A Study of Sunni and Shii Traditions Concerning Tahrif [of Holy Quran] Part 2

In this text, a three-part series written by Rasul Ja'fariyan, the author analyzes traditions from Sunni and Shia sources regarding Tahrif (alterations) [of Holy Quran], 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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The Collection of the Qur'an and Tahrif

Throughout the course of history, the Muslims' stand concern-ing the Qur'an is characterized by the absence of doubt, regard-ing any of the verses and their belief that it is in totally a revela-tion of God Almighty which has remained secure from deletions and additions.

Despite this belief, some traditions narrated by the Ahl al-Sunnah in the Sihah and other books on tradition concerning the compilation of the Qur'an appear to indicate the absence of tawatur of Quelinic verses and claim their basis on khabar al-wahid.[1] Here we shall men-tion some of these traditions and later examine them critically. The following tradition is narrated by al-Bukhari:

Zayd ibn Thabit narrates: "Abu Bakr called me after the battle of Yamamah. Umar lbn al-Khattab was then also with him and Abu Bakr said to me:' Umar had come to me and said: "The battle of Yamamah has taken a heavy toll of the reciters of the Qur'in, and I fear that fighting in other places would similarly result in a loss of reciters. This would lead to the loss of many Quranic verses. I think it is advisable that you should order the Qur'an to be collected."

I said to Umar: "How can we do something which the Prophet (S) did not?" Umar replied: "It is, by God, a good thing," and he continued to remind me of it until God opened my breast to the matter, and I appreci-ated the advice of Umar: " Zayd said: "Abu Bakr said to me: 'you are an intelligent young man, and I consider you free from any kind of blame, for you have also written the Revelation for the Prophet. Search for the Qur'an and collect it.'

I said, 'By God, if they had ordered me to move a mountain it would not have been more difficult than what I have been asked to do concerning the collection of the Qur'an.' Then I said to him: 'How will you do something which the Prophet (S) did not do.' He replied: 'It is, by God, a good thing.' Then Abu Bakr continued to remind me till God opened my heart to that to which He had opened the breasts of Abu Bakr and `Umar.

Then I searched for the Quran and collected it from palm leaves, stone tablets and the people's memories. I found the concluding part of the Surat al-Tawbah, from لقد جاءكم رسول.. until the end of al-Baraah, with no one except Abu Khuzaymah al-'Ansari. These suhuf were with Abu Bakr till his death, then with `Umar as long as he was alive, and then with his daughter Hafsah."[2]

Ibn Abi Dawad reports the following tradition transmitted through a hasan chain:

`Umar enquired about a certain Quranic verse and he was told that it was with a person killed in the battle of Yamamah. Thereupon he said "Inna lillah," and ordered the collection of the Qur'an. Thus he was the first one to compile it in form of a mushaf (codex).[3]

Ibn Ashtah in al-Masahif, narrates the following from Ibn Buraydah:

Ibn Buraydah said: "The first person to collect the Qur'an in the form of a mushaf was Salim, the mawla of Hudhayfah. He had taken an oath not to put on his cloak (i.e. to leave his home) until he had collected the Qur'an. Then they consulted as to what they would call it, and some of them suggested that it be named 'al-sifr.' Salim observed that this name was given by the Jews, (to their scripture), and therefore they did not favour it. Then he said: 'I have seen the like of it being called `mushaf in Abyssinia.' Thereupon they concur-red on naming it al-mushaf[4]

Al-Bukhari also reports the following tradition, which has also been recorded by al-Tirmidhi:

Zayd ibn Thabit said: "When we wrote the masahif and I missed a verse I used to hear from the Prophet (S). I found it later with Abu. Khuzayrnah al-'Ansari: 33:23) ...من المؤمنين رجال صدقوا). `Umar did not use to accept a verse of the Book of God unless two men gave evidence of its being so. A man belong-ing- to the Ansar came with two verses and `Umar said to him: 'I will not demand apart from yourself another witness for it.' "[5]

Yahya ibn ‘Abd al-Rahman Hatib observes: " `Umar decided to collect the Qur'an and standing up among the people he said: 'Anyone who has received anything of the Qur'an from the Prophet (S) should bring it to us.' They had written it on paper, stone tablets and palm leaves, and nothing used to be accepted from them unless two witnesses gave evidence to this effect. Then Khuzaymah came and said: 'I see that you have not included two verses and not written them.' Umar enquired: 'What are those two?' He replied: 'I have received from the Prophet (S): [6] :(9:128) ..لقد جاءكم رسول

Anas ibn Malik said: "I was one of those who were being dictated the Qur'an. At times when they differed regarding a verse, they would recall someone who had heard it from the Prophet (S). At times that person would be absent or in some remote place. Thereupon, they would write the verses preceding and following that verse and leave a vacant place for it until that person returned or was sent for."[7]

It is narrated from Ubayy ibn Kaab that: "They collected the Qur'an in masahif during the caliphate of Abu Bakr, may God have mercy on him. Men used to write on being dictated by Ubayy, and when they reached the verse of the Surat al-Baraah, 9:127) ..ثم انصرفوا صرف الله) they thought that it was the last verse of the Qur'an to be revealed. Thereupon Ubayy ibn Ka`b said: 'After this, two more verses have been read to me: [8]" لقد جاءكم رسول

Abü Dawud ibn al-Zubayr narrates that Abu Bakr said to `Umar and Zayd: "Sit at the door of the mosque and whoever comes to you with two witnesses evidencing anything from the Book of Allah, write it "[9]

Ibn Sirin reports that both Abu Bakr and `Umar died without the Qur'an having been collected)[10]. Ibn Sa`d reports that `Umar was the first person to collect the Qur'an [11]

Similar traditions are present in a large number in the Sihah and other works, and to accept what they say about the Qur'an implies negating the tawatur of the Qur'an and accepting it as based on akhbar ahad, such as the

story about incorporation of verses on the sole authority of Khuzaymah, or on the evidencing of two witnesses, or on the narration of Ubayy ibn Ka`b, or on the word of a person who happened to be out in the desert and who had to be called to recite to them. Some traditions - like the one about a verse which was with a qari martyred in Yamamah - cast doubt on the completeness of the Qur'an. Apart from this, other questionable issues crop up which a person cannot disregard were he to accept the traditions of the Sihah in this regard.

