

A Study of Sunni and Shii Traditions Concerning Tahrif Part 3

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In this text, a three-part series written by Rasul Ja'fariyan, the author analyzes traditions from Sunni and Shia sources regarding Tahrif (alterations), also from semantic and textual point of view. Evidences for the absence of Tahrif are presented via historical events and traditions.

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A Study of Sunni and Shii Traditions Concerning Tahrif Part 3

[The Shia and Tahrif](#)

Some explicit statements found in the works of major Shiah scholars prove their faith in the Qur'an's remaining safe from every form of alteration and deletion. These statements are a conclusive proof that the Qur'an as it exists today is exactly what has been revealed by God Almighty and that the Imamiyyah do not believe that any addition or deletion has occurred in it. Here we mention the remarks of some leading Shii scholars, along with some books and articles written by them to prove the nonoccurrence of tahrif.

Al-Fadl ibn Shadhan al-Nishaburi is a Shii writer of the 3rd/9th century. Anyone who reads his book al-'Idah will observe that he has accused some Sunni sects of believing in tahrif of the Qur'an, often referring to what they have narrated concerning the Qur'an's incompleteness, with the words, "Among that which you have narrated".... Now it is certainly a mistake to infer, as some have done, from his reference to these traditions that he himself believed in tahrif.

Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn 'Ali ibn al-Husayn ibn Babawayah al-Qummi, known as al-Qummi (d.381/991), says:

It is our belief that the Qur'an revealed by God Almighty to His prophet, Muhammad (S), is that which is present between the two flaps and that which is in the people's hands and there is nothing in addition to it, and anyone who ascribes to us the belief that it includes something more, is a liar.[1](#)

Thus al-Sadibi, who is one of the greatest Shii scholars and an authority on hadith and history, refutes the allegation that the Imamiyyah believe in tahrif

Al-Shaykh al-Mufid (d. 413/1022), who was the teacher of several eminent Shii 'ulama', including al-Sayyid al-Radi and al-Sayyid al-Murtada — may God's mercy be upon all of them — observes, 'Not a single word, verse or surah has been deleted from the Qur'an, and that which was deleted from Amir al-Mu'minin's mushaf was its interpretation (ta'wil) and the exposition (tafsir) of its meanings in accordance with the revelation. Though it was itself an established revelation, it was not part of the word of God which comprises the miraculous Qur'an....' He further adds, "I hold this opinion and seek succor from God (for guidance) to the truth." These words explicitly prove his belief in the absence of tahrif in the Quran.[2](#)

Apart from this, al-Shaykh al-Mufid has also rejected that which has been narrated concerning Ibn Masud mushaf, that it contained some additions. He points out that these traditions are Odd and therefore unworthy of any credence.[3](#)

4. Al-Sayyid al-Murtada 'Ali ibn al-Husayn al-Mitsawl al-'Alawi (d. 436/1044) in his set of replies to certain queries called al-Tarabulusiyat observes:

The knowledge of the authenticity of the Qur'an is like one's knowledge of countries, important events, famous books, and recorded Arabic poetry. There existed an intensity of care and a plentitude of motives for narrating and preserving it, and they reached a degree not reached in respect of any example mentioned by us.... The Qur'an was collected and compiled during the Prophet's (S) lifetime the way it existed at that time. The Prophet (S) even chose a group of Companions to memorize it, and it used to be presented to and recited before the Prophet (S).

A group of Companions, like 'Abd Allah ibn Mas'ud, Ubayy ibn Ka'b and others, completed the recital of the Qur'an a number of times in the presence of the Prophet (S). A little reflection will show that all this proves that the Qur'an was collected in an organized manner and that it was not left in a fragmentary and scattered state.... As to those among the Imamiyyah and the Hashwiyyah who oppose this view, their opposition is of no significance. Their opposition, along with that of a group of Ahl al-Hadith, is based on daif traditions that they narrate and which they imagine to be authentic, and it is not possible to give up on their basis something whose authenticity is known with certainty.[4](#)

Ibn Hajar writes concerning al-Shan't' al-Murtada that he considered anyone who believed the Qur'an to have been altered or to have suffered addition or deletion, an apostate. The same is true of two of his contemporaries, Abu' al-Qasim al-Razi and Abu Yala al-Tusi [5](#)

5. Shaykh al-Taifah Abu Jafar Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Tusi (d. 461/1068) states: As to the discussion regarding addition to and deletion from the Qur'an, such a thing does not befit it, because the presence of any addition is negated by consensus, and as to deletion from it, that which is evident from the beliefs of various Islamic schools is a negation of it as well, and this position is best entitled to authentication.

This view has been supported by al-Murtada — may God be pleased with him — and the literal import of traditions, although many traditions have been narrated both by the Shi'ah (al-Khassah) and Sunnis (al-'Ammah) which speak of deletions in many verses and the change of their place from one location to another in the Qur'an.

But all these traditions are ahad and do not bestow certainty, and therefore it is better to ignore them and to refrain from busying oneself with them, considering that they are capable of being interpreted (in a manner which is not critical of the purity of the Quranic text), even if their authenticity be accepted, because the Quran existing between the two flaps is of known authenticity, not having been challenged or rejected by anyone from the Ummah.

Furthermore, our traditions urge its recitation, require adherence to its contents, and command correlation of contradictory traditions relating to precepts with it, so that that which agrees with it is accepted and that which contradicts it is rejected. It has been narrated from the Prophet (S) in a tradition that has not been contested by anyone that he (S) said:

إني مخلف فيكم الثقلين ما إن تمسكتم بهما لن تضلوا، كتاب الله و عترتي أهل بيتي و إنهما لن يفترقا حتى يردا علي
الحوض 4-15

I am leaving behind among you two precious things. As long as you adhere to them you will never go astray. (They are) the Book of God and my kindred, my Ahl al-Bayt. Verily, the two will never separate until they meet me at the Pond.

