

In The Name of Allah

# **Danger of Self-Interpretation of Quran**

*WHAT FOLLOWS IS A QUICK AND DIRTY INTEGRATION SEVERAL  
PIECES OF DIALOGUE ON THIS ISSUE IN A SHIA DISCUSSION  
GROUP. THIS ARTICLE IS NOT FINAL, AND IS TO BE RESHAPED AND  
IMPROVED FOR A MORE EFFECTIVE PRESENTATION.*

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## Introduction

Quran is Allah's speech to mankind that was delivered to us by His last Apostle (PBUH&HF). Thus, it is our duty to learn and understand the words of Allah. Many people think that Quran is a self teaching book so that one can understand all of Allah words without need to acquire its meaning from a teacher who is authorized by Allah. They believe that as human sciences progress and as the new theories, ideas, and opinions develop, one can build a new understanding of Quran. They maintain that it is the duty of people to think and develop interpretations of Quran based on the needs the new generations and the requirements of each era . As a result, they consider Quran is subject to different interpretations based on the current needs of the society and people can modify its meaning according their new opinions. They consider this the dynamic feature of the religion of Islam. This would also give an excuse to tolerate and accept the differing views in Islam. They consider all these difference in understanding the religion of Allah is Allah's mercy to mankind which results in the progress of the religion as human sciences grow.

In this article, we will discuss if we are allowed to interpret Quran based on our opinion, and if Allah has left us on our own to find a relative understanding of Quran, and if He has excused us to follow such relative interpretations which are divergant due to the variety of opinions, or if He has assigned some specific teachers for explaining His Book to mankind and has ordered us to exclusively refer to them for usderstaning of the Quran.

## Does Quran Refer Us to An Interpreter?

When we study the Quran, we find that Quran refers us to some specific people to understand its meaning. Here I quote some traditions where the Imams of Ahlul-Bayt (AS) have quoted Quran to prove this point. In a Hadith, Abu Salt (RA) narrated:

Imam al-Ridha (AS) said to Ibn Jahm: "Fear Allah and do not interpret the Book of Allah by your opinion, because Allah said: 'and no one knows its interpretation except Allah and those who are firmly rooted in knowledge (3:7)'"

- Uyun Akhbar al-Ridha, v1, p191, Hadith #1
- al-Amali, al-Saduq, p90, Hadith #3
- Wasa'il al-Shia, v27, p187, Hadith #33562
- Bihar al-Anwar, v11, p72, Hadith #1

In one of his letters to Mu'awiya (L), Imam Ali (AS) wrote:

I have heard the Messenger of Allah (PBUH&HF) saying: "There is no verse in Quran except it has surface (meaning) and a hidden (meaning) and there is no letter in it except it has an interpretation, 'and no one knows its interpretation except Allah and those who are firmly rooted in knowledge (3:7).'"

Those firmly rooted in knowledge are us the family of Muhammad (PBUH&HF), and Allah has ordered other people to say: 'We believe in it (i.e., the interpretation of Ahlul-Bayt (AS)) the whole thing (i.e., Quran and divine interpretation) is from our Lord. But none will grasp the Message except men of understanding (rest of 3:7)' and thus Allah has ordered people to submit to us and return the matter to us. Certainly, He said: '*And had they referred it to the Messenger and Ulul-Amr among themselves, those who asked for clarification from them had known it (4:83).*' They (i.e., Ahlul-Bayt(AS)) are those from whom they ask and from whom they seek.

- Kitab Sulaim Ibn Qais al-Hilali, p771
- Bihar al-Anwar, v33, p155

The Messenger of Allah (PBUH&HF) said:

"Allah has cursed those who dispute in the religion of Allah by the tongue of seventy Prophets. He who disputes in the (meaning of the) verses of Allah has become disbeliever as Allah sates: 'None would dispute in the Signs/Verses of Allah but the disbelievers (40:4)' He who interprets Quran by his opinion has indeed lied upon Allah. He who gives Fatwa to people without knowledge the angels of the Heavens and the Earth curse him. Every innovation is misguidance and every misguidance leads to the Fire."

- Kamal al-Din, p256, Hadith #1
- Wasa'il al-Shia, v27, p190, Hadith #33568
- Bihar al-Anwar, v36, p227, Hadith #3

In another Hadith, Imam Musa Ibn Ja'far (AS) narrated from his father (AS) who narrated from his forefather:

Ali Ibn al-Husain (AS) said: "An infallible (Ma'sum) is the clinger to the Rope of Allah. And the Rope of Allah is Quran. The two shall never separate until the Day of Rising. The Imam guides to the Quran, and the Quran guides to the Imam, and this is the saying of Allah, the Mighty, the Majestic: 'Verily this Quran guides to whom is most right (17:9).'"

- Ma'ani al-Akhbar, p132, Hadith #1
- Bihar al-Anwar, v25, p194, Hadith #5

On the commentary of verse: "Nay, here are evident Signs/Verses in the hearts of those endowed with the knowledge (29:49)" Imam al-Baqir (AS), Imam al-Sadiq (AS), and Imam al-Ridha (AS) said: "those (endowed with the knowledge) are exclusively the Imams (AS)."

- Basa'ir al-Darajat, pp 205-207, Hadith #5,11,12,17
- Wasa'il al-Shia, v27, p180, Hadith #33543
- Bihar al-Anwar, v23, p201, Hadith #40; p202, Hadith #46

The above Hadith proves that all the verses of Quran are clear/evident only for Ahlul-Bayt (AS), and nothing of Quran is ambiguous (Mutashabih) for them.

