

Distortion (Tahrif) in the Holy Qur'an, Traditions and History

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For many years, the Wahhabis have been trying to assume the leadership of Muslim society. From the day when imperialism created this movement, they have been dreaming for the realization of that cherished day, and along this line, they have been utilizing every possible means. They are converting the abundant God-given wealth of oil into dollars and through which they are attracting many Muslims toward themselves.

They are equally making use of the historical merits and virtues of the land of Hijaz to acquire authority; for example, the Prophet of Islam (s) had been appointed for the Prophetic mission in that land and Islam began there as well. Since the spread of Islam from Mecca and Medina, and Medina even after the Prophet (s) had been the capital of Islam and the center of decision-making, from where caliphs were appointed and dismissed, today Mecca and Medina must accordingly also be the center of Islam.

In the same vein, the Qur'an was revealed in the land of Hijaz, and the language of the people of that region has been the made of its expression (i.e. Arabic) the qiblah of the Muslims is, the holy city of Mecca and holy sites, and sacred stations are located there. The present king of this country is called the "Servant of the Two Holy Places" {khadim al-haramayn} and his regime has enormous propaganda apparatuses at its disposal.

In conclusion, they believe that the Saudi king deserves to be the ruler and leader of the Muslims; that their Islam is the authentic Islam, that the Wahhabi creed is consistent with the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet (s); that it is the sect of salvation, the reference and source of understanding Islam as well as the propagator and disseminator of religion; and that the other sects should also refer to this sect to understand the religion.

Since the philosophy behind the emergence of the nascent Wahhabi sect is the effacement of the Shi'ah and the creation of discord and dissension among Muslims, the Wahhabis are looking for weak points in Shi'ism so as to besmirch their prolific thought, which can guide both Arabs and non-Arabs, and thus weaken their most serious rival.

One example which they consider as weakness in Shi'ism is their belief in the principle of taqiyyah {dissimulation}, which the Wahhabis consider as a form of nifaq {hypocrisy}. Similarly, they regard the Shi'ah's refusal to believe in the rightfulness of the first three caliphs as well as in the excellence of the Mother of the Faithful {umm al-muminin} 'A'ishah as defect and shortcoming, and their alleged belief in the distortion {tahrif} of the Qur'an, etc.

Stating the futility of the accusations and points of weakness attributed to the Shi`ah itself requires a bulky treatise. As an example, we shall discuss here the accusation on the Shi`ah's .alleged belief in the tahrif of the Qur'an

Belief in tahrif (alteration of the Qur'an) according to Sunni and Shi`ah 'ulama'

Just as the Shi`ah are not the only ones who discuss the subject of tahrif of the Qur'an, the Wahhabis are not the only ones to discuss the preservation of the Qur'an. Among Shi`ah 'ulama', a number of muhaddithun have believed in the tahrif of the Qur'an; of course, they mean tahrif in a particular sense and not in the sense the Wahhabis think.

A number of Sunni 'ulama' also believe in tahrif. For more information, one may refer to books written on this subject. Just as it is not correct to accuse Sunnis of tahrif of the Qur'an on account of the beliefs of a number of their past muhaddithun and 'ulama', applying this belief which is held by some Shi`ah muhaddithun to all their 'ulama', fuqaha and muhaddithun is no less incorrect.

A number of authoritative books of the Ahl as-Sunnah (for example, Sahih al-Bukhari, vol. 4, p. 11; vol. 8, p. 209; Sahih Muslim, vol. 5, p. 116; Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal, vol. 1, p. 47; Muntakhab Kanz al-'Ummal, vol. 3, p. 43), record traditions about tahrif of the Qur'an. Just as it is irrational to reject all these books, rejection the sayings and works of a number of those Shi`ah personalities who have believed in tahrif is also incorrect. For example, the book, Mustadrak, of Muhaddith Nuri is not supposed to be overlooked just because his book, Fasl al-Khitab attempts to prove the alleged tahrif of the Qur'an. It must be noted that the meaning of tahrif of the Qur'an according to Muhaddith Nuri is different from what the Wahhabis mean.