This indicates that the Qur'an shall be present in all ages, because it is not possible that the Prophet (S) should command us to adhere to a thing which we are incapable of adhering to, considering that among the Ahl al-Bayt (A) he whose word is to be followed is present at all times. Hence, when that which we possess is of accepted authenticity, it is incumbent that we devote ourselves to its exegesis and elucidation and set aside anything apart from it.⁶

Abu 'Ali al-Tabrasi (6th/12th century), the author of the exegesis Ajma al-bayan, observes:

...As to the issue of additions to and deletions from the Qur'an, addition to it is negated by a consensus refuting it, and as to deletions from it, a group of our companions (Shiis) and a group of the Hashwiyah from Sunnis have narrated occurrence of alteration in and deletion from the Qur'an. The correct view in accordance with the belief of our companions (Imamiyyah) is the opposite of it, and it is what has been

held by al-Murtada — may God sanctify his soul.[7](#)

Al-Shaykh `Abd al-Jalil al-Razi al-Faritsi, author of the book al-aqd written around 560/1164, after mentioning the accusation against the Shi`ah that they have narrated the tradition describing the incident of some domestic animal having eaten up the script of some verses assessed by `A'ishah (mentioned above in the tradition from Ibn rajah), observes: "This tradition is present in the books of the Ahl al-Sunnah Then he goes on to refute the view that the Shi`ah believe in tabrit.[8](#)

8. Al-Sayyid Ibn Tawils (d.664/1265) writes in his book Sa`d al Suud: "The Imarni view is that there has been no tahrif "[9](#) Then criticizing some Sunni scholars, he adds:

I am surprised at those who argue that the Qur'an has been preserved since the Prophet (S) and that it was he who compiled it, and then go on to describe differences between the people of Makkah and Madinah, between the people of Kufah and Basrah, and also hold that the bismalah is not part of the surahs. More surprising is the argument they offer that had it been part of the surahs, something else should have been mentioned before it as an opening. Good Heavens! When the Qur'an is secure against additions and deletions, as demanded by reason and the Shari`ah, why should it have something before it which is not a part of it, and how is such a thing possible at all?[10](#)

9. Al Allamah Al-Hilli(648-726/1250-1326), when asked by Ibn Muhanna this question concerning the Qur'an, "Do our scholars affirm the view that something has been either deleted from or added to the Qur'an or that its order has been changed?" replied: "The truth is that no change of order nor any addition or deletion has taken place in it, and I seek God's refuge from anyone believing in such a thing or something like it, because this results in negating the miracle of the Prophet — upon whom be peace — as well as the tawatur with which it has been narrated. [11](#)

10. Mulla Muhsin, known as al-Fayd al-Kashani (d. 1091/1680), after mentioning a set of traditions hinting at the occurrence of tahrif, states:

The main objection about these traditions is that if we accept them, there will remain for us no surety concerning anything present in the Quran, because then the possibility of tahrif and alteration will exist in every verse and its being contrary to that which God had revealed. Hence the Qur'an would lose its authority and utility, and the purpose of commanding adherence to it would be lost. God Almighty says:

..وَأِنَّهُ لَكِتَابٌ عَزِيزٌ لَا يَأْتِيهِ الْبَاطِلُ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَلَا مِنْ خَلْفِهِ..

And surely it is a Mighty Book. Falsehood does not approach it from before it nor from behind it (41:41-42)

And He says:

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ

Verily We have sent down the Remembrance, and verily We are its protector. (15:9)

Now how is it possible for tahrif to find its way into it?

The tradition has also been extensively narrated from the Prophet (S) and the Imams (A) that the authenticity of traditions is to be judged by comparing them with the Qur'an so that their authenticity is known from agreement with it and their falsity from their contradiction with it. Hence if the Qur'an we possess be considered altered, what is the use of making such a comparison? Apart from this, the traditions entailing the occurrence of tahrif contradict the Qur'an, and so it is necessary to reject them on the basis of their falsehood, or to interpret them. [12](#)

Concerning the meaning of verse 9 of *Stirat al-Hijr*, al-Fayd observes:

انا لحافظون من التحريف و التغيير والزيادة و النقصان

[It means,] 'We will protect it from tahrif, alteration, addition and deletion'. [13](#)

He also refutes the occurrence of tahrif in some other of his works. [14](#) This is al-Fayd's unambiguous view, which he states after citing some traditions about tahrif that he considers contrary to the Qur'an and so invalid. But some persons with dubious motives have imputed to al-Fayd the belief in tahrif solely because of his mentioning some traditions, without mentioning what he says about them, intending thereby to create doubts in the minds of people concerning the imamiyyah. [15](#)

Out of ignorance or bias, one writer ascribes the belief in tahrif to other 'ulama' as well, such as al-Shaykh al-Saduq, despite al-Saduq's explicit statement mentioned earlier of his belief in the absence of tahrif.

11. Muhammad Baha' al-Din al-'Amili, known as al-Shaykh al Baha' (d. 1030/1620), observes:

They have differed regarding the occurrence of addition to or deletion from it. The correct view is that the Great Qur'an is safe from it, be it addition or deletion, and the words of God Almighty وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ prove this.