Moreover it is narrated:

On the commentary of verse: "And no one knows its interpretation except Allah and those who are firmly rooted in knowledge (3:7)" Imam al-Baqir (AS) and Imam al-Sadiq (AS) said: "We are those who are firmly rooted in knowledge and we are those who know its interpretation."

- al-Kafi, v1, p213, Hadith #1
- Ta'wil al-Ayat al-Dhahira, p106
- Wasa'il al-Shia, v27, p178, Hadith #33536; p198, Hadith #33584
- Bihar al-Anwar, v23, p198, Hadith #31

In addition, Allah, the Glorious, mentioned in Quran:

And We sent not (as Our Prophets) before thee other than men whom We revealed. Ask the People of the Reminder (Ahl al-Dhikr) if ye know not! (We sent them) with Clear Signs and writings; and We have sent down unto thee (also) the Reminder (al-Dhikr); that thou clearly explain to men what is sent for them and that they may reflect. (16:43-44)

And we have revealed the Scripture unto thee only that thou may explain unto them that wherein they differ, and as a guidance and a mercy for the people who believe. (16:64)

From the above verses of Quran, especially where Allah states: "that you clearly explain to them what is sent for them", we can conclude that the information that the Apostle (PBUH&HF) would provide to people is not limited to the text of Quran. It certainly includes the commentaries of Quran, which are not in the explicit text of Quran. The end of the verse also shows that we can correctly reflect on the verse only after getting the explanation of the verse from the Prophet (PBUH&HF).

In the above verses, Allah used the term "Reminder" as well as "People of Reminder." The Sunnis consider the "Reminder" Quran and the "People of Reminder" the Christian and Jewish scholars who know the advent of our Prophet (PBUH&HF). Examining the claim of the Sunnis, we can realize that these two assignments do not match since if we consider the "Reminder" as Quran, the "People of Reminder" would certainly become the people of Quran, and not the Christian and Jewish scholars! Moreover, if we ask Christian and Jewish scholars, they would certainly invite us to their own religion, and not to Islam. Muhammad Ibn Muslim narrated that:

I asked Imam al-Baqir (AS): "There are some people who claim that the saying of Allah 'Ask the People of the Reminder (Ahl al-Dhikr) if you do

not know (16:43)' refers to the Jews and Christians." The Imam (AS) said: "(If so) then they would invite you to their own religion." He (AS) then pointed by his hand to his bosom and said: "We are the People of Reminder (Ahl al-Dhikr) and we are those who should be asked from."

- al-Kafi, v1, p211, Hadith #7
- Tafsir al-Ayyashi, v2, p260, Hadith #32
- Mustadrak al-Wasa'il, v17, p268, Hadith #21304
- Bihar al-Anwar, v23, p183, Hadith #43

Furthermore:

Imam al-Sadiq (AS) said: "Allah, Exalted is His Reminder, said, 'Ask the People of the Reminder (Ahl al-Dhikr) if you do not know (16:43).' The book (of Allah) is the reminder, and its people are the family of Muhammad (PBUH&HF). Allah has ordered to ask from them, and did not order to ask from the ignorant. Allah has named Quran 'the Reminder' and He said, 'And We sent down to you the Reminder so that you explain to people what is sent for them and that they may reflect. (16:44)' and He, Exalted, said: 'And certainly that is the Reminder for thee and thy people, and soon shall ye (all) be questioned (43:44).'"

- al-Kafi, v1, p295, Hadith #3
- Basa'ir al-Darajat, p41, Hadith #19
- Wasa'il al-Shia, v27, p66, Hadith #33215
- Bihar al-Anwar, v23, p181, Hadith #32

Thus, according to the Shia traditions, the Reminder is Quran, and the People of Reminder are the People of Quran, who are Ahlul-Bayt (AS) since they are attached of the Quran and shall never separate from it as stated in the Hadith of al-Thaqalain upon whose authenticity all Muslims agree.

Another meaning for "the Reminder" is also given in Quran and Hadith. In the second meaning, the Prophet (PBUH&HF) is referred to as the Reminder and the family (Ahl) of the Prophet is referred to the Family/People of the Reminder (Ahl al-Dhikr). We recite in Quran:

... Therefore fear Allah O men of understanding who have believed, for verily Allah hath sent down toward you a Reminder, (that is) an Apostle who recites unto you the signs of Allah which are clear, that He may bring forth those who believe and do good works from darkness into light... (65:10-11)

In this context, Abdullah Ibn Ajlan narrated:

About the saying of Allah, "Ask the People of the Reminder (Ahl al-Dhikr) if you do not know (16:43)," Imam al-Baqir (AS) said: "The Apostle of Allah (PBUH&HF) said: al-Dhikr (the reminder) is me, and the Imams (AS) are the Ahl al-Dhikr (people of the reminder)."

- al-Kafi, v1, p210, Hadith #1
- Ta'wil al-Ayat al-Dhahira, p259
- Wasa'il al-Shia, v27, p63, Hadith #33206
- Bihar al-Anwar, v16, p359, Hadith #55

Allah said in Quran:

Inna Alaina Jam'ahu wa Qur'anahu Thumma Inna Alaina Bayanah

ADD Translation and Related Traditions

In some traditions the Imams said, when we tell you something ask for its proof from the Qur'an because whatever we say has its basis in the Qur'an. It is important to observe that the Imam (AS) said "ask us", not anyone else. In fact, all the needed information is in Quran and its divine commentary that was revealed along with Quran. What Allah willed to reach us of this commentary, has reached us by Ahlul-Bayt (AS) in the form of Hadith. Imam al-Baqir (AS) said:

"Surely Allah did not leave anything of what people need up to the Day of Judgment but that He sent down in His Book, explained it to His Apostle (PBUH&HF), made a limit to everything, assigned a guide to direct it, and decreed a punishment for he who violates that limit."

