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THE HERMENEUTICS OF THE QUR'ÂN

IN THE SAHîH OF BUKHâRî

by

HAROON MEMI

THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

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at the

RAND AFRIKAANS UNIVERSITY

PROMOTER: PROFESSOR J A NAUDÉ

MAY 1992
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All praise is due to Allâh to have granted me the strength and ability to complete this humble piece of work.

Firstly, I am mostly indebted to my teachers both local and abroad, and my parents, who deserve my greatest debt for their care and attention. I pray for them in the words of the Qur’ân: "My Lord bestow on them Thy Mercy even as they cherished me in childhood." (17:24).

I will be failing in my duty if I do not express my gratitude to my ever-responding promoter, Professor J A Naudé, whose copious support and academic guidelines resulted in the culmination of this work. Although very heavily committed, he always maintained a very personal relationship ever responding to my requests.

Sincere gratitude is due to my friends and colleagues who read the draft and improved it by counsel and unsparing criticism.

I sincerely thank my beloved wife and son for their support and for bearing the pangs of my absence and night vigils.

In conclusion I wish to thank all those who supported me directly or indirectly, those mentioned above and those that I have not mentioned.

I beseech Allâh to guide us all and bless us with everlasting bliss. Amen

H Memi
May 1992
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NOTES ON THIS THESIS

Arabic words have been italicised except for the names of persons and instances where the dot underneath a letter cannot be reproduced in italic mode for example in Şahîh. Words such as Qur’an, sūrah and tafsîr have not been italicised due to their frequent appearance in the thesis. Bukhârî and Imám Bukhârî refer to the same person.

The Şahîh refers to the Jâmi’ of Imâm Bukhârî edited by Ibn Ḥajar Al-‘Asqalânî. This work has been used throughout unless otherwise stated. The translation of the Aḥâdîth from the Şahîh has been taken from the translation of Dr. Muhammad Muhsin Khân.

The definite particle "al" has been omitted for names and words that are commonly used in this study. The Arabic terms are explained in the glossary which is at the end of the thesis.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

S.A.W.: Şallâ Allâhu ‘alayhi wa-sallamahu i.e. May Allâh have mercy upon him (the Prophet (pbuh)) and bless him.
pbh.: peace be upon him (the Prophet).
A.H.: alludes to after Hijra, the migration of the Prophet (pbuh) from Makkah to Medinah.
Şahîh: refers to Imâm Bukhârî’s Jâmi’.

CONSONANTS

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Consonants are transcribed according to the above transliteration table. The reader will easily recognise the transliteration of vowels. The consonant 'alif is not written with the usual transliterated ('') when a word begins with it, for example Aḥādīth.
INTRODUCTION

THE IMPORTANCE OF TAFSIR

1. The Qur’ân as the Speech of Allâh

The Qur’ân as the Muslim witness understands it, is the Word of Allâh. It is the actual speech of Allâh revealed unto the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), the final messenger of Allah unto mankind. The revelation of the Qur’ân took a period of twenty-three years, revealed according to the need so as to create an environment conducive to the human mind's understanding of it. From the very advent of creation the structure of guidance was founded on two principles. Firstly, a revealed scripture expounding what is wanted of Man and secondly, an anointed personality to practically demonstrate the methods of its implementation.

The Qur’ân is very simply the code of Man's conduct on earth until he reaches his eternal abode. However, the Qur’ân was revealed to the Arabs in the Arabic language. Since it is the very Word of Allâh Himself, the Qur’ân allows for no change in literacy and style and also for no equivalent in any other language.

The speech of a person gains significant magnificence in the presence of four factors:1

(1) the speaker's knowledge and information. The speech of an educated person can be clearly distinguished from that of an ignorant person.

(2) a person's understanding, intelligence and perception. An Arabic proverb reads that the speech of a person is the scale of his intelligence. A person can be well-informed but his poor intelligence will make his speech insulting like the speech of a fool.

(3) his public image and social status.

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(4) the speech if transmitted has to be through authentic sources, otherwise, it will be unpopular and incomplete even in the presence of the above-mentioned factors.

The Qur'an, being the speech of Allâh, fully possesses the above four factors, because Allâh is the All-Knowing whose knowledge is so vast that it even incorporates those things within us that we ourselves are unaware of. His intelligence is unsurpassed and He is recognized even by speechless creations because he is the Creator of everything that exists. Therefore, His speech is complete, flawless and free from incongruity.

It is for this reason that we find the literary content of the Qur'an representing the highest ideal of style, character, eloquence and rhetoric. The Qur'an is recited in Arabic and its recitation is rewarding, whether it is recited with or without understanding. This formality has been adopted, contrary to the revelations of the past, mainly to preserve the purity of its style and textual content which in various language recitation would have been forfeited; and to retain it as a living miracle of the Prophet (pbuh) up to the end of time. Therefore, Allâh challenged Man to reproduce a text of the nature of the Qur'an.

This challenge of Allâh was initially directed to the Arabs whose poetic efficiency and language style was unsurpassed and profound. This challenge of reproducing a surah the like thereof holds up to this day and shall remain up to the end of the existence of Man. No person has so far accepted its challenge and succeeded in producing its equivalent. Although Musailama, the false prophet, attempted but was unsuccessful. Similarly, attempts by others like Mutanabbi etc. proved unsuccessful. This implies that the Qur'an is the highest form of literature ever to be written.

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2 Pickthall M.M.: *The Glorious Qur'an*, Karachi, Qur'an (24:41). Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall's translation of the Qur'an has been used throughout the text.


5 Qur'an (2:23).

6 See e.g. the account given in Ibn Hishâm: *al-Sira al-nabawiyya* 2nd. ed. (Cairo 1955), p270-1, of al-Walîd bîn al-Mughîra's view of the verbal power of the Qur'an and his advice to the Prophet (pbuh)'s opponents.

The contents and style of the Qur’ân did not only remain the Muslim purview of the study but the non-Muslim eye did not cross it unseen. As from the time Theodor Nöldeke (1860) published his Geschichte des Qorans, western scholarly and orientalist study of the Qur’ân has increased and a substantial amount of Qur’ânic literature written by western scholars has surfaced in the past century.

2. The Function of the Prophet (Pbuh)

The Qur’ân, although revealed in the Arabic language, to a community whose mother tongue was Arabic, still required a messenger or prophet to disclose its intricacies and subtleties of meaning. This conclusion excludes from it those verses which the Qur’ân refers to as clear verses. If the mere revelation of the Qur’ân would have been sufficient, then the office of prophethood holds no significance. The purpose of prophethood stems from the fact that man has to understand from the Qur’ân what is required of him. Man’s understanding is limited, while Allâh together with all His attributes is unlimited and infinite. In our own practical and materialistic world the understanding of one another’s thoughts has become so cumbersome and difficult to understand, in spite of the equality in the nature of our specific qualities, for instance, both possess limited information. How difficult has it not become today for us to understand the works of bygone authors and poets like Shakespeare, Milton, Dickens. If we do reach an understanding it is merely an assumption and therefore, prey to widespread differences of interpretation.

Therefore, to understand the Word of Allâh with our defective human perception is highly impossible, since there exist no form of parity between Allâh and man. The implication of this statement, although all the more applicable to non-Arabs, did not exempt the Arabic speaking communities in the least.

From the above deductions it follows that the objective of the office of prophethood is in fact a practical demonstration of the requirements of Allâh’s law and an inspired interpretation of the Word of Allâh so as to achieve a realistic and authoritative interpretation.

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9 Qur’ân (24:11).
3. **Logical and metaphoric meaning**

The actual "meaning" of a word, or verse, cannot be determined by logic but rather by its context in a narrative form. Incorrect reasoning which leads to the analysis of Scriptural text without any fixed principles and norms, but merely based on assumptions, may still satisfy the rules of "logic". A system of interpretation founded on specific criteria such as *qiyās* (analogy) is imperative. If logic would have been a criterion then the Qur’ān would have become divisive into a number of contradictory interpretations.

A practical example of logical interpretation can be found concerning the verse on fasting restrictions. In *sūrah* (2:187) Allāh says, "and eat and drink until the white thread becometh distinct to you from the black thread." Prior to the revelation of this verse the Muslims were required to fast from the evening meal of one day to the evening meal of the next. This verse was revealed as a relaxation of the above injunction.

‘Adī bin Ḥātim, one of the Prophet’s companions, upon hearing this verse placed a white thread and a black thread below his pillow. In order to commence the fast he would observe these threads. When the one could be distinguished from the other he would commence his fast. Obviously, this distinction could only be achieved when there was sufficient light. There were other Sahāba too who understood the verse in this way, which proves that literally their understanding was correct. But it was not actually what Allāh intended. The matter was brought to the attention of the Prophet(pbuh). When ‘Adī confirmed his action the Prophet (pbuh) said, "Oh ‘Adī! Your pillow is very spacious." The Prophet (pbuh) implied that ‘Adī did not understand the meaning of the verse, but that the white thread refers to dawn and the black thread to night. This means that fasting will commence at the breaking of true dawn.¹⁰

It can be deduced from the above example that a word or verse could have a literal as well as a metaphorical or implied meaning. The Qur’ān, although revealed in Arabic, does not in many places imply the literal meaning. An Arabic word has been used, but the literally implied meaning has not been implied. For example, the word *ṣalāt*, literally means "to pray". If a person prays by lifting his hands then he has literally complied to the injunction of *ṣalāt*, as *ṣalāt* means "to pray". However, in reality he has not, because *ṣalāt*

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¹⁰ *Imām Būkhrā: Sahīh Kt*, v.2 p647.
actually refers to a special Islamic ritual in which certain obligatory postures has to be performed together with numerous other requirements. The Qur’ān used an Arabic vocabulary, but implied such a figurative meaning which could possibly never be understood literally. In short, there are numerous examples of this type in which the Qur’ānic meaning is totally different to the literal meaning.11

Hence, a person with profound Arabic knowledge will not be in a position to interpret the Qur’ān merely with his Arabic proficiency. He would possibly translate the Qur'ān, but will definitely err from what the actual intent is of the Qur’ān.

The understanding of the Word of Allāh as in all pre-Islamic religions, as well as in Islam, has given rise to exegesis or theological interpretation. In Qur’ānic terms, exegesis took the form of a complete science to become known as 'ilm al-tafsīr. Tafsīr theoretically and practically means a manifestation of the meaning of the verses of the Qur’ān.12

A selective group of Muslims spent their blessed lives and purified souls in manifesting the secrets of the Qur’ān and its hidden treasures. They took pains in sacrificing their abilities to dive into this vast sea of knowledge to extract from it the scattered pearls of wisdom and presenting it in a well arranged articulated form. We find Abū 'Abdullāh Muḥammad bin ‘Abdullāh Bukhārī (546 A.H.), the tutor of the author of Ḥidāya, wrote an extensive tafsīr which exceeded more than a thousand juz’ (parts). Abū Yusuf 'Abdūs Salām bin Muḥammad Al-Qazwīnī (483 A.H.), wrote a tafsīr of thirty volumes titled Ḥadā'iq dhat Bahjah. Muḥammad ibn Jarīr Ṭabarī (310 A.H.) wrote a tafsīr of thirty thousand pages and thereafter reduced it to three thousand pages and presently available in thirty volumes. There are numerous voluminous tafsīrs of this nature, however, those that are shorter or pertain to a verse or a sūrah are innumerable and cannot be accounted for in this work.13

These shorter commentaries concentrated mainly on specific fields of study. The first persons in this category to render scholarly works on the Qur’ān were

11 'Uthmānī, op. cit., p79.
12 'Ainī: ‘Umdah al-Qāri’ v.18 p79
the grammarians like Fārā’ and Zujāj whose commentaries concentrated on allegorical expressions of the Qur’ān.\textsuperscript{14}

Some commentaries focussed only on narrative exegesis (Haggadic), like Ibn Jarīr Ṭabarī and Jalāluddīn Suyūṭī’s \textit{Durr al-Manthūr}. Other commentators lay the accent on jurisprudence, like Qurṭūbī, ʿAbū Ḥayyān on the grammatical principles of the Qur’ān, Zamakhshārī on its eloquence and rhetoric, Abū Sa‘ūd on directives and spiritual guidance, Fakhrūddīn Rāzī on kalām and Jawahirī Tantāwī on philosophy and astrology.\textsuperscript{15} Each of these commentaries individually highlights a particular aspect of the meaning of the Qur’ān, illustrating in this way the \textit{ijāz} of the Qur’ān, in other words its miraculous inimitability.

In modern times, \textit{tafsīr} from the more classical periods of Islām, after al-Ṭabarī, has rather naturally tended to attract more attention, perhaps the reason being the easy availability of the texts in printed editions.

Various specific works of classical \textit{tafsīr} has also received concentrated attention from modernists, like Abdus-Sattār on al-Hiřī, and Roger Arnaldez and Jacques Jolmer on al-Rāzī. Similarly, there are \textit{tafsīr} with theological implications like that of Zamakhshārī; inter-religious and polemical \textit{tafsīr}, especially in the journal \textit{Islamochristiana}; grammatical studies as for example done by Michael Shub. Finally Mohammed Arkoun’s study in \textit{Annales: Economies, Societes, Civilization} (1980), is an attempt to construct a new method of interpreting the Qur’ān in the modern context.\textsuperscript{16}

Modern commentaries with this new approach are those of Mawdūdī, Parwez, Mohammed Abduh, Dr. ‘A’īsha ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, widely known by her pseudonym Bint al-Shāṭi’ and Dr. Mustaphā Maḥmūd.

4. The importance of Ḥadīth

The study of the Qur’ān depends a great deal on sound Ḥadīth knowledge because, as explained earlier, the object of prophethood is to elucidate to man

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{14} Kāndhelwī M.Z.: \textit{Lāmi’ al-Darāʾī} v.9 p2.
\item \textsuperscript{15} Kāndhelwī M.Z. op. cit., v.9 p2.
\end{itemize}
the meaning of the Word of Allāh both theoretically and practically. Therefore, a large portion of Hadith literature is devoted to the explanation of the Qur'ān. 'A'isha, the beloved wife of the Prophet (pbuh) was questioned about the character of the Prophet(pbuh). She replied that his character was in fact the Qur'ān. This tradition confirms that all the Ahādīth represent in some way or the other an explanation of the Qur'ān.

Imām Bukhārī in his Şahih has devoted a complete section to Qur'ānic exegesis. Since his Şahih has been widely accepted for its authenticity, the traditions mentioned by him directly or indirectly will be widely accepted without any prejudice.

5. The Aim and Contents of this Thesis

The aim and object of this dissertation is to critically evaluate the book of ṭafsīr in Bukhārī's Şahih and to expound the exegetical methodology employed by him in the ṭafsīr of the Qur'ān. A number of works exist on exegetical methodology, both past and present, and a number of them have been rejected for contradicting orthodox principles.

Modern ṭafsīr material seems to be constructed on various principles and approaches. The works of Bint al-Shāṭi have been directed mostly to the literary and stylistic character of the Qur'ān, and there is no doubt that some of her views are highly controversial. An exposition of her approach could be found in Issa J. Boullatta's article, Modern Qur'ān Exegesis: A Study of Bint al-Shāṭi's Method.

Mohammed Arkoun has developed a new strategy with which to approach the notion of Revelation in Muslim Tradition. Furthermore, methods and principles have to be rethought in order to face the challenge of secularism, intellectual modernity, and theological civilization. Thus, in the light of this experience, we talk of the "Islamization of Knowledge" in accordance with the revealed discourse, or do we consider Islām in the context of a universal quest

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17 Qur'ān (3:164).
19 Muslim World, LXIV (1974), pp103-13
for meaning?20

Intellectual modernity, and secularization, just as they are foreign to Islâm and other religions, in the same way the sciences of logic and philosophy were also alien to Islâm and its forbearers. Imâm Bukhârî hails in a period when philosophy and reasoning was the intellectual thinking of the time. How did he react?

This thesis is to expound the methodology employed by Imâm Bukhârî in the exegesis of the Qur'ân. His approach would impress upon us his reaction against the "secularization" of his era and it will act as a guideline for those who intend seeking direction in Qur'ânic exegesis in a modern society and also guiding those involved in socio-political struggles, like in South Africa, from both the extremes of rightist and leftist thought.

This is the first work of this kind that has been done on the tafsîr of Bukhârî. The approach adopted will be free of prejudice and impartial and an attempt will be made to present the material in the simplest of forms and in an objective way allowing the reader easy access to its understanding and referential status. Apart from this objective, international viewpoints on Qur'ânic exegesis will be critically answered or evaluated by the deductions of the study material.

This dissertation is titled The Hermeneutics of The Qur'ân in the Şâhîh of Bukhârî. The term "hermeneutics" is an English word formed from the Greek infinitive hermèneuein. Among the most commonly cited meanings of this verb are "to explain", "to translate", and "to express". In Scriptural usage, hermeneutics became a synonym to the interpretation of Scripture.21

The thesis will consist of nine chapters in addition to a glossary and bibliography. Chapter One opens with an introduction to Imâm Bukhârî discussing his personal life. It contains biographical details of his family background, his academic career, his status in the field of Hadîth and it concludes on his circumspection. Chapter two briefly acquaints the reader with the historical background, contents and style, and discusses the various manuscripts of the Şâhîh as Bukhârî's magnum opus.

