

In the Name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

## Interdisciplinary Studies of Quran and Hadith

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### **Aims:**

The Holy Quran and Sunna (the Prophet and Imams' Traditions) are two basic sources of Islam and *Imamiyyah* school and the centers of attention of Muslim scholars from ancient times to the present. According to the Quran, there is nothing in the universe but mentioned in the Book (Q 6:59). Also, the Traditions of Ahl al-Bayt (the Prophet and Imams) being rooted in the Revelation, contain invaluable issues in different realms, scientific or otherwise, that can shed light on most problems if duly considered.

Interdisciplinary studies have been ascribed a high standing in today's academic circles. The progressive trend of knowledge and sciences has made it incumbent upon researchers to go beyond their specialties for solving problems that have become more and more complicated; in other words, one needs to have recourse to other realms of knowledge to solve the problematic issues. Islamic studies and humanities could be classified under interdisciplinary studies in this respect.

The Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic has time and again emphasized the necessity of the Islamization of human and social sciences in his remarks. Imam Sadiq University, the academic center that arose after the Islamic revolution, with the mission of acting as an authority in the field of Islamic and human sciences, has assumed a fundamental role in producing Islamic-oriented humanities and has played its part in actualizing this task since its inception four decades ago. One can witness the outcome of this monumental task in ISU publications and dissertations. Hence, the necessity of publishing this output and its equivalents from other academic centers in the form of scholarly articles rendered in Arabic and English languages, a task which if fulfilled, will provide a synergistic effort leading to perfection. In regard to the existing high potential in ISU Language Center that enjoys the participation of a knowledgeable faculty equipped with the above-mentioned languages next to Islamic capacity especially in the fields of Quranic and Tradition Studies, jurisprudence and law,

philosophy and theology, the possibility of producing interdisciplinary works is high.

The ISU Language Center has aptly felt the necessity of undertaking the Initiative of launching an Unequaled Quarterly Journal, Interdisciplinary Studies of Quran & Hadith in Arabic and English that could mirror the above-mentioned capacity.

**Scope:**

The scope of our activity with the centrality of Quran and Hadith is as follows:

- Language, Culture and Communication studies in the Quran and Hadith
- Management studies in the Quran and Hadith
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**Contents**

- **Image of God Reconsidered through Character of Seth: Islamic Hadith Literature as a Bridge between the Holy Qur'an and the Judeo-Christian Resources..... 1**  
*Ahmad Pakatchi*
  
- **Translation of Culture-Specific Items in Three Chapters of the Holy Quran: The Case Study of Translators with Different L1 Backgrounds ..... 13**  
*Mona Roodashty, Mohammad Amin Mozaheb, Amir Ghajarieh*
  
- **From Jesus to the Holy Prophet Mohammad Transmogrification and Deconstruction ..... 33**  
*Sajjd Gheytsi*
  
- **Obedience and Consciousness of Creatures in the Qur'an: A Cognitive Approach ..... 53**  
*Hossein Pourghasemian*
  
- **Analysis of the Textual Coherence in Nahj-Al-Balagheh Based on Halliday and Hassan Model: A Case Study of Ashbah Sermon ..... 69**  
*Abolfazl khoshmanesh, Mohammad Javad Rahimian*
  
- **Narratological Re-reading of Prophet Yusuf and Zulaikha Story ..... 91**  
*Ahmad Karimi, Akbar Shahiditabar, Farhad Morsali Pavarsi*



Vol. 1, Issue. 1 (Serial 1), Summer 2023

## Image of God Reconsidered through Character of Seth: Islamic Hadith Literature as a Bridge between the Holy Qur'an and the Judeo-Christian Resources

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### Abstract

The concept of God has a significant place in the anthropology of Abrahamic religions. One approach to achieving greater unity among the teachings of the Quran and the Bible may be to focus on the character of Seth and his relationship with his father Adam, and his enjoyment of all divine privileges. While the Quran does not mention Seth, Islamic hadith sources can associate him with the generous Jewish-Christian figure. This research uses a comparative approach between the theology of Abrahamic religions and employs a componential conceptual analysis method. The results show that Seth's enjoyment of divine rule and Adam's knowledge in the Bible are expressed in combination with the image of God, while in the Quran, they are expressed analytically, with rule meaning caliphate and knowledge meaning Asmā' (names).

**Keywords:** Adam, Biblical anthropology, Quranic anthropology, Caliph of God, Asmā'

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## 1. Introduction

The concept of the image of God was always inspiring in the anthropology of Abrahamic religions. Although a wide influence, this concept was a subject of debate too. If the image of God is understood in an everyday meaning, it leads to unacceptable anthropomorphism. Then it is particularly important to understand the depth of this concept in the relevant resources. Should be added the creation of man – namely Adam – by God in his image not only mentioned evidently in Genesis (1: 26-27) and further in Jewish- Christian religious literature, but also it is present in Islamic sources.

There is a famous Hadith, a saying narrated from the Prophet Muhammad which speaks evidently of God creating Adam in his image; but it is possible to be rooted in the Qur'an too with a different formulation. It is always useful for such an aim, to use semantic-theological bridges which help to find the common component between variants of concepts in different religions.

## 2. Theoretical Background

One of the themes that can help to make such a comparison between Jewish, Christian, and Islamic accounts is the figure of Adam's son, Seth, and the characteristics referred to him in both religions. The main question in this essay is what brings us to a deeper understanding of the concept of the image of God to use the accounts related to Seth as a semantic Bridge. The method used in this essay is componential semantics applied on the ground of a comparative religious study

### *2.1. Seth from Adam's Image to the Image of God*

As a departure point, one could refer to a verse in Genesis speaking about Seth as follows: "And Adam lived one hundred and thirty years, and begot a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named his Seth" (Genesis, 5, p. 3).

Genetically, it is very usual for all of Adam's children to be like their father in the face, even Cain. There is not understandable to restrict being in father's likeness and image to Seth unless the subject is not a physical similitude. Some resources tried to render this likeness to

beauty in the figure, as mentioned in the Book of Adam and Eve (Malan, 1882), saying:

“And Eve brought forth a son perfectly beautiful in figure and in countenance. His beauty was like that of his father Adam, yet more beautiful” (Malan, 1882).

The more serious commentary on this likeness is what is reflected in Jewish and Christian resources in the story of Seth struggling with a wild beast; in this story, the likeness is rendered to the fact that Seth is in the image of God like his father Adam. For example, we read in Haggadic literature as follows:

“Adam bade Eve go with Seth to the gates of Paradise and entreat God to have mercy upon him and send His angel to catch up some of the oil of life flowing from the tree of His mercy and give it to his messengers. The ointment would bring him rest and banish the pain consuming him. On his way to Paradise, Seth was attacked by a wild beast. Eve called out to the assailant, " How durst thou lay hand on the image of God?"

The ready answer came: "It is thine own fault. Hadst thou not opened thy mouth to eat of the forbidden fruit, my mouth would not be opened now to destroy a human being." But Seth remonstrated: " Hold thy tongue! Desist from the image of God until the day of judgment." And the beast gave way, saying, " See, I refrain myself from the image of God," and it slunk away to its covert. (Anderson & Stone, 1999, pp. 41-43; Ginzberg, 1909, pp. 93-94; Orlov, 2013, pp. 147-149).

This story is repeated and reproduced in Christian literature and some scholars such as Rivka Nir argued that the struggle between Seth and the beast should be understood as a struggle between the image of God and Satan (McGill, 2021, p. 43; Nir, 2008, pp. 327-339).

Anyway, this interpretation of Genesis' statement about Seth being in the likeness of Adam, makes the figure of Seth the second pace of human beings as the image of God, generation after generation. It is evidence that such an understanding about the position of Seth can make him a semantic bridge to solve the issue of the image of God.

We know that Seth has a significant place among Gnostic trends including Mandaeism, Manichaeism, and Christian sects. In connection with Seth as the image of God, particularly, it is worthy to pay attention

to Christianized Barbeloites which in the later 2nd century, had fused with the Sethites to form the Gnostic Sethianism. In the beliefs of this group, "Seth and Christ were identified as bearers of the image of God who had recently appeared in the world as the Logos to rescue Jesus from the cross" (Turner, 2001, p. 259).

Among Muslim ancient sects, a near belief is recorded from Ġanāḥiyya, a sect considered an extremist Shia sect. They believed that the spirit of God was entered inside Adam, after inside Seth, and then after that 'image (ṣūra)' was circulated among people (Baġdādī, 1977, p. 236; Īġī, 1997).

## **2.2. Seth as Caliph of Adam**

It is known from the Qur'an (2:30) that Adam was the caliph of God on the earth and now, we are tracing the sources speaking of this caliphate transmitted to Seth. After speaking about the connection between Adam's image and the image of God, it is important to know of Islamic accounts speaking about Seth as the caliph of Adam who was caliph of God. Although there is no mention of Seth's name in the Qur'an, he is well-known in Islamic exegesis and hadith literature.

The oldest account is a word narrated of Ka'b al-Aḥbār, a figure supposed to be a Jew from Du-l-Kilā' tribe of Yemen who converted to Islam and became a strongly influential scholar. He says in this concern that according to the command of God, Adam addressed his son Seth and said: "O my son! You are my caliph (successor) after me; thus, you must try to live with piety and to grasp the strong cord (of truth) (Ibn 'Asākir, 1995, p. 281).

Also, a Hadith narrated from Imam Muḥammad al-Bāqir mentioned that when it was the time of death for Adam, he gathered all his offspring including men and women, and said to them: "O my children! God had revealed to me that he shall raise my spirit up and commanded me to nominate my best child, the gift of God – i.e., Seth - as successor. This is God who has chosen him for me and for you. Then listen to him and obey his commands, because he is my successor and my caliph upon you. Then all of them said: "We shall listen to him, obey his commands, and don't disagree with him" ('Ayyāšī, 2001, p.307).

Another Hadith received from Imam Ja'far al-Šādiq (d. 765) the sixth imam, says that Gabriel commanded the angels to stand in a queue

behind Seth ... and Seth said: "O Gabriel! How it may come right for me while you are in the highest rank of the angels?" Gabriel said: "Do you know that God created your father Adam and introduced him to the angels and commanded us to pray to him; then he was our leader to be this a tradition in his offspring. But today God makes him die and you are his successor and heir of his knowledge, and you are expected to take his position (Rāvandī, 2009, p. 210; an abridged version: Al-Ṭabarī, 1986, p.101).

In the resources from the 10th century, we come across several times in the official Persian translation of the Qur'an known as Tarğome-ye Tafsīr-e Ṭabarī with the name of Seth as caliph of Adam (Yağmāyi, 1977, pp. 398- 399). As well, the historical book of Muṭahhar ibn Ṭāhir al-Maqdisī introduced Seth as Adam's successor, his viceroy, and the caliph after him (Maqdisī, n.d.: 3, p.11). A century later, Ğurğānī says that while the time of death was coming to Adam, God revealed and commanded him to nominate Seth as caliph upon his offspring; then he had raised to preach them ... and had nominated such as caliph" (Ğurğānī, 2009, pp. 661- 662).

In the 12th century, Meybodī says that "Adam prepared Seth, nominated him as his caliph on the earth and had bestowed to him his testimony" (Meybodī, 1992, 8, p.408). Also, Ibn al-Ğawzī (d. 1201) opened a chapter in his historical work with the title "the account of the caliphate of Seth instead of his Father Adam" (Ibn al-Ğawzī, 1992, p.229).

Finally, it is worthy to refer to a statement of Rumi (d. 1273) which says: "Adam's son was strong and matured and was neglecting the desires of this earthy world. Thus, a message came down from God that he should be the caliph of Adam" (Aflākī, 1983, p. 493). Rumi also says in a poem of him:

آن کز آدم رست و دست شئیث چید      پس خلیفه‌ش کرد آدم کان بدید

"Seth, who had grown out of Adam and gained what he gained in his hands.

Thus, Adam made him caliph, while saw him with these virtues (Rumi, 1994, p. 195).

### 2.3. Image of God and Piety

The story of Adam in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam is strictly connected with the eating of the forbidden fruit, a sin. In this concern, some religious resources, especially in Judaism bridges the concept of the image of God and piety in Seth's figure. An account speaking of sin as a cause affecting man's capacity to be an image of God is observable in the Haggadic story of Seth's struggle with the wild beast previously narrated.

Further, we should pay attention to some interpretations of the verse of Genesis saying:

“Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man” (Genesis. 9: 6).

At first, it should be considered explanations of some Rabbis, scholars of Mishna and Midrash who discussed the matter. Rabbi Akiva ben Yosef lectured: He who sheds blood is regarded as though he had impaired [God's] likeness. What is the proof? Whose Sheddeth man's blood, etc. What is the reason? For in the image of God made human.

Also, Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah lectured: “He who refrains from procreation is as though he impaired [God's] image. What is the proof? For in the image of God made human, which is followed by, and you, be ye fruitful, and multiply. Finally, it is Ben Azzai who lectured: He who refrains from procreation is as though he shed blood and impaired [God's] likeness. What is the proof? Whose sheddeth man's blood, etc.; why? For in the image of God made human, which is followed by, and you, be ye fruitful and multiply” (Yevamot, p. 63; Midrash Rabba, 1977, p.280).

This theme is discussed in the Qur'an too, while the issue of negation of murder and crime on the earth relates to the special position given to Adam; here 'caliph of God' instead of 'image of God.' The Quranic verse referred to is the following:

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً قَالُوا أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَنْ يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ قَالَ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ (بقره/٣٠)

“And when thy Lord said unto the angels: Lo! I am about to place a viceroy in the earth, they said: wilt Thou place therein one who will do harm therein and will shed blood, while we, we hymn Thy praise and

sanctify Thee? He said: Surely, I know that which ye know not.” (Pickthall’s translation).

Now from a positive standpoint, some sources speak of Seth guarding the dignity of the image of God by avoiding all the sins. As the first step, it is important to refer to a passage in the Book of Jubilees (Charles, 1913) which considers Seth as one of the seven pious men of the pre-Abrahamic times (Charles, 1913, pp. 24-25; Ginzberg, 1909, pp. 150, 274).

Some relevant information may be followed in connection with a verse in Genesis that says: “And as for Seth, to him also a son was born; and he named him Enosh. Then men began to call on the name of the Lord (Genesis, 4:26). Introducing Seth’s son, Enosh as a turning point in this verse of Genesis, led the commentators to further teachings. In this regard, first of all, it is worthy to refer to the explanation given in Bereshit Rabba, one of the Misrash sources claiming that Seth and his son Enosh were the last human beings to be created solely in the image of God; after their death creatures began to appear (Genesis Rabba, 23:6, cited in Hirschberg, 2007, p. 319).

Further, one should consider a conversation with Abba Cohen Bardella who was asked: “[Why does Scripture enumerate] Adam, Seth, Enosh, and then become silent”? He replied: “Hitherto they were created in the likeness and image [of God], but from then onward Centaurs were created Four things changed in the days of Enosh: The mountains became [barren] rocks, the dead began to feel [the worms], men's faces became ape-like, and they became vulnerable to demons (Ginzberg, 1909, p. 123).

Ginzberg refers to the fact that the generation of Enosh were thus the first idol worshippers and the punishment for their folly was not delayed long. God caused the sea to transgress its bounds, and a portion of the earth was flooded. This was the time also when the mountains became rocks, and the dead bodies of men began to decay. And still, another consequence of the sin of idolatry was that the countenances of the men of the following generations were no longer in the likeness and image of God, as the countenances of Adam, Seth, and Enosh had been. They resembled centaurs and apes, and the demons lost their fear of men. (Ginzberg, 1909, p. 123).



Although the mentioned resources speak of the image of God ending after Enosh, some Haggadic scholars like Pirque Rabbi Eliezer speak of the future generations of righteous people who will be the descendants of Seth (Hirschberg, 2007, p.319). Connected with this teaching, some other resources generalize the image of God to pious men; a righteous Jew by Jewish scholars, or a righteous Christian by Christian scholars (Ginzberg, 1909, pp. 66, 68).

These opinions could be better understood under the light of a Davidian account, narrated both in the Psalms and the Qur'an, which says:

צדיקים יירשו-אֶרֶץ וַיִּשְׁכְּנוּ לָעֶד עָלֶיהָ:

"The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell in it for ever"

(Psalms, 37: 29)

وَلَقَدْ كَتَبْنَا فِي الزُّبُورِ مِنْ بَعْدِ الذِّكْرِ أَنَّ الْأَرْضَ يَرِثُهَا عِبَادِيَ الصَّالِحُونَ (انبیاء/ ١٠٥)

"Before this We wrote in the Psalms, after the Message (given to Moses): My servants the righteous, shall inherit the earth." (Yusuf Ali).

"And verily we have written in the Scripture, after the Reminder: My righteous slaves will inherit the earth" (Pickthall's translation).

A remarkably close content also exists in the New Testament as follows: μακάριοι οἱ πραεῖς, ὅτι αὐτοὶ κληρονομήσουσιν τὴν γῆν.

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (Matthew, 5:5).

#### 2.4. Seth and His Knowledge of Asmā'

We know from the story of man's creation in the Qur'an that when God nominated Adam as his caliph (successor) on the earth, He taught him the asmā' (the names), which is reflected in the verse:

وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا ثُمَّ عَرَضَهُمْ عَلَى الْمَلَائِكَةِ فَقَالَ أَنْبِئُونِي بِأَسْمَاءِ هَؤُلَاءِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

(البقرة/ ٣١).

"And He taught Adam all the names (asmā'), then showed them to the angels, saying: Inform Me of the names of these, if ye are truthful" (2:31).

In some Islamic resources about Adam's story, Seth is introduced as the successor of his father in receiving granted knowledge of asmā'. In this regard, in a Hadith narrated from Imam Muḥammad al-Bāqir (d. 733), the fifth imam of Shia, he says that when it was the time for Adam's death, he was commanded by God to nominate Seth as his

successor and to teach him all knowledge of *asmā'* (‘Ayyāšī, 2001, p.306; also, an abridged version: Rāvandī, 1988, p.924).

Further, in a historical context, ‘Alī ibn Ḥusain al-Mas‘ūdī (d. 956) says: “When God wanted to make Adam die, commended him to announce his son Seth as successor and to teach him all the knowledge granted to him, and he did” (Mas‘ūdī, 196, p. 75).

Further, Qutb al-Dīn Rāvandī (d. 1177) says that “he was Seth who knew all the *asmā'* (the names) after his father’s death” (Rāvandī, 1988, p.922, ed. Imam Mahdi).

The transmission of knowledge granted by God from Adam to Seth was an issue of discussion by Muslim mystics too. The well-known scholar, Ibn Arabi in this concern speaks of granted knowledge and claims that it was dedicated to Seth. He announces that “every person who speaks in accordance with granted knowledge, his spirit is granted by Seth’s spirit, unless the case for the Last Prophet” (Ibn ‘Arabī, pp. 65-66). Around this saying of Ibn Arabi, some of his commentators explain that he meant by granted knowledge, knowing the divine *asmā'* which was specifically for Seth among all Adam’s offspring (‘Afīfī, p. 27; Bābā Roknā, 1980, p.223; Qaiṣarī, 1996, p. 474).

Further, he is Rumi who announced that “Seth had been granted the knowledge of *asmā'* and wisdom and had been nominated as teacher of his brethren” (Aflākī, 1983, p. 493). Introducing Seth as the only successor for Adam regarding knowledge of *asmā'* in Islamic resources is comparable with the specific place of Seth as the image of God in Judeo-Christian literature at a macro level.

### 3. Conclusion

In comparison between the content of the Old and New Testaments from one side, and Islamic religious literature from the other side, we find the character of Seth, son of Adam as a bridge between the discourses. The comparative reading proves that what is expressed synthetically in the Bible and its descendant resources as the ‘image of God’, usually is analysed to components in Islamic literature. The latter sources speak of the given dominion and power using the concepts of ‘caliph of God’ and the given knowledge is expressed by the concept of teaching *asmā'* (the names).

