that adherence to the Qur'ān safeguards one from going astray, the adherence to the Ahl al-Bayt ('a), too, guarantees salvation.

- Like the Qur'ān, the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) act as the channel between the earth and the heavens and are the link between Allah and His creation.

- The Ahl al-Bayt ('a) and the Qur'ān are together until the Day of Resurrection and shall never be separated.

- In the same manner that overtaking or lagging behind the Glorious Qur'ān results in going astray and in ruin, the same applies in the case of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a).

- As in the case of the Glorious Qur'ān, following the Ahl al-Bayt ('a), too, guarantees light and guidance."¹³

Ayatullah Burūjirdī's Comprehensive Analyses on the *Hadīth al-Thaqalayn*

Ayatullah Burūjirdī has arrived at certain conclusions over each of the phrases of the *Hadīth al-Thaqalayn*, which we shall discuss in several points below:

A. His Conclusions on the Phrase “*mā in tamassaktum bihimā lan-tazillū abadā*” (if you hold fast unto them you will never go astray)

Ayatullah Burūjirdī has enumerated his conclusions on this part of the *hadīth* in seven points and has then presented the comments of several Sunnī scholars, verifying his conclusions.¹⁴ According to him:

i) The trouble and disruption faced by the *ummah* following the passing away of the Prophet (S) and its need for a means of rescue is because the above-mentioned phrase implies that in the

absence of adherence to the Qur'an and the *'itrah*, the possibility of going astray lies rampant.

ii) The promise of the Messenger of Allah (S) that the Muslims would be safe from going astray and falling into error as long as they held fast unto these two pivots, holds true.

iii) The Prophetic warning against getting distanced from the Qur'an and the *'itrah* or from either of them, in which case, there would be no safety from error and misguidance.

iv) The Qur'an and the *'itrah* will last hand in hand with the *ummah*.

v) The immunity of the Qur'an from distortion and tampering as well as the infallibility of the *'itrah* and its purity from fallacy, error, and negligence, for the simple reason that emphasis has been made on following the *'itrah* and it has been held at par with the Qur'an, and especially since the command of the Prophet (S) to follow someone or something would only verify its flawlessness and purity.

vi) A total agreement that exists between the *'itrah* and the Qur'an in the presentation of laws as well as in indicating the ways of guidance, because if the adherence to either of them had held any kind of danger of error, such a command would never have been ordained.

vii) The complete and unified knowledge held by the Qur'an and the *'itrah*, regarding all the divine obligations and legal responsibilities such that it would be possible to arrive at any religious decree (in the areas of belief, law, and practical application) by referring to them.

B. His Conclusions on the Phrase “*innahumā lan-yaftariqā hattā yaridā 'alayya al-hawz*” (they will not part with each other even when they return to me at the pool)

As regards this phrase Ayatullāh Burūjirdi has enumerated his conclusions in four points and has again presented the

comments of several Sunnī scholars, verifying these conclusions. These four points are:

i) The permanence and the perpetuity of the Glorious Qur'ān and the *'itrah*: Thus, holding fast unto them is the means of salvation, for all times and in every era. A number of Sunnī scholars have mentioned this point as well. For example, in his book, *Hidāyah al-Su'adā'*, after quoting the *Hadith al-Thaqalayn*, Shihāb Dawlat-ābādī writes:

This *hadith* confirms the perpetuity of the *'itrah* till the day of Resurrection, since without a doubt there has to be a guide towards truth from among them so that those who adhere are saved from going astray.¹⁵

ii) Emphasis on following the path of the *'itrah* and the need to respect and honour them: This is because the *'itrah* is inseparable from the Qur'ān and there is an ontological bond as well as an interminable link between the knowledge, the acts, the words, the nobility and the excellence of the *'itrah* and the Qur'ān, both in this world and in the Hereafter. This is evident from the fact that although everything that the Prophet (S) uttered was through Divine guidance, in the case of this particular *hadith*, he had also said: “*akhbaranī al-Latīf al-Khabīr* (the Most Gracious the All-Acquainted has informed me) “I have the knowledge of subtleties”, which points out to the additional emphasis on the necessity of following the *'itrah*. Ayatullāh Burūjirdī has then quoted the sayings of a number of Sunnī scholars in this regard.

iii) The Prophet's (S) warning to the *ummah* of the consequences of opposing the Qur'ān and the *'itrah*: This is because through this *hadith*, the Prophet (S) has informed us that both the Qur'ān and the *'itrah* shall meet with him at the Pond of *Kawthar*, where he will inquire how they were treated by his *ummah*, after his earthly departure. In this case, too, the late Ayatullāh Burūjirdī quotes several Sunnī scholars.

iv) In the fourth point, Ayatullah Burūjirdī writes: “What is however not clear to me is whether this phrase implies that the first meeting between the Prophet (S) and the Qur’ān and the *‘itrah* only takes place on the Day of Resurrection, prior to which there is no other meeting between them, or whether it implies that on the Day of Judgement no one shall be blessed with the opportunity of drinking water from the blessed hands of the Prophet (S) and entering Heaven before actually being questioned about the way he treated the Qur’ān and the *‘itrah* and before his obedience towards them is testified.

C. As regards the phrase, “*lā tu‘allimūhum fa-innahum a‘lam minkum*”¹⁶ (Do not try to teach them for indeed they are more learned than you), too, Ayatullah Burūjirdī mentions the following seven points:

i) The necessity of learning from the *‘itrah* in order to remain immune from misguidance.

ii) The extent of the knowledge and command of the *‘itrah* on Divine laws, or else the Prophet’s (S) categorical order to ‘learn’ from them would be uncalled for.

iii) Since there is a lack of knowledge as regards all the legal obligations in anyone than the *‘itrah*, there is always a concern that learning from others would lead to misguidance.

iv) A lack of expertise on the part of others in understanding the Divine laws and in deriving them from the Qur’ān, because if people had the necessary expertise to do so, there would be no need for referring to the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) and learning from them.

v) The ineligibility of anyone, other than the members of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a), in teaching religious truths.

vi) The prohibition of referring to other than the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) for learning the Religion, as could be understood from the two points emphasized by the phrase “*lā tu‘allimūhum*” (do not try to

teach them), and “*fa-innahum a'lam minkum*” (for indeed they are more learned than you).

vii) The categorical stress on the superiority of the *'itrah* over the rest of the *ummah*, in all fields of knowledge, both religious and non-religious.

The Scope of the Exegesis of the Infallibles (‘a)

Unfortunately, as a result of the circumstances that fell upon the sources of *ahādīth* in the early centuries of Islam, even that part of the invaluable Prophetic legacy which had managed to survive with great difficulty, could not be easily recorded.

Taking into consideration the belief of the Sunnī school that only such *ahādīth* concerning Qur'ānic interpretations that can be traced back to the Prophet (S), are acceptable, the number of such *ahādīth* recorded by them have become very negligible.

In the concluding section of his famous book, *al-Itqān*, Jalāl al-Dīn Suyūti has recorded all the exegetic *ahādīth* that he has deemed authentic and which can be traced back to the Prophet (S), amounting to less than two hundred and fifty in number.¹⁷

‘Allāmah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabātabā’i, writes:

The total number of the Prophetic *ahādīth* recorded in the Sunnī sources barely reaches two hundred and fifty, many of which are weak while some are even disagreeable and unacceptable.¹⁸

On the other hand, although the Shi‘ite school considers the *ahādīth* of the twelve Imams (‘a) as the *ahādīth* of the Prophet (S), that part of the exegetic sayings of the Imams (‘a) which has managed to survive, is very negligible compared to the large number of the verses of the Glorious Qur'ān. According to ‘Allāmah Tabātabā’i:

Even if we take into consideration the number of *ahādīth* of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) that have reached us through the Shi‘ite sources - which amount to thousands in number - of which a considerable

number are reliable *ahādith*, they are however not sufficient to provide answers to the endless number of existing questions. Furthermore, there are many Qur'ānic verses about which no *hadith* has been recorded either by the scholars or by the common man.¹⁹

A study into the causes of the insufficient number of exegetic *ahādith* calls for a separate discussion. However, it could be said that a study of the prevailing political and social conditions during the lifetimes of the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) could, to a great extent, uncover the secret behind the insufficient availability of the exegetic *ahādith* of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a). As a consequence of the of enmity the rulers of the day towards the Imams of the household of the Prophet (S) and their efforts to ensure that the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) remained unknown to the masses, coupled with the prevailing ethnic prejudices and cultural deterioration of the society, the lucid tongue of the knowledge of *wahy* did not get the opportunity to express its potential. Moreover, the political seclusion imposed upon the Shiites, too, had a considerable impact on the deepening of these causes.

Anyhow, in spite of all adversity, a part of the teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a), like their exegetic interpretations for example, managed to emerge sound from all the storms and conspiracies. The great efforts of scholars as well as the memorizers of *ahādith* and the guardians of the works of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a), their invaluable legacy generally referred to as their "*hadith*-oriented exegeses" are at our disposal today. From among such works are: *Tafsīr al-'Ayyāshī*, *Tafsīr 'Alī bin Ibrāhīm Qummī*, *The Exegesis attributed to Imam Hasan al-'Askarī ('a)*, *al-Burhān*, *Nūr al-Thaḳalayn* as well as some other exegetic works.

However, unfortunately, this great legacy in which we can occasionally discover some classic sayings and expressions with powerful contents has not been able to attain its due and expected status owing to the reason that some falsities such as the

Isrā'iliyyāt or Jewish accounts, and in some cases even inauthentic *ahādīth* have penetrated into its fold. In the words of 'Allāmah Tabātabā'i:

The penetration of the *Isrā'iliyyāt* as well as forged narrations into our legacy of *hadīth* is an undeniable fact.²⁰

However, simply because of some undesirable intrusions, all the exegetic accounts which also contain authentic and irrefutable sayings cannot be discarded. Here it becomes incumbent upon the lovers of the '*itrah*, to endeavour towards providing valid rules, regulations, and criteria for the purpose of refining the sources of *ahādīth* and for separating the authentic sayings from the inauthentic ones in order to pave the path for the emergence of the pure exegetic knowledge of the Infallibles ('a).

The Role and the Importance of *Ahadīth* in Exegesis

The first and the foremost question that one needs to find an answer for, prior to re-examining the exegetic accounts, is the one regarding the role and the importance of the Prophetic Traditions, and particularly the exegetic narrations, in interpreting the Glorious Qur'ān. Furthermore, is it permissible for an exegete to employ exegetic narrations for the purpose of interpreting the Qur'ānic verses, are the Revealed Words of Allah? In any case, to what extent and manner, these *ahādīth* could be applied in the interpretation of the Glorious Qur'ān?

The other question that needs to be taken into consideration in this regard is that since most of the exegetic *ahādīth* fall into the category of the "single-narration *ahādīth*", and since such an account is mainly based on inconclusive evidence and not on certainty, could the criteria for evaluating and for validating or rejecting the exegetic accounts be the same as those that apply to the jurisprudential *ahādīth*? And if the criteria were to differ, then a great volume of the exegetic accounts would lose their validity for

the simple reason that they fall under the category of the single-narration *ahādīth*.

As discussed in its appropriate section, both the special as well as the general narrators are in unanimous agreement over the rational possibility of abiding by single-narration *ahādīth* and of their religious authenticity, even though they consider the validity to be subject to the presence of certain special conditions.

Taking into consideration the fact that most of the exegetic *ahādīth* do not fall under the category of the confirmed *ahādīth*, does there exist the possibility of employing them as sources of reference in the same manner as the jurisprudential *ahādīth*? Again, considering the fact that most of the exegetic *ahādīth* do not possess reliable documents, and even if they were to be accepted, they would certainly lack the conditions necessary to render them valid, are there any possible conditions by which these *ahādīth* could be utilized?

Regarding the first question, it could be briefly said that there do exist two viewpoints among the Shi'ite scholars on the possibility of employing these *ahādīth* for the purpose of *tafsīr*. Shaykh Tūsī, Ayatullāh Khu'ī, and some other contemporary jurists and exegetists consider it permissible to employ such *ahādīth*, while 'Allāmah Tabātabā'ī and Ma'rifat reject it.

A thorough acquaintance with the views of these scholars and an understanding of their methods of evaluating the exegetic *ahādīth* calls for a study of their works.

Views of the Advocates of the Permissibility of Employing Uncertain *Ahādīth* for *Tafsīr*

In this section, we shall initially discuss the views of some earlier and contemporary jurists and exegetists on the permissibility of employing the single-narration *ahādīth* for *tafsīr* and shall then evaluate these views in order to arrive at a conclusion.

The Views of Shaykh Tūsi

As regards permissibility in the acceptance of the single-narration *ahādīth*, Shaykh Tūsi does not differentiate between *usūl* and *furū'* since *tafsīr* falls under the category of *usūl* whereas *fiqh* falls under the category of *furū'*. According to him, the only difference is that while the employment of the single-narration *ahādīth* has taken place in *fiqh*, although permissible, the same has not happened in the case of *usūl*, which also includes *tafsīr*. In his own words:

The acceptance of single-narration account in the field of beliefs is permissible as it is considered acceptable in the sphere of *furū' al-Dīn*.²¹

Shaykh Tūsi also writes:

In my opinion a single-narration *hadīth* does not merit certitude, although it is permissible to accept such an account and the permissibility of acting in accordance to it has been approved by the *Shari'ah*, concerning obligatory actions.²²

It is however interesting to note that the Shaykh does not consider the employment of the single-narration *ahādīth* in the field of *fiqh* to be obligatory, but rather simply considers it as permissible.²²

In the preface of his valuable exegesis, *al-Tibyān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, Shaykh Tūsi, mentions that if an exegetic *hadīth* is certain or if it has a strong evidence of authenticity, it could be used to interpret a Qur'ānic verse but if the *hadīth* takes conclusive evidence, such as an inconclusive single-narration *hadīth*, it can be at its best be considered as a probable interpretation of the verse but not as the actual or true interpretation.²⁴

The Views of Ayatullah Khu'ī

Ayatullāh Khu'ī, the author of the invaluable book, *al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, after referring to the authentic sayings of the

Infallibles ('a) as one of the most important exegetic sources, explains his views on the validity of employing *ahādīth* for the purpose of *tafsīr* and its comparison with *fiqh* in a sequential order.

According to him, firstly, if the authenticity of a *hadīth* is confirmed and irrefutable, there would be no room for doubting its validity, while in the case of a weak *hadīth* that does not possess the special conditions that render its validity, it would undoubtedly need to be regarded as unacceptable.²⁵

Secondly, Ayatullāh Khu'ī refers to the existent disagreement over the validity or the invalidity of authentic *hadīth* in *tafsīr* and after quoting from the advocates of the invalidity of the above-mentioned type of narrations, he critically evaluates their views and finally concludes that there is no difference as regards the usage of such *ahādīth* in *fiqh* or in *tafsīr*. He further explains:

It could be argued that the implication of a valid single-narration *hadīth* or any other rational reasoning is that an adult individual, in case of a lack of awareness about the real decree, assumes a *hadīth* as valid and considers it as conclusive and bases his actions upon the inconclusive single-narration *hadīth*. The consideration of a single-narration *hadīth* as a conclusive one is permissible when the content of the *hadīth* is a religious decree or any other matter concerning the decree such that it is possible to take the application of the conclusive *hadīth* to be equal to that of a rational reasoning. However, if the content of the *hadīth* is not connected with action but falls in the categories of interpretation and belief, in that case, there would be no justification to replace a belief issue of certitude with an inconclusive exegetic account because in the areas of *tafsīr* and belief issues, there is no room for presumption.

As can be observed, the most important reasoning of those who refute presumption in the case of exegetic *ahādīth* is that such a presumption is permissible in the area of action while it is not permissible in issues concerning belief.

Furthermore, Ayatullāh Khu'i, through his statement "this paradox is contrary to research" considers the above-mentioned view as being incorrect and then emphasizes upon the validity of the inconclusive narrations in the two fields of *fiqh* and *tafsīr*. In the Ayatullāh's own words:

The mentioned argument is incommensurate with reality and truth because as stated in the discussion on *usūl*, the real meaning of certitude in evidences that lead to discovery of the real issue is that according to the Legislator, the evidence, although inconclusive is equal to certitude, and in this way, any valid path is at presumptive path (although not real and conscience-oriented) to knowledge, and thus anything applicable to knowledge is applicable to it as well; and as a result presumptive knowledge could be equal to conscience-oriented knowledge. Therefore, there can be no difference between the exegetic and the jurisprudential *ahādīth*.

According to Ayatullāh Khu'i the proof of this argument can be observed in the conduct of the scholars who do not differentiate between jurisprudential, exegetic, belief-based, or other works in the application of the effects of knowledge on any valid postulate.

Finally, he concludes that the fundamental condition for the acceptance of any *hadīth* either in the field of *tafsīr* or in the field of *fiqh* is that its content and its implications should not be incommensurate with the Qur'ān, the accepted Traditions, *ijmā'* (consensus among scholars), or common sense because otherwise, it would certainly become evident that the narration is forged and false despite possessing a "reliable" *asnād* and would consequently also be of no value. In this case too, there is no difference between jurisprudential and non-jurisprudential *ahādīth*.

At this point, if we compare the views of Shaykh Tūsī and Ayatullāh Khu'i, we discover that both of them believe that in the acceptance of presumptive narration, there is no difference between jurisprudential and non-jurisprudential matters. The only difference

is that Shaykh Tūsi was of the opinion that although it is acceptable to employ inconclusive narrations or postulates in non-jurisprudential matters, too, such an act has never really taken place, while the late Ayatullāh Khu'ī was of the opposite opinion.

Moreover, in the opinion of Shaykh Tūsi, these narrations could only be taken into consideration as the probable implication of a verse that is under discussion, but such a conclusion cannot be found in Ayatullāh Khu'ī's argument.

According to a contemporary jurist, Ayatullāh Fāzil Lankarani the condition for a single-narration *hadith* to be considered as valid is that it should be in connection with practical laws or in other words, it should have been expressed in relation with the verses that deal with practical laws. Consequently, he reasons out the validity of the employment of *ahādith* in *tafsir* and *fiqh* in the following words:

The reason that renders an inconclusive single-narration *hadith* valid is that it is either of a religious nature and should thus be accepted unquestioned or it has been a traditional basis for the actions of the Islamic scholars. If an inconclusive single-narration *hadith* is considered as valid because it has become a traditional basis for the actions of Islamic scholars (which is so, in the opinion of the jurist), in such case we find that the scholars have not differentiated between the employment of inconclusive *ahādith* in jurisprudential as well as non-jurisprudential matters, but rather that they have treated such *ahādith* as certain. For example, if we are certain about the upcoming arrival of Zayd, it would be acceptable for us to talk about it, even though his arrival has not yet occurred in action. Similarly, if a reliable person gives the news of the upcoming arrival of Zayd, according to scholars, it would be acceptable for the others to rely upon that news and to narrate it to others even though the action may not actually take place.

