

The Expressive Revelation and the Quiddity of the Sensory Articulation of the Qur'ān (in the Light of Nahj al-Balāgha Teachings)

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Abstract

The way the holy Qur'ān speaks to the human has always posed a question to him – especially the contemporary human. The author of this article believes that the manifestation of this style should be sought via a phenomenon called “the articulateness of the Qur'ān.” According to the linguistic and narrative indications, the “message and intention delivery and presentation” is the essential meaning that lies in the word “articulation,” and this message and intention might be realized through sensory mechanisms such as utterances and sounds (sensory articulation) or intellectual mechanisms (intellectual articulation). The premise of this article is that the expressive revelation is one type of the qur'ānic revelation articulation that ultimately leads to the confirmation of the origination of the exegesis of the Qur'ān from the qur'ānic revelation.

Keywords

Ahl al-Bayt (a) exegesis, Qur'ān, Articulateness of the Qur'ān, Sensory articulation, Nahj al-balāgha.

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Introduction

The deep and good relationship of a person with the noble Qur'ān is not only dependent on his receptive capabilities – i.e., his purity of soul – but also part of it is the result of the subjective qualities of the Qur'ān and the type of articulation that the Qur'ān adopts to connect with him. In narrative teachings, especially in those of Nahj al-balāgha, it is noted that the Qur'ān is articulate (Nahj al-balāgha, 1993, sermon 183) or the Qur'ān speaks (ibid, sermon 133), and the reader is asked to demand speech and articulation from the Qur'ān (ibid, sermon 158). The question is whether in all these cases, the meaning of the articulateness of the Qur'ān is the same. How does the heavenly revelation start talking with its earthly audience? Are the true concepts of these terms intended here or their virtual meanings?

As an introduction to the discussion, it should be said that the divine revelation has been presented to the human in two forms. One is the qur'ānic revelation that is developed in the qur'ānic text, and the other one is the expressive revelation that explains and interprets the qur'ānic revelation and lies in the chests of the true exegetes, as scholars have taken one of the inferred meanings of the verses “Nor does he say (aught) of (his own) Desire. It is no less than inspiration sent down to him” (Qur'ān 53:3-4) as expressive revelation – i.e., the knowledge that has been revealed by God onto His prophet and has come to be part of the prophetic sunna (Sayyid b. Ṭāwūs, n.d.: 131). Taking this meaning into account, 'Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'ī maintains that the meaning of this verse is that the Prophet (s) did not talk based on his desires when he invited people to God or when he recited the qur'ānic verses to them, but rather, (both types) are the divine revelation that is sent onto him by God (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1944, vol. 19: 27).

Therefore, the qur'ānic revelation is considered as the manifestation of the Divine Will that has been compiled in a written book, i.e., the Qur'ān, while the expressive revelation is the Divine Will that lies in the chest of the Infallibles (a). Believing in this dichotomous division, 'Allāma 'Askarī deems a narration from Imām Ṣādiq (a) as the evidence for the expressive revelation and says, “Part of revelation is one in which word and meaning are revealed to the prophets, which is specific to the divine Scriptures such as the Qur'ān. Another part of the revelation is one in which only meaning is revealed and the wording comes from the prophets, such as the prophetic traditions” ('Askarī, 1995, vol. 1: 260). As a narration from Imām Ṣādiq (a) says,

My narration, my father's narration and my father's narration,
 may grandfather's narration and my grandfather's narration,
 Ḥusayn's narration and Ḥusayn's narration, Ḥasan's narration

and Ḥasan's narration, the narration of the Commander of the Faithful and the narration of the Commander of the Faithful, [and] the narration of the Prophet of Allāh and the narration of the Prophet of Allāh are the words of the Almighty and Glorious Allāh (Kulaynī, 1986: 53).

In the expressive revelation (narrations), a kind of inward, mysterious, and covert consciousness occurs in which the divine realities and knowledge are revealed onto the Infallible in the form of meanings. However, words and meanings are concurrent in the qur'ānic revelation (Mudīr Shānāchī, 2002: 44-45).