As to the view popular among the people that the name of Amir al-Mu'minin (A) has been deleted from some places, for example, the verse يَا أَيُّهَا الرَّسُولُ بَلِّغْ مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ فِي عَلِيٍّ and other verses, it is not considered credible by the Ulema. [16](#)

12. Al-Shaykh Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Hurr Amili (d. 1104/ 1692), the author of *Waseil al-Shiah*, states in a treatise written by him in Persian negating tahrif:

Anyone having studied history and tradition knows for certain that the authenticity of the Qur'an has been established through utmost tawatur, being narrated by thousands of Companions, and that it had been collected and compiled during the era of the Prophet (S).[17](#)

This is the unequivocal observation of al-Shaykh al-Hurr al-'Amili, one of the greatest of Shii scholars and traditionists. He confirms in this treatise the absence of deletions from the Qur'an. Yet one finds some slanderers imputing to him the belief in occurrence of tahrif. [18](#)

13. The eminent scholar Zayn al-Din al-Bayadi, author of alSirat al-mustaqim, writes while elucidating the Quranic verse

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ

"It implies that God will protect it from tahrif, alteration, addition and deletion."[19](#)

14. Al-Qari al-Sayyid Nur Allah al-Tustari states: "That which has been ascribed to the Imami Shiis that they believe in occurrence of alteration in the Qur'an is not something which the majority of the Imamiyyah believe. Of course, a small number of them who have held such a view are those to whom no importance is attached by them."[20](#)

15. Al-Muqaddas al-Baghdadi, in his book Sharh al-Wafiyah, narrates the presence of Ijma' among the Imamiyyah on the issue of absence of any deletion from the Quran.[21](#)

16. Al-Fadil al-Jawad says, "The Qur'an has been confirmed by tawatur and anything narrated in the form of khabar al-wahid is not Qur'an. We said it is mutawatir because there were plenty of motives for narrating the Qur'an, and anything having this quality is ordinarily bound to be narrated completely by tawatur."[22](#)

17. Kashif al-Ghita' negates belief in the occurrence of tahrif and refutes its ascription to the Imamiyyah in his book Kashf al-ghita' 'an mubhamat al-Sharrat al-gharra.

18. Al-Sayyid Muhammad Jawad al-Balaghi refutes in his exegesis Ala' al-Rahman attribution of the belief in presence of tahrif to the Imamiyyah.

19. Al-Sayyid Mandi al-Tabatabai known as Bahr al Ulum in the chapter on the authority of the Qur'an of his book Fawaid Al-Usul denies the occurrence of tahrif. [23](#)

20. Ayatullah Kuh-Kamari has also confirmed the nonoccurrence of tahrif, as mentioned by his pupil in Bushra al-Usul 1411.

21. Al-Sayyid Muhsin al-'Amin Al-Amili(d. 1371/1951), in his work Ayan al-Shiah on biographies of Shi'i personalities, declares the absence of tahrif in the Qur'an, and observes about the ascription of this

belief to the Shi`ah: "This is a lie and a slander, with which Ibn Hazm has associated himself.., and the greatest of Shi`i scholars and traditionists have expressly affirmed their opposition to it."

He writes at another place, "No Imami scholar, from the earliest times to the present, has said that the Qur'an contains any minor or major additions to it. All of them concur regarding the absence of any addition, and those whose opinions are worthy of being taken into account also concur that nothing has been deleted from it.... Anyone who ascribes to them anything contrary to this is a liar and a slanderer guilty of affront to God and His Prophet (S)."[24](#)

Other eminent Shi`i scholars who have affirmed the purity of the Quranic text and absence of any tahrif in it are:

22. Mulla Fath Allah al-Kashani, author of the tafsir Manhaj al-sadaqien. [25](#)

23. Mirza Muhammad Hann al-'Ashtiyani (d. 1319/1901), in Bahr al-fawa'id

24. Al-Shaykh `Abd Allah ibn Muhammad al-Mamaqini (d. 1351/ 1932), in Tanqih al-maqal

25. Al-Shaykh Muhammad al-Nahawandi (d. 1291/1874), in his tafsir Nafahat al-Rahman.

26. Al-Sayyid Naqi al-Hindi (d. 1408/1988), in the book Tafsir al-Qur'an.

27. Al-Sayyid Muhammad Mahdi Al-Shirazi.

28. Al-Sayyid Shihab al-Din al-Mar`ashi al-Najafi.

29. Al-Sayyid `Abd al-Husayn Sharaf al-Din in his book Ajwibat masa'il Masa Jar Allah. He says:

The Wise Qur'an (has been so preserved in all respects that) falsehood cannot find a way into it, and it is what the people possess between the two flaps, without a letter having been deleted, or added, or replaced by another letter. All its letters are mutawatir, and in every generation its tawatur is definite, reaching up to the era of the Prophet (S) and its revelation.

It existed in a compiled form and in its present form in the earliest period. Gabriel used to present the Quran before the Prophet (S) once every year and presented it twice in the year of his (S) demise. The Companions used to present and recite the Qur'an to him (S) and they completed these recitals several times. All these necessarily known facts have been in front of the researchers among the Imami scholars.[26](#)

30. Ayatullah al-Hajj Aga Husayn al-Tabatabai al-Burujerdi has spelled out in some of his lectures on jurisprudence (as narrated by some of his pupils) the falsity of the notion of occurrence of tahrif, and upheld the purity of the Quranic text.

31. Allamah al-Sayyid Hibat al-Din al-Shahristani says:

The predominant view, held by the majority, is that the Qur'an revealed by God to the Prophet (S) is the one which exists between the two flaps, and there is sufficient evidence from history and tradition to substantiate it. Some Hashwiyyah and pious literalists among the traditionalists were misled by weak traditions, a part of which were coined by leaders of heretical sects in the early Islamic era, into imagining the occurrence of deletion in Qur'anic verses. And al-Murtada 'Alam al-Huda and other researchers among our predecessors have unequivocally stated that the Qur'an has been secure from addition and deletion²⁷

33. Al-Sayyid al-Khumayni, in Kashf al-Asrar.²⁸

There are other explicit statements of Shii 'ulama' in refutation of tahrif which we have not mentioned here. Those interested may refer to Kashf al-'iriyab fi raddi Fas1 al-khitab or their books on jurisprudence and especially the chapters in them on the legal authority of the Book.

The authors mentioned at the end of the above list have writings indicating their belief in the absence of occurrence of tahrif, and the author of Burhan-e roshan, Mirza Mahdi al-Burujerdi, has mentioned them along with the names of other scholars not mentioned here.