Therefore, if the validity of a single-narration *hadith* is based upon the actions of the scholars, there would be no difference in

the validity of employing such a *hadīth* in *tafsīr* and the validity of applying the apparent meaning of the Qur'ān since in such case, too, the validity is based upon the actions of the scholars, and thus as a result, just as it is possible to rely upon the apparent meaning of the verses in the *tafsīr* of the Qur'ān, it is also valid to employ a single-narration *hadīth* in the field of *tafsīr*. This would only apply in case we were to consider the reason for the validity of a “single-narration *hadīth*” in the light of the actions of Islamic scholars. However, even if we were to rely upon religious reasons like the verses of the Qur'ān as well as the *ahādīth* in order to prove the validity of a single-narration *hadīth*, there would again be no difference between the validity of employing them in *tafsīr* or in *fiqh*. For example, if we consider the reason for the validity of a *hadīth* to be the *naba'* verse it means that it is also permissible to rely upon a single-narration *hadīth* that has come through a just person and there would be no need to investigate any further.

Now if we took a careful look, we can discover that we do not have any reason to confine the applicability of the *naba'* verses merely in the areas of *fiqh* and practical laws, and rather, based upon the meaning of the verse, its application in both fields would be valid.. Therefore, there would be no justification in opposing the employment of a single-narration *hadīth* for *tafsīr*, whether the reason for its validity is the actions of the scholars or the religious reasons.²⁶

The Views of ‘Allāmah Tabātabā’i

‘Allāmah Tabātabā’i has arrived at certain exclusive conclusions on this subject which contain fresh and thought-provoking points. We can generally categorize his views on the criteria for evaluating the exegetic *ahādīth* into the two basic fields of proof (*sanad*) and “text”. In the ‘Allāmah’s opinion, the criteria for the acceptance or the rejection of a *hadīth* in *fiqh* and in practical laws are different from those in the fields of *tafsīr* and

usūl and there is a basic and fundamental difference between the two. In his response to Rashīd Rizā's argument regarding the criteria for the equal acceptance of a *hadīth*, both in the fields of *tafsīr* as well as *fiqh*, he writes:

The general view today is that if a *hadīth* has been quoted repeatedly (*mutawātir*) or if it is supported by an irrefutable evidence there would be no doubt regarding its certainty and validity and if it lacks any of these two factors, in that case provided the *hadīth* is presumptive it would be permissible to rely on it and to consider it valid in the area of *fiqh* and religious practical laws.²⁷

As can be observed, 'Allāmah Tabātabā'i considers the presumptive *ahādīth* as valid in the area of *fiqh* and religious practical laws but rejects its validity in the area of non-jurisprudential matters.

He supports his argument in the following words:

Religious certainty and validity is in the realm of matters concerning reasoning and therefore, unquestioned acting upon such a validity is permissible when a religious action with the capacity of being imitated is involved and since matters concerning belief including *tafsīr* as well as historical occurrences do not fall within the area of imitable religious acts, the question of rendering them religiously valid does not even arise. This is because it would be pointless for a Divine Legislator to grant the status of certitude to a matter regarding which someone has not attained certainty and to impose it upon him because such a religious imposition would never succeed in converting a matter regarding uncertainty exists into certainty.²⁸

From the discussion thus far, we can conclude that according to 'Allāmah Tabātabā'i, exegetic *ahādīth* are valid only when they have been repeatedly quoted and when there is certainty about them, failing which it would not be permissible to consider them as

valid and to rely upon them. On the other hand, taking into consideration that the number of exegetic *ahādīth* that lead to certainty are limited, a major chunk of the exegetic *ahādīth* are rendered unacceptable and cannot really be employed in matters of *tafsīr* since action cannot be based upon presumptive accounts. However, it would be difficult to randomly cast aside such a large number of *ahādīth* and to overlook them. Keeping this in mind, by providing certain specific definitions and outlines regarding the benefits of employing the exegetic *ahādīth* in the interpretation of the Qur'ān, 'Allāmah Tabātabā'i goes on to prove the usefulness of such *ahādīth* in the field of *tafsīr*.

Comprehensively speaking, in the opinion of 'Allāmah Tabātabā'i, the most important role that the exegetic *ahādīth* play is in the realm of the methodology of *tafsīr* and in the method of extracting meaning from the Qur'ān rather than in the actual *tafsīr*, and thus, in these *ahādīth*, one should look for the methodology for *tafsīr* not for the actual *tafsīr* itself. In other words, it must be said that prior to playing a role in the *tafsīr* itself, the exegetic *ahādīth* play an educative role and teach the exegetist the correct way of interpretation and understanding of the Qur'ān.

It could be deduced from the above discussion that the conclusion which the 'Allāmah arrived at perhaps has its roots in the fact that according to him, the interpretation of the Qur'ān by any source (including the Tradition and the *ahādīth*) other than the Qur'ān itself is not acceptable because interpreting the Qur'ān through any other source implies the dependence of the Qur'ān on other than itself in explaining and interpreting its verses and this is not commensurate with the Qur'ān being *nūr* (light), *bayān* (clear evidence), and *tibyān* (explanation).²⁹

In order to prove the non-dependence of the Qur'ān on Tradition, 'Allāmah Tabātabā'i indicates two points. The first one is: The total self-sufficiency of the Qur'ān and its non-dependence

on other than itself and what that implies. In order to prove this point, the ‘Allāmah resorts to Qur’ānic verses and writes:

Those verses of the Glorious Qur’ān that invite all mankind, including the believers and the non-believers – at the time of the Revelation and for the oncoming generations – to ponder upon and to contemplate on the Qur’ān particularly the noble verse: *Do they not then meditate on the Qur’ān? And if it were from any other than Allah, they would have found in it many a discrepancy* (4:82), clearly indicates that the seeking and thinking man can understand the teachings of the Glorious Qur’ān through thinking and meditating.³⁰

He also adds:

The Glorious Qur’ān which is made up of Words, like the other common words, is well capable of discovering the meaning of its implication and is certainly not ambiguous in that respect. Moreover, there is no external reason to conclude that the literal meaning the Qur’ān is any different from what its Arabic words imply.³¹

‘Allāmah Tabātabā’i says that the “Qur’ān is Light and is enlightening” and does not require to be explained externally. Elsewhere he writes:

The fact that the verses imply that the Qur’ān can be contemplated upon and that the contemplation leads to an understanding, and also the fact that contemplation on the Qur’ān resolves the apparent and initial discrepancies is most evident. It is obvious that if the meanings of the verses were not capable of becoming apparent, there would have been no point in thinking and meditating upon them in order to resolve their apparent differences.³²

The ‘Allāmah goes to the extent of claiming that it is also possible to extract the meaning of all the *mutashābih* verses and

therefore there is no verse in the Qur'ān whose meaning is beyond reach and the *mutashābih* verses are in fact bolstered through the *muhkam* verses. However, the *muqatta'ah* letters that appear at the beginning of some of the Qur'ānic *Surahs* cannot be accessed through words that are ordinarily used, and do not, thus, fall under either the category of *mutashābih* or *muhkam*.³³

The second point indicated by 'Allāmah Tabātabā'i is: If we were to suppose that the Qur'ān needed to depend upon the *Sunnah* (for its interpretation), this would inevitably give rise to a circular trend.

There are a large number of *ahādīth* which according to 'Allāmah Tabātabā'i have been quoted and indicate the categorical emphasis of the Prophet (S) on referring to the Qur'ān in order to evaluate the *ahādīth*, thus indicating that no meaning or understanding should be derived and accepted from the *ahādīth* unless it is possible to extract, understand, and perceive the same meaning and concept from the Qur'ān. (This means that the validity of *ahādīth* is subject to its being commensurate with the Qur'ān).

On the other hand, if we were to argue that the understanding and perception of the Qur'ān is subject exclusively to the sayings of the Prophet (S) and the Infallibles ('a), it would give rise to an unnecessary vicious circle. This is because, as explained earlier, the validity of the contents of the *ahādīth* is subject to their being commensurate with the Qur'ān.³⁴

Now the question that arises is that if the exegetic *ahādīth* are not supposed to actually interpret the Qur'ānic verses, then what is the relation between these *ahādīth* and the Qur'ān and its *tafsīr* and what could we expect from them? In the opinion of 'Allāmah Tabātabā'i, the role of Tradition, including the *ahādīth*, in respect to the Qur'ān and its interpretation can be divided into two parts:

1. The Educative Role of Tradition in the Interpretation of the Qur'ān: As is evident from the arguments put forward by

the ‘Allāmah, the foremost role played by the *Sunnah* in the interpretation of the Qur’ān is its educative role which imparts the method of a systematical understanding and perception of the Qur’ānic verses³⁵ and teaches man how to extract the teachings of the Qur’ān. In the words of the ‘Allāmah:

It is the duty of the exegetist to study and ponder upon the *ahādīth* of the Prophet (S) and the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) regarding the interpretation of the Qur’ān and to acquaint himself with their methodology and to subsequently begin the interpretation of the Qur’ān on the basis of the instructions of the Book and the *Sunnah*.³⁶

In other words, in the opinion of ‘Allāmah Tabātabā’ī the Prophet (S) and the Infallible Imams (‘a), act as teachers that prepare the minds of their students for grasping matters that are otherwise difficult to understand, and in this way they make it easier for them to access the Qur’ānic truths. They do not however give them ready-made answers.³⁷

Elsewhere he writes:

The status of the Prophet (S) and his Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) as regards the Qur’ān is the status of the infallible teachers that have never erred in their teachings....³⁸

2. The Imparting of Details: The task of providing details of the religious laws and practices as well as the details of the various accounts and other matters related to the Day of Judgement, which cannot be directly found in the text of the Qur’ān, is vested upon the *ahādīth*.³⁹

Elsewhere he writes:

What has been discussed thus far (as regards the non-dependence of the Qur’ān on Tradition) does not contradict the argument that the Prophet (S) and the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) held the responsibility of imparting the details of the religious

laws and practices that are not directly present in the apparent text of the Qur'ān.⁴⁰

In other words, the 'Allāmah means that what has been emphasized upon and proved with reasons and evidences about the non-dependence of the Qur'ān on other sources does not include such issues as the Resurrection and the Day of Judgement as well as the details of the Qur'ānic accounts and practical laws because awareness of these matters can only be obtained through an Infallible ('a) and they should be referred to in this regard. This does not, however, refute the fact that the Qur'ān is independent in conveying its message because the above-mentioned issues, by their very nature, call for an explanation from those who "know" (*Ahl al-Dhikr* or the *Ahl al-Bayt*), otherwise, the Qur'ān does not require other sources to convey what it has to impart.

The views of 'Allāmah Tabātabā'i can be summarized as follows:

- The degree of validity of the exegetic *ahādīth* differs from that of the jurisprudential *ahādīth*.
- Acting upon uncertain *ahādīth* is permissible in *fiqh* but is not permissible in *tafsīr*.
- It is pointless to expect non-Qur'ānic sources (including *ahādīth*) to be able to interpret the Qur'ān.
- The exegetic *ahādīth* teach the methodology of *tafsīr* and do not play a purely interpretive role.
- Reference to exegetic *ahādīth* is for the purpose of discovering the details of Qur'ānic accounts, the practical laws, details of the Day of Judgement and such matters.
- Since the presumptive exegetic *ahādīth* do not have certain or valid documents, employing them for the purpose of the interpretation of the Qur'ān is only permissible if and when their contents are commensurate with the teachings of the Qur'ān.

The Views of Shaykh Hādī Ma‘rifat

Like ‘Allāmah Tabātabā’i, a contemporary research scholar of Iran, Shaykh Muhammad Hādī Ma‘rifat, too, believes that the exegetic narrations should not be evaluated on the basis of their documents (*asnād*) because according to him, there is a fundamental difference between jurisprudential *ahādīth* and the exegetic *ahādīth* and the manner in which they are evaluated.⁴¹ He says.

In the Ma‘rifat’s view, the difference between *fiqh* and *tafsīr* is that the extraction of practical laws and obligations that take place in *fiqh* is connected to the action and the behaviour of the adult follower and a jurist is obliged to make a systematic perception and understanding of the practical laws and to erect them on firm bases. Gaining certainty in matters concerning the *furū’* (practical religious laws), through presumption and postulates is an acceptable practice and leads to a rational or religious validity even if it does not reach the level of certitude. This is because some of the postulates possess rational or religious validity in which case they give rise to religious obligations. However, the methods of attaining certitude in *tafsīr* and in historical matters differ with what was mentioned as regards *fiqh* because, basically in the matters of *tafsīr* basically, the question of imitation which fall in the realm of faith and belief is meaningless. Since ‘*tafsīr*’ means attaining clarification of apparently ambiguous terms, whenever such ambiguity is eliminated and the meaning of the term becomes apparent it leads to acceptance, otherwise it is not permissible to blindly adopt the meaning or the interpretation of a verse by imitation. In the words of Shaykh Ma‘rifat himself:

In the area of *tafsīr*, history, and belief, the single-narration *hadīth* is of no value since such a *hadīth* does not lead to knowledge, whereas what is necessary in these areas is certain knowledge and the single-narration *hadīth* lack this quality.⁴²

As regards providing the criteria and methodology of evaluating exegetic and historical *ahādīth*, Ma'rifat gives weightage to the text and the textual evaluation of the *hadīth* as a suitable method.⁴³

He then continues:

If the contents of a *hadīth* are such that they help in clarifying the apparent ambiguity of a verse that is under discussion, in such case, the validity of the *hadīth* is testified, otherwise there seems to be no justification for acting upon the *hadīth*.⁴⁴

Finally, he lays down certain conditions for accepting a *hadīth* for the purpose of *tafsīr*, which testify upon the validity of the *hadīth*. These conditions are:

- a) The availability of the *hadīth* in a reliable source.
- b) The reputation of the narrator as being honest and truthful in quoting *ahādīth* or at least his being free of an unreliable reputation.
- c) The firmness and wholesomeness of the contents of the *hadīth*, such that they can remove all doubt or they can add to the knowledge of the exegetist in the interpretation of a verse.
- d) Commensuration with irrefutable rational or religious fundamentals.

Ma'rifat concludes that if a *hadīth* has an apparent chain of *sanad* weak document but if it possesses the other conditions that render it valid, there is no barrier to the acceptance of such a *hadīth*.⁴⁵

An Evaluation of the Various Viewpoints

The discussion in the second part of this article was on the permissibility or the non-permissibility of acting upon the speculative and uncertain *ahādīth* in the area of *tafsīr*. At this juncture, the following points concerning the differences presented by the various viewpoints may be extracted:

1. It appears that the disagreements over the permissibility or the non-permissibility of acting upon the speculative or conjectural *ahādīth* in the area of *tafsīr* can only have theoretical value which is negligible. This is mainly because the theoretical value of these differences in opinion surface only as regards the inconclusive exegetic *ahādīth* that are very few in number and many of them either possess no *asnād* or hold weak *asnād*. Moreover, many of them are so obviously weak that by referring to the sources of the *hadīth*-based exegesis their weakness is exposed.

2. The evaluation of the text and the contents of the exegetic *ahādīth* which is popularly referred to as “the presentation of *ahādīth* to the Qur’ān and confirmed *Sunnah*” is accepted by the advocates of both the viewpoints and this becomes evident in the writings of Ayatullāh Khu’ī as well as ‘Allāmah Tabātabā’ī and Shaykh Ma’rifat. This shared view as regards the referring of the *ahādīth* to the Qur’ān testifies that the most reliable means for benefitting from such *ahādīth* is the evaluation of their texts and their contents especially since, as mentioned earlier, the number of the *ahādīth* that possess valid *asnād* is very negligible.

3. The advocates of both viewpoints have special regard for the exegetic *ahādīth* in the matters of interpretation of the Qur’ān. For example, Shaykh Tūsī who did not support acting upon these *ahādīth* has used them in his exegesis and by employing them has explained many an exegetic point. Of course, it seems that if the contents and text of the exegetic *ahādīth* are not incommensurate with the Qur’ān, they manage to rise above the categories of presumption.

Similarly, in his exegesis ‘Allāmah Tabātabā’ī pays special attention to *ahādīth* and at the end of the interpretation of one or a few verses, he includes a special section under the title “*hadīth*-based discussion”, in which he quotes the *ahādīth* related to the concerned verses and examines, analyses and critically evaluates them. On many occasions, he clearly arrives at exegetic points with

the help of these *ahādīth* although he refers to a large part of them as an evidence for proving a point.

Notes

1. Ahmad bin Hanbal, *Musnad*, Dār al-Fikr li-Tibā'ah wa al-Nashr, along with the notes on selected parts of *Kanz al-'Ummāl*, Vol. 4, pp. 367-371. This *hadīth* has been recorded in many sources of *ahādīth* of both the Sunnī and Shi'ite schools in different versions some of which are mentioned here:

Bayhaqī, *al-Sunan al-Kubrā*, Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah, 1413 AH (1992), vol. 2, p.148, *Kitāb al-Salāh*, Chapter on "Ahl al-Bayt"; Dārimī, *al-Sunan*, Cairo: Dār al-Fikr, 1398 AH (1978), Vol. 2, p. 433; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm*, Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah, 1402 AH (1982), Vol.3, p. 485; Tirmidhī, *al-Sunan (al-Jāmi' al-Saghīr)*, edited by 'Abd al-Rahmān Muhammad 'Uthmān, Second Print, Dār al-Fikr, 1394 AH, vol. 5, pp. 327-329, Chapter on the virtues of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a), *hadīth* No. 3874-6; Ibn Athīr, *Jāmi' al-Usūl fī Ahādīth al-Rasūl*, Beirut: Dār Ihyā al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1403 AH, Vol. 1, p. 186; Hākīm Nayshābūrī, *al-Mustadrak 'Alā al-Sahīhayn*, first print, compiled by Mustafā 'Abd al-Qādir 'Atā, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, Vol. 3, p. 161, *hadīth* No. 4712; al-Muttaqī al-Hindī, *Kanz al-'Ummāl*, Beirut: Mu'assisah al-Risālah, 1405 AH, Vol. 1, p. 172; al-Qundūzī Hanafī, *Yanābī' al-Mawaddah*, Beirut: Mu'assisah al-A'lami, 1418 AH, p. 296; Shaykh al-Tūsī, *al-Amālī*, Baghdad: Manshūrāt al-Maktabah al-Ahliyyah, 1384 AH, p. 361, Saffār, Muhammad bin Hasan bin Farrūkh, *Basā'ir al-Darajāt*, Tehran, Mu'assisah al-A'lami, 1983, pp. 432-434; Shaykh al-Sadūq, *'Uyūn Akhbār al-Rizā ('a)*, second print, edited by Sayyid Mahdī Husaynī Lājiwardī, Zindigī Press, Published by Rizā Mashhadī, Vol. 1, p. 57; Majlisī, Muhammad Bāqir, *Bihār al-Anwār*, Beirut: Dār Ihyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1403 AH, Vol. 89, p. 3.