Now, several questions come to mind. What is the relationship between the qur'ānic revelation and expressive revelation? How can this relationship be explained? The premise of the article is that the expressive revelation is a type of the qur'ānic revelation articulation that is manifested in the form of the sensory articulation of the Qur'ān. The reason is that the concept of the "qur'ānic articulation" can be examined from four general perspectives, namely the sensory and true articulation, virtual and metaphorical articulation, argumentative and conceptual articulation, and interpretive and expositional articulation. The common point that lies in all of these types is "the delivery and presentation of the intention from the superior to the inferior."¹

The importance of the examination of this type of articulation is in that it might regard the interpretive foundation of the exegesis of the Qur'ān. That is to say, in understanding and interpreting the Qur'ān, we need the sensory articulation, as the noble Qur'ān is not a self-evident tutorial. Rather, in order to understand the qur'ānic revelation, we need interpreters and exegetes who scholarly and justly go beyond the outer brevities and provide the society with the intention of the verses. However, it seems that by emphasizing the sufficiency of the Qur'ān itself in understanding it (Qur'ānism), some have ruled against the need of the Qur'ān to any entity other than itself, and deem this book as sufficient in understanding its meanings and intentions (q.v. Shu'ār: 1960; Ṣādiqī: 1987)².

Therefore, the way we process and the approach we take to the concept of the articulateness of the Qur'ān (which entails the foregoing principles) has a great role in the foundational thoughts of exegesis – and in turn, the way the qur'ānic verses are interpreted and understood.

1. In order to study more about this topic and the various types of the qur'ānic articulation, q.v. *Principles of Understanding and Interpreting the Qur'ān Based on the Teachings of Nahj al-Balāgha* by Ḥāmid Pūrrustamī, University of Tehran publications, chapter 4.

2. Moreover, for the related investigations and criticisms, q.v. *Bābā'ī*, 2016, vol. 2: 153-197.

Concept

Nuṭq (articulation)

Ibn Fāris (d. 1004 CE), who concentrates on processing the Arabic word roots, has written under the entry “nuṭq,” “N.Ṭ.Q. has two true meanings: One is the meaning of a statement or what resembles a statement, and the other is clothing.” He has mentioned two main meanings for “nuṭq,” with one being as the meaning of a statement or what is similar to it, and the other is a part or type of clothing. Of course, the second meaning is not meant in our discussion. The phrase “mā ashbahu” (what is similar to it) indicates that the word “nuṭq” is not limited to speech and vocal articulation; rather, the cases that have a kind of similarity and congruence with speech¹ are also considered to be within the semantic domain of “nuṭq.” Therefore, he believes in a kind of semantic development for this word. Nuṭq is opposite to “ṣumt” (silence), and Ibn Fāris mentions one main unique meaning for the latter as “implication of ambiguity and closure” (Ibn Fāris, 2001, vol. 5: 106). In other words, the semantic essence of the word “ṣumt” is ambiguity, obscurity, and lack of clarity and vividness.

Khalīl b. Aḥmad Farāhīdī (d. 791 CE)² deems one of the meanings of nuṭq to be clarity and explanation, and – relying on a poem by Labīd – has given the example “al-kitāb al-nāṭiq” (the clear and explaining book) in this regard (Farāhīdī, 1988, vol. 5: 104). It is obvious that in the light of the meaning of the word “nāṭiq” as “bayyin” (clarifying), we can take “yantiq” as “yubayyin,” “yudill,” or “yuwaddih.”³ In Mu‘īn Persian dictionary, other meanings such as saying a meaningful statement, speaking, and perception are given for nuṭq (Mu‘īn, 1975, vol. 4: 474).