Shi'i Books and Treatises in Refutation of Tahrif

A treatise written by al-Shaykh al-Hurr al-'Amili, as cited by the author of Lulu 'at al-bahrayn.²⁹

A treatise by al-Shaykh 'Abd al-'Ali al-Karaki refuting the occurrence of deletion³⁰

A treatise of al-Shaykh Aga Buzurg al-Tehrani entitled al-Naqd al-latif nafy al-tahrif.³¹

The study by al-Sayyid al-Khifi in his book al-Bayan ft tafsir al-Qur'an.

The study by al-Allamah Muhammad Husayn al-Tabatabai in his great exegesis at-Mizanfi tafsir al-Qur'an, under the verse 15:9.

A treatise by 'Abd al-Husayn al-Rashti Al-Hairi entitled Kashf al-'ishtibah, a refutation of Musa Jar Allah.

Al-Shaykh 'Abd al-Rahim al-Tabazi's book Ala' al-Rahim in refutation of tahrif.

A treatise written by the philosopher Hasan Zadeh Amuli in the published collection of his rasail.

A treatise by the faqih al-Fadil al-Lankarani, in his book Mad khal al-tafsir. –

Al-Sayyid Muhammad Husayn al-Shahristani's book entitled Risdlah fi hifz, al-Kitab al-sharif 'an shubhat al-qawl bi al-tahrif.

A detailed study by al-Sayyid Lutf Allah al-Safi al-Gulpayegani in his book Ma'a al-Khatib fi khututihi al-'aridah, which is a rejoinder to what al-Khatib has written against the Shi`ah.

A comprehensive book entitled Radd Fasl al-khitab, whose manuscript is with al-Shaykh Ricla al-'Ustadi in Qumm.

Al-Tahqiq fi nafy al-tahrif, a series of articles published in the journal Turathuna in refutation of tahrif by al-Sayyed 'All al-Milani.

My teacher, al Allamah al-Sayyid Jafar Murtada al-'Amili's comprehensive study, named al-Qawl al-fasl fi al-tahrif wa al-qira'at, to be published shortly.

Nonetheless, all these facts have posed no hindrance to an uninformed writer who had the temerity to write: "Nearly all Shii 'ulama', belonging both to the earlier and the latter generations accept the occurrence of tahrif in the Qur'an and that it has suffered alteration and deletion." It is an obvious misrepresentation of the truth to attribute the views of some Akhbari writers, occasioned by their uncritical acceptance of certain fabrication of the Ghulat and other heretics, to scholars and ascribe the opinion of a little minority to the Imami Shiis in general.

It is also not possible to ascribe the statements of the Shi'l 'ulama' in refutation of tahrif to taqiyyah, because these statements have been made by them in their books on fiqh, tafsir and doctrine (Itiqadat), an example of which is al-Shaykh al-Saduq's work on Shii creed, mentioned above. Though the Shiah believe in the concept of taqiyyah, they do not consider it valid in respect of the very foundations of the faith, especially the Qur'an. Apart from this, these statements have been made in books that were written for Shiis and hence the question of taqiyyah does not arise.

As a conclusion to these observations of Shii 'ulama', we quote a Sunni scholar on the topic of the Shi'l rejection of the occurrence of tahrif. Rahmatullah al-Hindi, in Izhar al-haqq hawl al-Shiah wa al-Qur'an, observes: "The Glorious Qur'an is considered secure from alteration and change by a vast majority (jumhur) of Twelver Shi'i scholars, and whoever among them has spoken of deletions in it, his view has been rejected and considered unacceptable by them."[32](#)

Imam 'Ali's Mushaf

It has been reported in books on history and tradition that 'Ali (A) had compiled and memorized the whole Qur'an, and it is an established fact that he was one of the scribes of the Revelation and the most eminent of them.

Ibn Abi al-Hadid observes, "All have concurred that 'Ali (A) used to memorize the Qur'an during the Prophet's era and at a time when no one else had yet started doing so. Then, he was the first to compile it."[33](#)

Sulaym ibn Qays reports that after the death of the Prophet (S) 'Ali (A) confined himself to his home to devote to the task of collecting and compiling the Qur'an. He did not leave home until he had compiled it.[34](#)

Al-Kalbi reports, "On the death of the Prophet (S) 'Ali (A) sat at home and compiled the Quran."³⁵

Al-Kattani reports, "'Ali (A) compiled the Qur'an in the order of its revelation after the death of the Prophet (S)."³⁶

Ibn al-Munadi reports from al-Hasan ibn al-'Abbas, from 'Abd alRahman ibn Abi Hammad, from al-Hakam ibn Zahir al-Sadusi, from 'Abd Khayr that "when 'Ali (A) saw ominous signs among the people on the demise of the Prophet (S), he vowed not to wear his rida until he had compiled the Qur'an. He then sat at home for three days compiling the Qur'an.

It was the first mushaf in which the Qur'an had been compiled from his memory. ³⁷Considering 'Ali's closeness to the Prophet (S) and his constantly keeping his company, it was natural that his compilation should have been done in the best manner. 'Ali (A) himself says:

ولقد كنت أتبعه أتباع الفصيل اثر أمه، يرفع لي في كل يوم من اخلاقه علماً، و يأمرني بالاعتداء به. و لقد كان يجاور في كل سنة بحراء فأراه، ولا يراه غيري. ولم يجمع بيت واحد يومئذ في الاسلام غير رسول الله - صلى الله عليه و آله - وخديجة و أنا ثالثهما. أرى نور الوحي و الرسالة، و أشم ريح النبوة. و لقد سمعت رنة الشيطان حين نزل الوحي عليه - صلى الله عليه و آله - فقلت: يا رسول الله ما هذه الرنة؟ فقال: هذا الشيطان قد أيس من عبادته. إنك تسمع ما أسمع، وترى ما أرى، إلا إنك لست بنبي، و لكنك لوزير و إنك لعلى خير

.. I used to follow him like a young camel following in the footprints of its mother. Every day he would raise for me the banner of his morality and command me to follow it. Every year he would go into seclusion to the mountain of Hira', where no one else saw him except me. In those days, Islam did not exist in any house except that of the Messenger of Allah — peace and blessing of Allah be upon him and his Descendants — and Khadijah, while I was the third after these two. I used to see and watch the effulgence of divine revelation and message, and breathed the scent of prophet hood.

