The Exploration of the Chain and Argumentation of the Tradition "the Qur'ān is Dhalūl (Like a Calm Camel) and has Different Aspects" in the Shī'a and Sunnī Sources

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Abstract

The study at hand has adopted a comparative-analytical method to investigate the chain and argumentation of the narration "the Qur'ān is Dhalūl and has different aspects, so take it in the best way" in the Shī'a and Sunnī sources. The foregoing narration is generally found in the Sunnī sources, but some Imāmīte scholars such as Ṭabrisī and Feiḍ Kāshānī have referred to it without mentioning its chain. This tradition is weak with regard to its chain and is considered a Delivered tradition. But it can be said that it enjoys a fair frequency with regard to its argumentation and text, in a way that the majority of the interpreters and Ḥadīth transmitters of the two denominations believe in the multidimensionality of the Qur'ān. Accordingly, an interpreter should avoid one-sidedness in the interpretation of the Qur'ān and should regard different aspects of the verses and express his final interpretation in a probabilistic manner. The narration "the Qur'ān has different aspects" which has been narrated from Imām 'Alī, too, confirms the narration "the Qur'ān is Dhalūl and has different aspects". It is noteworthy that the narration from Imām 'Alī has been mentioned in Nahj al-Balāgha without any chain, but the multiplicity of the narrators, the argumentative power, and the trustable character of Sayyid Raḍī help confirm this narration.

Keywords

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Introduction

In the frequent tradition *the thaqalayn* (the two weighty things) which has been narrated by both Shī'a and Sunnī, the Descendants of the Prophet (a) are considered as one of the two weights left from the Blessed Prophet (s) after his demise. The necessity of reference to the traditions and assertions of the Descendants of the Prophet (a) is that some points in the Noble Qur'ān (i.e. the Greater weight) have been presented in a brief and ambiguous manner. The explanation and instruction of these points is with the dear prophet of Islam (s) and after him with the Descendants of the Prophet (a) (i.e. the Lesser weight). People should refer to their narrations when they want to understand and interpret these verses. These interpretive narrations are like pure springs from which the Shī'as get their religion and numerous points about the Qur'ān. Now, if the water of these springs is not from a trustable origin or gets polluted on its way down, it will bring about illness and deviation. Therefore, the exploration and investigation of the chain and argumentation of the narrations gets important, so that people could drink healthy water, refresh their soul, and prevent blamable innovations in their religion.

One of the issues that have been mentioned in these narrations comes in a narration from the Blessed Prophet (s) who says, "The Qur'ān is Dhalūl and has different aspects, so take it in the best way". The meaning of the narration is that the Qur'ān has many different semantic aspects and the best aspect should be acted upon. Otherwise, some might deviate in understating the verses and misguide other people as well. Therefore, the study at hand aims at responding to these questions: have the foregoing narrations been issued from a reliable source? Are there other narrations that strengthen this narration? Is the text and argumentation of the quoted narration logical and acceptable, even if its chain is weak?

A glance at the previous works demonstrates that the majority of studies done in this regard have tended to be the investigations of the transmission chain. Therefore, the study at hand uses a comparative-analytical data collection and analysis method to explore and investigate the foregoing tradition as well as traditions similar to it for their chain and argumentation as found in the Shī'a and Sunnī sources and provide scientific responses to the above-mentioned questions.

The paths of the narration "the multidimensionality of the Noble Qur'ān" and examination of their chains of transmission

The narration "the Qur'ān is Dhalūl and has different aspects, so take it in the best way" has been narrated from Ibn 'Abbās in two ways.

1. Abū Naʿīm has narrated from Ibn ʿAbbās who said that the Blessed Prophet (s) said, "The Qurʾān is Dhalūl and has different aspects, so take it in the best way" (Suyūṭī, 1984, vol. 1: 443; Mutaqqī Hindī, 1988, vol. 1: 551; Abyārī, 1984, vol. 9: 18; Fāḍil, 2005, vol. 1: 15; Qāsimī, 1997, vol. 1: 9).

Abū Naʾīm: in the Sunnī Rijāl books, he has been mentioned as "Ḥāfiẓ, ṣūfī, the coordinator of jurisprudence and Sufism, and the supreme in memorizing and recording" (Subkī, 1936, vol. 4: 18), but in the Shīʿa Rijāl books, his name is mentioned as "Ḥāfiẓ and ʿĀmī al-madhhab" (Musawī Khūʾī, 1970, vol. 2: 136).