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The third chapter elaborates on the *tafsîr* in the *Ṣaḥîh*, it includes a detailed index of verses and words interpreted in the *Ṣaḥîh*. Chapters four to eight investigate Imâm Bukhârî's approach and his unique exegetical methodology. It argues the position of the Prophet (pbuh) and *tafsîr, asbâb al-nuzûl, and Qur'ânic* history. The elements of Qur'ânic science, muḥkam and mutashâbih, nāsikh wa mansûkh and Qur'ânic lexicography are dealt with. The different types of *tafsîr* are denoted in chapter eight. These chapters postulate upon a pre-study of Imâm Bukhârî’s *tafsîr* material in accordance to the general infrastructure adopted by him; for example, Qur'ânic exegesis with the Qur’ân as a source or exegesis using pre-Islamic poetry as a criteria. The final chapter covers the deductions derived by the study and briefly explains the concept of *Tafsîr bi al-Râ'î* (exegesis by personal opinion).
CHAPTER ONE

A SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF IMAM BUKHARİ

1. Family background and birth

Abū 'Abdullāh Muḥammad ibn Ismā‘īl ibn Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mughīrah ibn Bardizbah al-Ju‘fī, who later became known as Imām Bukhārī, was born on Friday 13 Shawwāl 194 A.H./19 July 810 in the city of Bukhāra in Central Asia. His great-great grandfather, Bardizbah was of Persian origin and was a follower of the Persian religion of fire-worship. His great-grandfather travelled to Bukhāra, accepted Islam by the mediation of Yāmān al-Ju‘fī and resettled in Bukhāra.

There is nothing recorded about his grandfather Ibrāhīm, however, his father, Ismā‘īl, was a great scholar in the science of Hadith. Ismā‘īl was a student of eminent scholars like Imām Mālik (founder of one of the Madhāhib).

His father being a wealthy person, possessed a high degree of piety and humbleness. The degree of his piety can be judged by his statement at the time of his death, "I am leaving behind a great estate but not one dirham of it has been earned from doubtful sources."2

2. Childhood and Early Life

Bukhārī was still very young when he lost his father and was left under the guardianship of his mother. During his childhood, due to an unfortunate incident, Imām Bukhārī lost his eyesight. This was a severe setback for his mother who was now left with a handicapped child. She continuously prayed to...

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1 Al-'Asqalānī Ahmad ibn 'Ali ibn Hajar (852 A.H.): Fast al-Bārî, Beirut (1988). Intro. p478-479. This reference will be referred to extensively in this work, therefore, a synoptical exposition of its nature follows: Ibn Khaldūn has mentioned that the Muslim community is indebted to Imām Bukhārī for the compilation of his Sahīḥ. However, ibn Hajar's student al-Sakhāwī in his book "Aṣāw‘ al-Lamī" has mentioned that "my tutor ibn Ḥajar has repaid this debt by writing this commentary". His commentary has been widely accepted for its unique exposition and academic research.


3 Ibn Ḥajar, op. cit. pp478-479.

4 Ibid., p480.
Allâh and it was through her devoutness and sincerity that her child's vision was restored.

During his very early childhood Imâm Bukhârî developed a strong inclination towards Ḥadîth. His close student and scribe Muḥammad ibn Abû Ḥâtim once questioned Imâm Bukhârî as to how all this began. Imâm Bukhârî replied that "from childhood I was greatly interested in the memorization of Ḥadîth. Whenever I heard a Ḥadîth I would immediately memorize it". This proves Imâm Bukhârî's devotion and interest in the field of Ḥadîth that earned for him the title of "Amîr al-Mu'mînîn fi al-Ḥadîth."5

When Imâm Bukhârî completed his primary Islamic education he began attending the lectures of Muḥaddithûn. It was during this period already that his unusual talent and memory manifested itself. There are numerous encounters of Imâm Bukhârî that prove his giftedness and intelligence. A famous encounter between himself and his teacher Dâkhîlî has been recorded in his biographies. His teacher, Dâkhîlî, whilst dictating a certain Ḥadîth made an error in the isnâd. Imâm Bukhârî very respectfully objected. Dâkhîlî, immediately referred to his original source and accepted his error. Imâm Bukhârî was only eleven at the time of this incident.6

Once Imâm Bukhârî began attending the lectures of another Muḥaddith. As there existed no printed manuscripts, the students (as was common practice) made written notes of whatever was dictated to them. The students observed Imâm Bukhârî's behaviour for he wrote not a single word the teacher dictated and objected strongly over this irresponsible attitude. When the criticism became unbearable to Imâm Bukhârî he instructed them to place their notebooks before themselves whilst he narrated its contents. He narrated to them the 15 000 Aḥâdîth in the very same sequence as it was dictated to them by their teacher.7

3. Imâm Bukhârî's Education

Initially Imâm Bukhârî collected Aḥâdîth from all the famous Muḥaddithûn of Bukhâra who were authorities in this field. The prominent amongst them were 'Abdullâh ibn Muḥammad Musannad (229 A.H.), Ibrâhîm ibn al-Ash'ath and

5 Ibid., p479.
6 Ibid, p479.
Muḥammad ibn as-Salām Baykandī. Once Sulaym ibn Mujāhid visited Baykandī. Baykandī mentioned to Sulaym that if you had come earlier I would have shown you such a student who knows seventy thousand Ahādīth by heart, thus referring to Imām Bukhārī. Sulaym taken by surprise immediately set off in search of Imām Bukhārī. Finally, when he met him he questioned him about the seventy thousand Ahādīth. Imām Bukhārī replied that there is no shadow of doubt for he knows even more than that, in fact, he even knows the historical background of every transmitter.8

Imām Bukhārī had by this period and time even memorized all the works of ‘Abdullāh ibn Mubārak (181 A.H.) and Wāki’ ibn al-Jarrāh (197 A.H.), the famous second century Muḥaddithūn of Baghdad.9

In the year 210 A.H., Imām Bukhārī at the age of only sixteen travelled with his mother and brother for pilgrimage (Ḥajj) to Makkah. At the completion of their pilgrimage Imām Bukhārī’s mother and brother returned, while he stayed on in Makkah to expand his knowledge of Ḥadīth. This was when the Islamic empire had spread far and wide and the famous religious scholars were all scattered throughout the then vast Islamic empire. However, Makkah and Medina, still held their esteem and great significance. During his stay in Makkah he acquired knowledge from personalities like Abū ‘Abdullāh ibn Zubayr (219 A.H.), ‘Abdullāh ibn Yazīd (213 A.H.). In the year 212 A.H., he travelled to Medina where he studied under ‘Abdul ‘Azīz ibn ‘Abdullāh al-Uwaysī, Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mundhir (236 A.H.) etc. Imām Bukhārī spent a total of six years in Hijāz, now called Saudi Arabia.10

Thereafter, Imām Bukhārī travelled to Basra where he was surrounded with pomp and praise. The reason for this sudden fame could be attributed to two causes. Firstly, his peculiar memory which gained vast coverage and secondly, his two works which he wrote during his stay in Medina at a very young age of eighteen years only. His two works were the "Qaḍāyā al-Ṣaḥābah wat-Tābi‘īn" (in Arabic, unpublished), and his famous "Al-Tārīkh al-Kabīr" (in Arabic, published in Hyderabad (India). The ulema of Baghdad were dumbfounded over Imām Bukhārī’s fame because of his young age, but knowledge is something that earns a person honour and dignity at all times. Although these ulema were themselves of a very high calibre, like Abū al-Walīd Al-Ṭyālisī

8 Ibn Ḥajar, op. cit. p484.
9 Ibid. p487.
10 ‘Uṭḥmānī, op. cit., p51.
(227 A.H.) and Sulaymân ibn al-Ḥarb (224 A.H.), they nevertheless agreed to host a convention to honour Imâm Bukhârî and witness his extraordinary talent. Imâm Bukhârî promised to present to them such Aḥâdîth which he had obtained from the Muḥaddithûn of Basra which will accord to them new insight and new information. His peculiarity in the presentation of these Aḥâdîth left everyone shocked and dumbfounded. Imâm Bukhârî journeyed to Basra four times altogether.¹¹

Imâm Bukhârî also travelled to Kûfâ and Baghdad. Imâm Bukhârî himself said that he was unable to enumerate the number of times he visited Kûfa and Basra. Baghdad was the capital city of the ‘Abbâssids, therefore, it was the focal point of Islamic sciences. It was Imâm Bukhârî’s intense love for Aḥâdîth that made him travel far and wide in search of it. His talent and memory reached pinnacles of fame and glory, therefore, upon reaching Baghdad the ulema of Baghdad inaugurated a convention to verify his talent. Ten Muḥaddithûn were chosen and each of them were entrusted to present to Imâm Bukhârî ten such Aḥâdîth in which the matn and isnâd were either changed or rearranged. The Muḥaddithûn presented their Aḥâdîth and Imâm Bukhârî played ignorant. Upon the completion of the hundred Aḥâdîth, Imâm Bukhârî called upon each of the presenters and recited before them the corrupted version in the same sequence as it was presented to him and thereafter, narrated to them the correct version. The ulema as well as the public were speechless because Imâm Bukhârî had only heard the "corrupted" Aḥâdîth once and had already memorized it.¹²

Imâm Bukhârî travelled practically to every Islamic country, like Egypt and Syria in quest for knowledge. Ja’far ibn Ḥâtim (Imâm Bukhârî’s scribe) quotes Imâm Bukhârî saying that I have heard Aḥâdîth from more than a thousand Muḥaddithûn.¹³

4. The Socio-political Context of Bukhârî’s Work

The end of the reign of the four caliphs brought in the rule of the Umayyads. Majority of the Umayyad rulers were mundane rulers concerned with territorial expansion. The death of the Umayyad regime gave rise to the ‘Abbâssid dynasty who were monarchs of the theocratic state and wielders of

¹¹ Ibid., p52.

¹² Ibn Ḥajar, op. cit., p487.

¹³ Ibid., p484.
the supreme religious power. This change in leadership and public spirit gave a new turn to literature. The ‘Abbāssids widened the scope of culture and literature by fostering not only the poetical and prosaic types of polite literature (adab) but also mightily developing scientific literature (hikma). Moreover, the religious character of the ‘Abbāssid dynasty furthered the large-scale development of theology and religious literature.\(^\text{14}\)

The ‘Abbāssid period, despite its brilliant contributions to the Islamic culture, its consolidation, institutionalization and centralization, brought along thorny problems. From the reign of Caliph Mansūr (d.158 A.H.) down to al-Ma‘mūn (d.218 A.H.), Greek philosophy enjoyed a free flow into the Islamic world and the works of Plato, Hippocrates, Galen, Aristotle and Ptolemy were translated into Arabic. The Shī‘a already were a threat and these philosophical influences rejecting religious eschatology posed the greatest threat to the Islamic Shari‘a (law) thus creating scepticism and uncertainty in the existence of Allāh, revelation, resurrection and in the institution of Prophethood, as a liaison between man and Divinity.

This gave rise to the Mu‘tazilite (the separatists) sect, formed by Wāsīl bin ‘Ațā (131 A.H.), which separated from the resurgent school of Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (110 A.H.). This sect enjoyed royal patronage under the ‘Abbāssids and it was declared as the state religion. The Mu‘tazilites did not merely deny the eternal attributes of Allāh but regarded the Qur‘ān as being created and liable to perish.

The war between reason and revelation continued unceasingly. The legitimate fear of interpolations and distortions of the Islamic Shari‘a by both the rationalists and heretics was quite prominent. Scholars took up the initiative to safeguard Islamic learning and protect the forgeries which were been committed to the corpus of Ḥadīth material.\(^\text{15}\)

This task was fulfilled by six scholars, who compiled six authentic collection of Ḥadīth which is referred to as the six canonical works. The Ṣaḥīḥ of Bukhārī is the most prominent and unanimously accepted as the most authentic book of Ḥadīth.

5. **Imām Bukhārī’s Death**

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As Imâm Bukhârî rose to fame so were evil elements in his pursuit to discredit his work and humiliate him. Wherever Imâm Bukhârî went these elements sprung up against him ridiculing and excruciating him. These elements had no real basis for their abhorred attitude therefore, they always searched for a pretext for derision.

A very sensitive theme that actually afforded a pretext was with regard to the Qur'ân being created or uncreated. Imâm Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal as well as Imâm Bukhârî, due to their knowledge and perception had to endure untold sufferings. The Mu'tazilites were of the opinion that the Qur'ân is a creation of Allâh. It was because of Mu'tazilite influence that the rulers and governors also held similar opinions. The opinion of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal was that the Qur'ân is the word of Allâh and therefore, uncreated. The Hanbilites put up strong opposition in repelling this evil. It was this strong opposition that took them to such an extreme that they began regarding their recitation as well as the written text to have been pre-existent.16

Imâm Bukhârî was also questioned about his viewpoint in the matter. To bring this extreme situation back to equilibrium he replied, "My words (recitation) of the Qur'ân is created". This gave the antagonists the long awaited pretext to vilify him. This situation compelled Imâm Bukhârî to return to his birthplace, Bukhârâ.17

When Imâm Bukhârî reached Bukhârâ he was awarded a very warm welcome. The then governor of Bukhârâ was Khalîd ibn Ahmad Dhuhali (250 A.H.). He requested Imâm Bukhârî to come to his official residence and teach the Sahih and his "Ta'rikh al-Kabîr" to his two sons. Imâm Bukhârî replied that he would not disgrace knowledge by delivering it to the doors of rulers and statesmen. Whoever intends seeking knowledge should avail himself at his home, or at the mosque. Khalîd, accepted this condition provided Imâm Bukhârî tutor his sons in the absence of all other students. This request too was turned down

16 Kandhelwi Zakariyyâ M.: Taqrîr al-Bukhârî (Urdu) pp39-40. With regard to correct Islamic belief the Qur'ân is the word of Allâh and its in existence from time immemorial, eternally pre-existent because just as the essence of Allâh is eternal, similarly His attributes too are eternal. However, our recitation and the written script are creation and therefore, not eternal. Creation is defined to mean to bring something non-existent into existence which logically nullifies eternity. Hence, the Qur'ân is uncreated in one aspect and created from another.

17 Ibn Ḥajar, op. cit., p491.
very harshly by Imâm Bukhârî. This situation arose resentment between the parties and Imâm Bukhârî was compelled to leave Bukhâra.18

Imâm Bukhârî left with the intention of resettling in Samarkand. He broke journey in the town of Khartank to spend some time with a few relatives. During his stay in Khartank, news reached him about the people of Samarkand and the division amongst them over his coming. This depressed him and he supplicated to Allâh saying: "Oh Allâh! The world has closed up upon me, so call me to you". Within a few days the Samarkand public were unanimous about Imâm Bukhârî's coming. He set off for Samarkand but did not even cover 20 steps when he felt a sudden weakness and passed away. It was the 1st Shawwâl 256 A.H., the 31 August 870. He was 13 days short of 62 years when he passed away.19

6. Imâm Bukhârî and the Science of Ḥadîth

In any field of study, proficiency and dexterity are divided into two categories. There are those that have gained total ascendancy and predominance over their field, whilst others although proficient, do not possess complete manipulation power. Imâm Bukhârî's proficiency was of the former category, thus any issue to him was well answered by Ḥadîth. A striking example that bears testimony to this is his book titled "Kitâb al-Hibah" (Arabic-unpublished). 'Abdullâh bin Mubârak (181 A.H.) and Waki' bin al-Jarrâh (197 A.H.) also wrote books on the very same subject but each of them have quoted only five and two Ḥadîth respectively, whereas Imâm Bukhârî has quoted five hundred Ḥadîth. Once Faḍal bin al-Abbas, a famous Muḥaddith of the third century, was questioned about Imâm Bukhârî's proficiency and that of Abû Zur'ah. He (Faḍal) replied that once he met Imâm Bukhârî between Baghdad and Ḥalwân. He postponed his journey and accompanied Imâm Bukhârî. Throughout his journey he tried quoting such a Ḥadîth which he thought Imâm Bukhârî would not know, but was unsuccessful. On the other hand there were numerous Ḥadîth that Abû Zur'ah did not know, in spite of him being from amongst the tutors of Tirmidhî, Ibn Mâja and Nasâ'i.20 There are numerous incidents of this nature that could be read in the detailed biographies of Imâm Bukhârî.