When the revelation descended on the Messenger of Allah — peace and blessing of Allah be upon him and his Descendants — I heard the scream of Satan. I said, "O Messenger of Allah, what is this scream?" And he replied, "This is Satan who has lost all hope of being worshipped. O 'Ali, 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."³⁸

It has also been narrated from Sulayman al-'A`mash that 'Ali (A) said:

ما نزلت آية إلا عَلِمْتُ فيما أنزلت و أين نزلت وعلى من نزلت، إن ربي وهب لي قلباً عقولاً و لساناً طلقاً

No verse has been revealed without my knowing about its subject, place of revelation, and against whom it has been revealed. Certainly, God has granted me a perceptive heart and a fluent tongue.³⁹

He has been reported to have said:

سلوني عن كتاب الله فإنه ليس من آية إلا وقد عرفت بليل نزلت أم بنهار، في سهل أم في جبل

Question me regarding the Book of God, for surely there is no verse except that I know whether it was revealed at night or during daytime, in a plain or on hilly ground.[40](#)

Sulayman ibn Qays reports 'Ali (A) to have said:

ما نزلت على رسول الله صلى الله عليه وآله آية من القرآن إلا أقرأنيها "ع" و أملاها علي، فكتبتها بخطي، و علمني تأويلها و تفسيرها، و ناسخها و منسوخها، و محكمها و متشابهها، و خاصها و عامها، و دعا الله أن يعطيني فهمها و حفظها، فما نسيت آية من كتاب الله، و لا علما أملاه علي و كتبتة

Not a verse of the Qur'an was revealed to the Messenger of God (S) without his reciting and dictating it to me, and without my writing it in my own hand. He taught me its (the Qur'an's) interpretation and exposition, its nasikh and manasukeh, and its muhkam and mutashabih. He prayed to God Almighty to teach me to comprehend and memorize it. Hence I neither forgot a verse from the Book of God Almighty nor any knowledge that he dictated to me and which I wrote.[41](#)

Now when the Imam (A) had a complete knowledge of all the verses and the contexts of their revelation (sha'h al-nuzul) as per the foregoing tradition, he must have written his mushaf in accordance with the revelation and what the Prophet (S) had ordered him (A). He also wrote in his mushaf the interpretation of verses as taught to him by the Prophet (S). Therefore, his mushaf was the most complete among the masahif in respect of exposition and shan al-nuzul of the verses. Similarly, his compilation of the mushaf was in the order of the revelation at different times.

Muhammad ibn Sirin reports from `Ikrimah that at the beginning of Abu Bakr's caliphate 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (A) stayed home to compile the Qur'an. Ibn Sirin says that he asked `Ikrimah whether anyone else had compiled the Qur'an in the order of its revelation. He replied: "Had all men and jinn joined hands to compile it in this manner, they would not have been able to do so."[42](#)

Al-Mufid observes regarding `Ali's (A) mushaf, "He mentioned the Makki verses before the Madani, and the mansukh before the nasikh, and placed every part of it in its rightful place."[43](#) He also says: "That regarding which there is no difference of opinion among Muslim exegetes is that deletion of the parts of Amir mushaf consisted of interpretations (tawai1) and the exposition of its meanings in accordance with the intent of the revelation."[44](#)

This observation clearly shows that the claim that the Imam's mushaf contained certain texts that established his right to the khilafah pertains to ta'wai1 of the revealed text of the Qur'an.

Ibn Jazzi al-Kalbi is reported to have said, "Had `Ali's (A) mushaf been accessible, it would have been a source of much knowledge."⁴⁵

Regarding the difference present among the initial compilers concerning the order of the surahs, al-Suyuti says, "Among them was 'Ali's mushaf, which arranged the surahs in the order of their revelation. It began with Iqra', followed by al-Muddaththir, Nun, al-Muzzammil, al-Takwir, and so on till the end of the Makki and Madani (surahs)."⁴⁶

Also, Ibn Shin, on the basis of Ibn Ashtah's report, said: "Ali (A) had recorded in his mushaf the nasikh and the mansakh (verses)." Ibn Shin is also reported to have said, "I sought that book and wrote to Madinah concerning it, but was unable to find it."⁴⁷ He is also reported to have said, "Had I been able to find that book, it would have been a source of knowledge."⁴⁸

Now, did Ibn Sirin believe that `Ali's mushaf contained some verses which were not present in other masahif? It wasn't so; rather, those additional material consisted of interpretations and facts revealed to the Prophet (S) concerning the verses. This is exactly what the Imam (A) has himself expressly affirmed:

ولقد جئتهم بالكتاب مشتملاً على التنزيل و التأويل

I surely brought them the Book comprising the revelation and the interpretation.⁴⁹

This explanation is affirmed by the traditions⁵⁰ which explicitly mention the presence of names of some hypocrites of Quraysh in the Imam's mushaf, that these were part of the ta'wilat and sha'n al-nuzul of the verses.

As this kind of compilation of the Qur'an was not done by anyone except 'Ali (A), al-Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (A) remarked:

ما ادعى احد من الناس أنه جمع القرآن كله كما أنزل إلا كذاب، وما جمعه و حفظه كما أنزل إلا علي بن أبي طالب و الائمة بعده

No one among the people, except a liar, can claim having compiled the whole Qur'an as it was revealed and no one except 'Ali (A) and the Imams succeeding him have compiled and preserved it as it was revealed?"⁵¹

As to the interpretation that `Ali's compilation of the Qur'an meant his compilation of it in his memory,⁵² it is contrary to what the traditions clearly mention concerning its compilation in a codex (mushaf). Hence it is clear that in the traditions there is nothing about 'Ali's (A) mushaf that hints at the presence in it of some verses not present in other masahif; rather it only contained the interpretations and sha'n al-nuzul of some verses.

