

Alhassanain (p) Network for Islamic Heritage and Thought

The Holy Prophet's (S.A.W.) Advice to Abu Dharr

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Preface

The claim of Dr Sayyid `Abd al-Latif (who observes that the source of belief in an "unschooled" Prophet (SA) has been in the interpretation of the word "ummi"), is unfounded. This is because, firstly, the history of the Arabs and the Makkah at the advent of Islam, is decisive evidence of the fact that the Prophet (SA) was untaught.

Earlier, we have explained that the status of reading and writing in Hijaz at the advent of Islam, was such that the names of all the people familiar with reading and writing were recorded in the history, but no one had listed the Prophet (SA) among such people. Assuming that there was no reference to the question, nor any explanation thereof, Muslims following the unquestionable verdict of history, would have to accept that their Prophet (SA) was untaught.

Secondly, in the Holy Qur'an, there is another verse which is not less explicit than the verses of Surat "al Ar'af containing the word "ummi". On the concept of "ummi" used in the verses of "Surat Al-A'raf", the opinion is divided among the Islamic interpreters of the Qur'an; but on the concept of the following verse which indicates unschooled or untaught Prophet (SA), there is no difference of opinion:

"And you did not read before it any book, nor did you write one with your right hand, for then those, who say untrue things, could have doubted (29:48)."

This verse makes it explicit that the Prophet (SA) neither read nor wrote before his prophethood. Islamic exegetes have generally given a similar interpretation of the verse. But Dr `Abd al-Latif claims that, the very verse has been misinterpreted. He claims that the word "kitab" used in this verse, has a reference to such sacred books as the Tawrat (Old Testament) and the Injil (Bible).

He claims that the verse suggests that until the revelation of the Holy Qur'an, the Prophet (SA) was unfamiliar with any sacred book, for such books were not available in Arabic, and if the Prophet (SA) had read the books available then in a language other than Arabic, he would have been suspected and accused by the idle talkers.

This claim is not true. Contrary to its meaning nowadays widely used in Persian, the word "kitab" in Arabic language has been defined purely as "writing", be it a letter or a book, sacred or otherwise, or be it holy or otherwise. This word has been used in the Holy Qur'an repeatedly.

Occasionally, this word "kitab" has been used (in the Holy Qur'an) to signify a letter sent by one person to another, such as the one concerning the "Queen of Saba": "O Noble Men! I have received a revered letter from Sulayman (Solomon) "; and occasionally it is used in connection with an agreement concluded as a document between the two parties: "Slaves who wish to be freed as per an agreement, accede to their requests to conclude such contracts". At times the term has been used in connection with occult tablets and heavenly truths which tell scientific facts about the world events: "There is neither any thing green nor dry but (it is all) in a clear book ...(6:59)."

In the Holy Qur'an, only at places where the word "ahl" has been added to form "ahl al-kitab", a particular concept is meant.

"Ahl al-Kitab" signifies "the followers of a heavenly book." In the Surat al-Nisa' of the Holy Qur'an, verse 152 reads: "The followers of the heavenly book shall ask you to send unto them a letter from the heavens. " In this verse, the term has been employed at two places: at one place, in conjunction with the term "ahl" and at another place, it is used alone. Wherever the term "ahl" has been prefixed, it is meant "heavenly book" and wherever it is used alone it is meant "letter".

In addition, the construction of the sentence: "You did not write with your right hand" suggests: "You did neither read nor write and if you knew how to read and write, you would have been accused of copying from some other source; but since you did not know how to read or write, there was no room for such an accusation".

However, if the purport is that "You did not read the holy books since they were available in other languages", then, the verse would be understood as: "earlier you neither read nor wrote in other languages", which is not right, for only reading the books in those languages would have well justified the accusation, and also it would not have been necessary for him to have been able to write in those languages.

If he had been able to write in those languages it would have justified the accusation, even though he should have written in his own language. Admittedly, here, there is a point which may confirm Dr `Abd al-Latif's view, even though neither he himself nor any one of the exegetists has given attention to this point. In this holy verse, the word "tatlu" has been used, a word derived from the root "tilawah" which, as referred to in Raghib's book: "Mufradat Alfaz al-Qur'an", is peculiar to reading the holy verses, and which contrasts with the generic term "Qira'ah" signifying "reading". Therefore, although the word "kitab" is applied commonly to "the holy and other books", the term "tatlu" is peculiar to reading "the Holy" verses.

Evidently, however, the reason that the word "tatlu" has been used here, is that the subject under discussion is the Qur'an. The term has been used in respect of all the texts for reading, ie, as if it should have been said to mean: "Now you read (tilawah) the Qur'an but you did not read any writing before the revelation of the Qur'an.

Another verse indicating the unschooling of the Prophet (SA), is verse 52 of the "Surat al-Shura' " (The Counsel): "And thus We revealed to you a spirit by Our command. You did not know what a writing or a faith was ...(42:52)." The verse suggests: "You were unfamiliar with the book or a writing until the Qur'an was revealed. "Dr Sayyid `Abd al-Latif has made no mention of this verse. He may observe that the term "kitab" as used in this verse, means "the holy texts", which existed in a language other than Arabic. The answer to this point, however, is the same as was referred to in the earlier verse.

For some reason, not clear to us, Islamic exegetes have maintained that "kitab" particularly refers to the Qur'an. Therefore, the interpretation of this verse is out of the scope of our logic.

Thirdly, the Islamic exegetes been unanimous regarding the meaning of the term "ummi". On the contrary, all the Islamic exegetes and scholars without any exception, have been unanimous on the unschooling of the Prophet (SA) and his non-acquaintance with reading and writing prior to his prophethood. This in itself is a conclusive evidence of the fact that the source of the Muslims' belief in the unschooling of the Prophet (SA) has not been the interpretation of the term "ummi". However, we have to discuss about the meaning of the word "ummi".

The meaning of the word "Ummi" Islamic exegetists have come up with three interpretations of the word "ummi ".

(i) Unschooled and unacquainted with writing

The majority of exegetes who favour this observation, have said that the word ummi is related to "umm" meaning "mother". The word "ummi" means a person who by birth is familiar with human written works and knowledge; or, it is related to "ummah" ie, who observes the customs of the majority, for the majority of people did not know about writing. Rather, only a few did. Likewise, the word " ummi" means, a man who is like the common people and ignorant. ^[23]

Some have said that the meaning of "ummah" is "creation", and "ummi" is one who has remained in his original state, ie, the illiteracy. For evidence one should refer to a poem ^[24] by Al-A'sha. However, be it either a derivation of "umm" or "ummah" - or whatever meaning of "ummah" is preferred - the meaning of the term ummi is the same, ie, "untaught".

(ii) An inhabitant of Umm al-Qura

Those who favour this view associate the word with "Umm al-Qura", ie, Makkah. The Qur'anic verse 92 of Surat Al-An am refers to Makkah as "Umm al-Qura": "...And that you may warn the (inhabitants of) Makkah and those (who live) around it (6:92). "

This possibility ^[25] has, since ancient times, found its way in the interpretive literature, and is confirmed in a number of Shi'ah ahadith, although these very ahadith have been found to be un-authentic and have been said to be of Israelite origin. ^[26] This possibility has, however, been rejected on the basis of certain proofs. ^[27]

One reason is that the word "Umm al-Qura" is not a proper noun, and has been applied to Makkah as a common attribute and not as a proper noun of Makkah. The word "Umm al-Qura" signifies the "centre of villages". Any point which serves as a centre of villages is known as "Umm al-Qura". From another Qur'anic verse, ie, verse 59 of the Surat Al-Qasas, it becomes clear that the word carries a descriptive rather than a nominative function: "Your Lord is not like this that He kills the residents of the villages until He sends a prophet to them in the centre of the villages, reciting to them Our revelations."

It becomes evident that in the Qur'anic language, any point constituting the centre of an area ^[28] is called its "Umm al-Qura". Moreover, this word "Ummi" used by the Holy Qur'an, has been applied to non-Makkans. Verse 19 of Surat Ali `Imran says:

"...And say to those who have been given the Book and the unlearned people (non-Jewish and non-Christian Arabs): `Do you submit yourselves?' ... (3:20)."

It then becomes evident that according to the custom of the time; and also in the language of the Holy Qur'an, all the Arabs who did not follow a heavenly book were referred to as "ummiyyin".

More important still is the fact that this word "ummi" was applied for the common Jews who were not educated. Verse 78 of Surat Al-Baqarah of the Holy Qur'an reads: ' "Some children of Israil are "ummi"; who do not know their Book except false hopes... (2:78)".

It is obvious that the Jews whom the Holy Qur'an refers to as "ummi" were not the inhabitants of Makkah, but rather, most of them were residents of Madinah or of its neighbourhood. Thirdly, if a word is associated with "Umm al-Qura", literary rules require that "qurawi" should be said in place of "ummi", for, according to the lexical rules governing attribution, when modifying the modifier or the modified, particularly when the modifier is "ab=father", "umm=mother", "ibn=son", or "bint=daughter", it modifies the modified and not the modifier, just as when modifying "Abu Talib", "Abu Hanifah", "Banu Tamim", they are referred to as "Talibi", "Hanafi" and "Tamimi".

(iii) Arab polytheists who were not the followers of the Book

This view has existed among the exegetes of the ancient times. In Majma` al-Bayan, under verse 20 of Surat "Ali-`Imran" of the Holy Qur'an, "ummiyyin" has been placed against "Ahl al-Kitab" This view is described as that of the Companion and great exegete, `Abdullah ibn `Abbas. Under verse 78 of the Surat Al-Baqarah, Abu `Ubaydah states', a similar view.