Muḥammad b. Mukhlad b. Ḥafṣ in the written form from Qāsim b. Faḍl b. Bazīʿ in the 259 AH from Zakarīyya b. ʿAṭīyyah from Saʿīd b. Khālid from Muḥammad b. ʿUthmān from ʿAmrū b. Dīnār from Ibn ʿAbbās has narrated that the Blessed Prophet (s) said, "The Qurʾān is Dhalūl and has different aspects, so take it in the best way" (Baghdādī Dārquṭnī, 2003, vol. 4: 144).

Muḥammad b. Mukhlad b. Ḥafṣ, Qāsim b. Faḍl b. Bazīʿ, and Saʿīd b. Khālid: they have not been mentioned in any of the Shīʿa and Sunnī Rijāl books. Therefore, they are Muhmal (neglected).

Zakarīyya b. ʿAṭīyyah: there are two people with this name. If this person is Baḥrānī and from Baṣra, he has been authorized (Bukhārī, 1942, vol. 3: 424; Ibn Ḥabbān, 1982, vol. 8: 252). If he is Ḥanafī, he is an unknown and weak transmitter mentioned by ʿAqīlī in the book *al-Ḍuʿafā* (ʿAqīlī, 1997, vol. 2: 85).

Muḥammad b. ʿUthmān: in the Sunnī sources, four people with this name are seen. 1. Muḥammad b. ʿUthmān b. bint Abī Saʿd Qāhirī: the legist jurisprudent and syntax scholar (Subkī, 1936, vol. 8: 76); 2. Muḥammad b. ʿUthmān b. Ibrāhīm b. Zarʿah Thaqafī: he has been the judge of Damascus (Ibid., vol. 3: 196); 3. Muḥammad b. ʿUthmān b. Karāmah ʿIjlī Kūfī: Bukhārī has narrated from him and Subkī agrees with his magnanimity (Ibid., vol. 9: 316); Muḥammad b. ʿUthmān Maqābirī Jurjānī: Subkī regards him pious (Ibid., vol. 3: 7). At the end, it can be said that Muḥammad b. ʿUthmān has been a trustable and authorized character in the Sunnī sources, but his name has been mentioned in the Shīʿa sources without complement or reproach; therefore, in the Shīʿa Rijāl sources, he is an unknown transmitter[1] (Barqī, 1998: 20; Musawī Khūʾī, 1970, vol. 16: 273).

ʿAmrū b. Dīnār: he has been mentioned in the Sunnī Rijāl books as "the jurist of Āl Zubayr" (Subkī, 1936, vol. 10: 226). It has been expressed in the

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1. According to Khūʾī, "Barqī has considered him as a companion of Imām Ṣādiq (a) but does not introduce him" (Mūsawī Khūʾī, 1970, vol. 16: 273) but such a claim was not found in the book *Rijāl al-Barqī.*

Shī‘a Rijāl books that if his name is ‘Amrū b. Dīnār Makkī, he has been a companion of Imām Bāqir (a) (Ṭūsī, 1961: 58), and if he is from Kūfa, he has been a companion of Imām Ṣādiq (a) (Ibid.: 377), and in either case, he is authorized and has been Imāmīte Shī‘a (Musawī Khū’ī, 1970, vol. 13: 97).

From among the contemporary Sunnī Ḥadīth transmitters, Albānī in the book *Al-Silsilah al- ḍa‘īfah wa al-mawzū‘ah* considers this tradition extremely weak for several reasons. First, there are some omissions in the chain to Ibn ‘Abbās. Second, Sa‘īd b. Khālid is unknown. Third, narrations by Zakarīyya b. ‘Aṭīyyah are inacceptable (Albānī, 1987, vol. 3: 127).

Therefore, the origin of this tradition in the foregoing two paths is Ibn ‘Abbās, and it is only Dārquṭnī who has completely mentioned its chain in a section of his book on rarities, but he has not specified the source of this tradition. In addition, it seems that others have also copied it with minor changes from him. With examination of the transmission chain of the two quoted narrations, it can be said that the tradition is weak.

Of course, this narration can be found in other Shī‘a and Sunnī sources too, where it has been directly narrated from the Blessed Prophet (s) without mentioning the chain of transmission (Ibn Ḥanbal, 1994, vol. 31: 114; Ibn Abī Jumhūr, 1984, vol. 4: 104; Zamakhsharī, 1979, vol. 3: 235; Ṭabrisī, 1993, vol. 1: 22; Feiḍ Kāshānī, 1994, vol. 1: 21; Musawī Khū’ī, 1970: 33; Baḥrānī, 1984: 45; Zarkishī, 1987, vol. 2: 163; Madanī, 1988, vol. 5: 441).