The Mushaf of Fatimah (A)

Some may imagine that Fatimah's (A) `mushaf' was something like the masahif of `A'ishah, Hafsa and other Sahabah, or that it contained verses not mentioned in the Qur'an handed down by tawatur. Here we may point out that a large number of traditions have been narrated regarding Fatimah's mushaf and some of them explicitly mention that this mushaf contained prophecies of future events and that it did not contain anything about halal and haram. Other traditions say that it contained Fatimah al-Zahra's testament (wasiyyah). Accordingly it is possible that it contained some teachings which she had learnt from her father. Some other traditions are explicit that Fatimah's mushaf did not contain the Qur'an and was not a Quranic codex."[53](#)

We do not intend here an investigation of the contexts of Fatimah's mushaf; all that we wish to point out is that her mushaf was not a mushaf of the Qur'an and therefore what some persons have imagined is out of question.

Fasl al-Khitab and Tahrif

Some persons who seem to enjoy misleading people have written that the book Fasl al-khitab by Mirza Muhammad Taqi al-Tabarsi on the topic of tahrif contains traditions on tahrif narrated solely by the Shiah. Mentioning two of the twelve arguments offered by al-Nuri which are based on Shii traditions, they ignore his ten other arguments nine of which refer to Sunni traditions[54](#) Here we will mention al-Nuri's arguments one by one.

1. He mentions traditions narrated by the Ahl al-Sunnah and some Shiis prophesying that developments similar to those which took place among the earlier peoples, such as the Israelites, will also take place within the Islamic ummah. In this regard he cites traditions from the Sihah of the Sunnis, concluding that since scriptural corruption has occurred among the Israelites it has also occurred among the Muslims.

Overlooking the basic weakness of this argument — because that which the traditions imply is developments and trends of a socio-historical character, to which the Qur'an also alludes — the thing to be noted is that most of these traditions have been narrated by the Ahl al-Sunnah and some of them by the Shiah.

2. Al-Nuri cites Sunni traditions concerning the compilation of the Qur'an and the fictitious tales related to it —such as the Qur'an's being compiled on the testimony of two witnesses, or the exclusive possession of certain verses by some persons, etc. From these he concludes the absence of tawatur and the possibility of tahrif.

This story of the Qur'an's compilation in this form is something particular to the Ahl al-Sunnah, because the Shi`ah believe that the Qur'an was compiled during the Prophet's lifetime, as pointed out by al-Tabarsi in the preface of his exegesis Majma` al-bayan.

In this argument mentions Sunni traditions concerning those verses and chapters whose reading is said to have been abandoned. Then he refutes the concept of abandonment of reading, observing, "These traditions prove the existence of verses and surahs which were deleted by the caliphs." As can be seen, this argument of al-Nuri is also based on what the Ahl al-Sunnah have narrated.

We also reject the concept of abrogation or abandonment of reading (naskh al-tilawah), and considering that the related traditions are akhbar ahad and incapable of proving anything regarding the Qur'an, it is incumbent upon all Muslims to reject them.

4. Al Nuri mentions changes made in the order of verses and cites the traditions which indicate such changes in the revealed sequence of the verses, or mention different orders in the masahif of the Companions, such as Ubayy, 'Ali (A) and Ibn Mas'ud. He also cites the view held by the Ahl al-Sunnah that the Qur'an has been arranged in accordance with the subjective judgement (ijtihad) of the Companions. Here he also cites Shii traditions as evidence.

We believe that the order of the surahs has been changed, but the order of verses has remained unchanged, because some traditions explicitly mention that the Prophet (S) himself arranged the verses. However, a change in the order of surahs does not amount to tahrif:

5. Al Nuri mentions the differences present in the masahif of the Sahabah concerning certain words, verses and surahs. He then cites traditions from such Sunni sources as al-Durr al-manthar, al-Kashshaf, al Itqan and from al-Thalabi, al-Tabari and others, inferring from them the occurrence of tahrif. Here again nearly all of the traditions supporting this argument are derived from Sunni sources, though some traditions which speak of differences amongst these masahif are derived from Shii sources.

It may be observed concerning these differences that they are shadhah forms of readings that have been attributed to some Companions. Also, the traditions which indicate the existence of other verses and surahs are all akhbar ahad and so incapable of proving anything regarding the Qur'an.

6. Here Al-Nuri mentions traditions from Sunni sources stating that Ubayy ibn Kaab is the best qari' of the ummah. Then he goes on to quote Sunni traditions concerning his mushaf which claims that it contained something in addition to the contents of the present Qur'an. From this he argues that since the present Qur'an does not contain all that which was present in his mushaf, it implies occurrence of tahrif. Most traditions relating to this argument are from Sunni sources and only few of them are from Shii sources.

However, we reject this argument of his on the same basis as mentioned above.

7. In this argument he mentions 'Uthman's burning of the masahif and unifying the people on a single reading. This is something which the Ahl al-Sunnah as well as the Shiah have narrated. Both of them have also narrated Ibn Masud's criticism of 'Uthman in this regard. The author again concludes the

occurrence of tahrif from this incident after discussing further details.

Here we point out that `Uthman's act was supported by Imam 'Ali ibn Abi `Falb (A), and the criticism of Ibn Mas'ud has either been falsely attributed to him or was for some other reason, or was a result of Ibn Mas'ud's ignorance of the extent of divergence of reading amongst the people, as noticed by Hudhayfah.