Al-Zarkashi was aware of this, and he has mentioned an alternative interpretation in this regard which cannot possibly be accepted. He says regarding the observation of Zayd concerning the acceptance of two verses from Khuzaymah:

It does not imply that a Quranic text has been proved by khabar al-wahid because Zayd, and similarly the other Companions, had assuredly heard it and knew its place in the .Suat al-'Ahzab on the basis of the Prophet's instruc-tion. Then Zayd had forgotten it, and on having heard it again recollected it. His seeking the verses from other people was only a means for recollecting and not for getting new knowledge [12]

But there is no proof to justify this kind of interpretation, because even if we accept it the question remains whether tawatur stands on the knowledge of only Zayd and Khuzaymah? Did all the other Companions forget this verse? If this was so, couldn't all of them including Khuzaymah forget some verses without there being anyone to remind and help them to recollect?

A stranger interpretation of his concerns the last verses of Surat al-Tawbah about which Zayd is reported to have said that he had found them with none except Khuzaymah ibn Thabit. Here AlZarkashi says: "It implies, (none) from those among Zayd's tabaqah (generation) who had not collected the Qur'an.,[13] This interpretation has no basis at all.

Others have also tried to rectify the problem posed by the story of Khuzaymah by construing it to mean that the Sababah did not find that verse in a written form with anyone except Khuzaymah.[14] The mention of its being written is not found in any tradition relating to this matter and it is not possible to accept it without any evidence. Apart from this, the condition of Khuzaymah's testimony being considered equal to the evidence of two witnesses negates this supposition.

Simi-larly, the interpretation offered by others that it means that Zayd sought to confirm that verse from someone who had heard it directly from the Prophet (S),[15] is again without any basis. The interpretation of Ibn Hajar about the story of recording verses is incorrect regarding the meaning of `shahidayn' (two witnesses) because he does not rely on any proof and the literal meaning of the word shahidayn also negates his interpretation.' [16]

It appears that the main purpose of such traditions is to give credit to the so-called compilers or those who ordered the alleged compilation and collection. But the acceptance of such traditions results in a denial of the tawattur of the Qur'anic text, in addition to laying blame on the Holy Prophet (S) who is implicitly held responsible for neglecting a most momentous duty in regard to the collection and ordering of the Quranic text.

We, however, think that these traditions ought to be rejected on the following grounds:

There is contradiction among the different traditions and it is not possible to reconcile them. It is not known whether the collector was Abu Bakr or `Umar or Salim, the mawla of Hudhayfah or, as Ibn Sirin observes, someone else.

It is said that the reason behind the collection of the Qur'an was the martyrdom of reciters (qurra) at Yamamah. This is not accept-able because the scribes of the revelation (kuttab) and those who had memorized it (huffaz), such as 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, Ubayy ibn Kaab (about whom the Prophet (S) had said: "Ubayy ibn Kaab is the best reciter among them"),[17] and similarly `Abd Allah ibn Mas`ud (about whom the Prophet (S) had said: "Read the Qur'an the way it is read by Ibn Umum `Abd) [18] were all present in Madinah. In the presence of these persons in Madinah, the alleged fears of Abu Bakr and `Umar con-cerning the loss of the Qur'an cannot be admitted.

We have already established in the preceding pages that the Qur'an had been collected during the lifetime of the Prophet (S). Hence the stories of its being collected during the reign of the Caliphs are untrue and cast aspersion on the Prophet (S) by alleging that he neglected its collection, considering that there was no more important task for him than the compilation of the Qur'an and its preservation for the future generations of Muslims. Therefore, when it is confirmed that the Qur'an was collected during the lifetime of the Prophet (S), these traditions cannot be accepted.

After accepting the presence of tawatur concerning all the verses of the Qur'an and the absence of deletions from it and additions to it, as per consensus, it becomes necessary to discard these traditions which entail the Quran's basis on akhbar ahad.

Tahrif and Shii Traditions

Shi'i narrators have also narrated traditions which apparently entail the presence of tahrif in the Book of God. Some people who have a shallow understanding of these issues have used these traditions to accuse that the Shiah believe in tahrif. The following may be said in answer to such accusations:

Inauthenticity of the Traditions Alleging Tahrif: The narration and mention of such traditions in books does not imply a tacit acceptance of their authenticity, especially by the majority of the Imamiyyah. The position of the Ahl al-Sunnah is the same regarding such traditions in their works, although they believe in the authenticity of all that has been narrated in Sahih al-Bukhari & Sahih Muslim and the other Sihah.

How is it possible to accept the authenticity of all that which has been mentioned in these books when we find in them contradictory traditions concerning many doctrinal and legal Islamic issues, is a question to which there is no credible answer? Even after the explicit claim of a particular traditionalist that he has recorded only authentic traditions, it is not possible to rely upon his word and consider all that he has narrated as authentic.

The Shi`ah do not believe in the authenticity of all traditions recorded in their books. Consequently, they mention the chain of narrators of traditions so that the researchers may be able to discern, after scrutinizing the character and reliability of narrators, between authentic and unreliable traditions. This principle applies to Al-Kafi and all other Shia works of tradition.