On the other hand, a brief look at Nahj al-balāgha indicates a kind of articulation in the worldly phenomena. That is, these phenomena enjoy a kind of expressiveness, implication, and representation according to their status. In his 91st sermon in Nahj al-balāgha, Imām ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (a) refers to two articulations, namely the articulation by the objective system of the world and the scientific articulation of the Qur’ān. The objective articulation of the world regards the phenomena of the world. Imām says, “God shows us so much of the majesty of His power and the wonders of the

1. It should be noted that Ibn Fāris, takes the word “kalim” as understandable speech, and enumerates “lafḍ wāḥid mubīn” (the unique, clarifying word), “qīṣṣa” (story), and “qaṣīda” (ode) as its developed instances (Ibn Fāris, 2001, vol. 5: 106).

2. He is one of the leaders and notables of philology, the founder of prosody, and the teacher of the grammarian scholar Sibwayh (Zereklī, 2002, vol. 2: 314).

3. Similarly, in the present-day dictionaries, the word “nuṭq” is defined as expressing and explaining (q.v. Bustānī, 1996, under the entry nuṭq).

effects of His wisdom – which expressively confirm the existence of the Almighty God – that drives us toward knowing and realizing.” With regard to the scientific articulation of the Qur’ān, Imām says, “I testify that those who equaled you to a creature have turned away from you, and whoever turns away from you is disbeliever according to the assertions of your unambiguous verses and the confirmation by your clear reasons” (Jawādī Āmulī, 2002: 64)¹.

Therefore, we observe that there exists a kind of silence and a kind of articulation in the phenomena of the world. Their silence derives from the fact that they do not have a speaking tongue and do not create sounds, and their articulation is rooted in the fact that they intend to deliver knowledge and signs related to the reality of the existence, as if they are talking with people and discuss with them.

The articulateness of the Qur’ān

As we noted, the word *nuṭq* (articulation) can be material (sensory) and spiritual (intellectual). The material articulation means the creation of a sensory verbal connection that occurs in dialogues. On the other hand, the spiritual articulation is an intellectual one that exists in the written things and even the worldly phenomena. Imām ‘Alī (a) reports on the existence of this type of articulation in the Qur’ān (the word *maktūbāt* [pieces of writing] in sermon 183 of *Nahj al-balāgha*) and the effects of God’s wisdom and creation (the phenomena of the world in sermon 91). Therefore, one of the important meanings of the word “*nuṭq*” is *dalla* (implied), *bayyina* (explained), or *ashāra* (referred). Then, this meaning might occur in the form of verbal dialogue, a phenomenon, a picture, or a piece of writing. At any rate, the common point of all the aforementioned cases is “the delivery and presentation of a message and intention.” This message and intention might be exchanged through sensory mechanisms such as words and sounds (i.e., sensory articulation), or the meaning-based connection and delivery might be done through intellectual mechanisms (intellectual articulation). The difference between the two is that in the intellectual articulation, the only means of communication is reflection and thinking, and the material means such as sound and tongue have no role in this regard. Accordingly, the articulateness of the Qur’ān means this Scripture delivers its concepts and intentions to its addressee either through sensory or intellectual means, and it clearly presents its knowledge to its audience. The article at hand is set to examine to the first type of articulation, i.e., sensory articulation.

1. This part is presented with some briefing and changes.

Types of sensory articulation

The existence of this type of articulation in the noble Qur'ān can be perceived in two moods.

The real articulation of the Qur'ān

Undoubtedly, this articulation – which means direct and unmediated speaking of the noble Qur'ān – is not possible and is contrary to experience, intellect, and narrations. The phrase “It won't do so [speak]” in the statement “It is the Qur'ān. If you ask it to speak it won't do so” discusses this type of articulation (Nahj al-balāgha, 1993, sermon 158).

Some explain this point and say,

The Qur'ān is made up of silent letters, and letters are a type of “accidentals”, and it is impossible for accidentals to be articulate, because articulation is the result of the [vocal] movement of particles in speech, and it is impossible for the speech to have particles that articulate per se [without vocal movements] (Mudarris Waḥīd, n.d., vol. 11: 215).

Therefore, the real articulation of the Qur'ān in which the delivery of the meaning and intention of the Qur'ān is done through speaking, the articulation of letters, or the creation of sounds is not possible at least in the ordinary conditions and in the material world. This type of articulation is contrary to the real silence.