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## Translation of Culture-Specific Items in Three Chapters of the Holy Quran: The Case Study of Translators with Different L1 Backgrounds

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### Abstract

Translation of religious texts, including the Quran, is a topic of interest to Translation Studies researchers. Recently, an increasing number of studies in this field have focused on translating culture within the source text. This study aims to highlight how cultural-specific items (CSIs) are translated in selected chapters of the Quran. To achieve this, data were collected from selected verses of three chapters of the Quran (Al-Baqarah, AL-Imran, and An-Nisa chapters), and analyzed using Ghazala's (2008) model of translation procedures, which was adapted from Newmark's model (1988). The model was employed by English translators with different L1 backgrounds in their translation of the Holy Quran by Pickthall (1986), Dolati (in press), and Haleem (2004, 2005) as British, Persian and Arabic natives, respectively. The meaning of the data was taken from English Shia exegesis by Tabatabai (1985). The most frequently used procedure by all translators was cultural correspondence. While the dominance of cultural correspondence in the analyzed translated verses shows that the three translators attempted to translate culture, insufficient paratextual references may cause partial loss of meaning. The findings showed that L1 background could affect the translator's habitus in terms of translation choices in religious texts. This research has implications for translators, translation educators, teachers and students, as well as policy makers in publishing religious texts.

**Keywords:** Intertextuality, Culture-Specific Items, Islamic translation, Translation Studies

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## 1. Introduction

The holy Quran is the most important source for Muslims and non-Muslims to gain solid and in-depth understanding of Islam through reading each verse or Ayah and its related intertextual exegesis. For a long time, some Muslim clerics believed it was impermissible to translate the Quran to other languages. Nevertheless, a large number of Muslim converts and scholars in Islamic studies whose mother tongues are not English have created the need for high-quality translations of the Quran that highlight semantic, syntactic, discursal and cultural aspects of language used in the Quranic verses. While it may be far from plausible to convey various linguistic, aesthetic and cultural features of the language represented in the Quranic verses, the translators of religious texts should pay utmost attention to create metatexts with near equivalents for such important elements of meaning. A significant focus of Quranic translation studies has been on micro-textual translation issues and translatability of the Quran. Translation of religious texts appears to be more complicated and critical, given that literal or meaning-based translation without considering linguistic and cultural subtleties and interpretations of the verses may mislead the readership and followers of Islam whose mother tongue is other than Arabic. Thus, it should be rendered by the translators accurately and in most cases, the translation loss in the target text is noticeable and compels the translators to make creative decisions.

Equivalents in English may not convey the full message in several cases. The most common strategy is to borrow the SL term (loaner word) and explain it briefly. The equivalents are intended as approximations of their general meanings. For instance, “Allah” is an Arabic term; it means “God” which is the English Equivalent. Additionally, “Al Salat” means “Prayers” or “Al Zakat” means “Charity”. Other examples include “AL Hallal (permissible)”, “Al sawm (fasting)”, “AL jihad (Holy war)” (Kashgary, 2011, p. 52).

The issue of the significance of culture in translation has been a controversial, much-disputed and also challenging subject within the field of literature which the scholars have perspectives regarding it. As Larson (1984) notes, it is substantial not to ignore the role of culture in the translation process, because its outcomes are more admissible with

closer cultural ties among the speakers of the two languages. As cultures are comparable, the translation process gets easier. In the case of several cultural terms, translators can find near equivalence. Nevertheless, it may be more difficult to find equivalent lexical items in languages having little cultural affinity with one another.

As a result, cultural differences often pose greater challenges to the translator than linguistic differences, especially if the two languages, namely Arabic and English, are linguistically and culturally different. According to Newmark (1988, p. 94) as cited in Ghazala (2015), culture indicates “a way of life and its manifestations” which are unique to society that utilizes a special language for communication. According to Vermeer (as cited in Katan, 2009, p. 82), “culture comprises all of what a society has to know, master, and feel, so one can assess the behavior of members in various roles”. As Gaber (2005, p. 18) stated, “culture means all aspects of the life of a nation or group of people who live in a place and share the same language, beliefs, customs, traditions, and history”.

In Translation Studies, CSIs (Culture Specific Items) appear to be a problematic area for transition with different terms to denote such linguistic elements. As Robati (2016) argues the vagueness of CSIs can be observed in several terms and categorizations. These items were referred to in the Translation Studies as “cultural words” (Newmark, 1988, p. 95), “culture-specific concepts” (Baker, 1992, p. 21), “*realia*”, or “culture-bound phenomena” (Robinson, 1997, p. 171), “cultural elements” (Hagfors, 2003, p.134), and “cultural concepts” (Davies, 2003, p.300).

According to Ghazala, Islamic terminology, like any other terms, may be translated. (Ghazala, 2012, our translation). Linguistic translation only displays half of the battle. Despite the fact that translators somewhat know Arabic, they frequently lack the expertise required to interpret Islamic verses. Because they are unfamiliar with the historical background, they overlook allusions to ideas, people, and events that are obvious to those who know Arabic. As a consequence, the translator is faced with a difficult duty that must be completed correctly and precisely, without regard for personal sentiments that may influence the course of events and things throughout the translation process.



In view of the fact that CSIs are troublesome for translators in many text genres, such items can pose challenges for the translation of Quranic verses in which the translator should pay utmost attention to convey meaning dynamically accurate, accounting for both linguistic and cultural considerations. Since a fair number of religious texts may perform indirect translation and are not acquainted with Arabic, CSIs in Quranic verses could be more complicated.

Regarding empirical evidence, while a large number of studies have focused on CISs in various types of texts, there is paucity of data on such items in Quranic verses. Thus, in view of these issues in translation of culture in religious texts, this study seeks to investigate strategies used for translation of CSIs in the Quran. It also examines how the translator's L1 background as part of their identity affect translation choices in rendering such items in religious texts. This study can be valuable since the translation of Quranic CSIs is investigated with references to interpretations of the verses in the selected chapters of the holy Quran, aligned with intertextuality in translation theories. One of the researchers who has an academic degree in Islamic Studies used her knowledge as well as consulting with books such as the Exegesis of Al Mizan Fi Tafsir Al Quran by Tabatabai (1965), and Thematic Dictionary of the Holy Quran by Seyyed Ali Akbar Ghorashi to examine the appropriateness of equivalents in the case of culture-specific items. This study is among a few that have dealt with the strategies employed by English translators with different L1 backgrounds in the translation of the Holy Quran in the verses Al-Baqarah, AL Imran, and An-Nisa chapters. The analysis of a sample of the translated CSIs with Shia exegesis also gives a practical instrument to use intertextuality in religious texts. For the purposes of this study, the following research questions are adopted:

What are the strategies employed in the translation of the CSIs in the selected verses of Al-Baqarah, AL Imran, An-Nisa chapters based on Ghazala's (2008) model of translation procedures, adapted from Newmark's model (1988)?

Is there any difference between strategies used to render such items in the sample based on the translators' L1 background?

## 2. Review of Literature

Culture-specific items are a major problem in having no various locations or no equivalents in the target reader's cultural system. Consequently, these cases give rise to trouble in rendering the functions and their meanings in the source text into target text. According to Hatim and Mason (1990), translators have experienced a shift in perception in recent times. They are now seen as cultural mediators rather than mere linguistic intermediaries. Additionally, it is a fact that translators employ a comprehensive strategy in their rendering, either leaning towards a source-language oriented approach or a target-language oriented approach.

A number of studies have surveyed cultural issues in translation of Arabic-English such as (Abdel-Hafez, 2004; Aziz, 1999; Bahameed, 2008; Bahumaid, 2017; Balfaqeeh, 2009; Barkho, 1987; Faiq, 2004; Ghazala, 2002; Homedi, 2004; Shunnaq, 2000). In the field of Quranic translation, a study conducted by Anari & Sanjarani (2016) analyzed CSIs translations in the Holy Quran using Baker's model and found that the most suitable strategy was subordinated translation, and paraphrasing was the least useful strategy.

A Comparative Study by Fallah Tafti (2016) examined the strategies applied in Translation of Culture Specific Items represented in Quranic Verses, translated by Arberry into English and by Ghomshei into Persian. The researcher analyzed the data via the classification of Newmark (1988) and the suggested model by Ivir (1987). The translators only adopted four out of seven strategies in their translations; namely, substitution, literal translation, borrowing and addition. Furthermore, it was shown that there was no gross difference between the frequencies of the employed strategies in translation of CSIs in the Holy Quran by Persian translator and English translator.

In 2016, Robati has adopted Davies' (2003) strategies for the translation of CSIs. Two translations of the Persian and English Quranic-Arabic culture-bound term "Jilbab" were considered by the researcher to compare them with two concerns which are related to the adopted translation strategies: linguistic (Persian and English), and translators' gender (male and female). Then she analyzed the data. Consequently, Localization was the most often utilized approach by

male translators in the English and Persian parallel corpus, whereas globalization and addition were the most frequently used strategies by female translators in the English and Persian parallel corpus.

In a study conducted by Ayyad & Mahadi (2019), they found the applied strategies by descriptive qualitative analysis. The researchers analyzed the English translation of cultural terms in the Holy Quran. Then they looked for the meaning of chosen terms according to the dictionary namely: *Islamic Words and Expressions* by Saleh (2011) to determine whether cultural terms are domesticated or Foreignized.

In another study, Albashir Mohammed, (2019) utilized a socio-historical interpretation to explore the limitations regarding translating some selected Qur'anic verses into English. It was grasped that the Holy Quran translators confronted some cultural and semantic constraints when translating the Qur'anic verses into English because of cultural and linguistic barriers between the Arabic and English cultures. As well as this, a wide range of translation strategies has been applied by the Quran translators, inclusive of omission, addition, cultural substitution, literal translation, adaptation, and back-translation.

According to Afrouz (2019), the religious background of translators does not play a significant role in choosing specific strategies. In order to accomplish this, the Holy Qur'an and its four English Muslim translations were examined and compared based on the Aixela model. Hence, the factor of 'translator's religious background' does not have a chief effect on rendering ITs.

In a descriptive study conducted by Valipoor, Heidari Tabrizi, & Chalak, (2019), regarding translation strategies applied by Irving (1991) in the translation of CSIs in the chapter of Baqarah. The findings showed that Irving applied domestication and Foreignization in the translation of Quranic CSIs. They found that Irving primarily employed domestication in the translation of Quranic CSIs by 79.9%. Based on his study on the accuracy of translation of cultural-specific items, Abdi (2019) derived that strategy does not influence translation quality, whereas the education level does.

In a study conducted El Haj Ahmed and Shammala (2020), it was shown that the two translators preferred domestication over foreignization, as well as foreignization, which was an appropriate

technique for cultural translation, these findings were demonstrated by utilizing Yusuf Ali's and Talal Itani's translations of fifty Quranic CSIs.

A qualitative work *Translating Culture-specific Items in the Noble Quran Which Relate to Arabian Habits* was undertaken by Zakaryia Almahasees & Mohammad Anwar Al-Taher (2021). This research detected the strategies adopted by ten translators in the verses of Holy Quran that indicate Arabian habits. Moreover, they recognized the procedures employed in translation of CSIs related to Arabian habits using the framework of Ivir (2002). The data were gathered via their reference to Arab habits and culture. The data analysis showed that the Literal translation was the most applied strategies in translation of the translators and the Addition or Paraphrase were the less employed strategies adopted by the translators.

Ayyad, Obeidat, and Mahadi (2021) surveyed the translation procedures applied by Abdullah Yusuf Ali for CSIs in *Al-Ma'idah* Chapter. The findings showed that the translator applied the translation procedures such as Cultural equivalent, functional equivalent, modulation, definition, description, generalization, footnotes, literal translation, explication, and borrowing in his translation. As a result, definition was the most frequent strategy, whereas an explication or generalization is the less frequent strategy, and a footnote was sometimes employed to support other procedures.

A study conducted by Sulhah Ramli, Arnida, and Bakar (2021) that the purpose of this article is to survey the strategy of domestication for the translation of religious cultural elements into English. It is a qualitative study with descriptive data analysis based on document analysis. The study adopts Newmark's (1988) componential analysis in order to explain the meaning of domesticated equivalent.

A recent study by Karimi & Fatehi Rad (2021) involved investigation of the translation strategies in translating the CSIs which regarding the novel of *Th Egyptian* written by Mika Waltari translated into Persian by Zabihollah Mansouri. The researchers analysed the data using the parallel comparison of the source text and its translation. Then they calculated the frequency and percentage of varied translation strategies employed by the translator. Furthermore, the researchers observed the gross difference among the frequencies of the varied

employed strategies by the translator using chi-square test. It was shown that the modulation and omission were the less strategies employed by the translator.

### 3. Methodology

This study highlights the translation procedures of the CSIs in Al-Baqarah, AL-Imran, and An-Nisa chapters. Ghazala's model is used in identifying the procedures that the English translators employed during the translation process. This study just deals with 9 strategies out of 16 ones.

Ghazala's (2008) model is an analysis model for translation procedures that includes, among other items:

Cultural equivalent. Finding the expression in TL that is applied precisely in the same context. So, this meaning becomes totally identical with the SL expression. For instance: the word the true believer is transferred as it is into Arabic المومن or the word The British Council is transferred as it is into Arabic البريطاني المركز الثقافي. In the case of cultural equivalents, the same connotation is attempted to be conveyed.

Cultural correspondence. The English cultural term is precisely and literally the same correspondent term in Arabic. For instance: the word Security Council is transferred as it is into Arabic مجلس الأمن.

Naturalization. Some culture-specific terms descend from the SL, which are halfway between English and Arabic. For instance: the word jihad is transferred as it is into Arabic جهاد or the word Hajj is transferred as it is into Arabic حج or the word Democracy is transferred as it is into Arabic ديمقراطية.

General sense. Disregard the cultural implications of SL terms, possibly because there is no cultural equivalent in TL. For instance: the word Muslim Hajj Rituals is transferred as it is into Arabic الحج مناسك or the word Paddy fields is transferred as it is into Arabic حقول الأرز.

**Transcription.** Converting the English word into Arabic Alphabet in the same way that it is pronounced. The word ka'ba is transferred as it is into Arabic الكعبة, or the word Koran is transferred as it is into Arabic القرآن.

**Paraphrase.** A long procedure, used when there is no other way to explain an uncertain cultural term in translation. For instance: the word Ham is transferred as it is into Arabic شرائح لحم الخنزير.

**Translation label.** Temporary translations, they are enclosed in square brackets [...], or quotation marks/inverted commas ("..."). For instance: the word the calf [for worship] is transferred as it is into Arabic العجل.

**Deletion.** An item of the SL cultural expression can be eliminated totally for its lack of significance to the TL readers.

**Footnotes.** Providing long details about an unfamiliar or ambiguous cultural term.

The categorization of CSIs in the Arabic verses was also made in this study by Newmark (2010: 174-177) and classification of Qur'anic culture specific items by Yasmien El-Sayed (2020: 5-6). They include:

Classifications of Newmark (2010: 174-177)

Ecology. Geological and geographical environment

Flora, Fauna, plains, hills, winds, sea, mountains, cities, states, etc.

Public life. Concern politics, law or governmental patterns in a community

Social life. Terms or phenomena about economy, occupations, social welfare, health or education systems.

Personal life. Composed of food, clothing, housing patterns, transport customs and related concepts: gestures, postures, body language, hobbies, entertainment, and sports, containing the idioms regarding those pursuits.

Private passions. Religion, music, poetry, and related different particular organizations like churches or poetry societies.

El-Sayed (2020: 5-6)

Gender-related CSIs.

إيلاء (dhihar), ظهار (dhihar), قِوَامَةٌ (qiwamah), نُشُوز (nushuz), ضرب (darab), (‘ila’)

Jihad-Related CSIs.

إِرْهَاب (‘Irhab), قِصَاص (qisas), جِزْيَةٌ (djizyyah), جِهَاد (jihad)

Prophet-related CSIs.

الْمُذْتَبِر (Muddathir), الْمُرْمِل (Muzzamil)

Material culture.

جِلْبَاب (djilbab), تَبْرُج (tabarrudj), خِمَار (khimar)

Delexicalized CSIs.

إِفْك (‘Ifk), جَنَابَةٌ (djanabah), إِدَّة (iddah)

To account for the translation of CSIs in this study, the source text of the Holy Quran in Arabic and its English translations translated by Pickthall (1960), Dolati (in press), and Haleem (2004, 2005) were studied. The present research is a case study and adopted a qualitative descriptive design. This study uses content analysis as the method for data collection. After reading the entire verses of chapters of Al-Baqarah, AL-Imran, and An-Nisa and their translations, a sample of verses in Quran and its translation in English was in terms of lexically carefully analyzed to detect the CSIs and the strategies employed by the translators with different L1 Backgrounds to translate them into English. Then, the categories of CSIs by Newmark (2010) and El-Sayed (2020) have been adopted as the theoretical framework of this research for analyzing culture-specific items. For transparency, every procedure is commented on and displayed with images in Tables.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

The following tables exhibit the frequencies and percentages of procedures in the case of each translator of the selected Quranic verses.

**Table 1.** *Procedures Used by Pickthall*

<i>Strategy of The First English Translation</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Cultural Correspondence	60	60%
Cultural Equivalent	7	7%
Deletion	-	0%
Footnote	-	0%
General (Sense)	4	4%
Naturalization	11	11%
Paraphrase	5	5%
Transcription	6	6%
Translation Label	7	7%
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100%</i>

According to Table 1, cultural correspondence and naturalization were among the most frequent translation procedures used by Pickthall. This shows that the translator strived to create the text that the reader feels more acquainted with based on their familiar cultural notions. A fairly higher number of naturalization also shows the translator's habitus for finding dynamic equivalence due to his familiarity with target language culture.

**Table 2.** *The Frequency of Procedures Used by Dolati*

<i>Strategy of The Second English Translation</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Cultural Correspondence	63	63%
Cultural Equivalent	3	3%
Deletion	-	0%
Footnote	-	0%
General (Sense)	3	3%



Naturalization	-	0%
Paraphrase	6	6%
Transcription	19	19%
Translation Label	6	6%
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100%</i>

Table 2 shows cultural correspondence and transcription were most frequently used by Dolati. This shows that the translator chose to familiar cultural concepts for translation of the CSIs as the main procedure whereby creating a more familiar text for the reader. A fairly moderate use of transcription shows how the translator's familiarity with Arabic text is reflected by choosing this strategy that brings the reader closer to the text. The limited use of paraphrase also indicates the translator's choice to render untranslatability in the text.

**Table 3.** *Frequency of Procedures Used by Haleem*

<i>Strategy of The Third English Translation</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Cultural Correspondence	58	58%
Cultural Equivalent	1	1%
Deletion	1	1%
Footnote	4	4%
General (Sense)	2	2%
Naturalization	14	14%
Paraphrase	11	11%
Transcription	4	4%
Translation Label	7	7%
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100%</i>

In the case of Abdel Haleem's translation, while cultural correspondence quite outnumbers the other types of strategies, paraphrase and transcription were used in a notable number of cases.

This indicate that the translator chose to bring the reader closer to the text, despite having the general tendency to find equivalents with similar connotations. While the dominance of cultural correspondence in the analyzed translated verses shows the three translators attempted to translate culture, insufficient paratextual references may cause partial loss of meaning.

#### **4.1. CSIs and Their Corresponding Equivalents Analyzed through Shiite Islam Lens**

While analyzing the data, the researchers probed equivalents through Shiite Islam sources for interpretations and exegesis as well as the possibility that the reader may be a convert who is familiar with Islamic terms or someone interested in knowing the cultural differences between the source and target texts. Based on the analysis, several important issues were brought up to the researchers' attention. Below is the sample analysis of a few of these verses.

Cultural Equivalent Sample

Al-Baqarah: 3

وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ ﴿٣﴾

Pickthall: "and establish worship"

Dolati: "and perform the prayer."

Abdel-Haleem: "keep up the prayer

**Table 4.** *Translations of Aş-Şalāat by Pickthall, Dolati, and Haleem*

Strategy	M	D	H
Cultural Equivalent	worship	the prayer	the prayer + footnote

Table 4 demonstrates the English translations of Salat in al-Baqarah chapter. It shows there are two meanings for "Aş-Şalāat": worship (Pickthall), and prayer (Rahim Dolati, Abdel Haleem). It means the translators found a connotatively similar word for "Aş-Şalāat" in

English. This meaning becomes totally identical with the Arabic language. However, they have different semantic load in the TL. Because Salat is one of the obligatory acts of worship that every Muslim must do five times a day, and "prayer" or "worship" does not mean Aṣ-Ṣalāat, and the word "Aṣ-Ṣalāat" should be translated in its original form, which is Salah or namaz. As a result, "Aṣ-Ṣalāat" is one of the Quranic and Islamic words that do not have a common cultural meaning and characteristic with the target language "English" and should be used in exactly the same original and Arabic form.