As to the Tafsir al-Qummi which has mentioned some of these traditions, what we have just said applies to this book as well. Apart from this, the Tafsir al-Qummi has been mixed up with another exegesis named Tafsir Abi Al-Jarud. Aqa Buzurg al-Tehrani has pointed out this fact in his al-Dhariah.[19]

This tafsir of Abu al-Jarud, apart from having in its chain of nar-rators Kathir ibn `Ayyash, who is unreliable, belongs to Abu al-Jitrad who had deviated from the path of the Ahl al-Bayt (A) and had been cursed by al-Imam al-Sadiq (A) (as mentioned by Ibn al-Nadim) who said about him and some others that they were liars. Traditions negat-ing his veracity and confirming his unreliability have been narrated from the Ahl al-Bayt (A).[20]

Al-Sayyid Al Khui’s tawthiq of Abu al-Jarud, due to his presence in the chains of the narrators of Kamil al-ziyarat, the veracity of whose chains of narrators has been testified by Muhammad ibn Qulawayh,[21] is not correct, because the negation of his veracity precedes his establish-ment as a thiqah; the traditions condemning him were present before his being considered a thiqah by Ibn Qulawayh. Apart from this, his acceptance of the veracity of all the narrators of Kamil Al-Ziyarat is not correct, and the words of Ibn Qulawayh do not convey such a claim. Whatever the case may be, al-Mamaqani, after mentioning the traditions negating Abu al-Jarud's veracity, observes: "This person has in no way been considered a thiqah; rather he has strongly been condemned and considered unreliable in al-Waitzah and other books."' [22]

As to the fact that some thiqah narrators narrated from him, this does not necessitate his being considered thiqah, as expressly stated by al-Sayyid al-Khui's concerning Abu al-Jarud.[23]

As to al-Kafi, which was compiled by al-Shaykh al-Kulayni - may God have mercy on him - during a span of twenty years, we do not accept the authenticity of all its traditions, because some of them are considered daif, mursal, etc., due to faults in their chains of transmis-sion. It also contains traditions which do not agree with the Qur'an and others which are defective from the viewpoint of text. Among such traditions are those which entail the occurrence of tahrif.

Al-Kulayni, moreover, has placed a number of such traditions under the head "al-nawadir," wherein he records nadir and shadhdh tradi-tions.'[24]

Thus al-Kafi, in the eyes of the Imamiyyah, is not like Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim and other such compilations of traditions in the eyes of the Ahl al-Sunnah, who accept the authenticity of all the traditions contained in these books, even if they are opposed to the Qur'an, going to the extent of saying: السُنَّة قاضية على الكتاب 'The Sunnah judges the Qur'an.[25]

If one refers to Mir 'at ul uqul(a commentary on al-Kafi) of al-`Allamah al-Majlisi, one will observe what al-Majlisi has mentioned about the traditions of al-Kafi concerning their chains of transmission, and will see that he has classed a large number of them as daif, mursal, or as possessing some other defect.

Al-Sayyid Hashim Maruf al-Husayni states: "The mutaqaddimun have not had any ijma on relying on all the traditions of al-Kafi.,[26] He also says: "Al-Kafi contains 16199 traditions; among these 5072 are$ahlk 144 hasan, 1128 muwaththaq, 302 qawi,, and 9480 daif." [27] This break-up is based only on the basis of scrutiny concerning the chains of transmission, not that of the texts of the traditions.

It may be said that most of the traditions-entailing tahrif belong to the class of daif traditions whose chains terminate at weak narrators (du'afa)[28] 'and those who have been accused of ghuluww or professing deviate doctrines.

The greater part of these traditions have at their source Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Sayyari. Al-Shaykh Mirza Mehdi al-Burujerdi observes: "I have counted the traditions on tahrif and have found more than 188 of them terminating at al-Sayyari." We have also counted these tradi-tions and have found more than 300 of them coming from him.

Al-Shaykh al-Najashi in his book on rijal speaks about al-Sayyari: ضعيف الحديث، فاسد المذهب، و .. .A weak narrator of traditions, of devious beliefs. Al-Najashi's statement about him indicates that al-Sayyari had been accused of ghuluww. [29] Al-Shaykh al-Tusi has also considered him daif in al-Istibsar after narrating a tradition from him.' [30]

Ibn Al-Ghadairi makes this statement about al-Sayyari: يُكَنَّى ابا عبيد الله المعروف بالسياري، ضعيف متهالك غال منحرف". 'His sobriquet - Abu Abadullah and popularly known as al-Sayyari; (is) za'if, weak, ghalli and deviate.' [31]

Al-Shaykh al-Tusi describes al-Sayyari as:

ضعيف الحديث، فاسد المذهب، مَجفُو الرواية كثير المراسيل 'A daif narrator, professing deviate doctrines, his traditions are not accepted, and most of his traditions are mursal[32]

Another of the narrators of these traditions is Yunus ibn Zabyan about whom al-Najashi remarks:ضعيف جدا، لا يلتفت الى ما رواه، كل كتبه تخليط ' Very daif; no attention is given to what he has narrated; all his books are confused and delirious.' Ibn al- Ghada'iri says of him: ابن ظبيان كوفي غال كذّاب وضَّاع الحديث Ibn Zabyan, a Kufi,a ghali,a liar,a fabricator of traditions. [33]

Mankhal ibn Jamil al-Kufi is also one of these narrators and writers on rijal have this to say about him: ضعيف فاسد الرواية! Daif and of corrupt narration,' and add: انه من الغلاة المنحرفين "He is one of the devious ghulat". [34]

Muhammad ibn Hasan ibn Jumhur is also among these narrators, and al-`Allamah al-Hilli says about him:

كان ضعيفاً في الحديث، غاليا في المذهب، فاسداً في الرواية، لا يلتفت الى حديثه، ولا يُعتَمد على ما يرويه.