Qur'ān's articulation through authorities

This type of qur'ānic articulation takes place through authorities. In other words, “Qur'ān's articulation through authorities” regards scholars who talk based on the Qur'ān and express its knowledge and facts. Since this type of articulation is vocal and entails articulation of sounds and words, it is a sensory (verbal and vocal) articulation type.

Nahj al-balāgha is one of the famous and valid sources in which great evidences of this type of articulation can be found. Two suchlike cases are examined here.

The expressiveness of authorities and exegetes

This meaning of articulation can be found in sermon 125 of Nahj al-balāgha where Imām 'Alī (a) stipulates that in the Arbitration in the Battle of Ṣaffayn, the corrupt people were not set as arbitrator, but rather, the Qur'ān was set as the arbitrator; but since the Qur'ān does not talk, there needed to be men who talk (first based on the Qur'ān and then) on behalf of it.

Quṭb al-Dīn Rāwandī (d. 1177 CE) has written about the term ‘tarjumān’ (interpreter) in the statement “... and it does not speak. It should therefore necessarily have an interpreter,” “[when we say] someone interpreted and

changed an Arabic text, it means he explained it in another language” (Rāwandī, 1985, vol. 2: 41)¹.

Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd Mu‘tazilī (d. 1258 CE) writes in this regard, “Tarjumān is the same as explainer and interpreter from one language to another” (Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd Mu‘tazilī, 1965, vol. 8: 104). In addition, Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Khānsārī has taken “tarjumān” as a person who interprets another person’s words into another language (Khānsārī, 1987, vol. 4: 97). Therefore, a tarjumān is one who explains a speech or text from one language into another one. With regard to the noble Qur’ān, too, the interpreter of the Qur’ān is one who explains and interprets the language of the Qur’ān systematically and based on its principles and indicators. His main attribute is the presentation and explanation of the knowledge and intentions of the Qur’ān rather than his own perceptions.

Some have taken the Qur’ān’s articulation through authorities to happen in two stages: 1) understanding and inferring the qur’ānic knowledge within the framework of literary principles and the intellectual principles of dialogue, and 2) narrating and discussing the qur’ānic knowledge and concepts. Therefore, suchlike interpretation of the Qur’ān and talking on behalf of it (i.e., Qur’ān’s articulation through authorities) needs inference by theoreticians who are free from bias, whims of soul, and carnal desires (Jawādī Āmulī, 2002: 68)².

Explaining the sermon 125 of Nahj al-balāgha (The Qur’ān is a book, covered, between two flaps, and it does not speak. It should therefore necessarily have an interpreter. Men alone can be such interpreters), the author of *Miftāḥ al-Ṣa‘āda* refers to the atmosphere in which the sermon was

1. Moreover, in philological terms, Jawharī has discussed the word “tarjumān” [interpretation] under the entry “rajama” and Fīrūzābādī under the entry “tarjama.” Nonetheless, both these philologists have chosen “interpreter and explainer of the language” as the meaning of this term. Likewise, narrations such as “Tongue is the interpreter of heart” (Khānsārī, 1987: no. 262) or “A piece of writing reveals the human intention” (ibid: no. 298) suggest the same meaning.
2. In his discussion of the Arbitration event, ‘Allāma Ja‘farī explains the words of Imām ‘Alī (a) as follows, “Therefore, we accepted the arbitration of those people because the Qur’ān which is seemingly a developed book, cannot interpret, explain and justify itself, and needs to be interpreted by knowledgeable, pious, and sincere people.” It is noteworthy that although the second part of ‘Allāma’s statement regards the Qur’ān’s articulation through authorities, the first part – if meant in an absolute form – can be questionable, because the Qur’ān might be able to interpret and explain its verses to some extent, and this does not contradict the interpretation of the Qur’ān by firmly rooted scholars and thinkers. Of course, considering the words of ‘Allāma about the sermon 133 of Nahj al-balāgha (The Book of Allah is that through which you see It’s one part speaks for the other part...), it seems that he accepts self-interpretation of the noble Qur’ān and so deems the Qur’ān as a valid interpretive source.

stated as well as the Arbitration event, and deems the arbitration as including fabrications and rules. He believes that fabrications need to be examined by experts and common sense. However, with regard to arbitration in rules, he states that the arbitration in rules might be in two forms: the creation and innovation of a rule based on personal understanding and intellect or the inference of the rule from Islamic sources without an interference from personal understanding.