It follows from what is understood from verse 75 of Surat Ali-`Imran that Al-Tabarsi himself has selected the meaning for the verse. In his book: "Al-Kashshaf", Al-Zamakhshari has provided a similar interpretation of this verse and of verse 75 of the Surat Ali-Imran. Fakhr al-Razi mentions the same possibility under the verse 78 of the Surat al-Baqarah and verse 20 of the Surat Ali-`Imran.

But the fact is that this meaning is not different from the first one. However, it is not correct that a people who do not follow a divine book, be referred to as "ummi" although they may be literate. This term has been applied to Arab polytheists because they were illiterate. What constituted the basis for applying this term to Arab polytheists was their unfamiliarity with reading and writing rather than their not following a heavenly book.

Hence, wherever this word has been used in the plural form and applied to Arab polytheists, this possibility has been mentioned: but wherever it has been used in the singular form and applied to the Holy Prophet (SA), no interpreter has said that the significance is that the Prophet (SA) did not follow one of the heavenly book. In this case, the possibilities are only two at the most. One is that the Prophet (SA) was not familiar with handwriting, and the other was that he was from Makkah. Since, for the conclusive reasons enumerated above, the second possibility is ruled out, definitely the Prophet (SA) was called "ummi" because he had not been taught, nor did he know how to write.

Here, there is a fourth possibility in regard to the meaning of the word: this being that the word meant unfamiliarity with the texts of holy books. This possibility, is the one that Dr Sayyid `Abd al-Latif has innovated, and that he confused it with the third one that we have mentioned, quoting the ancient exegetes. The aforementioned person says:

"The words "ummi" and "ummiyyin" have been used at several places (in the Holy Qur'an) but they have always been used to mean the same everywhere. Lexicographically the term "ummi" means a "newly-born baby" from a mother's womb. It is with reference to this state of living and life, that the word "ummi" came to imply: "one who can neither read nor write. The word "ummi" also means "a person who lived in "Umm al-Qura". "Umm al-Qura" means "the mother of cities", "capital city", and "metropolis". This was the attribute the Arabs of the Prophet's (SA) time associated with Makkah. Therefore, whoever was from Makkah was referred to as "ummi ".

Another area of application of the word "ummi" is to a person who has not been conversant with Semitic texts nor been a follower of Judaism or Christianity which has been referred to as "Ahl al-Kitab" in the Holy Qur'an. In the Holy Qur'an, the word "ummiyyin" was applied to the pre-Islamic

Arabs who neither had a holy book nor followed the New Testament and the Old Testament, and that the word was used for Ahl al-Kitdab ".

While there are so many meanings for the word "ummi" it is not known why the exegetes and translators of the Holy Qur'an, Muslim or non-Muslim, have picked up the meaning namely, "a newly-born baby unaware to his environment" and interpreted it as illiterate and ignorant, and as a consequence, have introduced ^[29] the pre-Islam inhabitants of Makkah as "ummiyyin", or "an illiterate people".

Firstly, since the earliest days, the Islamic exegetes have interpreted the words "ummi" and "ummiyyin" in three ways, and have come up with at least three possibilities Contrary to Dr Sayyid `Abd al-Latif, Islamic exegetes have not given one single meaning.

Secondly, no one has said that the word "ummi" means a newly-born baby unaware of his surroundings "whose connotation is that a person who can neither read nor write. Basically, this is not applied to a newly-born baby, but rather to an adult who knows as much about the skills of reading and writing as when he is just newly-born. As referred to by logicians, the word signifies "absence and second nature". Islamic logicians would always mention this word as one of the examples of "absence and second nature" in books of logic.

Thirdly, it is not true to say: "the word is also used to mean a person who has no familiarity with ancient Semitic texts". What can actually be inferred from the sayings of early exegetes and lexicologists is that the plural form of the word (ummiyyin) has been used for the Arab polytheists who were generally illiterate, as compared with the "people of the book". The polytheists were perhaps given this humiliating title by the Jews and the Christians.

On the whole, it is illogical to call a people "ummi" who can read and write in their own language, just on the basis of unfamiliarity with a certain book or language. The root of the word is "umm" or "ummah" and implies remaining in the same state as when one is born.

But why this word "ummi" has not been recognised as being rooted in "Umm al-Qura", although the possibility has been mentioned consistently, is because of numerous objections which have been mentioned earlier. The Indian scholar's amazement is therefore baseless. It is confirmed by the fact that in some other usages of this word, recorded in books of history and ahadith, there is no other meaning for it except "untaught". In the book: "Bihar al-Anwar", vol 16, p 119, it is narrated from the Holy Prophet (SA): "We are a people who neither read nor write". In vol 4 of his history book, under the biography of Muhammad ibn `Abd al-Malik, popularly known as Ibn Al-Zayyat, a minister of Al-Mu'tasim and Al-Mutawakkil, Ibn Khallikan writes:

"Earlier he was among the secretaries of Al-Mu'tasim, the `Abbassid Caliph, and Ahmad ibn Shadi Al-Basri was the minister. Once a letter came to Al-Mu'tasim, which the minister read for the Caliph. The word "kala' " was in the letter and Al-Mu'tasim, who was not a knowledgeable person, asked his minister for its meaning. The minister didn't know the meaning

either. The Caliph said: "An untaught Caliph and an ignorant minister". Then he asked for one of the secretaries to come.

Ibn Al-Zayyat was present and came for explaining the meaning of the word. He explained through some other words which were closer to the meaning and stated their differences. This formed a prelude for him to become the Caliph's minister later on." Here, the Caliph, who spoke the language of the ordinary people, meant "untaught" when he used the word "ummi". The poet Nizami says as given below: Wisdom is inferior to the Messenger Ahmad, The two worlds depend on the existence of Muhammad.

He is unschooled but stating in the most fluent way, The inclusive knowledge from Adam to Jesus, I say.

In the keeping of a promise he is perfectly steadfast, Ahead of all prophets he was though among them he was the last. ^[22] "Rawshanfikir", issue no 8 and 15, October 1965 and the Publication of the Society of the Headclerks. November 1965 (copied from the Publication of the Ministry of Education and Training, September 1965).

Is It Inferred From The Qur'an That The Prophet Used To Read And Write?

According to Dr Sayyid `Abd al-Latif, it can explicitly be understood from some of the Qur'anic verses that the Prophet (SA) could both read and write: In Surat Ali-'Imran, verse 164, we read:

"Truly Allah conferred a benefit upon the believers when He raised among them a Messenger from among themselves, reciting to them His communications and purifying them, and teaching them the Book and the Wisdom, although before that they were in manifest error (3:164)." Dr. `Abd al-Latif says:

"As the Holy Qur'an clearly states, the foremost duty of the Prophet (SA) was teaching the Qur'an to his followers, and it is certain that the minimum capability required for the one who wants to teach the contents of a book to others is, again as the Qur'an states explicitly, being able to make use of the pen or, at least, being able to read what has been written by the pen."

This reasoning seems queer, as, firstly, what all Muslims unanimously believe in, and he desires to prove the vice versa, is that the Holy Prophet (SA) neither could write nor read before the appointment to prophethood. Such a reasoning at the most can prove that the Holy Prophet (SA) was able to read and write during the period of his prophethood. This is agreed by Sayyid Murtada, Sha'bi and some other people.

Secondly, even as regards the period of prophethood, Dr `Abd al-Latif's reasoning is ineffective; for example, pen, paper, blackboard, drawing, etc, are required when a teacher is to teach reading and writing or to teach mathematics for which he has to solve himself so that the students may learn. However, there is no need for such tools for prophets who teach metaphysics, ethics and halal and haram matters. Among Mashsha'in philosophers (peripatetic philosophers) were called so because they used to walk when teaching, and the learners had to take notes in order not to forget the matters taught. The Holy Prophet (SA) too frequently advised his followers to write down his sayings. He used to say: "Record the knowledge", and when he was asked, "how?", he answered, "By writing down".^[30] He also said:

"May Allah grant happiness to the servant who hears what I say, records it (in his mind) and conveys it to the one who has not heard me saying that."^[31]

It is in the traditions that the Messenger of Allah twice announced this statement, "O God bless my successors". "Who are your successors?", he was asked, and he replied, "They are those who come after me, who learn my sayings and traditions and teach them to others".^[32] He also said: "Among the rights of a child on his father is to choose him a good name, teach him writing and choose him a spouse when matured."^[33] The Holy Qur'an states explicitly:

"O believers! whenever you contract a debt with one another for a fixed time, then write it down; and let a scribe write it down between you with equity ...(2:282)."

Thus, based on the commands of Allah (SWT) and His Prophet (SA), Muslims were bound to acquire the noble art of reading and writing in order

to preserve their religious heritage; to fulfil their duties towards the rights of their children; and to administer well their worldly affairs. This led to the rise of "the pen movement", which stimulated the people among whom the literate were only a few, to seek knowledge and to acquire the skills of reading and writing with such an enthusiasm that some of them learned few languages in Madinah and could propagate the message of Islam throughout the world in different languages.

History tells us that the Holy Prophet (SA) made the captives of the Battle of Badr free on compensation. Some of them were poor, and were freed without paying while some others had the ability to teach writing and each of them were obliged to teach writing to ten children of Madinah, in return for their freedom.^[34] This was the extent to which the Holy Prophet (SA) insisted on the learning of reading and writing and on the acquiring of knowledge. But this does not necessarily mean that he had to know and employ these two skills in order to call people to Islam and propagate his religion.