2. Haythamī, Ahmad bin Hajar, *al-Sawā'iq al-Muhriqah*, Egypt: al-Matba'ah al-Maymaniyah, 1382 AH, p. 136.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Amīnī, 'Abd al-Husayn, *al-Ghadīr*, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Arabī, Vol. 6, p. 330.
5. Tabātabā'ī Burūjirdī, Husayn, *Jāmi' Ahādīth al-Shī'ah*, Qum: al-Matba'ah al-'Ilmiyyah, 1399 AH, Vol. 1, p. 20.
6. Timidhī, *al-Sunan*, Vol. 5, p. 662, *hadīth* No. 3788, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah.
7. Dārimī, *al-Sunan*, Vol. 2, p. 423.
8. *Sahīh al-Muslim*, *hadīth* No. 2408.
9. Ma'rifat, Muhammad Hādī, *Ahl al-Bayt fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, Tehran: The Ahl al-Bayt ('a) World Assembly, p. 13.
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
12. Shahrīstānī, Muhammad bin 'Abd al-Karīm, the manuscript of the book *Mafātīh al-Asrār wa Masābīh al-Abrār*.
13. Amīn al-'Amīlī, Sayyid Muhsin, *A'yān al-Shī'ah*, Beirut, Dār al-Ta'āruf lil-Matbū'āt, Vol. 1, pp. 370-371.
14. Tabātabā'ī Burūjirdī, Husayn, op. cit., Vol. 1, pp. 62-73.
15. *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 75.
16. *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 77-82.
17. Suyūṭī, Jalāl al-Dīn, *Al-Itqān*, Qum, Manshūrāt al-Razī, pp. 245-300.
18. Tabātabā'ī, Muhammad Husayn, *Qur'ān dar Islām*, Qum, Islāmī Publications, p. 62.
19. *Ibid.*
20. Tabātabā'ī, Muhammad Husayn, *al-Mizān*, Vol. 12, p. 112.
21. Ma'rifat, Muhammad Hādī, *al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufasssīrūn*, The Razawī University of Islamic Sciences, Vol. 1, p. 478.
22. Tūsī, Muhammad bin Hasan, *al-'Uddah fī Usūl al-Fiqh*, p. 105.

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23. *Ibid.*, p. 100.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 108.
25. Tūsi, Muhammad bin Hasan, *al-Tibyān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, Vol. 1, p. 8.
26. Khu'i, Abū al-Qāsim, *al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, pp. 397-400.
27. Fāzil Lankarāni, *Madkhal al-Tafsīr*, Qum: The Office of the Islamic Propagation, pp. 173-176.
28. Tabātabā'i, Muhammad Husayn, op. cit., Vol. 10, p. 351.
29. Tabātabā'i, Muhammad Husayn, *Qur'ān in Islām*.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
31. Tabātabā'i, Muhammad Husayn, *al-Mizān*, Vol. 3, p. 84.
32. Tabātabā'i, Muhammad Husayn, *Qur'ān in Islām*, p. 24.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 60.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 37.
36. Tabātabā'i, Muhammad Husayn, *al-Mizān*, Vol. 3, p. 85.
37. It is to be mentioned here that 'Allāmah Tabātabā'i, has presented a part of this discussion to prove the validity of the implication of the verses and their meanings and the part to prove the necessity of interpreting the Qur'ān through Qur'ān.
38. Tabātabā'i, Muhammad Husayn, *Qur'ān in Islām*, pp. 63-64.
39. Tabātabā'i, Muhammad Husayn, *al-Mizān*, Vol. 3, p. 85.
40. Tabātabā'i, Muhammad Husayn, *Qur'ān in Islām*, p. 60.
41. Tabātabā'i, Muhammad Husayn, *al-Mizān*, Vol. 1, p. 84.
42. Tabātabā'i, Muhammad Husayn, *Qur'ān in Islām*, pp. 24-25.
43. Ma'rifat, Muhammad Hādī, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 31.
44. *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 32.
45. *Ibid.*

Imam ‘Alī (‘a), the Source of Authentic Qur’ānic Knowledge

By: Ahmad Turābī

Translated by Mahdī Chamanzār

Prophet Muhammad (S), whose heart and soul brimmed with Divine Revelation, had, since the initial days, a very close and dear companion, who was a source of peace and serenity to his ethereal spirit.

History, in spite of its narrow and biased attitude in recording truths and realities and its distortion of facts, was unable to ignore the name and qualities of that sincere companion of the Almighty’s Last Prophet or to undermine his unparalleled virtues.

Indeed, the name ‘Alī (‘a) appears along that of the Prophet and any reference to the Holy Qur’ān throughout the history of Islam. As confirmed by authentic sources, he was the first to acknowledge the prophethood of Muhammad (S). So deep were the bonds between the two cousins –despite the age gap of 30 years – that he spent more time with him than with any of his brothers. He was, actually, raised by the Prophet (S) and imbibed the divine source of knowledge and virtue through him. He personified the

morals and wisdom of the Prophet. From the very day that his father Abū Tālib had entrusted him to the care of the Prophet, there is no instance of any separation between these two chosen ones recorded in history, except for a few special occasions. Of these, mention could be made of *Laylah al-Mabit*, when Imam ‘Ali (‘a) was asked by the Prophet to sleep in his bed so that he could migrate from Mecca to Medina, undetected by the infidels hovering around the house. The other two occasions are the expedition which the Prophet undertook to Tabuk and assigned him to stay in his absence in Medina as his deputy –citing the *Hadīth al-Manzilah* on the relationship between Moses and Aaron– and his despatch to Yemen before the Farewell Pilgrimage.

Thus, apart from these exceptions, one finds Imam ‘Ali (‘a) always at the side of Prophet Muhammad (S) in the same manner as the latter was inseparable from the Holy Qur’ān and Divine Revelation. This association between the two wasn’t the mere bond of kinship or the Prophet’s repayment of the favours of his loving uncle and guardian Abū Tālib. Rather it was due to the striking resemblance the two cousins shared in spiritual qualities and intellectual perceptions as divine providence had decreed. Years later, Imam ‘Ali (‘a) in his own inimitable and unmatched eloquence was to describe this relationship as follows:

You do know my position of close kinship and relationship with the Messenger of Allah. When I was only a child he took me over. He found neither lie in my speaking, nor weakness in any act... From the time of his weaning Allah had put a great angel with him to take him along the path of high character and good behaviour throughout day and night, while I used to follow him like a young camel following in the footsteps of its mother. Every day he used to demonstrate to me some of his high traits and commanded me to follow. Every year he used to go in seclusion to Mount Hira where I saw him but no one else saw him... I used

to see and watch the effulgence of divine revelation and the fragrance of prophethood.¹

The companionship between the two was so intertwined and was at such a peak of spiritual perception that the Prophet said:

O 'Alī! You see all that I see and you hear all that I hear, except that you are not a Prophet, but you are a vicegerent and you are surely on (the path of) virtue.²

Two Perspectives of Imam 'Alī ('a)

Although history has recorded the important role and personality of Imam 'Alī ('a) in firming up the foundations of Islam in those critical moments of the divine message, it is distressing to note that historians have not paid the required attention to his transcendental characteristics which continue to loom larger than life and extend beyond the realm of valour, magnanimity, piety, knowledge, wisdom and perception.

There are two broadly defined views in the history of Islam with respect to the position and status of Imam 'Alī ('a): the perspective of those who claim to follow the *sunnah* of Prophet Muhammad (S), and the perspective of those who call themselves Shi'ite –by stressing that the *sunnah* would remain incomplete if the Prophet's practice of love and affection for his Ahl al-Bayt is not duly emphasized.

The Ahl al-Sunnah see Imam 'Alī ('a) as a valiant hero who decisively defeated the roughnecks of Arabia from among the unbelievers and hypocrites, and whose matchless sword (*dhū al-fiqār*) never faltered in the defence of the person of the Prophet and the prestige of Islam. But in their view, Imam 'Alī ('a), although a brave, fearless and magnanimous warrior, lacked knowledge of politics and statecraft like the Umayyids, to extend the physical boundaries of Muslim lands through wars, increase state coffers by way of taxation, booties and spoils of war, and crush any signs of dissent in the embryonic stage.

The viewpoint about the Imam by those claiming to be his devotees also falls short of adequate perception. The main axis of belief of this group is that since the Commander of the Faithful (*Amīr al-Mu'minin*) and the Leader of the Pious (*Imam al-Muttaqin*) decided against use of force for his rights after the Prophet, despite being the most worthy person for the caliphate and was subsequently deprived of political authority, he should be considered as an oppressed saint and should thus be mourned for.

However, the shortcomings of these two points of view do not imply they're wrong. Rather, they should be called as inadequate attempts to fathom the fathomless ocean. Without the least doubt, Imam 'Alī ('a) was a matchless warrior and had no peers as regards the caliphate, but neither of these two viewpoints, reflect the essence of his unique and extraordinary characteristics.

For Prophet Muhammad (S) he was the closest, the dearest, the most reliable and the highly respected confidant and companion, but not simply because of his bravery, piety, knowledge or judgement; rather, because he had full qualities of prophethood although he was not a prophet. The Almighty Creator had granted him the perception to see the signs of revelation to his cousin the Seal of Prophets, yet it was Divine Will that he was not Allah's Messenger. Imam 'Alī ('a) was in fact the Interpreter of the Holy Qur'an and the Testifier to its Truth, as taught by Prophet Muhammad (S), and this was the greatest privilege for him. This is why he would repeatedly urge people:

Ask me before you lose me (forever). By Allah! There is no *āyah* in the Qur'an except that I know regarding whom it was revealed and where it was revealed, whether in the plain or on the mountain. Indeed My Lord has granted me a perceptive heart and an eloquent tongue.³

The Imam's Knowledge of the Holy Qur'ān

Islamic scholars of various schools have focused on the fact that while the Holy Qur'ān is the greatest miracle presented to mankind for all time by the Almighty's Last Messenger, Prophet Muhammad (S), Imam 'Alī ('a) enjoys the honour of being the most knowledgeable of the companions in respect to the secrets and mysteries of Allah's Revealed Word. Thus, he is the most merited and praiseworthy human being after the Prophet.

This is confirmed by the wise and eloquent speeches as well as the egalitarian practices of Imam 'Alī ('a), which continue to stand out as exemplary behaviour for humanity. For instance, although he emphasizes his undisputable right for the caliphate in view of the fact that he was the publicly proclaimed deputy of the Prophet and denounces the incompetent for usurping what did not belong to them, he is so magnanimous that he is prepared to overlook his right of leadership in order to avoid dissension at that critical juncture of Islamic history when the neo-Muslims could well have turned back to idolatry. However, he deems it highly crucial to continue his presence in the intellectual and social scenes by expounding the principles of Islam and interpreting the meaning and purport of *āyahs* of the Holy Qur'ān. A glance at *hadith* literature and historical narratives including his own sermons and letters, reveal that throughout the twenty-five years of his detachment from political and administrative issues, Imam 'Alī ('a) never felt unconcerned about the affairs of the *ummah* and anxiously invited Muslims to properly learn the meaning of the Holy Qur'ān. In one instance he calls on people as such:

O people! Ask me (about any matter), since after me you will never find anyone more knowledgeable than me to pose questions. Neither will you find anyone more knowledgeable than me about what is between the two covers (the Holy Qur'ān). So ask me.⁴

On another occasion he says:

Surely, the Almighty Allah has honoured me, from among the companions of the Messenger of Allah, with the knowledge of the abrogator (*nāsikh*) and the abrogated (*mansūkh*), the clear (*muhkam*) and the allegorical (*mutashābih*), and the specific (*khāss*) and the general (*‘amm*). And, this is Allah’s favour to me and to His Prophet.⁵

In the book *Tārīkh Dimashq*, we come across the words of Ibn Shabramah who says:

No one but (Imam) ‘Alī bin Abī Tālib (‘a) was able to assert on the pulpit (publicly) that he could answer any question and explain any subject with respect to the contents of the Holy Qur’ān.⁶

In *Manāqib Al-i Abī Tālib*, Ibn Shahr Ashūb quotes al-Sha‘bi as saying:

There is no one after the Messenger of Allah (S) more knowledgeable than (Imam) ‘Alī (‘a) with respect to the Holy Qur’ān.⁷

‘Abdullah bin ‘Abbās, who is considered a well-known exegete of the Holy Qur’ān of the early days of Islam, has been quoted in the book *al-Nihāyah fī Gharīb al-Hadīth* as emphasizing:

My knowledge of the Qur’ān in comparison with (Imam) ‘Alī (‘a) is like a small pond in front of a fathomless ocean.⁸

Mansūr bin Hāzim, a companion of Imām Ja‘far al-Sādiq (‘a) citing a relatively long report which he presented to the Imam for soliciting his views regarding debates with various scholars, says as follows:

I asked the people: Are you aware that Prophet Muhammad (S) was Allah’s proof or authority (*hujjah*) to mankind? They replied in the affirmative. I asked: Who is Allah’s *hujjah* among the *ummah* after the passing away of the Prophet (S)? They said: the Qur’ān. I contemplated on the Holy Qur’ān and realized that even

groups harbouring doubts about Divine Revelation, such as the Murji'ah, fatalists and atheists despite their disbelief in the Qur'ān never hesitate to cite verses from the Qur'ān in their paradoxical arguments, in order to overwhelm their antagonists! Hence, I observed that the Qur'ān without a guardian and correct interpreter can not be referred to. So I questioned them: Is there any criteria in this regard to expound the correct interpretation of the Holy Qur'ān? They said: 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ūd, while 'Umar and Huzayfah also have some knowledge of the Qur'ān! I enquired: Did they have thorough knowledge of the Qur'ān and were able to answer all relevant questions? They replied with one voice: No! On several instances questions were posed and they were unable to reply; however, the only person who has never left any question concerning the Qur'ān unanswered, was (Imam) 'Ali ('a).⁹

Imam 'Alī ('a), the Source of All Authority

The interpretation of the Revealed Word of God or Exegesis of the Holy Qur'ān is traced to Imam 'Ali ('a). He is considered the indisputable authority in this field. In fact, as scholars testify, he developed this science expounded to him by the Prophet and passed it on to his disciples after creating various branches out of it. A review of the exegeses of the Holy Qur'ān reveals that he is the ultimate source for most of the authentic explanations. He bequeathed this science to his cousin 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas, who on being asked to compare his own knowledge with that of Imam 'Alī ('a), said:

It is like a raindrop in comparison with the all-encompassing ocean.¹⁰

In the book *Matālib al-Su'ūl* it is written:

Among the Islamic *ummah* 'Abdullah bin 'Abbās is reputedly the pioneer and the foremost exegete of the Holy Qur'ān, yet he

was a student and follower of (Imam) ‘Ali (‘a) and acquired knowledge from the Imam.¹¹

Imam ‘Ali (‘a) & Practical Implementation of the Holy Qur’ān

The Imam, in word and in practice, showed that his emphasis on his right of leadership and his position of being the Testamentary Legatee (*wasī*) of the Prophet was not an ambition to gain power and political authority. Rather, it was for the practical implementation of the Holy Qur’ān in society as intended by Allah and Prophet Muhammad (S), since during every military encounter Imam ‘Ali (‘a) cherished nothing but martyrdom for the cause of Islam. His famous saying: “By Allah the Son of Abi Tālib is more familiar with death than an infant with the breast of its mother,”¹² stands out as firm testimony in this regard. It is also worth recalling that the day when the masses fed up with decades of injustice and distortion of the spirit of Islam, came begging at his doorstep to take on the reins of political authority, Imam ‘Ali (‘a), after initial refusal said that he has decided to accept the caliphate only because of the fact that it is the duty of the learned and the capable to duly discharge their responsibilities with respect to the oppressed people.

He says in this regard:

Behold! By Him who split the grain (to grow) and created living beings, if people had not come to me and supporters had not exhausted the arguments and if there had been no covenant of Allah with the learned to the effect that they should not acquiesce in the gluttony of the oppressor and the hunger of the oppressed I would have cast the rope of caliphate on its own shoulders, and would have given the last one, the same treatment as to the first one. They you would have seen that in my view this world of yours is no better than the sneezing of a goat.¹³

In another instance, once when he was mending his shoes during his caliphate, he asked one of his companions of the worth of his wornout footwear and on being said that it was worth nothing, he answered:

This matter of caliphate is even more worthless for me than these worn out shoes, if I am not able to support the oppressed against the oppressors!

What was then the objective of Imam 'Alī ('a), when following the passing away of Prophet Muhammad (S) and the scandalous event of Saqifah Banī Sā'idah, he solicited the testimony of the *Ansār* and the *Muhājirīn* for his right to the caliphate?

What made the Imam deliver that memorable and moving sermon called *Shiqshiqiyyah* in which he has denounced the misrule of his predecessors and questioned their legitimacy to the caliphate?

How is it possible to justify the Battles of Jamal and Nahrawān and the War of Siffin that the Imam fought against dissenters as Caliph of the Islamic state?

The answers to these questions are not much difficult for those who are familiar with the position and personality of Imam 'Alī ('a). Indeed, in the Imam's view, the caliphate was in essence nothing more than a task to be fulfilled, and he only regarded it as a means to promote the Holy Qur'ān and promulgate the Divine laws in society for the benefit of mankind. It is beyond any question that the caliphate was his right in view of the fact that he was the most knowledgeable about the Holy Qur'ān and the principles of religion, and was blessed with the wisdom to foresee the outcome of affairs. In this respect, he has said:

I am more cognizant than any of you about the Book (Qur'ān) and the *sunnah*, more perceptive of religion than any of you and

more knowledgeable than any of you regarding the consequences of affairs.¹⁴

It was not due to arrogance but because of solid and indisputable proofs that Imam ‘Ali (‘a) considered himself as Manifestation of Qur’ānic verses, and saw his perception, will and words, as the words, views and will of the Book of Allah. This is the very reason why, during the events of Siffin when the deceitful lifting of the Holy Qur’ān on spearpoints by the forces of Mu‘āwiyah had misled a part of his own forces to think that they were wrong in fighting fellow-Muslims, the Imam reminded to them:

I am *the Qur’ān al-Nātiq* (Vocal or Speaking Qur’ān)... This is *Kitāb Allah al-Sāmit* (Silent Book of God), and it is me who explains and interprets it. So hold fast to the *Kitāb Allah al-Nātiq* (Vocal Book of God).^{15&16}

Undoubtedly, such statements could only be expressed by Imam ‘Ali (‘a). He was witness to the revelation of the Holy Qur’ān as well as the eloquent expressions of the Prophet. He demonstrated the practicability of the divine *āyahs* and the *sunnah* of the Prophet, not for any worldly objective, but to pave the ground for spreading the genuine precepts of Islam and bringing about justice in society.