It seems that the existence of this narration in the Imāmīte sources without mentioning the chain and without a specific resource shows that this narration has been delivered[1] from the Sunnī to the Shī‘a sources.

Other traditions similar to *multidimensionality* and investigation of their chain

Other traditions with content similar to that of the foregoing tradition have been narrated through different paths. These include:

1. It has been narrated from Ibn Wahab from Khālid b. Ḥamīd from Yaḥyā b. Abī Asīd that the Blessed Prophet (s) said, "The Qur’ān is Dhalūl and has different aspects, so take it in the best way" (Andulisī, 1986, vol. 3: 271).

Ibn Wahab: there is no mention of him in the Sunnī Rijāl books. Some Shī‘a Rijāl books have noted that this person might be the same Mu‘āwīyah

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1. The term *Delivered reports* is a later term that is used by ‘Allāmah ‘Askarī in the precious book *Al-Qur’ān al-karīm wa riwāyāt al-madrasatayn*. He has applied this term usually along with the phrase *‘an madrasah al-khulafā’* (‘Askarī, 1995, vol. 3: 13). In a more general view, we can generalize the term *delivered* to other Islamic sects and provide a generic definition of it, "Words, narrations, and works that have found their way from one religion or sect to another religion or sect (here to Imāmīte) and in some cases or sources are considered as acceptable" (Mu’addab, 2014: 207).

b. Wahab (Musawī Khū'ī, 1970, vol. 23: 50). If this is true, he is an Imāmīte Shī'a and is authorized, and Shaykh Kulaynī has quoted narrations from him (Kulaynī, 2008, vol. 3: 169). If not, he is neglected by the Shī'a, too.

Khālid b. Ḥamīd: Shaykh Ṭūsī has introduced a person with this name as a companion of Imām Ṣadiq (Ṭūsī, 1961: 199), although in the light of generation considerations, the indirect narration of a word from the Blessed Prophet (s) by this person is impossible.

Yaḥyā b. Abī Asīd: he is neglected because he has not been mentioned in any Shī'a or Sunnī Rijāl book.

Therefore, the first narration has a weak chain.

2. Ibn Sa'd has narrated through 'Ikramah from Ibn 'Abbās that 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib had sent him toward Khārijītes and said, "Do not argue with them using the qur'ānic verses, because the Qur'ān has different aspects. Rather, argue with them using traditions" (Suyūṭī, 1984, vol. 2: 145; Ma'rifat, 1998, vol. 1: 40).

Ibn Sa'd: there is no reference to him in the Sunnī sources and he is neglected. In the Shī'a Rijāl books, no complement or reproach has been attributed to him and he is unknown.

'Ikramah: Kashshī considers him a weak transmitter, because he has not been complemented and even the opposite has happened to him (Kashshī, 2003: 216).

Therefore, the chain of the second narration is also weak.

3. From Imām 'Alī's (a) order to 'Abdullāh b. 'Abbās when sending him to argue with Khārijītes: "While arguing, never quote statements from the Holy Qur'an because the passages of this Book require very careful consideration as they could be paraphrased in various ways and their meanings could be construed differently. Thus, you will adhere to your explanation and they will stick to their elucidation. Therefore, argue with them in the light of the traditions of the Holy Prophet (s) and then they will find no way to misrepresent truth" (Nahj al-Balāgha, 1993: letter 77; Majlisī, 1982, vol. 3: 376; Ibn Bābwīyah, 1983: 6; Ibn Abī Zeinab, 1976: 138; Khājū'ī, 1997: 149). Of course, this narration is also seen in the Sunnī sources (Darwazah, 1963, vol. 1: 273).

Sayyid Raḍī has introduced this narration from Imām 'Alī in Nahj al-Balāgha without mentioning its chain of transmission. However, due to the trusted personality of Sayyid Raḍī, this narration can be considered as a confirmation for it. As Mullā Muḥsin Amīn writes in his *A'yān al-Shī'a* about Sayyid Raḍī: "Sayyid Raḍī was among the notable and significant Shī'a scholars, orators, poets, and gentlemen of Baghdad. He learned from knowledgeable figures and became an outstanding and well-known writer.

He was an erudite jurist, a competent theologian, and a Qurʾān and prophetic Ḥadīth interpreter" (Amīn, 1999, vol. 9: 218; Burūjirdī, 2007, vol. 25: 36).