- Tafsir al-Ayyashi, v1, p6, Hadith # 13
- al-Kafi, v1, p59, Hadith #2
- Basa'ir al-Darajat, p6, Hadith #3

The important point is that these bases are exclusively with the Ahlul-Bayt (AS). That is why they have become Ahl al-Dhikr to the exclusion of others. They release any information they wish to any one they want. When they say, "ask us", we are obligated to refer to them and no one else. We cannot extract such information from Quran independently nor can we ever find it in the hand of any fallible person.

## The Reasons for the Falsity of Self-Interpretation

Various authorities narrated from both Imam al-Baqir (AS) and Imam al-Sadiq (AS) who said:

"Nothing is farther than the reasons of men from the interpretation of Quran. Certainly, the beginning of a verse can be about something, its middle is about another thing, and its end is (yet) about another thing."

- Tafsir al-Ayyashi, v1, pp 11,12,17 (four traditions)

- Wasa'il al-Shia, v27, p192, Hadith #33572; pp 203-204, Hadith #33600, #33604, #33605

- Bihar al-Anwar, v89/92, p91, Hadith #37; p94, Hadith #45; p95, Hadith #48; p110, Hadith #10; p111, Hadith #14

In a long discourse, Imam Ali (AS) said:

"... Certainly in Quran some verses are partly in one chapter and the rest of them are in another chapter, and there are some verses half of which are abrogated and the other half remained in their states. Some verses have different wordings but have common meanings, and some have common wordings but have different meanings, ... The appearance of some verses are in disagreement with their internal/hidden meanings and their surface meanings are acted upon in the case of Taqiyya... There are some verses that apparently address a group while they are meant for another group, and there are verses that address the Prophet (PBUH&HF) while they are meant for his nation..."

- Tafsir al-Nu'mani, as quoted in Bihar al-Anwar, v90/93, p4

Qasim Ibn Sulaiman narrated:

Imam al-Sadiq (AS) said: "No one has related a part of Quran to another part (by his opinion), except that he has become disbeliever."

- al-Kafi, v2, p632, Hadith # 17; p633, Hadith #25

- Tafsir al-Ayyashi, v1, p18, Hadith #2

- Ma'ani al-Akhbar, p190, Hadith #1

- Uddat al-Daa'i, p299, Hadith # 11

- Bihar al-Anwar, v89/92, p39, Hadith #1

Of course, the different parts of Quran are related to each other, but its knowledge can be obtained only from Ahlul-Bayt (AS). In explaining the above-mentioned Hadith, Shaikh Saduq (RA) quoted his teacher Muhammad Ibn al-Hasan (RA) saying: "This means that a man gives interpretation of a verse by interpretation of another verse." (See *Ma'ani al-Akhbar*, p190)

A number of authorities narrated:

Imam Al-Sadiq (AS) said: "There is no subject in which two individuals could disagree except that it has a root in the Book of Allah, but the reasons of people do not reach it."

- al-Kafi, v1, p60, Hadith #6; v7, p158, Hadith #3

- al-Tahdhib, v9, p357, Hadith #9

- Wasa'il al-Shia, v26, p293, Hadith #33025

- Bihar al-Anwar, v89/92, p100, Hadith #71

Abi Mu'ammarr al-Sa'dani narrated:



Imam Ali (AS) said: "Avoid interpreting Quran by your opinion and you should obtain deep understanding of it from al-Ulamaa (i.e., only the Imams of Ahlul-Bayt (AS)). Verily there exists many revealed verses whose wordings have similarity with the saying of human, but since they are the saying of Allah, their interpretation (Ta'wil) do not have any similarity with the saying of human. Nothing in His creation is like Him. Moreover, His action has no resemblance with any actions of human, and also His saying has no similarity with the saying of human... Thus do not liken the saying of Allah to the saying of human or else you will perish and will go astray... there are many verses in Quran that its interpretation is different from its revealed appearance and is not similar to the saying of human."

- Kitab al-Tawhid, p254, Hadith #5

- Bihar al-Anwar, v90/93, p127, Hadith #2

Mu'alla Ibn Khunais narrated:

Imam al-Sadiq (AS) said: The Messenger of Allah said: "Surely nothing is remoter than the hearts of men from the interpretation of Quran about which all mankind have become confused except whom Allah will. The reason that Allah has hidden its (interpretation) is to direct people to His door and His Path so the people worship Him (i.e., do not get religion from other than those who are assigned by Allah) and so that people come to those who are the maintainer of His Book and the speakers of His command so as to understand His saying and to follow them and to ask for clarification of that which they need from it (i.e., Quran) instead of (tying to clarify) by themselves. He (PBUH&HF) then recited: '*And had they referred it to the Messenger and Ulul-Amr among themselves, those who asked for clarification from them had known it (4:83).*' As for those who try to get its knowledge from other than them, they shall never know it and they shall never find (the truth of it)... Beware! Beware of following Quran according to your opinion because people do not share its knowledge as they share other knowledge and they do not know its interpretation except by coming to the door that Allah has put for it. Thus understand what I said In-Shaa-Allah, and seek the issue (interpretation of Quran) from its place so that you find it In-Shaa-Allah."