Imam ‘Ali (‘a), although privileged with such a great and highly significant position and status, lived a very simple life that measured to the standard of the poorest of people in society. That’s why, his speech and his silence, his resentment and his contentment, his deed and his word, his consent and his admonishment, were all manifestations of Allah’s will. He was indeed, the living Qur’ān, since his life mirrored the practical interpretation of the divine *āyahs*.

Alas! His detractors deprived him of the chance to promote the Holy Qur’ān in its entirety and explain more clear the rule of

religion in society so as to pave the way for the Islamic *ummah* to strive towards prosperity and salvation. It’s a pity, the *ummah* did not give Imam ‘Alī (‘a) the respite to wield his enlightened pen as dexterously as his celebrated sword, *dhū al-fiqār*, to let mankind benefit from the ocean of knowledge of which he was the repository. It surely is most bothersome for men of knowledge and wisdom to be deprived of the opportunity to shed their light of knowledge on the society and to guide people on the right path, and instead, be forced to unsheath the sword.

It’s even more annoying for men of wisdom and justice to see their precious and valuable words unheeded and their justice untolerated. It is unfortunate that not even the pulpit was snatched from him to prevent him from expounding his knowledge, but at the same time his hands were tied with the ropes of political intrigue so as to prevent him from even drawing the *dhū al-fiqār* against oppression and evil in the general interests of the Islamic *ummah*. Religion is the most significant challenge for men of knowledge and it is that crucial arena where they unravel the waves of wisdom beating in their breasts; for they have waited long to witness the spread of virtue and munificence among mankind.

Imam ‘Alī (‘a) has a famous saying in this respect:

So I adopted patience, although there was pricking in the eye and suffocation (of mortification) in the throats.¹⁷

In spite of all these barriers, Imam ‘Alī (‘a) used every opportunity to explain and expound the meanings of the *āyahs* of the Holy Qur’ān. However, he was quite concerned with the lack of appropriate learners of the Divine knowledge and thus would say:

I am the great treasure of knowledge, but unfortunately the number of learners and seekers of knowledge are so few. It won’t be long before they miss me for ever, and be disappointed?¹⁸

In another instance, while addressing his disciple Kumayl bin Ziyād, the Imam said:

O Kumayl! Knowledge is a belief that is acted upon. With it a person acquires obedience in his life and a good name after his death. O Kumayl, those who amass wealth may be dead even though they may be living while those endowed with knowledge would remain so long as the world lives. Their bodies are no more but their figures exist in the hearts. Look, here is a heap of knowledge (pointing to his bosom). I wish I could get someone to bear it. Yes I did find, but either it was the one that could not be relied upon. He would exploit the religion for wordly gains, and by virtue of Allah's favours upon him he would domineer over the people and through Allah's pleas would lord over his devotees. Or it was the one who was obedient to the hearers of truth but there was no intelligence in his bosom. At the first appearance of doubt he would entertain misgivings in his heart. So neither this nor that was good enough. Either the person is eager for pleasures, easily led away by passions, or is covetous for collecting and hoarding wealth. Neither of them has any regard for religion in any matter. The nearest example of this is the loose cattle. This is the way that knowledge dies away with the death of its bearer.¹⁹

What troubled the Imam was the lack of a deserving audience. He was the repository of knowledge, yet people asked him about the most simple and basic issues, while the crooked tried to annoy him by deliberately posing irrational questions. His answers were based on their level of intelligence, but whenever he found the opportunity he let flow the springs of science and wisdom, he did. That's why he has said:

I have hidden knowledge; if I disclose it you will start trembling like ropes in deep wells.²⁰

Nevertheless, never did Imam 'Ali ('a) let go any single opportunity to inculcate Muslims with the meaning and purport of the Qur'ān and its vast secrets. Hence, in accordance with the instructions of Prophet Muhammad (S) he was the first to compile

the Holy Qur’ān. He subsequently employed the following two methods for interpretation of the Holy Book:

A. Elucidation of the concepts and moral obligations of the *āyahs* and the harmonious interrelation between them with respect to actual and related topics.

B. Explanation of Divine knowledge with respect to various matters such as religious, social and scientific, during sermons and while giving answers to ideological questions.

Today, both the effective methods employed by Imam ‘Alī (‘a), are at the disposal of researchers and scholars, enabling them to discover the keys to understanding the Holy Qur’ān in order to quench the for divine Divine knowledge of the seekers of truth.

Imam ‘Alī (‘a), Barometer of Qur’ānic Concepts

Whatever has been recorded by academic and historical sources of the personality, thoughts, works, practice and behaviour of Imam ‘Alī (‘a), is ample proof of his unrivalled merits that enables seekers of knowledge in an era when mankind has taken giant strides in the scientific field, to rely upon the Imam’s words in their fundamental discussions in both the ideological realm and the world of nature and practical sciences.

If contemporary philosophers and theoreticians, in spite of having access to all sources of human knowledge are unable to offer clear, unambiguous and definite answers to many essential questions regarding the science of divinity, anthropology and theology, they are advised to study the trail blazed out by Imam ‘Alī (‘a), whose transcendental wisdom will help unravel the truth. The various theories, beliefs and isms that have been wandering in the valley of bewilderment, should avail the opportunity to contemplate on the timeless wisdom of the eloquent words of Imam ‘Alī (‘a). Then only will they be able to understand the basis of his words. The Imam says:

I advise you to hold fast to the Book of Allah! It is a strong rope, a bright light, a definite remedy and a satiating spring. It protects from error those who have faith in it, and grants success to those who abide by it.²¹

Unfortunately, the clear and lucid words of Imam ‘Ali (‘a), which he expressed in an era of ignorance – and at times he vented his feelings by speaking down the mouth of a well because of lack of deserving persons who could lend him their ears – were to be ignored by two groups:

A. Those who claimed to be his devotees but who only devoutedly recalled and repeated his words without ever making much effort in theory and in practice to make these ideals and beliefs manifest in social life.

B. The so-called modernists who because of their narrow-mindedness wrongly dismissed the intellectual legacy of the past without giving themselves the opportunity to ponder on words and thoughts of Imam ‘Ali (‘a) regarding Divine Revelations, religion, the Qur’ān and achievements of Islam.

Notes:

1. *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermon: 192.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*, Sermon: 189.
4. Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīkh Dimashq*, Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, vol. 42, p. 398.
5. Sadūq, Muhammad bin ‘Ali bin Bābawayh, *al-Khisāl*, p. 576.
6. Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīkh Dimashq*, vol. 42, p. 299.
7. Ibn Shahr Āshūb, *Manāqib Āl Abī Tālib*, vol. 2, p. 43.
8. Ibn Athīr, *al-Nihāyah fī Gharīb al-Hadīth wa al-Athār*, vol. 1, p. 212; Majlisī, Muhammad Bāqir, *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 106, p. 92.
9. Kulaynī, Muhammad bin Ya‘qūb, *Usūl al-Kāfi*, vol. 1, p. 168.

10. Ibn Abi al-Hadid, *Sharh al-Nahj al-Balāghah*, vol.1, p.17.
11. Shāfi'i, *Matālib al-Su'ul*, p. 29.
12. *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermon: 3.
13. Tabrisi, Fazl bin Hasan, *al-Ihtijāj*, vol. 1, p. 182.
14. Qundūzī, Sulaymān bin Ibrāhīm, *Yanābī' al-Mawaddah*, vol. 1, p. 214.
15. *Mawsū'ah al-Imām 'Alī ('a)*, vol. 8, p. 207.
16. *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermon 3.
17. Sadūq, *'Ilal al-Sharā'i'*, p. 40.
18. *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Maxim: 147.
19. *Ibid.*, Sermon 5.
20. *Ibid.*, Sermon 156.

Imam ‘Alī (‘a), the First Compiler of the Holy Qur’ān

By: Dr. Sayyid Muhammad Bāqir Hujjātī

Translated by Sayyid ‘Alī Shāhbāz

Inna ‘Aliyyan ma‘a al-Qur’ān wa al-Qur’ān ma‘a ‘Alī, lan-yatafarraqā hattā yaridā ‘alayya al-hawz (Indeed, ‘Alī is with the Qur’ān and the Qur’ān is with ‘Alī, the two will never separate even when they return to me at the pool [of *kawthar* in paradise]) – Prophet Muhammad (S).¹

The above *hadīth* found in several authoritative works of almost all denominations of Islam, is not a stray or solitary reference to the relationship between the Holy Qur’ān and its prime and perfect compiler as a *mushaf* (book) in the correct order of revelation, especially when one takes note of the widely-quoted *Hadīth al-Thaqalayn* which the Prophet pronounced on several occasions concerning the legacy that he was leaving behind and the inseparability between the Book of Allah and his Ahl al-Bayt, whose most senior member was his cousin and son-in-law, Imam ‘Alī bin Abī Tālib (‘a). In addition, the Prophet’s explicit explanation of certain *āyahs* of the Holy Book, such as “...say:

sufficient is Allah as witness between me and you and he with whom is the knowledge of the Book" (13:43), that the witness other than God referred here, is Imam 'Alī ('a),² is further proof of the fact that it was but natural for the Qur'ān to be collected between two covers by the person who for twenty-three years had been the sole human witness to the revelation of the Divine Message to the Seal of Messengers (S).

All early sources of Islamic *hadīth* and history have vouched the veracity of the words of Imam 'Alī ('a) –expressed on several occasions– that from among the Prophet's companions, other than him, no one was more knowledgeable of the Qur'ān between the two covers, and in addition to the *nāsikh wa mansūkh* (abrogator and the abrogated), the *muhkam wa mutashābih* (clear and allegorical), and the *khāss wa 'āmm* (specific and general), he knew every single Qur'ānic *āyah*, regarding whom it was revealed and where it was revealed, whether in the plain or on the mountain, in daytime or at night. He not only had committed to memory the entire Qur'ān but as the person most nearest to the Prophet, had also transcribed on parchment, leaf, cloth and papyrus whatever his cousin dictated, in addition to the sacred text.

Thus, it is clear that he possessed every single revelation and it was only a matter of time for him to give these fragmented folios the form of book (*mushaf*). This opportunity came to him after the passing away of the Prophet and his isolation by the conspirators who staged a coup at Saqīfah Banī Sā'idah while he performed the last rites of the Divine Messenger.

Reports on Compilation of the Imam's *Mushaf*

There are numerous reports in both Sunni and Shi'ite texts that Imam 'Alī ('a) was the first-ever compiler of the Holy Qur'ān as well as the manner of compilation of his *mushaf*. According to the prominent *tābi'ī*, Muhammad bin Sīrīn (33-110 AH), the Imam's *mushaf* was in the order of revelation with due focus on

āyahs pertaining to *nāsikh* and *mansūkh*. Ibn Sirīn says that when Imam 'Alī ('a) stayed away from the new rulers and did not give allegiance to Abū Bakr, the latter felt concerned and visited his house to ask him the reason for not acknowledging his caliphate. The Imam replied that he had pledged to Allah not to put a cloak on his shoulders except for the prayer until he compiled the Qur'ān between two covers (*mushaf*). Ibn Sirīn regretted that this transcript has not passed into the hands of the Muslims (for reasons which will be mentioned later) and said: "If that transcript were in our hands, we would have found great knowledge in it."³ A similar report has been given by Ibn Munādī, who says that after the passing away of the Prophet, the Imam confined himself to his house for three days and compiled the whole Qur'ān. The famous bibliographer, Ibn Nadīm, has called it the first ever *mushaf* and said the Imam compiled it with the help of his heart and memory.⁴ Ibn Jawzī al-Kalbī reports that during the lifetime of the Prophet, the Qur'ān was in fragmented form, confined to parchments and the memory of reciters, until compiled as *mushaf* in the order of revelation by Imam 'Alī ('a) immediately after the passing away of the Noble Messenger. He says that if this *mushaf* were to be traced it would unravel bezels of wisdom.⁵

Unfortunately, certain persons, while acknowledging the authenticity of these accounts have tried to cast doubts on the Imam's compilation being in book-form, by stating, rather unconvincingly, that the phrase *jama'a al-Qur'ān* means that he memorized the Holy Scripture after the passing away of the Prophet and did not present anything between two covers. It is a crude attempt to credit others with the first compilation of the Qur'ān but the fallacy of such biased claims are exposed when we diligently scrutinize the text of the above-quoted accounts where the word *mushaf* is clearly mentioned. Moreover, only a written or transcribed document could be the quest of scholars who regret at not having access to it, and not the memory of a person. 'Allāmah

Majlisī in his note to the queries and answers given by the celebrated Shaykh Mufid in *al-Masā'il al-Sarwiyyah*, writes:

The Commander of the Faithful, Imam 'Alī ('a) compiled the whole Qur'ān from its beginning to its end and arranged it in order (of revelation) with the Meccan *āyahs* taking precedence over those revealed later in Medina and placing the abrogated before the abrogator; everything in the Qur'ān being in its right place. For this reason Imam Ja'far al-Sādiq ('a) has said: "Yes, by Allah! If the Qur'ān is to be recited as per its order of revelation, you will find us in it with names and references in the same manner as those before us have been mentioned by name."⁶

Al-Shahristānī's Report on *Mushaf* Imam 'Alī ('a)

'Abd al-Karīm al-Shahristānī (d. 548 AH) in his exegesis of the Holy Qur'ān, pointing to the confused statements of the days of 'Uthmān concerning the compilation of the Book of Allah, says: "Ignoring these statements we should study why (Imam) 'Alī bin Abī Tālib ('a) was not approached for compilation of the Qur'ān? Was he not a greater authority than Zayd bin Thābit in transcribing the Qur'ān (as well as its memorization and familiarity with its contents)? Did he not possess a better knowledge of Arabic and its grammar than Sa'id bin 'Ās? Was not (Imam) 'Alī bin Abī Tālib ('a) considered closer to the Messenger of Allah (S) than any of the *sahābah*?"

The answers are obvious, he says, and regrets that the *sahābah* ignored the realities with the majority of them showing indifference to the compilation of the Qur'ān by Imam 'Alī ('a) and almost ostracizing him. After discharging the funeral rites of the Prophet, the Imam pledged not to put the cloak on his shoulders until he had fulfilled his duty of compiling the Qur'ān. He compiled the Qur'ān as per the sequence of its revelation in the correct order of arrangement shown to him by the Prophet, without the least distortion, deletion or addition of words.

Al-Shahristānī writes that this first-ever *mushaf*, in addition to the text of the Holy Qur'ān, contained comments and explanatory notes by Imam 'Alī ('a) as well as parenthetical sentences on the margin in relation to specific phrases. He says that when Imam 'Alī ('a) completed the compilation of the Qur'ān, he took the *mushaf*, along with his slave Qanbar, to the people (Abū Bakr and his companions) assembled in the Prophet's Mosque. It is reported that the *mushaf* was equal to a camel-load. The Imam told the gathering:

“This is the Book of Allah as it was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (S). I have collected it between two covers.” The caliph and his courtiers replied: “Take away your *mushaf* we do not require it.” The Imam told them: “By Allah! After this you will never see it again. I only felt it my duty to inform you that I have compiled it.”

The Imam returned to his house reciting the following *āyah* of the Holy Qur'ān: “O' my Lord! Verily my people have held this Qur'ān as a vain forsaken thing.” (25:30)

He had no other choice but to leave the people to their own fate in the same manner that Aaron, after completing his argumentation, left the rebellious *ummah* of Prophet Moses ('a) to its fate and apologised to his brother in the following words: “...I was afraid lest you say: You have caused division among the Children of Israel and did not respect my word.” (20:94) Imam 'Alī ('a) also recited the *āyah*: “...he (Aaron) said: O' son of my mother, verily the people did reckon me weak and had well nigh slain me, so make not (my) enemies rejoice over me, and count me not among the unjust people.” (7:150)

The Imam had thus fulfilled his responsibility to the *ummah*, whether or not they heed his words. In order to save Muslims from fragmentation and divisive tendencies, it was essential for the Qur'ān to be compiled between two covers from the hitherto fragmented state of *sūrah*s inscribed on parchments, on shoulder

bones of camels, on leafs and in the minds of some who had memorized a few parts.

“(O People!) follow what has been sent down unto you from your Lord, and follow you not (any) other than Him, as (your) guardians; how little do you mind.” (7:3)

Imam ‘Ali (‘a) by virtue of his position to the Prophet had shown people the correct way of preserving the sacred text as it was revealed, but the group rejected it. When years later, they felt the necessity of a *mushaf* to serve as a standard book, the people entrusted with the compilation of the Qur’ān again made the folly of ignoring him despite the explicit instructions of the Prophet that his Ahl al-Bayt are one of the two invaluable things as mentioned by *Hadith al-Thaqalayn*:

I am leaving behind among you the *thaqalayn* (two invaluable things), the Book of Allah (Qur’ān) and my progeny (my Ahl al-Bayt). Hold fast to them and you will never go astray, for these two will not part with each even when they return to me at the pool.⁷

After focusing on these facts, al-Shahristānī says: “Yes, by Allah, the Qur’ān is certainly safe from any kind of interpolation, whether omission or addition, as promised by the Almighty: “Surely, We have sent down the Reminder (the Qur’ān), and surely We (Ourselves) will be Guardians over it. (15: 9) It is only through the endeavours of the Ahl al-Bayt the Qur’ān has been protected and preserved since the two are inextricably inseparable and compliment each other by way of their discourse: “And indeed We caused the word (of guidance) to come unto them continuously...” (28: 51) The bond between the *thaqalayn* and their indivisible cohesion (e.g. expounding the timeless wisdom of the Qur’ān and the correct way of recital as shown by the Ahl al-Bayt) is borne out by Allah’s words: “Certainly, on Us is the collection of it (Qur’ān) and the recital of it!” (75:17) Therefore, if the *mushaf* of (Imam

be to Allah, it is safe with another group; hidden and concealed: "Nay! It is *Qur'ān the Glorious (inscribed) in the Guarded Tablet (Lawh Mahfūz)*." (85:21 & 22)⁸

Al-Shahristānī then goes on to note a very vital point. He says Imam 'Alī ('a) –in contrast to the attitude of the *sahābah* towards the *mushaf* he had compiled after the passing away of the Prophet– did not reject the Qur'an collected by the *sahābah*. Neither did he pass comments like Uthman, who said concerning the Qur'an: *arā fihī lahnān wa sataqayyamūhu al-'Arab* (I see grammatical mistakes in it which the Arabs will rectify). Nor did he express an irresponsible remark such as the one attributed to 'Abdullah bin 'Abbās *inna al-kātib katabahu wa huwa nā'is* (the scribe wrote it [Qur'an] in the state of stupor). In fact, Imam 'Alī ('a) recited what had been compiled by others as the single codex and also copied it in his handwriting. Likewise, his descendants, the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt, recited the one and only *mushaf* that was in circulation among the Muslims, and taught it to their children. The Almighty is too Wise and Glorious to let grammatical mistakes and errors creep into His Final Revelation to mankind and leave it to the Arabs to correct it later on.