Of course, when this word is included in the vocabulary of the English language, they will take the phonetic and syllabic form of that language. Therefore, this sort of words "Az-Zakāata, Ṣiyāmin and piety" should be used in the same way so that they become popular little by little and are used frequently as loanwords in the target language (Veysi, 2003). Consequently, according to al-Mizan exegesis, Salah means attention and flexibility. In this case there is the dissimilarity between Pickthall and Dolati with the meaning of the intended interpretation in terms of cultural meaning. So, the first and the second English translation were not able to convey accurately the CSI found in this verse.

#### **4.2. Cultural Correspondence Sample**

The English cultural term is precisely and literally the same correspondent term in Arabic. There are hundreds of samples of complete "cultural correspondence" that can be seen among Arabic and English, especially "at the level of collocations, idioms, and proverbs of cultural origins". As a matter of fact, there is good proof to eradicate these claims that culture cannot be translated and "cross-cultural links or correspondence is impossible" (Ghazala, 2008, pp.196-197).

Al-Baqarah:35

أَنْتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةِ ﴿٣٥﴾

Pickthall: "thou and thy wife in the Garden."

Dolati: "you and your mate dwell in the Garden."

Abdel- Hameed: live with your wife in this garden.'

**Table 5.** *Translations of Al-Jannata by Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall, Rahim Dolati, and Muhammad A.S. Abdel Haleem*

Strategy	P	D	H
Cultural Correspondence	in the Garden	in the Garden	in this garden

Table 5 above demonstrates the English translations of Jannat in the Baqarah chapter. It shows there are two meanings for “Al-Jannata”: in the garden (Pickthall, Dolati), and in this garden (Abdel Haleem). So, the English cultural term “Garden” is precisely and literally the same correspondent term in Arabic “Al-Jannat”.

According to Almizan exegesis, Imam Sadiq (AS) said Adam's garden was a garden of this world. It would not have been possible for him to come out of a garden of the hereafter. “A garden of this world has been used in contrast to the garden of everlasting abode.” It refers to a position among “this world and the hereafter”. “Adam’s garden was not the garden of everlasting abode, but neither was it a garden like that of ours al- Barzakh is the state, place and time between one’s death and the Day of Resurrection. The said garden maybe called a garden of al-Barzakh, and it may well have been situated in this world.” (Commentary Almizan, Vol 1, pp. 196,197)

As a result, there was the dissimilarity between Pickthall, Dolati, and Abdel-Haleem with the meaning of the intended interpretation in terms of cultural meaning. So, the first and second, and third English translations were not able to represent accurately the CSIs found in the Holy Quran according to Shia commentary.

**Table 6.** The Frequency of The Classifications of The Quranic CSIs

<i>Classifications Of the Quranic CSIs</i>	<i>Frequen cy</i>	<i>Percenta ge</i>
Ecology	27	27%
Public life	8	8%
Social life	6	6%
Personal life	6	6%
Customs and Pursuits	14	14%
Private passions	16	16%
Gender-Related CSIs	4	4%
Jihad-Related CSIs	3	3%
Prophet-Related CSIs	15	15%
Material culture	-	0%
Delexicalized CSIs	1	1%
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100%</i>

## 5. Conclusion

This study intended to bring the reader into a closer understanding of the concepts, categories, and translation strategies of culture specific items in the Holy Quran and surveyed the strategies adopted for rendering them into English. According to the results, the strategies of Cultural equivalent, cultural correspondence, Naturalization, general sense, transcription, paraphrase, translation label, deletion, and footnotes were employed in the translation of the CSIs in the selected verses of Al-Baqarah, AL-Imran, An-Nisa chapters based on Ghazala's (2008) model of translation procedures, adapted from Newmark's model (1988). Cultural equivalent was dominantly used by all three translators, which shows they would like to establish a sense of cultural affinity to the text for the readership. While this indicates how the translators attempted to render culture, in the case of sacred texts with

a wide range of readership, the translation of culture should be done with references to intertextuality that among others include exegesis and interpretations. The important point is that to translate the Holy Quran and find equivalents in any other language, it is not enough to know Arabic and the target language. A person who undertakes this important task must have sufficient proficiency in Islamic knowledge and be familiar with the sciences of philology, syntax, derivation, as well as the science of hadith and speech, the interpretation of the verses, and in general with the Quranic knowledge apart from sufficient translation skills.

While there was no significant difference between using the most frequent strategy to render such items in sample based on the translators' L1 backgrounds, familiarity with the Arabic language affected the translators' choices in limited cases. The application of such strategies could depict a more realistic picture of the Quran for the readers who are converts and those interested in Islamic studies. This study is limited to the corpus analyzed and other corpora with differing theoretical frameworks may yield variant results. Future lines of research can explore various aspects of culture at the level of discourse and intertextuality in religious texts. Furthermore, the influence of the translator L1 background can be further explored with other variables such as style, linguistic, academic and cultural backgrounds under the habitus of the translator. This study's findings are useful for translators, translation educators and translation teachers and students, giving them a practical guideline on how to translate culture specific items which are abundantly used in religious texts. This study has implications for policy makers in publications as well, raising the awareness of publishing houses on the necessity of translations that are more tuned to specialized readership that request translations based on different denominations of Islam, including Shiite.

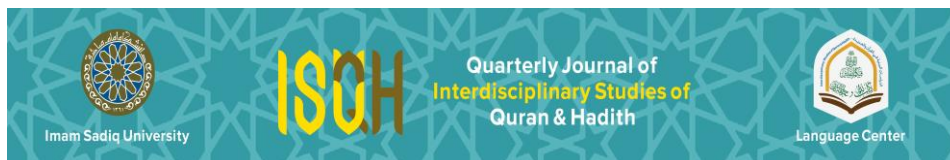
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## From Jesus to the Holy Prophet Mohammad Transmogrification and Deconstruction

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### Abstract

What happens when Holy texts are treated as literary ones. Characters, events, actions, dialogues etc. would become possibilities among enumerable possibilities and, as a result, everything becomes earthy. This is the first step in deconstruction which is an attempt to put in suspense the privileged hierarchy and meaning. In this article, the interpretive possibilities inherent in deconstructionist readings of the biblical text are considered. Heretofore, Jesus as the nodal point in Christianity having a privileged and transcendental meaning has been under attack coming from modernist and postmodernist thinkers. The same is true with the holly Prophet Mohammad who has been considered as a messenger bringing the exact words of God in the Holy Quran. Significantly, deconstructive attempts have been widely lunched to put in crisis the meaning, hierarchy and the discourse of the Holy Prophets. In this sense, the present study aims at analyzing and criticizing such deconstructive attempts.

**Keywords:** Prophet Muhammad, Jesus, Deconstruction, Postmodernism

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## 1. Introduction

A wide variety of skeptics has challenged that the Scriptures would provide modern readers with literary fictions and myths constructing the ancient world. Accordingly, they reject the need for personal faith and deny the Bible's truth claims.

After Protestant Reformation, the Italian Renaissance and Enlightenment throughout Europe, reason became the foundation of modern society. Educated people wanted the light of reason and wanted to go beyond the dark Ages which manipulated them politically or religiously – notably, they were “enlightened.” Most importantly, they adhered to the principle of empiricism which proposed that knowledge is obtained through the senses. One can only believe the things he can touch, taste, see, etc. The scientific revolution announced by rationalism prevailed throughout the West (in Europe and America), and philosophers began to question the notion of religious faith altogether.

In this regard, archaeology as the scientific way of observing and analyzing the past came to the fore. Accordingly, if archaeology can prove that events occurred as the Bible said they happened, then one can state that what is in the Bible is true. Despite all scientific limitations of archaeological inquiry, that critical approach would assume that biblical texts, when analyzed using science, are not reliable sources. It is not that archaeology has disproved the Bible, but that historical texts like the Bible do not deserve our trust until they are deemed worthy by the hard evidence and higher authority of scientific rationalism.

Postmodernism, suggesting the death of the author and also metanarratives, proposes social concern regarding marginalized voices in society. On the contrary to giving voice to the oppressed, in postmodernism exists a fierce political agenda fueled by the theory of deconstruction: marginalized people (minority populations) need to replace societal power structures by questioning authorities and displacing those in positions of power and privilege. (Bonilla-Silva, 2006, p. 85). In this sense, written texts have power, and they too must be deconstructed/overthrown. Moreover, when texts i.e., the Constitution, novels of Mark Twain, or the Bible are used by the powerful to marginalize the oppressed; therefore, such texts must be

questioned, reinterpreted and put in suspense to indicate their inner incompatibility.

When it comes to religious holy texts, the postmodern critic aims at questioning the nodal points of the texts or its transcendental signified in order to make other possibilities of signification free (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 150). In this regard, a postmodern critique like Ludemann concludes that Jesus' body simply "rotted away" and called the resurrection "'an empty formula' that must be rejected by anyone holding a 'scientific world view'" (Woodward, 1996, p. 63). Regarding that modernism would provide the appropriate lens by which one can interpret universe, then of course the Bible's historical accounts cannot be true. The Bible's supernatural events cannot be proven by science and must be reinterpreted to fit the presuppositions of scientific rationalism – which has no room for the divine or the miraculous. Moreover, considering postmodernism, the Bible will no longer be of use and confirm our tests for ethical neutrality. Significantly, regarding Muslim world, there have been some specific attempts; the most recent one is Dr. Soroush's Prophetic Dream Theory which tries to put in crisis the authority of the Holy text of Quran as being the words of the holy Prophet not that of God.

Deconstruction theory is a reaction to the structuralist ideas of logocentrism and binary oppositions and instead aims at understanding the meaning as abstract and fluid. It can be regarded as a form of literary and philosophical analysis – derived from the works of the post-structuralist philosopher Jaques Derrida. His way of achieving this was by conducting thorough, careful, sensitive, and yet transformational readings of philosophical and literary texts, with an ear to what in those texts runs counter to their apparent systematicity (structural unity) or intended sense (authorial genesis) (Sallis, 1988, pp.3-4). Derrida asserts that meaning is not static and instead continually evolves and varies across time and space. In this sense, he aimed at criticizing the notion of logocentrism and instead believes that linguistic signs should be viewed different from the concepts that they represent.

Derrida lunched his attack on logocentrism – the traditional Western philosophical belief that writing and language are indicative of some external reality. According to Derrida, the central aspect of traditional Western philosophy is the belief that there exists an absolute,

undeniable, transcendental truth which will somehow articulate meaning. In this regard, the signified is essentially the core idea, that it is always already in the position of the signifier, is the apparently innocent proposition within which the metaphysics of the logos, of presence and consciousness, must reflect upon writing (Derrida, 1997, p.73).

In this sense, “truth” becomes the centre around which all meaning is created. The idea that is attached to “truth” is called logos which is injected to society via language. Herein, significantly, logocentrism signifies the difference between the abstract meaning (logos) and its institutionalized meaning. Accordingly, deconstruction can be regarded as the heterogeneity of meaning contained within texts. Deconstruction can be regarded as, “there is nothing outside of the text”, while denying the idea that there is a transcendental origin of meaning. As Hobson states deconstruction denotes the pursuing of the meaning of a text to the point of exposing the supposed contradictions and internal oppositions upon which it is founded (Hobson, 2012, p.51). Accordingly, it tries to show that the foundations are unstable enough to be avoided.

Deconstruction generally aims at demonstrating that what is known as a text is not a distinct whole ‘but contains several irreconcilable and contradictory meanings. This is exactly what Soroush states about Quran when trying to put the Holy Prophet at the centre and as the writer of Quran not as a mere receiver. When the holy text becomes dreams of the holy Prophet, one can have enumerable interpretations according to her/his own taste or ideology. Moreover, it is worth mentioning that, according to deconstruction, any text therefore can have more than one interpretation. Accordingly, the text itself links these interpretations inextricably and, thus, that an interpretative reading cannot go beyond a certain point. Derrida refers to this point as an "aporia" in the text; thus, deconstructive reading is termed "aporetic"(Currie, 2013, p.80).

Regarding Christianity and Islam, there have been a wide variety of textual deconstruction which would involve examining a text contextually, referring to the time and culture in which the (holy) texts were written. Known as liberation theology, this trend has an eye on the influence of culture/context– following strenuous re-examination of traditional interpretive method (Poythress, 1988, p.169).

## **2.Theoretical Framework**

### **2.1. *The Deconstructed Jesus***

There have been a wide variety of voices all through history to suspend Jesus as the transcendental signified and, accordingly, constructing novel meanings. Herein, the following examples as attempts lead to ‘anything goes’ due to the fact that they deny clear historical and geographical issues. Regarding Cristian world, such deconstructive attempts aim at questioning the religious nodal points. As the most significant interpreter of deconstruction and Jacques Derrida’s writings, John D. Caputo states that a deconstructive reading must research a wide range of topics, but it does not engage in “anything goes.” Caputo says:

To read Plato and Aristotle well, one must learn Greek, learn as much as possible about their predecessors, contemporaries, and successors, about their religious, social, political, and historical presuppositions, understand the complex history of subsequent interpretations of their work, etc. This is “not easy”; indeed, it is an infinite task, and deconstruction does not circumvent it. For otherwise, if this reading does not take place, then “anything goes,” and readers may say of a text whatever comes to mind. (Caputo, 1997, p. 78)

Caputo, representing other scholars, repeats the notion that a deconstructive reading does not say “whatever comes to your head about the text” (Caputo, 1997, p. 79). Herein, the aim is to represent and analyze deconstructive attempts and also analyze their readings of the Holy figure of Jesus Christ, Prophet Mohammad and Quran, whether or not the scholars define themselves by the labels “postmodern” or “deconstruction” as such. It is worth mentioning that ‘anything goes’ cannot be regarded as deconstruction – leading to the abyss of denying clear socio-historical facts.

#### **2.1.1. *The Jesus Seminar***

The Jesus Seminar was founded by Robert Funk in 1985. It consists of some scholars – discussing over the historical Jesus. They have concluded with the idea that there is a great difference between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith. They announced that he said only eighteen percent of the words found in the Gospels. In this regard, Funk states that:

In spite of the sciences, impressive methodological advances, and the knowledge explosion we still cannot be certain that we can tell the difference between illusion and reality. Aspects of what we think we see and hear, of what we believe we know, are almost certainly illusory (Funk, 1985, p. 26)

How did they reached such conclusion is still unclear; but, one can link it to Funk's hyper-skepticism which is somehow injected to other Seminar scholars. Moreover, such skepticism can explain how they reached their stringent conclusion that Jesus spoke only eighteen percent of the words recorded in the Gospels – a conclusion that most other New Testament scholars reject. In this sense, N. T. Wright, one of the most prominent New Testament scholars, says in his book analyzing the gnostic Gospel of Judas that the mainline of Jesus scholars have bypassed the Seminar. He writes:

The main line of Jesus-scholarship today has, I believe, largely left behind the fantasyland of the “Jesus Seminar” and its attempt to produce an “objective” portrait of Jesus while measuring the data against an already reductionist framework. (Wright,2006, p. 65).

### ***2.1.2. Pagan Christ***

Considering Tom Harpur's book *Pagan Christ: Recovering the Lost Light*, he believes that Jesus never existed and that the Gospel writers transformed Egyptian religion and its gods and put them in the Gospels. The same point that Muslim scholars have also asserted about the Holy Prophet. Craig A. Evans states:

. . . Almost no serious academic – of any ideological, religious, or nonreligious stripe – doubts that Jesus of Nazareth actually lived sometime in the first century and was crucified under Pontius Pilate, governor of Judea. The evidence for the existence of Jesus – literary, archaeological, and circumstantial – is overwhelming. (Evans, 2006, p.220)

Afterwards, Evans tracks down the source of Harpur's faulty scholarship. Evans asserts:

Judging by the comments that [Harpur] makes at the beginning of his book, his change [from believing Christ existed, worked miracles, and was raised from the dead] in thinking had little to do with critical,



historical work (though the work of “minimalists,” that is, those who minimize the historical elements in the Bible, exerted some influence). It had more to do with adopting the theosophic views of Gerald Massey (1828-1907) and Alvin Boyd Kuhn (1880-1963). The work of these men, especially their reconstructions of ancient history and attempts to draw lines of continuity between Egyptian religion and Christianity, is deeply flawed. No qualified historian takes the theories of these men seriously. (Harpur, 2004, pp. 220-21)

Herein, Evans points to a significant point that is applicable a wide variety of deconstructive attempts:

Anyone charmed by Harpur’s Pagan Christ should beware. We are talking old, odd stuff here. Personal philosophy and introspection it may be; history in any responsible, recognized sense it is not. (Evans, 2006, p. 221)

### **2.1.3. Gnostic Revealer**

The word “Gnosticism” originates from an ancient Greek word “knowledge.” A gnostic is “someone who knows” or a “knower” who would know secret teachings. Gnostics were in the Mediterranean societies— decades after Jesus lived – who were more qualified than Jesus himself. The gnostic authors often borrowed the names of Jesus’ disciples to attach to their texts, i.e., the Gospel of Peter, Thomas, Philip, and Mary.

The gnostic documents were not generally significant but to a few specialists. However, some recent scholars imply that Gnostic texts should be accepted as equally valid and authoritative as the Four Canonical Gospels. In the following, it is shown that how Gnosticism tries to undo and put in crisis the nodal points of the Christian discourse.

Regarding the canonical Gospels, Jesus is passionately concerned about the kingdom of God in his own world of first-century Israel. Moreover, he was bringing history to a great climax through which he would establish his sovereign and saving rule in and for the world, as created by the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. However, the gnostic gospels saw the world itself as a gigantic blunder of a secondary, incompetent and hostile deity, so humans must escape from it.



#### ***2.1.4. Castrated Leader***

New Testament scholar A. K. M. Adam is the editor of the book, *Postmodern Interpretations of the Bible*, in which one of the contributors, Deborah Krause, interpreted in a postmodern/deconstructive sense one of key passages in the Gospel of Mark, using Lacanian and Foucauldian techniques. In her article “School’s in Session: The Making and Unmaking of Docile Disciple Bodies in Mark,” she uses two interpretive keywords to reread Mark as a tale of desire, which are castration and phallogentrism.

According to the mentioned essay, castration can be regarded as the “limitation of one’s will to comprehend, to master” . . . (Adam, 2001, p. 182). Regarding the ‘narration’, the characters can be considered “castrated” because they do not comprehend the big picture in the story itself. Thus, when you consider holy texts as narrated and the historical characters as fictional ones, it is possible to attach an enumerable signified to the signifiers. As a result, the readers will become lost in the abyss of ‘anything goes. In her article, she states that, on the night he was betrayed and arrested, Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane, where he was praying for the will of his Father to pass him by. He was struggling in his will not to drink the cup of his death. It is difficult for him to comprehend the “phallic” will of the Father that dominates (Adam, 2001, p. 184). Moreover, she also believes that this incomprehension on his part is symbolic castration, as he is seized and led away (Adam, 2001, pp. 185-86). In her text the signifier is unstable – in the air not on the solid basis – ready to attain whatever the interpreter intends. Herein, the ideological, cultural, racial, social, religious, economical etc. considerations of the interpreter will clearly affect the interpretation of the holy text and even Jesus himself.

#### ***2.1.5. De-Enlightened Male***

As “the leading practitioner of deconstruction in the field of biblical studies today”, Stephen D. Moore brings a deconstructing reading of the Holy Text (John 4). Herein, the unnamed Samaritan woman and Jesus’s dialogue which creates a hierarchical position is put in suspense via reversing the relationship. In this sense, it is worth mentioning that such a reading cannot be regarded as postmodern because it creates another hierarchy – leading again to nowhere. John 4:15 says:

The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.” (John 4:15)

Moore’s goal in John 4 is to reverse “the hierarchical opposition of male and female – the male in the missionary position, the female beneath” (Moore, 1994: 50). This sexual innuendo, one of several, reflects a Derridean/Freudian interpretation. However, Moore says:

But what if the Samaritan woman were found to be the more enlightened partner in the dialogue from the outset? What if her insight were found to exceed that of Jesus all along? Impossible? Not at all, as I hope to show. (Moore, 1994, p. 50)

He tries to articulate his discourse via deconstructing the holy text dividing it of its meaning. In this regard, puts the woman at the centre having the whole intellect. In a summary passage, Moore retraces the motif of water through his chapter. In the following passage he also enters the space of symbolism to complete his task. He writes:

At the Samaritan well, literal earthly water was declared superseded by figurative living water (4:13-14), which was later interpreted as the Holy Spirit (7:39), which has now become available through Jesus’ death as symbolized both by his giving up pneuma [spirit] as he expires (19:30) and by the fresh flow of water from his side (19:34). (Moore, 1994, p. 58)

Regarding this symbolism, Moore concludes that Jesus confuses the literal and figurative, but the woman understands the difference. She has “outstripped her male teacher” (p. 62). He says that reversing the hierarchy (e.g., spiritual / material; heavenly / earthly; male / female) is the key to a deconstructive reading (Moore, 1994, p. 56). These scholars come as close as possible to interpretive Anything Goes.