He adds that arbitration actually is not the arbitration by authorities; rather, it is based on the Qur'ān and the sunna. Therefore, the sublime God has set the noble Qur'ān as the arbitrator. However, since the Qur'ān is silent and does not talk, it needs interpreters. Setting authorities as arbitrator means they are the interpreters of the Qur'ān and the articulating tongue of this noble book. This is a reasonable and legal issue.

In other words, the responsibility of the arbitrators was to infer the legal rules about the caliphate of Muslims based on the divine Scripture and talk on behalf of the Qur'ān through their scholarly and just understanding of it. Therefore, Abū Mūsā Ash'arī and 'Amru 'Āṣ were not arbitrators in fact; rather, they were the interpreters of the Qur'ān. The difference between these two roles is clear, and so Imām said, "[Competent] men alone can be such interpreters" and this is because of the inability of the Qur'ān to speak (Naqawī Qā'inī, n.d., vol. 9: 440-442)¹.

Mudarris Waḥīd has taken "tarjumān" as derived from "tarjam-yatarjam" and the four-letter word form "fa'lala." In line with interpreting the sermon, he introduces the content of Imām's statements as a response to the objection and doubt-casting of Khawārij on the reason for setting Abū Mūsā Ash'arī and 'Amru 'Āṣ as the arbitrators, because Imām's intention of the arbitration by authorities was the arbitration of the qur'ānic verses rather than that of some persons' opinions (Mudarris Waḥīd, n.d., vol. 8: 137-138).

Therefore, we might regard the sermon 125 as conveying that the identification of the intentions and referents of the noble Qur'ān needs informed and systematic interpreters who explain the knowledge and rules of the Qur'ān and talk on behalf of it. It is noteworthy that if this qur'ānic explanation is given by an Infallible, it is called expressive revelation (which is the highest level of sensory articulation). Therefore, the Infallibles' sensory articulation is the same as expressive revelation through which the serious intentions of the qur'ānic revelation are expressed in an infallible manner. This can be understood better through the following evidence.

1. The account here is a summary of his words.

Informing by the Infallible

In sermon 158 of Nahj al-balāgha, Imām ‘Alī (a) discusses the articulateness of the Qur’ān and his own high status, and says, “It is the Qur’ān. If you ask it to speak, it won't do so; but I will tell you about it. Know that it contains knowledge of what is to come about, stories of the past, cure for your ills and regulation for whatever faces you.”

In this sermon, Imām first refers to the first type of the Qur’ān’s articulation – i.e., real (sensory) articulation¹ – and then quickly rejects the possibility of suchlike articulation by the Qur’ān. He then refers to the second form of articulation (i.e., the Qur’ān’s articulation through authorities) and introduces himself as an evident exemplar interpreter of the noble qur’ānic verses who talks on behalf of the Qur’ān, and explains and interprets those verses. In fact, this statement of Imām ‘Alī (a) can be regarded as an explanation of sermon 125 (It should therefore necessarily have an interpreter. Men alone can be such interpreters).

The inspection of the opinions of Nahj al-balāgha interpreters about the statement “If you ask it to speak, it won't do so” reveals that there is a common point among them; that is, the Qur’ān’s articulation through authorities is possible only for those authorities who justly and scholarly interpret and explain the qur’ānic verses.