- al-Mahasin, v1, p268, Hadith #356

- Wasa'il al-Shia, v27, p190, Hadith #33569

- Bihar al-Anwar, v89/92, p100, Hadith #72

Imam al-Sadiq (AS) once talked to a group of people who were arguing about the verses of Quran. He (AS) said to them:

"Do you have the knowledge of the abrogating parts, abrogated parts, clear parts, and unclear parts of the verses of Quran in which so many people went astray and have perished? So evil you have done by what you have informed people due to your ignorance of the Book of Allah and the Sunna of the Prophet (PBUH&HF). You reject the traditions that are in conformity with the revealed Book due to your ignorance and your ignoring the insight to the hidden interpretation of the Quran and its abrogating parts, abrogated parts, clear parts, unclear parts, commands, and prohibition... Leave what has confused you and have no knowledge of, and return its knowledge to its people so that you get reward and have excuse before

Allah. You were looking for the abrogating verses of Quran amongst the abrogated ones, and were looking for the clear verses amongst the unclear ones, and were looking the commandments amongst the what are (in reality) forbidden..." \*\*\* TRANSLATE THE REST \*\*\*

- *Wasa'il al-Shia*, v27, p183, Hadith #33554
- al-Kafi, v5, pp 66-70, Hadith #1
- Tuhaf al-Uqul, pp 349-353
- Bihar al-Anwar, v47, pp 233-237, Hadith #22

Furthermore, Zaid Ibn Shahham narrated:

Imam al-Baqir (AS) said to Qatada: "Woe unto you O Qatada! If you interpreted Quran by yourself, you have indeed perished and caused others to perish, and likewise if you interpreted Quran based on what (fallible) men said, you have indeed perished and caused others to perish... O Qatada! Indeed only to whom Quran was addressed to, knows the Quran (i.e., Prophet (PBUH&HF) and consequently his Ahlul-Bayt (AS))."

- al-Kafi, v8, p311, Hadith #485
- *Wasa'il al-Shia*, v 27, p185, Hadith #33556
- Bihar al-Anwar, v24, p237, Hadith #6

In a long discourse:

"Imam al-Sadiq (AS) said: "... The Prophet (PBUH&HF) put the remaining flag of his executors but people left them while they are the witnesses of the people of every era. People opposed anyone who accepted the Wilaya of those who are vested with authority (by Allah) and opposed those who tried to seek their knowledge. This is because people try by themselves to relate one part of Quran to another and bring evidence from an abrogated part thinking that it belongs to an abrogating part, and bring evidence from a specific part (Khas) thinking that it is a general concept of Quran. They bring evidence from the first (impression) of the verse and forget about its hidden meaning... this is because they do not obtain it from its authorities and thus they go astray and cause (people) to go astray."

#### **TRANSLATE THE REST OF THE HADITH**

- Tafsir Nu'mani, as quoted in Bihar al-Anwar, v90/93, p3
- *Wasa'il al-Shia*, v27, p200, Hadith #33593

We cannot attribute anything to Allah without permission from Allah. Quran says:

"Say: Hath Allah permitted you, or do you forge (things) to attribute to Allah? (10:59)"

If we attribute something to Allah, even if it happened to be true, we have spoken without knowledge. Allah said:

"And pursue not that of which thou hast no knowledge (17:36)"

Speaking without knowledge is wrong no matter if what we said happened to be true. Both Shia and Sunni narrated that:

The Apostle of Allah (PBUH&HF) said: "He who speaks about Quran by his opinion, even if he hits the right, he has made a mistake. He who states anything about Quran without knowledge (from Allah), he shall arrive in the Day of Judgment while he is bridled with a bridle made of Fire. What I most fear for my nation after me is (the danger of) people to whom Quran is handed and they put it in other than the place its meanings."

- Munyat al-Murid, p369
- Bihar al-Anwar, v89/92, p111, Hadith #20; v30, p512
- The first sentence of the above Hadith can also be found in the Sunni collections including Sahih Tirmidhi, Sunan Abi Dawud, etc. narrated by Ibn Abbas and Jundab.

## The Meaning of Mutashabih

What is meant by the prohibition of tafseer of Qur'an by Ray refers to the bawaatin or mutashaabih. Again defining what exactly the bawaatin and mutashaabih is and what exactly of those things is haraam to do tafseer of is complex. (because what may seem batin to one is zahir to another person and what may seem mutashabih (ambiguous) to one is quite muhkam (decisive) to another (see Tabatabai's "Qur'an in Islam" for clarifications).

Well, if we want to define Mutashabih by our opinion, we have to face all these complexity for which there is no solution except to indulge in more and more innovations. The simple solution is to refer to the commentary of Ahlul-Bayt (AS) and see how they (AS) interpreted the verse. If they interpreted it based on the inner meaning of the verse that is in disagreement with its outer meaning then we can readily figure out that the verse was Mutashabih (ambiguous). On the other hand, if the Imam's explanation agrees with the straightforward meaning of the verse, then the verse is Muhkam! So simple and safe from indulging into any type of innovation and opinion.

There is a very long but interesting Hadith from Imam Ali (AS) about Tafsir of Quran reported in Tafsir Nu'mani where he (AS) explained the meaning of Mutashabih:

Imam Ali (AS) said: "As for a clear verse that nothing in Quran abrogated it is the saying of Allah, the Mighty and the Majestic, 'He is Who has sent down to thee the Book: of it are some clear verses which are the foundation of the Book, and others are ambiguous. (3:7)' Certainly, people have perished in the ambiguous part since they were not aware of what it refers to and they were not cognizant of its reality. Thus, they made for it interpretations and exegeses by themselves and according their opinion, and consequently, they felt satisfied with it and thought they were able to do it without asking it from the Executors. This way, they throw away behind themselves the saying of the Apostle of Allah (PBUH&HF). ... The ambegous part (of Quran) that people deviated from it uses similar wordings (to what we usually use) but refers to different things."