18 Ibid., p494.
19 Ibid., p494-495.
20 Ibid., p486.
7. **Imám Bukhārī and the Science of "Jarḥ"**

Just as the Muḥaddithūn committed themselves to the preservation of the statements and the practices of the Prophet(pbuh) in its pristine purity, similarly, they applied extreme care with regard to soundness of the Ḥadīth transmitters. The critical evaluation and examination of the transmitters existed during the reign of the four caliphs and the era of the illustrious companions of the Prophet(pbuh). It was these precautionary measures that made the preservation of the Aḥādīth, statements of the Prophet's(pbuh) companions and their successors a possible reality. As time drifted from the era of prophethood the principles and norms of evaluation became more stringent and severe.²¹

The Muḥaddithūn never hesitated in criticising or ridiculing any transmitter. This process of evaluation and examination of transmitters took the form of a complete science in the study of Aḥādīth and became known as Ṭasmâ‘ al-Ḥālīf. Imám Bukhārī was regarded as one of the forerunners to give it individual status and his famous work, "Ṭa‘rīkh al-Kabīr", bears testimony to this fact. Many of his contemporaries took even dislike to him for his extreme firmness and harsh attitude. It was due to this attitude that the Muḥaddithūn unanimously accepted the authenticity of his Ṣaḥīḥ and formed a conclusion that all transmitters approved by Imám Bukhārī are free from any dangers. Imám Bukhārī was very cautious in discrediting any transmitter, therefore, he says that whichever transmitter has been discredited by him, it is not even permissible to narrate from him.²²

Imám Bukhārī's knowledge with regard to Ṭalāl was also profound. Ṭalāl in Ḥadīth terminology refers to the science of determining complicated discrepancies and weaknesses which create defects in the soundness of Aḥādīth. The search for these complicated discrepancies requires a superb memory and a high degree of skill and intelligence because in trying to determine its causes a complete biographical knowledge of the transmitter as

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²¹ ːSuyūṭī J.: Ṭa‘rīkh al-Rāwī (Arabic) Cairo (1972) p369. See also Muslim ibn al-Hajjāj: Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim - intro. Karachi (1956) p10. Ibn ‘Abbās is reported to have said that we only narrate and accept Aḥādīth from those we know. This proves that during the reign of the four caliphs and specifically in the reign of Caliph ‘Alī propagandists fabricated Ḥadīth as a ploy to strengthen their forces and discredit their enemies. The distinction between truth and falsehood always existed but in an Islamic context its roots are established from the sayings of the Prophet (pbuh) and also from Qur’ānic verses. For more details see Jāmi‘ al-‘I’m of ‘Abdul Barr and Khatib's "al-Kifāyah" and also Qur’ān (49:6).

well as knowledge of variant transmissions is required. Tirmidhi, compiler of one of the six canonical works and a great Muhaddith, mentions that Imám Bukhârî’s expertise in this field has formed a major part of his work. Tirmidhi’s manifestation is sufficient evidence to substantiate Imám Bukhârî’s status as a Muhaddîh par excellence. 

8. Imám Bukhârî’s Religious Circumspection

Imám Bukhârî was extremely cautious over his writings. The cause for apprehension was the fear that someone might intentionally or unintentionally change a few details which would discredit his image. Ibn Hajar has quoted a strange incident about his circumspection. Once Imám Bukhârî was travelling by ship and he apparently had a thousand dirhams in his possession. A fellow traveller became quite friendly towards him and Imám Bukhârî happened to disclose to him about the thousand dirhams in his possession. The following morning this person created a stir and complained about a thousand dirhams missing from his luggage. When Imám Bukhârî became aware of the situation he disposed of the sum by flinging it into the water. A thorough search was conducted of the ship and the money was nowhere to be found. When they finally reached their destination this fellow traveller inquired from Imám Bukhârî about the thousand dirhams. Imám Bukhârî explained to him what had transpired. The person was taken by surprise and could not understand how could someone dispose of such a large sum of money. Imám Bukhârî upon noticing his astonishment explained that a person who had spent his entire life in the preservation and compilation of the sayings of the Prophet(pbuh) and whose reputation in trustworthiness and authenticity had become proverbial, should not destroy his image with the mere suspicion of theft.

It was this dedication to his cause that made him the most revered of all traditionalist and whose “Kitâb al-Jâmi’ al-Ṣaḥîh” (referred to as Ṣaḥîh Bukhârî) has a place that is unique in the awe and esteem of Muslims as a work of great historical import and of deep piety.

24 Ibid., p481.
9. **Imâm Bukhârî's Works**

With the exception of his Šâhîh, Imâm Bukhârî has written twenty-three other works on various subjects, like *rijâl*, *'ilal* and other controversial related subjects. His first works were the "Qaadåyå al-Šâhâbah wat-Tabî'în" and "Ta'rîkh al-Kabîr" which were written in Medina at the age of eighteen. Only six out of his twenty-three works has been printed. Some of his written manuscripts are believed to be found in West Germany, now Germany.\(^{25}\)

CHAPTER TWO

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO IMAM BUKHARI'S SAHIH

1. The Title of the Book

The name of Imâm Bukhârî's book is "al-Jâmi' al-Musnad as-SAHIH min Aḥadîth Rasulillâh (S.A.W.) wa Sunananihi wa Ayyâmihi",1 (A collection of authentic and ascriptic traditions of the Prophet of Allâh (pbuh), his practices and his era (of prophethood). Jâmi' in Ḥadîth terminology refers to that work that covers the following eight sciences:-

(1) Articles of Faith,
(2) Discord,
(3) Etiquettes,
(4) Rules and Regulations,
(5) International Law,
(6) Exegesis of the Qur'ân,
(7) Signs of the Last Day, and
(8) Hagiology.

Musnad means an uninterrupted chain of transmitters. Sunan comprises the practices of the Prophet (pbuh) as well as those practices which the Prophet (pbuh) witnessed and did not criticize. Ayyâm refers to those events that occurred during the Prophet's (pbuh) lifetime.

2. Why Imâm Bukhârî Compiled his Collection

According to a transmission narrated from Muhammad bin Sulaymân bin Fâris that Imâm Bukhârî was inspired to his task of compilation by a vision of the Prophet (pbuh) being pestered by flies while asleep - flies that Imâm Bukhârî fanned away from the face of the Prophet (pbuh). The flies represented clouds of spurious traditions darkening the true image, and the fan was its tireless rescuer. Whatever the truth of this narration it does capture the truth of Imâm Bukhârî's vocation.2 According to another tradition he reported the dream to his teacher Ishâq bin Râhwayh, who interpreted it to

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2 Ibid. p13, and also see Encyclopaedia of Islam, ed., 1967, v.1, p1296.
mean that someday "you will extract the falsehood from the traditions of the Prophet (pbuh)". Another factor as reported by Ibrāhīm bin Maʿqal was his tutor Ishaq bin Rāḥwayh’s desire to compile a collection of only authentic traditions. This statement motivated Imām Bukhārī to fulfill this task.

3. Historical Background

Imām Bukhārī lived during the period of the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate. It was during the rule of Mutawakkil ʿal-Allāh - one of the ‘Abāsīd rulers - that the Muḥaddithūn were allowed to deliver discourses in Ḥadīth. The formal compilation of Ḥadīth literature began in 99 A.H. and it could be distributed into three periods. One of the famous writings of this time was the Muwaṭṭa’ of Imām Mālik (179 A.H.). A famous compilation of the second period was the Musnad of Imām Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal (241 A.H.). Imām Bukhārī’s Sāḥīḥ comes into existence in the third period of Ḥadīth compilation. However, tafsīr literature initially was transmitted from the Ṣaḥāba who in turn transmitted it from the Prophet (pbuh). The successors of the Ṣaḥāba transmitted Qur’ānic tafsīr from the Ṣaḥāba. It was after this period that the formal compilation of Ḥadīth literature commenced and tafsīr material was incorporated into these compilations. For example, the compilations of Yazīd bin Ḥārūn al-Sulamī (117 A.H.), Sufyān bin ‘Uyayna (198 A.H.), ‘Abd bin Ḥumayd (249 A.H.). It was after this period that tafsīr literature was separated from Ḥadīth and the exegesis of the Qur’ān commenced. It is difficult to ascertain with certainty as to who initiated this science. Ibn Hajar in his book "Tahdhib al-Tahdhib" writes that ‘Abd al-Malik bin Marwān (86 A.H.) - one of the Umayyad rulers - instructed Saʿīd bin Jubayr (95 A.H.) to compile a short tafsīr of the Qur’ān, which Saʿīd did. Similarly, in the book "Wafāt al-Aʿyān" it is recorded that ‘Amr bin ʿUbayd, one of the leaders of the Muʾtazzilites, copied Qur’ānic tafsīr from Ḥāṣan al-ʿĀṣirī who passed away in 116 A.H. These manuscripts of tafsīr as well as the manuscripts of Ibn Jurayj (150 A.H.), Abū ʿUbayda (208 A.H.) etc. were prior to the period of Imām Bukhārī. The tafsīr collections of Ibn Māja (273 A.H.), Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (310 A.H.) came into existence after Imām Bukhārī.

3 Ibn Hajar, op. cit., p479.
4 Ibid., p5.
5 Najībābādī Akbar Shah: Taʾrīkh-e-Islām, (Urdu), (India), v.2 p489.
6 Al-Dhahabi M.H.: Al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufassirīn, (Beirut, 1976), v.1, pp141-144.
Imám Bukhári mentions that it took him sixteen years of editorial pain and scrutinizing to compile this Šaḥīḥ. Imám Bukhári compiled his Šaḥīḥ from his memorized collection of six hundred thousand traditions. He maintained extreme precautionary measures in its compilation. He commenced this gigantic task by roughly sketching its chapters and topics. Thereafter, in the sixteen years of its compilation he attached appropriate Ahâdîth to these topics and chapters. It has been reported by historians that Imám Bukhári performed Ghusl (bath) and two rak'âts salât (prayer) before noting down any Ḥadîth. In fact, Imám Bukhári observed fast during the period of its compilation. This shows the dedication and devotion he attached to the compilation of this work.

However, there exist no historical evidence as to its precise dates of commencement and completion. Sháikh Muhammad Zakariyyáh Khandelvi, a renowned Muḥaddith of the 20th century and an author of numerous works, has by way of analogy tried to ascertain the exact period of its compilation. He says that Imám Bukhári commenced with its compilation in 217 A.H. at the age of 33 and completed it in 233 A.H. His conclusion is based on Imám Bukhári’s statement that at the completion of his work, he presented it to his teachers amongst whom were Ahmad bin Hanbal, Yahya bin Mu‘in (233 A.H.) and ‘Alî bin al-Madînî (234 A.H.). However, from amongst the aforementioned three, the first to pass away was Yahya bin Mu‘in in 233 A.H. Therefore, Imám Bukhári must have completed it by then.7 This evidence proves that Imám Bukhári wrote his Šaḥīḥ towards the latter portion of his life. The period when the Mu‘tazzilites had influenced the ‘Abbásid regime and their ideologies like "the Qur’ân is created" became state policy.

4. The Contents and Style of the Šaḥīḥ

Imám Bukhári commenced this gigantic task by roughly sketching its chapters and topics and thereafter preparing the final manuscript. The Šaḥīḥ begins with the Kitâb of Wahî (revelation) and it ends with the Kitâb of Tawhîd (Unity of Allâh). The ninety-seven books (kitâbs) are thematically arranged very close to the sequence employed in fiqh literature.

Imám Bukhári did not elucidate the principles he used in extracting Ahâdîth from his vast memorized collections and placing them in the Šaḥīḥ. The ulema, after carefully studying these works have analysed the principles

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7 Khandelvi M.H.: Taqrîr al-Bukhârî, (India), v.1, p42.
generally applied by him in his compilation of the Ṣahīḥ. A scholastic work on this subject could be found in the work of Abū Bakr Muḥammad bin Abī Ṭūhīmān al-Ḥāzimī (584 A.H.) known as Al-Iʿtibār fī al-Nāṣikh wa al-Mansūkh min al-Akhbār.

The conditions applied by Imām Bukhārī were more rigid and austere than those applied by other Muḥaddithūn. A tradition consists of two parts: the matn (contents) and the isnād (list of transmitters). The transmitters authenticity and acceptability is corroborated upon two factors. Firstly, his personal profile regarding his honesty and uprightness; and secondly, student-teacher relationship. Bukhārī regarded both these conditions inevitable, the honesty of the transmitter which is undisputable, but for the second factor Imām Bukhārī regarded merely being contemporaries as insufficient and would not accept a Ḥadīth until he could with certainty ascertain their meeting either at home or on journey. The other Muḥaddithūn were much more lenient when it came to the second factor. They felt that being merely contemporaries provides a possibility for meeting as the transmitter was upright and falsehood could not be attributed to him.8

The most important and intricate part of his Ṣahīḥ according to the scholarly world lies in the choice of his topics, the introductory notes of the chapters and the correlation between these topics and notes to the Aḥādīth cited in the specific chapter. He arranged his Ṣahīḥ into ninety-seven books and three thousand four hundred and fifty chapters or topics.9 A famous statement of the Muḥaddithūn regarding the Ṣahīḥ is: Bukhārī’s fiqh is found in his topics. Although ibn Ḥajār has written an extensive commentary of the Ṣahīḥ which has received wide acceptance, the topics were not given their due preferential treatment. It was the ulema of the Indo-Pak subcontinent that allocated a separate status to these topics. We find that Shāh Waliyullāh has written a book in Arabic titled "Tarājim Abwāb al-Ṣahīḥ al-Bukhārī" and one in Urdu written by Sheikh al-Hind.10 These books pay special attention to the introductory comments mentioned by Imām Bukhārī in the topics and chapters and elucidate the relationship between the Aḥādīth and the introductory notes.

8 Kashmīrī Anwar Shāh: Fayḍ al-Bārī, (India, 1980), v.1, p35. The Ṣahīḥ of Muslim is a perfect comparison in this regard.

9 Encyclopaedia of Islam, v.1, p1296.

10 Kashmīrī, op. cit., v.1, pp40-42.
Just as the authors of the six canonical works had preconceived objectives, (for example, Tirmidhi’s prime object was to point out the different opinions of various scholars, Abû Dâwûd’s object was to include all the proofs of the various Imâms), Imâm Bukhârî’s object was to elucidate the method of extracting rules and regulations from the Aḥâdîth.

Imâm Bukhârî, according to ibn Ḥajar, gathered in his book 9082 traditions with full isnâd. However, Nawâwî, the famous commentator on Ṣâhîh Muslim, has mentioned it to be 7500. Allowing for repetitions the net total is 2513 according to ibn Ḥajar in his Muqaddama (introduction) to Faṭḥ al-Bârî and 2602 in the first volume of his commentary. Sheikh Kashmîrî of Deoband has approved 2602 to be the correct figure. The purpose of this citation was to enumerate the number of Aḥâdîth Imâm Bukhârî quoted in his Ṣâhîh. These vast differences are mainly due to different norms applied in the counting of the text.¹¹

5. The Ṣâhîh’s Manuscripts

Imâm Bukhârî had 1080 teachers and a great number of students who heard the Ṣâhîh directly from him.¹² Because there existed no printing facilities, students used to pen down the teachers’ dictated lectures. This obviously gave rise to differences amongst the various manuscripts. To prove logically the nature of these differences is out of the ambit of this work, I will just mention ibn Ḥajar’s references to these manuscripts. Ibn Ḥajar reports that there were four manuscripts of the Ṣâhîh. They were those of Nasaﬁ, Bazdawî, Ḥammâd bin Shâkîr and Firâbî.¹³ According to Kirmani – one of the commentators of the Ṣâhîh - a fifth manuscript of Maḥâmîlî also existed.¹⁴

Sheikh Kashmîrî refers to nineteen manuscripts, the most authentic is that of Şâms ad-Dîn al-Saghânî. However, the manuscript acceptable today is that of Al-Qastâlânî, one of the commentators of the Ṣâhîh.¹⁵

¹¹ Ibid., p39
¹² Ibid., p37.
¹³ Ibîn _HCJ), op. cit., p493.
¹⁴ Khândhelvi, op. cit., p42.
¹⁵ Kashmîrî, op. cit., v.1, p37.
The manuscript of Al-Qaṣṭālānī is the one transmitted from Firabri and which is the one in circulation and widely available. Firabri, a student of Imām Bukhārī, heard the Ṣaḥīḥ in its entirety from his teacher twice and after the demise of his teacher he taught the Ṣaḥīḥ for a period of 64 years. It is possibly due to this factor that his manuscript gained wide acceptance.

The Ṣaḥīḥ of Bukhārī is noted for the attention Muslim scholars as well as Orientalist devoted to it. It was the first ever compilation to be translated in its entirety into the English language by Muhammad Muḥsin Khān and published in nine volumes by the Islamic University of Madina, Saudi Arabia. In the same way the Ṣaḥīḥ was translated into French by O. Houdas and W. Marcais and published in four volumes in Paris in 1903-1914.16

Similar works were undertaken by Joseph Schacht in his *Aus der Traditionssammlung des al-Bukhārī*, A.J. Arberry in his work titled "The Teachers of Bukhārī"18 and I. Goldziher's research named *Chatm al Buchari*.19

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17 Ibid., p74.

18 Ibid., p30.

19 Ibid., p46.
CHAPTER THREE

TAFSIR IN THE SAHIH OF IMAM BUKHARI.

1. The Presentation of Tafsir in the Sahih

The Sahih has a section specifically incorporated for the presentation of tafsir. However, throughout the Sahih there appear numerous quotations of Qur'anic verses and comments and deductions from them. These quotations are scattered throughout the Sahih over all the ninety-seven books, or sections. It is Imam Bukhari's style of presentation to divide each section into various chapters. Each of these chapters are not numerically identified but rather an introductory topic (tarjama) is attached to them. These topics determine the ideologies and inclinations of Imam Bukhari and form the most relevant component of his work.

A survey of the complete compilation reveals exegetical material presented by the compiler to total 731 Qur'anic verses not taking into account repetitions. This figure includes the contents of the section dealing with only tafsir.