Sayyid Raḍī had a specific scientific and moral fame not only among the Shīʿa but also among the Sunnī. ʿAbdulmalik Thaʿālibī, the poet contemporary to Sayyid Raḍī describes Sayyid in his exploratory-literary book *Yatīmah al-dahr* as, "He had just turned into 10 when he started composing poems. Now he is the best poet of our era, the most gentleman of Iraq, has an honorable ancestry and proper manners, apparent decorum, vivid virtue, and has all goodness" (Thaʿālibī Neishābūrī, 1982, vol. 3: 131). Khaṭīb Baghdādī writes in his book *the history of Baghdad,* "… Raḍī has written books on the meanings of the Qurʾān at whose level few books can be found" (Khaṭīb Baghdādī, 1996, vol. 2: 246) and Jamāl al-Dīn Bardī Atābakī, too, writes in his book *Al-Nujūm al-zāhirah fī Mulūk Miṣr wa al-Qāhirah*, "Sayyid Raḍī Musawī knew Arabic language, [Islamic] rulings, jurisprudence, and syntax, and was an eloquent poet. He, his father, and his brother were the leaders of the Shīʿa" (Bardī Atābakī, 1963, vol. 4: 240).

Of course, the content of the foregoing narration can be seen in other assertions, too: 1. From Qitādah b. Sulaymān: "One does not become a complete jurist unless he considers many aspects for the Qurʾān" (Māzandarāni, 2000, vol. 2: 254). Abī Qulābah from Abū al-Dardā: "You will not become a complete, competent jurist unless you consider different aspects for the Qurʾān" (Suyūṭī, 1984, vol. 2: 122).

It should be noted that these assertions are not tradition in the common Shīʿa usage[1], but they can be a confirmation and enhancement for the content of the narrated tradition.

Argumentative analysis of the narration "the Qurʾān is Dhalūl and has different aspects"

Dhalūl means obedient (Farāhīdī, 1988, vol. 8: 176), the opposite of difficulty (Rāghib Iṣfahānī, 1983: 330; Zabīdī, 1993, vol. 14: 253), a tame, obedient steed or camel (Qurashī Banāʾī, 1991, vol. 3: 23; Ḥasanī Bīrjandī, 1999: 410). Zarkishī considers two possibilities for this word. First, the Noble Qurʾān obeys the carriers of it and talks to them in their language.

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1. In the Shīʿa terminology, tradition is an assertion that reports the words, behavior, and tacit approval of the Infallibles (a) (Ṣadr, 2008, 80; Faḍlī, 1995: 33). Shaykh Bahāʾī's definition is a little different for this term and its criticism (q.v.: Ṣadr, 2008: 85); when defining the term tradition, Shahīd Thānī and Mīr Dāmād have taken a definition congruent with the Sunnī viewpoint which expresses that it includes the words and behaviors of the Companions and the Later generation of the Prophet's companions (Shahīd Thānī, 2002: 54; Mīr Dāmād, 2001: 67); this definition has been criticized by the majority of the Shīʿa scholars (Ṣadr, 2008: 81; Faḍlī, 1995: 33)

Second, the Noble Qur'ān explains its meanings so that those who try to understand it can comprehend it (Zarkishī, 1987, vol. 2: 163). The first possibility seems more suitable and correct due to the more compatibility it has with the meaning of the word *dhalūl*.

The word *dhū* means owner and the word *wujūh* is from the root word *wajh* which means the first thing that welcomes you (Rāghib Iṣfahānī, 1983: 855). *Dhū wujūh* (multidimensional) means a phenomenon with various aspects (Ibn Manẓūr, 1993, vol. 11: 175; Ṭarīḥī, 1996, vol. 5: 365; Ibn Athīr, 1988, vol. 1: 444). Several possibilities have been offered for this compound noun. First, it means a combination of aspects such as orders and injunctions, promotion and caution, permission and prohibition, as well as indefinite and ambiguous (Ibn Shahr Āshūb Māzandarāni, 1949, vol. 1: 5; Zarkishī, 1987, vol. 2: 163). Second, some words of the Noble Qur'ān have several meanings. Of course, the second possibility seems to be more accurate, because the words of the Noble Qur'ān, in the light of its linguistic context, have many different meanings. For example, if someone relies on a certain meaning and interpretation of a verse that agrees with his goal, his rival can rely on another aspect of the same verse and so, each one can claim that it has acted upon the Qur'ān and can argue based on it. Of course, this feature is limited to the generalities and ambiguous verses of the Qur'ān, not the precise and definite ones. This has been verified by numerous scholars (Ibn Bābwīyah, 1983: 6; Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, 1983, vol. 18: 71; Zarkishī, 1987, vol. 2: 163; Khalīfāt, 2007: 27; Sharīf Raḍī, 2001; 237; Shūshtarī, 1997: 104).