Shāriḥ Mu‘tazilī (d. 1258 CE) is silent about the foregoing statement – especially the phrase “but I will tell you about it” – despite his usual method which revolves around extensive explanations (Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd Mu‘tazilī, 1965, vol. 9: 217). However, Shāriḥ Baḥrānī writes in this regard, “Imām orders to ask the Qur’ān to speak, and explains this issue as listening to the qur’ānic knowledge through his words, and breaks the illusions and thoughts that were surprised by “asking the Qur’ān to speak” with the phrase “it won’t do so” (Ibn Maytham Baḥrānī, 1996, vol. 3: 273). In fact, Ibn Maytham regards the Qur’ān’s articulation the same the articulation of ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (a) on behalf of the Qur’ān and asking him to explain the qur’ānic knowledge.

Mīrzā Ḥabībullah Khū‘ī (20th century) – the author of *Minhāj al-barā‘a* – asserts that one might take the phrase “ask it to speak” to mean asking people to try to “inspect” the qur’ānic themes to understand the truths, subtleties, licit and illicit, and rules regarding them. However, he rejects this possibility and deems understanding the Qur’ān by the Qur’ān itself as impossible due to the existence of unambiguous and ambiguous, abrogating and abrogated, outward and inward, revealed and esoteric, and other points

1. The phrase “ask it to speak” might virtually mean asking the Qur’ān to speak and to give knowledge; this will be discussed in the argumentative articulation discussion.

in it, as Imām uses the phrase “It won’t do so” to refer to this point that understanding the Qur’ān is not possible merely by the Qur’ān itself and there should be an interpreter for it. He then adds, “Using the phrase ‘but I will tell you about it,’ Imām points out that only he is the interpreter, guardian, and exegete of the meanings as well as the outward and inward of the Qur’ān” (Khū’ī, 1984, vol. 9: 336).

Mullā Ṣāliḥ Māzandarānī emphasizes this meaning, too, and says that using the phrase “it won’t do so,” Imām points out that if he is asked to talk, he will talk on behalf of the Qur’ān, because he is the tongue of the Qur’ān and it is obligatory for him to explain the Qur’ān (Māzandarānī, n.d., vol. 2: 297).

Master Jawādī Āmulī divides the humans into three groups based on the way they deal with the Qur’ān’s articulation.

1. The first group is comprised of those who never ask a question about the Qur’ān due to their petrification and lack of thought. Constantly and really static and solid, these people do not hear any word from the wise Qur’ān, and so, this divine Scripture similarly treats them with silence.
2. The second group consists of those who – due to distortion and negative thinking – ask the Qur’ān a wrong question, deem the sound of their own worries as the call of the Qur’ān (due to their wrong presuppositions), and accuse this divine Scripture with the favorite response they attribute to it, while God’s book is silent to this group, too.
3. Those who reflectively pave the Right Path, ask the noble Qur’ān a reasonable question, and get the appropriate response from it. According to the Commander of the Faithful (a), such exegetes are the interpreters of the noble Qur’ān and talk on behalf of it (Jawādī Āmulī, 2002: 69-70).

Therefore, the desirable authority articulation is possible if it is carried out systematically and if reasonable questions are asked from the noble Qur’ān. Imām ‘Alī (a) calls the owners of this method and the users of this type of articulation as “rijāl” (authorities).

It should be noted that although the scope of the third group (who are Qur’ānic authorities and talk scholarly and justly on behalf of the Qur’ān) is not limited to the Infallibles and also includes the pupils of their school, the Infallible Imāms are inevitably the highest and most perfect exemplars of the exegetes and interpreters of the divine revelation, in a way that others’

exegetic knowledge does not come even close to theirs¹. Even when others take the role of the exegete and beautifully talk on behalf of the Qur'ān, they owe their exegetic principles, methods, and knowledge to Ahl al-Bayt (a).