Dr `Abd al-Latif says:

"In the first surah of the Holy Qur'an, Allah makes mention of `pen' and `writing'. Isn't this the explicit mentioning of a proof that the Prophet of Islam knew reading and writing and that he made use of them? How was it possible that the Holy Prophet encouraged people seek knowledge and become literate, whilst he himself paid no attention to reading and writing? Although he always had a pioneering role in any activity."

This is, again, a strange reasoning. The initial verses of the above-mentioned s6rah indicate, of course, that these were revealed to a servant of Allah (SWT), who was in charge of guiding Allah's other servants, and that the Prophet (SA), who received them at his holy heart, acknowledged the value of reading and writing for men. But these verses never suggest that either Allah (SWT) or the Prophet (SA) dealt with reading, writing, pen or paper.

Dr `Abd al-Latif also says: "The Holy Prophet was the initiator in practising all that he himself ordered. How could he then order this without doing it himself?"

It is, as if to say that a physician who prescribes a medicine for a patient, should first use the medicine himself. Of course, if the physician falls sick and is in need of the same type of medicine, he will definitely take it just as his patient does. But how about the reverse - when the physician isn't sick and consequently not in need of such a medicine?

Here we should see whether the Holy Prophet, like others who were in need of learning the arts of reading and writing in order to attain perfection and to remove their defects, had to acquire these two arts and yet, didn't act upon what he himself ordered, or was he in a state that rendered him independent of them. The Holy Prophet was the forerunner in matters of worship, devotion, piety, honesty, truth, good-temperedness, democracy, humility and other good manners. For all of these were counted towards his perfection and the lack of these was a defect. But the issue of so-called `literacy' doesn't belong to this category.

The unusual value of being literate for human beings is because the literacy helps them benefit from one another's knowledge. Writing is essentially the conventional symbols used by people to express themselves. In fact through the familiarity with writing, knowledge can be transmitted from one person to another, from one tribe to another and from one generation to another. Thus, man preserves his knowledge from extinction. This is why being literate is considered equal to knowing languages, i.e, the more number of languages the man knows, the more means he has at his disposal to acquire knowledge from others.

Both knowing languages and being literate are keys to the acquisition of knowledge rather than the "knowledge" in its real sense. The knowledge implies that the man comes to know of a fact or a law which enjoys reality in the world of existence. Natural sciences, logic, and mathematics are considered as knowledge because they serve the man to discover a real, creative and cause effect type of relationship among subjective things. But knowing words, grammar and the like are not in themselves knowledge, for these will not make us aware of true relationship between the objects. Instead, they will help us to know a series of conventional matters which do not go beyond the limit of assumption. Knowing these matters means knowing the keys to knowledge rather than "knowledge" itself.

Of course, a series of real phenomena such as the development of words and compositions, which represent the evolution of thought and take place on the basis of natural laws, appear in the context of such conventional matters; and needless to say that it is a part of philosophy and knowledge to know these natural laws. Consequently, the value of literacy lies in the fact that the man can find the key to others' knowledge.

Now, let's see whether acquiring knowledge is limited to man's getting the key to the knowledge of others and making use of it. Does the Prophet have to make use of the knowledge of mankind? If so, then what happens to genius and initiative and to the direct acquisition of knowledge from nature? It actually happens that the most inferior way of seeking knowledge is through the sayings and writing of others, for not only the seeker's personality does not play its role in this process, but also in man's writings there can be found illusions and realities interwoven.

The famous French philosopher, Descartes, after having published a series of articles, earned a worldwide fame and his sayings gave rise to the amazement and admiration of one and all. One of those who had read Descartes' articles and was astounded by them, and whose viewpoint was the same as of Dr Sayyid `Abd al-Latif, thought that Descartes had found a valuable treasure of books and manuscripts and had received all his knowledge and information from these sources. He met Descartes and requested him to show -his library. Descartes directed him to a place where he had dissected the dead body of a calf, and addressed the man: "This is my library. I have gained all my knowledge from `these' books".

The late Sayyid Jamal al-Din Asadabadi used to say:

"It is quite strange that some people spend a long life studying the books and writings by their fellow-human beings under the light of a lamp, but if

they close the books one night and study the same lamp, they will acquire much more knowledge."

Nobody is born learned, Ali people are ignorant at the beginning and they become learned little by little. In other words, every person, with the exception of Allah (SWT), is ignorant himself but turns out to be knowledgeable by virtue of some other forces, causes and means. Thus, every individual is in need of an instructor - an inspiring force. Allah (SWT) speaks of the Holy Prophet (SA) in this respect in the following verse: "Did He not find you an orphan and give you shelter? Did He not find you unable to see and show you the way? Did He not find you in need and make you free from need (93: 6-8)?"

But, in principle, who and what should the instructor be? Does the man out of necessity have to acquire knowledge from another of his fellow beings? If so, then he would essentially have the key to the knowledge of others (ie, "literacy") at his disposal. Is the man not in a position to be the initiator himself? Can he not study the book of nature and creation independent of others? Is the man not in a position commune with the ghayb (invisible) and the kingdom of heaven, and Allah (SWT) directly becomes his instructor and guide? The Holy Qur'an clarifies this in respect of the Prophet (SA):

"Nor does he speak out of desire. This is naught but revelation that is revealed; the Lord of Mighty Power has taught him (53: 3-5). " Imam `Ali (AS) speaks about the Holy Prophet (SA):

"Allah (SWT) had appointed His most honourable angel to look after him since his very childhood. The angel led him to noble ways and manners and the best morals of the world." ^[35]

In his outstanding "Al-Muqaddamah (Introduction)", Ibn Khaldun regards the perfection of writing to lie in the fact that man leads a social life, ie, members of human society need the knowledge of one another. He depicts the evolutionary course of writing in different civilizations and after pointing out the advent of writing in Hijaz, continues thus:

"In the early days of Islam, writing enjoyed its initial forms so far as its technical aspect was concerned, and the ways of writings of Prophet's Companions were undoubtedly defective. However, their followers and successors retained the same ways of writing and regarded them as sacred and honourable in transcribing the Holy Qur'an, without making any alterations, though some ways were in distinct opposition to the rules of writing. Consequently, some of the Qur'anic terms and phrases remained in a specific form of writing."

Ibn Khaldun adds:

"We should not be mistaken about the difference between perfection in technical and practical matters, including prescribed forms of writing, which are relative and dependent on means of living, and the absolute perfection, the lack of which creates real defects in man's humanity." He then sets forth the issue of the Prophet's unletteredness and concludes:

"The Prophet was untaught, and being untaught was an accomplishment for him, for he had received his knowledge from the heavens. But for us,

being untaught means defect and imperfection, for it indicates our very ignorance." [36]

Other Qur'anic verses to which Dr `Abd al-Latif refers are 3rd and 4th verses of Surat al-Bayyinah (Surah 98). He says:

"It is quite strange that the translators and commentators of the Holy Qur'an have been heedless of these verses about the Holy Prophet (SA), in which Allah (SWT) says: '(Muhammad) a messenger from Allah, reciting pages purified, therein true Books'. We should take into consideration the fact that in these verses it is not mentioned that the Holy Prophet (SA) narrated the holy "suhu f" (ie, pages) by heart. It is rather stipulated that he read from the texts."

The answer to this reasoning will be clear when the meanings of the two words (ie, "Sahifah" and "yatlu") in the above-mentioned verses are understood. The meaning of the verses is: "The Holy Prophet (SA) reads to the people some purified pages on which there are true and everlasting writings." Now, since the "pages" here means the very sheets on which the Qur'anic verses were recorded, it is obvious that the Holy Prophet (SA) recited the Holy Qur'an for the people.

The word "yatlu" (from the root "tilawah") does not have the sense, "reading from a text" and nowhere has it been so employed. A consideration of various applications of the words "tilawah" and "qira'ah" makes it clear that not every kind of expression can be called "tilawah" or "qira'ah". Rather, these words are employed in cases where the material read is related to a certain text, regardless of being read from memory or from the text. For instance, reciting the Holy Qur'an is both "tilawah" and "qira'ah" whether it is recited from the text of the Qur'an or from one's memory.

There is a difference, of course, between the two, that is, "tilawah" is used when reading a holy text but "qira'ah" can be applied to any reading, holy or unholy sort of written material. As an example, in case of reading Sa'di's "Gulistan" only "qira'ah" can be used, and not "tilawah".

At any rate, whether one reads from the text or from the memory, it does not have anything to do with the concepts of "tilawah" and "qira'ah". Thus, the above-mentioned verses indicate no more than the fact that the Prophet (SA) read to the people the Qur'anic verses which were recorded on some sheets. And there was essentially no need for the Prophet (SA) to read the verses of the Qur'an from the text while hundreds of Muslims recite them from the memory. Had the Prophet (SA) not memorized the Holy Qur'an? In fact, Allah (SWT) had guaranteed his memory. In Surat Al-'A'la, verse 6, the Holy Qur'an says: "We shall make you recite so you shall not forget (87:6)."

It is thus clear that one cannot conclude from the Qur'anic verses that the Prophet (SA) of Allah (SWT) was able to read and write. Rather, contrary to this fact can be concluded. Even if we conclude on the basis of the Qur'anic verses to that effect, it would be something belonging to the prophetic period, whereas Dr Sayyid `Abd al-Latif's claim is that the Prophet (SA) was able to read and write before his appointment as a prophet.