"Nay! They (angels) are (His) honoured servants. They speak not before He speaks, and they act on His bidding." (21: 26 & 27)

As al-Shahristānī argues it is not unlikely that concerning the copying of the Revealed Qur'an there were two manuscripts that were not different, and since these two were not in contradiction to each other they were considered the Word of Allah. Neither does it mean that Prophet Moses ('a) had written the Torah in his own handwriting. There is a *hadīth* regarding the special manuscript of the Torah, as recorded and preserved in the Tablets, that was in the safe custody of the righteous descendants of Aaron. Even though the interpolation of the Torah by the Jews distorted its contents, nevertheless it cannot be construed of losing the honour of containing the Word of God. We see in the Qur'an how Allah has mentioned the Torah in estimation and reminds us that: "...*therein*

(in the Torah) was guidance and light; with it judged (Our) apostles..." (5: 44)

Likewise, the Evangel could also be considered a Book of Allah. Its four different copies currently in circulation among the Christians were reportedly written or compiled by four of the disciples of Prophet Jesus ('a). There are numerous and major differences in these four books. Of course, we cannot consider them collectively as the Word of Allah made manifest through revelation. But these gospels could be likened to parts of the Qur'an commented upon by exegetes in their exegesis later on. Accordingly, the gospels attributed to St. John, St. Mark, St. Luke and St. Matthew could be called commentaries on the original Evangel revealed to Prophet Jesus ('a), regarding whom God says in the Holy Qur'an: "...and (I come) confirming that which is before me of the Torah..." (3: 50). The Qur'an also says: "...confirming what was before it; and He sent down the Torah and the Evangel..." (3: 3)

Thus the Qur'an in circulation among Muslims is the Divine Word between two covers protected by God from errors, faults, changes and metamorphosis. Neither the scribe was lethargic and overcome by drowsiness when writing it down, nor did the reciter (the Prophet) committed grammatical errors and solecism while pronouncing its divine contents as alleged. The people who recite the Qur'an diligently observe whatever is right and advisable, and their discernment between revelation and interpretation, has kept it safe from any errors and distortion. "...while no one knows its interpretation except God and those firmly rooted in knowledge; they say: 'We believe in it, all of it is from our Lord,' and none takes Reed except those who possess acumen." (3: 7)⁹

Al-Shahristānī's critique by raising these questions and providing answers to them, proves beyond doubt that Imam 'Ali ('a) accomplished the invaluable work of compiling the Qur'an in view of his profound familiarity with its contents and his unrivalled proximity of relationship with Prophet Muhammad (S). The deliberate rejection of Imam 'Ali's ('a) *mushaf* by the *sahābah* has been severely censured by al-Shahristānī. It pains his heart like a

prickly thorn, bringing clear complaints on his lips as how this *mushaf* was collectively rejected by the Prophet’s companions.¹⁰ When Imam ‘Alī (‘a) brought his compilation of the Qur’ān and placed it before the *sahābah*, ‘Umar bin al-Khattāb who was later to direct efforts to compile the Qur’an during the caliphate of Abū Bakr, told him bluntly: “*mā aghnānā bimā ma’anā min al-Qur’ān ‘ammā nad’ūnā ilayh* (does not the [parts of] Qur’ān which we have sufficient for us from what [your *mushaf*] you are calling us to).”¹¹

Al-Shahristani explicitly states: “The Commander of the Faithful, (Imam) ‘Alī (‘a), in accordance with the clear instructions of the Prophet, busied himself in the compilation of the Qur’an immediately after performing the last rites of the Messenger of Allah. He completed it without any intermission.”¹² A narration from Imam Ja‘far al-Sādiq (‘a) as related by Abū Bakr al-Hadhrami says in this regard:

Irna Rasūl Allah (S) qāla li-‘Alī (‘a): “Yā ‘Alī al-Qur’ān khalfa firāshī fi al-mushaf wa al-harīr wa al-qarātīs, fa khudhūhu wa ajma‘ūhu wa la tuzayyi‘ūhu kamā zayya‘at al-Yahūd al-Tawrah.” Fa-intalaqa ‘Aliyyun fa jamma‘ahū fi thawb asfar thumma khatam ‘alayh fi baytihī wa qāla: “Lā artadī hattā ajma‘uh.” Wa in kāna al-rajulu liya‘tiyahū fa-yakhruja ilayhi bi-ghayr ridā’ hattā jama‘ah (In fact, the Messenger of Allah (S) told (Imam) ‘Alī (‘a): **“O ‘Alī, the Qur’ān is behind my bed (in written form) between two covers, and silk and papers. Take it and compile it and let it not be lost as the Jews lost the Torah.”** (Imam) ‘Alī (‘a) accordingly gathered it in a yellow garment and bound and sealed it in his house, saying: “I will not put on the cloak (on my shoulders) until I have compiled it.” If anyone called at his door he used to come out and meet him without a cloak, until he had completed the compilation).¹³

Al-Shahristānī refers to the *Hadīth al-Thaqalayn* concerning the compilation of the Holy Qur’an and stresses the firm bond between the Book of Allah and the Prophet’s progeny, saying the Qur’an has a special relevance to the Ahl al-Bayt and it is they, who are its guardians and protectors.¹⁴

In fact, from whatever angle we view the Qur'ān we feel the need of the Ahl al-Bayt as the final and satisfactory source of authority that cannot be separated from any dimension of the Holy Scripture. When Imam 'Alī ('a) entered the Prophet's Mosque with the Qur'ān, the *sahābah* asked him what had brought him after the intermission that occurred with the passing away of the Messenger of Allah. The Imam placed before them the Qur'ān he had compiled, and reminding them of the *Hadīth al-Thaḳalayn* pointed out to them the unbreakable bond between the Book of Allah and the Ahl al-Bayt, by quoting the Prophet's words: "*Innī mukhallif fikum mā in tamaskatum bihi lan-tazillū, Kitāb Allah wa 'Itratī* (Indeed I am leaving among you that which will prevent you from going astray if you hold fast to it, the Book of Allah and my posterity)." The Imam added: "*wa hādihā al-Kitāb wa ana al-'Itrah* (and this is the Book (of Allah) and I am (of his) posterity)." ¹⁵

At this stage 'Umar bin al-Khattāb got up and said what we have related earlier concerning the rejection of the Imam's *mushaf* with the words that what the *sahābah* had of the Qur'ān was sufficient. ¹⁶

In the accounts narrated from the Ahl al-Bayt we find that this *mushaf* was a source of concern and anxiety for the *sahābah*. Imam 'Alī ('a) even received death ¹⁷ threats because of its contents which included on the margins the facts of revelation. Al-Shahristānī hints in his account that the reason of rejection of the Imam's *mushaf* by the *sahābah* was "it is related by some that in this *mushaf*, besides the sacred text, there were marginal notes that appeared to be critical." ¹⁸

It is clear that al-Shahristānī is trying to divulge the reality, albeit in a cautious way, concerning the remarks of certain persons, who have been identified and exposed in the *hadīth* related from the Ahl al-Bayt. For instance when Talhah asked Imam 'Alī ('a) regarding the *mushaf* he had shown to the *sahābah* after the passing away of the Prophet, he replied:

"*Yā Talhah inna kulla āyatin anzalaha Allah 'alā Muhammad (S) 'indī bi imlā' Rasūl Allah wa khatti yadī hattā arsh al-khadsh* (O' Talhah every *āyah* that Allah revealed to

Muhammad (S) is with me in my own handwriting as dictated by the Messenger of Allah (S), everything including the expiation for a scratch).” Talhah asked in astonishment: *kullu shay’in min saghīr aw kabīr, aw khāss aw ‘āmm, kāna aw yakūnu ilā yawm al-qiyyāmah fahuwa ‘indaka maktūb?* (Is everything with you in written form, whether small or big, specific or general, what has so far occurred and what will occur till the Day of Resurrection, written with you?). The Imam answered: *na‘am, wa siwā dhālika, inna Rasūl Allah (S) asarra ilayya fī marazih miṣṭāha alfi bābin min al-‘ilm, yaftahu kullu bābin alfa bāb, wa law inna al-ummah munzu qabzi Rasūl Allah (S), attaba‘ūnī wa ‘atā‘ūnī la-akalū min faṣṣihim wa min tahti arjulihim...* (Yes, and in addition, the Messenger of Allah during his sickness opened for me a thousand doors of knowledge, with each door opening up another thousand doors, and if the ummah after the passing away of the Messenger of Allah had followed me and obeyed my instructions they would have been flooded by divine favours from [all directions] above and from beneath).”¹⁹

Al-Shahristānī also confirms these facts and says: “The Commander of the Faithful compiled the Qur’ān as it was revealed, without the least distortion or change, as well as addition and omission. As directed by the Messenger of Allah his *mushaf* covered the order and arrangement of the *sūrahs* and *āyahs* including what should come before or after. According to Abū Hātam, he also placed besides each other, *āyahs* of similar purport.”²⁰

This is also supported by the accounts of prominent scholars of the school of Ahl al-Bayt. Shaykh Mufīd states clearly that the Qur’ān in circulation among the Muslims is the Revealed Word of God Almighty in its entirety without the least human interference in its contents. Neither has anything been added or deleted from it. ‘Allāmah Majlisī writes in this regard:

Imam ‘Alī (‘a) collected the Qur’ān, as it was revealed, from its beginning till end and arranged it in order of sequence with the parts revealed during the Meccan period taking precedence over

what was revealed in Medina (after the Prophet's migration). Likewise he placed the *mansūkh* before the *nāsikh* with everything in the Qur'ān put in its exact place.²¹

As could be deduced from the accounts of both the Sunnis and the Shi'ites, the Commander of the Faithful, Imam 'Ali ('a), till the end of his life, never again showed to anyone his *mushaf* which 'Umar bin al-Khattāb and his accomplices had so coldly rejected. The longing of Ibn Sirin for the Imam's *mushaf* and his words, "if it could be found it would open up vistas of wisdom,"²² is a firm testimony to the very first copy of the Qur'ān between two covers that had been compiled immediately after the passing away of Prophet Muhammad (S). Ibn Sirin adds:

In his *mushaf* the Commander of the Faithful had specified the *nāsikh* and the *mansūkh* but I was unable to trace it despite my profound efforts in this regard including the letter I wrote to Medina (to the Imam's family).²³

This statement which may raise questions in minds concerning the compilation of the first ever copy of the Holy Qur'ān and its fate after the martyrdom of Imam 'Ali ('a), could be satisfactorily answered from the *hadith* found in the texts of the School of the Ahl al-Bayt. The following is an account on the authority of the Prophet's esteemed companion, Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī:

When 'Umar (after he became caliph) asked (Imam) 'Ali ('a) for his *mushaf* so that it could be subjected to review and changes, he said: O Abā al-Hasan, bring the Qur'ān that you had brought before Abū Bakr so that we decide about it. (Imam) 'Ali ('a) replied: It is impossible; there is no way to it. I had brought it to Abū Bakr in order to complete my argument upon you so that you will not be able to say on the Day of Resurrection "we had no information about it," or would make the pretext that "you did not bring it to us." Certainly the Qur'ān which is with me will not be

touched by anyone except the pure, the testamentary legatees (*awsiyā*’ pl. of *wasī*) among my offspring. ‘Umar said: Is there a specific time for showing it. (Imam) ‘Alī (‘a) answered: Yes, when the Qā’im from my lineage rises, he will reveal it, make mankind follow it and implement the (Prophet’s) *sunnah* on its basis.²⁴

To lend further credence to the fact that it was Imam ‘Alī (‘a) who compiled the first and foremost *mushaf* of the Holy Qur’ān, the following discourse between the Commander of the Faithful and Talha should remove the last lingering doubts in the minds of sceptics:

O Abā al-Hasan, I see your reluctance to answer some queries regarding the *mushaf* of the Qur’ān you had compiled and whether you would like to show it to the people? He replied: O’ Talhah, I have deliberately chosen not to answer your question. You first relate to me whatever has been gathered by ‘Umar and ‘Uthmān, whether it is the complete Qur’ān or whether (anything) other than divine revelation has found its way in it? Talhah replied: It is the complete Qur’ān. The Imam said: If you abide by its contents you are safe from the fire of hell and will be rewarded with the garden of paradise, since the Qur’ān contains proofs, arguments and clarifications of our rights and the obligation to follow us. Talha said: This is sufficient for me. The Qur’an suffices me.

Then Talhah said: Now inform me about the Qur’an in your possession, concerning its interpretation and the forbidden and the sanctioned mentioned in it. To whom would you entrust it after you and who will be the possessor of this Qur’an after you. The Imam replied: I will entrust this Qur’an to the person whom the Prophet had specified for me. The one who is my testamentary legatee, and who is more deserving of authority and guardianship of the people than the people themselves. I mean, my son Hasan (‘a), who, in turn will entrust it to my (younger) son Husayn (‘a). Then it will

pass onto the sons and descendants of Husayn ('a) one after another until it reaches the last of them (Imam Mahdī), who will return with it to the Messenger of Allah at the pool (on the Day of Judgement). These are inextricably tied to the Qur'ān and are never separate from it. The Qur'ān is with them and there is no separation between them.²⁵

Notes:

1. Al-Tabarānī, *Mu'jam al-Saghīr*, vol. 1 p. 255; Al-Hākīm al-Nayshābūrī, *Mustadrak 'alā al-Sahīhayn*, Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 2002/1422, vol. 3, p. 337, *hadīth* n. 4686; 'Allāmah Majlisī, *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 89, p. 80.

2. Al-Tabarī, Muhammad bin Jarīr, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, vol. 12, p. 119; Al-Hākīm al-Nayshābūrī, *Gharā'ib al-Qur'ān wa Raghā'ib al-Furqān* (on the margin of al-Tabarī's exegesis *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, vol. 12, p. 100); Al-Suyūṭī, Jalāl al-Dīn, *al-Itqān* (edited by Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm) vol. 1 p. 48; Abū Ja'far al-Tūsī, *al-Tibyān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, vol. 6, p. 268; Amin al-Islām al-Tabrisī, *Majma' al-Bayān* vol. 6, p. 301; Majlisī, *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 89 p. 80.

3. Al-Hindī, al-Muttaqī, *Kanz al-'Ummāl*, Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risālah, 1985/1405, 5 Edition, vol. 2, p. 588, *hadīth* n. 4792.

4. Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, p. 40.

5. *Al-Tashīl li-'Ulūm al-Tanzīl*, vol 1, p. 4.

6. *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 89, p. 74.

7. Ahmad bin al-Hanbal, *al-Musnad*, vol. 3, pp. 14,17, 26, 59 & vol. 4, pp. 336, 371; Al-Hākīm al-Nayshābūrī, *al-Mustadrak 'alā al-Sahīhayn*, vol. 3, p. 323, *hadīth* nos. 4634 & 4635.

8. Al-Shahristānī, Muhammad bin 'Abd al-Karīm, *Mafātīh al-Asrār*, vol. 1, pp. 119-121.

9. *Ibid.* vol. 1, pp. 121-123.

10. *Ibid.* vol. 1, p. 120.

11. *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 89, p. 41; al-Tabrisī, *al-Ihtijāj*, p. 52.

12. *Mafātīh al-Asrār*, vol. 1, p. 120.

13. *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 89, p. 48. Also refer to pp. 40 & 52 of the same volume for a *hadīth* of similar purport.
14. *Mafātīh al-Asrār*, vol. 1, p. 131.
15. *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 89, p. 52.
16. *Ibid.*
17. *Ibid.* pp. 42, 43; *al-Ihtijāj*, p. 82.
18. *Mafātīh al-Asrār*, vol. 1, p. 120.
19. *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 89, pp. 41, 42, quoted from *Kitāb Sulaym bin Qays*, pp. 108 & 110 & *al-Ihtijāj*, p. 81.
20. *Mafātīh al-Asrār*, vol. 1, p. 120
21. *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 89, p. 74.
22. Shaykh Mufīd, *Awā’il al-Maqālāt*, p. 55; *Bahr al-Fawā’id*, p. 99.
23. Ibn Hajar, *al-Sawā’iq al-Muhriqah*, p. 126; al-Suyūti, *al-Itqān*, vol. 1, p. 59.
24. *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 89, p. 42, 43, quoted from *al-Ihtijāj*, p. 82.
25. *Kitāb Sulaym bin Qays*, p. 110; *al-Ihtijāj*, p. 81.

The *Mushaf* of Imam ‘Alī (‘a)

By: Bahā’ al-Dīn Khorram-Shāhī

The course of this discussion will clearly reveal that the scholars from the various Islamic schools as well as the Qur’ānic historians [the experts and researchers on the history of the compilation of the *Imāmī/‘Uthmānī masāhif* and the *masāhif* of some other *ashāb* or the Prophet’s (S) companions] including the non-Muslim Islamologists have no dispute over the historical fact and have mentioned repeatedly that Imam ‘Alī bin Abī Tālib (‘a) was the first compiler of the Glorious Qur’ān, prior to the collection and the compilation of the *‘Uthmānī mushaf* under the supervision of Zayd bin Thābit.

It is important to note that the issue of the *mushaf* of Imam ‘Alī (‘a) is neither based on inference nor is it a matter of belief but it is rather a historical and well-researched fact, and if there exists any dispute over this issue, it is regarding certain details and the eventual fate of this *mushaf*. The questions that are generally raised in this regard are:

1. Did Imam ‘Alī (‘a) collect and compile (bind together between two covers) the Glorious Qur’ān in three days or did it take six months?