#### ***2.1.6. The JEPD Theory (or Documentary Hypothesis of the Pentateuch)***

Adherents to JEDP Theory claim that the Torah is not a literary unity and Moses did not write it. Herein, regarding Islam, Dr. Soroush says that the holy Quran is not the exact words of God given to us by His messenger but some dreams narrated by the Prophet Mohammad.

In this regard, followers of the movement believe that the Torah was written as a propaganda piece during or immediately after the exile by editors – aiming to convince the exilic Jews to resettle in Judea. In this sense, the creation of a divine promise of land to Abraham, the story of Pharaoh, and the messenger Moses were characters created in order to convince these deportees to return to the land of their forefathers. Generally, the theory holds that Moses as God’s deliverer never really existed, but the story was written to inspire later captives to flee “their Egypt.”

### ***2.1.7. Feminist Reading of Bible***

It is in the gnostic Gospel of Thomas – which is itself one of the deconstructive attempts – that one can find misogynistic passages which can be defined in terms of liberal feminism:

Simon Peter said to them [the disciples]: 'Let Mary leave us, for women are not worthy of Life.' Jesus said 'I myself shall lead her, in order to make her male, so that she too may become a living spirit, resembling you males. For every woman who will make herself male will enter the Kingdom of Heaven' (Pagels, 1979, p. 72)

Having briefly established what we mean by textual deconstruction, it is worth mentioning that feminist reading of the Bible can also result in the suspending the nodal points articulated in the text. As Poythress states, 'In Bible study we may not see a possible interpretive alternative until we abandon familiar ways of thinking' (Poythress, 1988, p. 86). Herein, familiar means those interpretations which adhere to a transcendental signified and looking for other possibilities means deconstructing the nodal points. In this sense, Phyllis Trible – the other feminist writer – says:

Born and bred in a land of patriarchy, the Bible abounds in male imagery and language. For centuries interpreters have explored and exploited this male language to articulate theology: to shape the contours and content of the Church, synagogue and academy; and to instruct human beings - female and male - in who they are, what rules they should play, and how they should behave. So harmonious has seemed this association of Scripture with sexism, of faith with culture, that only a few have even questioned it (Trible, 1982, p. 23).

Thus, according to the above quotation, the text of the Bible must be read and interpreted in such a way to fulfill what Phyllis Tribble means and wants. Phyllis calls to question, put in crisis and finally deconstruct the nodal points. Elisabeth Cady Stanton, in her book *The Woman's Bible* (1895), writes those women had been forced by legislators and priests, religious parties and denominations into 'a fundamental conviction of their inferiority, conveyed to them not least by their incapacity to "image" God' (Loades, 1990:15). And Ruth Page says of her: 'Stanton found it necessary to engage in interpretation of the Bible because it was used as the ultimate sanction against any change of conditions for women' (Page, 1987, p.18).

Regarding Genesis 1:27-28: 'So God created man in his own image; in the image of God, he created him; male and female he created them' (NEB), Rosemary Radford Reuther states that this passage uses the term 'man' generically, so that the image of God is shared by both male and female, as in the second part of verse 27. In this sense, she mentions that 'practically the whole patristic and medieval tradition rejected the possibility that women were equally theomorphic' (Reuther, 1985, p.139). Moreover, she quotes Augustine's *Treatise on the Trinity* where he says that:

the woman, together with her own husband, is the image of God ... but when she is referred to separately ... then she is not the image of God, but as regards the man alone, he is the image of God as fully and completely as when the woman is joined to him in one (Augustine de Trinitate 7.7.10 quoted in Reuther, 1985, p. 139).

Gail Ramshaw sums up this area of possibility when she says 'What is required is not only the will to change one's vocabulary, but a renewed perception of God. (Ramshaw, 1982, p.179) 'The possibilities of new understandings and perceptions of God, then, are enormous.

## **2.2. Prophetic Dream Theory**

Finding the nodal point of the Holy Quran is not a difficult task: the holy text has been given to the prophet and he, in turn, gave the exact message to the people. Dr. Soroush, in his theory *Prophetic Theory*, tries to put in suspense the transcendental signified behind the holy text, that is God. In this regard, Prophet is not the messenger but the seer/observer of some scenes in his dreams. The holy text is the result

of such dreams and the words are the exact words of the Prophet which need to be interpreted by specialized dream interpreters because the scenes were observed in a state-like dream. From the very start of his discussion about his theory, it is evident that the nodal points are under attack and a deconstructive attempt is under way.

As a Ute proverb truly says “God gave us each a song”; accordingly, in order to understand the song of a man, you must listen to his notes. Jacques Derrida reminds us how to understand the notes in a mind, called thoughts. Besides, Abdelkarim Soroush tells us that there are three tissues of these notes we call thoughts. The first tissue is the social context of a person. The second is abstract concepts and reason; then: personal experience. These ideas also relate strongly to Max Weber's observation of 1. Traditional authority, 2. Charismatic authority and 3. legal authority. How these tissues mix and, then, make each note unique? Derrida and Soroush show us how to listen to a song's notes. We all sing in the moment of now; but we also sing our memories and hope for the future.

people without a history are like wind on Buffalo grass. - Lakota proverb

To not blow in the wind and have good roots, it is necessary and “essential” to remember how to live from our mothers and fathers. These “essentials” are the substance which connect us to the wisdom of those who sang generations ago and the notes we may forget in the “now” which creates "accidental" moments, or small durations of our time. In the history of humankind, religion has been responsible for the care of past "essentials" and their utility in understanding today. Afterwards, religion connects the discrete elements of our life into a unified whole. These “essentials” are the attributes that are eternal, connecting the notes of the past to the notes of the present. The secular has focused on the needs of the present material world which is nominalist, fleeting, and temporary. To have good roots and not blow in the wind we must have both the “essentials” which are the eternal attributes and also the objects and substances contained in our sensory understanding of the “accidentals” of the present. This creates meaning.

As William of Ockham states “entities should not be multiplied without necessity”, the mix of man's songs has always created conflict with those concerned with the present in contrast to those who want to reflect selected notes from songs of the past. “Essentials” construct a vector trajectory for “accidentals” so that we may interpret what effects they may cause. No “accidental” is discrete to itself. Without these “essentials” an “accidental” may float or wander in space without a destination. This causes instability in current actions and inability to project the future intent of our endeavors. Therefore, the “essentials” are important information in both the secular world and the religious world. They create a vector of direction to understand and be rational. What then would be the purpose in discounting “essentials”? The process to determine cause and effect and create political will for action can be extensive in time. In the immediacy of a wish for action “essentials” may be overlooked for a desired immediate outcome. This foregoes the need to project the future trajectory of this “accidental”. Thus, to engage in this immediacy, “essentials” are overlooked and discounted. The “accidental's” trajectory is lost because man's past gives no implication of cause and effect or “collateral damage”. Methods may be employed to obscure relevant “essentials” to understand the effects of the “accidental”. This can cause implementation of an “accidental” without evaluation. Thus, man's historical understanding for over thousands of years is lost without identification of “essentials” in decision making.

How can the roots from our “essentials” be destroyed? William of Ockham suggests the simplest method is the most practical. For those who wish the “accidentals” of thought to control the present a small attack on one “essential” at a time is not useful. Desire for power by individuals requires fast action to create rewards for the participants. The most direct path is to attack as many of the “essentials” at once as possible. Now, this attack is happening all over the world against major religions in order to create a human centric secular world. Big technology and the Internet have created the electronic opportunity to quickly do this worldwide. Soroush and Derrida only have given us a method to consider the process of thought and reflect on what is taking place now. As St. Teresa of Avila might say the “accidentals” have already entered the Interior Castle. The following list shows direct

attack on the structure related to “essentials” and multiple religions to create “secular accidental” songs.

1. The geography of the world and all its varied characteristics has been declared equal in value. This attacks the idea of sacred ground; therefore, the idea of sacred ground is destroyed because specification of ground is not equal.

2. The 10 Commandments creates a list of ancient values. It is therefore judgmental, cruel, and culturally biased.

3. Science shows that God view of only two sexes is an incomplete view. Either this view of God is incorrect, God did not know what he was making, or that God simply did not create the world. All the “essentials” for religions that believe in God are taken down at once.

4. Destruction of the child-family relationship presents itself in multiple varieties of family constructions, increase control of the secular over education, institutions rather than the family supplying the basic needs of a child, and increased interference in parent-child and relationships without any proven provocation. Different social values presented directly to children in contrast to values possessed by the parents this is causing a cultural and “essentials” shift in the autonomy of the family. The idea of the “family of man” can then be reconstructed into another concept.

5. The end of each man’s burden is expressed in victimhood. This is a direct attack on an “essential” concept of burden in all religions which therefore is an attack on the utility of any religion.

6. Languages are unclarified and generalized. This flattens the nuance in meanings. “Essentials” are made unclear and confused with other “essentials”. The breakdown of conceptual barriers between “essentials” confuses and avoids critical evaluation.

7. Words are made fluid in their definition for example, difference of opinion is declared hate to stop reflection on a continuum of thought.

8. Abstract thought is substituted with ridicule of personalities.

9. Global climate change has its value in preserving the earth; however, this should not be used for a reason to attack the ideas of

sacred places. Global climate change cannot be used to create only one “accidental END TIME” as the new singular “essential”.

10. Restriction of religious language, free association of religious groups, or rituals in secular environments or media

11. Creative methods to deconstruct positive relationships between religions that have theological differences.

The above methods are being used to destroy and corrupt multiple “essentials” in religions. The greatest quantitative body of continuous “essential” thoughts concerning man’s history and relationship both to other humans and to God belongs to the Abrahamic religions. Smaller or more specific arguments are only a detraction from the massive world revolution against “essentials” in the Abrahamic religions to create a solidarity of perhaps only one “accidental END TIME” of total order with a potential totalitarian result or chaos. It is our elephant in the Interior Castle.

If God gave each man a song, then how can other men declare what is not suitable for one man’s note to sing? If we forget our roots what will happen to us? Man has gone to the moon and travel distances which corresponds with to the travel of Abraham from Ur to Mecca or the travel of Paul to Rome.

Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another... Paul’s Epistle to the Romans, King James Bible

This verse implies that natural law and the understanding of “essentials” is an a priori need in our search for meaning. Man has observed the anatomy in the tissue of earth and looks to the tissue and anatomy of the universe. We must continue to look for the “essential” substance in our quest to understand our actions beyond the perception of the “accidentals” of living temporal time. This is the duty of individuals. Both religious and secular society must allow this process to continue in the individual. What we do will promote religion culture or a possible deconstruction of religious life. At the same time, society must monitor hegemony between individuals that may be abusive.



God establishes the first “essential” in the Book of Job, King James Bible, and Job is also supported in the Qur’an. Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me. Where was thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding.

### ***2.2.1. Deconstruction of the Holy Text***

In the “Prophetic Dreams 2”, Soroush, in the manner of Freud who reduces people to their dreams and their subconscious mind, proposes that in order to know the Prophet one must know his dreams: “people can be understood through their dreams as it is the same with the prophets, it is in these dreams that a prophet is known” (Soroush, 2014, p. 5). In the prophetic dream discourse, the way to know the Prophet is to know his dreams, and this results in putting the traditional discourse in crisis and deconstructing it.

After reading the prophetic dream theory, the reader comes to this understanding that he can interpret the words of the desacralized Text as he wishes, because the ultimate meaning (metaphysics of presence) has lost its position as the transcendental signified; the speaker of the whole text to which all other meanings refer to. The words of the text become earthly and humanized and become wandering signs that can be attached to any other signified in the absence of the transcendental signified. Chaos pervades the text, and everyone begins to interpret the Text in accordance to his/her own necessities.

One of the main goals of the Prophetic dream theory, as its theorist acknowledges, is that in the future dream interpreters who are familiar with various sciences - humanities and natural sciences - will start interpreting the dreams of the Qur’an. But, Dr. Soroush did not need to deconstruct the text in order to just propose this. In the Prophetic Dream 6, it is stated:

According to historical documents, when he (Prophet Mohammad (PBUH)) went into a state of unconsciousness, selflessness and immersion ... he saw and heard things which, on his return, he restated them for his companions. Companions saw them, wrote them down, or memorized them, and gathered them in a notebook twenty years after his death. Therefore, the language of the Qur'an of Muhammad (PBUH)

is the language of the world of unconsciousness ... and it is forcibly in need of dream interpretation. (Soroush, 2014, p. 10)

Of course, introducing some people as dream interpreters did not require all this deconstructive process. Citing history, which is itself a human construction in which the narrator's taste/ orientation/ insight pervades the entire narrative, is irrational. On the other hand, his conclusion is just as miles away from rational reasoning. Before the word "therefore", he has given a historical reason, and the conclusion he has drawn from it, is much greater than the reason he has given. Where he writes and concludes that the language of the sacred text is the language of the unconscious world, the reader is faced with the important question that based on what rational reason he has come to this conclusion.

Revelation is one of the most important nodal points that is attacked by Soroush. The message of God, which reaches his prophet through revelation, is deconstructed in the mentioned theory and is interpreted as a dream world. When the prophet is not the subject of revelation but only observes a series of audio/ visual images, it will pave the way for the articulation of a new discourse. A discourse in which, of course, the nodal points and moments of the traditional view of Islam will have other meanings. The prophetic dream theory is the starting point of a movement in which, after deconstruction, a new discourse will be formed; bringing about a completely different definition of God, the prophet, the immaterial world, revelation, sin, Satan, and so on. In fact, the urgency of the existence of the dream interpreters in this theory can mean that in the absence of the ultimate meaning, the floating signs of the text are directed to a direction in which the dream interpreters articulate, freeze and thus construct a new discourse.

Dream interpreters, like any other individual, come to the text/dream having their own ideological assumptions, being unconscious but aiming at making it concrete, as L. Althusser once stated: "an ideology always exists in an apparatus, and its practice, or practices" (Lenin, 1971, p. 112). Accordingly, it won't contribute to a better understanding of the holy text. From this theory, various gods will be born.

### 3. Conclusion

Considering the fact that the mentioned theory is inclusive, like Darwin's Theory of Evolution, and that any critique of this theory can be disabled by referring it back to the dream of the holy text, it is difficult to criticize the mentioned theory. But, on the other hand, it can be said that trying to create meaning by pursuing a theory that results in immersion in meaninglessness is futile. In other words, the dream world also has forgetfulness, and since the revelation of the Qur'an took twenty years, the verses must not only have been forgotten and disappeared from the Prophet's memory, but also after each narration they should be narrated in some different ways. In this sense, in order for his words to be more effective and to express his meaning more accurately, the narrator would use a variety of words and sentences. While in the Holy Qur'an, this never happened and the same words and sentences were heard many times from the Prophet. If he wanted to narrate the dream of the Prophet in his own way, he would certainly have to decorate it with better words after each time he wakes up and narrates in order to have a better effect on the reader. On the other hand, the role of the dreamer's subconscious mind should not be overlooked in seeing and narrating dreams, which is the main source of storing the repressed adversities of one's life. Thus, if we accept the prophetic dream theory, the sacred text will become a text like novel that having a wide variety of voices written by a man having some dreams. In this way, you can say how the theory will lead us to construct counter/alternative discourses.

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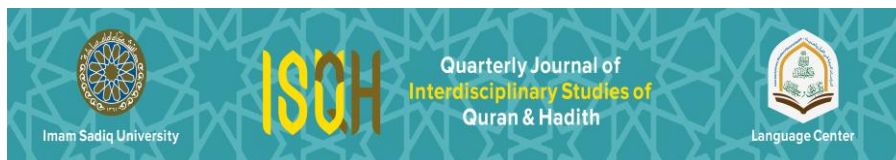
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### Appendix

A sample of CSIs and their transliterations, ET and procedures

NO	CH/V	AR	Transl	ET1	STR
1	3,12	جَهَنَّمَ	Jahannama	Hell	Cultural Correspondence
2	2,4	الْآخِرَةِ	Ākhirati	the Hereafter	Cultural Correspondence
3	4,43	أَلْغَايَةِ	Al-Ghā'iṭi	the closet	Cultural Equivalent
4	2,144	أَلْمَسْجِدِ أَلْحَرَامِ	Al-Masjidi Al-Ĥarāmi	the Inviolable Place of Worship	Paraphrase
5	2,114	الدُّنْيَا	Ad-Dunyā	the world	Cultural Correspondence
6	2,35	أَلْجَنَّةِ	Al-Jannata	In the Garden	Cultural Correspondence
7	4,24	أَلْمُحْصَنَاتُ	Al-Muḥṣanātu	all married women (are forbidden unto you)	Translation label
8	3,96	بَكَةً	bakkata	Becca	Transcription
9	2,3	الصَّلَاةِ	Aṣ-Ṣalāata	worship	Cultural Equivalent
10	2,119	أَلْجَحِيمِ	Al-Jahīmi	hell-fire	Cultural Correspondence
11	2,25	أَلْأَنْهَارِ	Al-'Anhāru	rivers	Cultural Correspondence
12	2,83	الزُّكَاةِ	Az-Zakāata	the poor-due	Cultural Equivalent



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## Obedience and Consciousness of Creatures in the Qur'an: A Cognitive Approach

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### Abstract

Consciousness of all living and non-living things has been expressed in various forms in religions and philosophies; in Buddhism, Hinduism, and Judaism, and in philosophies such as pantheism and panpsychism. To address the idea of consciousness of all creatures in Islam and through a cognitive approach to consciousness, the present study attempts to cite a number of Qur'anic verses which indicate that according to the Qur'an all creatures whether animate or inanimate have cognition and praise Allah. Moreover, as the selected verses indicate, all creatures except for those people who are polytheists or infidels are obedient to Allah. When these verses refer to man, they generally mean those human beings who refute Allah and are disobedient. The selected verses also reveal the understanding of all creatures and their consciousness. The paradox is that man who has the greatest consciousness or cognition among all creatures is the one who disobeys although he has accepted the gift of Allah or al-amānah which all other creatures refused to bear or receive. The verses may imply that the cognition of all creatures have been higher than man because they all understood the heavy responsibility of Allah' al-amānah.

**Keywords:** Consciousness, Cognition, Obedience, Qur'an, Islam

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## 1. Introduction

Debates on the nature of cognition or consciousness have existed for as long as the mindful humans appeared (Clark and Riel-Salvatore 2001). As such the term is very difficult to define and has been defined with different implications in philosophy, anthropology and even in literature. According to Gennaro (1995), “consciousness” or “cognition” are umbrella terms encompassing a wide range of mental and physical phenomena with a diversity of meanings, and the adjective “conscious” is applied to whole organisms, including creature consciousness, and even to various levels of mental states and processes. Consciousness necessitates cognition because cognition is a process of acquiring knowledge and understanding through exerting thought, and experience, felt through the senses.

Distinctions can be made between creature and state consciousness and also among their varieties. Among the most noteworthy categories delineating the differences, we can name the categories of state consciousness and cognition as phenomenal cognition, reflexive or meta-mental consciousness, access consciousness, and narrative consciousness. Creature consciousness and cognition, the concern of the present study has been defined at six levels including: sentience, wakefulness, self-consciousness, similarity to its kind, subject of conscious states, and transitive consciousness (Armstrong 1981; Carruthers 2000; Nagel, 1974; Rosenthal,1988). At sentience level a creature is conscious as far as it responds to its environment. At this level, all physical objects including atoms and subatomic particles are conscious. Wakefulness refers to a state of consciousness when the organism actually exercises the capacity of being conscious rather than merely possessing the ability or inclination to do so. Therefore, it can only be counted as conscious if it is fully awake and alert. At the third level, or self –consciousness, conscious creatures are defined as those that are both aware and also aware of their awareness (Carruthers 2000). As such, animals, objects and even young children may fail to qualify as conscious. However, if only basic and primary implicit aspects of self-awareness are involved, a wide range of non-linguistic creatures might be considered as self-conscious. The fourth level, similarity to its kind or in the words of Thomas Nagel's (1974) “What it is like” refers to a more subjective notion of consciousness in organisms. Based on

his view, a being is considered conscious only if there is “something that it is like” to be that being, when the world is viewed from that creature's mental state or experiential level of understanding. Accordingly, all creatures experience the world through their own echolocatory senses rooted in their cognition, even though human beings from their own human point of view cannot emphatically perceive such a form of consciousness exerted by other creatures. Subject of conscious states, the fifth level defines the notion of a conscious organism based on its conscious states. Therefore, first a mental state must be defined as a conscious mental state, and afterwards if the being possesses that state, it can be defined as a conscious creature possessing cognition. In this respect an organism's consciousness or cognition would then depend upon the particular definition we give to conscious states. The last level of creature consciousness or cognition refers to transitive consciousness which is directed at the object of consciousness or what the being is conscious of (Rosenthal,1988).