Therefore, a number of the Sunni and Shi`ah figures believe in the tahrif of the Qur'an, and the most important step in this context is the separation of the Wahhabi imperialist sect and their creation of the seed of discord between Sunni and Shi`ah Muslims.

The Shi`ah vehemently deny tahrif of the Qur'an, believing that the Qur'an is the book on the basis of which all our beliefs and traditions (in order to know their authenticity or otherwise) must be presented, and the standard of the Islamic system. Keeping this importance of the Qur'an, if tahrif had really occurred in it, the infallible Imams ('a), who are the true guardians and protectors of the religion after the Prophet (s), would definitely have pointed it out. In view of the proofs of the Shi`ah indicating the absence of tahrif, that group of the Sunni 'ulama' which believes in tahrif of the Qur'an would have to attribute the occurrence of tahrif to the first three caliphs because the Qur'an was compiled during their reigns, and 'Ali ('a) abided by the Qur'an they had compiled.

One of the proofs of the Shi`ah on the absence of tahrif of the Qur'an is the statement of Imam
:'Ali ('a) who says

وَأَعْلَمُوا إِنَّ هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ هُوَ النَّاصِحُ الَّذِي لَا يَغْشَى، وَالْهَادِي الَّذِي لَا يُضِلُّ، وَالْمُحَدِّثُ الَّذِي لَا يَكْذِبُ .

And know that this Qur'an is indeed an adviser who does not deceive, a leader who does not mislead, and a narrator who does not lie. This hadith shows the completeness of the Qur'an because the Qur'an could be a good guide, truthful adviser and similar descriptions only if it
.had not experienced any form of distortion

The viewpoint of a number of jurists {fuqaha}

The Shi`ah 'ulama' and maraji' al-taqlid generally reject the belief in tahrif. The works that have been written on this subject are so many that mentioning them is not an easy task and would need a separate section. Now, for the sake of information, it will suffice to mention some of
them below:

1. Ayatullah Riya' ad-Din Araki, Al-Usul, vol. 3, p. 93;
2. Ayatullah Musawi Bujnardi, Muntahi'l-Usul, vol. 2, p. 81;
3. Firuzabadi, 'Inayah al-Usul, vol. 3, p. 120; and
4. Akhund Khurasani, Kifayah al-Usul, vol. 2, p. 63.

Ayatullah al-'Uzma Sayyid Abu'l-Qasim al-Khu'i says in this regard: Tahrif of the Qur'an in the sense of the deletion of some of its verses or words is a fictitious affair as there is no truth in
it.

The outstanding Shi`ah 'alim, Imam Khomeini (r) thus said in one of his class sessions many years ago: What the Akhbaris say that there has been tahrif in the Qur'an is not true because their proof is a few traditions some of which are fabricated {maj'ul}, while others are 'weak'
{da'if}, and yet some others are subject to interpretation.

Similarly, in his message addressed to the pilgrims during the 1365 AHS (1986) Hajj season, Imam Khomeini had urged and encouraged the people to reflect and ponder over the Qur'an. In one part of the message, he has explicitly stated that no sort tahrif has ever been present in the Qur'an and it is reliable and trustworthy for all Muslims: God forbid that this divine-heavenly book - which is the apparent and written form of the aggregate of names, attributes, signs, and expressions, and whose ...written form has been handed to us without any defect and omission or commission in the tongue of revelation after descending from various stages and phases -

be forgotten.

The Shi`ah belief in this regard is so clear that it no longer needs scholastic {kalami} interpretation, and for more information the reader may refer to books written on this subject

The excuses and distortions of Wahhabism

There is a hadith recorded in Usul al-Kafi stating the fact that ʿadrat Fatimah (ʿa) and Imam 'Ali (ʿa) each had a manuscript of the Qur'an from the time of the Prophet (ʿa) in which they also used to record the daily events. And since Usul al-Kafi is one of the oldest and most authentic Shi`ah texts, the Wahhabis have taken advantage of the existence of these traditions in Usul al-Kafi, saying: "Based on traditions recorded in authentic Shi`ah books, the Shi`ah regard the Qur'an of Fatimah and 'Ali as their main Qur'an and they regard the existing Qur'an as defective." They raise this issue so that the Shi`ah would renounce their belief and say, "Hadrat

Fatimah and 'Ali (ʿa) had no book at all."