He was daif in narrating traditions, a ghali by faith, corrupt in his narrations; no significance is given to what he has narrated and it is not relied upon.[35]

Al-Najashi has the same to say about him: ضعيف الحديث، فاسد المذهب

A daif narrator and professor of deviate doctrines.[36]

From this it becomes clear that these narrators were not accept-able to the authorities on rijal, being considered by them as devious, ghulat, etc. The narration of their traditions by some Akhbari writers is due to their lack of precision and care, and unfortunately some writers have relied on the traditions of these weak narrators in their belief in the incompleteness of the Qur'an. But such writers are very few in number and as al-Shaykh Abu Zuhrah says: "A very large number of Imami scholars headed by al-Murtada, and others, oppose them."[37]

The late Ayatullah al-Sayyid al-Burijerdi states in this regard:

Logical necessity dictates against it (belief in tahrif), and the traditions contradicting the purity of the Quranic text are extremely unreliable, both from the viewpoint of sanad and content. Indeed some of these traditions contradict what is certain and necessary and go against the very purpose of Prophethood. Further, it is most amazing to see that some people claim the preservation of traditions in books and through oral transmission throughout a period exceeding thirteen centuries, contending that had any deletion taken place therein it would have been obvious, yet at the same time affirm the possibility of deletion taking place in the Quran.[38]

Al-Allamah al-Shahshahani observes regarding the traditions entailing tahrif: "These traditions deserve no attention on account of their amid. Even those who have argued on their basis have not regarded even one of them as

authentic (Sahih). They have been cast aside by the greatest of our scholars." He adds: "These traditions contradict reliable traditions, stronger than them in regard to their conformity with the Qur'an, the Sunnah, reason and consensus." [39]

Traditions Related to Variance of Readings: A part of the traditions narrated in this context are those which are related to the difference in qira'at; only some of them are mentioned in Shi'i books while a very large number of them, as said, are found in books of the Ahl al-Sunnah. Most of what has been reported in Shi'i books is attributed to the Ahl al-Bayt (A), especially to the mushaf of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (A), while in the books of Ahl al-Sunnah such differences are attributed to such Sahabah as Ibn Mas`ud, Ubayy, and others.

We may say that these traditions, in which the verses have been mentioned in a form different from what is known through tawatur and is popular among the people, are all alehbor cihdd and consequently incapable of establishing anything as Quranic text. Further, it is also not possible to forsake something mutawatir by relying on akhbar ahad. Accordingly, the Imams (A) have ordered their followers to recite the Qur'an as it is recited by the people.[40]

Dr. `Abd al-Sabar Shahin observes: "All that which has been nar-rated concerning differences of qira 'at, which delete from or add to the Qur'an as we possess it, is undoubtedly of a shahdadh character and incapable of proving something as part of the Qur'an, or is of mudraj character in which commentary or explanation has found way into the text without being part of the Quranic text."[41]

Accordingly, it is not valid to follow these shahaddh forms of qiraat of the Qur'an, because they are based on akhbar ahad, in addi-tion to the possibility of these readings being explanations of the Quranic text and exegetic comments, as pointed out by Dr. `Abd al- Sabur. This is further supported by Abu Hayyan's statement in his footnotes (taliqah) on the reading of Ibn Masud: فوَسوَس له الشيطان in place of فأزَّلهما الشيطان عنها "This reading is contrary to the Quranic text as accepted by consensus and it is appropriate to consider it an exegetic remark.' [42]

The same applies to such traditions as have been narrated by the Imamiyyah. The books of the Ahl al-Sunnah also contain traditions regarding differences of readings and there are scores of books written on the topic. One may refer in this context to al-Masahif of Ibn Abi Dawud al-Sijistani, the exegeses of al-Zamakhshari, al--Tabari and others, and one would be surprised by what he finds) [43]

Most of these variations pertain to exegetic and explanatory remarks, especially of those who accepted the validity of changing the words of the Qur'an for clarification,' [44] though with the passage of time it led to lending support to claims of tahrif.

As to the tradition narrated by the Ahl al-Sunnah that the Qur'an has been revealed in seven different 'letters' ('ala sab`at ahruf,[45] which was interpreted to imply the validity of the various readings of the Qur'an), it is something which cannot be accepted, neither on the basis of traditions nor logic. This is

because this tradition is contradicted by another tradition narrated by them which regards the Qur'an as revealed in three ahruf (ala thalathat ahruf).[46] Similarly, it is also opposed to what has been authentically narrated by the Imamiyyah from al-Imam al-Sadiq (A), who while answering the query of Fudayl ibn Yasar regarding the narration that the Qur'an has been revealed in seven ahruf, said:

كَذَبوا- أعداء الله- لكنه نَزلَ على حرفٍ واحد من عند الواحد

They lie, the enemies of God! Rather, it has been revealed in a single harf by the One.[47]

The following tradition has been narrated from al-Imam al-Baqir (A):

إن القرآن واحد، نزل من عن الواحد، ولكن الاختلاف يجيء من قبل الرواة.