Historical Facts and Ahadith

Dr Sayyid `Abd al-Latif claims that it is possible to prove, through historical facts and traditions, that the Prophet (SA) used to read and write. He supports this by two facts.

(1) He states: "Al-Bukhari relates within the narrations and ahadith recorded in the Chapter: "Al-Ilm" (the knowledge that the Prophet (SA) gave 'Ali, his son-in-law, a secret letter and told specifically not to open it, but have the name of the recipient in his mind and hand him over the letter.

Who else other than the Prophet could have written the letter while even 'Ali, his son-in-law and his trusted person did not know its content? ^[37] Unfortunately, the narration in Sahih al-Bukhari does not mention 'Ali's (AS) name as the carrier of the letter, whereas Dr `Abd al-Latif concludes that the Prophet (SA) himself had written the letter, on the basis that he kept its contents a secret even to 'Ali (AS): In Sahih al-Bukhari, Chapter "Al-Ilm" Al-Bukhari asserts: "The Prophet set off a group of people and handed a letter to their commander and asked him not to open it before he arrived at a certain place."

He does not say that their commander was 'Ali (AS). The contents of the narration reveal, in addition, that the one to open it should have been the carrier of the letter not a third person, as assumed by Dr `Abd al-Latif. What Al-Bukhari has narrated is really connected with a story called "Batn al-Nakhlah" recorded in books of history and Prophetic traditions.

Both Ibn Hisham's "Sirah" ^[38] (under the title: `Abdullah ibn Jahsh's sariyyah) and Bihar al-Anwar ^[39] relate the same narration that the carrier of the letter was `Abdullah ibn Jahsh. It is said that the Prophet (SA) asked him to open the letter after two days' journey and do as it instructed, and he did so and acted upon the Messenger of Allah's command.

Al-Waqidi's "Al-Maghazi" states in explicit terms that Ubay ibn Ka'b was the writer of the letter, not the Holy Prophet (SA). It says:

"Abdullah ibn Jahsh said: `Once, after the Salat al-Isha' (night prayer), the Prophet asked me to come to him the next morning early, armed and ready, to be sent on a mission. The next day, after the Salat al-Fajr (morning prayer), held in the mosque in congregation under the leadership of the Prophet, I was standing near the Prophet's house armed and prepared. Some other Companions were present there too like me.

The Prophet summoned Ubay ibn Ka'b and ordered him to write a letter. Then, he handed me over the closed letter and said: `You are the commander of these people. Open this letter after two nights of journey on the mentioned path, and act as it instructs.' I did what I had been told after two days and noticed that I had been ordered to go to Batn al-Nakhlah (a place between Makkah and Waif) to obtain necessary information about the Quraysh's caravan.

In addition, I had been advised not to compel any of the men to accompany me in the task. Of course, it was a dangerous mission. I told my friends that whoever is ready for the martyrdom could accompany me, and that the remaining were free to go back. They all unanimously remarked: We all heard and shall obey Allah, His Prophet and you.' ^[40]

Accordingly, what Dr `Abd al-Latif has based his claim on is totally unfounded.

(2) Dr `Abd al-Latif further states: "As narrated by Al-Bukhari and Ibn Hisham..., the Prophet (SA) wrote the treaty by his own hand." Firstly, Al-Bukhari has quoted this in one narration and has related the contrary in another. Secondly, Sunni scholars have almost unanimously asserted that although Al-Bukhari's statement apparently indicates that the Prophet (SA) himself has written it, this has not been the intention of the narrator. Al-Halabi's "Sirah", narrates the story in the same manner and even states: "The Holy Prophet asked `All to delete the words: "Allah's Messenger'." but adds, quoting narration of Al-Bukhari, that some have taken this as a miracle carried out by the Prophet (SA). It, however, mentions afterward:

"Some have said that this narration is not acceptable by some knowledgeable persons. It actually implies that the Prophet ordered someone to write and that he did not write it himself."

He adds:

"Abul-Walid Baji Maliki from Spain, who intended to rely on the apparent meaning of Al-Bukhari's statement was seriously refuted by the Spanish scholars." ^[41]

However, Ibn Hisham's "Sirah" does not include such a statement and it is not clear as why did Dr `Abd al-Latif ascribe this to Ibn Hisham.' We have already mentioned that from the historical point of view, what is inferred from most narrations, is that `Ali (AS) wrote all the written material. That the Prophet (SA) wrote, despite his inability to write, can only be concluded from Al-Tabari's and Ibn Al-Athir's statements. At the most this can be implied that the Prophet (SA) wrote once or more during the prophetic period, whereas, the issue under discussion concerns the period before his prophethood.

The Adversaries' Accusation

It was mentioned at the very beginning of the book that: "The opponents of Islam and the Prophet (SA) accused him of borrowing ideas from others (this accusation is reflected from some verses of the Qur'an). But they did not say that he was literate and knew how to read and write and that he perhaps had some books which he consulted before presenting his views."

Someone might, however, claim that the Prophet (SA) accusation is was accused in this respect too. This reflected from the Qur'an where it says:

"They say: The stories of the ancient - he has got them written down - so that these are recited to him morning and evening (25: 5). " The answer is that this verse does not explicitly indicate their claim that the Prophet (SA) used to write, regardless of the fact that the opponents' accusations were so prejudiced and based on complexes and grudges that, as the Holy Qur'an puts it, only terms like "injustice" and "oppression" can best be used for them. At the same time, the Arabic term "iktitab" means both 'to write' and "istiktab" ie, to make someone write something'.

Here, the second meaning applies to the verse which would mean "They said: 'he has written (or others have written for him) the stories of the ancient, then someone reads to him every morning and evening," "iktitab" is mentioned here in the past tense and "imla" in the present continuous. It implies that someone wrote them, and that those who knew how to read, used to come to Prophet (SA) every day and night and read them to him, and that he learned and memorized them. Thus, if the Prophet (SA) knew how to read, they would not necessarily say that others used to read to him day and night; rather, it would suffice them to say that he himself referred to writings and memorized them.

Therefore, even the oppressive and accusing infidels of his time, who accused the Prophet (SA) in many ways and named him an insane, a sorcerer, a liar and an imitator of others' oral statements, etc, could not claim that he read the contents of other books to them due to his inability to read and write.

It is inferred from what has already been stated that according to the definite testimony of history, Qur'anic proofs and abundant indications deduced from the history of Islam, the Holy Prophet's (SA) mind was untouched by human teaching. He was a man taught only in the divine school and who received his knowledge from Him alone. He was a flower fostered by the Pre-eternal Gardener and none else.

Although Allah (SWT) has nothing to do with the pen, paper, ink, reading and writing, He swore by the pen and its manifestations as a sacred matter in His Holy Book: "Nun' I swear by the pen and what they write (68:1). " Allah (SWT) also commanded "reading" in His ,first heavenly message and introduced the knowledge and art of using the pen as the greatest blessing bestowed on man after the blessing of "creation". The Holy Qur'an states: "Read in the name of your Lord Who created. He created man from a clot. Read and your Lord is Most Honourable; Who taught (to write) with the pen; taught man what he knew not (96:1-5). "

In fact, the one who had not held a pen in his hand, established the "Pen Movement" immediately after his arrival in Madinah by providing simple

facilities. Although he had neither been tutored by man nor had he attended any universities or the like, he turned out to be man's teacher and the founder of universities. Hafiz remarks:

"Brightened and made Heaven's grace manifest, He healed our wandering heart and our wounded chest.

He, who attended no school, was dear of mine, Hundreds of tutors were taught with his knowledge, divine.

And his graceful glance filled the lovers with spirits raised, The knowledge and wisdom both got amazed."

Imam 'Ali al-Rida (AS), in his discussion with the people following other religions, addressed Ra's al-Jalut:

"Among the true reasons of his prophethood is that the Prophet was an orphan, a poor shepherd and a worker who had not read any books and had not been taught; yet, he brought a book in which there are the stories of prophets and the information regarding both past and future generations."
[42]

What reveals more reasonably the loftiness, grandeur and heavenliness of the Holy Qur'an is the fact that this great divine Book, with myriad instructions concerning the creation, the Resurrection, human beings, morality, law, admonitory stories and sermons - with all its grace, beauty and eloquence - was issued from the tongue of the one who was himself unlettered, who neither attended any school or college nor received any university education and who neither met any of his contemporary scholars nor read a simple book of his time.

The sign and miracle that Allah (SWT) granted to His last Prophet (SA) was the book and writing, of speech and meditation, and of feelings and senses. It deals with wisdom, thoughts, the heart and mind. This Holy Book has shown for centuries, and still shows, its extraordinary spiritual authority.

The passage of time cannot make it obsolete. It has fascinated, and continues to fascinate, millions and millions of hearts. It brims over with a life-sustaining power. What thoughtful minds it has induced to meditation! What numerous hearts it has overflowed with spiritual enthusiasm! What countless nightingales of dawn and those keeping a night vigil it has spiritually fed! What tears it has caused to flow on cheeks at midnight out of love for Allah (SWT) and fear of Him. And what enslaved and chained nations has it emancipated from the claws of tyranny and despotism.

The poet says:

"As the Qur'an's seal shone all and everywhere, The Pope's plans it shattered and of the Magi's here and there.

Let's open what I really feel in essence, It is not a simple book but has a difference.

It transforms into whosoever's soul it enters, Like the transformed soul, the .world also alters.