With the aim of discrediting the Shi`ah and creating the seed of Suuni-Shi`ah discord, the Wahhabis magnify this issue so much that it would seem that authoritative sources and their 'ulama' do not hold such belief. Earlier pages, in this book, pointed out the references of these traditions in authoritative Sunni texts.

The 'authoritativeness' {ʿtibariyyah} of Sunni and Shi`ah sources does not mean that everything recorded therein is absolutely authentic and acceptable, and does not require criticism, study, interpretation, or refutation. Of course, it is true that there are traditions about the Qur'anic manuscripts of Hadrat Fatimah (ʿa) and Imam 'Ali (ʿa), and according to the belief of the Shi`ah these copies are in the possession of the Imam of the Age (al-Mahdi) (ʿa).

These two manuscripts of the Qur'an are not inconsistent with the present Qur'an because this Qur'an is also complete. In the manuscripts of these two pure personages, the daily events as well as the commentary of the verses and circumstances surrounding their revelation are recorded, which can help us a lot in understanding the Qur'an

Tahrif in the statements and works of the Prophet

Since the two schools, including the Wahhabis, reject tahrif of the Qur'an, it is appropriate to ask: Is not tahrif with respect to hadiths of the Prophet (s) blameworthy as well? If there is any tahrif in the statement of the Prophet (s), what guarantee and proof are left for us concerning the immunity of his sayings?

In the books and writings of the Wahhabis, there are many instances where the Prophetic

traditions are mutilated and subjected to tahrif, they are incompletely quoted and their primary sources are not usually presented. Most cases of distortion {tahrif}, alteration {tabdil}, and deletion {isqat} in hadiths pertain to the Ahl al-Bayt ('a), descriptions of Imam 'Ali ('a) and conformity of some verses of the Qur'an with the Imam ('a), or affirmation of the Shi'ah creed. We shall cite some of these instances below: First instance: One of the hadiths being manipulated by this group is the hadith known as thaqalayn {two precious things} when the Prophet (s) said

إِنِّي تَارِكٌ فِيكُمْ الثَّقَلَيْنِ: كِتَابَ اللَّهِ وَعِثْرَتِي، أَهْلَ بَيْتِي

Verily, I am leaving among you two precious things: the Book of Allah and my progeny, the members of my Household. Shaykh 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn 'Abd Allah ibn Baz, the head of the Islamic Call, Guidance and Ifta' of Saudi Arabia, in one of his booklets published in 1364 AH, regards intellectual demonstration as a religious innovation {bid'ah} and national praise such as that of Palestine and Lebanon and the vilification of others such America, the Soviet Union and Israel as a sin. Then, in page 8 of his booklet, he narrates the said hadith

إِنَّهُ خَطَبَ النَّاسَ يَوْمَ عَرَفَةَ، فَقَالَ: إِنِّي تَارِكٌ فِيكُمْ مَا لَنْ تَضِلُّوا إِنْ إِعْتَصَمْتُمْ بِهِ: كِتَابَ اللَّهِ وَسُنَّتِي

Verily, he (s) addressed the people on the Day of 'Arafah, saying: "I am leaving among you things which if firmly hold, you shall never go astray: the Book of Allah and my tradition {sunnati}."