Verily, there is only one Qur'an, which has been revealed by the One, and the differences have cropped up due to the narrators.[48]

Al-Shaykh al-Tusi states in this regard: "It should be noted that the common view of our scholars and their position, well known from their accounts and narrations, is that the Qur'an was sent down on one harf and on one prophet."[49]

The idea of sab`at ahruf implying seven permissible readings, is also negated by the Imami tradition that the meaning of sab`at ahruf is seven rhetorical forms, which are amr (positive command), zajr (pro-hibitory command), targhib (inducement), tarhib (warning), jadal (polemics, argument), mat hal (allegory, parable), and qasas (story telling).[50]

It has been narrated by the Ahl al-Sunnah from Ibn Mas'ud that the Qur'an has been revealed on khamsat ahruf: halal, haram, muhkam, mutashabih , and amthal.[51] It has also been narrated from 'Ali (A) that the Qur'an has been revealed in four parts: a quarter concerning halal, a quarter concerning haram , a quarter concerning ethical dis-courses (mawaiz) and parables (mathal), and a quarter dealing with historical narratives and accounts (qasas wa athar).[52] many similar traditions have been narrated by the Ahl al-Sunnah.[53]

Those among the Imamiyyah who have narrated that the Qur'an has been revealed on seven ahruf are either those whose identity is unknown (majhal),[54]or those who are accused of ghuluww and doctrinal deviation,[55] or those who have meant by it something apart from the validity of the different readings.

We also find traditions which negate the existence of different readings, such as the tradition recorded by Atimad in his Musnad from Zirr ibn Hubaysh, from Ibn Masud

أقرأني رسول الله سورة الاحقاف فخرجت الى المسجد فإذا رجل يقرأها على غيرما أقرأني، فقلت، من أقرأك؟ فقال رسول الله. قال: قلت للآخر إقرأها، فقرأها على غير قرآتي وقراءة صاحبي، فانطلقت بهما الى النبي (ص) فقلت: يا رسول الله هذات يخالفاني في القرآءة فغضب وتعَمَّرَ وجهه وقال (ص)/ إنما أهلك من كان قبلكم الاختلاف، قال زِرٌ: وعنده

(ص) قال: فقال: ان رسول الله يأمركم أن يقرأ كل رجل كما أُقريء، فإنما أَهلَكَ من كان قبلكم الاختلاف.

The Prophet (S) taught the reading of the Surat al-'Ahqaf to me. When I went to the mosque there I found a person reciting this surah differently. I asked him, "Who taught you this reading?" He replied, 'The Prophet (S)." Then I asked another person to recite it and he recited it in a manner which differed from that of me and that of my companion. Then I went with both of them to the Prophet (S) and said, "Both of them differ from me in their reading."

The Prophet's (S) face became red with anger and he said, "Surely it was this difference which caused those who have gone before you to perish."

Zirr ibn Hubaysh says, “Ibn Masud proclaimed in the presence of the Prophet (S), The Prophet (S) orders that each one of you should recite the Qur'an as it has been recited to him. For, surely, it is such difference which has caused those before you to perish.”[56]

This tradition expressly shows that the Prophet (S) prohibited differences in reading and would be dismayed on coming across such variance. It also highlights that the differences did not originate from the Prophet (S); rather, it shows the Prophet (S) as emphasizing that such variance caused the earlier nations to perish and that it should not be present among Muslims.

The differences of reading between some Sahabah during the Prophet's (S) time were due to the differences between their dialect and that of the Prophet's (S) and his tribe, or these differences came into being after the Prophet (S), especially after the spreading of the Com-panions to different places and their reciting the Qur'an to the people, each with his own peculiar rendering of certain verses of the Qur'an. The presence of this variance was a cause of anxiety for some Compan-ions and they urged `Uthman to gather the people on the single reading which was received in a mutawatir fashion from the Prophet (S). This is apparent from the following traditions about Uthman's step:

Anas says: "Hudhayfah ibn al-Yaman came to `Uthman at a time when the people of Syria and Iraq were fighting together in the conquest of Armenia and Azarbaijan. Hudhayfah was worried about their differences of reading, and he said to `Uthman: "O Commander of the Faithful, save this ummah before it starts differing about the Qur'an, like the Jews and the Christians...." `Uthman consequently ordered the collection of the masahif (which were in the hands of the people)."[57]

Hudhayfah says: "I was fighting in the conquest of Armenia in which both the people of Iraq and Syria took part. The Syrians would recite in accordance with the reading of Ubayy ibn Ka`b. They would recite in a way which the Iraqis had not heard, and the Iraqis would accuse them of apostasy. The Iraqis would recite in accordance with the reading of Ibn Mas'ud. When they recited in a fashion which the Syrians had not heard, they would accuse the Iraqis of apostasy." Zayd said: " `Uthman ordered me to collect the Qur'an." [58]

This is also supported by the following episode reported by Al -Baladhuri:

They said to `Uthman, "You have burnt the Book of God." `Uthman replied, "The people differed in their readings of the Qur'an, and one would say to another, 'My Qur'an is better than your Qur'an,' and the other one would claim, 'My Qur'an is better than yours.' Hudhayfah was the first to dis-approve of it and he brought up the matter before me. I gathered the people on the reading which was written in the Prophet's presence." They said, "But why did you burn the masahif? Weren't their contents in accordance with the reading on which you have brought together the people? Why didn't you allow them to remain as they were?" He replied, "I wanted that nothing should remain except that which had been written in the Prophet's presence and recorded in a mushaf that was with Hafsah, the Prophet's wife. I pray to God to forgive me."[59]

Now when the variance of readings could lead to accusations of tahrif, the like of which had occurred among the Jews and Christians, is it logical to believe that the Prophet (S) permitted it? The observation of al-Tabari is strange where he says: "The Prophet's (S) command regarding the reciting of the Qur'an in seven ahruf (something in accord-ance with which `Uthman did not act, but on the contrary made the people accept a single reading) was a command indicating permissibility and incumbence." [60]