It is clear like "truth", but hard to reach, Alive, everlasting, a manifest speech." Yes, to enlighten more clearly that the Qur'an is a revelation and a miracle for the human beings Allah (SWT), the Everlasting Grace, revealed it to one among His servants who was an orphan, a poor shepherd and a desert-rover and an untaught and unschooled man.

"That is Allah's grace; He grants it to whom He wills, and Allah is of abounding bounty (62:4). "

How to Send Greetings to Holy Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.)?

When sending greetings to Prophet Muhammad, · some say: Peace be upon him (PBUH) · others say: Peace be upon him and his family (S.A.W.) · some others say are more generous and say: Peace be upon him and his family (Aalihi) and his wives (wa Azwajihi) and all his companions (wa Sahbihi Ajma'een). Now let us see how the Prophet himself thought us to send blessing for him:

The Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.) said, "Do not salute for me in short!" The companions asked, "What is saluting in short?" The Prophet replied, "Saying that Blessing of Allah be upon Muhammad." They asked, "what should we say?" the Prophet (S.A.W.) answered, "Say: Blessing of Allah be upon Muhammad and his Ahlul-Bayt." In another wordings the Prophet replied: "Say: O Allah bless Muhammad and his household the same way as you blessed Abraham and his household. Verily you are worthy of all praise full of all glory!".

Sunni reference:

· al-Sawa'iq al-Muhriqah, by Ibn Hajar, Ch. 11, section 1, p225 This saying of the Prophet was in connection with the following verse of Quran which was related about the House of Abraham (AS): They said: "Do you wonder at Allah's decree? The Mercy of Allah and His Blessings be upon you O people of the house! for He is indeed worthy of all praise full of all glory!" (Quran 11:73)

Moreover, Ibn Hajar also mentioned that some of the Sunni commentators of Quran have narrated from Ibn Abbas (RA) that the Quranic verse "Peace be upon the family of Yaaseen (Quran 37:130)" refers to the family of Muhammad. (See al-Sawa'iq al-Muhriqah, by Ibn Hajar, Ch. 11, section 1, p228).

From the tradition given earlier, one can see that the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.) mentioned his name and his Ahlul-Bayt together, and disliked mentioning his name alone. He specifically ordered that his followers SHOULD include his family in all their greetings to the Prophet Muhammad. This because ONLY those individuals whom Quran testifies to their perfect purity (the last sentence of Verse 33:33) are worthy of being saluted. Let us look at more traditions, this time from Sahih al-Bukhari:

Sahih al-Bukhari Hadith: 6.320 Narrated Ka'b bin Ujra:

It was said, "O Allah's Apostle! We know how to greet you, but how to invoke Allah for you?" The Prophet said, "Say: O Allah! Send your blessings/greetings (Salawat) on Muhammad and his family, the same way as You sent Your blessings/greetings on Abraham's family. You are indeed worthy of all praise, full of glory."

Sahih al-Bukhari Hadith: 6.321 Narrated Abu Said al-Khudri: We said, "O Allah's Apostle! (We know) this greeting (to you) but how shall we invoke Allah for you?" He said, "Say: O Allah! Send your greetings on Muhammad who is Your servant and Your Messenger, the same way as You sent Your greetings on Abraham's family. And send Your blessings on Muhammad and on Muhammad's family, the same way as You sent Your blessings on Abraham's family."

Sahih al-Bukhari Hadith: 6.322 Narrated Ibn Abi Hazim and Ad-Darawardi:

Yazid reported (similarly with the following wordings) "...And send Your blessings on Muhammad and on Muhammad's family, the same way as You sent Your blessings on Abraham and on Abraham's family."

Sahih al-Bukhari Hadith: 8.368 Narrated 'Abdur-Rahman bin Abi Laila:

Ka'b bin 'Ujra met me and said, "Shall I give you a present? Once the Prophet (saw) came to us and we said, 'O Allah's Apostle! We know how to greet You; but how to send Salat upon you?' He said 'Say: O Allah! Send your greetings (Salawat) on Muhammad and his family, the same way as You sent Your Salawat on Abraham's family. O Allah! Send Your blessings on Muhammad and on Muhammad's family, the same way as You sent Your blessings on Abraham's family. You are indeed worthy of all praise, full of glory.'"

Two more traditions are as follows:

Abu Masud Badri relates: (Once) we, were sitting with Sad bin Ubadah when the Holy Prophet came to us. Bashir Ibn Sad asked the Holy Prophet: O Messenger of Allah, we have been commanded by Allah to invoke blessings on you by reciting Salat, then how shall we do this ? The Holy Prophet kept quite for sometime, so much so that we wished that Bashir bin Sad had not asked the question from the Holy Prophet. After some time the Holy Prophet said these words :

O Allah, send Thy blessings on Muhammad and on the children of Muhammad as Thou didst send Thy blessings on Abraham, and bless Muhammad and the children of Muhammad as Thou didst bless Abraham. Indeed Thou art the praiseworthy, the Glorious. Continuing, the Holy Prophet said : and the salutation is already known to you.

Sunni reference: Riyadh al-Saliheen, by al-Nawawi, English version, Tradition #1406

Although the above traditions confirm that the Prophet (S.A.W.) ordered people to send Salawat on him and his family. This can not be regarded as self-esteem, rather it was the order by Allah to do that. It served as teaching the Sunnah to people. Specially the highlighted part in the last tradition shows that the Prophet was hesitating to salute himself at first, but since it was the order of Allah, he conveyed the message. In another tradition:

When the Messenger of Allah noticed that a blessing from Allah was to descent, he told Safiyya (one of his wives): "Call for me! Call for me!"

Safiyya said: "Call who, O the Messenger of Allah?" He said: "Call for me my Ahlul-Bayt who are Ali, Fatimah, al-Hasan, and al-Husain." Thus we sent for them and they came to him. Then the Prophet (S.A.W.) spread his cloak (upper garment) over them, and raised his hand (toward sky) saying: "O Allah! These are my family (Aalee), so bless Muhammad and the family (Aal) of Muhammad." And Allah, to whom belong Might and Majesty, revealed: "Verily Allah intends to keep off from you every kind of uncleanness O' People of the House (Ahlul-Bayt), and purify you a thorough purification (Quran, the last sentence of Verse 33:33)".

Sunni references:

· al-Mustadrak by al-Hakim, Chapter of "Understanding (the virtues) of Companions, v3, p148. The author then wrote: "This tradition is authentic (Sahih) based on the criteria of the two Shaikhs (al-Bukhari and Muslim)."

- Talkhis of al-Mustadrak, by al-Dhahabi, v3, p148
- Usdul Ghabah, v3, p33

Similarly, it is narrated that in another occasion, when the Messenger of Allah gathered Ali, Fatimah, al-Hasan, al-Husain (peace be upon them all) under his cloak, he said:

"O Allah! Verily they are from me and I am from them. Thus place Your blessings and Your mercy and Your satisfaction on me and them." and:

"O Allah! These are Aale-Muhammad (family of Muhammad). Thus place Your blessings and Your bounty upon the family of Muhammad, for, indeed You are the praiseworthy, the Glorious."

Sunni reference:

al-Sawa'iq al-Muhriqah, by Ibn Hajar, Ch. 11, section 1, p225, quoted from Ahmad Ibn Hanbal Also it is narrated that:

The Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.) said: "If one prays, and in it he does not send blessings to me and my family, his prayer will not be accepted."

Sunni references:

- al-Darqunti, and al-Bayhaqi, as quoted in:
- al-Sawa'iq al-Muhriqah, by Ibn Hajar al-Haythami, Ch. 11, p349 In fact, invoking Salawat on the Prophet's family was so important that it has been included in ANY Salawat on the Prophet (S.A.W.). Invoking Salawat on the family of the Prophet is a sign of pledging allegiance to them, and affirming what Allah Himself has affirmed for them: They are perfectly cleansed and worthy of being saluted.

Side Comment

Earlier, a Sunni brother mentioned that I thought that "SWS" and "AS" were used for the prophets whereas "RA" was used for others including Ali (RA) The abbreviation "AS" stands for "Alayhi-s-Salam" meaning "peace be upon him". I am interested to know from where you concluded that we can not use this term for a non-prophet? Could you quote a verse from Quran or an authentic tradition that we can not use the phrase "Peace be upon him" after his (AS) name?

Dear brother, if we want to follow the Sunnah of Prophet (S.A.W.), we are ORDERED by the above authentic traditions to send peace not only to Imam Ali (AS) but also to all the members of the House of Prophet. If the Prophet (S.A.W.) ordered us to send Peace and blessing to his family, then who are we to set regulations in contrary to that and yet claim to follow the Sunnah of Prophet?

The phrase "May Allah be please with him" (RA) can be used for the companions, not for Prophet and his Ahlul-Bayt who are perfectly pure, flawless, and sinless.

The Holy Prophet's (S.A.W.) Advice to Abu Dharr

(Says the sheikh) that my master, father, may Allah increase his life-span Al Fadl bin al Hasan said, "These pages are of the advice of the Messenger of Allah (s) that he gave to Abu Dharr al Giffari ." (Then he gives the whole chain of narrators tracing it from Sheikh Mufeed and Sheikh Abu Ja'far Muhammad bin Hasan Babweih up to Abu al Aswad.)