One of the ninety-seven sections in the Sahih is titled Kitab al-tafsir. It contains 548 Ahadith not counting repetitions within the same chapter, having to do with different versions of the same report. It has 465 Ahadith which are mawsul and 83 Ahadith are mu'allaq. From the total of 548 Ahadith, 448 have been mentioned elsewhere in the Sahih, therefore, there exist only 100 Ahadith which have not been narrated elsewhere. All 114 surah's of the Qur'an are listed, each of them as a separate section, usually composed of several chapters (abwab). Thirty-one of the 114 have no Hadith pertaining to them, but most of these, as well as others, have lexical and brief interpretative helps at the beginning of the chapters. No surah is completely lacking in comment.1

In the introductory contents of the chapters as well as in the contents of the topics, Imam Bukhari breaks from his normal habit of supplying an isnad for each item of information. He simply writes the name of the final source giving the person's interpretations of the meaning of words and phrases from the surah in question, or sometimes he cites information without any sources. For example: On surah al-Takathur (Qur'an:102):- Ibn 'Abbas said, "al-Takathur

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means (rivalry) from wealth and offspring". On surah al-Humaza (Qur'an:104): "al-Ḥuṣama" is a synonym for fire like "Saqara" and "Laẓā".

This practice adopted by Imām Bukhārī in this section of the Sahih is either to continue the conventional "topic" idea, which means to cite only more references or as Ibn Ḥajar notes that Imām Bukhārī cites information from Ibn ʿAbbās without the chain of transmission because it did not satisfy his requirements for authenticity. In hadīth terminology, the exclusion of one or few transmitters is called taʿlīq.

The muʿallaqāt of Imām Bukhārī are of two types. Those that appear with authoritative or assertive forms, like "he said" or 'he commanded", are unanimously accepted as mawsūl. However, those that appear in a passive form are controversial. Suyūṭī has outlined the differences of authorities like Ibn Ṣalāḥ (643 A.H.), Zayn al-ʿIrāqī (608 A.H.) and has concluded that this form is also mawsūl.

The authorities cited by Imām Bukhārī in the introductory contents of these chapters and topics are some of the companions of the Prophet (pbuh), like Ibn ʿAbbās, ʿUmar, and their successors, like Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and Mujāhid.

The Qur'ānic verses cited by Imām Bukhārī is highly selective depending upon the type of Ḥadīth, whether it fulfills the criteria laid down by Imām Bukhārī or not. Very rarely does Imām Bukhārī cite more than one text for a particular Qur'ānic verse. Therefore, the coverage of the Qur'ānic verses is fragmentary. A survey of the primary sources cited by him show a total of 76 persons, mostly companions. Their successors from Makkah, Medina and Iraq are also cited. Apart from the companions and their successors who were renowned for their knowledge of the Qur'ān, such as, ʿAlī, ʿUmar, ʿAʾisha and Ibn ʿAbbās, and their successors, such as, Mujāhid, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and ʿIkramah, the remaining authorities are represented by one or two Ḥadīth only. Therefore, the impression one gets from this is that one of the objectives of the Kitāb al-tafsūr is to include with limited material a wide range of guarantors.

2. The Index of the Sahih's Kitāb al-tafsūr

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2 Ibn Ḥajar, al-ʿAsqālānī: Tahdhib al-Tahdhib, p430.

This chapter of the thesis includes an index of the Kitāb al-tafsīr. Some of the material found in this index contains one word interpretations or portions of verses, and some of it represents the interpretation of complete verses. For the purpose of brevity, a detailed index of the primary authorities has been presented including the break down of their interpretations into words and verses. The remaining material has been included under the title of miscellaneous, and the authorities referred to here are those whose quotations number less than five. The index shall include the total number of words or phrases and only the respective sūrah numbers in which they appear. However, where the material represents complete verses, or parts of a verse, then the verse numbers appear together with the sūrah in which they appear. The sequence of the sūrah’s adopted by Bukhārī is similar to the sequence as they appear in the Qur‘ān and could be easily found in any edition of the Ṣaḥīḥ.

The following is a list of authorities represented in the Ṣaḥīḥ:-

A. The Prophet (pbuh):-


B. Ibn ‘Abbās:-

Interpretation of 277 words and phrases has been made of sūrah’s throughout the Qur‘ān with exclusion of the following sūrah’s :-

1, 14, 16, 21, 30, 31, 40, 41, 45, 48, 49, 51, 54, 56, 57, 58, 62, 63, 64, 67, 70, 76, 81-87, 89, 90, 91, 94-104, 106, 107, 109-113.

Interpretation of complete verses or part thereof are as follows:

C. ‘A’isha:-

Interpretation of verses:-


D. Ibn Mas’ūd:-

Interpretation of two words in sūrah 74.

Interpretation of verses or part thereof are as follows:-


E. Mujāhid:-

A total of 343 words and phrases with exclusion of the following sūrah’s:


Interpretation of complete verses or part thereof as follows:-

2:234; 3:7; 9:11, 26; 11:12; 17:78; 38:24; 54:17; 111:4, 5;

F. Imām Bukhārī:-

A total of 189 words and phrases throughout the Qur’ān with exclusion of the following sūrah’s:-

1, 7, 8, 10, 13, 14, 19-21, 23, 25, 26, 29, 31, 32, 35, 36, 37, 39-44, 46, 47, 51-54, 56, 57, 58, 60-62, 64, 65, 68, 72-75, 78, 79, 82-97, 100, 102, 105-108, 110, 113, 114.
Interpretation of verses:-

2:195; 30:30; 103:1;

G. Ibn 'Umar:-

Three words in sūrah 2.

Interpretation of verses:-


H. Anas bin Mâlik:-

Interpretation of verses:-

2:144, 158; 3:92, 154; 5:33, 45, 93, 101; 8:32, 35; 25:34; 33:23, 37, 53; 48:1; 49:2;

I. Abû Hurayrah:-

Interpretation of verses:-

3:110; 5:103; 9:2, 3, 4; 15:18, 80; 17:1, 3; 20:1; 26:14; 30:30; 31:13; 32:17; 33:6; 47:22; 50:30; 62:3;

J. 'Umar bin al-Khaṭṭāb:-

One word in sūrah 81.

Interpretation of verses:-

2:106; 5:3, 90; 33:53; 59:7, 9; 62:9; 66:5;

K. Al-Barâ' bin al-'Azib:-

Interpretation of verses:-

2:148, 187, 189; 3:153; 4:95, 176; 9:1; 14:27; 48:4; 87:1; 95:1;
L. Jābir bin ‘Abdullāh:-

Interpretation of verses:-

2:223; 3:122; 4:11, 60; 5:90; 48:18; 62:11; 74:1, 2, 3, 4;

M. ‘Ali bin Abī Tālib:-

Interpretation of verses:-

22:19; 60:1; 92:5-10;

N. Qatādah:-

A total of 16 words and phrases in the following surah's:

2, 11, 21, 43, 45, 52, 54, 55, 68

Interpretation of verses:- 33:34; 43:5, 8;

O. ‘Ikramah:-

A total of 20 words and phrases in the following surah's:

2, 3, 4, 11, 12, 21, 36, 53, 72

Interpretation of verse 107:7;

P. Ibn Jubayr:-

A total of 22 words and phrases in the following surah's:

2, 3, 4, 11, 12, 20, 25, 54

Q. Ibn ‘Uyaynah:-

A total of six words and phrases in the following surah's:

22, 23, 25, 94, 106

Interpretation of verses:-
R. Ḥasan al-Baṣrī:-

A total of ten words and phrases in the following sūrah's:

25, 52, 55, 59, 72, 73, 81, 89, 96

S. Miscellaneous:-

A total of 194 words and phrases excluding the following sūrah’s:

1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 20, 22, 23, 26, 27, 30, 31, 32, 33, 36-40, 44, 50, 57, 58, 59, 62, 64-67, 69, 70, 72, 74, 75, 78, 84-88, 90-92, 94, 95, 97-108, 110, 111, 113, 114;

Interpretation of the following verses or part thereof:-


The following are some of the authorities referred to in "miscellaneous" above in descending order of their inclusions:-


The Kitāb al-tafsīr is a sprawling work, similar to the rest of the Ṣaḥīḥ. It has many puzzling anomalies, most of them small, but the compiler had a particular pattern of composition in mind which made the presentation so unique.

The tafsīr section of the Ṣaḥīḥ seems to act as a precursor or an introduction of the kind of tafsīr work which would combine the technical material of vocabulary and recitations with a record of the evocative and clarifying memories of those who experienced the revelation of the Qur’ān. The Tafsīr al-Kabīr of Imām Bukhārī (unpublished) seems to be the result of this idea.
Farbarî - one of the scribes of the Ṣahīḥ - reports the existence of this tafsīr, although, manuscripts of it are yet to be found.4

Turning to the rest of the Ṣahīḥ, one realises that the section of tafsīr does not exhaust the interest of would be studies in the avenues of tafsīr in the Ṣahīḥ. We find in the "Kitāb al-Faḍā'il", a conventional setting forth of Ḥadīth on the language of revelation, the seven "forms" of revelation, the history of gathering and editing the revealed text and the virtues of the various sūrah's.

The "Kitāb al-Tawḥīd" in the Ṣahīḥ gives an imposing series of chapters on the Divine attributes, each one introduced by a Qur'ānic text, together with the relevant exegetical Aḥādīth pertaining to the subject. Elements of eschatology are included, substantiated by Qur'ānic and Ḥadīth material. Likewise, the "Kitāb al-Anbiyā’" is a vast mosaic of Qur'ānic material enriched with episodes of about twenty-two Messengers of Allāh.

The elucidation of this exegetical material will be further witnessed in the ensuing chapters.

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CHAPTER FOUR
THE PROPHET'S (PBUH) EXEGETICAL STYLE AS EXPOUNDED
BY IMAM BUKHARI

Allah appointed messengers on earth to outline to communities the laws and requirements of our Creator. To every community a guide was sent the purpose of which was to link the creation with the Creator. Allah says, "Thou art a warner only, and for every folk (there was) a guide." (Qur'an 13:17).

Allah communicated to His creation in the way they best understood His message, therefore, every messenger was sent to a community where barriers of communication were non-existent. Allah says, "And we never sent a messenger save with language of his folk, that he might make the message clear to them." (Qur'an 14:4).

It is the law of nature, that Man to Man communication is perpetrated for direct transmission, needless of any elucidation or interpretation. However, an explanation or interpretation is required for three reasons. Firstly, the informative strength of an author of high ranking status and the intricate import of succinct language, often leads to difficulty in the understanding of a particular text, therefore, a commentary of the text is required to expound its subtleties and actual meaning. Secondly, due to the conclusivity of the text, the elucidation of such fore-knowledge is required which has been taken for granted by the author. Thirdly, the ambiguous nature of the text, like figurative expressions and synonyms etc.

The Qur'an although revealed in Arabic also needed an explanation for it's intricacies. The student of today requires the recourse in interpretation due to the purity and eloquence of the original language which has changed over the past centuries, and the absence of the original receptor of the message.

The task of Qur'anic interpretation being vital, still remains perplexing, for it is the Word of Allah conveyed unto Man, the Word of a Being superior in knowledge to all the knowledgeable. To understand the exact implication of a verse in accordance to the exact import of Divine revelation makes the study of tafsir most perplexing and difficult. During Qur'anic revelation, the puzzling anomalies were unwound through Divine revelation by the Prophet (pbuh), the direct recipient of the message. The apparent difficulty is, that it is the speech of a Speaker whose speech could not be understood without directly listening to it from Him. But it is impossible to reach Him, therefore, one of the many duties of the Prophet (pbuh) was to convey the Divine message as well as its Divine interpretation. Allah says,
"Allāh has verily shown grace to the believers by sending unto them a messenger of their own who reciteth unto them His revelations, and causeth them to grow, and teaches them the Scripture and wisdom (sunna); although before he came to them they were in flagrant error." (Qur'ān 3:164).

As the Kitāb al-Tafsīr in the Šahīḥ of Imām Bukhārī is the primary source for this work, the nature of Imām Bukhārī's exposition of prophetic exegetical material will be presented in a systematic form, the subheadings indicating the type of exegesis.

1. Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān bi-al-Qur'ān

In the commentary of Sūrah Luqāmān verse 13, Imām Bukhārī quotes a tradition reported by Ibn Mas'ūd that when the following verse: "Those who believe and confuse not their belief by wrong doing, theirs is safety, and they are rightly guided." (6:82) was revealed, it disturbed the companions of the Prophet (pbuh). They said, "Who of us did not confuse his faith with wrongdoing (zulm)". The Prophet (pbuh) replied, "It (matter) is not so. Did you not hear the address of Luqāmān to his son, 'Verily, Shirk (polytheism) is a tremendous wrongdoing'" (31:13).

Ibn Kathīr in his commentary acknowledges this Ḥadīth and its contents but cites an incident of a companion who approached the Prophet (pbuh) with the intent of accepting Islam. Upon acceptance he suffers a fatality and dies. The Prophet (pbuh) remarks, "He is among those with regard to whom Allāh has said, 'Those who belief and confuse not their belief ...'. (6:82). This incident approaches the exegesis of the verse as expounded by Imām Bukhārī much differently.

Some commentators like Balkhi, Zamakhshāri etc. interpret "zulm" to mean transgression and evil. The above-mentioned Ḥadīth does not negate this possibility because the vowel on the word "zulm" is for glorification or aggrandizement which would translate as follows: "Those that did not confuse their faith with a great wrong".

This tradition of the Book of Tafsīr has also been recorded in the Book of Faith in the Šahīḥ under the chapter of "Injustice of one kind can be greater or

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lesser than that of another". This Ḥadīth has been used by Imām Bukhārī to categorise wrongdoing (ṣulm) into various categories. However, he did not change the target status of this verse from polytheism. This Ḥadīth has been quoted in the Šaḥīḥ under various variations. Ibn Ḥajār is of the opinion that this verse was revealed at the occasion referred to by Imām Bukhārī and the Prophet (pbuh) informed the Companions about it at a later stage and showed them the relativeness to verse 82 in Sūrah 6, thus reflecting on a principle of exegetical methodology of Tafsīr-al-Qur'ān-bil-Qur'ān.4

Why did the companions understand this verse in a general context. There are two reasons for it. Firstly, the phrase ẓulm in this context is an indefinite noun appearing after a negative verb. Grammatically, a sentence construction of this form applies generality. Hence, the Prophet (pbuh) contained this generality to a specific interpretation. Thus, the indefinite noun would now be for glorification.5

Secondly, the phrase ẓulm does entrench ẓīrk and all that is inferior to it, but customarily it beholds only transgression. This is ascertained from their (companions) reply: "Who amongst us has not done wrong (ẓulm)." In short, in the first instance the companions understood it in generality, the Prophet (pbuh) specified it, and in the second instance they specified it to mean all wrong other than ẓīrk, the Prophet (pbuh) generalised it to mean ẓīrk as well.6

Did the Prophet (pbuh) derive this exegesis by analogy and coherence or was it a personalised opinion? What method did the Prophet (pbuh) adopt in the understanding of this verse in the manner described above? This question need not be addressed because of the Prophet (pbuh) being a recipient of revelation, the need for analogy was not required. However, a careful study of the verse and the words used in it does reflect upon an analogy, the discussion of which does not fall within the ambit of this study, but the method employed by the Prophet (pbuh) as expounded in the Šaḥīḥ points to the analogous interpretations substantiated from the Qur'ān itself in this case or other authorised material otherwise.

2. Tafsīr of Qur'ānic Lexicography

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5 Ibid.
The Prophet (pbuh) applied lexicographical phrases to either specify or generalise Qur'anic text. An example of this type of interpretation is witnessed in Surah 84 verse 8. 'A'isha reports that the Prophet (pbuh) said, "(On the Day of Judgment) anyone whose account will be taken will be ruined". I said, "May Allâh make me be sacrificed for you, doesn't Allâh say, 'Then whosoever is given his account in his right hand, he truly will receive an easy reckoning'" (84:8). He replied, "That is only the presentation of the account, but he whose record will be questioned will be ruined". It could be noticed how the word Hisâb has been expounded to mean "presentation" in this context.

3. Elucidation of a Revealed Text by the Text itself

"And eat and drink until the white thread appears to you distinct from the black thread of the dawn," (2:187).

Al-Sha'bi narrates: "'Adi took a white rope (or thread) and a black one, and when some part of the night had passed, he looked at them but he could not distinguish the one from the other. The next morning he said, 'O Allâh's Apostle! I put (a white thread and a black thread) underneath my pillow'. The Prophet said: 'Then your pillow is too wide if the white thread and the black thread are underneath your pillow!'"

Sahl bin Sa'd narrates, "The verse, "and eat and drink ... from the black thread," was revealed, but "... of dawn" was not revealed (along with it). So, some men when intending to fast used to tie their legs, one with white thread and the other with black thread and would keep on eating until they could distinguish one thread from the other. Then, Allâh revealed, "... of dawn", whereupon they understood that the white thread and black thread meant the night and the day."

The "... of dawn" in this verse is either an explanation to one of the threads or to both. If it explains the first thread then the meaning of the other is self-explanatory. Some commentators are of the opinion that it explains both, like

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7 There does exist an analogy transmitted from Maulana Qâsim Nânotwî, founder of the Islamic University of Deoband. He says that the verb "labasa" reflects that common transgression is not meant. The verb actually means when a thing is suffused in such a way that the one cannot be distinguished from the other. This could only take place when the two things are found in the same place, therefore, faith and injustice could only be suffused if the location of both is the same. The location of faith is the heart, therefore, the location of zulm must also be the heart. Hence, the interpretation of zulm to be shirk. (Fayd al-Bâri, v.i p123.)
for example, until the learned was separated from the ignorant of the people - where people is an elucidation of both the learned as well as the ignorant. The difference between the two is rhetoric, where the emphasis moves from a metaphor to a simile.8

The narration of ‘Adî reads, "when this verse was revealed", supposes his early acceptance of Islam, but the case is not so, fasting was made compulsory in the very early years of the Medinan period and ‘Adî’s acceptance dates back to the ninth or tenth year A.H. Therefore, this phrase would be appropriate if it meant "when this verse was recited to me". The phrase "that your pillow is too wide" refers to his excessive sleeping or that your night is very long or that your pillow is so wide that it encompasses the entire horizon into it. This Ḥadîth has been quoted by Imâm Bukhârî in the Book of Fast as well. In a different transmission this phrase has been changed to mean, "you are not an intelligent person".