Neither can the tradition (about sab`at ahruf) be interpreted to imply - as interpreted by Dr. `Abd al-.Sabur - the differing dialects and accents, which were the result of differences of language and educa-tion, nor can it imply the difference of some words and a change in the sequence of sentences where the meanings remain unaffected, because it obviously amounts to accepting tahrif, which angered the Prophet (S), was a cause of consternation for Hudhayfah, and as a measure against which `Uthman took his step, which was approved by 'Ali (A) who said: "Had I been in power, I would have done what he has done."[61]

It is necessary to point out that if the tradition regarding the Qur'an being revealed in sab`at ahruf had been authentic, the Companions would surely have argued on its basis and criticized Uthman's action, because he had approved only a single reading. In this regard, it is the opinion of my revered teacher al-`Allamah al-Sayyid al-Murtada that the reasons for the variant readings were: the absence of diacritical marks and points, variations of the scripts used by the scribes of the Qur'an, errors and slips made by the copyists, the exercise of personal judge-ment in regard to reciting, the shortcomings in reciting, mistakes in hearing, differences of dialect, and, sometimes, the inclusion of exe-getical remarks while reciting the text.[62]

For instance, the verse is ان الله يغفر الذنوب جميعا was recited with the addition ولا يبالي (and He will not care). Such examples are present in large numbers. Similarly, some differences of reading were the result of the belief held by some that the words of the Qur'an can be substituted by their synonyms.[63]

This fact is evident to anyone conversant with Qur'anic studies. There-fore, one who refers to books written on the variant readings will find that the basis of these different readings is individual ijtihad practised by their propounders in the areas of grammar and syntax. This kind of ijtihad ,

apart from being based on shadhdh and weak traditions, is only a later development, not seen in the earlier period. This form of ijtihad stands condemned on the ground that it is in fact ijtihad in opposition to a nag.

The Shiah concur that it is not valid to recite these shadhdh forms of readings during salat, and this indicates that they do not attach any weight to the traditions on which these readings are based.

Al-Sayyid al-Tabatabai says in this regard: "The basis of authority (in regard to a Qur'anic verse) is the tawatur of its text and reading." He adds: "Shadhdh traditions are not worthy of notice." Al-Mawla al-Mazandarani observes: "That which has reached us through akhbar ahad - such as the shadhdh forms of readings and that which Ibn Mas'ud mentioned in his mushaf - is not part of the Qur'an, because there is no proof of its being so." As Fadil al-Qummi observes in al-Qawanin: "Shadhdh traditions not acted upon because there is no proof of their contents being part of the Qur'an."[64]

Traditions Implying the Presence of Certain Names: Of the traditions wherein some verses are mentioned in a form differing from that received through tawatur are those which relate to the particular historical context of their revelation (sha'n al-nuzul) and contain the addition of a few words to elucidate their meaning. These extra elements are either the words of the Prophet (S) or have been incorporated by one of the Companions in his mushaf, or are additions made by the Companions themselves.

'Ali (A) states: "I had surely come to them with a book compris-ing both the text of the revelation and its interpretation."[65]

We have already mentioned that 'Ali (A) had mentioned in his mushaf the sha'n of the verses, and Ibn Skin had sought this mushaf for the sake of the information it contained, but was unable to find it.

As to those traditions which entail that the name of 'Ali (A) had occurred in some verses - aside from their possible inauthenticity on the basis of their narrators' character - it is also possible to include them in this class of traditions, considering that we have some traditions which negate the presence of `Ali's name in the Qur'an. The following is one from al-Kafi from Abu Basir from al-Imam al-.Sadiq (A):

عن أبي بصير عن ابي عبدالله (ع) فقلت له أن الناس يقولون: فما له لم يُسَمِّ علياً في القرآن و أهل بيته في كتاب الله؟ فقال: فقولوا لهم ان رسول الله نزلت عليه الصلاة و لم يسم ثلاثاً و اربعاً حتى كان رسول الله هو الَّذي فسر لهم ذلك.

Abu Basir says: "I said to him that people ask why God has not mentioned the name of 'Ali (A) and his household in the Qur'an? The Imam replied:

'Tell them that the command of salat was delivered to the Prophet (S) with-out God's mentioning specifically the number of rakat as three or four, and it was the Prophet (S) who explained this to them.' "[66]

This tradition explicitly negates the presence of 'Ali's (A) name in the Qur'an, and therefore those traditions which entail the mention of 'Ali's (A) name in some verses should be considered as furnishing explanatory details.

Accordingly, al-Imam al-Sadiq (A) usually used to recite the verse: يا ايها الرسول بلِّغ ما أُنزل اليك من ربك و ان لم تفعل فما بلَّغت رسالته , without adding to it the name of 'Ali ( ).[67] The Ahl al-Sunnah have narrated traditions regard-ing this verse which include 'Ali's (A) name in it.[68]

Another tradition which confirms what has been said is narrated by Muhammad ibn al-Fudayl from Aba al-Hasan al-Madi, i.e. al-Imam al-Kazim (A):

قال: قلتُ هذا الذي كنتم تكذبون فقال الامام (ع) يعني أمير المؤمنين: قلت تنزيل؟

قال: نعم.