- Bihar al-Anwar, v90, p 12

In another long discourse, it is narrated:

Imam Ali (AS) said: "Allah divided His Saying into three parts. He made one part such that the learned and the ignorant understand it. He made another part such that none knows it but he who cleanse his mind and soften his senses and correct his discernment *from amongst those whom Allah have opened their breast for submission*. He also made another part such that no one knows it but Allah and His trustees who are firmly rooted in knowledge, and He made it this way so that the people of falsehood who usurped the legacy of the Apostle of Allah (PBUH&HF) could not claim whatever of the knowledge of the Book that Allah did not bestow upon them, so that they realize the necessity of submitting to those who are authorized over them by Allah. However, they disdained to obey him by supporting each other against Allah, by lying upon Him, and by being decieved due to their great number of supporters and helpers. Thus, they resisted stubbornly against Allah - Great is His Name - and His Prophet (PBUH&HF).

As for what the ignorant and the learned understand are those verses that gives preference to the Apostle of Allah in the Book of Allah, such as His saying: 'Whoever obeys the Apostle, he indeed obeyed Allah (4:80)' and His saying: 'Allah and His angels send blessings on the Prophet: O you who

believe! Send blessings on him, and salute/submit (Sallimu) to him in all respect (33:56).' And for this (latter) verse, there is an apparent and a hidden meaning. The apparent meaning is sending blessings/salutation on him while the internal meaning on His saying 'Sallimu Tasliman (i.e., submit to him a complete submission)' is to submit to whoever he chooses as his executor and his successor whom he gave preference over you and charged him with authority. This (hidden) meaning is what I informed you that none knows it but he who cleanse his mind and soften his senses and correct his discernment..."

- al-Ihtijaj, v1, p253

- Bihar al-Anwar, v90/93, p120

According to the above tradition, what all people share its correct understanding from Quran are those verses that urge us to submit to the Prophet (PBUH&HF) and his Ahlul-Bayt (AS) in all matters. A person who does not refer to them and does not submit to their commentary of the verses of Quran, did not even comply with the order of Allah in the verses of the first category! When someone claims that he can relate a part of Quran with another no matter if Ahlul-Bayt (AS) related those specific parts or not, it shows he has not submitted to the words of Ahlul-Bayt (AS), and thus he does not certainly belong to people that Imam Ali (AS) described in the second category. Imam Ali (AS) said they are "*from amongst those whom Allah have opened their breast for submission*". Rest assured, what comes out of such person is just innovation, and he has gone astray and causes others to go astray as the traditions clearly expressed.

When we submit to the explanation Ahlul-Bayt (AS), Allah opens the door for us to get insight to the verses that belong to the second category by the guidance that Ahlul-Bayt (AS) will provide. Thus, even for the second category of verses we are not left on our own and we need Ahlul-Bayt (AS) to first tell us which verses belong to which category and what is their explanation, and then by Allah's help we get some insight to those verses based on our capacity. although the capacities of the believers are different, yet in submitting to the words and commentaries of Ahlul-Bayt (AS) non is exempted. To explain the verses of Quran without first referring to Ahlul-Bayt (AS) and submitting to their words is wrong. This is because, Allah has not opened any other door to learn about his religion except through them, no matter how much one has studied human sciences.

Moreover, looking at the above-mentioned categories, we realize that as we do not know a specific verse belongs to which category, we should first consult the commentaries of Ahlul-Bayt (AS), and if they have provided a commentary to that or if they related some parts of this verse to other verses, then we can contemplate over the whole information that they provided in this regard (all the verses and their commentaries by Ahlul-Bayt (AS)). However, if they did not provide any commentary to that, then we can draw conclusions from the appearance of the text of Quran. To relate one verse with another, we need to first check the commentary of both verses given by Ahlul-Bayt (AS) and if they provided similar context for both verses, then their relation is implicitly proven by Ahlul-Bayt (AS). Because, as we have already seen there are many cases that two verses have similar wordings but

have different meanings. Therefore it is clear that before making any comment on the verses of Quran (other than those verses that clearly direct us to Prophet and his family, peace be upon them) or relating them to each other, we need to see what Ahlul-Bayt (AS) said in this regard, and to submit to the context that Ahlul-Bayt (AS) provided us, otherwise we will not be blessed with the understanding of the second category of verses. Submission to the commentary of Ahlul-Bayt (AS) is the first and foremost requirement to understand the second category.

## **The Warning of Traditions About Self-Interpretation**

Ryyan Ibn Abi Salt narrated:

Imam al-Ridha (AS) said: The Leader of the Faithful said: The Messenger of Allah (PBUH&HF) said: Allah, the Glorious, said: "He dose not believe in Me he who interprets My Speech by his opinion, and he dose not know Me he who resembles Me to My creation, and he is not on My religion he who applies analogy in My religion."

- al-Ihtijaj, v2, p410
- al-Amali, Saduq, p6, Hadith #3
- Kitab al-Tawhid, p68, Hadith #23
- Uyun Akbar al-Ridha (AS), p116, Hadith #4
- Wasa'il al-Shia, v27, p45, Hadith #33172
- Bihar al-Anwar, v2, p297, Hadith #16

Furthermore, Abu Basir (RA) narrated:

Imam al-Sadiq (AS) said: "He who interprets Quran by his opinion, if he intercepts (the right) he has no reward, and if he goes wrong has distanced (from truth) farther than the heavens."