This verse has become a point of contention to determine the permissibility of suspending an explanation at the time of a need. In this instance the permissibility exists due to the fact that the figurativeness of the two threads was widely known. This fact can be established from the Prophet’s (pbuh) statement to ‘Adî, "you are not an intelligent person". If the matter required further elucidation than the intelligent and the foolish would be alike. However, the explanation was revealed to clear the ambiguity for those who still found difficulty in the understanding of the verse.9

Abû Ḥayyân has interpreted this verse from amongst the principles of abrogation. However, this claim is unfounded because for an abrogation a separate verse is needed and furthermore, this type of abrogation has not been previously expounded by other scholars.10

We understand from this verse that all the verses of the Qur’ân were not self-explanatory and an explanation was needed. This explanation either emanated from the Prophet (pbuh) through Divine inspiration or either an occasion or situation called for a verse of the Qur’ân to be revealed for that purpose which in Qur’ânic terminology is termed asbâb al-nuzûl.

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8 Baghdâdi, op. cit., v.2, pp.66-68.
9 Ibid.; Ibn Kathîr, op. cit., v.1, p222.
10 Fath al-Bâri, v.i, p72.
CHAPTER FIVE

ASBĀB AL-NUZūL
THE OCCASIONS OF REVELATION

It became an important occupation of the classical interpreters to find out what might have been the asbāb al-nuzūl (Sitz im Leben) of sundry revelations, to such an extent that a group of scholars have written manuscripts exclusively on asbāb al-nuzūl, like ‘Alī bin al-Madīnī, the tutor of Imām Bukhārī. The most famous book written on this subject is the Asbāb al-Nuzūl of al-Wāḥīdī.1 Ibn Ḥajar commentator of the Ṣaḥīḥ had also written a short manuscript on this subject. But the most extensive work is that of Al-Suyūṭī, titled Lubāb an-Nuqūl-fī Asbāb-an-Nuẓūl.2

According to this sort of historic "research", however, which recalls the rabbinic way of tackling Scripture-texts, finds little favour in the eyes of the modernists. To their mind Qur’ānic message is disrupted through it and outlines get lost.3

There exist a negative opinion about the historical origin of Qur’ānic verses and it is regarded as unavailing because it flows along historic principles and these principles are contrary to Qur’ānic exegesis.4

On the contrary, the consensus of religious scholars reflect upon the importance of this science. Wāḥīdī says, "It is not possible to understand the tafsīr of a verse without investigating its narrative and explaining the consequences of its revelation".5 Ibn Daqīq al-‘id says, "The explanation of asbāb al-nuzūl is an influential route in understanding the meaning of the Qurʾān".6 The information of asbāb al-nuzūl will simplify the understanding of a verse. If the motive or reason of a particular verse is known, than this will assist one in understanding the statement itself.

The general consensus of Islamic scholars have agreed that the asbāb al-nuzūl provides an invaluable additional source of knowledge for the understanding of a

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1 Sābūnī ‘Alī: Al-Tibyan fī Ulūm al-Qurʾān, p17.
3 Baljoun J.: Modern Muslim Koran Interpretation, p46.
4 Suyūṭī, op. cit., v.1, p28.
5 Sābūnī, op. cit., p18.
verse provided that it was transmitted in an authentic way from either the Prophet (pbuh) directly or his companions. Wāḥīdī says, "It is incorrect to say anything with regard to asbāb al-nuzūl except by means of transmissional statements of those who witnessed original revelation".

1. **What is Asbāb al-Nuzūl**

Asbāb al-nuzūl could be divided into two categories:

Firstly, the occurrence of an incident or event leads to the revelation of a verse or few verses of the Qurʾān. In the Ṣaḥīḥ a transmission of Ibn ʿAbbās reads: "When the verse, 'And warn your tribe of near-kindred', (26:214), was revealed, the Prophet (pbuh) ascended the Ṣafā (mountain) and started calling, 'O Bani Fihr! O Bani 'Adil' addressing various tribes of Quraish till they were all assembled. Those who could not come themselves, sent their messengers to see what was there. Abû Lahab (the Prophet's (pbuh) uncle) and other people from (the) Quraish (tribe) came. The Prophet (pbuh) then said, 'Suppose I tell you there is an (enemy) cavalry in the valley intending to attack you, would you believe me?'. They said, 'Yes, for we have not found you telling anything other than the truth'. He then said, 'I am a warner to you in face of a terrible punishment'. Abû Lahab said (to the Prophet (pbuh)), 'May your hands perish all this day. Is it for this purpose you have gathered us?' Then it was revealed:- 'Perish the hands of Abû Lahab and perish he! His wealth and gains will not exempt him' ..."  

In the above-mentioned example asbāb al-nuzūl helps one determine the meaning of a certain word. For example, the word "al-ʿaṣhirah" could have a vast domain encompassing distant relatives or a restricted domain referring to only close relatives. It also indicates the method of implementation together with the reason for its initiation like in the case of the revelation of sūrah al-Lahab (111). Secondly, the companions questioned the Prophet (pbuh) about something, and divine revelation answered their queries. Like Muʿaż bin Jabal asked the Prophet (pbuh), "O Apostle of Allāh! Verily, the Jews deceive us, and continuously question us about the crescent. What's the situation of the..."
crescent, it begins in a minute form and increases until it becomes big and round, thereafter, it diminishes until it returns to its beginning form". Allâh then revealed the following verse: "They ask Thee (O Muhammed (pbuh)) of new moons", say, "They are fixed seasons for mankind and for pilgrimage."10

This, however, does not imply that one searches for asbâb al-nuzâl for every verse, because the revelation of the Qur'ân was not subjected to incidents or queries, but it's inception was about the revelation of beliefs, the principles of Islam and the obligations of Allâh both individual and collective. Ja'barî11 has said, "Qur'ânic verses could be categorised into two categories. One is inceptive (without asbâb al-nuzâl) and the other is causative (after an incident or query)."12

2. The Benefits of Asbab' al-Nuzâl

The benefits of this science inter alia are the following:

Firstly, to understand the wisdom behind the specific command. Al-Barâ’ narrates, "When the order of compulsory fasting of Ramađân was revealed, the people did not have sexual relationship with their wives for the whole month of Ramađân, but some men cheated themselves (by violating that restriction). So Allâh revealed: 'Allâh is aware that you were deceiving yourselves but he accepted your repentance and forgave you, so hold intercourse with them and seek that which Allâh has ordained for you'".13

Secondly, to earmark the command to the cause. This applies to those who hold the opinion that consideration to a specified cause be given and not to the general meaning. For example, Alqamah bin Waqqâs narrates: Marwân said to his gatekeeper, "Go to Ibn ‘Abbâs, O Râfî! and say, if everybody who rejoices in what he has done, and likes to be praised for what he has not done, will be punished, then all of us will be punished". Ibn ‘Abbâs said, "What connection have you with this case? It was only that the Prophet (pbuh) called the Jews and asked them about something, and they hid the truth and told him something else, and seem to deserve praise for the favour of telling him the answer to his question, and they became happy with what they had concealed".

10 Ibid. v.1, p71.
11 His name was Burhân al-Dîn. He was a high ranking scholar of Qur'ân. His two main works are Rawda al-Târîfî fi Rasm al-Masâhif and Kanz al-Ma'ânî - a commentary on the modes of recitation. He died in 732 A.H.
12 Suyûtî, op. cit., v. 1, p28.
Then Ibn ‘Abbâs recited, "(Remember), when Allâh took a covenant from those who were given a Scripture, and those who rejoice in what they have done and liked to be praised for what they have not done".\textsuperscript{14}

Thirdly, information of \textit{asbâb al-nuzûl} is the best way to determine the meaning of the Qur’ân. For example, ‘Urwah narrates: "I said to ‘A’îsha (the wife of the Prophet (pbuh)), and I was a young boy at that time, ‘How do you interpret the Words of Allâh, He is Blessed and Exalted, ‘Verily, \textit{Ṣafâ} and \textit{Marwâh} (i.e. two mountains of Mecca) are among the symbols of Allâh’. It is therefore, no sin for him who is on pilgrimage to the House or visiteth it, to go around them’. In my opinion it is not sinful for one not to go around them.” ‘A’îsha said: "Your interpretation is wrong, for as you say the verse should have been, ‘It is therefore no sin for the one (performing \textit{Hajj} or \textit{Umrah}) not to go around them’". This verse was revealed in connection with the \textit{Anṣâr} who (during the pre-Islamic period) used to visit \textit{Mandt} (i.e, an idol) after assuming their \textit{ihrâm} and it was situated near \textit{Qudayd} (i.e. a place in Mecca), and they used to regard it sinful to go around \textit{Ṣafâ} and \textit{Marwâh} after embracing Islam. When Islam came, they asked Allâh’s Apostle about it, whereupon Allâh revealed, "Verily, \textit{Ṣafâ} and \textit{Marwâh} are amongst the symbols of Allâh".\textsuperscript{15}

Fourthly, the name of the person who was the cause of the revelation of the verse is manifested in order to avoid suspicion and obscurity. Yûsuf bin Mâhak narrates: Marwân had been appointed as governor of Hijâz by Mu’âwiya. He delivered a sermon in which he mentioned Yazîd the son of Mu’âwiya (as successor) so that the people might take the oath of allegiance to him as the successor of his father. Then ‘Abdur Raḥmân bin Abû Bakr told him something. Whereupon Marwân ordered that he be arrested. But ‘Abdur Raḥmân entered ‘A’îsha’s (his sister) house and they could not arrest him. Marwân said, "It is he (‘Abdur Raḥman) about whom Allâh revealed this verse, ‘And the one who says to his parents, Fie, on you! Do you hold the promise to me ..?’" (46:17). Upon this ‘A’îsha said from behind a screen, “Allâh did not reveal any revelation about us in the Qur’ân except that which was connected with the declaration of my innocence (of slander)”. In another Ḥadîth she says, "If I so desire, I will name the person who was the cause of this revelation".\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., (3:187-188).
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., (2:158).
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., (46:17).
The General Implication of \textit{Asbâb al-Nuzûl}

If consensus exists over the generality of the cause or to the specific nature of a cause, then the general cause will be taken in its general context and the specified cause in its specified context.

However, when the cause is specific reflected by a general phrase, the majority scholastic opinion is that the general meaning will be taken into account. Therefore, the ruling extracted from the general form will be transitive from this specific cause to all corresponding situations. Ibn 'Abbâs narrates: Hilâl bin Umaiyya accused his wife of committing illegal sexual intercourse with Sharîk bin Sahma and filed the case before the Prophet (pbuh). The Prophet (pbuh) said to Hilâl, "Either you bring forth a proof (four witnesses) or you will receive the legal punishment (lashes) on your back". Hilâl said, "O Allâh's Apostle! If anyone of us saw a man over his wife would he go to seek four witnesses?" The Prophet (pbuh) kept on saying, "Either you bring forth the witnesses or you will receive the legal punishment on your back". Hilâl then said, "By Him who sent you with the truth, I am telling the truth and Allâh will reveal to you what will save my back from punishment". Then Jibra'il (Gabriel) came down and revealed to him: "As for those who accuse their wives but have no witnesses except themselves ..." (24:6).\footnote{Ibid., (24:6).}

We can conclude from the above-mentioned incident that verses were revealed in specific instances but the ruling extracted therefrom was transitivity stretched to all similar situations. Like for example, the above ruling has been entrenched into Islamic Law and is applicable right up to this day. There are numerous examples of this nature that expound this principle, for example, the laws of stealing, zihâr etc.

How to Recognise \textit{Asbâb al-Nuzûl}

\textit{Asbâb al-nuzûl} can be recognised in two ways:
Firstly, when the expression is used unambiguously, like a transmitter says, "The cause for the revelation is thus," or, "We asked the Prophet (pbuh) something, then the following was revealed".

Secondly, the expression used is ambiguous, for instance the transmitter says, "This verse was revealed in this matter". This expression holds both the
possibilities of it being *asbāb al-nuzūl* or it reflects an exegetical analysis. Like Jábir's narration: The Jews used to say, "If one has sexual intercourse with his wife from the back, then she will deliver a squint-eyed child." So this verse was revealed, "Your wives are a tilth unto you, so go to your tilth when or how you will." (2:223).18

‘Urwah narrates: Az-Zubair quarreled with a man from the Anṣār because of a natural mountainous stream at al-Ḥarā. The Prophet (pbuh) said, "O Zubair! Irrigate your land and then let the water flow to your neighbour". The Anṣār said, "O Allāh's Apostle! (This is because) He (Zubair) is your cousin?" At that, the Prophet's (pbuh) face turned red with anger and he said, "O Zubair! Irrigate your land and then withhold the gates till it fills the land up to the walls and let it flow to your neighbour." So the Prophet (pbuh) enabled Zubair to take his full right after the Anṣār provoked his anger. The Prophet (pbuh) had previously given an order that was in favour of both of them. Zubair said, "I don't think but this verse was revealed in this connection: 'But no, by your Lord, they can have no faith, until they make you judge in all disputes between them,'" (4:65).19

This incident shows the difficulty in ascertaining the exact cause for the revelation of this verse.

5. Could a Verse have more than one Occasion of Revelation?

There are six situations with regard to this matter:20

Firstly, if the form is ambiguous, then obviously the ambiguous form will take an exegetical form, unless there exist a hidden reason for preferring one to the other.

Secondly, if one of the forms is ambiguous and the other unambiguous, then the unambiguous form will be regarded as the cause. Like for example, "your wives are a tilth unto you." (2:223). Ibn ‘Umar reports the verse to have been revealed with regards to approaching women in their posterior (Bukhārī). However, the form was ambiguous whereas Jábir’s Ḥadīth, mentioned earlier is unambiguous. Therefore, it, will be regarded as the cause.

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18 Ibid., (2:223).
19 Ibid., (4:65).
20 Šābūnī, p18.
Thirdly, if both the asbāb al-nuzūl are distinctive, but there is a variance in authenticity of the transmission, then the one more authentic will be accepted. Like the cause for the revelation of sūrah 93. Imām Bukhārī’s version disagrees with Ṭabrānī’s, but Imām Bukhārī’s transmission is more authentic, therefore, it would be preferred.

Fourthly, if the transmissions are equal in nature in authenticity, then we should try and ascertain an external cause for preference. Like the transmitters presence in the cause or the superiority of one over the other. Like Imām Bukhārī’s tafsīr of (17:85) differs with Tirmidhī’s tafsīr of the same verse. Imām Bukhārī’s Hadīth would be preferred because Ibn Mas‘ūd, the transmitter, witnessed the cause, whereas Ibn ‘Abbās is merely informing us of the event.

Fifthly, if their status is equal, then both of them could be collated if possible. This would imply that the verse was revealed because of two or more circumstances, due to the close proximity of one to the other. Like, Imām Bukhārī’s tafsīr of (24:6), when a husband accuses his wife for adultery, according to one narration, it was the wife of Hilāl bin Umayyah and according to another narration it was the query of ‘Uwaymir. Due to their closeness in time and period, both of them will be taken as the causes.21

Sixthly, if there is no possibility of collation because of being too far apart, then this would reflect multiple causes. Like, (9:113), Bukhārī, Tirmidhī and Ḥākim narrate different causes for this revelation. Bukhārī refers to the death of Abū Ṭālib, Tirmidhī to an unknown person seeking forgiveness for his polytheist parents, and Ḥākim to the Prophet’s (pbuh) paying respect to his mother’s tomb. Each of them differ over the cause, and each of the incidents narrated is too far apart, like Abū Ṭālib’s death is during the Meccan era and the Prophet’s (pbuh) incident of his mother’s tomb is a Medinan incident. Therefore, each of them shall reflect multiple causes for the revelation of this verse.22

Since asbāb al-nuzūl plays an important role in Qur’ānic exegesis, its corollaries has to be studied as well. In the Qur’ān we find historical references which form an invaluable source of guidance and which is a

21 Ibn Hajar, op. cit., v.8, p.362.
22 Sābūnī, op. cit., p.18.
corollary of ḥāfīz al-nuzūl, therefore, in the next chapter approaches to history will be analysed.
CHAPTER SIX
THE SAHIH'S APPROACH TO HISTORY

History is a continuous methodical record of important public events.\(^1\) It is derived from a Greek word meaning knowledge and in its widest sense is a knowledge of past activity. The more general use of the word is for the past activities of nations.\(^2\)

History plays an important role in the building of a nation. Therefore, the Qur'\(\text{\textasciitilde}n\) would not fall short in excluding from a manual of guidance an imperative player in the building of a nation. However, the purpose of historical material in the Qur'\(\text{\textasciitilde}n\) differs from other historic material. The Qur'\(\text{\textasciitilde}n\) says: "Narrate unto them the history (of the men of old), than haply they may take thought," (7:176). This verse indicates the object of narrative in the Qur'\(\text{\textasciitilde}n\). It is simply for man to ponder and take lesson and advice therefrom. In another verse the Qur'\(\text{\textasciitilde}n\) highlights this objective. All\(\text{\textdagger}\) says, "And all that we relate unto thee of the story of the messengers is in order that thereby we make firm thy heart and herein hath come unto thee the truth and an exhortations and a reminder for believers." (11:120).