:In the book, Fath al-Majid, a tradition with a similar intention has been narrated, thus

قَالَ : إِنِّي تَارِكٌ فِيكُمْ مَا إِنْ تَمَسَّكْتُمْ بِهِ لَنْ تَضِلُّوا: كِتَابَ اللَّهِ

He (s) said: 'Verily, I am leaving something among you which if you take firm hold, you shall never go astray: the Book of Allah'. The case of distortion {tahrif} is so vivid that there is a difference between the narration of the author of Fath al-Majid and that of 'Abd Allah ibn Baz, who are both of the same creed. In the first instance, "the Book of Allah and my tradition" {kitab Allah wa sunnati} is recorded while only "the Book of Allah" {kitab Allah} is mentioned in

the second instance. In spite of this, the Sunni references and sources, both traditions, notwithstanding their differences, have been distorted because all authoritative Sunni references mention “the Book of Allah and the members of my Household” {kitab Allah wa ahla bayti}. Since this indisputable tradition is in favor of the family of the Prophet (s) and corroborated by the Shi`ah, however, the Wahhabis have manipulated it. The tradition has been :narrated in the Sahih Muslim, thus

إِنَّهُ قَالَ: “أَلَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ! يُوشِكُ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ رَسُولُ رَبِّي فَأَجِيبُ؛ وَأَنَا تَارِكٌ فِيكُمْ الثَّقَلَيْنِ: أَوَّلُهُمَا كِتَابُ اللَّهِ، فِيهِ الْهُدَى وَالتُّورُ، فَخُذُوا بِكِتَابِ اللَّهِ وَاسْتَمْسِكُوا بِهِ.” فَحَثَّ عَلَى كِتَابِ اللَّهِ وَرَعَبَ فِيهِ. ثُمَّ قَالَ: “وَأَهْلُ بَيْتِي؛ أَذْكُرْكُمْ اللَّهُ فِي أَهْلِ بَيْتِي

He verily said: “Now to our purpose: O people, I am only a human being. I am about to receive” a messenger (the angel of death) from my Lord and I, in response to Allah's call, (would bid goodbye to you), but I am leaving among you two weighty things: the one being the Book of Allah in which there is right guidance and light, so hold fast to the Book of Allah and adhere to it.” He exhorted (us) (to hold fast) to the Book of Allah and then said: “The second are the members of my Household; I remind you (of your duties) to the members of my family.”

In the Musnad of Ahmad ibn Hanbal (pages 17 and 59), Sahih at-Tirmidhi (volume 3, page 14), al-Sawa'iq al-Muhriqah of Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani (page 136), and other references of the Sunnis, a similar tradition with the term “the members of my Household” {ahla bayti} have been recorded. In the new books, however, such as Fath al-Majid, the booklet of 'Abd Allah ibn Baz, and other booklets published by the Library of Masjid an-Nabi as well as in Mecca, one can find alterations, deletions and distortions. This is just one example of famous {mashhur} and uninterrupted {mutawatir} hadiths in which tahrif has been done. Is this practice not a distortion, deviation and treachery to Islam and the history of Muslims?

Second instance (the identity of the saved sect): In the book, al-As'ilah wal-Ajwibah, there has : (been recorded a tradition allegedly from the Prophet (s

إِنَّهُ قَالَ: سَتَفْتَرِقُ هَذِهِ الْأُمَّةُ عَلَى ثَلَاثٍ وَسَبْعِينَ فِرْقَةً؛ كُلُّهَا فِي النَّارِ إِلَّا وَاحِدَةً، وَهُمْ أَهْلُ السُّنَّةِ وَالْجَمَاعَةِ

Verily, he (s) said: “This ummah will be divided into seventy-three sects and all of which shall be in the hellfire except one, and that is the Ahl as-Sunnah wa'l-Jama'ah.”

In this hadith, the expression, "Ahl as-Sunnah wa'l-Jama'ah" has been inserted in order for them to claim that the Holy Prophet (s) has approved of the Ahl as-Sunnah from the very beginning.

It must be said that the phrase, "Ahl as-Sunnah wa'l-Jama'ah," is not extant in any of the primary and authoritative references of the Ahl as-Sunnah. Since the Wahhabis could not add the name of their sect in the hadith as Wahhabism is a nascent group, and on the other hand, since they associated themselves with the Ahl as-Sunnah and their mission is to magnify the Sunni-Shi'ah dichotomy, they have inserted the phrase, "Ahl as-Sunnah wa'l-Jama'ah" in the hadith so as to fortify the notion that the Prophet (s) had approved of the Ahl as-Sunnah from the very beginning, and none other than them have been formally recognized.