- Tafsir al-Ayyashi, v1, p17, Hadith #4
- Wasa'il al-Shia, v27, p202, Hadith #33597
- Bihar al-Anwar, v89/92, p110, Hadith #13

Furthermore, it is narrated:

Imam al-Sadiq (AS) said: "He who judges by his opinion over two (religious issues) has indeed become disbeliever, and he who interprets any verse of Quran by his opinion has indeed become disbeliever."

- Tafsir al-Ayyashi, v1, p18, Hadith #6
- Wasa'il al-Shia, v27, p60, Hadith #33195
- Bihar al-Anwar, v89/92, p111, Hadith #15

Moreover, Ibn Abbas narrated:

The Messenger of Allah (PBUH&HF) said: "... Allah sent down to me the Quran. He who opposes it shall go astray, and he who tries to obtain its knowledge from other than Ali (AS) shall perish."

- al-Amali, al-Saduq, p64, Hadith #11
- Wasa'il al-Shia, v27, p186, Hadith #33560
- Bihar al-Anwar, v38, p94, Hadith #10

In many traditions the Prophet (PBUH&HF) and his family (AS) have reminded us about holding fast to Quran, reciting it, and following it. They also mentioned many rewards for reciting the Quran. In following interesting Hadith, Imam Hasan al-Askari (AS) states that all such rewards are only for those who aquire the understanding of the meaning of Quran exclusively from Ahlul-Bayt (AS). Thus urging to follow Quran mentioned in many traditions means to follow the Quran as explained by Ahlul-Bayt (AS), not based on independent understanding:

Imam Hasan al-Askari (AS) said: The Apostle of Allah (PBUH&HF) said: "I advice you to the Quran since it is the beneficial cure, the blessed medicine, the protection (Isma) for he who holds fast to it, and the salvation for he who follows it. Neither does it cause crookedness so that it departs (from the truth) nor does it deviate so that it causes trouble. Its marvels do not come to end and the vastness of refutations does not wear it. Recite it as

Allah gives you ten rewards for each letter that you recite from it." Then Imam Hasan al- Askari (AS) said: "Do you know who really holds fast to it and reaches to such honor and reward? He is the person who takes Quran and its interpretation from us Ahlul-Bayt (AS) or from the deputies that we send to our followers, and takes its (interpretation) neither from the opinions of those who argue (on the speech of Allah) nor form the analogy of those who compare (different parts of the speech of Allah)." \*\*\* ADD THE REST OF HADITH

- Tafsir Imam Hasan al-Askari (AS), p13
- Wasa'il al-Shia, v27, p33, Hadith # 33143
- Bihar al-Anwar, v89/92, p182, Hadith #18



## The Origin of the Problem

The fact is that Quran without its divine teacher is not beneficial. As Quran can be interpreted in many ways by people, it cannot be considered an independent source of Guidance. It becomes the source of guidance only when a divinely appointed teacher explains it to us. We can then go a head and reflect on the verse within the context that Ahlul-Bayt (AS) have explained to us.

The start of the tragedy was at the time of the illness of the Prophet (PBUH&HF) when he asked for pen and paper to write something for his nation. It was when Umar initiated the idea that the Book of Allah is sufficient for us! He and his followers accepted the Quran but rejected the teachers that Allah assigned for it. According to the Sunni historians, Umar was also the first to ban writing and narrating the Hadith of the Prophet (PBUH&HF). He used to say to people that they should only recite Quran.

All people who make independent conclusions from Quran (no matter if they call themselves Shia, Sunni, Muslim-only, etc.) follow the above-mentioned Umar's doctrine. They prefer their own understanding of the verses of Quran to the commentaries of Ahlul-Bayt (AS) that are available in the form of Hadith. Rejecting the Hadith of Ahlul-Bayt (AS) is equivalent to rejecting the teachers of Quran.

In every country, there is a special assembly to interpret the country's constitution law, and not everyone has the right to interpret law. However, when it comes to the Book of Allah, you see that many people easily bypass the household of the Prophet (PBUH&HF) whom Allah assigned as the only authorities for interpreting His Speech as well as expounding the Islamic beliefs and practices.

It should, however, be noted that according to the traditions it is not necessary for the Prophet (PBUH&HF) and his Ahlul-Bayt (AS) to explain and comment each and every verse of Quran to the public (either due to simplicity of the verse or else due to some Maslaha). If they explained a verse, people should certainly accept only that way of understanding of the verse. However if they chose not to explain a verse, it means that we can hold the apparent meaning of the verse that is in conformity with the meanings of other verses of Quran that were explained by Ahlul-Bayt (AS). The important point is that before making any conclusion on any verse of Quran, we are required to first consult the traditions of Ahlul-Bayt (AS) and if they have provided any commentary to that we should adopt it and only draw conclusions within the context given by Ahlul-Bayt (AS).

Unfortunately, not all the "Shia" commentators of Quran were careful in this regard, and you will find that in some "Shi'i" Tafasir, instead of focusing on the traditions of Ahlul-Bayt (AS) the authors provided their own opinions as well as the opinion of some Sunni authorities plus a number of traditions reported by the Sunnis. This is while many of these views are against the commentaries of Ahlul-Bayt (AS) available in our rich Hadith literature. To make it look like a Shia Tafasir, they have also sometimes quoted only a small number of traditions from Ahlul-Bayt (AS) along the way while ignoring many vocal traditions available on the subject. These authors have basically preferred the blend of opinion+Sunni+poorly

chosen Shia reports to the pure teachings of Ahlul-Bayt (AS). What a catastrophe. all muslims acknowledge that tafseer bil Ray is haraam but it can be quite complex to define what exactly it is.