1. Qur'\(\text{\textasciitilde}nic\) History and its Miraculous Aspect

In fact, these historical events play a great a role in the miraculous aspect of the Qur'\(\text{\textasciitilde}n\) and partly in the challenge of its \(i'j\(\text{\textdagger}\)az\) (incapacitation).\(^3\) The historical information mentioned in the Qur'\(\text{\textasciitilde}n\) could not be narrated by an unlettered Prophet but through revelation and no person could bring forth this information without the agency of revelation. The Qur'\(\text{\textasciitilde}n\) speaks: "We narrate unto thee (Mu\(\text{\textdagger}\)ammad) The best of narratives in that we have inspired in thee this Qur'\(\text{\textasciitilde}n\), though aforetime thou wast of the heedless." (12:3).

These verses indicate the purpose and object of Qur'\(\text{\textasciitilde}nic\) historical material. The purpose and object is not just the recording of past events, but it is a precedent set by All\(\text{\textdagger}\) for admonishing man in the future. It also reflects upon the theory of incapacitation thus, that the Prophet (pbuh) was an unlettered prophet. The fact that the Qur'\(\text{\textasciitilde}n\) contains a profound knowledge of the events

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\(^3\) Issa J. Boullata: "The Rhetorical Interpretation of the Qur'\(\text{\textasciitilde}n\): \(i'j\(\text{\textdagger}\)az\) and Related Topics" in Approaches to the history of the interpretation of the Qur'\(\text{\textasciitilde}n\), Edited by Rippin, p150.
of the past as recited by an unlettered person like the Prophet (pbuh), confirms that it could only be revelation from Allâh, the one and only God.

The historical evidence in the Qur'ân dates back from Adam (pbuh) up to Jesus (pbuh), following no chronology of events. However, the Qur'ân was preceded by other scriptures like the Torah, Injil (Gospel), Zabûr (Psalms). Therefore, historical evidence is found in them as well. The Qur'ân's objective of history being basically admonishment, hardly reflects upon detailed accounts of situations and circumstances. The Torah and Injil, however, discuss these parables with a great amount of detail, whereas the Qur'ân has kept the principle of not repeating material which was of no relevance to its audience.

Thus the story of Adam (pbuh) appears in the Torah as well as the Qur'ân, with the most elaborate account in the Qur'ân in sūrah 2 and in sūrah 7. The Qur'ân's narrative of Adam (pbuh) gives no description of the Garden, the name of the prohibited tree, nor the creature that Satan used to transmigrate into the Garden, or the name of the ground upon which Adam and Eve were sent after their exile from the Garden.

Similarly, a comparison between the Qur'ân and the Injil, reveal the same pattern as that for the Torah. Thus the Qur'ân reflects upon the birth of Jesus and his miracles in the form of a lesson, but does not follow a descriptive pattern in outlining the pedigree of Jesus (pbuh), his place of birth. The Injil has a more detailed and descriptive account.

The Muslim reader, comparing the two Scriptures to the Qur'ân finds in them the detailed account of historical material. What is of concern in this thesis is how Imâm Bukhârî responded to this material.

2. The Sahîh and Isrâ'îliyât

In the commentary of sūrah 2 verse 136, Imâm Bukhârî narrates on the authority of Abû Hurairah that the people of the Scripture used to recite the Torah in Hebrew and used to explain it in Arabic to the Muslims. Upon that Allâh’s Apostle said, “Do not believe the people of the scripture or disbelieve them, but say, ‘We believe in Allâh and what is revealed to us’.”

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This narration acted as a guideline for the companions of the Prophet (pbuh). The companions also desired further elucidation and detail, therefore, they were informed by those among the people of the Scripture who had already accepted Islam. They never inquired about beliefs or Islamic ordinances, and also those items which they had already learnt from the Prophet (pbuh). Similarly, those things which were futile were of no concern to them, like the colour of the dog of the people of the Cave, or the size of Noah’s ark, the wood with which it was constructed.5

Imâm Bukhârî narrates on the authority of Abû Hurairah that Allah’s Apostle (pbuh) talked about Friday and said, “There is a (lucky) hour on Friday and if a Muslim gets it while praying and asks some thing from Allah, then Allah will definitely meet his demand. And he (the Prophet (pbuh)) pointed out the shortness of that time with his hands”.6

The companions differed on the exact time of this hour. Abû Hurayrah then asked Ka‘b al-Ahâr (a Jew who accepted Islam) about it. Ka‘b replied that it was once in a year. Abû Huraira than replied by saying that it comes every Friday. Ka‘b referred to the Torah and found Abû Huraira’s version to be correct.7

Imâm Bukhârî’s line of thinking in this regard follows that of the Companions of the Prophet (pbuh). They did not verify or attest these Scriptural transmissions if it contradicted the Shari’a or any fundamental belief, in fact, the Companions would rectify that which was contrary, like in the above example.

This type of confrontation reflects upon the scepticism of the companions over the acceptance of all material transmitted to them. The Companions of the Prophet (pbuh) never transgressed the boundaries of permissibility laid down to them by the Prophet (pbuh), which can be understood from the following Hadith, “The Prophet (pbuh) said, ‘Propagate from me even if it is one verse, and narrate from the Children of Israel and there is no objection, and

5 Waliyullâh Shâh: Al-Fawz al-Kabîr, p35.
7 Qaşâlânî: Irshâd al-Sârî (commentary of the Şâhîh), v.2, p190.
whosoever, intentionally belies me should prepare his abode in the Fire of Hell".\textsuperscript{8}

The above-mentioned two traditions do not contradict one another. Each of them permit narrating from the Banî Isrâ’il, provided one is aware of it being free of falsehood and contradictions of the Shari’a.

The Companions of the Prophet (pbuh) were very cautious in matters relating to the Qur’ân. Their successors expanded this right, where Isrâ’îlyât formed an important portion of tafsîr literature. This could be attributed to two factors. Firstly, the increase in number of Muslim converts from amongst the Ahl al-Kitâb and secondly, the enthusiasm of Muslim scholars to find details of the various parts of the Qur’ân that coincided with the Scriptures. In fact, tafsîr literature became filled with numerous incompatible stories like the tafsîr of Maqâtil ibn Sulaimân died 150 A.H. Abû Ḥâtîm has ascribed to him to have extracted most of his tafsîr material from the Jews and Christians. In fact, some of the commentators of this time tried to associate Qur’ânic material to future events, which they acquired by way of Isrâ’îlyât. Like Maqâtil bin Sulaiman’s interpretation of the verse 58 of Sûrah 17 reflect this pattern.\textsuperscript{9}

Their successors, ushered in the era of formal tafsîr compilation and a number of commentators included in their books Scriptural sources which brought their writings close to extinction due to disinclination of the Muslim public caused by these inclusions which apparently had a negative impact upon tafsîr literature. Although, Imâm Bukhârî preceded them he did not follow the pattern used by Maqâtil thus leaving a similar pattern for his successors. In fact, his approach in this regard closely resembles the methodology of the Prophet’s (pbuh) Companions.

3. The Division of Isrâ’îlyât

Isrâ’îlyât could be divided into 3 categories:

(1) If the matter is authenticated that the narration emanated from the Prophet (pbuh) personally, then obviously it will be correct and accepted.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[8] Şâhîh al-Bukhârî from Fath al-Bârî, v.6, p329.
\item[9] Baghdâdi: Rûh al-Ma’ânî, v.15, p93.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Secondly, that which directly contradicts Qur'ânic principles, will be unanimously unacceptable.

Thirdly, narrations not falling into either of the two above categories, will not be accepted nor rejected. It would be permissible to narrate it thus acting in accordance with the following saying of the Prophet (pbuh), "Do not believe the people of Scripture or disbelieve them, but say: 'We believe in Allâh and that which is revealed to us'."¹⁰

Imâm Bukhârî, in his Book of Tafsîr did not give any importance to pre-Qur'ânic Scriptural material. He accepted and included in the Şâhîh only those transmissions which were transmitted with authenticity directly from the Prophet (pbuh). The story of Moses (pbuh), upon whom the Torah was revealed, as narrated in the Qur'ân, "And when Moses said unto his servant: "I will not give up until I reach the point where the two rivers meet." (18 :60-82), is concise and brief. According to the Hadîth narrated in the Şâhîh, in the Book of Prophets, the Prophet (pbuh) said, "Whilst Moses was in a group of Banî Isrâ'îl, when a person approached him and said, 'Do you know of any person who knows more than what you know'. He replied, 'No'. Then Allâh revealed to Moses, but our servant, Khîdr."¹¹

The Qur'ân makes no mention of the name of the servant. Since this name existed amongst the people of Scripture and it emanated directly from the Prophet (pbuh), Imâm Bukhârî accorded it the status of narrative (haggadic) exegesis.¹²

Imâm Bukhârî's approach to Scriptural material can also be witnessed from the following verse. Allâh says, "And verily we tried Solomon, and set upon his throne a mere body. Then did he repent." (36:34). Qur'ânic commentators like Ibn Kathîr, al-Baghdâdî refer to the test of Solomon (pbuh) to be the following Hadîth. Abû Hurairah reports that the Prophet (pbuh) said, "Solomon the son of David said, "I will go between hundred wives, or ninety-nine of them. Each of them will conceive a rider who shall fight in the path of Allâh. One of his companions said to him, '(Say) Inshâ'a Allâh (if Allâh wills)'." He (Solomon) did not say. None of the wives except one conceived who gave birth to an

¹⁰ Bukhârî: "Book of Tafsîr" (2:138)
¹¹ Ibid. (18:16-82)
¹² See Chapter Nine on Haggadic Exegesis.
abnormal child. The Prophet (pbuh) said, "By Allah, if he said (In shâ’a Allah, than each one of them would have been the warriors of Allah."\textsuperscript{13}

Ibn Jarîr Tâbarî - a famous commentator of the Qur’ân, whose commentary is classified as one the most authentic by unanimous Muslim Scholastic opinion - quotes from Qatādah, "Solomon ordered the construction of the Bait al-Muqaddas, (the mosque in Jerusalem) ...". Imâm Bukhârî preceded him but his exclusion of this Ḥadîth proves his caution in this regard.

Analysing the commentary of this verse, we find that the other commentators of the Qur’ân provided certain type of material which Imâm Bukhârî indirectly did not include in his tafsîr. Although including the incident of Solomon and his wives in the Book of Jihad and the Book of Prophets, he does not include it in the Book of Tafsîr under the exegesis of the relevant verses which demonstrates his indifferent attitude towards irrelevant exegetical material.

This proves that Imâm Bukhârî was extremely cautious in the handling of this type of material.

This chapter develops a question in the mind of the reader that the Qur’ân does not only consist of verses relating to history and neither do all verses have occasions of revelation. Therefore, the next chapter deals with the method used by Imâm Bukhârî in the exegesis of the remaining types of material found in the Qur’ân.

\textsuperscript{13} Bukhârî, op. cit. (English), v.4, p22.
CHAPTER SEVEN

ELEMENTS OF QUR'ANIC SCIENCE

The Qur'ān was revealed to the Prophet (pbuh) according to the Arab dialogue of his time. The Arabs tried to understand the language of the Qur'ān in accordance to the skill and dexterity they applied in the understanding of their spoken language. The Qur'ān says, "Lo, We have revealed it, a lecture in Arabic, that you may understand". (12:2). In another verse Allāh says, "(This is) a scripture the revelations whereof are perfected and then expounded". (11:1)

1. Muḥkam and Mutashâbih

In another verse the Qur'ān nevertheless indicates a possible difficulty in understanding all its verses. Allāh says, "He it is who has revealed unto Thee (Prophet (pbuh)) the Scripture wherein are clear revelations. They are the substance of the book and others (which are) allegorical. But those in whose hearts is doubt pursue, forsooth, that which is allegorical seeking (to cause) dissension by seeking to explain it. None knoweth its explanation save Allāh. And those who are of sound instruction say, We believe therein; the whole is from our Lord; but only men of understanding really heed". (3:7)

This verse divides the contents of revelation into two orders, labelling one muḥkam and the other mustashâbih. The root word Ḥakama literally means "to pass judgment between two things", like a ruler or judge who passes judgment between the plaintiff and the accused. The verb in its fourth form means "to strengthen" and this is where the word muḥkam gets its meaning of "strengthened or perfected".1 When used in a linguistic sense, it would mean "to strengthen a statement by distinguishing the false from the truth".

In another verse of the Qur'ān, Allāh describes its verses to be muḥkam. Allāh says, "(This is) a Scripture the revelations (āyāt) whereof are 'perfected' (uḥkimat) and than expounded. (It cometh) from One Wise, Informed." (11:1). Therefore, in this sense, the entire Qur'ān is muḥkam, because it is a perfected speech that creates a distinction between truth and falsehood.2

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1 Wehr Hans: A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic, p197.
On the other hand, *tashabbuh*, literally means "resemblance". It implies that two objects cannot be distinguished from each other due to their close resemblance to one another, either literal or metaphoric. Allâh says, "And it is given to them in resemblance." (2:25). The resemblance referred to here is with regard to the fruit of Paradise, where they would resemble one another in colour. Linguistically, it means "similarity" where the one attests the other. In this context, Allâh has described all the verses of the Qur'ân to be *Mutashâbih*. Allâh says, "Allâh has now revealed the fairest of statements, a Scripture of resemblance". (39:23). Therefore, the Qur'ân is totally *Mutashâbih* where the one verse resembles the other in beauty and perfection and where every verse resembles the attestation of other verses in meaning.

However, *Muḫkam* and *Mutashâbih* referred to in verse (3:7) indicates a special purpose. There exists a difference of opinion amongst *tafṣîr* scholars in the interpretation of these two terms according to the above verse (3:7).

The most important differences are:

A. **Muḫkam**: The meaning could be understood directly from the word itself.
   **Mutashâbih**: That which Allâh has preferred for himself.

B. **Muḫkam**: There exists only one possibility.
   **Mutashâbih**: that which has many possibilities.

C. **Muḫkam**: It does not need another explanatory verse for understanding.
   **Mutashâbih**: It cannot be understood by itself and it needs an explanatory verse for it to be understood.\(^3\)

A preliminary examination of the above-mentioned statements suggests *āyâtun muḫkamât* to be characterized as those which are fortified by clarity and detail. These verses could be classified under the following antonyms: licit and illicit, promise and threat, recompense and punishment, command and rebuke, informational statement and aphorism/metaphor, exhortation, admonition and obligation. The *āyâtun mutashâbihât* are described as similar and could be characterized as abrogated verses or those verses which describe the nature of

\(^3\) Ibid., p184.
Allāh’s names and His attributes. For example, "The Hand of Allāh is above their hand" (48:10).

Imām Bukhārī has interpreted it differently in his Ṣaḥīḥ. In the introductory chapter (tarjamah), he prefers the interpretation of the word mutashābīhāt as meaning "obscure" to the unpopular one "that some verse attests other similar verses". He quotes a Ḥadīth that supports the more popular interpretation of "obscurity of meaning". Similarly, he interprets Muḥkam to mean licit and illicit (halāl wa-ḥarām), which confines it to the more accepted meaning of "clear in meaning".

On the other hand, Al-Ṭabari divides these verses into five categories:

1. the Muḥkam verses as abrogating and the Mutashābīh as abrogated.
2. the Muḥkam are those verses in which Allāh decisively explains what is permitted and forbidden, the Mutashābīhāt are those which resemble each other in meaning even though their words differ.
3. the Muḥkam are those which permit only one interpretation and Mutashābīh are amenable to more than one interpretation.
4. the Muḥkam verses constitute the reports on the nations of the past and the messengers who were sent to them. In contrast, the Mutashābīh are the repetitions of the same in other parts of the Qur’ān.
5. the division is made on the very possibility of interpretation. While the Muḥkam verses are accessible to the 'Ulama, the Mutashabīh are understood by no one except Allāh himself.

Imām Bukhārī's unique behaviour in this matter could be attributed to create an awareness towards other interpretations as well, although the acceptable view held by him is the more popular one of "obscurity of meaning". This is proven by the Ḥadīth quoted by him in the Ṣaḥīḥ which is narrated on the authority of 'A’isha, Allāh’s Apostle (pbuh) recited the verse, "It is He who sent down to you the Book ...". (3:7). Then Allāh’s Apostle said, "If you see
those who follow thereof that is not entirely clear, then they are those whom Allāh has named [as having deviation (from the Truth)], so beware of them.\textsuperscript{6}

The inclusion of this Ḥadīth determines Imām Bukhārī’s viewpoint, which conforms to the general opinion of "obscurity of meaning". If this was not his view than he would have included the transmission of Mujāhid which indirectly imply all the verses of the Qur’ān to be susceptible to interpretation be it Muḥkām or Mutashābih. He (Mujāhid) says, "I presented the Qur’ān before Ibn ‘Abbās from the beginning to its end, stopping at every verse and asking about its interpretation".\textsuperscript{7}

The Mutashābih verses are classified as those that were abrogated, the names and attributes of Allāh, the realities of the Last Day and the knowledge of the final hour and the so called "mysterious letters" with which certain sūrahs of the Qur’ān begin. Attempts to interpret these "mysterious letters" has been condemned by all classical exegetes, as much as they were evidently the subject, on the part of both Muslims and Non-Muslim, of efforts at divination by alphabetic numerology.