Therefore, once the expression, "Ahl as-Sunnah wa'l-Jama'ah," is added, this question springs to the mind: Which group refers to the saved sect? Undoubtedly, the group, which is closer to the Book of Allah, the Sunnah of the Prophet (s), and the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) and takes more recourse to them, is the saved group. It is because in the traditions narrated in the Sunni references it is emphasized that only the group which holds fast to the Book of Allah and the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) will not go astray.

Third instance (tahrif of the phrase, "mut'ah an-nisa'"): In Sahih al-Tirmidhi, another authoritative Sunni source, this tradition has been recorded

سُئِلَ ابْنُ عُمَرَ عَنْ مَتْعَةِ النِّسَاءِ، فَقَالَ: "هِيَ حَلَالٌ." وَكَانَ السَّائِلُ مِنْ أَهْلِ الشَّامِ، فَقَالَ لَهُ: "إِنَّ أَبَاكَ قَدْ نَهَى عَنْهَا." فَقَالَ ابْنُ عُمَرَ: "أَرَأَيْتَ إِنْ كَانَ أَبِي نَهَى عَنْهَا، وَصَنَعَهَا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ. أَتَتْرُكُ السُّنَّةَ وَتَتَّبِعُ قَوْلَ أَبِي؟"

A certain man from Sham asked {Abd Allah} ibn 'Umar about mut'ah {fixed-time marriage}. He said: "It is halal {lawful}." The man from Sham said: "Your father has prohibited it." Ibn 'Umar said: "If ever my father has prohibited it, and the Messenger of Allah has regarded it as lawful.

Shall you abandon the Sunnah (of the Prophet) and follow my father's opinion?"

In the new edition of Sahih al-Tirmidhi, however, this hadith is totally expunged. Of course, it must be said that 'Umar ibn al-Khattab prohibited not only the mut'ah for women but also the mut'ah for Hajj {hajj at-tamattu'}. The latter means that whenever the person in the state of ihram {muhrim} finishes his rituals of 'umrat at-tamattu' - as per instruction of the Prophet (s) - provided that he has not yet donned the ihram for the hajj, he may enjoy performing lawful sexual acts.

Ibn Kathir has narrated a hadith similar to the one quoted above concerning the prohibition of

...كَانَ ابْنُهُ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ يُخَالِفُهُ. فَقَالَ: "إِنَّ أَبَاكَ يَنْهَى عَنْهَا." فَيَقُولُ: "حَشَبْتُ أَنْ تَقَعَ عَلَيْكُمْ حِجَارَةٌ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ! قَدْ فَعَلَهَا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ. أَفَسُنَّةَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ نَتَّبِعُ أَمْ سُنَّةَ عُمَرَ بْنِ الْخَطَّابِ؟"

Abd Allah was against the saying of his father. When it was said to him that his father had indeed prohibited the people from practicing mut'ah, he said: "I am afraid lest stones from heaven fall on your heads (for saying so). The Messenger of Allah deemed it lawful. Shall I follow the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah or the sunnah of (my father) 'Umar ibn al-Khattab?"

It was said that mut'ah for Hajj is a debatable subject and the Companions of the Prophet (s) had no unanimity of view about it. The Zahiriyyah believe that the practice of the Companions is the proof, but in view of the diverse opinions of the Companions in this regard, the saying of :Umar must be accepted

مَتَّعَتَانِ كَانَتَا عَلَى عَهْدِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ وَأَنَا أَنْهَى عَنْهُمَا وَأُعَاقِبُ عَلَيْهِمَا: مَتْعَةُ الْحَجِّ وَمَتْعَةُ النِّسَاءِ .