The meaning of the multidimensionality of the Qur'ān
With the multidimensionality of the Qur'ān we mean the "semantic aspects" of it. However, it should be noted that some of those aspects might be incomplete. Therefore, it is necessary for the interpreter to pay complete attention to the complete meanings of the words and sentences of the Qur'ān and identify the incorrect meanings and incompatibilities of the meanings as much as he can in the light of the other verses of the Qur'ān and the sound narrations and to keep them away from the qur'ānic realm.

With the semantic aspects of the Noble Qur'ān we mean the "polysemous structure" of the verses that is excellent among the issued texts and speeches. The verses of the Noble Qur'ān have specific semantic levels, in a way that no other text can match them. Therefore, a qur'ānic word or statement has semantic domains other than the literal meaning all of which could be taken from it (Mu'addab, 2013: 159).

'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, too, considers the verses of the Noble Qur'ān as having different levels of meaning, the verses that carry various meanings and verses that stipulate a specific meaning. For example, in the discussion

of instances, he asserts that regarding its compatibility with various instances, the Noble Qur'ān has a lot of capacity and the Divine Speech cannot be limited to the revelation case, but rather, it should be generalized to anything that is suitable for that concept. In the interpretation of the verse 102 of the Cow chapter and discussing the story of Hārūt and Mārūt and applying the mathematical probabilities, he calculates the possible meanings of this verse to be one million and two hundred and sixty thousand meanings and says, "By God, this is of the wonders of the Noble Qur'ān that a verse has such a great number of probable meanings that astonishes the wise" (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1995, vol. 1: 234).

He believes that the Noble Qur'ān clarifies the religious purposes through its literal meaning and gives people doctrinal and practical orders. However, the intentions of the Qur'ān are not limited to this level. Rather, under these very wordings and within these same purposes there exist the purposes of a spiritual level; deeper and vaster purposes that only the elite can understand by their pure hearts, and the mental capacity of people in learning this heavenly knowledge that enliven the internal part of the human is different (Ibid., 1992: 14).

Imām Khumeinī (May God have mercy on him) says in this regard, "The levels of the Noble Qur'ān have so many intertwined layers that in some layers of it, even the formal sciences, illuminative knowledge, and metaphysical intuition are not useful, and we need the essence of the Blessed Prophet (s) who can access those truths at the intimate assembly of the Distance of Two Bowstrings" (Khumeinī, 1989: 181). These levels and hidden meanings do not conflict with the authoritativeness of the appearance of the Noble Qur'ān for all people and understandability of the Qur'ān and use of all people from this sea of knowledge, because every person can use the Qur'ān according to the capacity of his own thought, competence, and capability. The purpose of the revelation of this sacred book and the motivation for the appointment of the Blessed Prophet (s) is that everyone can use it at the level of his existential and intellectual capacity (Id., 2000, vol. 14: 387).

At the end, it can be said that the Noble Qur'ān has many layers in its meaning and concepts and every person uses it based on his own capacity.

The evidences on the inner side related to the multidimensionality of the Noble Qur'ān

In order to prove the polysemous structure of the verses and the existence of esoteric meaning in them, we can use evidences such as narrations and intellectual reason as following.

The narrations related to the multidimensionality of the Noble Qur'ān

The most important evidences for the existence of esoteric meaning in the verses regard the numerous narrations in the sources of Shī'a and Sunnī, especially the Imāmīte narrative sources. Some of these are presented here.

1. Fuḍayl says: I asked Imām Bāqir (a) about this prophetic narration that says, "There is no verse without outer and inner side". Imām Bāqir (a) said: "Its outer side is its revealed form and its inner side is its hidden meaning, part of which has passed and part of it has not appeared yet; the qur'ānic verses are moving as the Sun and the Moon are flowing"[1] (Ṣaffār, 1983, vol. 1: 196; 'Ayāshī, 1960, vol. 1: 11; Ḥurr 'Amilī, 2013, vol. 27; 196; Majlisī, 1982, vol. 89: 94 & 97, vol. 33: 155; Muḥaddith Nūrī, 1942, vol. 17: 331).