However, the interpretation of these verses has three dimensions. The verse in question says, "None knoweth its explanation save Allāh". The Arabic equivalent for "explanation" in this verse is the word ta’wīl. This phrase is either synonymous to tafsīr or the actual meaning is explained without any interpretation or it means the moving of the meaning of a word from the obvious meaning to a hidden meaning.\textsuperscript{8}

To interpret Mutashābihāt, the phrase ta’wīl would have to be interpreted as the equivalent to tafsīr as is the opinion of Mujāhid narrated by Imām Bukhārī in his introduction. The more acceptable opinion is to explain the actual meaning of the verse. An example to illustrate this view and to uphold the interpretation of Mutashābihāt as "obscurity of meaning" is Imām Mālik's answer to the interpretation of the following verse: "The Beneficient One, who is established (istawī') on the throne". (20:5). He replied: "The meaning of al-istiwa' is known, the nature of it is unknown, to believe in it is compulsory and to question about it is heresy. Although the meaning of al-istiwa' is known to

\textsuperscript{6} Al-Kashmīrī Anwar: Faid al-Bārī, v.4, pp165-166.

\textsuperscript{7} Ibid., p186.

\textsuperscript{8} Ibid. p186.
us, but the nature of Allāh’s sitting or establishing Himself on the throne is unknown”.

The third dimension of moving the impetus from the obvious meaning to a hidden meaning had always been abhorred, for example, the verse, “The Hand of Allāh is above their hands”. The actual meaning would be that Allāh has a hand, the nature of the hand, however, is unknown to us. But, this third form of explanation, interprets hand to figuratively mean power which takes away the sense of the word from its obvious meaning.⁹

Therefore, we notice Imām Bukhārī’s indifferent attitude towards the interpretation of mustashābiḥat. Although, abrogated verses, fall under the category of Mutashābiḥât, the commentators of the Qurʿān including Imām Bukhārī have formulated guidelines for their inclusion and exclusion.

2. The exegetical genre of nāṣīkh al-Qurʿān wa-mansūkhuhu

Although the doctrine of abrogation (nāṣīkh) has recently attracted the attention of several scholars interested in the collection of the Qurʿān, John Burton argues that the explanations found in Islamic sources as to how the Qurʿān came to assume its present shape were introduced, at a relatively late date, by jurists seeking support for their theories about abrogation. The final text of the Qurʿān, according to Burton, was provided by the Prophet (pbuh) himself. John Wansbrough comes to a very different conclusion in his "Qurʿānic Studies",¹⁰ where he argues that the final text of the Qurʿān emerged from what were originally independent traditions that were brought together a century or more after the death of the Prophet (pbuh). Remarkably, Wansbrough like Burton, finds support for his theory in the doctrine of abrogation.¹¹

However, an understanding of nāṣīkh is essential to a proper understanding of the Qurʿān. ‘Ālī bin Abī Ṭalīb once passed a judge and inquired of him if he was familiar with the genre of nāṣīkh. He replied, “No”. ‘Ālī said, “You are doomed!”¹² The earliest treatises on the subject of abrogation are attributed to

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The commentators and legists find Qur’ānic sanction for the doctrine of abrogation in four verses. The term *naskh* itself occurs twice in the Qur’ān, each time with a different connotation. In the Qur’ān, 2:106 and 22:25 contain the term *naskh*, signifying abrogation in the first instance and implying a sense to cancel, annul or suppress in the second instance. In verse 16:101, the word *tabdil* (replacement) is used and finally in verse 3:7 according to some companions like ibn ‘Abbās, regard the terms *mutkam* and *mustahab* as referring to the abrogating and abrogated verses, respectively. This identification may have been prompted by the fact that in the *naskh* literature a verse that is not abrogated is classified as being *Mutkam* i.e. in force or effective.¹⁴

Amongst Muslim scholars there appears a great amount of difference on this subject. The most striking reason is the terminological difference between the earlier and the later authorities.

The term *naskh* has two meanings.

Firstly, it means "to cancel, to annul", and this is conformed in the Qur’ān verse 22:52, "Never sent we a messenger or a Prophet before thee but when he recited (the message) Satan proposed (opposition) in respect of that which he recited thereof. But Allāh annuls (yansakh) that which Satan proposeth. Then Allāh establishes his revelation.

Secondly, it means to displace, transfer, like for example, *Nasakhtu al-Kitāb* would mean I copied the book.¹⁵ The question that arises is whether these meanings, are both literal, or is one literal and the other figurative? Ibn al-Ḥājib has pointed various opinions. Al-Rāzi is of the opinion that "to annul" is the literal meaning and "to displace" the metaphoric meaning because

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¹⁴ Al-Ṭabarī, op. cit., v.3, pp172-173.

displacement entails the annihilation of an object and the creation of another whereas "to annul" means annihilation only, and for a word to be literal is better in a general context rather than in a specific context. The meaning taken "to annul" is general whilst the other is specific.16

The above-mentioned definitions were that of the Companions of the Prophet (pbuh) and their successors. However, the traditionalists define naskh to mean the culmination of a ruling.17

In the Ṣaḥiḥ, Imām Būkhrān did not differentiate between these two viewpoints. His object in the Ṣaḥiḥ was basically the inclusion of authentic Hadith material. We find that he included in his works only those traditions that fulfilled his criteria and that it contained the phrase mansūkh with it.

The companions and their successors regarded naskh to take place by abrogating a verse or part thereof with another verse, or part of a verse, either due to the termination of its period of practice, like verse 2:109, "Forgive and be indulgent (towards them) until Allāh give command" was abrogated by verse 9:29, "Fight against such of those who have been given the Scripture as believe not in Allāh nor the last day". When the period of practicing forgiveness terminated the command of fighting was revealed.

This change is at times enacted to change the impact from the obvious to the obscure or to specify any kind of generality.18

Due to the difference in definitions between the earlier and later authorities, the earlier authorities counted approximately five hundred verses of naskh if not more. According to the definition of the traditionalists, the number of naskh verses only reaches twenty as expounded by al-Suyūṭī in his al- Iṭqān.19 Shah Waliullāh apparently has disputed this claim and has further decreased it to five verses.20 The purpose of this study does not allow any further elucidation. For further reading and research, a number of manuscripts on the topic is available.

16 Pālanpūrī, op. cit., p164.
17 Rāghib al-Asfahānī: Muqaddamah al-Qur'ān, p600.
18 Waliyullāh Shāh: Al-Fawz al-Kabīr, p166.
Imâm Bukhârî, out of the twenty verses cited by Al-Suyûtî, has only included four in the Şahiîh and has disagreed with one. The four verses are: 2:184; 2:240; 2:284 and 8:66. The disputed verse is 4:32.

The discussion of abrogation brings us to the final discussion on Imâm Bukhârî's tafsîr which is the lexicon of the Qur'ân in the Şahiîh.

3. Qur'ânic Lexicography

In analysing the vocabulary of the Qur'ân, the Arabs of the classical period developed several approaches. The most prominent in this context is the gharîb works. In the modern sense, it indicates dictionaries of difficult words. "Difficulty", as manifested in the variety of Arabic writings which go under this title, is conceived in a variety of ways: Foreign words, dialect words, bedouin words or lexical oddities. While some works devoted to Qur'ânic vocabulary tend to isolate one aspect of this "difficult" tradition, others tend to be more all-inclusive.

The work conducted in this field of study are numerous. The first ever to establish this Science was, 'Abdullâh bin 'Abbâs, the cousin of the Prophet (pbuh). The most comprehensive is Al-Râghib al-Aşfâhâni's (d.502/1108) Al-Mufradât fi Gharîb al-Qur'ân, which is a far more complete work and is virtually a complete inventory of Qur'ânic vocabulary rather than a simple dictionary of "difficult" words.

Imâm Bukhart, in his Şahiîh, created chapters in accordance with the verses of the Qur'ân he intended commenting. He would converge upon its meaning with an authentic Hadîth. Throughout the Şahiîh, his writing genre shows introductory notes before any concrete substantiation. In the Kitâb al-Tafsîr, at the introduction of every sûrah, and at times at every chapter, he would elucidate a number of words or phrases. Their noticeably seem to exist no fixed pattern in the style and choice of words. Generally, the more difficult and obscure words are included to facilitate easy understanding of the Qur'ânic text.

On Sûrah al-Baqara (2:57), Mujâhid explains, in a note without isnâd, that the manna which God gave as food to the Hebrew people was a resin (şamgha)

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and that *salwā* was a kind of bird. A report that follows, documented by Sa‘īd bin Zayd as coming from the Prophet (pbuh), calls attention to the white truffle (*kam‘a*) as being similar to *manna*, and in addition as being a good remedy for eye trouble.

Imām Bukhārī, in the explanation of these difficult words or phrases relied greatly on the interpretations of ibn ‘Abbās which was transmitted to him through ‘Ali bin ‘Abī Talha, a student of Ibn ‘Abbās. Ahmad bin Ḥanbal said, "In Egypt, there is a manuscript of ‘Ali ibn ‘Abī Talha, it would not be futile for a person to travel thus far to acquire it".22

Imām Bukhārī did not copy the entire contents of this manuscript in his Ṣāḥīḥ. Imām Bukhārī did not mention his name in this Ṣāḥīḥ and only used the contents of the manuscript in his *tarajim* due to a certain degree of doubt surrounding the personality of ‘Ali ibn ‘Abī Talha. Another point worthy of mention is that Imām Bukhārī only used the manuscript for difficult words and not for commentary. Al-Suyūṭi’s *Itqān* reflects the contents to be only obscure words and Imām Bukhārī’s presentation suggests a similar deduction. However, Ṭabarî has quoted exegetical material from this manuscript which suggests its contents to be more elaborate and comprehensive.

Imām Bukhārī did not only rely on the manuscripts, or the interpretations of Ibn ‘Abbās from other sources, like Mujāhid, ‘Ikrama, but included references of Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Qatāda, Ibn al-Musayyib and Ma’mar. [See Chapter Four for details].

Imām Bukhārī has cited two poetic phrases as substantiation to obscure words (see below), although Wansbrough has apparently only found one line of poetry.23 The probability of this approach is to prove the possibility of using poetry in the understanding of words. A difference of opinion does exist in the usage of poetry, on the assumption that poetry will become a basis for the understanding of Qur’ānic text. The general opinion is that to elucidate obscure Qur’ānic words with poetry is permissible. Ibn ‘Abbās has said, "poetry is the divan (*diwān*) of the Arab, so if a word is obscure to us from the Qur’ān which Allāh has revealed in Arabic, we will retreat to its divan and find the meaning from there".

22 Pālanpūrī, op. cit., p159.

In the introductory section of the tafsîr of surah ten, Imâm Bukhârî, as usual, includes references of difficult words. In this introduction the word La-awwâhun is translated to mean compassion. Imâm Bukhârî cites a poetic couplet to substantiate this meaning. Similarly in the introductory section of the tafsîr of verse (11:7) the phrase sijjîl is translated to mean severe. Imâm Bukhârî regards sijjîl and sijjîn to be similar in meaning and documents a couplet of Tamîm bin Muqbil to substantiate this claim.

This than brings us to the end of Imâm Bukhârî’s genre in the tafsîr of the Qur’ân. Before coming to any conclusion I would like to discuss the various types of Tafâsîr and compare it to Bukhârî’s Şâhîh.
CHAPTER EIGHT
BUKHARĪ AND THE TYPES OF TAFSĪR

The word tafsir is derived from the root word fassara, which means to explain, to expound. It means "explanation" or "interpretation".¹ In technical language the word tafsir is used for the explanation, interpretation and commentary of the Qur'ān, comprising all the ways of obtaining knowledge that contributes to its proper understanding, explaining its meanings and clarifying its legal implications.

The Qur'ān being the word of Allāh, revealed unto the Prophet (pbuh) for the guidance of Man, had to be understandable by them. Man in the understanding of the Word of Allāh was firstly responsible to the Prophet (pbuh) for its elucidation and understanding. The Qur'ān revealed in Arabic, contained inter-alia within it, language, paradigm, social and cultural norms, historical analysis, and religious obligations. Therefore, we find that the various exegetes, interpreted and highlighted certain aspects of the Qur'ān which than became a tafsir genre for their successors. This then gave rise to the various forms of tafsir literature.

1. Tafsir Types in Muslim Academic Circles

In Muslim academic circles, tafsir literature is divided into three types:²

A. Tafsir bi-'l-Riwaya (by transmission) also know as Tafsir-bi-'l-Ma'thūr.
B. Tafsir bi-'l-Ray (by sound opinion).
C. Tafsir bi-'l-Ishāra (by indication, from signs).

A. Tafsir bi-'l-Riwaya

By this is meant all explanation of the Qur'ān which can be traced back through a chain of transmission to a sound source. i.e.:
(1) The Qur'ān itself.
(2) The explanation of the Prophet (pbuh).
(3) The explanation by the Companions of the Prophet (pbuh).

Naturally, the explanation of the Qur'ān by the Qur'ān and the explanation of the Qur'ān by the Prophet (pbuh) are the two highest sources of tafsir.

¹ Wehr Hans: A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic, p713.
B. Tafsîr bi-’l-Ray

The second kind of tafsîr is the so called tafsîr bi-’l-Ray. It is not based directly on transmission of knowledge by the predecessors, but on the use of reason and ijtiham. This does not mean interpretation by mere opinion, but it means deriving an opinion through ijtiham based on sound sources.

C. Tafsîr bi-’l-Ishâra

By tafsîr bi-’l-Ishâra is meant the interpretation of the Qur’ân beyond its outer meanings, and the people practising it concern themselves with meanings attached to verses of the Qur’ân which are not visible to anyone, but only to him whose heart Allâh has opened. This kind of Tafsîr is often found with mystically inclined authors. However, Ibn al-Qayyim is reported to have said that results achieved by tafsîr bi-’l-Ishâra are permissible and constitute good findings if the following four principles are jointly applied:

1. That there is no disagreement with the plain meaning of the verse.
2. That it is a sound meaning in itself.
3. That in the wording there is some indication towards it.
4. That there are close connections between it and the plain meaning.

2. Wansbrough’s Exegetical Typology

Wansbrough in his Quranic Studies has produced the following exegetical typology:

A. Haggadic
B. Halakhic
C. Masoretic
D. Rhetorical and Allegorical

A. Haggadic exegesis is a narrative form of exegesis which could be closely classified to Tafsîr bi-’l-Riwaya. Halakhic exegesis takes the form of

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acquiring from the text rules of conduct and behaviour, like aḥkām (laws
and prescription), iḥtiṣāf (dispute) and nāskh (abrogation). This could
be classified as Tafsīr bi-'l-Rayā.

B. Masoretic exegesis is divided into three elements due to the Qur’ān
Masorah being divided into three elements, lexical explanation,
grammatical analysis and an agreed apparatus of variant readings.

C. Rhetorical and Allegorical refers to language devices like conciseness
(Ijāz), brevity (iḥtiṣār), ellipsis (ḥaddīf) and mathāl (extended simile);
and to symbolic interpretation. This symbolic interpretation or allegory
is a very close equivalent to Tafsīr bi-'l-Ishāra.

Modern tafsīr (interpretation) uses text emmanent exegesis - the diachronic
approach where the origin of the text is studied or text immanent exegesis - the
synchronic approach, where the text itself is studied or reception criticism,
where the readers position is emphasized to understand the implication of the
text upon the reader.

3. A Comparison between ʿImām Bukhārī and Wansbrough

ʿImām Bukhārī in his ʿṢāḥīḥ approached tafsīr very differently from the
conventional tafsīr after him. The tafsīr of Ṭabarī, who wrote his tafsīr just
after ʿImām Bukhārī’s death, could be classified as haggadic or tafsīr bi-'l-
Riwaya. Whereas ʿImām Bukhārī’s tafsīr contains all the five types of tafsīr
expounded by Wansbrough.

Wansbrough classified ʿImām Bukhārī’s exegetical material as predominantly
haggadic which reflects upon the Kūrān al-Tafsīr of the ʿṢāḥīḥ only, whereas a
study of the entire ʿṢāḥīḥ reveals the halakhic type as in Kūrān al-Wuḍū’.

In fact, masoretic exegesis is so conspicuous in the tafsīr, that Wansbrough
mentions, “In the corpus of 475 traditions every Qur’ānic sūrah received some
attention from the author, if only in the form of a single lexical identification.”
. This lexicography is evident throughout the tafsīr.

5 Ibid., pp227-243.
6 Ibid., p181.
Like, for example, Qur'ân 2:178, a variant reading of the verse is mentioned or 2:198 where the variant reading of Ibn 'Abbâs reflects a masoretic exegesis. Wansbrough tried to isolate the blurring that occurs in exegetical works between scripture and its interpretation by drawing attention to the various devices used for separation of the two and their presence or absence. An aspect of this problem is contained also in the notion of variant readings to the text of the Qur'ân and the suggestion of their exegetical origin and intent, and the question of how their existence is to be understood in the light of a supposedly fixed text of scripture. Adrian Brockett argues this point, suggesting that variants have no significance for Muslims and have been misinterpreted by the scholarly community outside Islâm.7

The essential difference between Imâm Bukhârî and the haggadists is the insertion of appropriate isnâds. The insertion of isnâd into tafsîr material has uplifted the image of the Sahîh and its tafsîr material. Even the lexicography, etymological or grammatical exegesis is mostly not without isnâd.