Having stated a rough definition of various levels of creature consciousness or cognition, this study intends to see if these levels are present among the creatures cited in the selected verses from the Quran for this study and if they are obedient to Allah. By this definition, we attempt to see if the beings are conscious of Allah according to the Quran.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

A host of researchers and religious scholars have dealt directly or indirectly with the concept of consciousness or cognition in Islam and have explored its categories at state or creature consciousness. Of course, it should be noted that these studies have investigated the matter thematically and have not mentioned the types or categories. Thus, their considerations, though somehow classifiable under the categories of this study, do not specifically refer to any one of these types.

Ismail (2004), has conducted an interesting study of the state consciousness of sleep and death in the Quran without referring to inanimate objects or creature consciousness. Siwar and Hossein (2009) have investigated being conscious to Islamic rules and the increase in accountability in social responsibilities thus implicitly referring to target consciousness. The study conducted by Islam and



Chandrasekaran (2016) building on target consciousness and cognition without naming them, deals with the effects of Islamic beliefs among the Muslims on their consumption and buying behavior and the resultant effect upon the environment. Their study considers how obedience to Allah affects the individual's attention to ecological and environmental concerns. Memon (2010) has conducted a study investigating social consciousness as a fundamental aspect of Islamic practice leading to community activism and social justice thus implying target consciousness without explicitly referring to it. Moustafa (2013) building on target consciousness again without mentioning the term examines the inward conscious religious belief and its responses to women justice issue in Malaysia. Munir (2020) considers ecological consciousness of Islam and compares it with that of the West, examining different aspects of it, from Islamic perspectives, relying on the Qur'an, for the protection of the environment.

As stated previously there is a dearth of scholarly materials on dealing with creature consciousness or cognition in the Quran, only a recent study has dealt with the issue from a philosophy of mind approach. SadatMansori (2020) presenting a few Quranic verses has attempted to consider panpsychism in the Quran. Panpsychism asserts the existence of mind and cognition in all beings and pantheism sees God in everything. His study relying on the exegeses of the cited verses asserts that the verses reveal the presence of the mind and cognition in animate and inanimate beings and asserts that all beings are subservient and obedient to Allah. In the present study, we not only deal with the concept of obedience to Allah by all beings but also make comparisons with man on this issue. Moreover, we consider the levels of creature consciousness and cognition as well and attempt to observe to what extent these levels are present in the Qur'anic verses selected for the purposes of the study. More specifically this study addresses the following questions: 1. Is obedience to Allah limited only to man according to the Quran? 2. Is consciousness limited to man according to the Quran?

To address the questions of the study a number of the Quranic verses showing the obedience and consciousness or cognition of all creatures to Allah, are mentioned and, as far as possible, explanations and elaborations are provided for the verses. It must be noted that since

obedience and consciousness can both be understood from the verses we deal with both of them at the same time.

### *Quranic verses*

Truly, we did offer al-amānah to the heavens and the earth, and the mountains, but they declined to bear it and were afraid of it. But man bore it. Verily, he was unjust and ignorant (Quran.33:72)

In explaining the above verse, Allameh Tabatabae sees al-amānah as a gift bestowed upon man to keep it and deliver it safely to Allah (Tabataba'i,1972, vol.16, p.524).

As the above verse reveals the earth and mountains, and heavens have consciousness and cognition because they understand what Allah is asking from them and they all have free will to choose or decline what Allah is offering them. They all refuse and it is man who accepts because he is ignorant and does not perceive the burden of the responsibility which is offered to him. The earth, heavens and mountains were afraid of bearing al-amānah which according to Sadat Mansori (2020) can stand for the trust of Allah in matters such as honesty, and the ordained duties imposed by Allah which are different from the ordinary earthly duties performed by these beings. Allah, is asking them to accept a higher order duty which none accepts except the ignorant man who is not aware of the consequences of this duty. As for the levels of creature consciousness, we can certainly assert that the creatures in this verse possess all the six levels. Specially the third level is addressed here because these creatures are both conscious and conscious of their cognition. Another implication of this verse is the knowledge and fuller cognition of these creatures because they are conscious of the significance of the duty and responsibility of al-amānah. Man accepts it because he is both ignorant and unjust according to the Quran. It should be noted that this is not just pure personification of the heavens, or the earth and mountains because they have preceded man in this verse. In other words, first the verse mentions them and then it reports that man accepted al-amānah. We understand it was an offering given to all creatures if we consider the heavens and the earth as metonymy for the whole universe and for all creatures including mankind. As such, one cannot argue that this is only a personification of these inanimate beings and has nothing to do with their consciousness or mindfulness. Moreover, the verse can also

indicate that in the beginning, the level of consciousness among all creatures was equal and in this respect all creatures including man had the same level of consciousness and free will. The next point is that the verse even implies that all other creatures had a higher level of understanding which man did not have and still he does not have because it uses the present tense to refer to man's ignorance. Man did not have any understanding of what it means to be trusted by God. Therefore, in case of the comparison between man and the other creatures in terms of obedience which was one of the concerns of this study man is disobedient and unfaithful because he has promised to bear al-amānah of Allah but he has failed to perform his duty. All other creatures were honest and they understood their own weakness but man had failure in judgment which is understandable from the adjective "unjust" which Allah uses for him. In this verse, Allah names the heavens, the earth, and the mountains; as stated earlier, the heavens and the earth may signify the whole universe and all beings existing in the universe but the mountains here may signify power and majesty, two qualities which the ignorant man lacks. Nevertheless, he is so unjust and so ignorant that he accepts what even the mountains decline in spite of all their majesty and power. Moreover, the verse reveals that Allah is just and man was free like all other creatures not to choose al-amānah but he chose because he (man) is both unjust and "ignorant".

If We had caused this Qur'an to descend upon a mountain, thou verily hadst seen it humbled, rent asunder by the fear of Allah. Such similitudes coin We for mankind that haply they may reflect (Quran.59:21).

Allameh Tabataba'i in *Almizan* asserts that the background for the above verse is the act of bringing examples relying on the imagination of people to understand the meaning which is behind the example. The verse also intends to make the people be humble to the Quran and bow to its instructions and teachings. The verse implies that the Quran can affect the mountains but some people are so ignorant that their minds are harder than stones (Tabataba'i, 1972, vol. 19.p.380).

This verse also indicates that inanimate objects have understanding and they know the majesty of Allah and are fearful of Him. Again, God as He Himself mentions it has used mountains as an example because mountains are the most stable and solid beings on the earth. God implies that it has created other even more powerful beings than mountains but

mentions the mountains because man perceives them as powerful that is why they serve as “similitudes” so as to make mankind reflect. The verse shows that the mountains do have consciousness and their level of consciousness is very high because they understand the greatness of the Quran and they are fearful of Allah. As for the six levels of consciousness, we can assert that the mountain possesses the third level of consciousness which is the highest one though they also display the other five levels as well. The ignorance of mankind and his disobedience are both underscored in this verse because his understanding is even less than mountains and stones. God has not sent the Quran to the stones but He is sure that they would tremble in fear and they would be humbled before the majesty and mightiness of Allah but man is such an ignorant creature who cannot perceive the greatness of God. Allah brings these similitudes so that man “may reflect”. The modal verb “may” refer to an uncertainty and the verse shows this uncertainty because this “similitude” may fail to make the ignorant man think. Although he has already received the Quran, he does not appreciate It. Sadat Mansori sees the verse as an indication that the mountains have understanding because the Qur’an can only descend upon those beings that have understanding to appreciate it. The fact that God has decided to send examples for mankind through the Quran may indicate the degree of ignorance of man because he needs help to gain understanding. The obedience of other beings to Allah is far greater than that of man because the mountain trembles in fear but man due to his ignorance and his lack of sound judgement seems to have no fear. Fear comes from imagination and it has degrees depending on the level of understanding and consciousness. An animal becomes fearful only when it sees the danger at hand but man can imagine a catastrophe and become fearful. Imagination is a higher faculty of the brain than mere perception. When we want to refer to lack of understanding, inflexibility, solidness and absence of imagination, we generally refer to stones, the building blocks of mountains. Therefore, the verse emphasizes the degree of man’s ignorance by asserting that even stones can understand and imagine the power of Allah but man is even harder than stones in this respect. Therefore, it is not just the power and majesty of the mountain that Allah intends to pervade but its hardness is at stake as well. Unfortunately, the mind of man, according to this verse is even harder than rocks and stones.

In the following verse, the heart of man is compared with rocks and Allah states that even the rocks are permeable but the heart of man is even harder than rocks.

Then after that your hearts hardened. They were as rocks, or even harder. For there are some rocks from which rivers gush out, and others that splinter and water come out from them, and others that sink in awe of Allah. Allah is not unaware of what you do (Quran.2:74).

According to Allameh Tabataba'i in *Almizan*, stones are considered as inanimate beings symbolizing hardness and water is symbolized as softness. The hearts of the infidels are even harder than rocks because soft water sometimes gushes out of stones but these people are so stubborn that the words of God cannot enter their hearts (Tabataba'i, 1972, vol.1, p.306).

The rocks in this verse display both the first level of consciousness and the third level which is the highest one. On the first level, the rocks can respond to the environment that is why they are permeable and can pass the water through themselves and the fact that they "sink in awe of Allah" reveals the third level of consciousness which is being conscious and being aware of it. An interesting point in this verse is the separation of the two levels of consciousness in this verse because the rocks in the first part of the verse are at the first level which is sentience but in the last part when Allah says "others that sink in awe of Allah" He is definitely referring to those rocks which have perception, understanding and imagination, characteristics which the infidels and the polytheists do not have. The verse beautifully implies that man can even lose the first level of consciousness. In this respect the infidels and the polytheists are dead because they do not display consciousness even at the lowest level. The other implication of this verse is that Allah has classifications even for the natural beings and creatures and one may conclude that some of the rocks according to this verse have a higher degree of consciousness which the others lack. One reasoning might be that through this classification, God emphasizes the degree of the degeneration of the infidels and shows how lowly and inferior they are. The dichotomy of heart and brain is itself a matter worth of attention in this verse. Perception of spiritual matters is through heart, and of course by heart Allah does not mean the physical heart. The infidels have lost the permeability of their brains (hearts) that is why they cannot permit the light of God to enter their hearts. The comparison with rocks which

let the water pass through them elucidates the point. Spirituality actualizes itself in the heart for human beings while those rocks which are conscious to Allah can easily understand the majesty and mightiness of God within their total being that is why there is no reference to the hearts of the rocks or the hearts of other beings in the Quran. The other creatures are all hearts and they are at the service of Allah worshipping Him throughout their life. As the verse 44 of the Quran's 17th chapter Surah Al-Isra reveals the matter:

“The seven heavens and the earth and all that is therein praise Him, and there is not a thing but hymneth His praise; but ye understand not their praise. Lo! He is ever Clement, Forgiving”. (Quran,17:44)

Allameh Tabataba'i in *Almizan* states that the whole existence displays its dependence upon Allah and all creatures are praising Him and the process of creation of all animate and inanimate beings is just for the praise of Allah. Moreover, the verse asserts the oneness of Allah and the needy creatures find their well-being in praising Allah. (Tabataba'i, 1972, vol.13, p. 148).

This verse clearly reveals that the whole universe and whatever exists in it, is celebrating and worshipping Allah. Therefore, even those rocks in the previous verse which are not fearful and are at a lower level of understanding compared with the other rocks of the same verse are still praising Allah. The above verse (Quran,17:44), asserts the obedience of all creatures in the universe and their obedience necessitates their consciousness because without consciousness, there cannot be any obedience. All beings are, therefore, conscious of Allah and are subservient to Him. This is only man whom the verse admits cannot understand their worshipping. The verse makes no exception and asserts that everything is praising Allah and only among human beings there are some whose hearts are hardened as stated in the previous verse who have no consciousness about God and they are even inferior to rocks. Comparing this verse with the previous one shows that in this verse the general worshipping of Allah is meant which is unknown to human intellect. Consequently, if we, humans do not understand the worshipping of other beings and their constant praise of Allah, it doesn't mean that such a worship does not exist.

“Hast thou not seen that Allah, He it is Whom all who are in the heavens and the earth praise, and the birds in their flight? Of each He

knoweth verily the worship and the praise; and Allah is Aware of what they do”. (Quran 24: 41)

Allameh Tabatabae relates this verse to its preceding verses and in Almizan asserts that after Allah called himself the Light of the earth and the skies, He brings reasons to support His claims such as the fact that all creatures are dependent on Him and they praise Him all the time (Tabataba'i, 1972, vol.15, p.184)

The above verse also displays the consciousness and obedience of all creatures and again emphasizes that man is not aware of their praise. Allah knows the worshiping of these creatures and the verse also asserts the mysterious nature of these creatures because “Allah is Aware of what they do”. This part of the verse not only shows that the worshiping and praise of the other creatures is unknown to man but also signifies that man can never understand these creatures completely because only Allah knows them. In this verse Allah is implicitly referring to a fact which He explicitly stated in (Quran.33:72), that is, the ignorance of man. While performing their normal behavior or leading their natural lives these creatures are worshiping; for example, the verse shows that that the birds, in their flight are praising Allah. We might just see the birds flying but, in fact, they are worshiping Allah in their flight. Considering the fact that the birds are praising Allah, they display the third level of consciousness.

“All that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth glorifieth Allah, the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One, the Mighty, the Wise”. (Quran 62:1).

According to Allameh Tabataba'i, in Almizan, this verse maintains that whatever exists in the heavens and on the earth, all of them praise Allah and purge Him of any impurities all the time (Tabataba'i, 1972, vol.19, p.444).

This verse of the Quran asserts the ubiquitous nature of worshiping and praising of Allah, the fact that whatever exists in the universe is praising God. This verse again shows both the obedience and consciousness of all creatures because as stated by Sadat Mansouri (2022), obedience necessitates consciousness because these creatures must be conscious in the first place to be able to praise and worship Allah. The beings referred to in this verse possess the six levels of consciousness. The fact that the verse refers to the wisdom of Allah shows that when God mentions that all creatures are conscious of Him, he reiterates his wisdom and the fact that He knows everything and man



is ignorant, see the (Quran,17:44), (Quran 24: 41), and (Quran.2:74). In these verses Allah implies He is the greatest consciousness and the most conscious of all beings because in all these verses He mentions His knowledge, wisdom and awareness and repeats in some of them the ignorance of man and his misunderstandings.

All that is in the heavens and the earth glorifieth Allah; and He is the Mighty, the Wise (Quran, 57: 1).

Allameh Tabatabae, commenting this verse, states the above verse displays that all creatures purge Allah from any indecent features and all of them praise Him; thus, showing their obedience to Him. Stating the features of Allah such as His wisdom and His power or mightiness show that the creatures all confess to the greatness of Allah (Tabataba'i, 1972, vol.19, p. 251).

This verse is very similar to the previous verse displaying the glorification of Allah and his wisdom. The verse again asserts that everything which exists in the universe is praising and glorifying Allah. When Allah asserts that everything is glorifying Him immediately, He mentions His knowledge and wisdom to show that the greatest understanding and consciousness belong to Him.

To display the differences between man and other creatures a few verses are mentioned which embody instances of polytheism and disobedience of man.

They have taken as lords beside Allah their rabbis and their monks and the Messiah son of Mary, when they were bidden to worship only One Allah. There is no Allah save Him. Be He Glorified from all that they ascribe as partner (unto Him)! (Quran, 9:31).

Based on Almizan by Allameh Tabataba'i, the disobedience of the Christians and the Jews lies in obeying their religious leaders to the extent that they considered them as God. Whereas, Allah has no partner and Jesus, the son of Mary, is not the son of God implying that someone who is born from a woman is a carnal being and he cannot be considered as God and "only One Allah" deserves to be worshiped (Tabataba'i, 1972, vol.9, p.326).

The above verse shows one instance of the disobedience of man because instead of worshiping and praising Allah, performed by all beings, a number of human beings have worshiped "their rabbis and their monks and the Messiah son of Mary" while only Allah deserves



to be praised and worshiped. This verse elucidates the difference between man and all other creatures in terms of obedience to Allah.

Yet they ascribe as partners unto Him the jinn, although He did create them, and impute falsely, without knowledge, sons and daughters unto Him. Glorified be He and High Exalted above (all) that they ascribe (unto Him). (Quran,6:100)

In Almizan, Allameh Tabataba'i asserts that in the above verse, the infidels impute the jinn as partners to Allah; whereas, they are only creatures created by Allah and it is impossible for the creatures to be partners for their creator (Tabataba'i, 1972, vol.7, p.401).

The above verse also shows the polytheism and disobedience of mankind. Whereas, no other creature ascribes partners to Allah. The verse asserts that Allah is creator of all beings including the jinn but man is so ignorant that he considers the jinn equal to Allah.

Glorified be Allah from that which they attribute (unto Him) (Quran,37:159).

According to Allameh Tabataba'i in Almizan, the above verse asserts that Allah is purged from any ascription which the infidels ascribe to Him. Moreover, Allah is purified from any description which comes from people because He is far greater than the imagination of people (Tabataba'i, 1972, vol.17, p.274).

The above verse emphasizes the purity of Allah from everything which the polytheists and infidels ascribe to Him. The verse shows the disobedience of man.

They will say: Be Thou Glorified. Thou (alone) art our Guardian, not them! Nay, but they worshipped the jinn; most of them were believers in them. (Quran, 34: 41)

This verse shows the hypocrisy of man, the verse mentions that man cannot be trusted even when he states that he is worshiping Allah because he may be not truthful as revealed by the above verse. The polytheists are worshiping the jinn while their tongues "say: Be Thou Glorified. Thou (alone) art our Guardian" but Allah says that they are telling lies and "they worshipped the jinn; most of them were believers in them". This is man versus all other creatures because no other creature is a hypocrite and neither do they lie but man does, and he cannot be trusted even when he says that he is worshipping Allah.

Therefore (O Muhammad), bear with what they say, and celebrate the praise of thy Lord ere the rising of the sun and ere the going down

thereof. And glorify Him some hours of the night and at the two ends of the day, that thou mayst find acceptance. (Quran,20:130).

The above verse shows the importance of praising Allah, and also the verse is very important because it gives instructions regarding the steps and quality of worshipping Allah. Another implication of this verse is that it shows that God has sent clear message for mankind regarding the manner of worshipping. Whereas, the quality and quantity of worshipping in other creatures are wired onto them and as the previous verses also said the worshipping of other creatures is not understandable by man. In the above verse, Allah teaches the instructions for His praise to His Chosen human beings, the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) probably because no other human being deserves to have direct contact with Allah. Therefore, all human beings are not equal in terms of being conscious about Allah. The prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) has the highest consciousness and understanding and that is why he is chosen by Allah to convey His message. |Of course, praising and worshipping Allah are not limited to the times mentioned in the above verse and Allah in numerous verses tells His prophet to praise Him. The following verse is one of them.

Praise the name of thy Lord the Highest, (Quran, 87: 1).

In the above verse which is just one of many verses telling the prophet and thereby telling all human beings to worship, Allah is exalting Himself and telling the human beings that He is the only one who deserves to be worshipped because He is “the Highest”.

### 3. Conclusion

This study attempted to investigate the levels of consciousness in creatures and their obedience to Allah. Concerning the levels of consciousness, we found that the beings referred to by Allah in these verses mostly possessed all the six levels but in some of them the third level of consciousness which is being conscious of their consciousness was also present. In verse, (Quran.2:74), 74 of the second Surah of the Quran, Allah makes a distinction between the rocks and as stated previously, there are some of them which are fearful of Allah displaying the highest form of consciousness.

Regarding the verses selected for the study, we notice that in these verses generally three major themes can be observed: 1. Consciousness

of all creatures. 2. Ignorance of man in general and his ignorance of the consciousness and obedience of all other creatures in particular. 3. The knowledge, wisdom and consciousness of Allah, which is the highest and the most sublime kind of consciousness.