Abu al Aswad said, "I had arrived at al Rabdha and I met Abu Dharr Jundib son of Janada (a) and he narrated to me." "I entered one day in the midday in the presence of the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.) in his masjid. I didn't see anyone at all in the masjid except the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.) and Ali (A.S.) who was sitting by his side, so I took the opportunity of the emptiness of the masjid (to approach the Prophet (S.A.W.))." I said, " Oh RasulAllah (S.A.W.) , by my father and mother, please advise me with such advice that Allah will benefit me by it."

So he said, "Yes, and how noble you are Oh Abu Dharr! Most surely You are from us, the Ahl Al Bait (A.S.), and I am giving You advise so remember it, for surely it is the collection of (all) the paths of goodness. Surely if You memorize them and put them into practice (hafiztaha), You will have by it `Kiflan'." (Two folds of mercy, in this world and the hereafter)

Oh Abu Dharr!

"Worship Allah as if You see Him and if You weren't seeing Him (You must understand that) surely He sees You. Know You that the first of worship of Allah is (Ma'rifa) gnosis, for He is surely the first before every other thing, so there is nothing before Him, The singlemost without any second, the continuing but not to an end. He is the Creator of the heavens and earth and whatever is in them and between them and He is the Subtle, the Aware, and He has power over all things;

then (the second most important factor in the worship of God is) belief in me and acknowledgment that Allah sent me to all of humanity as a bearer of glad tidings, a warner, a caller (of people) to Allah by His permission and a illuminating torch of light; Then (the third most important factor in God's worship is) the love of the people of my house, Those from whom Allah has removed (from them) every impurity and purified them a perfect purification.(33:33)

"You must know Abu Dharr that Allah, the Great and Majestic, has made the `Ahl al Bait' in my nation the likliness of the ship of Nuh (Noah) whoever rides it is saved and whoever desires other than it is drowned. He has made them the likliness of the Gate of Jericho among the Banu Israel, whoever enters the gate is safe.

Oh Abu Dharr!

"Safeguard what I am advising You, You will be happy in this world and next."

Oh Abu Dharr!

There are two blessings seriously taken for granted (misused) by mankind, health and spare time.

Oh Abu Dharr!

Take advantage of five things before five things seize you; Your youth before Your old age, your health before your sickness, Your wealth before your poverty, your spare time before your being busy and your life before you death.

Oh Abu Dharr!

Beware of Procrastination for you are (in) today and not (in) tomorrow. If there is a tomorrow for you, be tomorrow as you are today. If there isn't a tomorrow for you, you will grievously regret the opportunity you missed today.

Oh Abu Dharr!

How many a person there is who has met a day he didn't complete! How many a waiter there is of tomorrow who doesn't find it!

Oh Abu Dharr!

Had you known the exact period of time you will live you would hate hopes and their deception.

Oh Abu Dharr!

Be in the world as if you are a stranger or like one simply passing by as in a journey and count yourself as among the people of the graves.

Oh Abu Dharr!

When you wake up in the morning don't talk to yourself about tonight and when night has come don't worry of the mourning for surely you don't know what your state will be tomorrow.

Oh Abu Dharr!

Beware that may not over take you a fatal accident during stumbling. The stumbling will not be averted. It will not be possible to return (to correct your mistake). Will not praise you the one you left behind of what you left behind. Will not excuse you, the one you will meet (Allah), of what you were so busy conducting (in the world, carelessly).

Oh Abu Dharr!

Be greedier, in terms of your time (life span) more than of your gold and silver coins (wealth).

Oh Abu Dharr!

Does any of you wait for but wealth that will make him oppressive or poverty that will make him a forgotten thing or sickness that will destroy or old age that will not permit him to do anything but sit, or death that will finish him off, or the great deceiver, Dajjal - surely he is the most evil of those things awaited; or the hour (Day of Judgment) which is more calamitous and bitter. Most surely the worst of men in position with Allah on the Day of Judgment is he who didn't benefit from his knowledge. He who seeks knowledge in order to divert peoples attention towards himself will surely not smell the fragrance of Paradise.

Oh Abu Dharr!

He who seeks knowledge to deceive by it others will not even smell the fragrance of Paradise.

Oh Abu Dharr!

When you are asked of some knowledge you know not of say, "I do not know!" You will be saved of it's consequences. Don't make judgment of that

which you haven't knowledge, you will be saved from the wrath of Allah on the Day of Judgement.

Oh Abu Dharr!

There will be a day when a group of people of Paradise will be over a group of people of Hell and they will say, "What has made you enter hell-fire? For surely we entered paradise by you teaching us and your disciplining (educating) us!" They will say, "We used to bid others to do good while we ourselves didn't do it."

Oh Abu Dharr!

Surely the rights Allah (s) has over us are greater than his servant can possibly fulfill! Surely the favors of Allah are more than His servants can ever encompass. This is why they pass night and day repenting.

Oh Abu Dharr!

You are surely in the passing of night and day where terms are short, deeds are recorded and death comes suddenly. Whoever sows good is on the verge of reaping good and whoever sows evil is on the verge of reaping regret. And for every sower in the like of that which he sowed. Will not pass a slow person even a moment and a greedy person will not reach that which is not destined for him. Whoever is given good, Allah gave it to him and whoever is protected from evil, then Allah protected him.

Oh Abu Dharr!

The pious are the masters. And the learned are the leaders. Keeping their company is increase (in good). Surely the believer sees his sin as if it is a boulder, he fears that it will fall on him and surely the unbeliever sees his sin as if it is a fly passing on his nose.

Oh Abu Dharr!

Surely Allah (s), when He wills good for a servant he puts his sins before his two eyes. When he wills bad for a servant he makes him forget his sins.

Oh Abu Dharr!

Don't look at the smallness of the sin but look at the one you disobeyed.

Oh Abu Dharr!

Surely the believer is stronger in his fleeing from sin than a sparrow when thrown from his nest.

Oh Abu Dharr!

He whose words conform with his deed so he is the one who has attained his share. He whose words don't conform with his deed then he is only destroying himself.

Oh Abu Dharr!

Surely a mans sustenance is prohibited (from reaching him) because of a sin he did.

Oh Abu Dharr!

Leave that which you have nothing to do with. Do not speak of that which does not concern you, and guard your tongue like you guard your money.

Oh Abu Dharr!

Surely Allah, glorious is His praise, will enter a people into paradise and will give them until they are weary and above them there will be a people in the highest grades. So when they will look to them they will recognize them

so they will say. "Oh our Lord, they are our brothers, we use to be together in the world so why have you favored them over us." So it will be said, "Far from it, far from it! Surely they used to be hungry while you were satiated, they used to be thirsty while you were quenched, they used to stand (in prayer) while you used to sleep, they used to rise (take a stand) while you used to go low (be passive, relax).

Oh Abu Dharr!

Allah, glorious is His praise, has made the pleasure of my eye in Salat, and has made me to love the Salat like food is made loveable to the hungry and water to the thirsty. And surely the hungry one, when he eats, he is satiated and the thirsty one, when he drinks he is quenched but I am not satiated from Salat.

Oh Abu Dharr!

Anyone who voluntarily does 12 raka't other than the obligatory, he has a sure right to a house in paradise.

Oh Abu Dharr!

Surely, so long as you are in Salat, you are knocking on the door of the Great King, and whoever knocks much on the door of the King it will be opened for him.

Oh Abu Dharr!

There is no believer that stands in prayer but falls on him goodness (birr) what is between him and the Throne. And an angel is appointed for him that calls out, "Oh son of Adam, if you knew what there is for you in Salat and who you are calling, you would not turn away.

Oh Abu Dharr!

The Salat is the pillar of the religion (deen) and the tongue is greater; and charity wipes out sin and the tongue is greater; and Fasting is a shield against the fire and the tongue is greater; and jihad is nobility and the tongue is greater.

Oh Abu Dharr!

A degree in heaven is above a degree (like steps) like what is between the sky and earth. And surely the servant raises his eye and light dazzles it, almost snatching his sight, so he is shocked by it and says, "What is this?" So it is said, "This is the light of your brother." So he will say, "My brother so and so? We use to work together in the world and he has been so much favored over me?" So it will be said, "He surely was better than you in deeds." Then will be put in his heart satisfaction until he is satisfied.

Oh Abu Dharr!

This world is the prison of the believer and the paradise of the unbeliever. And no believer wakes up but is grieved in it. And how can he not be grieved in it when Allah has sworn that it will take him to Hell and He didn't promise him that it will deliver him from it, and that he shall meet (in it) sicknesses and hardships and matters which will anger him and he will be wronged in it and won't be helped. He seeks reward from Allah and continues to be in grief (in it)until he departs from it. And when he departs from it, he attains to comfort and honor.

Oh Abu Dharr!

Allah (s), has not been worshipped with a thing like that of length of grief.

Oh Abu Dharr!

Whoever is given knowledge which doesn't cause him to cry simply because he has been given knowledge, it will not benefit him. Allah has described the learned and said, "Surely those who were given knowledge before it, when it is recited onto them they fall upon their faces in prostration and they say, "Glory be to our Lord. Surely the promise of Allah shall be done." They fall on their faces crying and they increase in humility.

Oh Abu Dharr!

Whoever is able to cry, let him cry. Whoever isn't able to cry then let him have his heart feel sadness and let him try to cry. Surely the hard heart is far from Allah (s), but they don't realize.

Oh Abu Dharr!

Allah (s) says, "I will not combine for my servant two fears nor two safeties. So when he feels safe from me in the world, I make him fear on the Day of Judgement. And when he fears me in the world, I give him safety on the Day of Judgement."

Oh Abu Dharr!