The chapter dealing with the lexicography of the Sahîh in this dissertation is proof of rhetoric and masoretic exegesis. Wansbrough has found only one line of poetry in the tafsîr of the Sahîh,8 whereas two lines of poetry has been found.

In short, Imâm Bukhârî’s impetus in tafsîr was a collection of authentic tafsîr material. The Majaz al-Qur‘ân of Abû ‘Ubayda served as a guideline for this task. In the final chapter, our conclusions and assumptions will be drawn from the material thus far presented and its implications on the concept of Qur‘ânic hermeneutics.

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8 Wansbrough, op. cit., p217.
The Sahih of Imam Bukhari is a work of authoritative Hadith literature, which encaptulates two centuries or more of Islamic 'ilm, the word describing that knowledge which is useful for the worship of Allâh and for life in society. Information about the Qur'ân is an important part of this store of knowledge. In fact, it is impossible to separate Qur'anic elements from the rest of knowledge, without doing violence to the whole. This is clearly witnessed in the way Imam Bukhari integrates legal material with Qur'anic data. At the same time, the presence of a section dealing with tafsîr al-Qur'ân, witnesses the fact of an independent and parallel development of the science of tafsîr.

The emergence of a full-blown work of tafsîr, such as the Jâmi' al-Bayan of Al-Tabari, from the same century as that of the great muhaddithûn, is startling evidence of the difference between the concerns of a mufassir and a muhaddith.

The mufassir was primarily concerned, if not wholly, with the elucidation of the revealed text, for whatever that might serve, and to achieve the end, he was open to several possible sources of information. The muhaddith, on the other hand, was concerned primarily with reporting the sunna of the Prophet (pbulh), and when the reports he brought involved the Qur'anic text, his effort joined that of a mufassir. By analysing the efforts of Imam Bukhari, we realise that the Qur'ân is not a "book" in the ordinary sense of the term because it was never formulated as a connected whole but rather was revealed to the Prophet (pbulh), piecemeal as situations demanded. The Qur'ân itself as well as its opponents are aware of this fact. The Qur'ân says, "Those who disbelieve say why has the Qur'ân not been sent down upon him (Prophet (pbulh)) as a whole all at once." (25:32). A total revelation at one single time was impossible by the very nature of the fact that it had come as a guidance for Muslims from time to time as needs arose.

The understanding of the Qur'anic message is to study it with its immediate background, the activity of the Prophet (pbulh) himself and his struggle under the guidance of the Qur'ân. The understanding of the general Arab way of life, their customs and institutions is vital, because the Arab milieu pre-supposes the Prophet's (pbulh) activity. The pre-Islamic religion is not the only thing, their legal institutions, economic life and political relationships are also of vital importance.

It is at times objected that to try to understand the Qur'ân and put it back into historical context is to confine its message to that place and time. Nothing is further
from truth than this. The whole idea behind our contention that the Qur’ān has to be put in its context is that it must be understood properly. Imam Bukhārī has concentrated a great deal on this aspect, referred to as "Occasions of Revelation" (asbāb al-nuzūl). These asbāb al-nuzūl are no more or no less than historical materials which are meant to shed light on the passages of the Qur’ān and provide a context for understanding its injunctions. Imam Bukhārī’s theme was not to confine the Qur’ān to its historical context. He believed that in doing so, he wanted people to understand the true import of the Qur’ānic message.

In fact, Imam Bukhārī’s display of naskh material, and to all writers of tafsīr, the science of asbāb al-nuzūl is essential. A systematic illustration of this can be found in the banning of alcohol. Initially, alcohol was mentioned as amongst the blessings of Allāh. (16:66). Thereafter, the Qur’ān speaks of the harms of alcohol and certain of its benefits. (2:219). An incident of the misreading of the text of the Qur’ān under the influence of alcohol caused the revelation of verse (4:43) of the Qur’ān restricting the performance of salāt under its influence. Finally, when the Muslims moved to Medina, they became a society and an informal state. Alcohol being detrimental to the harmonious relationship of this new society was than totally prohibited by verses (5:90-91). The background of these verses makes intelligible to us the understanding of the Qur’ān. the concept of naskh and the Law of Graduation together with reason and method of implication.

Furthermore, the understanding of the Qur’ān is not confined to the understanding of its historical context. In fact, mere knowledge of the Arabic language will not suffice in its understanding. The incident of ‘Adi bin Ḥātīm quoted by Imam Bukhārī, reflects upon the blind fallacy of knowing Arabic and understanding the Qur’ān. ‘Adi, conversant in the Arabic language, realises his misinterpretation only when enlightened by the Prophet (pbuh) about its correct interpretation.

The Qur’ān says, "We have revealed unto Thee the Remembrance that thou may explain to Mankind that which has been revealed for them. and that haply they may reflect" (16:44).

There seems to be a dire need to expose such a hermeneutical theory that will help us understand the meaning of the Qur’ān as a whole so that both the theological sections of the Qur’ān and its ethical and ethico-legal parts become a unified whole. Allāh says, “This is the Scripture whereof there is no doubt, a guidance unto those who ward off (evil).” (2:3). It stems from this verse that the Qur’ān in its entirety is a source of guidance, guidance which will be achieved by applying the teachings of the entire Qur’ān to one’s self.
The Qur'an says, "And Lo! thou (Prophet (pbuh)) art of a tremendous nature." (68:4). 'A'isha was questioned about the nature of the Prophet (pbuh). She replied, "The nature of the Prophet (pbuh) was the Qur'an."\(^1\)

Therefore, the understanding of the Qur'an as a whole is to understand the character and sunna of the Prophet (pbuh). This can be achieved from the Hadith material on the Qur'an which is largely reflective and edificatory. It is also exemplary, didactic and at times juridical, thus nourishing the concerns of the Hadith scholars, who saw the sunna as the key to the application of Qur'anic principles to the life of the Muslim society. Hadith literature furnishes an instructive view of the kind of information that was and is accessible to the masses of Muslims in their effort to reflect and act upon the Qur'anic revelation. Hadith are short, concrete, vivid and practical pieces information. It is no wonder that they have provided perhaps the primary religious nourishment of the Islamic community.

Imâm Bukhârî has displayed throughout the section on tafsîr, the link between the sunna and the Qur'an. I would say that Imâm Bukhârî has illustrated the Prophet's (pbuh) fulfilment of explaining the Qur'an to Mankind both by word and practice. He has shown how the sunna details that which is general in the Qur'an, for example, the rules of pilgrimage. He has shown how the sunna clarifies that which is obscure in the Qur'an, especially the meanings and application of words and expressions. The sunna contains acts which demonstrate the meaning of the revealed text. The sunna answers queries on rules of worship and behaviour. Finally, the sunna is both elucidation (bayân) of the Qur'an and supplement.

The question that now arises is that does the sunna elucidate everything in the Qur'an. Imâm Bukhârî's pattern of referring to Ibn 'Abbâs, Qatadâ and other scholars reflects upon the fact that the sunna does not detail everything in the Qur'an. However, Imâm Bukhârî did not include any material without the citation of an authority. Wherever information is cited without a source, especially and only in the tarajim, then the source of that information is Abû 'Ubaidah Ma'mar bin al-Muthannâ. Abû 'Ubaidah is regarded as one of the first persons to compile a manuscript on gharib words.\(^2\) Imâm Bukhârî used the tafsîr of Abû 'Ubaidah known as Majáz al-Qur'an as a tafsîr source. Imâm Bukhârî only used it to extract the meanings of words and expressions, not the exegetical textual interpretations. Because this tafsîr contained less favoured suppositions, incondite and inconclusive

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matters, this was all imported into the Sahih, thus making the understanding of the tafsir of the Sahih extremely difficult.\(^3\)

Imâm Bukhârî's attempts to rely on other sources rather than to incorporate his personalised opinion is probably due to his cognizance of the following Hadîth: The Prophet (pbuh) said, "Whoever explains the Qurʾân according to his (wrong) personal opinion shall take his place in Hell."\(^4\) The prohibition of Qurʾânic explanation by personal opinion was intended either to confine the understanding of the Qurʾân to that which has come down by tradition (naql) and to that which is heard from authorities on exegesis and to abandon the eliciting of meanings from the texts of the Qurʾân and independent understanding, or to be something different. It is certainly wrong to believe that the purpose was to limit our understanding of the Qurʾân to only that which one hears and receives from an authority; and this is wrong for several reasons:

Firstly, it is a stipulation that it should be heard from the mouth of the Prophet (pbuh) and be supported by a chain of narration going back to him, but this is something which applies only in the case of a small part of the Qurʾân. As for the explanations of the Qurʾân which Ibn ʿAbbas and Ibn Masʿûd gave from their own understanding, it should not be accepted and should be called "an explanation of the Qurʾân by personal opinion", because they have not heard this explanation from the Prophet (pbuh). The same analogy would apply to the other Companions as well.

Secondly, companions of the Prophet (pbuh) and exegeters who flourished after them disagreed over the explanation of some Qurʾânic verses; they gave such varying explanations of them that it is impossible to reconcile. It is impossible to assume that all these conflicting explanations were heard from the Prophet (pbuh). Thus it is definitely clear that on the meaning of the words of the Qurʾân every exegete came to his own conclusions through his eliciting, investigation and personal effort.

Thirdly, the Prophet (pbuh) prayed for Ibn ʿAbbâs saying, "O Allah! bestow upon him the understanding of the religion and teach him the interpretation (taʿwîl) of the Qurʾân".\(^5\) If interpretation of the Qurʾân is something which is heard from the Prophet (pbuh) like Revelation and which is preserved the way revelation is preserved, what is the sense in specifying Ibn ʿAbbâs in this case?

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\(^3\) Kashmiri A.: Faid al-Bâri, v.4 p149.

\(^4\) Al-Tirmidhi: Sunan, Chapter on Tafsîr, Hadîth 1.

As for the prohibition of explaining the Qur'ân by personal opinion, it is for one of two reasons. One of them is that the person giving an explanation has an opinion of his own on a matter, and this opinion is influenced by his nature (\textit{tab'î}) and passion (\textit{hawâ'}). So he interprets the Qur'ân according to his opinion and passion in order that he may adduce an argument in favour of his purpose. This happens in different conditions. Sometimes it happens despite knowledge of the Shari'a, as in the case of a man who adduces an argument from a certain Qur'ânic verse for validating his heresy knowing well that this is not intended in the verse.

Sometimes it happens to a man ignorant of the basic principles of Shari'a. But since a Qur'ânic verse can be interpreted from two or more perspectives, his understanding inclines to that perspective which suits his purpose and that aspect is given preponderance by his own opinion and passion.

Sometimes a man has a valid purpose for which he seeks a proof from the Qur'ân, and he adduces a proof for that purpose with a verse in which, he knows, that purpose is not intended. For example, a man who invites people to strive hard against hardness of the mind, heart and soul says that Allâh ordered Moses (pbuh), "Go to Pharaoh; he has certainly transgressed grievously," (20:24), and, pointing at his own heart says, "This is what is meant by Pharaoh". This kind of explanation is sometimes employed by some religious preachers for good purposes by embellishing their speeches and encouraging their audience, but this is unacceptable.

We find this practice of tafsîr by wrong personal opinion practised by Shi'ites, Mu'tazilites and Modernists. We find the \textit{Tafhim al-Qur'an} of Mawdūdī and of his other works as exemplary in this context. His fundamental principle stems from establishing God's Sovereignty on Earth and the freedom of criticism which formed the basis of his thought as expounded in his works. The Qur'ân speaks of man's objective to be worship. Allâh says, "I created the jinn and humankind only that they might worship Me." Similarly, in the socio-political context of South African politics, the words oppression and umma are used by Muslim activists to manipulate Qur'ânic material to accord the freedom struggle a religiously legal impetus in accordance to their delusive arguments.\(^6\)

Being influenced by whim and passion, the personal opinion regarding understanding the Qur'ân makes a person oblivious to the background knowledge of linguistic facts, legal principles and the accounts of the circumstances of revelation.

Sometimes the context of the verses are ignored or only part of the evidence furnished by the context is considered, the rest overlooked. Many a times only the lexicographical sense of obscure words is taken into account, ignoring the light casted upon their meaning by the authorities who lived closer to the time of revelation.

Muḥammad ‘Abduh has divided tafsīr into two divisions, the superior and the inferior. According to his classification, superior tafsir refers to the deep indepth understanding of the Qur’ān.7

This type of tafsir requires the understanding of the principles of tafsīr (Uṣūl al-tafsīr). A number of works exists on the methods and principles of Qur’ān interpretation.8

A close analysis of the Șahīh indicates the types of knowledge required to interpret Qur’ānic material. The following are some of the important requirements:

1. The in-depth knowledge of the Arabic language and its rules, like grammar and etymology.
2. The knowledge of Rhetoric.
3. The knowledge of the principles of Fiqh.
4. The knowledge of Asbāb al-Nuzūl.
5. The knowledge of Nasikh wa-al-Mansūkh.
6. The knowledge of the variations of Qur’ānic recital.
7. Intuitive and inspired or gifted knowledge. This cannot be acquired by conventional means, but Allāh provides it to those who possess high levels of piety.

Suyūṭī has pointed out fifteen sciences required for the purpose of "superior" tafsir. Those analysed above form the kernel of these sciences.9

The inferior division of tafsir is to understand the Qur’ān superficially which enlightens the heart, attracts one towards good and protects him from evil, and this division of tafsir could be achieved by any person, provided that he consults the Ulama if and when in doubt. Allāh says, "And in truth, We have made the Qur’ān easy to remember (understand), but is there any that remembereth (pondereth)" (54:17).

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8 Ibid.
9 Suyūṭī, Al-Itqān, v.2 pp179-180.
GLOSSARY

Abwàb sing. Báb
Chapter or section of book.

‘Adil
An authentic transmitter.

Aṣḥāfi
A gold coin used as legal tender.

Dirham pl. Darāhim
A silver coin used as a means of exchange.

Fiqh
Islamic Jurisprudence.

Du‘ā’
Mode of supplication to Allâh.

Ghusl
A major ritual ablution. (i.e. washing of the whole body).

Hādîth pl. Ahâdîth
Refers to the sayings, actions or tacit approval of the Prophet (S.A.W.)

Hajj
Greater pilgrimage to Makkah and one of the five pillars of Islâm.

‘Id
Literally means festival, it refers to the two main festivals of Islam, ‘Id al-Fîtr (festival after the month of fast) and ‘Id al-Aḍhâ (festival of sacrifice).

Iḥrām
State of ritual consecration of a pilgrim to Makkah.

Ijtihâd
Independent legal reasoning.

‘Ilal
The science to determining complicated discrepancies and weaknesses of Ahâdîth.

Imâm
Literally means leader, it is used as a title of honour.

Isnâd
Chain of transmitters who transmitted tradition from one to another.

Jarb
The science of invalidating transmitters.

Jihâd
Holy war.

Kalâm
Scholastic theology, dealing mainly and primarily with beliefs.

**Mansūkh**
Abrogated.

**Matn**
The text or substance of the transmission.

**Marfū’**
The isnād of a hadith goes back to the Prophet (pbuh) though it might be broken somewhere.

**Mawṣūl or Muttaṣil**
The isnād of the hadith is unbroken and goes back to the Prophet (pbuh) or to a companion.

**Madhhab, pl. Madhāhib**
A school of thought or religious denomination, like the four Madhāhib: Ḥanafī, Māliki, Shāfi‘i, and Ḥanbalī.

**Muḥadith pl. Muḥadithûn**
A person occupied and proficient in the field of ḥadīth. In classical terms it refers to a person who is an expert in the science of Rijāl (biographies of all ḥadīth transmitters), ‘Ilal, he knows a considerable amount of ḥadīth out of memory, and had formally heard the six canonical works, the Musnad of Ahmad bin Ḥanbal, the Sunan of Baihaqi and the Mu’jam of Ṭabrāni. (Tadrīb).

**Muḥkam**
Clear revelations.

**Mutashabih**
Obscurity of meaning.

**Mu’allaq**
An isnād having a single or more links missing in sequence at the beginning of the sanad.

**Nāsīkh**
Abrogating

**Rak’ah**
A unit of prayer which includes standing, genuflexion, prostrations and sitting.

**Ṣahih**
A sound ḥadīth in whose isnād or matn there are no weaknesses. In this dissertation it Refers to the Jāmi’ of Imām Bukhārī.

**Sanad**
Chain of authorities on which a tradition is based.

**Shari’a**
The canon law of Islām.

**Shawwāl**
The tenth month of the Muslim calendar.

**Shuyūkh, sing. Shaikh**
In hadith terminology it refers to a person's tutors.

**Sunna**
It refers almost exclusively to the practice of the Prophet (pbuh).

**Sūrah**
A chapter or section of the Qur'ān.

**Ta'wil**
Explanation of a verse.

**Tafsīr**
Exegesis or interpretation.

**Tarājim**
The introductory notes or passages in the Sahih, generally at the beginning of each chapter (bāb).

**‘Ulama, sing. ‘Alim**
Refers to learned scholars of Islam.

**Umma**
It refers to Muslims as one integrated community.

**Umrah**
Smaller pilgrimage which, unlike the hajj proper, need not be performed at a particular time of the year and whose performance involves fewer ceremonies.

**Zihār**
A form of divorce constituted by oath or word of repudiation.
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