I do not think there is any complexity in the definition of Tafsir Bil Ra'y. Of course, it will become complex if we want to justify the actions of all our scholars and their treatment of Quran. Tafsir by opinion simply means to use ones opinion for the interpretation of Quran. Quran is the Speech of Allah and no one has the right to interpret it but Allah and those who are gifted with divine knowledge. The Ahlul-Bayt (AS) themselves did not provide us with their personal opinion; they have rather given us the divine commentaries. A large number of Mutawatir (in meaning) Hadith proves that interpretation of Quran is only the prerogative of Ahlul-Bayt (AS) and that no one else has the right to do that, or else he has lied upon Allah. We should only refer to the interpretation of Ahlul-Bayt (AS) first before making any conclusion from the verses of Quran. The conclusion that we make is rational conclusion based on the commentaries of Ahlul-Bayt, not based on the opinion.

## The Disagreements Between Quran and Hadith

a nice discussion about it can be found in Sayyid al Khoi's (ra) alBayaan under the topic Hujjiyah Zawaahir al Qur'aan. (the authoritiveness of the apparent (outer) meaning of the Qur'an) just a jist of why it is complex the question comes:

1/There are hadeeth that say that if you want to know whether what is attributed to us of narrations is correct compare it to the Qur'an; if it contradicts the Qur'an reject it because we never contradict the Qur'an.

2/If you want to know the real meaning of the Qur'an then consider what the Prophet and his Aal said.

So which one is the right course? Do we understand the Qur'an through hadeeth or do we understand the hadeeth through Qur'an?

Well, this reminds me of the dilemma of egg and chicken! Which of them was first? The fact is that Allah has not commanded us to a vicious cycle.

There are different types of disagreements between Quran and Hadith. The first type of disagreement is the explicit contradiction face on face in such a way that the Hadith cannot even be justified as implicit meaning of the verse. For instance, if Quran explicitly states that something is unconditionally Haraam and a Hadith explicitly states that the very same thing is unconditionally Halaal. The traditions that say 'leave whatever disagrees with Quran' point only to such type of Hadiths. However, such traditions are extremely rare in our collections of the traditions.

The second type of disagreement is that if the appearance of a verse of Quran states something, and the Hadith states that the appearance of the verse is not meant and then Hadith gives an explanation for the verse that contradicts the appearance of the verse but is justifiable as the implicit or hidden meaning of the verse. We cannot reject such traditions just based on the saying that 'leave whatever disagrees with Quran'. Let me give you some clear examples in this regard that is undeniable for any Shia be it scholar or otherwise:

Let me start with a living example in this discussion group. He recently played the role of a Sunni on this net and challenged all of you about who Ahlul-Bayt (AS) are. No one amongst you could answer him by Quran alone. Even you gather all the fallible scholars throughout the history to face him, he will remain unchallengeable and victorious. The reason is that the appearance of the text of Quran (verse 33:33) shows that the wives of the Prophet (PBUH&HF) are included in Ahlul-Bayt. Based on the appearance of the verse, the change of feminine gender to masculine gender at the end of the verse is because the Prophet (PBUH&HF) is included in "The People of the House" (This is, BTW, agreed upon by all Muslims that the Prophet (PBUH&HF) is one of the members of the House, and is the head of the members).

Now, my question to you, my respected brother is that, based on what you stated below, we should stick to the appearance of the text of Quran and deny ALL the Hadiths that are super authentic, super Mutawatir, and agreed upon by all Muslims!!! Just because Imam (AS) somewhere said 'leave

whatever disagrees with Quran' with the explanation that you implied below:

The conclusion is that one must rely upon the Zawaahir al Ma'aani min al Quraan (the outer apparent meanings) first. If a hadeeth contradicts the obvious outer apparent meaning of the Qur'an that hadeeth must be rejected.

I am certain that you did not know the consequence of your statement since you believe that only the fourteen infallibles are the members of the house. Right?

If you say that we can see from that historical reports that Aisha was not pure, then you have preferred historical narrations over what appears in the text of Quran which far worse than preferring Hadith over the text of Quran! This is because the scholars agree that historical narrations are less reliable than the traditions as the source of Hadith was supposedly Wahy and was handled with much more care.

If we are to take the appearance of Quran, we will find many contradictions between its verses. This, by itself, proves that such a method is wrong and we have to refer to Ahlul-Bayt (AS) first to receive the correct meaning of the verses. To give another example, in contrary to the purification verse 33:33 of Quran, in some verses Quran apparently implies that the Prophet (PBUH&HF) commits sins. This is while the explanation of Ahlul-Bayt (AS) is different from what the verse apparently implies. For instance: When Allah states to the Prophet (PBUH&HF) "in order to forgive the past and future sins of you," it actually means (or its divine interpretation is) "in order to forgive the past and future sins of your followers, i.e., the Shia of Ali (AS)". According to some Hadiths, the Messenger of Allah (PBUH&HF) took all the sins of the Shia of Ali (AS) as his and Allah forgave them all. (Of course, not anybody can claim to be the Shia of Ali. A true Shia does not insist on sin, and tries his best to follow the footsteps of the Imams, and for such person Allah forgives for his sudden slips. This fact is clear in our traditions too.) An alternative interpretation was also given by Ahlul-Bayt (AS) in other traditions for this specific verse.

Another example is the story of Musa (AS) killing a man. When he (AS) killed that man, he said (Sunni's translation):

He said: This is of a work of Satan, for he is an enemy that manifestly misleads! He (also) said: My Lord! Lo! I have wronged my soul (dhalamtu nafsi), so forgive me (Ighfir li). Then He forgave him. Lo! He is the Forgiving, the Merciful (28:15-16).