2. Did the act of “collecting” actually imply “memorization” or did it imply a literal “compilation”?

3. Was the Imam’s *mushaf* compiled on the basis of the order of the revelation of the *āyahs* or was it compiled in the same sequence as the Uthmānī *mushaf* and other *masāhif*?

4. Did the *mushaf* also include an interpretation and if it did so, was it included along with the main text or was it marginal?

5. Did it also mention the *nāsikh wa mansūkh* (abrogator and abrogated) and their *sha’n al-nuzūl* (the background of the revelation of the verses) as well as the explanatory notes on the *muhkam wa mutashābih* (clear and allegorical) verses? If so, were the Imam’s recordings written within the margins or were they put down besides the main text; and wherever the *sha’n al-nuzūl* was mentioned, did it explicitly contain particular names, not specified in the main text of the Qur’ān, and the names of the *munāfiqīn* in particular?

6. Did the *nāsikh* (abrogator) verses appear first or were the *mansūkh* verses put down first?

Attempts have been made to provide answers for these questions in different books of history, including the oldest and the most important of all, namely the *Tārīkh al-Ya’qūbī* (which has also been translated into Persian by the late Muhammad Ibrāhīm Āyatī), as well as a number of other books, Qur’ānic works, and histories of the Holy Qur’ān like the *al-Masāhif* of Sajistānī (230 – 316 AH), the *al-Fihrist* of Ibn Nadīm (b. 380 AH), the exegesis written by Shahrīstānī (b. 548 AH), the *al-Itqān* of Suyūṭī (b. 911 AH), the *Bihār al-Anwār* of ‘Allāmah Majlisī (b. 1111 AH), and the later works like the *History of the Qur’ān* by Nuldke (1836 – 1930 CE) written in German, the *History of the Qur’ān* by Abū ‘Abdullah Zanjanī (b. 1360 AH), the *History of the Qur’ān* by

‘Abd al-Sabūr Shāhin (a contemporary writer), the histories of the Qur’ān written by scholars like Mahmūd Rāmyār and Dr. Muhammad Bāqir Hujjati, and a few other old and new sources.

Now let us refer to some old and new sources to find the answers to these questions and to their existing issues and ambiguities in order to arrive at a more clear historical picture of the *mushaf* of Imam ‘Alī (‘a) which was the very first compiled *mushaf* after the passing away of the Prophet of Allah (S).

Ibn Wāzih Ya‘qūbī has offered a detailed discussion on this noble *mushaf* and the description of its manner of compilation in his famous book on history, the *Tārīkh al-Ya‘qūbī*. He writes:

It has been said that ‘Alī bin Abī Tālib (‘a), following the passing away of the Prophet (S), prepared the *mushaf* and placed it on a camel and brought it (to the supposedly elderly *ashāb* who were now in political power) and stated: “This is the Qur’ān and I have compiled it”, He (the Imam) had divided it into seven parts.

Then Ya‘qūbī mentions the seven parts in detail, along with the names of the *sūrahs*. The learned translator of this book into the Persian language, the late Muhammad Ibrāhīm Āyatī, in a footnote referring to the number of the *sūrahs* has observed:

The *sūrahs* mentioned (by Ya‘qūbī) are hundred and nine in number and five *sūrahs* have been missed out.¹

The late scholar Mahmūd Rāmyār has offered the most comprehensive, the most documented, and the most critical discussion on the *mushaf* of Imam ‘Alī (‘a), including the views and comments of others, in his book on the history of the Qur’ān. As regards Ya‘qūbī’s book on history and the information provided on the *mushaf* of Imam ‘Alī (‘a), Mahmūd Rāmyār mentions:

The other source available is the *Tārīkh al-Ya‘qūbī* (ibn al-Wāzih). This book has recorded historical incidents until the year 252 AH. It is a very reliable book but alas, the sequence (*tartīb*)

that it mentions does not match with any narrative or knowledge of the manner. He then quotes the seven parts in detail, and continues as follows) "...The total number of *sūrahs* mentioned is one hundred and nine and the five *sūrahs* that have not been mentioned are the *Fātihah al-Kitāb* (1), *al-Ra'd* (12), *Sabā* (34), *al-Tahrim* (66), and *al-'Alaq* (96).

Besides this sequence (*tartīb*), Ya'qūbī refers to yet another sequence, and quotes Imam 'Alī ('a) as saying:

The Qur'ān was revealed in four sections. One-fourth of it is regarding us, one-fourth is against those who hold enmity towards us, one-fourth of it contains parables, and one-fourth of it is on the *muhkam wa mutashābih* (clear and allegorical verses).

However, the fact of the matter is that the description provided by Ya'qūbī in dividing the Qur'ān into seven sections seems rather strange. That which almost all the historians and narrators have mentioned is the sequence of the *sūrahs* in the *mushaf* of Imam 'Alī ('a) according to the order of their revelation, along with the reasons of revelation as well as the explanatory notes on many of the ambiguities in the Qur'ān. Ya'qūbī's description, however, the views of all the historians and narrators on this issue.

Most of the narrations indicate that Imam 'Alī's ('a) *mushaf* was compiled on the basis of the order of the revelation of the *sūrahs*. For example, beginning with the *sūrah al-'Alaq (Iqra')* (96), *al-Muddaththir* (74), and so on. However, there are differing views as regards the contents of the *mushaf* and whether it contained only the revealed text or whether it also contained the *sha'n al-nuzūl* (reasons of revelation of the verses) and the *nāsikh wa mansūkh* (abrogator and abrogated).

Imam al-Bāqir ('a) says:

Anyone claiming to have compiled the Glorious Qur'ān, exactly in the order that it was revealed by Allah, the Almighty, has lied

because no one except ‘Alī bin Abī Tālib (‘a) has collected and compiled the Qur’ān in the order of its revelation.

This is a statement from one of the members *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a) and is the final statement but we do not have any information on its details. It is interesting to note that there is also a narration that attributes two non-original *sūrahs* supposedly named, *Khal’* and *Hafad* to Imam ‘Alī (‘a). In a nutshell, it has been said that Imam ‘Alī’s (‘a) *mushaf* was compiled in the order of the revelation of the verses, containing their *sha’n al-nuzūl*, the time of their revelation, as well as the interpretation of the allegorical verses, specifying the *nāsikh wa mansūkh* (abrogator and abrogated) and the general and specific (*‘āmm wa khāss*), as well as the method of recitation. However, the differences among the various *qārīs* (recitors) on the *mushaf* of Imam ‘Alī (‘a) or its recitation, based on the information that is available among us today, are mainly the differences in accent or pronunciation (*tajwīd*). Only in three cases, viz. in the *Sūrahs al-‘Asr* (103), *al-A‘rāf* (7:32), and *al-Shu‘arā’* (*āyah* 215) can any major differences be observed, along with descriptive and exegetic sentences. But it is not really possible to confirm as to what degree these various claims are reliable. What has been attributed to Imam ‘Alī (‘a) as regards the *Sūrah al-‘Asr*, is very different from the prevalent and existing trend of recitation, in spite of the fact that even the current trend of recitation can be sourced to Imam ‘Alī (‘a). Therefore, the validity of these narrations is under doubt. Imam Ja‘far al-Sādiq (‘a) has said²:

There is a book in our possession dictated by the Prophet of Allah (S) and written in the hand of ‘Alī (‘a).³

Mahmūd Rāmyār then discusses two other important matters. Firstly, the point that he brings up is that the *mushaf* attributed to Imam ‘Alī (‘a) contains as a signature, the words “This has been written by ‘Alī bin Abī Tālib,” whereas according to the rules of grammar, it should have been written as “‘Alī bin Abī (not Abū)

Tālib”. However, by referring to some older documentations and certain authentic quotations, he goes on to prove that this style of grammar was used in the early days of Islam and was prevalent even a little prior to the advent of Islam and therefore, it cannot be referred to as a reason to invalidate the attribution of the *mushaf* to Imam ‘Alī (‘a).⁴ Despite this argument, the validity of the attribution of the said *mushaf* to Imam ‘Alī (‘a) would certainly require some solid and irrefutable evidence.

The second point discussed by Rāmyār is that several (perhaps more than ten) hand-written manuscripts, all in the Kufic script and scribed on deer-skin, are famous as the *Masāhif* of ‘Alī (‘a), and in his opinion, it is logically improbable that the Imam (‘a) had actually written several copies of the Glorious Qur’ān. The late Rāmyār then enumerates the reasons for the existence of the numerous *masāhif* attributed to Imam ‘Alī (‘a).⁵

The second important and ancient (3rd century AH) source that has made a reference to the *mushaf* of Imam ‘Alī (‘a) is the book, *Kitāb al-Masāhif*, written by Sajistānī (230-316 AH), whose complete name is Hāfīz Abū Bakr ‘Abdullāh bin Abi Dāwūd Sulaymān bin Ash‘ath.

(As regards his high status in the field of research on the Glorious Qur’ān and its various forms of recitation please refer to *al-A‘lām* of Zirikli, *The Encyclopedia of the Qur’ān and Research on the Qur’ān* as well as the introduction to the book *al-Masāhif* compiled by Arthur Jeffery, the great Islamologist and Qur’ānic research scholar who has written several books on the Qur’ān including the one on the terms used in the Glorious Qur’ān, which has been translated into Persian by Feraydūn Badrih’i).

In his book, in the section entitled, *The compilation of the Qur’ān into a book by ‘Alī bin Abī Tālib (may Allah be pleased with him)*, Sajistānī writes:

‘Abdullāh quoting through Muhammad bin Ismā‘il Ahmasi through Ibn Fuzayl through Ash‘ath through Muhammad bin Sirin

Tābi‘ī (33 – 110 AH), a resident of Basrah and one of the greatest of the scholars of his age in most Islamic sciences, the author of the famous book, *Ta‘bīr al-Ru‘yā*, (refer to *al-A‘lām* Zirikli) has narrated for our benefit that when the noble Prophet (S) passed away, (Imam) ‘Ali (‘a) pledged that he would not put the cloak on his shoulders (dress up or leave home) except for participating in the Friday congregational prayers, until he would complete the collection and the compilation of the Glorious Qur’ān in a *mushaf*. After a few days, Abū Bakr sent someone to invite him [Imam ‘Ali (‘a)]. And as the Imam (‘a) visited him, Abū Bakr said: ‘O Abā al-Hasan! Are you unhappy about our authority?’ The Imam (‘a) replied: ‘By Allah that it is not so; except that I have sworn not to dress up or to leave home unless it is for participating in the Friday congregational prayers, until I complete the collection and the compilation of the Glorious Qur’ān.’ He then shook hands with him and returned.

Thereafter, in a statement that appears within parenthesis, indicating the inclusion of some matter from another text, the following has been stated:

Abū Bakr (Sajistāni) says: ‘No one besides Ash‘ath has mentioned anything about the presence or the compilation of a *mushaf* and his words are not true; and it is worth mentioning that it has been said that the sentence, ‘...until I compile the Qur’ān’, actually implies, ‘until I complete its memorization’, because anyone who memorizes the Qur’ān is said to have ‘compiled’ the Qur’ān.⁶

The third reliable and old (4th century AH) source making a mention of the *mushaf* of Imam ‘Ali (‘a) is the book, *al-Fihrist*, by Ibn Nadim (b. 380 AH). In the section on the compilers of the Qur’ān during the times of the Prophet of Allah (S), he first mentions the name, “‘Ali bin Abī Tālib, *rizwān Allah ‘alayh*.⁷

In the same section, under the topic “Arrangement of the *Sūrah*s of the Qur’ān in *Mushaf* Amir al-Mu’minin ‘Alī bin Abī Tālib *karrama Allah wajhah*”, he writes:

Ibn al-Munādi says: “Hasan bin ‘Abbās said to me: I came to know through ‘Abd al-Rahmān bin Abī Hammād, through Hakam bin Zuhayr Sadūsī, through ‘Abd Khayr, who said regarding ‘Alī (‘a): ‘After the passing away of the Prophet (S), he witnessed the concern and apprehension of the people and therefore took an oath that he would not remove his cloak until he would compile the Qur’ān. Thereafter, he sat at home for three days and compiled the Glorious Qur’ān; and that is the first *mushaf* in which the Qur’ān is collected and compiled through his memory. This *mushaf* was with Ja‘far’s family and I personally saw a *mushaf* with Abū Ya‘lā Hamzah al-Hasanī, that was in ‘Alī bin Abī Tālib’s (‘a) handwriting, and some pages were missing from it, and it was preserved by the Banī Hasan family as a legacy (passing from one generation to the next); and the order of the *sūrah*s in this *mushaf* is’.”

Unfortunately the discussion regarding the names and the order of the *sūrah*s is missing from this reliable book, and it is not clear whether this has been intentional or unintentional.

One of the important documents that has been recently discovered which contains a considerable description of the *mushaf* of Amir al-Mu’minin (‘a) is the book, *Tafsīr Mafātīh al-Asrār wa Masābih al-Abrār*, written by the great scholar, Muhammad bin ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Shahristānī (b. 548 AH), the author of the famous book, *al-Milal wa al-Nihal*, who considered himself as an *Ash‘arī* in theology, and the follower of the Shāfi‘ī school in jurisprudence. Following the discovery of this book and the subsequent publication of its photographed version (by Markaz Nashr Nusakh Khattī, Tehran) in two volumes as well as the typeset publication of its first volume, researched by Dr. Muhammad ‘Alī Āzarshab, along with some explanatory notes and published by Markaz Nashr

Mirāth Maktūb (The Center for the Publication of Written Heritage) in the year 1997, it has become evident and proved that Shahrīstānī had strong Shi‘ite inclinations (probably of the Ismā‘ili sect). In the second chapter of his introduction to the manner of the compilation of the glorious Qur’ān, he talks about a *mushaf* that was with Imam Ali (‘a) and writes that on the recommendation of the Prophet of Allah (S) the Imam had included some exegetical secrets in that *mushaf*. He then reprimands the *ashāb* [the Prophet’s (S) companions] who had assumed charge of the compilation of the Qur’ān for not accepting the *mushaf* of Imam ‘Ali (‘a) and then continues as under:

...After completing the funeral rites of the Prophet (S), he (Imam Ali) took an oath not to wear a robe, except for attending the Friday prayers, until he compiled the Qur’ān; because he had been categorically commanded to do so. He then collected and compiled the Qur’ān in the order of its revelation without any tampering or addition or subtraction. The Prophet of Allah (S) had earlier mentioned (to him) the order and the position of the verses and the chapters of the Qur’ān as regards their sequence...⁸

He then presents a rare point that has perhaps not been mentioned in any other source. In his own words:

... And it has been said that his [Imam ‘Ali’s (‘a)] *mushaf* comprised the main text and the commentaries within margins.⁹

And then continues as under:

And it is said that after completing its compilation he took it to the people (the so-called elderly *ashāb*) who had gathered in the mosque. They carried it with difficulty and it is said that it was as large as a camel-load. The Imam (‘a) announced to them: ‘This is the Book of Allah exactly as it was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (S) and I have compiled it between two covers. They said: ‘Pick the *mushaf* and take it back with you, we are not in need

of it.' The Imam ('a) said: 'By Allah, you will never see it again. Since I had compiled it, it was my responsibility to inform you about the compilation.' He [the Imam ('a)] then returned home, reciting this verse: '... *O my Lord! Surely my people have treated this Qur'ān as a forsaken thing*'. (25:30)¹⁰

Another significant feature of the book, *Mafātīh al-Asrār*, is that it quotes the sequence of the *mushaf* of Imam 'Alī ('a) from Muqātil bin Sulaymān (b. 150 AH).

An outstanding feature of the *mushaf* of Imam 'Alī ('a) is that, as stated by Shaykh Mufīd (b. 413 AH) and some other research scholars, it contains the interpretations of the meanings of the Qur'ānic verses¹¹. Moreover, the *mansūkh* (abrogated) verses precede the *nāsikh* (abrogating) ones.¹² It has also been said that the Imam's ('a) *mushaf* had clarified many ambiguities, including the names of some of the *munāfiqīn* (hypocrites), in the margin of the *mushaf*. These are, in fact, the reasons why this *mushaf* was not acceptable (by some *ashāb*) and Imam 'Alī ('a), while approving of the Imāmi/Uthmāni *mushaf* hid his own *mushaf* forever; and many Shi'ite sources believe that this *mushaf* has passed on from one generation to the next, of the Infallible Imams ('a), and is presently in the possession of the Imam Mahdī (may Allah hasten his reappearance)].¹³ Certainly, there is no doubt over the historical existence of the *mushaf* of Imam 'Alī ('a) and its exclusivity in comparison with the other *masāhif*.

Notes:

1. Al-Shahristānī, Muhammad bin ‘Abd al_Karīm, *Maḥāṣin al-Asrār wa Masābih al-Abrār*; *Tārīkh al-Ya‘qūbī*, Vol 2, pp. 15-16, with some changes in certain phrases.
2. Kulaynī, Muhammad bin Ya‘qūb, *Usūl al-Kāfi*, Vol. 1, p. 242.
3. Rāmyār, Mahmūd, *The History of Qur‘ān*, pp. 365 – 373.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 374 – 477.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 378.
6. *Al-Masāhif*, Cairo: al-Matba‘ah al-Rahmāniyyah, 1355 AH/1936 CE., p. 10.
7. *Al-Nadīm*, Abū al-Faraj Muhammad bin Abī Ya‘qūb Ishāq, *al-Fihrist*, researched by Rizā Tajaddud, Tehran: Maktabah al-Asadī and Maktabah al-Ja‘farī al-Tabrizī, 1391 AH/ 1979 CE., p. 30.
8. Al-Shahristānī, *Maḥāṣin al-Asrār wa Masābih al-Abrār*, the photographed version, p. 5.
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 12, research and explanatory notes by Dr. Āzarshab.
11. Mufīd, *Awā‘il al-Maqālāt*, p. 94.
12. Al-Zanjānī, Abū ‘Abdullah, *Tārīkh al-Qur‘ān*, p. 54.
13. *Haqāyiq Hāmmah*, p. 160.

Religion and Modernity

By: Dr. Rizā Dāwarī

Translated by Zahrā' Shujā'-Khānī

Although we find a wide range of historical reports in books on theology, philosophy, and sociology on the experience that the Western Christian world has gained from the phenomenon of modernity, our experience of what is called modernity has been decidedly different. The Western world has largely been oblivious to issues of Muslim societies even though our problems have never really found a fair platform within their media. However, if an atmosphere of a fair exchange of mutual experiences had been possible, a big stride would also have been possible towards the attainment of mutual empathy, understanding, and acceptance.