2. The Prophet (s) says, "The Qur'ān has been revealed on seven letters, and there is no letter without outer and inner sides, and the outer and inner sides of the Qur'ān are at the disposal of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib" (Ṭabarī, 1991, vol. 1: 25; Suyūṭī, 1984, vol. 4: 233).

There are many more narrations in the Shī'a sources and some Sunnī sources[2] that in line with the foregoing narrations argue for the existence of an inner side for all verses. In some of these, up to seven levels – which seem to generally mean a big number rather than exactly showing number seven[3] – have been foreseen for the inner side.

Some assertions on the existence of an inner side for the Noble Qur'ān have been narrated from non-infallibles, that is, from the companions of the Prophet (s) (Suyūṭī, 1984, vol. 4: 233), but the majority of narrations on the inner side of the Qur'ān have appeared in the Imāmīte sources and it seems that among Sunnīs, belief in the inner side of the Qur'ān is not so common. Therefore, Ibn Teimīyah believes that there is no sound tradition to prove the inner side of the verses and the foregoing traditions are "fabricated and loose" (Ḥawzah 'Ilmīyyah Qom, 2007, vol. 3: 79). Of course, Ālūsī and Dhahabī do not accept this and believe that sound traditions have been narrated in the Sunnī sources for the existence of the inner side in the qur'ānic verses (Ālūsī, 1994, vol. 1: 8). In addition to the authentic traditions on the inner side, the Infallibles (a) have also paid attention to the inner side

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1. This narration has been narrated through several chains. The best of these is in Baṣā'ir al-darajāt. The most important source of this narration is the 'Ayāshī interpretation of the narration "Mā fī al-Qur'ān". 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, too, has narrated this verse from 'Ayāshī (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1995, vol. 3: 73).

2. Majlisī has established in Biḥār al-anwār a chapter entitled "verily the Qur'ān has an outer and an inner side and verily the knowledge of everything is in the Qur'ān …" in which tens of narrations have been mentioned for the inner side (q.v.: Ṭabarī, 1991, vol. 1: 22; Suyūṭī, 1984, vol. 4: 225; Mutaqqī Hindī, 1988, vol. 1: 550).

3. For more information in this regard, q.v.: Mu'addab, 2013: 166.

of the verses when they wanted to interpreted the verses (Baḥrānī, 1984, vol. 4: 366).

The intellectual reason for the multidimensionality

Any thinker knows that the condition for the eternity of the Noble Qur'ān in all places and times is the existence of the inner side in it, because on the one hand, the revelation of the qur'ānic verses has ended and the collection of them has been compiled in a unitary manuscript called the "Qur'ān". On the other hand, many questions appear with the lapse of time that cannot be answered by mere reliance on the appearance of the verses. Therefore, it is necessary for part of the Islamic knowledge to be hidden in the inner side of the Qur'ān so that these could be achieved with the help of the Infallibles (a) and the insightful interpreters (Mu'addab, 2013: 166).

The positive and negative aspects of the multidimensionality of the verses

Some have contended that this multidimensionality of the noble verses of the Qur'ān can expand in two directions: the positive, semantic way and the negative, pathological way. The positive dimension suggests that the verses of the Noble Qur'ān, in addition to having semantic aspects in the outer layers, entail other semantic aspects that exist in the deeper levels. In other words, the knowledge and intentions of the Noble Qur'ān are not limited to its appearance and instances, but rather, they have more internal levels and sides that can be discovered and understood according to the scientific and spiritual capacity and capability of the interpreter. As mentioned in a narration from an Infallible, "Verily there are inner and outer sides in the Qur'ān" (Ṣaffār, 1983, vol. 1: 33).

The negative dimension suggests that in the way to understand the Noble Qur'ān, the interpreter faces issues such as semantic similarities, topical similarities, etc. and so, he should avoid superficial treatment of the verses and should always have this point in mind that the Noble Qur'ān can also tolerate the pseudo-correct and pseudo-real meanings. According to this view, the verses of the Noble Qur'ān not only have semantic aspects and inner semantic sides, but also these aspects can be understood and developed in two opposite directions (Pūrrostamī, 2011: 145).