Regarding the second major concern of the present study which is the obedience of all creatures, the verses showed that all creatures in the universe worship Allah and the only creature who is disobedient is man. Of course, again by this certainly Allah is not referring to all human beings and only the infidels and polytheists are intended. However, among all other creatures according to this verse worshipping is ubiquitous and it includes all of them although depending on the degree of their consciousness and awareness there might be some differences between them. Man is the only exception because some humans are not worshipers and they are the ones whose hearts have hardened and they have lost their consciousness to God. These are the ignorant and the unjust ones to whom the verses referred.

The study also showed that there were other differences between man and the other creatures in their worshipping. Only man has received instructions regarding the quality and quantity of worshipping Allah through the prophets. In other words, the other creatures are wired for worshipping by Allah. But man is an exception because only through the prophets, he is taught how to praise Allah. Moreover, the praise of Allah by the other creatures is totally unknown to man. God gives admonitions to man not to praise anything but Allah but does not give such warnings to any other creature because they are by nature worshipers of God.

The analysis of the selected verses of the Quran in the present study showed that all beings whether animate or inanimate had consciousness and all worshipped Allah although the degree of their consciousness differed, they were all obedient. Only a number of human beings were disobedient and they were the ignorant ones who were the polytheists and the infidels. Allah called these people both ignorant and unjust, perhaps signifying that these people had the lowest level of consciousness because in the Quran all creatures were conscious and obedient. Consciousness according to the Quran means being conscious to Allah and this kind of consciousness is the highest one because it leads to praising and worshipping Allah.

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## Analysis of the Textual Coherence in Nahj-Al-Balagheh Based on Halliday and Hassan Model: A Case Study of Ashbah Sermon

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### Abstract

One of the main arguments between the proponents and the opponents of religious books has been the lack of coherence and semantic connection in these books. After Holy Quran, Nahj-Al-Balagheh is the most important book of Muslims (Esp. Shia). Hence, the present paper aims to investigate one of the famous sermons of Nahj-Al-Balagheh. Coherence is the semantic connection in a text or spoken language that creates a connection between the author or speaker with the reader or listener. Coherence includes the structural and lexical relationships of a text. The present study uses the text coherence model of Michael Halliday and Roghayeh Hassan (1985) to examine the textual coherence of one of the famous sermons of Nahj-Al-Balagheh. So, for this purpose, Ashbah Sermon was selected and the factors of text coherence were evaluated using the Halliday and Hassan model. Finally, the obtained results revealed that this sermon despite being short has a strong and significant coherence. The results of the present study can be beneficial to scholars, students, professors, and all who are interested in Islamic Studies, religion as well as political science and its links to Islamic thoughts. Similar studies can also be conducted on other Islamic texts paramount among Muslim scholars and political analysts. To put it another way, this study can attract the attention of a large number of stakeholders and practitioners focusing on political science and religious studies as it considers the significance and the prominent role of Nahj-Al-Balagheh in Islamic philosophy in today's world.

**Keywords:** Ashbah Sermon, Coherence, lexical Coherence, Structural Coherence, Halliday and Hassan model

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## 1. Introduction

Role-oriented linguistics is one of the new attitudes in the field of linguistics, which has been emphasized by many linguists today. Based on this attitude, "language is a tool for social interaction and a unit of text analysis in context. In this sense, it is the ratio of linguistic units and their formal relationships with the context that gives specific meanings. (Halliday & Hasan, 1985, p. 40). For this reason, they start their work by relying on words and analyzing words. Based on the role-oriented approach, the text is a coherent and meaningful collection. "From this point of view, the military language system is not arbitrary and contractual, but is natural and a product of society, and is in accordance with the needs of society and man; So that every element of the language can be explained by referring to its role in the overall language system. (Mohajer and Nabavi 1997, p. 14) One of the parts of speech analysis is discourse. Discourse or speech analysis is based on the belief that when the text has the necessary coherence, it turns into speech. (Green and Labihan 2013, p. 33). For this reason, coherence is considered one of the most important factors in the formation of the text; Halliday believes that coherence can include semantic relationships between different parts of a piece of writing or speech, and this coherence ultimately makes that writing become a text. (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 4). Due to the ability of the coherence theory to determine the coherence of the text, it can be used as a framework for analyzing the coherence of the text in Nahj al-Balaghah. Coherence in the text is created through various elements. These elements are divided into three categories: grammatical, lexical and linking elements (Amiri Khorasani and Alinejad, 2014). Each of these elements has more minor factors, by examining them, the coherence factors of the text can be evaluated to a great extent (Akbari and Mashayikhi, 2020).

Imam Ali (A. S.) is the first imam of the Shiites who ruled as caliph for less than five years. He has a special place among Muslims. Despite all the religious differences in the historiography of Muslims, the sources agree that he was a deeply religious person who was dedicated to Islam and a just government in accordance with the Qur'an and the Sunnah. The book of Nahj al-Balaghah, which is a selection of the sayings and literary writings of Amir al-Mominin Ali (AS), was collected by Seyyed Razi at the end of the fourth century. This book has

been named "Akh al-Qur'an" by some scholars because of its rich content and eloquence. This book is divided into three parts: sermons, letters, and aphorisms. One of the most famous sermons of Nahj al-Balagha is the sermon of ghosts. The Ashbah sermon is one of the sermons of Nahj al-Balagha, which begins with the knowledge of God and ends with a prayer seeking God's pleasure. This sermon in Nahjul Balagha is not complete and only a part of Imam Ali's speech is included in it. Ibn Abi al-Hadid considers the metaphors and ironies of this sermon as a sign of the superiority of the speaker of the sermon over others. The description of God, his timelessness and space lessness, the limitation of his names and attributes, the purposefulness of the creation of beings, the description of the sky, angels, the creation of the earth, are among the topics raised in this sermon.

Considering the importance of this sermon and its length in Nahj al-Balagha, this article aims to analyze the text of this sermon.

In this article, the following questions are answered:

- 1- Does the text of the ghost sermon have coherence?
- 2- According to the model of Halliday and Hassan (1985), what is the textual coherence of the ghost sermon?
- 3- What are the text coherence factors in the ghost sermon?

The present article tries to analyze the "ghost" sermon based on one of the latest patterns of text analysis. In this article, we will try to analyze the coherence and elements of coherence in the aforementioned sermon from Nahj al-Balagha and answer the questions that were raised earlier.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

The method of this research is "analytical-adaptive". In this article, Halliday's coherence model is applied in the text of the Sermon of ghosts, and at the end, the results are stated based on this model. Text analysis has long been one of the topics researched by experts in the field of language and literature. Text analysis emphasizes the factors that make a text coherent (Hardy, Bako, and Magor 2020). "Cohesion can be considered the most excellent feature of a literary work. Whether it is a sonnet, an ode, a story, a play, an epic, or a sermon, or any other



type of literature" (Ebrahimi et al., 2016, p. 2). Examining cohesion factors, including grammatical factors, based on the Halliday model, is one of the things that can evaluate the coherence of the text in different texts and help determine the coherence of the text (Rostami and Kotbi, 2019). In another research, Siyabi (2019) evaluates the factors of coherence in writing in different texts using the Halliday and Hassan model. In this research, he analyzed the various factors of text coherence. Coherence in the text is one of the things that need to be analyzed in some cases, and it is not possible to comment on the coherence of the text with a cursory and superficial look at the text. For this reason, different methods for analyzing the text are evaluated to determine its coherence, one of which is the Halliday and Hassan model (Stamboli and Belmaki 2019).

Halliday's theory of coherence is one of the most efficient and newest models of examining text coherence, which has recently entered the field of studying the translation of the Qur'an into Persian. Michael Halliday's "role-systemic" theory of linguistics is one of the most important theories of linguistics, which analyzes various literary texts in a systematic way within the framework of role orientation. In a part of this theory, he talks about indicators that a coherent text should have" (Amrai, Kahe and Soleimani, 2019).

Adalat Pour (2018) states in his article that Halliday's coherence theory is used to determine the coherence factors and the degree of coherence of the text. Among the functions of this theory, we can mention the analysis of coherence relationships between different texts as well as the examination of coherence within the text. Articles such as "Effectiveness of Halliday's and Hassan's Theory in Delineating the Textual Coherence of Surah Muzamal" by Ezzat Mulla Ebrahimi and Zahra Rezaei (2013), "The Use of Cohesive Factors in Surah Al-Ala and Its Translation from Saffarzadeh" by Masoumeh Nemati Qazvini and Tahereh Ishani (2015), Comparative evaluation of coherence in Surah Al-Alak and its translation by Haddad Adel based on the theory of Halliday and Hasan" by Mohammad Hassan Amraei, Gholam Abbas Haftader and Mohammad Taqi Zand Vakili (2016), all of them are articles that use the same model in the experiment and analysis of text coherence in the Qur'an. The analysis of the coherence of the text in Nahj al-Balagha is also based on this new model in some cases.

For example, in article "Investigation of the Role of Repetition in Giving Coherence to Nahj al-Balagheh Sermons based on Halliday and Hassan's Coherence Model" by Khalil Parvini and Alireza Nazari (2013), the function of conjunctions in giving coherence to Nahj al-Balagheh sermons" by Alireza Nazari, among the articles in this are the context.

In line with the research done in this field, the present article aims to investigate the quality of coherence in the sermon of Nahj al-Balagha based on the model of Halliday and Hassan (1985) and the coherence coordination of Ruqiyeh Hassan in 1984. Considering the importance of the Quran and Nahj al-Balagha among religious books, the study of coherence theory has a special place in it. Although religious books, especially books approved by Shia scholars, have always been attacked by the opponents of Islam, these opponents were trying to diminish the importance and status of these religious books among the people. For example, Thomas Carlyle explicitly considers the Qur'an as a "difficult text... a complex, ambiguous, boring, inelegant and primitive collection" (Al-Awi 2010, p. 53). Similarly, in another place, Montgomery Watt points out that the Qur'an does not have the necessary "coherence".

Based on this, the review and analysis of coherence in these books can be one of the important and worthy issues. Nahj al-Balagha is one of the most important and influential religious books in terms of religious and mystical dimensions and has remarkable eloquence and eloquence. This importance is to the extent that it is referred to as the "Second Qur'an" and these factors make it very important to examine the various linguistic aspects of this book. (Emrai and Bamri, 2019, p. 179).

The issue of coherence in Nahj al-Balagha can also be one of the important and worthy issues. Nahj al-Balagheh is considered one of the influential religious and mystical texts as an eternal literary and rhetorical work. For this reason, examining the text of Nahj al-Balagha using modern approaches is very important, especially since most of the researchers in this field have focused on the text of the Qur'an and less attention has been paid to Nahj al-Balagha in this field. The research done on Nahj al-Balagha has been investigated more from the traditional point of view and relying on the concepts in rhetorical books,

and less from the perspective of linguistics and semantic coherence in the field of Nahj al-Balagha. (Emarai and Bamri, 2019, pp. 179-180).

Among the factors that linguists have proposed in the field of text, two factors of cohesion and continuity are of great importance. As a rule, whatever the name of the text refers to must have cohesive factors, although these cohesive factors may be different in different languages. (Latfipour Saedi, 1371). According to these points, Nahj al-Balagha is not an exception to this rule, and the factors of cohesion can be observed and analyzed in its text.

Further, in the research, it has tried to analyze and show the factors and elements of text coherence in the ghost sermon.

In this research, the sermon of ghosts has been used for the following reasons. First, the Ashbah sermon is one of the most famous and important sermons of Nahj al-Balagha (Moradian, Jantifar and Masoumi 2019). Secondly, in the sermon of Ashbah, various issues are discussed such as the description of God, the interpretation of Raskhan, the goal of the creation of the universe, and many other topics.

In this research, the data analysis method is descriptive-analytical, in other words, the authors have used the content analysis method based on Halliday and Hassan's theory to analyze the selected sermon. In this method, based on the theory of Halliday and Hasan, the factors that express intratextual coherence are evaluated and investigated. According to Halliday's theory, coherence consists of three grammatical, lexical and linking elements, which are presented in this article in different sections according to the text of the cases and examples to clarify the matter. According to Halliday and Hasan's theory, the coherence of the text includes all the semantic relations through which any piece of text or speech can act as a text. "Cohesion is the grammatical and lexical connection of the elements within a text, through which the text becomes integrated and meaningful (Sadighi and Setaish Mehr, 2014, p. 25). Therefore, "cohesion" refers to all relationships that connect elements of a sentence to It connects the elements of other sentences" (Latfipour and Saedi 1371, p. 110). According to this theory, the meaning must be organized and become a structure. This work is done in the lexical layer. The meaning is formed by the combination of units that have relationships between these units. Based on this, the coherence of the speech is achieved at two grammatical and lexical levels (Mohajer and Nabawi, 1997, p. 35).

According to Halliday and Hassan's theory, "textual coherence" is the relationship between the sentences of a text. Accordingly, Halliday and Hassan have defined textual coherence as follows: coherence is a semantic concept that deals with the semantic relationships in the text and is used as a factor to separate the text from the non-text. Halliday believes that coherence lies potentially in the elements of the language system such as reference, deletion, substitution. (Hallidi and Hassan, 2013, p. 38). Based on the basics of Halliday and Hasan's theory, the cohesion factors of the text are as follows:

- Vocabulary system - which includes "repetition, conjunction, reference, substitution and deletion".
- Link system that refers to the same "conjunctions". In this process, we talk about the relationships between objects and phenomena. Such processes are often accompanied by verbs such as being, seeming, becoming and having (Halliday, 1985, pp. 112-114).

### **3. Results and Discussion**

One of the language theories that is used in the analysis of literary texts is Michael Halliday's theory. According to Halliday's theory, coherence is the semantic, verbal, syntactic and logical connection of a text, the factors that create coherence are divided into three categories: Structural Cohesion, lexical Cohesion and Conjunctive cohesion.

Structural coherence is divided into two branches: grammatical, structural and non-structural grammatical coherence. Among the factors that exist in this type of coherence, we can mention factors such as reference, connection, replacement and deletion. Lexical cohesion includes factors such as "repetition" and "combination". (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, pp. 16-20).

According to Halliday's theory of text coherence, semantic coherence is the relationships through which a piece of speech or writing can be called a text. Therefore, cohesion is the relationship that connects one sentence to another sentence. According to his theory, meaning is not formed by itself in the text, and this organization and coherence cause the formation of meaning in the text. These relationships take place at the lexical-grammatical level and form the language. (Stari and Haghghi, 1395, 104).

"Cohesion exists when the interpretation of some elements in the discourse relies on other elements. These elements are presuppositions of other elements, which means that they cannot be decoded without referring to those elements. When this problem occurs, a coherent relationship is created and the two mentioned elements, i.e., the presuming element and the presumed element, are potentially combined in the text" (Halliday and Hassan, 2013, p. 4).

Using Halliday and Hasan's model to analyze religious texts is one of the methods that can well evaluate the coherence of the text in terms of grammar and vocabulary. The existence of coherence in such texts can help to better understand the text (Fadil Abbas, 2020). For example, some researchers have stated that by using the Halliday model, textual coherence, the power of the text in conveying the concept and even the ideology in the text can be evaluated and investigated (Alafnan, 2019).

Michael Halliday and Ruqieh Hassan identify and introduce tools for cohesion in English language, which can be classified under three major categories: grammatical cohesion, lexical cohesion, and relational cohesion.

### ***3.1. Lexical Cohesion***

Lexical cohesion is the relationship that the lexical units of the language have with each other in terms of the content of the meaning (Masbouq and Delshad 2015, p. 121). Lexical cohesion is the result of having similar and related words in a text. For example, when talking about religious life and religious relationships, words that are related to the topic are inevitably used, for example, it is about previous faith and belief or religious teachings to create coherence so that the audience is in the desired space. Lexical coherence can be examined at two levels: a) the sentence level, where the semantic relationship of the words in the sentence is evaluated and b) at the text level: where the words in the whole text have a conceptual relationship between different sentences, They are being analyzed and checked. (Zanos and Nabipour, 2016, pp. 90-91).

#### ***3.1.1. Repetition***

Another important factor in lexical cohesion is repetition. From the psychological point of view, repetition of the content in the speech expresses the importance of the topic and through it, it wants to convey

it to the listeners. Repetition occurs in different formats such as "combination", "contrast", "semantic inclusion" and "part-whole relationship" (Pashazanos and Nabipour 2016, p. 53).

### 3.1.2. *Verbatim Repetition*

Verbal repetition means the repetition of a word in the text, which is divided into two categories: total repetition (word repetition without any change) and partial repetition (repetition of derivatives of a word). The following tables show total and pure repetition factors.

**Table 1.** *Total Repetition Factor in the Sermon of Ghosts*

The number of repetitions	Repeated word
3	Praise
3	Forgiveness
13	Blessing (Gift)
6	Sustenance
7	Creatures
10	God

**Table 2.** *Partial Repetition Factor in the Ghost Sermon*

Derivatives	Repeated Root
بخشش	بخشش
بخشیدن	
بخشایش	
بخشنده	
هدایتگر	هدایت
هدایت	
نیازمند	نیاز
نیازمندان	

### 3.1.3. *Semantic inclusion*

Semantic inclusion means that the concept of a word includes several other words as well (Palmer 1374, p. 132). For example, the repetition of the word "forgiving" can both mean giving and it can also refer to God. For example, consider the following sentence:

زیرا هر بخشنده‌های جز او، اموالش کاهش یابد، و جز او هر کس از بخشش دست کشد  
مورد نکوهش قرار گیرد.

چون او بخشنده‌های است که درخواست نیازمندان چشمه جود او را نمی خشکاند

In the first sentence, the word "forgiving" refers to God, but in the second sentence, the word "forgiving" refers to giving words and actions.

### 3.1.4. *Synonym*

Synonyms are words that are similar in meaning. The meaning of adverbs are words that are used by the speaker or the author of the text to diversify the text.

Some examples of metaphors in the sermon of ghosts are as follows:

-برای مثال کلمه خدا و ضمیر او هر دو اشاره به خداوند دارد.

-دو کلمه فقر و کاهش اموال هر دو مضمون فقر دارند.

-دو کلمه جود و بخشش هر دو اشاره به صفت بخشندگی خداوند دارد.

-دو کلمه انسان و پرستش کننده هر دو اشاره با انسان دارد.

### 3.1.5. *Repetition of compound structure*

A group of sentences that are related to each other with a conjunction to connect two or more similar sentences. Such sentences have the same grammatical structure but different meaning, which creates a kind of coherence in the text (Mokhtari and Khodabakhsh, 2017, p. 116). In the sermon of ghosts, some of these cases can be seen, for example, a few of them are mentioned here.

-ستایش خدایی را سزاست که نبخشیدن بر مال او نیفزاید، و بخشش او را فقیر نسازد

-خدا اولی است که آغاز ندارد، تا پیش از او چیزی بوده باشد، و آخری است که پایان ندارد تا چیزی پس از او وجود داشته باشد

-خدایی که پدیده ها را از هیچ آفرید، نمونه ای در آفرینش نداشت تا از آن استفاده کند

### **3.1.6. Collocation**

Collocation is the combination of words that have a strong semantic connection between them, such as the connection between the two words "drinking" and "water". Sometimes this semantic connection is so strong that hearing one of the words evokes another word in the mind, such as the words "Dad" and "Bidad". This strong connection between two words that are similar to each other is one of the things that increase the coherence and consistency of the text. (Zanos and Nabipour, 2016, p. 95).

The combination is divided into two categories. The first category is to observe the example: it consists of using words that are in harmony with each other.

Some of the examples of observing al-Nazir in the sermon of ghosts are:

-معادن و کوهها، نقره‌های خالص و طلاهای ناب

-دریا، صدف، مرجان، در

-وهم و خیال

-حد و اندازه

-شکل و قالب

-حکمت و تدبیر

The second category, contrast: sometimes a strong connection between two opposite words causes them to be used together. Because sometimes it is in such a way that hearing one of these two words, the other Kamela is associated in the mind. For example, the words "left and right". Some examples of contradictions in the sermon of ghosts are stated below:



-خدا اولی است که آغاز ندارد، تا پیش از او چیزی بوده باشد، و آخری است که پایان ندارد تا چیزی پس از او وجود داشته باشد.

-نامحدود و محدود

-کجی و راست

-پستی و بلندی

-فرود آمدن و برخاستن

-روشنی و تاریکی

-شب و روز

-شادی و غصه

-مقدم و موخر

### 3.2. Grammatical Coherence

Grammatical coherence is divided into three categories: reference, deletion and substitution.