8. Here al-Nuri mentions traditions and statements from Sunni sources regarding deletions from the Qur'an, like the narration from `Abd Allah ibn `Umar concerning the deletion of verses from the Qur'an and the loss of a large number of them, or the story of Abu Musa al- 'Ash`ari as mentioned in Muslim's Sahih regarding his gathering the qurra' of the Qur'an and his remarks about one of al-Musabbihat, the matter of the so-called surahs of al-Khal and al-Hafd,⁵⁵ the tradition narrated by al Bukhari concerning the inclusion of the phrase `salat al-`asr in the verse 2:238 and such similar instances mentioned about the mushaf of `A'ishah.

He cites al-Bukhari regarding the tahrif of other verses, and mentions the purported inclusion of such phrases as *مواسم الحج* and *إلى أجل مسمى* in the verses 2: 198 and 4:24 from al-Thalabi, Al-Suyuti, al-Itqan, Malik's al-Muwatta; and al-Raghib al-Isfahani's al-Muhdadardt. That which we said in relation to his argument relating to traditions concerning the abrogation of reading also applies here.

9. Al-Nuri bases this argument on certain Shii traditions in which there is no mention of the Qur'an, or tahrif, or differences of readings, but which state that the names of the Imams (A) had been mentioned in all the heavenly scriptures. From this al-Nuri infers that if the Imams' names were present in earlier scriptures, then their names must also have been mentioned in the Qur'an as well, which is the scripture specified for the Islamic ummah. Since we do not find their names in the Qur'an, it does not imply that they were not mentioned, but rather that they were deleted by interested persons.

We do not accept this argument because its premises are refutable, considering that it is possible that the absence of the mention of the names of the Imams (A) could be due to some reason that we do not know. Apart from this, as mentioned earlier, there are other traditions which explicitly state that the name of 'Ali (A) has not been mentioned in the Qur'an.

10. Al-Nuri cites traditions describing differences of readings, which the Ahl al-Sunnah have narrated in large numbers and have justified them as being in consonance with the tradition that says that the Qur'an was revealed in sab`at ahraf. They accept the validity of the seven readings even though, as pointed out by some of them, the number of these readings exceeds ten. The Shiah have also narrated some of these readings, though most of the related traditions are not sahih, and the few that are sahih are contradicted by such other traditions as *إقرأوا كما يقرأ الناس* (Read as the people read) and *إقرأوا كما علمتم* (Read as you have been taught). Moreover, these traditions are akhbar ahad, while the Qur'an requires tawatur as a proof, and there also exists the probability of their being explanations of the verses.

This and the following argument are based on traditions from Shii sources in which there is a mention of

the Qur'an having undergone tahrif. It may be pointed out that by `tahrif mentioned in these traditions — apart from the fact that most of these traditions have been narrated from al-Sayyari, a ghali, and other daif narrators — is implied semantic alteration not textual alteration, because we have unambiguous, sahih traditions proving this point, among them being the letter of the Imam (A) to Sa'd al-Khayr, cited earlier, which al-Kulayni has mentioned in Rawdat al-Kafi.

12. Here al-Nuri has collected nearly a thousand Shii traditions concerning specific verses in which tahrif has been alleged.

The following points may be noted in regard to this argument.

More than 320 of these traditions contain in their chains the name of al-Sayyiri, a ghali, who was cursed by al-Imam al-Sadiq (A) and has been discredited by all the authorities on rijal.

More than 600 of these thousand traditions are repetitions, the only difference between them being that they are derived from different books while their chains of transmission are the same, or that their chains of transmission are different.

As to the traditions which do not fall in the above two categories, we find more than 100 traditions cited from al-Tabarsi's Majma` al bayan concerning variant readings. Most of these traditions are common to the Shiah and the Ahl al-Sunnah, for al-Tabarsi often cites traditions from Sunni narrators such as al-Kisai, Ibn Masud, Al Jahdari, Abu 'Abd al-Rahman, Al Salami, al-Dahhak, Qatadah, Ibn `Umar, Ibn Hijaz, Mujahid, 'Ikrimah, 'Aishah, Ibn Zubayr, Hamzah, Ibn Yamar, Ibn Nuhayk, Sa'id ibn Jubayr, `Umar ibn Qaid and other Sunni personalities.

In view of this, is it possible to affirm tahrif by relying upon the few remaining traditions — whether reported by al-Kulayni or 'Ali ibn Ibrahim al-Qummi — when we already know that the vast majority of Shii 'ulama' believe that the Qur'an has remained secure from tahrif and that it has been proved through tawatur?

Moreover, some of the traditions mentioned by al-Nuri relate to the exposition and sha'n al-nuzal of Quranic verses, as pointed out by al-Majlisi in his commentary on the Usul Al-Kafi.

As a conclusion to this discussion we may mention what Aqa Buzurg al-Tehrani relates about his teacher, Mirza Husayn al-Nuri. AlTehrani says,

I have heard him (al-Nuri) say: "I made a mistake in naming the book and it was more appropriate that it should have been named Fasl fi `adam tahrif al-Kitab because I have proved in it that the scripture of Islam, the Noble Qur'an, as present between the two flaps and in circulation in all parts of the world, is the revelation of God in respect of all its surahs, verses and sentences, and no alteration, change, addition or deletion has taken place in it from the day of its compilation to this day, and its first compilation has reached us through a confirmed tawatur..

However, I was negligent in respect of expressing this fact in several places in the book in order to avoid becoming a target of criticism and abuse, and I have foolishly expressed the contrary. I was content with an allusion to my belief on page 22, whereas that which was important was achievement of certainty concerning the nonexistence of anything besides the compilation existing between the two flaps, and to this effect I quoted al-Shaykh al-Mufid on page 36.

The certainty as to the nonexistence of any remainder can be attained only by refuting the six logical possibilities (about the occurrence of tahrif), because even if one of these possibilities is present in the mind no certainty concerning the nonexistence of a remainder can be attained.

I have left the task of judging whether all these possibilities are refutable or not to the reader who studies with a penetrating eye the indications and supportive evidence mentioned by me in the book. Now if there remains in his mind a doubt about the possibility of some remainder besides the extant Qur'an, he should not extravagantly claim to be certain of its nonexistence.