The “Qur'ān articulator” title that has been used by some scholars to describe Imām ‘Alī (a) and other Infallibles (a) (Ḥasanzāda Āmulī, 1995: 122) is not used for anyone else – even the famous interpreters – because there is a kind of semantic attribution and trust in this title that implies the intended person talks on behalf of the Qur'ān without any mistake or distortion and is the right articulator of God's Book. However, others might make mistakes when they talk on behalf of the Qur'ān and so, they are not described by the subjective adjective the “Qur'ān articulator.” Moreover, Imām ‘Alī (a) is also named “Kalāmullāh al-nāṭiq” (the articulate Word of God). Some have noted that this title is given to him because the Commander of the Faithful ‘Alī (a) is the way the Qur'ān appears in the Resurrection Day, as he carries the flag of the qur'ānic knowledge and is adorned by all qur'ānic virtues (Majlisī, 1983, vol. 79: 199). Some other scholars have maintained that the reason for this description is the establishment of God's Word in the soul of Ahl al-Bayt (a) and their complete knowledge about the Qur'ān (Jazā'irī, 1996, vol. 1: 328; Ṣūfī Tabrīzī, 1958, vol. 2: 713). As a result, an interpreter of Nahj al-balāgha has called this book “Ḥadā'iq al-ḥaqā'iq fī sharḥ kalimāt kalāmullāh al-nāṭiq” (Gardens of facts about explanations of the words of the articulate Book of God).²

An important point

It is necessary to point out the extent to which the Qur'ān needs interpreters and interlocutors. It seems that this relies on two factors.

Subjective factor

This regards the degree of brevity in the qur'ānic verses and topics. It is evident that the qur'ānic verses are not all at the same level, but rather, they are different with regard to the meaning and argumentative clarity. Therefore, the more the brevity of a verse and the covertness of its meaning and intention are, the more the need to an interpreter for the identification of its meaning will be. This is obvious in the narrations that do not regard the

1. As Imām ‘Alī (a) himself reports this infinite distance, “None in the Islamic community can be taken at par with the Progeny of the Prophet [‘Alī Muḥammad]. One who was under their obligation [used their knowledge] cannot be matched with them” (Nahj al-balāgha, 1993, sermon 2).

2. Authored by Sayyid Amīr ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Muḥammad b. al-Amīr Muḥammad ‘Alī Shāh Abū Turāb al-Ḥusaynī (d. 1698 CE), as mentioned by Āqā Buzurg Tihrānī, n.d., vol. 6: 284.

qur'ānic verses as equal with regard to their meaning, and divide them into different groups.¹

Receptive factor

The audience of the Qur'ān consists of a wide range of people who are different in terms of capacity and knowledge. Therefore, the more their scientific and spiritual capacity are, the less the need to the explication and interpretation of the verses will be. A narration from Imām Ṣādiq (a) can be used to support this stance, “Unambiguous is something that is acted upon, and ambiguous is something that is obscure for the ignorant” (‘Ayyāshī, n.d., vol. 2: 12). This narration intends to say that ambiguity is relative based on the people. That is, based on the knowledge capacity of different people, a verse might be ambiguous for a person and need interpretation, but is not ambiguous for another person.

Conclusion

According to the linguistic and narrative indications, the word “articulation” entails “message and intention delivery and presentation” as its main meaning. This message and intention might be communicated through sensory mechanisms such as utterances and sounds (sensory articulation) or is delivered through intellectual mechanisms (intellectual articulation). The discussion of the principles of the Qur'ān's articulation through authorities indicates that the noble Qur'ān – at least partially, if not totally – needs interpreters who use exegetic resources and apply principles and their indicators to answer the existing questions (part of which might stem from the brevity of verses) and express the qur'ānic meanings and intentions. Therefore, the Qur'ān is not a self-help tutorial that can be understood without any help from any other source. In fact, the Qur'ānism theory, which deems understanding the Qur'ān needless to the non-Qur'ān and considers the Qur'ān sufficient for understanding its meanings and intentions, seems to be inadequate. Finally, the important point is that expressive revelation is a type of qur'ānic revelation articulation, is exclusive to the Infallibles (a), and is out of the reach of other exegetes.

1. E.g., “A level of the Qur'ān is understood by [everyone, including] the knower and the ignorant, another level is specific to the pious and insightful scholars, and still another level is exclusive to sublime God, prophets, and those who persist in the way of knowledge” (Ṭabrisī, 1948, vol. 1: 377; Ḥuwayzī, 1991, vol. 4: 305).

References

The noble Qur'ān

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