#### 3.2.1. Reference

Referencing in the text is done using pronouns, referent nouns and related nouns. Referral plays a significant role in establishing coherence and establishing a relationship (Velini et al., 2015, pp. 78-79). Some of the references in the sermon of ghosts are stated in the table below.

**Table 3. References in the Ghost Sermon**

Pronoun reference	Pronoun
خداوند	او
صفات خداوند	آن
پیامبران و امامان	آنها

انسان‌ها	ما
خداوند	تو
انسان	خود
مشركان	آنان
فضای باز	آن
شهاب‌های روشن	آنها
خداوند	خود
خداوند	خویش
فرشتگان	آنها
فرشتگان	شان
فرشتگان	خود
فرشتگان	آنان
زمین	خود
مردم	آنان
انسان	او
رزق و روزی	آن

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### 3.2.2. Replacement

In replacing one language element, it replaces another element, that is, a word or phrase may replace another word or phrase in the text (Zanos and Nabipour 2016, p. 88). In fact, the replacement factor can be considered as the semantic repetition factor. (Velini and others, 2015, p. 78). Substitution can exist in two ways in the text: noun instead of noun and noun instead of sentence. Below are some examples of substitutions in the sermon of ghosts.

At the beginning of the Sermon, we have

"ستایش خدایی را سزاست که نبخشیدن بر مال او نیفزاید"

then

"چون او بخشنده‌ای است که درخواست نیازمندان چشمه جود او را نمی خشکاند"

In the two examples of the mentioned sentence, instead of the word God, the word "forgiving" is used in the following, which refers to one of God's attributes.

"ای پرسش کننده، درست بنگر، آنچه را که قرآن از صفات خدا بیان می دارد، به آن اعتماد کن."

In this example, instead of the word God's attributes, its word is used in the following.

"ای پرسش کننده، درست بنگر، آنچه را که قرآن از صفات خدا بیان می دارد، به آن اعتماد کن، و از نور هدایتش بهره گیر، و آنچه را که شیطان تو را به دانستن آن وامی دارد."

Here, instead of the پرسش کننده that refers to a human being, the pronoun تو is used in the second sentence.

### 3.2.3. Elimination

Deletion means not including the word, sentence or part of the sentence in the text in such a way that the audience can find out the deleted element according to the clues in the text. Omissions help text coherence for two reasons. First, deletion prevents repetition in the text. Second, it may occur due to reference, which may occur due to the presence of a similar element in the text. Therefore, in order to receive

the deleted element, it is necessary to refer to its counterpart (Zanos and Nabipour 2016, p. 89).

Below are some of the omissions of letters or words or phrases in the Sermon of Ghosts.

**Table 4.** *A list of Omitted Letters or Words or Phrases in the Sermon of Ghosts*

The main phrase	The phrase used
در این جمله فعل به قرینه	روزی همه را تضمین، و
حذف شده است "تضمین فرمود"	اندازه اش را تعیین فرمود
در این عبارت حرف "ش"	
اشاره به خداوند دارد در واقع جمله	از نور هدایتش بهره‌گیر
به این صورت بوده است "از نور	
هدایت خداوند بهره‌گیر"	
در این جمله کلمه خداوند به	در آنچه آفریده آثار صنعت
قرینه معنایی در جمله حذف شده	و نشانه های حکمت او پدیدار
است تا ار تکرار در متن جلوگیری	است
و انسجام متن حفظ شود.	
در این عبارت نیز با توجه به	آنچه را آفرید با اندازه
قراین و معنای موجود کلمه خداوند	گیری دقیقی استوار کرد و با
حذف شده است	لطف و مهربانی نظمشان داد، و
	به خوبی تدبیر کرد.

در این عبارت نیز مانند	
پس کجی های هر چیزی	مثال های قبل کلمه خداوند از جمله
را راست، و مرزهای هر یک را	به قرینه معنایی حذف شده است تا
روشن ساخت	انسجام معنایی متن حفظ و تکرار
در متن جلوگیری شود	

### 3.2.3. Elimination

Conjunctive coherence is the semantic and logical connection between the sentences of a text. Based on the theory of Halliday and Hasan, connective cohesion is divided into four categories: additional, causal, confrontational and temporal (Velini et al. 2015, p. 82).

Additional connection is when we add a sentence or a phrase to the previous sentence. In fact, this sentence or phrase can have an explanatory or allegorical aspect.

Causal relationship is when a sentence or phrase has a causal relationship with the sentence before or after it.

Contrastive relationship refers to a relationship that has a relationship with our previous sentence or phrase.

A temporal relationship is said to be a relationship that creates a time sequence between two events.

Some examples of connective cohesion in the sermon of ghosts are shown in the table below.

**Table 5. Cases of Connective Cohesion in the Sermon of Ghosts**

Sample	Relational cohesion
با لباس نازک گل برگ ها که بر خود پوشید، هر بیننده	
ای را به شگفتی واداشت. و با زینت و زیوری که از گلو بند	و
گل های گوناگون، فخر کنان خود را آراست	Additional relation

<p>دست قدرت بر سینه همه نواخته بازگرداند، در حالی که</p> <p>در تاریکی های غیب برای رهایی خود به خدای سبحان پناه</p> <p>می برند</p> <p>خدایی که پدیده ها را از هیچ آفرید، نمونه ای در</p> <p>آفرینش نداشت تا از آن استفاده کند</p> <p>هر پدیده را برای همان جهت که آفریده شد به حرکت</p> <p>در آورد، چنانکه نه از حد و مرز خویش تجاوز نماید</p> <p>بدون احتیاج به اندیشه و فکری که به آن روی آورد، یا</p> <p>غریزه ای که در درون پنهان داشته باشد</p> <p>در پیش او آنقدر از نعمت ها وجود دارد که هر چه انسان</p> <p>ها درخواست کنند تمامی نپذیرد، چون او بخشنده ای است</p> <p>که درخواست نیازمندان چشمه جود او را نمی خشکاند</p> <p>اوست خدای توانایی که اگر وهم و خیال انسانها بخواهد</p> <p>برای درک اندازه قدرتش تلاش کند، و افکار بلند و دور از</p> <p>وسوسه های دانشمندان، بخواهد ژرفای غیب ملکوتش را در</p> <p>نوردد، و قلب های سراسر عشق مشتاقان، برای درک کیفیت</p> <p>صفات او کوشش نماید</p> <p>هر یک از پدیده ها حجت و برهانی بر وجود او می</p> <p>باشند، گرچه برخی مخلوقات، به ظاهر ساکت اند</p>	<p>درحالی که</p> <p>تا</p> <p>چنانکه</p> <p>یا</p> <p>چون</p> <p>برای</p> <p>گرچه</p>	<p>Causal relationship</p> <p>Reciprocal communication</p>
--	---	--

گرچه برخی مخلوقات، به ظاهر ساکت اند، ولی بر تدبیر	
خداوندی گویا، و نشانه های روشنی بر قدرت و حکمت	ولی
اویند.	
پس چگونه ممکن است سرپیچی کند در حالی که همه	درحالی که
موجودات از اراده خدا سرچشمه می گیرند	

The table below shows the repetition rate of each of the factors of textual coherence in the sermon of ghosts.

**Table 6.A** *List of the Repetition Rate of Each of the Factors of Textual Coherence in the Sermon of Ghosts*

Total F	Frequency	Elements of cohesion
	55	verbatim repetition
	6	synonym      Semantic repetition
143	50	Repetition of compound structure      Lexical coherence
	16	symmetry      Collocation
	16	Conflict
	42	Reference
60	12	Replacement      Structural coherence
	6	Elimination
		انسجام
10	10	Conjunction      پیوندی

#### 4. Conclusions

Based on the analysis, this article shows that even though Nahj al-Balagha has been translated into Persian and the analysis in this article is based on its Persian text, there are subtleties and subtleties in its text

that will be appreciated. Nahj al-Balagha is one of the authentic books of Shia and has always been of interest to Muslims and scholars of religious issues. Although research has been done on the textual coherence of the Qur'an and Nahj al-Balagha, this article tried to show that despite the translation of the text from Arabic to Persian, these subtleties still remain in the text of Nahj al-Balagha. The importance of Nahj al-Balagha is enough that this book has been translated into 18 languages and the number of translations of Nahj al-Balagha in different languages reaches more than 100 titles.

Based on Halliday's theory, the examination of the textual coherence of the Ghost Sermon was evaluated and investigated from various aspects, and it was tried to give examples of the text to show the coherence in different parts in order to objectively show these cases. According to the investigation and analysis, the results obtained from this analysis are as follows.

Based on the theory of Halliday and Hassan, the results obtained from the study of the sermon of Ashbah Nahj al- Blagha show that according to the number of examples of coherence in the text, which was also mentioned in Table 6, there are 232 cases of coherence factors in this short sermon, which is a high and significant figure. In this table, an attempt has been made to summarize all the factors of coherence within the text that were evaluated in the sermon of ghosts. Based on this, it can be seen that this sermon is at a high level in terms of lexical coherence, followed by grammatical and linking coherence.

Among the factors of text cohesion, factors such as semantic inclusion, synonyms, repetition of the combined structure, coincidence, reference, replacement, deletion, link cohesion are used in this sermon. The most cohesive element of the text used in this sermon is related to the factors of lexical cohesion and verbal repetition. Based on the analysis and the numerous tables of the elements of the coherence of the text, we can come to the conclusion that the sermon of Ghosts has a high textual coherence and considering that in this sermon, various issues such as knowledge of God, the attributes of God, the description of God in the creation of beings, the manner of creation, the characteristics Angels and... have been discussed, but again its textual coherence was very high and remarkable.

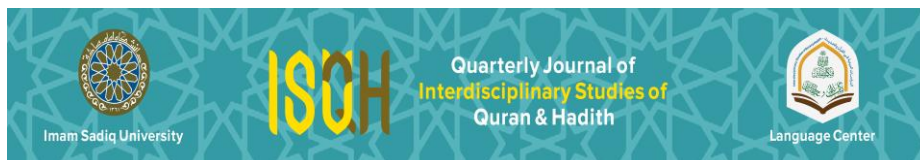


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## Narratological Re-reading of Prophet Yusuf and Zulaikha Story

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### Abstract

The story of Prophet Yusuf and Zulaikha is one of the fascinating stories of the Holy Qur'an. One of the points of dispute is this section of the Holy Qur'an "... he would have made for her [too] had he not beheld the proof of his God". The significance of the sentence includes two parts: What does "...he would have made for her [too]..." mean? And what is the meaning of "...had he not beheld the proof of his God"? The objective of the current research is shedding enough light upon the true meaning of the afore-mentioned sentence. Accordingly, by utilizing the methodology of content analysis and narratology (White, 1973), verses 23 and 24 of Surah Yusuf have been analyzed thoroughly and meticulously to ultimately clarify the ambiguous points. The result of the study shows that the phrase "...he would have made for her [too]..." could be elaborated on in two ways: it can mean a physical confrontation with Zulaikha and it can also mean an intention similar to Zulaikha's intention and will. The significance of "...had he not beheld the proof of his God" squarely depends on the meaning obtained from "...he would have made for her [too]..." In the first interpretation, the observation of the proof of his God describes Prophet Yusuf as a pious person whom God helps thanks to his steady piety, and in the second interpretation, the observation of the proof of God portrays the infallibility and impeccability of Prophet Yusuf which hinders him to succumb to sordid penchants and intentions.

**Keywords:** Prophet Yusuf, Zulaikha, God's, Proof, Piety, Infallibility of Prophets, Quranic Narratives

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## 1. Introduction

The story of Yusuf and Zulaikha is one of the most interesting stories in the Holy Qur'an. The story begins with Zulaikha's seduction and ends with Prophet Yusuf's imprisonment. In the current paper, only the part of the story where Prophet Yusuf turns down Zulaikha's request and runs towards the door will be studied. This part of the story is as follows:

After Zulaikha tries to seduce Prophet Yusuf, Prophet Yusuf takes refuge in God and says to her that his God has elevated his status and her deed is indecent and immoral. But Zulaikha does not accept his answer and tries to catch Prophet Yusuf. Observing the proof of his God causes Prophet Yusuf to not pay attention to her so he runs towards the door. As a result, sordor and indecency are averted from him.

This part of the story consists of four smaller parts as following:

The first part shows Zulaikha's request for a relationship with Prophet Yusuf as "The woman in whose house he was, tried to seduce him. She closed the doors and said, 'Come!' ... (12: 23)". This section delineates Zulaikha's indecent and immoral demeanor. The second part represents Prophet Yusuf's reply to Zulaikha as "...He said, 'God forbid! Indeed, He is my God; He has given me a good abode. Indeed, the wrongdoers are not felicitous. (12: 23)" The third part shows the movement of Zulaikha towards Prophet Yusuf and his reaction as "...She certainly made for him; and he would have made for her [too] had he not beheld the proof of his God (12: 24)" and the fourth part shows the repercussion of Prophet Yusuf's behavior in the third part as "...So it was, that We might turn away from him all evil and indecency. He was indeed one of Our dedicated servants" (12: 24).

The above four parts have been the cynosure of different researchers and analyzed in detail. However, the part "...had he not beheld the proof of his God..." in the third section which presents Prophet Yusuf's reaction towards Zulaikha's intention and will is the point of serious dispute among scholars. In this research, the authors seek to delve into this section and extract the true meaning and significance of the sentence. Accordingly, the methodology of content analysis has been chosen.

## 2. Theoretical Background

In the present research, the story of Prophet Yusuf and Zulaikha is steadily lucubrated into and studied using the methodology of content analysis and narratology, and all through the study, the research questions are answered in full.

Narratology is a novel methodology approaching narratives and their structures so as to uncover new and ulterior layers of narratives. The study of narrative is significant since the ordering of time and space in narrative forms creates one of the major ways meaning is formed in general. As Hayden White puts it, "far from being one code among many that a culture may utilize for endowing experience with meaning, narrative is a meta-code, a human universal on the basis of which transcultural messages about the nature of a shared reality can be transmitted" (White, 1973). As the prevalence and importance of narrative media in our daily lives (television, film, fiction) is ubiquitous, narratology is also a useful base to have before we try to analyze popular cultures such religious texts.

The story of Yusuf and Zulaikha has always been the cynosure of quite many popular cultures such movies and literary criticism. In this article, the authors have approached this story from the vantagepoint of narratology and tried to show how this story could have new and hidden connotations by using linguistic and narratological clues while alluding to other narratives in the Holy Quran. The reader can come to uncover novel layers of Yusuf's and Zulaikha's discrepant intentions by the way they both narrate the things having happened between them from diverse views.

The story of Prophet Yusuf, due to its coherence, has widely been discussed in various articles from literary and story-telling view-points. However, far fewer articles have been published from the aspects of the interpretation and examination of the verses. A number of the pertinent articles published recently are as follows:

The article by Mohseni and Ahmadi Begash has examined the life of Prophet Yusuf from the point of view of interpretive and narrative sources, using mostly quoted opinions of diverse scholars (Mohsani and Ahmadi Beghash, 2019). In another article, the same authors analyzed some parts from Surah Yusuf and have only analyzed the opinions of other scholars and relevant hadiths (Mohsani and Ahmadi Begash,

2017). Moghadam and Safari in their articles have analyzed the phrase "...he would have made..." and examined different opinions, and in the end, Allameh Tabatabai's opinion was considered the best opinion. In the following sections, the result of this article will be pointed at (Moghadam and Sadrifar, 2019). In an article, Shafiee has analyzed three scholars' opinions, Allameh Tabatabai, Rashid Reza and Javadi Amoli, on verse 24 of Surah Yusuf (Shafii Darab, 2019). Examining Prophet Yusuf's statement about Zulaikha and the King of Egypt after Prophet Yusuf got released from prison is another issue discussed by Azghadi and Seyyed Mousavi (Azghadi and Seyed Mousavi, 2017.) Apart from the articles, the research questions are discussed in detail in the commentary books and various scholars have given diverse opinions about them.

The story has been interpreted and elaborated upon in the following sections and every single word is analyzed and examined so that the different aspects of the story and also the prevailing ambience are delineated properly. These studies are in fact the initial introduction to find the true answer to the main question of the research.

### ***2.1. Zulaikha's Request for a Relationship with Prophet Yusuf***

In the section related to Zulaikha's confrontation with Prophet Yusuf, the Holy Qur'an has touched upon the details relevant to the true ambience of the story and Zulaikha's request in the section "...the woman in whose house he was, seduced him. She closed the doors and said, 'Come!!'... (12: 23)". Zulaikha is in a position of power and considers Prophet Yusuf according to the phrase "...bought him ..." her bought servant who has been under her orders so she expects him to follow and act according to her wishes and orders. Thus, she requests him to have a relationship with her. The verb "Rawadah" is based on Mofala tonality and stems from "Rawada" which means both "asking" and also "passing" (Mirhosseini and Ranji, *Semantic Analysis of the Word "Marawdeh" in the Holy Qur'an*, 2016). Ragheb Esfahani has translated it into "passing and coming and going slowly in search of something" (1995, p. 371) in which the connotation of repetition is hidden. The verb "Rawadah" has been eight times in the Holy Qur'an, in all of which it has been in the structure of "subject+ verb+ second subject+ about+ object". This is a cooperative-confrontational structure where two subjects are involved with each other over the "object" and



this cooperation is of confrontation and conflict nature (Mirhosseini and Ranji, *Semantic Analysis of the Word “Marawdeh” in the Holy Qur’an*, 2016). Therefore, the meaning of “...the woman in whose house he was, seduced him... (12: 23)” is that Zulaikha and Prophet Yusuf had a quarrel with each other over Prophet Yusuf's soul and Zulaikha demanded Prophet Yusuf's self-surrender before her and he had a conflict and problem with this demand. The verb “Rawadah” signifies that this request has already been made before and since Zulaikha has not obtained the desired result in the previous requests, which were apparently indirect, she decided to lock the doors and expressed her request directly in the phrase “...Come! ...”. Hayata is an imperative verb meaning “come forward” (Qur'an 7:137) and Hayata Lakah signifies “come forward, all is yours”.

## ***2.2. Prophet Yusuf's Answer to Zulaikha***

Prophet Yusuf has used several sentences in response to Zulaikha's request. Prophet Yusuf's answers are studied one by one so as to disclose his point of view regarding Zulaikha's request and the predicament in which he is entangled. Prophet Yusuf's answer starts with the sentence “Mu'adhullah” which means “May God help me”. This sentence signifies “seeking refuge in God” which has two presuppositions: firstly, Prophet Yusuf is a monotheist and, secondly, although he is apparently a slave of Zulaikha's and under her command, he is actually under the protection of God.

Then, Prophet Yusuf completes “Mu'adhullah (12: 23)” by saying “...Indeed He is my God; He has given me a good abode ... (12: 23)”. Prophet Yusuf has reacted to Zulaikha's mentality, which she has raised him and, following the order of the King of Egypt, has elevated his status in “...Give him an honorable place ... (12: 21)” so he has to obey her. Prophet Yusuf states in his answer that God is the only teacher and God who has raised him and attributes his elevated position to the Unique and Almighty God and demotes the position of the King of Egypt and Zulaikha to the extent that they only carried out the order of the Unique God. Needless to mention, some scholars have referred the pronoun “him” in “certainly him” to the King of Egypt, which is not correct. Considering the following points justifies such a mistake in the interpretations:



The first point is that the King of Egypt is not mentioned in this conversation, so it is not logical to refer the pronoun to a few verses before, in the meantime, the word “Allah” is mentioned exactly in this verse right in the previous words.

The second point is that in eighteen cases in Surah Yusuf the word “Rabb” is used in the form of “Rabb”, “Rabbi”, “Rabbakah” and “Rabbah” pointing at either the King of Egypt or Unique God. Anywhere Prophet Yusuf addresses the King of Egypt with “Rabb”, it is used in the form of “Rabbakah” or “Rabbah”. The title “Rabbi” has never been used for the King and in the entire cases including the six cases where Prophet Yusuf has used or the one case where Jacop has used, it refers to the Unique God. Therefore, the word “Rabbi” in the phrase in question refers to God, and the reference of the word “Rabbi” to the King of Egypt in the phrase in question has no logical basis according to the linguistic context.