If a man had the deeds of 70 prophets he would be looked down upon and it is feared that he will not be saved from the evils of the Day of Judgement.

Oh Abu Dharr!

Surely the servant will be shown his sins on the Day of Judgement with him who did his sins (also) so he will say, "As for me, I was afraid, feeling anxiety (about my sins) so he will be forgiven.

Oh Abu Dharr!

Surely the man does a good deed and he trusts (depends) on it and he (also) does despised deeds until Allah comes to him while angry. Surely the man who does an evil deed and he is afraid of it (its consequence) he will come safely on the Day of Judgement.

Oh Abu Dharr!

Surely the servant commits a sin, so he is made to enter into heaven by it! So I said, "And how is that? By my mother and father Oh Messenger of Allah (s)." He said, "That sin in front of his eyes makes him repentant of it, fleeing to Allah (s) (from it), until he enters heaven!"

Oh Abu Dharr!

Smart is the one who subjugates himself and acts for that which is after death, and weak is the one who follows his self and its caprice and then hopes in Allah so many a hope.

Oh Abu Dharr!

]Surely the first thing which will be removed from this community (Ummat) is safekeeping (amaanat) and humbleness until it will hardly be seen fearful (of God)

Oh Abu Dharr!

By Him in whose hand the soul of Muhammad is in (s), if the world was equal, with Allah, to that of a wing of a fly, the unbeliever wouldn't even get from it a glass of water.

Oh Abu Dharr!

The world is cursed! Is cursed what is in it except that by which Allah's face is sought. And there is nothing more hateful to Allah than the world. He created it then left it so He didn't look at it and will not look at it until stands the hour (Day of Judgement). And there is nothing more loveable to Allah than faith (eeman) in Him and abandoning of that which He ordered to be abandoned.

Oh Abu Dharr!

Surely Allah (s), revealed to my brother Isa (a), "Oh Isa! Don't love the world for surely I don't love it and love the Hereafter for surely it is the house of return."

Oh Abu Dharr!

Surely Jibreel (a) came to me with the treasures of the world and said, "Oh Muhammad (s)! This is the treasures of the world (for you) and it will not decrease of your share (in the Hereafter) with your Lord." So I said, "My beloved Jibreel! I have no need of it. When I'm satiated I thank my Lord and when I'm hungry I ask Him."

Oh Abu Dharr!

When Allah wants good for a servant He gives him understanding in religion and makes him abstemious in the world and makes him to see his own faults.

Oh Abu Dharr!

No servant abstains in the world but Allah causes wisdom to grow in his heart, and causes his tongue to utter it, and gives him insight of the faults of the world and its sickness and its cure and causes him to leave from it safely into the abode of peace.

Oh Abu Dharr!

When you see your brother abstaining from worldliness, listen to him for surely he is dictating wisdom. So I said, "Oh Messenger of Allah (s), who is the most abstemious (zahid) of mankind?" So he said, "One who doesn't forget the graves and the deterioration (of the world) and leaves the excess of the adornment of the world and prefers what lasts over that which perishes and he doesn't count tomorrow among his days and counts himself among the dead.

Oh Abu Dharr!

Allah didn't reveal to me to amass wealth upon wealth. But He revealed to me, "Glorify with the praise of your Lord and be among the prostrating ones and worship your Lord until comes to you the certainty."

Oh Abu Dharr!

I wear coarse clothing, sit on the floor lick my fingers, ride a donkey without a saddle and have someone sit behind me. So whoever does not like my manner, so he is not of me.

Oh Abu Dharr!

Love of wealth and honor are stronger in stripping a man of his religion than two ferocious wolves in a cattle pen of sheep; so they attack in it until mourning. So what will remain of it?

So I said, "Oh Messenger of Allah (s), the fearful humble lowly people who remember Allah much, will they be the first among mankind to go to

heaven?" So he said, "No. But it will be the poor among the muslims. They will come outstripping the necks of mankind. Will say to them the Keepers of Heaven, "Like that you are until you are given account of!" So they will say, "About what shall we give account, for by Allah we didn't own anything by which we could oppress or do justice and we weren't given (wealth) so we could withhold or give (to others) but we worshipped our Lord until He called us so we answered.

Oh Abu Dharr!

The world keeps our hearts and bodies busy and Allah will ask us about what we were favored with of His lawful (halal) so what about that which we enjoyed in His unlawful (haram).

Oh Abu Dharr!

I surely asked Allah, magnificent is His praise, to make the sustenance of he who loves me sufficient and to give the one who hates me much wealth and children.

Oh Abu Dharr!

Blessedness is for those who are abstemious in the world, the longers of the hereafter; they take the earth of Allah as a carpet and its soil as a pillow and its water as perfume. They read the book of Allah lowly and call Him loudly and they cut themselves off from worldliness completely.

Oh Abu Dharr!

Surely my Lord has informed me so He said, "By My glory and majesty, no servants attain to crying but I build for them a palace in paradise that no one will be a partner with in it.

So I said, "Oh Messenger of Allah (s), who among the believers is most intelligent?" He said, "those that remember death most and prepare for it in the best way.

Oh Abu Dharr!

When light enters the heart it expands and becomes spacious. I said, "So what is the sign of that by my mother and father, Oh Messenger of Allah (s)."He said, "Turning (one's attention) to the eternal abode and keeping aloof from the abode of deception and preparation for death before it takes place."

Oh Abu Dharr!

Fear Allah and don't show mankind that you fear Allah so they honor you while your heart is evil.

Oh Abu Dharr!

]Let there be for you in everything a pious intention, even when it comes to sleeping and eating.

Oh Abu Dharr!

You must magnify the majesty of Allah in your heart. So don't remember him like the ignorant remembers Him in the presence of a dog saying, "Oh Allah disgrace him" and in the presence of a pig "Oh Allah disgrace him."

Oh Abu Dharr!

Surely Allah has angels who are standing out of fear of Him. They won't raise their heads until the trumpet shall be blown, the sounding of the Hereafter. So they will all say, "Glory be to You our Lord, and Your praise. We haven't worshipped you as it is fit for You to be worshipped!"

Oh Abu Dharr!

If a man had the deeds of 70 prophets he would deem his deeds small because of the hardship he will see on that day. If a bucket of two baths were poured in the rising place of the sun it would cause to boil, the skulls of those who are witnessing its setting. And if Hell only exhaled one sigh, no near angel nor messenger sent would remain but would fall prostrate on his knees saying, "Lord have mercy on my soul," until he will forget Ibrahim and Ishaq and say, "My Lord, I am your Khaleel Ibrahim, so don't forget me!"

Oh Abu Dharr!

If a woman of the people of paradise rose from the sky of the world in the darkest night she would illuminate the earth more than the moon does when it is full and would notice the fragrance she emits, all the people of the earth. And if a cloth of the garments of the people of paradise was spread today in the world, would faint who ever looks at it because of what their eyes are beholding.

Oh Abu Dharr!

Lower your voice during a funeral, during fighting and during the recitation of the Qur'an.

Oh Abu Dharr!

When you are in a funeral procession, so let your mind be busy in pondering and humbleness and know that you will meet the same fate.

Oh Abu Dharr!

Know that when something gets spoiled then salt is its remedy and when the salt is spoiled there is no remedy for it. And know you that in you are two (dangerous) qualities; laughing at something not amusing and laziness when not tired.

Oh Abu Dharr!

Two moderate cycles of prayer (rak'at) with pondering is better than standing all night in prayer with a neglectful heart.

Oh Abu Dharr!

The truth is heavy and bitter and the falsehood in light and sweet and it may be that the (fulfillment of the) desire of an hour will yield a long period of grief.

Oh Abu Dharr!

A man has not fully understood until he sees mankind next to Allah as camels, then he looks to himself and holds himself more contemptible.

Oh Abu Dharr!

You will not reach the reality of faith until you see all of mankind as fools in regards to their religion (deen) and intelligent in regards to their worldly matters (dunya).

Oh Abu Dharr!

Take account of yourself before you're taken account of so your accounting will be easier tomorrow. And weigh yourself before you are weighed and prepare for the great staging; the day you will be presented, not the least of a hidden thing of you will be hidden from Allah.

Oh Abu Dharr!

Be shy of Allah for surely by the One who my soul is in His hand, I always feel embarrassed when I go to the bathroom; I cover myself with my cloths because of the two angels with me.

Oh Abu Dharr!

Would you like to enter heaven? I said, "Yes, may my father by sacrificed for thee." He said (s) , "So cut your hopes short and put death before your eyes and feel shy of Allah, the shyness due to Him." He said, I said, "Oh Messenger of Allah, all of us feel shy of Allah." He said, "That is not shyness; rather shyness is to not forget the graves and deterioration and protecting your stomach and what concerns it and the head and what it contains and whoever wants the honor of the Hereafter, so let him leave the embellishments of the worldly life. So if you are like that, you have attained the Kingdom (walayat) of Allah."

Oh Abu Dharr!

Some supplication with good deeds is sufficient just as some salt is sufficient with food.

Oh Abu Dharr!

The one who supplicates without deed is like one who tries to shoot his arrow without a string on his bow.

Oh Abu Dharr!

Surely Allah, because of the goodness of his servant, He betters the condition of his whole family and even his neighbors and the houses around him so long as he is with them.

Oh Abu Dharr!