It seems that in the narration "the Qur'ān is Dhalūl and has different aspects, so take it in the best way", the first part of the narration is in the positive mode because the Noble Qur'ān has numerous layers and aspects and any person uses its teachings according to his capacity, while the second part of it is in the negative mode, because it emphasizes that the Qur'ān should be taken in the best possible way so as to prevent distortion and

misguidance. Besides, the narration from the Commander of the Faithful (a) in which he prohibits Ibn 'Abbās from making arguments based on the Noble Qur'ān can be considered another example of the pathological theory. This narration says, "While arguing, never quote statements from the Holy Qur'an because the passages of this Book require very careful consideration as they could be paraphrased in various ways and their meanings could be construed differently. Thus, you will adhere to your explanation and they will stick to their elucidation. Therefore, argue with them in the light of the traditions of the Holy Prophet (s) and then they will find no way to misrepresent truth" (Nahj al-Balāgha, 1993: letter 77). The reason was that the Khārijītes could rely on the ambiguities of the Qur'ān to confirm their deeds and make wrong, untrue interpretations of those verses.

In other words, Imām 'Alī's advice to Ibn 'Abbās is to argue with the Khārijītes using the prophetic traditions and to avoid useless disputes that could lead to the futility of the discussion. It is unclear if Ibn 'Abbās acted upon Imām 'Alī's advice or not; some believe that Ibn 'Abbās acted upon the advice of the Commander of the Faithful (a) and triumphed over the Khārijītes (Nisā'ī, 1996: 148; Ṣan'ānī, 2002, vol. 10: 157; Ma'rifat, 1998, vol. 2: 43), while others deem that he did not do so and was defeated (Iskāfī Mu'tazilī, 1995: 198). Of course, it should be said in general that no definite conclusion can be made in this regard and one cannot insist on the truthfulness of one side because the historical suggestions are different. However, it seems that Iskāfī's assertion is closer to reality. That is to say, Imām has been rightly concerned and according to the evidences, Ibn 'Abbās relied upon the qur'ānic verses in his argument with the Khārijītes (Pūrrostamī, 2015: 135).

Of course, some have considered the prohibition of argumentation in this assertion of Imām 'Alī incompatible with the order to "take it in the best possible way" and regard this prohibition and order as a kind of conflict in the text of the traditions on the multidimensionality of the Noble Qur'ān and have taken these traditions weak in both their chain and their argumentation (Bustānī, 2010: 42). Nonetheless, the Commander of the Faithful (a) has prohibited Ibn 'Abbās from arguing based on the Qur'ān at the crisis and distress created by the disagreements of the Khārijītes, because Khārijītes did not have the ability to discern the best aspect of the Noble Qur'ān and it was possible that they consider their mediocre understanding as the best interpretation. It might have been that Imām (a) has allowed Ibn 'Abbās to take the Qur'ān in its best meaning in order to teach him in an atmosphere away from crisis.

Aḥsana Wujūhah (the best aspects): Zarkishī has taken into account two

possibilities for this phrase, too. The first interpretation is to take the Noble Qur'ān to its best meanings, and the second is that the best aspect is in performing the obligations without asking for the permission and in forgiving without revenge. He finally concludes that this proposition is the most evident reason for the permissibility of inference and free investigation in the Divine Book (Zarkishī, 1987, vol. 2: 163). The first possibility suggested by Zarkishī seems to be more accurate, because it can be construed from the word *aḥsan* (the best) that there is a *Ḥusnā* (good) next to it, but the Blessed Prophet (s) and the Descendants of the Prophet (a) have advised us to take the best aspect of the Qur'ān. Confirming this stance, the owner of the book *Tafsīr tasnīm* writes,

> The multidimensionality of the Noble Qur'ān reveals that the Noble Qur'ān has various longitudinal and horizontal topics and materials; if it is not possible to bring them into a coherent idea, interpret them in the best way. If those meanings were not sound and complete, the Noble Qur'ān would never be untrue, calm, soft, and flexible toward them and those meanings would not be considered among the aspects of the Qur'ān" (Jawādī Āmūlī, 2008, vol. 6: 11).

In other words, the multidimensionality of the Noble Qur'ān does not mean that it entails both true and untrue meanings, because invalidity can never find a way into the Qur'ān, "No falsehood can approach it from before or behind it: It is sent down by One Full of Wisdom, Worthy of all Praise" (Qur'ān 41:42). Rather, this phrase means that the Qur'ān has true and truer meanings, and it is the truer meaning that should be relied upon.

It is even possible that interpreting the Noble Qur'ān in an aspect which is not the best one misguides the agent himself and also other people and leads them to blasphemy. Examples of this misguidance is clear today in Takfīrīs who have misused the verses of the Noble Qur'ān to attack millions of people, kill them, and feel honored due to their misdeeds while they hope to meet the Blessed Prophet (s) in Paradise, a prophet that was a mercy from God to all creatures, "We sent thee not, but as a Mercy for all creatures" (Qur'ān 21:107). How is it possible that a prophet who did not fight even the hypocrites during his virtuous life could be happy from Takfīrī's killing of the Faithful and innocent and unprotected children and wait to meet these misguided and misguiding people in Paradise?