The third point is that the word “Rabb” was used only for the One and Only God during the period of Prophet Moses. In the sentence:” He said, ‘Our God is He who gave everything its creation and then guided it (20: 50)’. Prophet Moses refers to God with the word “Rabb” and in the sentence: “I am your exalted God!’ (79: 24). Pharaoh and those around him address Pharaoh with the word “Rabb”. Because Prophet Moses showed up as a Prophet after Prophet Yusuf among the same people (based on the sentence: “...but you continued to remain in doubt concerning what he had brought you (40: 34)”), therefore, God during the era of Prophet Yusuf is the same as the Pharaoh of his time, and at that time as well as during the era of Prophet Moses, “Rabb” was used only for the One and Only God. The conclusion of the above three points is that the sentence “...Indeed He is my God...” refers to the Only God, and in the Holy Qur’an, the word “Rabb” is never used for the King of Egypt. Therefore, Prophet Yusuf ends his sentence with “...Indeed the wrongdoers are not felicitous. (12: 23)” With this, he implies two points, one about himself and the other about Zulaikha. By describing the unfairness of this act and his monotheism, Prophet Yusuf fathoms such an act against his own safety and God's guidance. The sentence “...those who have faith and do not taint their faith with wrongdoing—for such there shall be safety, and they are the [rightly] guided.’ ... (6: 82)” confirm the above-mentioned point. In this verse, it is stated that those who are believers will always be safe and God will

guide them if they do not taint their faith with oppression. Also, to this idea of Zulaikha, who, in her view, will enjoy this relationship, then will hide this relationship and continue her normal life, he answers. Describing this act as unfair and cruel, Prophet Yusuf indicates that this action is only a fleeting pleasure and ends adversely in a way that it will be disclosed in the future, and once revealed, there will be no way to excuse and explain in front of the King of Egypt. The sentence "...Indeed those who are faithless and do wrong, Allah shall never forgive them, nor shall He guide them to any way... (4: 168)" verifies the afore-mentioned point. According to this verse, those who do wrong, God will divulge their wrongdoing and there will be no way to get away. This way, Prophet Yusuf tries to dissuade the wife of the King of Egypt from her decision.

### ***2.3. Zulaikha's Interest in Prophet Yusuf and His Reaction***

The wife of the King of Egypt has not given up and this moment approaches him for seduction. The Holy Qur'an in "She certainly made for him; and he would have made for her [too] had he not beheld the proof of his God. So it was, that We might turn away from him all evil and indecency. He was indeed one of Our dedicated servants. (12: 24)" believes that if Prophet Yusuf had not believed in God's proof, he would have been seduced by Zulaikha so such evil and immorality were averted from him, and he was one of the righteous people. The question is what "...he would have made for her..." and "...had he not beheld the proof of his God..." signify where the Holy Qur'an considers one a precondition for the other. In the following section, initially the meaning of "proof" is delved into in order for the other points to be explained.

### ***2.4. Meaning of Proof***

The word proof has been used seven times in the Holy Qur'an (in addition to the verse in question). Five are those verses addressing various groups to justify their actions by providing proof. In these five verses which include "...Whoever invokes besides Allah another god of which he has no proof... (23: 117)", "...Those are their [false] hopes! Say, 'Produce your evidence [proof], should you be truthful.' ... (2: 111)", "... 'Produce your evidence [proof].' Then they will know that all reality belongs to Allah... (28: 75)", "...Say, 'Produce your evidence [proof], should you be truthful (27: 64).'" and "...Have they

taken gods besides Him? Say, ‘Produce your evidence [proof]! ... (21: 24)’ the request for proof (evidence) in these verses is to show that these people's claims are invalid and indeed there is no proof or a legitimate reason to show what they have done is right. Accordingly, proof has been used with the pronoun “your” and the phrase “for him”. In the other two verses, proof refers to the miracle of something. In the sentence “...a proof has come to you from your God... (4: 174)” the presence of the Last Prophet (PBUH) is some proof provided by God and in the phrase “...two proofs from your God... (28: 32)” the two miracles of Prophet Moses have been introduced as proof from the side of God to fight Pharaoh. In the sentence “...With the help of Our signs, you two, and those who follow the two of you, shall be the victors.’ ... (28: 35)” the Holy Qur’an states that by these proof and verses, Prophet Moses will overcome Pharaoh. This shows that “Proof from the God” is a kind of miracle and the effects made by miracles can also be made by “Proof from the God”. Therefore, “Proof from the God” is like a miracle, a cause and a certain cause, the result of which is the revelation of the truth, overcoming, and domination. As “the proof of God” has been explained, it can be stated that “...had he not beheld the proof of his God...” means that by observing the proof of God, this proof got dominated and manifested in the heart of Prophet Yusuf and reassured him that the intentions and wills contrary to what was right, regardless of whether these intentions and wills were contrary to expediency, shall not be done. Needless to mention, the quality of observation of “the proof of God” can be examined and discussed after defining the true significance of “...he would have made for her [too]...”. Thus, the ambience dominant in this case is to be examined and discussed in the following sections so that the true meaning of “...he would have made for her [too]...” is reached.

### ***2.5. Ambience in Zulaikha’s Room***

Prophet Yusuf is extremely attractive and Zulaikha has worn enough makeup for her meeting with him. According to “...in whose house he was...”, Zulaikha has raised him under her own supervision. She has fallen in love with him and thinks that since she has raised him, he will not turn down her request and the atmosphere is completely ready for her affair. In the palace of the King of Egypt, the private room is the room, to reach there, one must pass through several doors. Based on

“...she closed the doors...”, the entire doors have been closed. The word “ghallaqat” is in the voice of “tafiel” which connotes exaggeration and hyperbole stressing the entire doors have been closed in full. Therefore, no one else has access to the meeting room and the possibility of disclosure and being witnessed is zero. In this situation, to get rid of this predicament, Prophet Yusuf has to pass through several locked doors, which seems impossible. All these have urged Zulaikha to calmly insist on her request, and at the moment when Zulaikha tries to approach Prophet Yusuf, his reaction can be interpreted in two ways which include:

### **2.5.1. First Analysis**

Prophet Yusuf is in a situation where he cannot find any solutions, so he had no choice but to resort to violence to get out of this impasse. The sentence “... and he would have made for her...” means violence against the wife of the King of Egypt or a similar action he is expected to do. This can be justified by the similarity of the situation of Prophet Yusuf in front of Zulaikha and Prophet Moses is in confrontation with the Pharaoh (who was killed by Prophet Moses) and his reaction there. These two cases are similar to each other in several ways, as explained below:

Firstly, both the Prophets involved are among the sincere ones based on the explicit verses of the Holy Qur’an. Secondly, they lived in palaces and grew up there. According to “...‘This is of Satan’s doing... (28: 15)” and “...that We might turn away from him all evil and indecency. (12: 24)”, what happened was an evil act for both, because both of the Prophets had to react immediately since there was no opportunity to think and find a solution. In the case of Prophet Moses, the sentence “...the one who was from his followers sought his help against him who was from his enemies. (28: 15)” and in the case of Prophet Yusuf, the sentence “...she certainly made for him...” point at this issue. Therefore, both immediately have reacted to this issue. In the case of Prophet Moses, he punched that Pharaoh and he died right away. Although this act in itself cannot be an evil act, since it was done in defense, it has no good consequences for him as he says “...I have wronged myself. (28: 16)” meaning “oppressing oneself”. Oppression means putting something in a wrong place (Dictionary Qur’an, Volume 4: 270) and the Prophet believes that his action made him unable to stay

in his current position, which was the palace of the King of Egypt and the Pharaohs'. Thus, he asks God for forgiveness. Although he is forgiven, as it is emphasized in the sentence "...Forgive me!' So He forgave him... (28: 16)" But since the case of murder is revealed in the second conflict, Prophet Moses is obliged to flee from Egypt and settle in Madinah. Similarity of these two cases show that Prophet Yusuf is likely to resort to violence just like Prophet Moses, as a result of which he will suffer the same consequences as Prophet Moses' and perhaps even worse.

In this case, resorting to violence is against expediency, and seeing God's proof acts as a strong bedrock preventing us from doing actions against expediency. God's proof here is like a light in the darkness that shows the way out of plights and impasses. It is an inspiration from God, who calls running towards the closed door as the solution to save Prophet Yusuf from his predicament. Because the Satan has no control over the sincere people, any sound, image, or light that evokes this solution for Prophet Yusuf, he is completely reassured that it has been provided by God to save him. Therefore, after seeing the proof of God and receiving the inspiration to run towards the locked door, he follows it and runs towards the closed door. The juxtaposition and comparison of the discussed case with the case of Prophet Lot and the close coherence between them as they both touch upon "sexual deviation" justifies this interpretation.

The situation of Prophet Yusuf in confrontation with Zulaikha and the situation of Prophet Lot in confrontation with his people are similar corresponding to each other in six issues. In the story of Prophet Lot, when his guests visit him, based on the sentence "...he was distressed on their account... (11: 77)", he is entangled in a tough situation. According to "...his people came running toward him... (11: 78)", his people rushed to him to let them perform sodomy on his guests. He was unable to support his guests against the illegitimate demands of his people and he wishes he could find an effective solution in order to overcome them. So he was asked to leave at night as mentioned in the sentence "Take your family in a watch of the night... (11: 81)". This solution is certain and provided by God as pointed at in "...we are messengers of your God. (11: 81)", the result of which is the saving of the Prophet Lot as mentioned in "They will never get at you... (11: 81)". The six characteristics afore-mentioned in the case of Prophet

Yusuf and Zulaikha are also present. In the case of Prophet Yusuf, the sentence "...she closed the doors..." signifies confinement and entanglement; the sentence "...Come!" shows Zulaikha's movement towards Prophet Yusuf; the sentence "... 'God forbid!'" indicates his inability to avert Zulaikha and his need for a reliable refuge against her request. Therefore, "...the proof of his God..." like the sentence "...Take your family in a watch of the night..." is "an order to move" made by "God" and the result is "...turn away..." which signifies the saving of Prophet Yusuf from the predicament. Accordingly, the sentence "...he would have made for her..." means physical confrontation with Zulaikha. The following objection has been made to this analysis:

"...She certainly made for him..." and "...he would have made for her..." should signify the same unless it cannot be carried in appearance. When "...he would have made for her..." is interpreted as a physical action to overcome Zulaikha, it has deviated from the apparent meaning of the words. (Sobhani, 11: 371, Tabatabai, 11: 196, Moghadam and Sadrifar, 2019).

In response to this criticism, it should be noted that although the apparent meaning of "...She ... made..." and "...he would have made..." seems the same signifying intention and will, it does not mean that the intention of both is the same. Similar to this concept is the sentence "They raced to the door..." in the next verse. In this sentence, both of them have intended the same action, but their intentions are completely different, Prophet Yusuf ran towards the door to escape, and Zulaikha ran to catch him. Therefore, "...he would have made for her..." is the will and intention for Zulaikha deciphered and understood based on the intention of Prophet Yusuf. Therefore, the true intention of Prophet Yusuf should be discovered utilizing the other clues in the text.

After shedding enough light upon the first analysis, the second analysis will be examined and explicated more in detail.

### **2.5.2. Second Analysis**

In the second analysis, Prophet Yusuf's endeavor is juxtaposed with Zulaikha's will and intention, which, seeing the God's proof, he did not realize and ran towards the door. Thus, the sentence "She certainly made for him; and he would have made for her [too] had he not beheld

the proof of his God.” Signifies that if a woman has intentions with the characteristics mentioned in the verse in question, according to the instincts instilled in a man, a similar intention and will shall certainly occur on the part of the man, provided that the person has not observed the divine proof. In this verse, Prophet Yusuf’s will has gotten attached to a condition and while the condition does not get realized, the will is rejected accordingly. As a result, Prophet Yusuf remains immune and impeccable, even in the stage of will and making any decision. Therefore, this meaning does not contradict the infallibility of Prophet Yusuf (Sabahani, 11: 371, Tabatabai, 11:196, Moghadam and Sadri Far, 2019). In this case, observing the proof of God verifies the infallibility of Prophet Yusuf as explained below:

In “...had he not beheld the proof of his God...”, the word “beheld” has been used instead of “we showed him”. Such an application shows that God's proof is always there and a person only needs to see it. “Seeing” has two presuppositions: firstly, the person is alive and can see, and secondly, the atmosphere is clear enough for him to see. Such a person is well described in “...then We gave him life and provided him with a light by which he walks among the people... (6: 122)”. Also, by observing God's proof, the viewer can either deny or confirm it. For instance, “...Certainly We showed him all Our signs. But he denied [them] and refused [to believe them] ... (20/56)” clarifies that irrespective of the verses and proofs shown to him through Prophet Moses, Pharaoh did not give up and began to deny them. Based on these explanations, beholding the proof of God and his concession to it proves that Prophet Yusuf had a living heart adorned with the Divine light, so he beheld the Divine proof and since the Devil had no part in his soul, he surrendered to it and acted differently from Zulaikha. This trait is the same infallibility implied in “...so he abstained... (12: 32)”. The Divine proof that Prophet Yusuf beheld is explained below:

To elaborate on this, the confrontation between Prophet Moses and the magicians is used. This case is the same as the story of Prophet Yusuf and Zulaikha in terms of structure and way of confrontation. In both cases, one side was a sincere Prophet whereas the other side is a person or people who resorted to “ruse” and in both cases, “God's proof” was the reason for the victory of God's Prophet. Therefore, the function of the staff Prophet Moses has as “God's proof”, it is also



expected to have happened in the story of Prophet Yusuf. In the story of Prophet Moses, God in "...it will swallow what they have conjured. What they have conjured is only a magician's trick, ... (20: 69)" states that the miracle of the staff devoured and razed everything the sorcerers made with their deception. Likewise, it is expected that God's proof will neutralize what Zulaikha has prepared with her ruse. What Zulaikha has prepared includes two parts: adorning oneself and locking the doors. Therefore, it is expected that this proof will depreciate the pulchritude of Zulaikha in the eyes of Prophet Yusuf and open the doors for him. Based on this, the Divine proof can both mean seeing the sordid inner part of Zulaikha's request manifested for him at that moment and it can also be the beauty that people with good hearts can see and against which the beauty and charms of this world is of no worth and value. Therefore, accepting Zulaikha's proposal means moving towards the ugly interior and missing out on those beauties that Prophet Yusuf is fond of and since Prophet Yusuf sees himself at a loss at the moment when the doors are unlocked, with God's permission, he tries to run away to evade the plight.

Based on the above-mentioned explanations, we can conclude that the first analysis that Prophet Yusuf's effort means physical confrontation is unequivocal and can be considered a reliable and valid interpretation. Accordingly, it is assumed that this case has not happened once and immediately, but rather it was done many times before by Zulaikha but indirectly and Prophet Yusuf has tried to adopt piety and sincerity in his actions as "...—those who have faith and are God wary. (27: 53)" Any time, he is entangled in predicaments, God has helped him to avoid them by opening the locked doors. Therefore, this case does not function as a test for Prophet Yusuf for his promotion because there is no evidence in the following verses to prove it, but rather it means the plight in which God helps pious people. However, accepting such interpretation does not necessarily ignore the second interpretation. In the second interpretation, this case functions as a test for Prophet Yusuf ("...they are tried once or twice every year?... (9: 126)") like the tests having been exposed to by Prophet Moses ("...We tried you with various ordeals... (20: 40)") to prepare him for prophethood; or the tests set for Prophet Abraham so that he gets ascended to prophethood ("...When they both submitted [to Allah's command] and Abraham laid him on his forehead... This was indeed a



revealing test... (37: 103)"); or the test set for Prophet Job where he succeeded to pass "...Indeed, we found him to be patient... (38: 44)". The reason for Prophet Yusuf's escape towards the closed door is his belief in the existence of a way out of this plight after he failed to convince Zulaikha. From this perspective, the significance of infallibility in Prophet Yusuf's behavior can be seen well.

### ***2.6. Result of Prophet Yusuf's Behavior***

In the following verses, it is indicated that the outcome of beholding the Divine proof by Prophet Yusuf is averting indecency and sticking to virtue instead because, thanks to the proof, he moves away from the setting having been prepared for the act of adultery. In other words, observing the proof, Prophet Yusuf ran away from the setting while the possibility of adultery was eliminated and evil and indecency got away from him. The objective of avoiding and averting is implied in "...turn away..." and "...evil..." stresses Zulaikha's empty room where Prophet Yusuf's presence exposes him to guilt and conviction and "...indecency..." points at adultery averted from Prophet Yusuf. Some scholars have translated "...he would have made for her..." into "physical punishment" and deemed evil and indecency as accusation and killing consequently (Tafsir Majam al-Bayan, Volume 5, p. 345). This interpretation cannot be correct since Prophet Yusuf's objective is to get rid of that setting and all the words Prophet Yusuf uses in the previous verse are told to dissuade Zulaikha. When God says evil and indecency have been averted from him, it means that Zulaikha's intention has not been realized there and the evil and indecency that Zulaikha forces Prophet Yusuf to perpetrate got repelled from him.

At the end of the verse in question, in "...He was indeed one of Our dedicated servants. (12: 24)", Prophet Yusuf has been introduced as one of the dedicated followers. This sentence accounts for Prophet Yusuf's behavior and words. The dedicated followers based on "...I will surely pervert them, except Your dedicated servants among them. (38: 82)" are those who cannot be misled and misguided by Satan. The dedication of a follower signifies that the follower's deeds and demeanor are in line with monotheism and the Satan plays no role in them. Furthermore, in "...he [Satan] indeed prompts [you to commit] indecent and wrongful acts... (24: 21)", Satan urges and prompts people to commit wrong deeds and indecency, so an honest and

dedicated follower is not inclined to perpetrate any kind of indecency and wrongful acts. If a dedicated and pious follower is entangled in a plight where evil and indecency are present, God, according to "...Whoever is wary of Allah, He shall make for him a way out [of the adversities of the world and the Hereafter] ... (65; 2)" will help him/her to avoid them and get out of it. In this case too, undoubtedly under no circumstance would Prophet Yusuf not get involved in adultery because he was one of God's dedicated and pious followers, as a result, in that plight, he was shown the way out of the situation. Accordingly, "... had he not beheld the proof of his God..." is the outcome of Prophet's Yusuf's dedication and piety which can be interpreted as his infallibility or by assuming his infallibility, it can also be seen as the way out of the plight assisting him to avoid evil and indecency.

### 3. Conclusion

In the previous sections, the case of Prophet Yusuf and Zulaikha was studied. In this story, Zulaikha, with the mentality that because she has raised Prophet Yusuf under her supervision and that Prophet Yusuf's current status is given to him by her, by locking the doors tightly and putting on make-up, she tries to seduce Prophet Yusuf. Prophet Yusuf tells her the phrase "Mu'azallah" signifying he believes in monotheism and is under the protection of Allah in all situations and will not do any wrongful deeds. Then with the phrase "...He has given me a good abode..." he makes her understand that the current status of Prophet Yusuf was bestowed upon him by God, and Zulaikha and her spouse were only the means to fulfill it. In the following sections, Prophet Yusuf, considering Zulaikha's demand as cruel and unfair, points out to her that there is no good ending for such an act.

Zulaikha does not accept Prophet Yusuf's rationale so she tries to seduce him. Then, the sentence "...and he would have made for her [too] had he not beheld the proof of his God..." portrays his possible rely to her request. In order to find the true meaning of the sentence above, the similarity of the story of Prophet Yusuf with the story of the confrontation between Prophet Moses and the Pharaoh, the confrontation between Prophet Moses and the Sorcerers and confrontation between Prophet Lot and his people was taken into consideration. The result of the comparison is as follows:

Comparing the conditions of Prophet Yusuf with the conditions of Prophet Moses in his confrontation with the Pharaoh and the close correspondence of these two stories confirms that the sentence "...he would have made for her [too]..." can be interpreted as his confrontation with Zulaikhah and the comparison of the conditions of Prophet Joseph with the conditions of Prophet Lot in the confrontation with his people, who made an indecent request, verifies the possibility that the phrase "...had he not beheld the proof of his God..." signifies finding the solution to get out of the plight, which is to rush and run to the closed door.

Comparing the story of Prophet Yusuf with the story of Prophet Moses' confrontation with Pharaoh's sorcerers and paying attention to the phrase "proof of God" used for the staff of Prophet Moses justifies the interpretation that "...had he not beheld the proof of his God..." functions like the staff of Prophet Moses. The miracle of the staff shattered and razed whatever the sorcerers had created with deception. Here too, it is expected that God's proof will destroy whatever Zulaikha has prepared with deception, including "putting on make-up" and "locking the door". Therefore, observing the Divine proof also means discovering the sordid nature of Zulaikha's request helping him to ignore the pulchritude and beauties of this, and opening the locked door. Accordingly, "...he would have made for her [too]..." signifies an effort similar to Zulaikha's effort, which did not get realized in Yusuf when he saw "the proof of God".

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