Surely your Lord (s) boasts to the angels about three people: A man who is in a deserted place (though alone), he calls azan and iqamat and he prays. So your Lord says to the angels, "Look at my servant! He's praying and no one sees him but me." So descends 70,000 angels and pray behind him and they seek forgiveness for him until the next day; and a man who stands in the mid of night and prays alone and does sajdah (prostrates) and falls asleep while prostrating. So Allah (s) says, "Look to my servant! His soul is with me and his body is prostrate" and a man who is in a war and all his companions flee, but he stays firm fighting until he is killed.

Oh Abu Dharr!

No man puts his forehead (in prostration) in a place of the places of the earth but that place bears witness of that for him on the Day of Judgement. There is no place that a people visit but that place starts either sending salutation on them or cursing them.

Oh Abu Dharr!

There is no place of lodging or departure of the places of the earth but they call one another, "Oh neighbor, did anyone pass by you who remembered Allah or worshipped by placing his forehead on you in prostration to Allah?" So one says yes and one says no. When one says yes, it shakes and opens up (in happiness) and sees that it has (been favored) a greater rank over its neighbor.

Oh Abu Dharr!

Surely Allah, when He created the earth and created what's in it of trees. there was no tree that the children of Adam came to but they got from it a

benefit. The earth and the trees remained like that until the evil of the children of Adam started saying the grievous utterance. Their saying, "Allah has taken a son." So when they said it the earth trembled and the benefits of the trees went away.

Oh Abu Dharr!

The earth cries over the believer when he dies for forty mornings.

Oh Abu Dharr!

When a servant is in a deserted place and does wudu or tayammum then he does Azan and Iqamat and he prays. Allah (s) orders the angels, so they form a row behind him where the two ends of the row are not seen. They bow with his bowing and prostrate with his prostrating and say Ameen for his supplications.

Oh Abu Dharr!

Whoever does Iqamah without Azan, no one prays with him but the two angels with him.

Oh Abu Dharr!

No youth leaves the world and he spent his youth in obedience to Allah but Allah gives him the reward of 72 Siddiq (truthful near servants).

Oh Abu Dharr!

A remember (of Allah) among the careless is like a warrior among the fleeing.

Oh Abu Dharr!

A pious gathering is better than being alone and being alone and being alone is better than an evil gathering and speaking good is better than silence and silence is better then speaking evil.

Oh Abu Dharr!

Don't accompany but a believer and let no one eat your food but a pious person and don't eat the food of the evil doers.

Oh Abu Dharr!

Give your food to eat to one who you love for Allah and eat the food of one who loves you for Allah (s).

Oh Abu Dharr!

Surely Allah (s) is with the tongue of every speaker. So let every man fear Allah and know what he is saying.

Oh Abu Dharr!

Leave excessive speech and is enough for you what you reach by it your need.

Oh Abu Dharr!

It is enough for a man as a lie to say everything he hears.

Oh Abu Dharr!

There is nothing more deserving of being imprisoned for (in Hell) than the tongue.

Oh Abu Dharr!

It is of respect to Allah to honor an old muslim man, and to honor a carrier of the Qur'an who acts by it, and to honor a just ruler.

Oh Abu Dharr!

Has not acted, the one who has not guarded his tongue.

Oh Abu Dharr!

Do not be a seeker of faults (in others) nor a person who over praises (others in there face) , nor a defamer nor a wrangler.

Oh Abu Dharr!

A servant continues to increase in distance from Allah so long as his behavior is bad.

Oh Abu Dharr!

A good word (of advise) is sadaqah (charity) and every step you take towards Salat is (also) sadaqah.

Oh Abu Dharr!

Whoever answers the caller of Allah and does well in inhabiting the masjids of Allah, his reward from Allah is paradise. So I said, "May my father and mother be sacrificed for you Oh Messenger of Allah (s). How should the masjids of Allah be inhabited?" He said, "Voices should not be raised in them and useless matters should not be discussed in them and things should not be bought and sold in them. Leave foolish talk so long as you are in them and if you don't, so don't blame on the Day of Judgement but yourself."

Oh Abu Dharr!

Surely Allah (s) gives, so long as you're sitting in the masjid, for every breath taken in it, a degree in paradise. And the angels send blessings on you, and will be written for you for every breath you take in it ten good deeds and will be wiped out from you ten evil deeds.

Oh Abu Dharr!

Do you know the reason concerning which this verse was revealed? "Be patient and exhort others to be patient and connect and fear Allah that you may be successful." I said, "I don't know. May my father and mother be sacrificed for you." He said, "In waiting for the next Salat after every Salat."

Oh Abu Dharr!

Doing wudu well during difficulties is among the things that wipe out sins, and frequenting the masjids, that is connecting.

Oh Abu Dharr!

Allah (s) says, "Surely the most beloved of the servants to me are they that love each other for my sake; they whose hearts are attached to the masjids and the seekers of forgiveness at dawn. They are the ones that when I want to punish the people of the earth, I remember them, so I avert the punishment from them."

Oh Abu Dharr!

Every sitting in the masjid is a waste except three; the recitation of one offering prayers, the remembrance of Allah, and the asking of knowledge.

Oh Abu Dharr!

Be more concerned about doing deeds with piety than just doing deeds. Because it is not deemed little, that which is done with piety. And how can a deed be deemed little which is accepted? Allah (s) says, "Allah only accepts from the pious."

Oh Abu Dharr!

A man can not be among the pious until his accounting of himself is stronger than the accounting a (business) partner takes of his partner. So he knows from where his food comes from and from where his drink comes

from and from where his cloths come from; from a lawful means or from a prohibited one.

Oh Abu Dharr!

Whoever doesn't care from where he earns his money, Allah (s) doesn't care from where He will enter him into Hell.

Oh Abu Dharr!

Whoever it pleases that he may be the most honorable of mankind, let him fear Allah.

Oh Abu Dharr!

The most beloved of you to Allah, magnificent is His praise, is the one who remembers Him most. And the most honorable of you to Allah is the most pious among you, and the most saved of you from the punishment of Allah is the strongest of you in awe of Him.

Oh Abu Dharr!

Surely the God-fearing are they who are careful concerning those things which people are not generally concerned with, out of fear of falling into that which is doubtful.

Oh Abu Dharr!

Whoever obeys Allah has remembered Him even if his prayers, fasting and recitation of Qur'an is little.

Oh Abu Dharr!

The king of religion is piety and its crown is obedience.

Oh Abu Dharr!

Be pious! You will be the best in worship among mankind and the best of your religion is piety.

Oh Abu Dharr!

The Virtue of knowledge is greater than that of worship. And know you that if you prayed until your back becomes bent and you fasted until you became thin as strings, that would not benefit you unless it is done with piety.

Oh Abu Dharr!

Surely the people of piety and abstinence in this world, they are the real friends of Allah.

Oh Abu Dharr!

Whoever does not come on the day of Judgement with three qualities he has surely lost. So I said, "What are the three, may my mother and father be sacrificed for you?" He said, "Piety that prevents him from that which Allah the Great and Majestic has made haraam for him, and clemency (hilm) by which he refutes the ignorance of the fools and good manners (Khuluq) with which he deals with the people.

From Makarim al Akhlaq: Page 458

Compiled by Sheikh al Jaleel Rادیو ال Deen Abu Nasr al Hasan bin al Fadl al Tabrasi, one among the great scholars of the 6th Century A.H.

Notes

- [23]. Al-Raghib Al-Isfahani, Mufradat Alfaz al-Qur'an Al-Taquddum al-'Arabi Press, November 1972, under the word "umm" and Exegesis of the Holy Quran : Majma' al-Bayan, under the verse 78 of Surat Al-Baqarah.
- [24]. Exegesis of the Holy Qur'an: "Majma' al-Bayan, verse 78 of "Surat Al-Baqarah " .
- [25]. Exegesis of the Holy Qur'an: Majma' al-Bayan, under the verse 75 of Surat Ali 'Imran and verse 157 of Surat Al-A'raf; and Tafsir al-Razi, under the verse 75 of Surat Al-A'raf.
- [26]. The Magazine published by the Astani Qudsi Razavi, Mashhad, issue no 2.
- [27]. Ibid.
- [28]. One of the narrations confirms the word "ummi" as a derivative of "Umm al-Qura" meaning Makkah, although the word "Umm al-Qura" is a common attribute and not a proper noun. The narration states: "The Prophet was known as "Umami" because he was an inhabitant of Makkah and Makkah is one of the "Umm al-Quras",
- [29]. The publication of the society of the Headclerks, issue of October 1965 (copied from the publication of the Ministry of Education and Training, September 1965).
- [30]. Bihar al-Anwar, new impression, vol 2, p 151.
- [31]. Al-Kafi, vol 1, p 403.
- [32]. Bihar al-Anwar, vol 2, p 144.
- [33]. Wasa'il al-Shi'a, vol 3, p 134.
- [34]. Husayn Al-Diyar Bakri, Tarikh al-Khami", vol 1, p 395; and "Al-Sirah al-Halabiyyah", vol 2, p 204.
- [35]. Nahj al-Balaghah" Sermon No 190.
- [36]. Ibn Khaldun, Al Muqaddamah (Introduction)", Ibrahim Hilmi Press, p 494, 495.
- [37]. Sahih al-Bukhari, vol 1, p 25.
- [38]. Ibn Hisham, S'irah, vol 1, p 601.
- [39]. Bihar al-Anwar, old edition, vol 6, p 575.
- [40]. Muhammad ibn 'Umar al-Waqidi, Al-Maghazi, vol 1, p 13.
- [41]. Al-Sirah al-Halabiyyah, vol 3, p 24.
- [42]. `Uyun Akhbar al-Rida, p 94.

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