And if there remains no such doubt, then he has indeed attained certainty, as the popular saying goes, 'There is no town beyond Abadan.' Apart from this, no Shari responsibility devolves upon one in regard to the presence or absence of this certainty, and therefore there is no occasion here for anyone of the two groups to find fault with the other.

Al-Tehrani adds: "This is what I have heard from my teacher himself, and as to his practice, we saw him give no credence to the contents of the traditions (in this regard); rather he considered them Ahad, incapable of proving anything regarding the Qur'an and worth being discarded."[56](#)

Conclusion

Having mentioned the Imami belief in the purity of the Quranic text and absence of any tahrif in it, it is necessary to point out certain issues.

1. Some Sunni writers — mistakenly or willfully — have made confusion between the various Shii sects and have been unable to identify the differences present in their beliefs. They do not differentiate between the Ghulat and the other sects, and this leads them to ascribe the beliefs of one of them to the other. Therefore, Dr. Hafni Dawud says concerning Ahmad Amin, the Egyptian writer, "He has failed to differentiate between the Imamiyyah and the Mu'allihah (those who attribute divinity to the Imams).... Further he has not been able to make an exact differentiation between the moderates among them (the Shiah) and the fanatics who vehemently attack the beliefs of others."[57](#)

He also says, "The Imamiyyah and the Zaydiyyah among Shii sects are moderates and differ completely from such extremist sects as the Kaysaniyyah, the Mu'allihah and the Hululiyah."[58](#)

This mix-up may be the result of these authors' lack of knowledge of Shii Imami beliefs, or perhaps they have overlooked these differences because their sole purpose was to attack the Imamiyyah, but it is

something which does not befit any healthy mind.

It is not valid to attribute some issues which were a part of the beliefs of the Ghulat to the Imami Shiis, and the issue of tahrif is one of them. The profession of this belief by the Ghulat, such as al-Sayyari, Ahmad ibn Al Kuffi and others, and their narration of some traditions concerning it, bears out that it is a part of Ghali beliefs and its ascription to the Imamiyyah is incorrect?"[59](#)

The vast majority of these traditions have been narrated by those who are accused of ghuluww or forgery in Shii works on rijal.

These days we come across some clerics in some places as in India and Pakistan who are commonly known to belong to the Imamiyyah yet incline towards Ghali, beliefs. They have written some books on doctrine from which their acceptance of tahrif is understood. Similarly, some of their other beliefs also show their inclination towards the Ghurat. This is, however, something to which the most eminent of Shii scholars, whose names have been mentioned, do not subscribe, and the Imamiyyah decline to share the burden of the beliefs of such persons.

These are their own personal views which may not be attributed to the Imamiyyah. The case is similar to the views expressed on certain issues by some Sunni scholars, such as Ibn Taymiyyah and others, which the Ahl al-Sunnah do not accept, and hence it is not appropriate to attribute these beliefs to them as a whole.

Hence it is not right to ascribe the views of such persons to the Imamiyyah, as justly pointed out by al Zarqani, who observes, "Some Shii Ghulat imagine that `Uthman, and before him Abu Bakr and Umar, altered the Qur'an and deleted numerous verses and surahs from it."[60](#) He further says, "Surely some Shii 'ulama' dissociate themselves from this nonsense and it cannot be ascribed to them."[61](#)

Dr. `Abd al- Sabur Shahin also states, "It is the Ghulat who have associated some false traditions with the Quran."[62](#)

If one studies the bibliographies of Shii works, one will find that they have written scores of books in refutation of the Ghulat and have dissociated themselves from them and their beliefs."[63](#)

2. One of the things which needs to be pointed out is the presence of some traditionists among Shiis and Sunnis who accept traditions without paying heed to the Qur'an and without examining whether a tradition is in consonance with its teachings or not. They also accept traditions without studying their chains of transmission and make no effort to differentiate scientifically between the traditions with a view to accepting the authentic and rejecting the inauthentic.

Therefore, when they came across some traditions entailing the occurrence of tahrif, they were misled to accepting the presence of tahrif. Even if they themselves did not believe in tahrif they narrated those fabrications in their books because they imagined the likelihood of these traditions being authentic or

understood them to signify something that had nothing to do with tahrif. The responsibility of narrating such traditions lies with them.

Anyhow, the Shii `ulama, including their most eminent scholars such as al-Saduq, al-Tusi, alMurtada, al-Tabarsi and others, do not believe in tahrif and reject its ascription to the Shiah. They have also emphasized the weakness of the traditions pertaining to tahrif. One can refer in this regard to the introduction of Majma' al-bayan, the introduction of Tafsir al-Safi, al Bihar, and other works mentioned earlier.

Concluded — wa al-hamdu lillah

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[5.](#) Ibn Hajar, Lisan al-Mizan, iv, 223

[6.](#) See Tafsiral-Safi i, 55, from al-Shaykh al-Tusi

[7.](#) Majma al-bayan, i, 15.

[8.](#) Al-Naqd (Tehran), ed. by al-Muhaddith alUrmawi, 135

[9.](#) Sad al-Saud, 144, 145, 192, 193

[10.](#) Ibid, 193

[11.](#) Ajwibat al-masail al-Mahanni'iyah, 121. Also refer concerning the belief of the `Allamah in the absence of tahrif, Radd Fasl al-khitab, p. 66, manuscript with al-Shaykh Rida al-'Ustadi in Qumrn

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- [34.](#) Kitab Sulaym ibn Qays, 25
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- [52.](#) Ruh al-maani, i, 21
- [53.](#) Refer concerning all this to al-Kafi, i240
- [54.](#) This is part of what the Ahl al-Sunnah have narrated and al-Nuri has quoted them. But some writers have misleadingly ascribed their narration to the Shiah, which is surprising. See Ihsan Ilahi Zahir's al-Shiah wa al-Sunnah
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