(Muhammad ibn al-Fudayl says:) "I asked the Imam (A) regarding the verse هذا الذي كنتم به تكذبون..; . He replied: 'It implies Amir al-Mu'minin (A).' I inquired: 'Is it tanzil?"Yes,' replied the Imam."[69]

This tradition clearly indicates that the name of 'Ali (A) was not mentioned in the Quranic verse but was present in the exposition revealed by God concerning the intent of the verse.[70]

Among the traditions of this kind is a tradition narrated by both the Shia and Sunni works concerning the verse: وحافظوا على الصلوات والصلاة الوسطى where they have added to it the words 'salat al-`asr. ;[71]

It is obvious that the addition of the words salat al-'asr to the text does not imply that it is a part of the verse; rather, it is an explana-tion of the phrase al-salat al-asr in the verse. Therefore al-Qadi, while refuting those who have ascribed to Ibn Mas'ud the exclusion of the Mu`awwidhatan (the last two surah s, al-Nas and al-Falaq) from his mushaf and to Ubayy ibn Ka`b the inclusion of two additional siurahs, al-Hafd and al-Khal , in his mushaf, , says that it is possible that Ubayy had recorded in his mushaf some interpretative remarks and prayers. He states: "He had recorded in his mushaf interpretations and prayers which are not parts of the Qur'an., [72]

Al-Baqillani has also refuted this allegation saying, "The prayer recited in qunat , which is narrated to have been recorded by Ubayy ibn Ka`b in his mushaf, has no proof for considering it a part of the Qur'an. Rather, it is a kind of a prayer, and had it been a part of the Qur'an it would have been transmitted to us and we would have the knowledge of its authenticity."[73]

Regrettably, while Sunni scholars have tried to overcome the dif-ficulties raised by the statements of their authorities and explained them away, they have not adopted a similar attitude regarding the traditions entailing tahrif narrated from the Imams of the Shiah nor bothered to examine their authenticity. Rather some anti-Shii pro-pagandists bent on the villification of the Shiah have taken the sole presence of such traditions in Shii works as an evidence that the Shiah believe in tahrif of the Holy Qur'an.

Al-Fayd al-Kashani states: "It would not be far-fetched if said that some of the deletions were of the nature of exegetical clarifications without being parts of the Qur'an. Thus any change that may have occur-red is one of meaning, i.e. the charge of alteration and corruption relates to exposition and interpretation. It implies that the meaning ascribed was different from

the actual intent. Thus the import of the Imam's state-ment كَذا نزلت (this is how it was revealed) is that its meaning has been altered; not that the verse was revealed with such additional words and then they were deleted from it.[74]

Al-Shaykh al-Mufid states: "...But the revealed expository and exegetical matter recorded in the mushaf of Amir al-Mu'minin (A) was deleted, even though it was an established revelation (thabitan munzalan), although not part of the text of the kalam of God Almighty which is the miraculous Qur'an. The ta 'wil of the Qur'an has also been called 'Qur'an' ...and there is no difference of opinion among the exegetes about this: [75]

Similarly, al-Shaykh al-Saduq has pointed out that some revelations are not part of the Qur'an, such as the counsel given by Gabriel to the Prophet (S) and to which the Prophet (S) refers in many of his traditions. Al- Saduq says: "The like of it are many, all of which are revelation without being a part of the Qur'an. For had it been part of the Qur'an, it would have been joined to and combined with the Qur'an instead of being separated from it."[76]

Traditions Explicitly Mentioning Tahrif : Other traditions which allude to the presence of tahrif are those which speak of the Qur'an as muhar-raf (altered, corrupted). It should be pointed that these traditions men-tion the presence of tahrif in the meaning of verses and not in their words. This is indicated by the following tradition narrated by Al -Kulayni in Rawdat al-Kafi. In a letter al-Imam al-Baqir (A) writes to Sa'd al-Khayr:

... وكان مِن نَبْذِهِم الكتاب أن أقاموا حروفه و حرَّفوا حدوده فهم يرونه، ولا يرعونه، والجهال يعجبهم حفظهم للرواية، والعلماء يحزنهم تركهم للرعاية، وكان من نبذهم الكتاب ان ولوه الَّذين لا يعلمون فأوردوهم الهوى و اصدروهم الى الردى وغيَّروا عُرى الدين ثم ورَّثوه في السَّفَهِ و الضِّبا.

Endnotes

1. Traditions are divided broadly into two categories: mutawatir and Ahad (or wahid). A mutawatir tradition is that which has been reported by such a number of narrators and through so many different chains of transmitters that it is not possible to doubt its veracity. A tradition which is not mutawatir is called khabar al-wahid. The ahad traditions are divided into five main classes: sahih, qawi, hasan, muwaththaq and daif, in accordance with the character of their narrators and transmitters. When narrated by a single narrator, a tradition is generally called mufrad, shahdadh or nadir. Mudarraj is a tradition in which the narrator, or one of the transmitters, has indistinguishably mixed the words of the narrator or a trans-mitter with the text.

2. Al-Bukhhari, Sahih, kitab al-tafsir, bab jam' al-Quran; al-Itqan, i, 57; Ta'rikh al-khulafa', 77, and Tafsir al-Tabari, i, 20.

3. Al-Itqan, i, 58

4. Ibid

5. Tandzib Ta'rikh Dimashq, v, 136; al-Bukhari, Sahih, kitab al-tafsir; al-Burhan, i, 234; see al-Qurtubi, Tafsir Al-Quran, 51.