The Western Christian world witnessed and experienced the emergence and growth of the seeds of modernity right in its own home ground, whereas we first encountered this phenomenon when it had already borne fruit in the West and consequently picked and chose from its harvest. The Western world has been living with modernity for a few centuries now. Although the aim of this article is not to judge and evaluate this particular issue, it would however

not be possible to study the relationship between modernity and religion without initially delving into this aspect of the subject. Issues like the emergence of modernity and its descent into the heart of the Western Christian world, giving it a new dictate and thereby inviting it to participate in a new order, consequently rendering only a tiny but ornamental niche for the purpose of worship and devotion, is the drama of modern history that Nietzsche was perhaps justified in calling the tragedy of history. Whatever we choose to label this part of history, groups – affect a tiny fraction – in Muslim societies, we too have undeniably come to share of it in the past hundred years or so. Our encounter with modernity occurred at a time when religion was viewed as defensive against the oncoming onslaught of modernity.

Freud was of the opinion that the ancient pre-modern society was dealt three fatal blows with the onset of the modern age. The first blow was dealt by Galileo and Copernicus with their cosmic theories (derived mainly from the works of Islamic scientists); the second blow came from Lamarck and Darwin in the field of biology; and the third one was in the field of psychology that claimed that the intellect was a drifting island in the ocean of the forces of the sub-conscious. The intent here is not to advocate or to refute Freud's statement, nor does an evaluation fall directly into the context of the present discussion, but if at all, it could be said that the third blow was not inflicted upon the ancient society but rather on the body and the soul of modernity. If we classify the history of modernity according to the Freudian criteria, it was around the time of the second blow on the European medieval society and the pre-modern world in general that the so-called elites in Muslim societies were introduced to the phenomenon of modernity that brought along a host of problems for us. Many terms and concepts that came to be translated into our languages did not really carry the meanings that they actually held in their languages of origin. To quote some examples, the term "progress"

came to be translated as *taraqqī* while the term “liberty” came to be translated as *hurriyyat*. Although these translations were not altogether incorrect, the fresh implications of the terms like *taraqqī* and *hurriyyat* that were already in use in the language of our mysticism, ethics, and theosophy could not easily be discerned from their older perceptions. Thus, if someone were to raise any questions in the realms of *taraqqī* or *hurriyyat* (progress or liberty), he would be accused of being against *taraqqī* and *hurriyyat* which were the pre-requisites for the independence of man. Also the term “modernity” came to be translated as *tajaddud*, which already held a specific meaning and implication in philosophy, mysticism, and theology. However, the implications held by this term in those fields are not adaptive to the concept of modernity and the sense in which this term was used in the other fields can even prove as barriers to the proper understanding of the nature of modernity. One of the misunderstandings that arise from such loose translations is that many a historical truths are converted into mere words or intangible concepts. Let us remind ourselves that modernity is very much a historical reality that has more or less actively permeated the entire planet in varying degrees whereas the meaning of the term *tajaddud* as it exists in our dictionaries and our memories is rather neutral in implication and does not affect any change. Thus, if *tajaddud* is related to, as a mere concept, then it would be no problem for religion and modernity (*tajaddud*) to co-exist but if we were to refer to the historical meaning of modernity, it would be rather difficult to understand it within the context of religion.

No one can claim that religion and modernity have been indifferent and unbiased towards each other and neither can it be implied that all the advocates of modernity were opposed to religion. On the other hand, it is not as if all the religious authorities have been opposed to modernity or have struggled against it. However, modernity – according to its advocates – has

changed man's relationship with his fellowmen, with the world, and in some cases with the origin of the world. Whatever this relationship is, it is definitely not a religious one. At the same time there are many groups of people that look at things through the window of modernity, even though they continue to adhere to some sorts of religious beliefs and rituals. However, in the world of modernity, religion is quite different from its original concept, or in other words, one could say that in modernity, religion has been interpreted differently. Despite the fact that the founders of modern society and modernity during the Renaissance period did hold religious beliefs and were concerned with religion and some of them even lost their lives for their religious beliefs; however, they chose to overlook religion at the time of actually designing the modern world. But, religion is not a thing that can be overlooked, and thus, in order to preserve the necessary harmony in the modern society, religion had to be made to synthesize with modernity. Religious reforms and new interpretations of the Judo-Christian Holy Scriptures were some of the attempts in the way of forging the required synthesis. Then it was the modernist philosopher Immanuel Kant's turn to introduce the concept of "religion within the limits of reason alone".

It were these very changes and developments in Europe that resulted in the eventual expansion of modernity and those who attempted to re-interpret religion and to evaluate it with the new reasoning did not have any specific purpose in their minds and were not thinking in terms of resolving any civilizational issues and were not even looking at paving the path for economic and social development. But the communities that adopted modernity from the West, on the whole, had three distinct types of approaches towards it. The first approach involved the products and the effects of modernity, which generally invited an attitude of skepticism and doubt. The second approach was an unconditional, open-arm acceptance of all the aspects of modernity and a complete surrender

to this new phenomenon as well as to the invitation to an unquestioned imitation of the West which manifested in different forms. Of course, there soon appeared those who advocated the stance of welcoming modernity while yet retaining their own traditions and religions. Finally, the third approach which involved the study of the nature of modernity. However, our approach towards modernity is only one side of the whole issue; and the more important question would be concerning the effects that modernity has had on us. In reply to the efforts of those Muslims who had welcomed modern science, people like Ernest Renan – who had placed modernity against religion and religiosity – alleged that Islam was opposed to science and modernity.

Since the name of Ernest Renan has come up in this discussion, it would not be out of place here to bring to mind the debate between Renan and the great pan-Islamist reformer, Sayyid Jamāl al-Dīn Asadābādī that took place in Paris. In one of his earlier speeches, Renan had claimed that Islam is opposed to science and modernity and Sayyid Jamāl al-Dīn responded to this comment. However, their debate did not really end conclusively and in fact, even the point of dispute and disagreement was not actually clarified. Sayyid Jamāl al-Dīn was defending a religion that was not in any dispute with modernity while Ernest Renan who had no idea of the harmony between Islam and reason, this appeared as wishful thinking. Renan believed that modernity would reach its zenith only when any and all kinds of sacred beliefs would come to be eliminated and in his opinion, only modern science would ultimately prove to be the answer to the needs of mankind. He claimed that science would not only be the answer to the needs of the world and mankind but that even the issues related to God or divinity would come to be answered only through science and reason. Therefore, Renan did not really find it necessary to place religion after science and reason. As far as he was concerned, science was the only answer and when he was questioned by the

French writer, Romain Rolland, as to why man's hopes, desires, and sentiments did not find any place in his book, *The Future of Science*, Renan answered with his customary pessimistic arrogance that man's attachments and hopes were of no significance and that what was of sole importance was the progress of science. Later, when Bertrand Russell whose thoughts and ideas were generally close to those of Renan, used the term "the scientific hell", he too, probably held extreme ideas like those of Renan.

Renan was referring to the cultural-ethical results of the principles of intellectualism of Europe in the eighteenth century and beyond. In his opinion, if perfect scientific knowledge could be attained through modernity then man could take the place of God and could provide a systematized organization to the world. Modernity has extracted its power from this belief and in the world of modernity, nothing is held as sacred or absolute and nothing should ever leave the precincts of research, science, technology, and art. It would not be right for us to try to understand the meaning of modernity by referring to the ideas of Ernest Renan because he had converted modernity into an ideology and speaks of it as though he is propagating its worship. This, however, does not mean that he was altogether opposed to the views of the other thinkers and authorities on this subject and held totally different views. Renan was an ardent admirer of reason and the power of modernity and was not the philosopher of modernity. Kant is the philosopher of modernity. Even prior to the actualization of modernity, he had already described the qualities and nature of this phenomenon. This means that although, as a rule, a phenomenon can only be described once it is actualized and has taken shape, in a reply to the triple question of "who are we", "what should we do", and "what can we hope for", Kant had more or less described the essence of the modern man and the modern world. Hegel and Marx followed in his footsteps. Kant strengthened the foundation of subjectivity and presented a new theory according to which and

through which it is man who grants everything its form and that it would not be possible to say anything about such matters that fall out of the realms of man's power and perception and whatever had thus far been said in these areas are the outcomes of an error. Besides this, he also wrote the book, *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* (1793). It must however be mentioned that in his book, Kant has not rejected religion and has rather argued on how religion can be synthesized with modern reason. Renan believed that modernity has no boundaries and that everything is permissible in it.

According to him the ancient societies and religions believed in do's and don'ts, the lawful and the unlawful, sanctity and sacredness but the modern society is free from such restrictions. It was later on that Max Weber declared that the world has found a rational form and that nothing holds the power of enchantment anymore. Renan's problem was that he had not yet freed himself from the enchantment of modern science and unlike Kant he could not think of religion within the bounds of reason. He was unaware that modernity is in itself a religion or at least intends to take on the appearance of a religion. However, modernity does not prohibit reference to the divine books and Law, provided that such a law is in conformity with the conditions of modernity and fits into its framework. Modernity considers the laws of nature as the valid laws. In the realm of modernity, any laws - divine or non-divine - should be made to conform to natural laws; but these laws do not govern man externally.

In modernity, nature does not hold the same meaning as was held by the Greeks. In fact, nature is translated into the "laws of nature", because nature is an objective issue. Hegel was of the opinion that it is in our quest for gaining dominance over nature that we get to rediscover ourselves. Marx, too, spoke in terms of the "humanization" of nature and the "naturalization" of the human. Both these views are rooted in the philosophy of Kant

according to which, it is in understanding nature that man is able to rediscover himself as well as the limits of science and the power of reason. It is through this rediscovery that he reaches maturity and is freed from all kinds of external bondage; he does not any longer seek anything outside of himself; he does not abide by the laws formulated by others but instead undertakes to be the lawmaker himself, and follows the laws formulated by himself. The modernity that Kant envisaged was not opposed to religiosity; rather, in his form of modernity, Christianity was manifestly stripped off its intrinsic sacredness and was in fact used as a piece of decoration in the secularized world.

Despite all that has been discussed thus far, we have not yet reached much clarity on questions like: “who is the modern man”, “what is modernity”, and “what is its relationship with religion”. If we were to ask people who have no background in philosophy, theology, or similar disciplines for their idea of modernity, they would most likely indicate towards the living conditions of the modern world as well as the customs and traditions of the Western world and would probably say: “It is the Western man who is modern; and modernity is his way of living”. In other words, in the common opinion of such people, modernity is equated to the externals that can be found in the modern world and, thus, they generally do not hesitate to accept it. Of course, there have been people who have not really welcomed the Western commodities. Yet what we see today in most developing countries seeking modernization in terms of their acceptance of such Western commodities that suit them and the rejection of the ones that are unsuitable to them, is nothing but a transformed version of the earlier stance.

In the earliest encounters between the traditional societies and the modern world, the leaders of these societies were very skeptical and dubious of anything Western, viewing it as a threat to religion, religious beliefs, and traditions. However, as modernity

gradually spread and took people widely under its influence, introducing them to the modern commodities, not only was it no longer rejected but it was now even looked upon with admiration. There were yet some people who believed that modernity had both good and bad features, out of which the good ones should be accepted while the bad ones should be avoided. This is undoubtedly a positive stance that cannot and should not be rejected. However, one could and should question the practical applicability of such a stance, and how and to what extent such a selection could really be possible. One may probably even encounter some people who may claim that such a thing is impossible. But the problem here is that if we were to reject the possibility of selecting between the good and the bad features, what other option would we then be left with? Would we not reach an apparent stalemate - either accept the whole package, consisting both good and bad features, or then abstain from partaking in any of it whatsoever? It appears as if there is no middle way between these two options. But this may not really be the case and we are not perhaps actually standing on a crossroad at all. Or we could even argue that it has not been proved that the modern world and modernity are simply a package of technico-scientific objects. But if it is claimed that modernity is a single historical unit then our task becomes rather difficult because in that case, it would not be possible to split or segregate anything from a single history and single world; and moreover, any inter-relation and scientific-cultural interaction would become impossible or would at least prove to be extremely difficult. At the same time, we see through the course of the history of modernization that many things from the Western world have reached the various parts of the globe but it cannot yet be said that modernity as a whole has been realized anywhere in the world. As we know, even an authority like Jurgen Habermas is of the opinion that all the possibilities of modernity have not yet been actualized.

This issue has sometimes more or less been an area of concern for the pioneers of modernity in some of the Islamic countries, including Iran. In one of his most outstanding papers that has been published under the title, "A Discourse on Education", Sayyid Jamāl al-Dīn Asadābādī says: "It is now forty years since the Ottoman government has established modern schools but has yet to achieve its expected results." Sayyid Jamāl al-Dīn was of the opinion that the adopters of the modern European system of education had not taken into consideration the foundation of this system. As a matter of fact, the mere appreciation and adoption of some of the aspects and things of the modern world and modernity does not necessarily mean that one has entered the world of modernity and even if one does manage to do so, the world of modernity does not become native to him and he does not experience solace and tranquility in it. There are many people who are infatuated by some of the externals of the modern world without really having much in common with modernity itself and there are yet others who actually belong to the modern world or may be share some sort of a relationship with it but still do not approve of or appreciate all the externals of that world. It is very interesting to note here how a great and famous writer-poet of the older days had actually composed a poem eulogizing the railways and how a modern poet finds nothing but a "purple scream" in a train!

Thus, belonging to the world of modernity and simply being an admirer of the trappings of the modern world are two different things. When introduced to any society, with any historical background, the trappings of the modern world may always find some takers and admirers. But let us not forget here that we are not being taken to a display of modernity from which we can pick, choose, and buy what we wish to. In fact, no one is even seeking out our opinion on modernity. It must, however, be accepted without any hesitation that religious-minded people are very much

in a position to pass a verdict on modernity. However, what should be particularly taken into consideration is that modernity is not compliant with every religion or with every form of religion. In fact, before permitting any entry into its world, modernity tends to first mold the religion according to its own principles. It is thus not surprising that there are people who advocate that religion should comply with modernity. But is something like this really possible? It has been said that modernity is a city whose nights are lit up with neon lights and whose first great poet is Baudelaire. If this happens to be the case, it would be rather difficult to modernize a city by manipulating the views and beliefs of its people; and who anyway can command such a sway over the views and beliefs of the people? With his poem and “the street lights”, thanks to which there is now no difference between the night and the day, Charles Baudelaire has laid the foundation of the modern city. However, there is a very distinct difference between the beliefs of the people of this city and those of the pre-modern world because wherever modernity steps foot, it changes and alters the beliefs, the customs, and the earlier traditions. Again, if we were to believe that modernity merely comprises some superficial alterations and that modernity can be said to have taken reality wherever certain apparent changes have occurred, we would be making a big mistake because anyone holding such a belief would firstly have misunderstood the order of things and would have, secondly, erroneously believed that in the course of the history of mankind anyone and everyone has the power to do anything he wishes to or can alter whatever he desires. As the famous Persian poet Hāfiz says:

Na har keh chehreh bar afrukht delbari dānad

na har keh Ayeneh sāzad sekandari dānad

Whoever furbishes the face may not be a captivator of hearts.

Neither does any mirror-maker is the all-conquering Alexander.

Modernity is a specific kind of relationship between man, the world, and the origin of the world and this specific kind of relationship has manifested in modern science and technology by eclipsing the divine order and through the categorization of arts under the realm of aesthetics. Thus, modernity is not a matter of personal opinion or taste and being modern cannot be translated into some kind of psychological or ethical state of being. Although it is true that the modern man is the one who adapts to the call and changes of his times, however, the age and times of modernity cannot really be confined to a limited time period. Thus, what we can deduce from the above discussion is that being “modern” is equal to being up-to-date. A few years back, a banner adorned the Gallerie Lafayette in Paris that read: “Live by the latest fashion and express your own special taste in choosing your clothes and personal effects”. According to this statement, in order to express one’s personality one has to become like the others. But this paradox somehow needs to be eliminated. First of all, it should be kept in mind that people are not free to go by any and every fashion, and that these fashions are solely dictated by modernity and the modern world. Secondly, even “being yourself” and owning a personality holds a special connotation in the modern world. Thus, having a personality and being fashion conscious are both limited within the conditions of modernity. A visitor to the Gallerie Lafayette is free to buy and wear any outfit that he wishes. This freedom of his stretches even beyond the confines of the galleries. However, it would be wishful thinking if he decided to leave the precincts of the city of modernity whose poet is Baudelaire and yet be considered a modern man. Modernity is not a personal opinion, view, or taste but when we translated it as *tajaddud*, we also attributed all the meanings that *tajaddud* held in our language to modernity as well. Although this translation cannot be considered as incorrect, as mentioned earlier, in the West the term “modernity” has been applied to such phenomena, one of

whose pre-requisites is “progress”, which has been translated by us as *taraqqī*. Yet when modernity is translated as *tajaddud*, in all probability, it is assumed that the meaning of both these terms is same in all respects and that they can be used interchangeably. Modernity is a term that appeared in the nineteenth century whereas *tajaddud* is an old term that has been in use in our fields of philosophy, mysticism, and theology for centuries, and whenever we use the term *tajaddud*, all the meanings that the term carried in the other disciplines come to our mind and our relationship with this term tends to take the place of our relationship with modernity.

Let us not forget that our problem is not restricted to the translation of the terms “modern” and “modernity” but we are faced with this same problem even in the translation of most of the terms related to the fields of philosophy and theology. Modernity is not only a term, the meaning of which can be understood by simply translating the word. Modernity is in fact a phenomenon that itself determines the meaning of certain concepts and it cannot be treated merely as one more concept among those that are already at our disposal. We could say that modernity is history; albeit one which was not related to all the peoples of the world initially but has now come to prove to be the history of the entire world.

There are many who believe that since man is known to have been capable of altering things to suit his own views, knowledge, and actions, the same can also be possible in the case of modernity. They think it is possible to carry modernity along with them wherever they wish, to alter it according to their own desires, to synthesize it with whatever they want, or in short, to hold it under their own command. They are oblivious of the fact that this has only been possible so far as the material paraphernalia and the externals of modernity are concerned. Modernity has provided the conditions within which man’s potential has been unfolded and if these conditions were to be withdrawn, his power, too, would be diminished. Nietzsche had rightly predicted that man would lose

his power in the final stages of modernity. Man has expressed himself to his full capacity in the world of modernity and now that the time of his power has come to an end, sitting in nostalgia will not prove to be very helpful. And perhaps, this indulgence in the past glory may even become a subject of ridicule in the future. It is high time that all those who have been fruitlessly dreaming about the utopia of modernity, blaming the opponents – individuals as well as groups - of modernity for their failure realized their own inability. Evidently, if a small minority is able to waylay their progress, it would only go on to prove their own disability because if someone weak were oblivious of his own weakness, he would perhaps prove to be dangerous in word and action and would soon become an object of ridicule. But then can it ever be possible to turn aside from modernity or to even be indifferent towards it? Man is now not in a situation to be able to ignore modernity or to turn a blind eye toward it and even those who talk of post-modern conditions do not claim to have exited from the realm of modernity. The post-modern conditions are the continuity of modernity, the only difference being that the seeds of the downfall of modernity have manifested themselves in it. So it is possible to live in modernity without actually considering it an absolute value and the criteria for everything.