Unfortunately, there are many such examples in the history. There are people who interpret the Noble Qur'ān in the non-best ways, do not identify the boundary between right and wrong, and have communities follow them in the wrong way for many years and consecutive periods. It is in such

situations that with any drop of blood shed, they are cursed by the Sublime God, the angles, and the Blessed Prophet (s) and come closer to their expiration point.

Therefore, the different possible aspects of the noble verses should be completely identified and the best aspect should be taken. Otherwise, it will be a preface to the blameworthy, subjective interpretation of the Qur'ān, as the owner of the book *Tafsīr tasnīm* considers the foregoing narrations as one of the signs that prevents the blameworthy, subjective interpretation of the Qur'ān in which people impose some aspects onto the Noble Qur'ān and adapt the Divine revelation to their own desires (Jawādī Āmūlī, 2008, vol. 6: 11).

The blameworthy, subjective interpretation as an example of ignoring the multidimensionality of the Qur'ān

Paying attention to the multidimensionality of the Qur'ān causes the interpreter to take into account all possibilities and prevents him from falling into blameworthy, subjective interpretation. There are numerous narrations in the Shī'a and Sunnī Ḥadīth sources that reproach the subjective interpretation of the Qur'ān. For instance, the Blessed Prophet (s) says, "The punishment of a person who interprets the Qur'ān based on his own opinion is the fire of Hell" (Tirmidhī, 1959, vol. 5: tradition no. 2950; Feiḍ Kāshānī, 1994, vol. 1: introduction n. 5). This interpretive method has been considered disagreeable and invalid by the Shī'a and Sunnī interpreters.

'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī regards the blameworthy, subjective interpretation as an "interpretation based on the appearance of the verses without taking into account the inner side of them" (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1995, vol. 3: 76), and Imām Khumeinī (May God have mercy on him) has considered one of the four types of subjective interpretation as "one-sidedness in the interpretation of the Noble Qur'ān and disregard of the various aspects of the verses" (Khumeinī, 1991, vol. 1: 235). In other narrations, too, a bad destiny has been predicted for a person who conducts the blameworthy, subjective interpretation of the Qur'ān. Therefore, an interpreter should avoid one-sidedness in the interpretation of the Qur'ān, should take into account the various aspects and inner sides of the verses and do not stop at the outer sides of the verses, and should express his ultimate interpretation in a probabilistic manner. At the end, it can be said that the weakness of the chain of a narration does not always mean that the tradition has weak argumentations, and it seems that the foregoing narration has a fair frequency of the text due to the multiplicity of its narrators and the strength of its meaning and concept, as the majority of the Shī'a and Sunnī interpreters and Ḥadīth transmitters unanimously believe in the multidimensionality of the Qur'ān.

Conclusion

From what was said in this article, it can be concluded that

- The narration "the Qur'ān is Dhalūl and has different aspects, so take it in the best way" attributed to the Blessed Prophet (s) has a weak chain of transmitters and is considered among the Delivered traditions.

- With regard to its argumentation and text, this tradition has fair frequency in a way that the majority of Shī'a and Sunnī interpreters and Ḥadīth transmitters unanimously believe in the multidimensionality of the Qur'ān.

- The narration "the Qur'ān has different aspects" narrated from Imām 'Alī as well as the narrations on the inner and outer side of the verses confirm and enhance the foregoing narration.

- The "order" to take the best aspect from among the many aspects of the Noble Qur'ān is not in conflict with Imām 'Alī's "prohibition" of arguing based on the Noble Qur'ān by Ibn 'Abbās, because his majesty advises Ibn 'Abbās at the time of crisis and emergency. The reason was that the Khārijītes did not have the ability to discern the best aspect of the Noble Qur'ān and it was possible that they consider their mediocre understanding as the best interpretation. It might have been that Imām (a) has allowed Ibn 'Abbās to take the Qur'ān in its best meaning so as to teach and educate him.

- The tradition on the multidimensionality of the Noble Qur'ān prevents one from the blameworthy, subjective interpretation of the Qur'ān. Accordingly, an interpreter should on the one hand avoid one-sidedness in the interpretation of the verses and should not stop at the appearance of the verses. Rather, he should take into account the different aspects and inner sides of the verses and present his final interpretation in a probabilistic manner.

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