Umar said:} There were two types of mut'ah during the time of the Messenger of Allah which I've prohibited and I shall punish whoever shall perform them: the mut'ah for Hajj and the mut'ah for women. Now, this question is hereby posed: If the difference of opinion among Companions was the reason behind their acceptance of the saying of 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, why did they not prefer the saying of 'Abd Allah ibn al-'Abbas - a learned man, muhaddith and well-informed of the sayings of the Prophet (s) - who was of the opinion that the mut'ah for Hajj had not been abrogated {mansukh}.

It can be deduced from the opposition of 'Abd Allah ibn al-'Abbas and 'Abd Allah ibn 'Umar that 'Umar used his independent reasoning and prohibited the people - who had consensus of opinion that these were practiced during the time of the Prophet (s) - from doing so. Does this view and opinion not go against the text {nass} (of the Qur'an and hadith)?

'Abd Allah ibn 'Umar, 'Abd Allah ibn al-'Abbas, and a number of the Companions were the first persons who differed with the opinion of the Caliph. In view of the fact that the Wahhabis have regarded the Companions as worthy to be emulated, if certain people (such as the Shi'ah) while relying on indisputable proof would not accept the opinion and view of 'Umar but instead

accept the view of 'Abd Allah ibn 'Umar, 'Abd Allah ibn al-'Abbas, and other Companions, have they traversed the path of misguidance and disbelief {kufr}? If it is so, were Ibn 'Umar, Ibn al-'Abbas and other Companions also misguided and infidels?

Fourth instance: In Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal we can come across eight traditions all of which indicate the brotherhood and fraternity between the Prophet (s) and 'Ali ('a). In all of these traditions, the Prophet (s) pointed at Imam 'Ali ibn Abi Talib ('a) and said

هَذَا أَخِي

This ('Ali) is my brother. In the new editions of this book, however, all these traditions are expunged and no trace of them is left.

Fifth instance: In Tarikh Ya'qubi until the 1358 AH edition, it is stated that this noble verse was :revealed on the day of Ghadir Khumm

الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتَمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا .

Today I have perfected your religion for you, and I have completed My blessing upon you, and I have approved Islam as your religion. From its 1379 AH edition onward, however, that sentence which had been recorded for many centuries in that history book has been distorted and twisted as it is now claimed that the same verse was revealed on the Day of 'Arafah. On account of the politics of tahrif, many graves, mosques and relics of the past have either been effaced or their names have been changed. The birth site of the Prophet (s) {mawlid an-nabi}; the birth site of 'Ali ('a) {mawlid 'ali}; the tombs of Prophet Isma'il (Ishmael) ('a) and his mother Hajar on the two sides of Hijr Isma'il (which until recently had been identified through a specific stone-mark); the location of Ghadir Khumm; the tomb and other relics of Hadrat Khadijah al-Kubra; the Shi'b Abu Talib; the tomb of Abu Talib; and many other relics have been destroyed by the Wahhabis, because each of them bespeaks of the historical events and happenings most of which, to some extent or other are to the detriment of the inverted school of Wahhabism.

The site of the mubahalah {imprecation} has been changed into Masjid al-Ijabah by them. Today, if the residents of the city of Medina are asked about the location of the grave of Fatimah ('a), they do not know, and if those people who know the location of the mubahalah

would travel to that area, they would not be able to locate it easily. Therefore, the Shi`ah do not believe whatsoever in tahrif, and only a limited number Sunni and Shi`ah 'ulama' of the past held this belief. Tahrif in whatever form is rejected, whether it is tahrif of the Qur'an or tahrif of the hadiths, history and historical places. It is appropriate for the Muslim world to form a committee with the task of preserving the sayings of the Prophet (s) as well as the ancient authoritative religious references and texts, and to make efforts in protecting the foundations of Islam. Perhaps, the secret behind the ,hadith

مَنْ حَفِظَ مِنْ أُمَّتِي أَرْبَعِينَ حَدِيثًا...

Whoever in my ummah preserves or memorizes four hadiths..." is a campaign against these "distortions