6. Tandzib Ta'rikh Dimashq, iv, 136

7. Tafsir Al-Tabari I, 21

8. Majma' al-zawa'id, vii, p. 35

9. Irshad al-sari, vii, 447

10. Ibn Abi Shaybah, al-Musannaf, xiii, 90; al-Tabaqat al-kubra, iii, 211

11. Al-Tabaqat al-kubra, iii, 281

12. Al-Burhan, i, 236.

13. Ibid., 239

14. Manahil Al-Irfan i, 266

15. Irshad al-sciri, vii, 448

16. A1-Itqcin, i, 58

17. Mustadrak al-Sahthayn, iii, 53; al-Tabaqat al-kubra, ii, 340; Akhbar Isfahan, ii, 13

18. Ibn Al Shaybah, al-Masannaf, x, 520, 521

19. Al-Dhariah ila tasanif al-Shiah, iv, 303, 304

20. Majma' Al-Rijal iii, 73; Qamus al-rijal, iv, 228, 230; Jami` al-ruwait, i, 339

21. Mu 'jam rija1 al-hadith, vii, 325

22. Tanqih al-maqal, i, 46

23. Mujam rijal al-hadith, vii, 325

24. See al-Vsal al-ammah li al-fiqh al-muqarin, 109

25. Ta'wil mukhtalaf al-hadith, 199, Sunan i, 145; Maqalat al Islamiyyin , 324, 251, Dala'il al-Nubuwwah, i, 26; and 'Awn al-Ma`hud, iv, 429. All the sources quoted are from Buhuth ma 'a Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Salafiyyah, 67,68

26. D irascit al-hadith we al-muhaddithin, 132, 134

27. Ibid., 138, from Rawdat al-jannah

28. Majma' al-bayan, i, 15; Awa'il al-maqalat, 195, footnote; Bihar al-'Anwar, vol.89, p.75

29. Rijal al-Najashi, 58

30. Qamus al-rijal, i, 403, 404 ;Mujam rijal al-hadith, iii, 290

31. Qamus al-rijal, i, 403

32. Mu jam rijal al-hadith, ii, 290

33. Rijal al-Najashi, 838; al-cAllamah al-Hilli, Khuaisat al-rijal, 266. See also Ikhtiyar m'arifat al-rijal, 318, appendices

34. Dirascit ft al-hadith wa al-muhaddithin, 198

35. Khulasatal – Al Rijal 251

36. Rijal Al-Najashi 238

37. Al Imam Zayd bin Ali 350, 351

38. Maa Al Khatib fi khutahi al-Aridah 49

39. Al-Kafi I 219

40. Al-Kafi, i, 219

41. Ta'rikh al-Qur'an, 81

42. Al-Bahr, i, 159, from Ta'rtkh al-Qur'an, 96

43. For examples of such differences in readings see: Sunan Abi Dawad 31-38, Ibn Abi Shaybah, al-Musannaf, ii, 504; Majma' al-zawaid, vii, 154-156; Sunan al-Daraqutni, ii, 192; 'Abd al-Razzaq, al-Musannaf, i, 578, 579; iii, 207; iv, 242; v, 75; vii, 312; viii, 305, 514, 560; Ta'rikh Baghdad, i, 303, 372, 373; ii, 189; Hayat al-Sahabah, iii, 506, from Kunz ii, 137; al-Tabaqat al-kubra, 371; al-Taratib al-'idairiyyah, ii, 163; al-Majruhin, ii, 269

44. Al-Musannaf, xi, 219

45. Sahih Muslim, ii, 202-203; Sahih al-Bukhari, vi, 100, 111, and iii, 90; 4014 al-Tirmidhi, xi, 60,62; Tafsir al-Tabari, i, 9-15, and Tafsir al-Qurtubi, i,43

46. Ibn Abi Shaybah, al-Mu.sannaf, x, 517

47. Al-Kafi, kitab fadl al-Qur'an, bab al-nawddir, tradition No.13

48. Ibid., tradition No.12. A large number of such traditions have been narrated by the Shilah. Refer Fusi al-khitab, 213

49. Tafsir al-tibyan, i, 7

50. Risalat al-Nu`ani fi suruf ay al-Qur'an, see al-Tamhid fi 'ulam al- Qur'an, ii, 94

51. Tafsir al-Tabari, i, 24

52. Musnad Zayd ibn 'Ali (A), 385

53. Ala' al-Rahman, 30, 31, from al-Mustadrak, Ibn Jarir, Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn al-'Anbari, al-Basa'ir we al-dhakha'ir, p.130, from Abu `Ubaydah; Majma' al-zawa'id, vii, 153

54. Al-Bayan

55. Ibid

56. Musnad Ahmad, i, 419, 421

57. Sahih al-Bukhari, kitab al-tafsir, bab jam' al-Qur'an, vii, 226; Tafsir al- Tabarri, i, 23

58. Tafsir al-Tabari, i, 21

59. Ansaib al-'ashraf, v, 62, 63

60. Tafsir al-Tabri, i, 22

61. Al-Burhan fi al-Quran, i, 240; Mandhil i, 255; al-Zanjani, Ta'rikh al-Qur'an, 45; S'ad al-su'ud, 278; al-Masahif, 12; Irshad al-sdri, vii, 448

62. Al-Itqan, i, 51

63. Abd al-Razzaq, al-Musannaf, iii, 364

64. Radd Fasl al-khitab, 62

65. Ala Al-Rahman 257

66. Usa kitab al-hujjah, bab nass Allah wa Rasalihi 'aid al-'A'immah.

67. See the related traditions- in al-Kafi and al-Rahim (1381) concerning the negation of tahrif in the Qur'an, 16

68. Al-Durr al- manthar, ii, 298

69. Usul al-Kafi, kitab al-hujjah, bab al-nukat min al-tanzil al-wilayah

70. In accordance with what has been narrated from some authorities regarding the meaning of al-tanzil. This view is also supported by traditions

71. Tafsir i, 84; Ibn Abi Shaybah, al-Musannaf, ii, 504. See al-'Itqan, from 'A'ishah, and similarly, Ibn Abi Shaybah, ii, 506; and Majma' al- zawa'id,vii, 154, whose author observes that its narrators are thigat

72. Al-Burhan fi 'ulam al-Qur'an, ii, 128

73. Manahil i, 264, from al-'Intisar

74. Tafsir al-safi, i, 52

75. Awa'il al-maqalat, 54

76. Idiqat al-Saduq, bab al-Itiqad mablagh al-Qur'an