From what has been discussed thus far, it can be seen that modernity is pretty neutral towards religion and in it religiosity and agnosticism are both viewed equally. Modernity is a city whose founders, even if they were religious people like Thomas Moore who have given up their lives for their beliefs, have not been people who really held religion in very high esteem while some of them have even categorically opposed religion. Their opposition is normally attributed to their own individual or personal choices but what is important to note is that the rise of a modern world order with its agnostic thinking has taken place and the modern man

today views life from an agnostic angle, in spite of the fact that some religious beliefs continue to linger on.

As a matter of fact, the understanding of the relationship between religion and modernity is not a difficult one and even if it sometimes appears to be difficult, it is mainly because there are some people who desire and claim to be able to create a marriage between modernity and religion, and to live with both of them simultaneously. And even if someone points out the difficulties in such a union, he is criticized from all sides. Some call him an enemy of science and *tajaddud* while others claim that he considers religiosity as impossibility. And if one believes that modernity is the best possible world to live in and that it will continue to exist forever and ever, he should either turn away from religion or then should at least bring about a compromise between the two (both of which options would amount to the same thing). Such a person should realize that in his view, the world of modernity is no more one of the possible worlds, but that its existence is indispensable; and that in this indispensable world, people or at least some people can live and behave in any which manner they choose to; and no matter what their belief systems, they can influence the course and the management of general affairs. They say that there are people who are scholars, engineers, and technocrats that have an effective share in the management of technological affairs who also hold their own set of religious beliefs; thus, it is possible for religiosity to survive safe and secure in the world of modernity. The question that arises here is: What rules and regulations do these people follow? No one can claim that it is not possible to hold religious beliefs and to abide by one's religious obligations and practices in the modern society. However, it is one thing to hold religious beliefs and practices and it is another thing to view the world from a religious angle and follow the laws of religion in one's daily practical affairs. Modernity is certainly not in favour of allowing religion to have a say in the management of affairs. Or in other

words, in the wisdom of modernity it is man's word and law that prevails, and anything beyond that is myth, invalid, and unsolicited. This means that if there is a future for man, he is not destined or fated to stay on in this world; and this world is not eternal. No matter how difficult our task may appear, the horizons of possibility are open to man. If in the world of modernity, despite the fact that everything is constantly in a state of change and renewal, tomorrow does not hold much difference from today and everything repeats itself, yet, one can hope in a day after tomorrow that will prove to be different from today and tomorrow.

Conclusion

Religion will prevail and is preserved in all times, including the age of modernity. Even though at the time when modernity appears to stand strong and powerful, religious people and religious thinkers can be found in all nooks and corners of the modern world. Just as the modern world and its great happenings shook the foundation of the ancient world, the happenings of the future thinking will shake the foundations of modernity; tremors of which can already be experienced. Post-modernism is not an independent world and post-modern thinkers do not consider themselves as the thinkers of the future world and do not claim to be religious minded either, since they consider themselves as the spokespersons of the latter part of modernity - or the period in which the modern man does not anymore believe in the principles of modernity. The absence and concealment of religion in the modern world has perhaps been effective in the weakening of the principles of modernity and the emergence of post-modern thinking. At the same time, there is no necessary relationship between religion and the post-modern thinking and we can clearly see that some of the representatives of post-modernism have openly opposed religion and some others consider this opposition as the main symbol of modernity. Therefore, we see that religion has had

a fundamental role in the destiny of all periods of history and society, including the modern world. Although this discussion may appear to resemble theological and sociological arguments, the views presented in this article are of a philosophical nature and the aim has not been to discover how a union can be forged between modernity and religion or to create a compromise and peace among the two. Anyone attempting such a task has invariably stepped into the realm of ideology. In a recent discussion with a couple of colleagues and friends on the relationship between religion and modernity, this writer questioned them on their views on the unfriendly attitude of modernity towards religion, to which one of them answered: "Modernity is neutral and indifferent towards religion." The other one replied: "Perhaps the answer would be as Prophet Jesus ('a) had supposedly said according to the Gospel, 'Love thy enemy as thy friend'."

The Dialogue Among Civilizations Versus the Clash of Civilizations

Dr. 'Alī Naqī Bāqir-Shāhī

Introduction

Samuel Huntington's theory of the Clash of Civilizations has received considerable responses throughout the world. Scholars and intellectuals from different countries have written articles and made comments on his approach to civilizations. Nevertheless, most of them are of the view that his theory suffers from scientific shortcomings and can serve only the interests of America in the post-cold war period.

As against such approach to civilizations Sayyid Muhammad Khātami, the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran presented the idea of Dialogue Among Civilizations in the UN General Assembly, while he was the Chairman of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), proposing the designation of the year 2001 as the year of Dialogue Among Civilizations. Thus, it is worthwhile to examine these two approaches to civilizations and throw some light on the consequences of such approaches. One believes the fault lines of civilizations will be the battle lines of the

future and the other holds that the fault lines of civilizations are the dialogue lines of civilizations. The former is a pessimistic outlook and believes that the difference among civilizations may generate the clash of civilizations. The latter is an optimistic outlook to civilizations and the future world order and believes in mutual respect and tolerance for the views and values of various cultures and civilizations and considers the cultural diversity as a permanent feature of human society and a cherished asset for the advancement of humanity at large.

The Clash of Civilizations

Apart from many weak points and lapses in Samuel Huntington's theory of the clash of civilizations, there is a strong point in his views: he revived the issue of civilizations and the role that civilizations can play in post-cold war period. It should be borne in mind that before him Arnold Toynbee had pointed out the pivotal role that other civilizations have played in transformation of states. In his controversial article entitled, "The Clash of Civilizations" that appeared in the journal of Foreign Affairs, Summer 1993, Huntington elaborated the political atmosphere of the post-cold war period and referred to a new source of conflict in the new world.

World politics from Huntington's perspective, is entering a new phase, and intellectuals have not hesitated to proliferate visions of what it will be the end of history, the return of traditional rivalries between states, and the decline of the nation states from the conflicting pulls of tribalism and globalism, among others. Each of these visions catches aspects of the emerging reality. Yet, they all miss a crucial, indeed a central aspect of what global politics is likely to be in the coming years. Huntington says in his hypothesis that the fundamental sources of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict

will be cultural. Nation states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics. The fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future.¹

Huntington considers civilizations as a new source of conflict in this new world but he fails to clarify as to what is meant by civilization and the clash of civilizations, that is, he never gives a clear definition of civilization. Sometimes he refers to religion as the common element of civilizational units and some times he refers to language, history, customs, etc. as the common element of civilizations. Thus, his definition of civilization lacks common point and clarity.

Regarding the definition of civilization, Huntington says that "it is defined both by common objective elements, such as language, history, religion, customs, institutions, and by the subjective self-identification of people."² In his *A Study of History* Arnold Toynbee identified 11 major civilizations, of which only six exist at present, but Huntington identified seven or eight major civilizations. These include Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American and possibly African civilization.³ Huntington never explains the basis of such classification of civilizations as he has failed also to give a clear cut definition of civilization.

Huntington refers to the differences among civilizations and concludes that such difference may generate the clash of civilizations. He says that differences among civilizations are not only real: they are basic. Civilizations are differentiated from each other by history, language, culture, tradition and most important religion. He further adds that over the centuries, however, differences among civilizations have generated the most prolonged and the most violent conflicts.⁴ Sometime he refers to certain conflicts in the world and considers them as the instances of the

clash of civilizations but he fails to justify for example the case of the Persian Gulf War on the basis of his division of civilizations. In this war Muslim states sided with Western countries against Iraq. According to Huntington's theory of the Clash of Civilizations, a part of the Islamic civilization allied with Western civilization against Iraq which is a part of Islamic civilization. Thus, it is pointless to call it the clash of civilizations. In the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina war also, both sides were Slavic and it is not related to the clash of the civilizations.

Moreover, there is no reason why instead of civilizational dialogue there should be the clash of civilizations. The clash of civilizations, from Huntington's perspective, can occur at both the micro and macro levels. Civilizations may struggle over the conflict of international organizations, and try to influence those states that lie outside their civilizational sphere of influence.⁵

The critics of the theory of the clash of civilizations are unanimous in the view that Huntington's theory only serves the interest of the U.S. During the cold war the U.S. tried to win the support of West European countries through capitalizing on the menace of communism. But after the collapse of communism, the U.S. had no common enemy through which to continue its earlier policy and European countries also had no reason to support U.S. policy. Therefore, they tried to free themselves and think of a united Europe. In order to continue their hegemony over European countries, the Americans tried to find out a new common enemy. Huntington's idea that Islamic civilization and Confucian civilization threaten the Western civilization, is a theoretical support of such a policy of America.

But Europeans are well aware of this fact and prefer to support the dialogue among civilizations. Therefore they supported Mr. Khātami's proposal of designating the year of 2001 as the year of the dialogue among civilizations.

Huntington's theory of the clash of civilization is so vague

that one may not understand what he means by developing such a theory. Perhaps he works out a strategy to safeguard the interests of America in the future order of the world.

The Dialogue of Civilizations

Some of the critics of Huntington accepted the role of civilizations in transformation of states in the future, but pointed out that why instead of the dialogue of civilization there should be the clash of civilizations. For, the history of mankind from the outset, bears witness to the exchange of experience and dialogue among civilizations. The fault lines of civilizations like Syria and Egypt were the lines of the exchange of cultures and civilizations. The rise and fall of certain rulers cannot be interpreted as the mark of the clash of civilizations.

Today the idea of dialogue among civilizations vis-a-vis the idea of the clash of civilizations has been propounded by President Khātami, and almost all countries in the world particularly the representatives of OIC member states participating in the Islamic Symposium on dialogue among civilizations, held in Tehran, of Iran, 3-5 May 1999, expressed their profound appreciation for the initiative of President Khātami, to proclaim the year 2001 as the UN Year of Dialogue among Civilizations.

It is interesting to note that the idea of the dialogue among civilization has been offered by the product of the Islamic Republic of Iran against the idea of the clash of civilizations that has been introduced by Americans who claim to be the pioneers of peace and civilization. Thus Khātami's idea of dialogue among civilizations is a meaningful gesture.

President Khātami, as a religious scholar and as the then chairman of the OIC, offered the idea of the dialogue among civilizations and asked for cordial relations between various civilizations, thereby contradicting Huntington's idea about Islam as a militant civilization.

Addressing the U.N. General Assembly, President Khātami stated: “Among the worthiest achievements of this century is the acceptance and significance of dialogue and rejection of force, promotion of understanding in cultural, economic and political fields, and strengthening of the foundations of liberty, justice and human rights. Establishment and enhancement of civility, whether at national or international level, is contingent upon dialogue among society and civilization representing various views, inclinations and approaches” President Khātami added that if humanity at the threshold of the new Christian century and millenium devotes all effort to institutionalize dialogue, replacing hostility and confrontation with dialogue and understanding, it would leave an invaluable legacy for the benefit of the future generations.⁶

Addressing the university scholars in Florence, Italy, President Khātami said that the hearts and minds of Iranians epitomize harmony, love, and tolerance. It is because of this that Iranians are proponents of dialogue among civilizations.⁷

In the Tehran Declaration on dialogue among civilizations, the following points were considered as the general principles of dialogue among civilizations:

1. Respect for the dignity and equality of all human beings without distinctions of any kind and of nations large and small;
2. Genuine acceptance of cultural diversity as a permanent feature of human society and a cherished asset for the advancement and welfare of humanity at large;
3. Mutual respect and tolerance for the views and values of various cultures and civilizations, as well as the right of members of all civilizations to preserve their cultural heritage and values and rejection of desecration of moral, religious or cultural values, sanctities and sanctuaries;
4. Recognition of diversified sources of knowledge throughout time and space, and the imperative of drawing upon the

areas of strengths, richness and wisdom of each civilization in a genuine process of mutual enrichment;

5. Rejection of attempts for cultural domination and imposition as well as doctrines and practices promoting confrontation and clash between civilizations;

6. Search for common grounds between and within various civilizations in order to face common global challenges;

7. Acceptance of cooperation and search for understanding as the appropriate mechanism for the promotion of common universal values as well as for the suppression of global threats;

8. Commitment to participation of all peoples and nations, without any discrimination, in their own domestic as well as global decision-making and value distribution processes;

9. Compliance with principles of justice, equity, peace and solidarity as well as fundamental principles of international law and the United Nations Charter.⁸

Regarding the participants of dialogue, in the Tehran Declaration on dialogue among civilizations scholars, thinkers, intellectuals, scientists, economists, and people of arts and culture are considered to be the primary engines for the initiation and sustaining of dialogue and governments and their representatives should play the primary role in encouraging and facilitating dialogue among civilizations.

President Khātami also is of the view that scholars are the main designers of dialogue among civilizations and politicians should prepare the ground for scholars in this respect.⁹

The idea of the dialogue among civilizations is a realistic idea, for it can explain a part of post-cold war realities. In this approach, both sides enjoy equal place and right, that is, both sides try to learn from each other, thus, they try to understand each other as well. Owing to such communication and understanding, both sides recognize and respect each other. Therefore, the logic of dialogue opposes any kind of selfishness and ego-centric tendency.

Indeed, understanding of the nature and identity of each side is necessary for civilizational understanding. After accepting the independent identity of various civilizations, dialogue will be meaningful and fruitful. Obviously, every civilizational unit possesses rich experience and in the course of dialogue it can exchange its experience and talk about its problems. Following such kind of communication, the common problems of mankind will come to the fore.

At present Iran's policy is based on dialogue as President Khātami said that peace and freedom will not be attained except in the light of dialogue only if the two sides respect each other's honour, dignity and equality. For this reason the Islamic Republic of Iran has taken all its endeavours to establish constructive dialogue and promote the idea of dialogue among civilizations and cultures.¹⁰

In his article entitled, "What Is Civilization? What Is the Dialogue among Civilizations?" Iranian writer Dr. Ghulām 'Alī Khoshru has drawn a brief comparison between the dialogue and the clash of civilizations in the following lines:¹¹

Dialogue among Civilizations	Clash of Civilizations
1. Is based on equality (dialogue on equal position).	1. Is based on inequality and discrimination.
2. Diversity of cultures pave the way for cooperation and reconciliation.	2. Diversity of causes prepare the grounds of confrontation.
3. Attention to the common points for initiating dialogue and cooperation.	3. Emphasizing on the differences for commencement of conflict and war.
4. Looking for friendship, unity and mutual understanding.	4. Looking for hostility, domination and dependence.

5. Trying for understanding and promotion of genuine awareness.	5. Trying to deface the pictures of others and highlight their weak points.
6. Promoting confidence and understanding.	6. Erecting the wall of mistrust and disbelief.
7. Necessitates tolerance, consultation and exchange of views.	7. Necessitates violence, threat and promoting confrontation.
8. Transparency for cooperation and construction.	8. Secret and clandestine work for creating trouble and destruction.
9. Useful and beneficial to all sides of the dialogue.	9. Always one side is winner and victorious or loser or none.
10. Necessitates reason, criticism and morality.	10. Necessitate terror and rejection.
11. Thinkers and scholars are engaged in dialogue.	11. Military persons and war mongers are engaged in war.
12. Through dialogue civilizations become rich and deep.	12. Become devoid of their civilizational identities.
13. A strategy establishing justice and bringing about permanent peace in the world.	13. A strategy for an endless and total war.

Notes:

1. Huntington, Samuel P., *The Clash of Civilizations*, Foreign Affairs, vol. 12, No. 3, p. 34.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

5. Lee Burke, Victor, *The Clash of Civilizations*, Polity Press, 1997, p. 6.

6. President Khātami's speech at the 23rd session of the General Assembly of UN.

7. President Khātami's speech to university scholars in Florence, Italy in March 10, 1999.

8. Islamic Symposium on Dialogue among Civilizations, Tehran, 3-5 May 1999. Tehran Declaration on dialogue among civilizations.

9. President Khātami's interview with domestic and foreign reporters at Mehrabad Airport, Tehran, before his departure for a state visit to Italy.

10. President Khātami's speech at a banquet hosted in his honour by the Italian president, Rome, March 9.

11. Ghulām 'Ali Khoshru, *What is Dialogue among Civilizations?* The Journal of Foreign Policy (in Persian), No. 2, Summer 1998, p. 263.

Sources:

1. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*.

2. Victor Lee Burke, *The Clash of Civilizations*.

3. Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History*.

4. 'Abdul Husayn Zarrin Kub, *Kārnāmeḥ-ye Islam*.

5. Mujtabā Amirī, *The Clash of Civilizations: Huntington and his Critic*.

6. The Journal of Foreign Policy.

7. The Iranian Journal of International Affairs.

8. President's speeches on dialogue among civilizations in different occasions.

Aims and Objectives

1. To provide a forum for scholars to make analytical studies of Islamic topics and themes.
2. To advance the cause of better understanding of the Qur'ān and the Ahl al-Bayt's ('a) contribution to Islam.
3. To publish English translations of Arabic and Persian works of Muslim scholars.
4. To endeavour to find Islamic answers to questions relating to the contemporary social, political, and moral problems.

* * * * *

Scholars and writers from all over the world are invited to contribute to this journal.

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References and notes should be listed at the end of the article and should contain complete bibliographical information.

Books and other items sent to the journal for review are welcomed.

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SYSTEM OF TRANSLITERATION OF ARABIC CHARACTERS

CONSONANTS:

ء	'	س	s	ل	l
ب	b	ش	sh	م	m
ت	t	ص	s	ن	n
ث	th	ض	z	هـ	h
ج	j	ط	t	و	w
ح	h	ظ	z	ی	y
خ	kh	ع	'	Persian Letters	
د	d	غ	gh	پ	p
ذ	dh	ف	f	چ	ch
ر	r	ق	q	ژ	zh
ز	z	ک	k	گی	g

VOWELS:

Long:	ا	ā	Short:	ـَ	a	Doubled	یـِ	iyy (final from ī)	
	و	ū		ـُ	u		وـُ	uww (final from ū)	
	ی	ī		ـِ	i		Diphthongs:	وـِ	au or aw
				ـِ				یـِ	ay or ai