Now according to Imam Ridha's (AS) interpretation, Prophet Musa (AS) refers to the fight between those two men as the work of Satan. Therefore, Musa's interference and action was not the work of Satan. In addition, "Dhulm" is the opposite of "Adl" which linguistically means to put anything in its own place. As Imam Ridha (AS) explained, the "Dhulm" of Musa (AS) means putting himself in a city that was not a secure place for him. So here his "Dhulm" had nothing to do with wrongdoing. Killing that stupid man was not Dhulm; it was rather absolute "Adl". Moreover, when Musa (AS) said "Ighfir li", the word "ghafara" linguistically means to cover. Thus, Musa (AS) asked Allah to cover him in the city of his enemies, and according to the verse Allah covered/protected him! Other verses pertaining

the rest of this story were also explained nicely by Imam Ridha (AS), which I skip for the sake of brevity. (For details, see Hadith in al-Bihar v11, p78, #8 and also v11, p72, #1. In these two long traditions, Imam al-Ridha (AS) explains almost all the controversial verses of Quran that seemingly defy the infallibility of the Prophets, peace be upon them). You can see from the above example how the hidden meaning of the verse is quite opposite to its surface meaning that is usually implied in the first glance. This is how Allah protected His religion from being understood by those who are not worthy of it. Only people who come to Ahlul-Bayt (AS) who are the possessors of the Knowledge of the Book will find the correct meaning of the words of Allah.

If I want to list and explain for you the number of verses in Quran that we do not accept its apparent meaning and we only refer to commentary of Ahlul-Bayt (AS) and accept the explanation of the Hadith over what appears in the verse of Quran, this article exceeds hundreds of Kilobytes...

I just give you one more example, and you can find for yourself a lot more on this line. Allah said in Quran:

"The Most Gracious is established on the Throne (20:5)"

The Salafis said that based on the appearance of the verse Allah has sited on his throne. Other Sunnis confirm the same thing but they say "we do not know how." Some Sunnis further say He has a body but we do not know how, and it is not like the body that we know at least. So it does not apparently contradict the verse "Nothing is like him" (although such argument is full of contradiction, rest assured).

On the other hand, our traditions state that the appearance of the verse is not intended, the verse rather means the Plan/Command of the Most Gracious is established on the Throne.

In fact, some verses in Quran have some words left with presumption (Ala Taqdir). Only the teacher of Quran knows it and, in fact, it was the will of Allah to provide us Quran this way so that without teacher it would be misleading. Only people who prove their piety by coming to the city of knowledge from its door are blessed with intended meaning of the Book of Allah. In a long discourse Imam Ali (AS) said:

"... And certainly some Dhann of Kafir means certainty and such is the saying of Allah: 'And the guilty shall see the fire and thus shall become certain (Dhannu) that they have to fall therein (18:53).' However, His saying about the hypocrites: 'and you cast so much doubts about Allah (33:10)' here Dhann does not mean certainty, and it rather means doubt. Thus, the words are the same in appearance but they are in disagreement in hidden reality. In addition, the saying of Allah: 'The Most Gracious is established on the Throne (20:5)' means His Plan (Tadbir) is established and His Command (Amr) ascended...

- al-Ihtijaj, v1, p250

- Bihar al-Anwar, v90/93, p115

It is noteworthy that there are traditions that extend the criteria from Quran to "Quran and/or established traditions". In other words, if a Hadith does not contradict either Quran or established traditions then it should be acted upon. This removes the dilemma of egg and chicken altogether,

because a Hadith may seem to be contradictory with Quran, but has harmony with an established tradition, and thus it cannot be left out. Ibn Abi Ya'fur narrated:

I asked Imam al-Sadiq (AS) about the conflicting traditions related by those whom we trust and also by those whom we don't." Hearing this, the Imam (AS) replied: "Whenever you receive a tradition which is borne out by any verse from the book of Allah or by a saying of the Prophet (PBUH&HF), then accept it. Otherwise, the tradition is meant for the one who has brought it to you."

- al-Kafi, v1, p69, Hadith #2

- Wasa'il al-Shia, v27, p110, Hadith #33344

- For a similar Hadith see Tafsir Ayyashi, v1, p9, Hadith #6&7 \*\*\*

TRANSLATE THEM \*\*\*

Also, we usually do not reject a Hadith, as in many traditions the Imams (AS) state "farudduhu Ilayna" means leave its meaning to us, or ask clarification from us (at this time clarification by other Hadiths). In the case that we cannot handle a Hadith anyway properly, we have no obligation to act upon that Hadith while we do not reject it either.

Except the above-mentioned types of disagreements between Quran and Hadith, there are some more. The third type of disagreement is that Quran states something without specifying condition (Mutlaq) and Hadith makes it conditional (Muqayyad) and thus in the absence of those conditions there would be disagreements between the commands of Quran and Hadith.

The fourth type is that Quran states a general (Aam) command (like saying prayers and its general time) and Hadith states a specific (Khass) command (the specific time of prayer, number of Rak'a, etc.), or vice versa.

The fifth type of disagreement is that Quran states something and Hadith states that this verse or a part of it is abrogated by another verse (which may, in appearance, have no relation with the former verse, but the Imam (AS) uses the implicit meaning of the verse).

We have a huge number of traditions that have these types (third~fifth) of disagreement with Quran and all our scholars agree that these traditions can not be rejected for such type of disagreements and the sayings of the Imam (AS) that 'leave whatever disagrees with Quran' does not refer to these disagreements. (See the discussion Shaikh al-Ansari in this regard)

Now, my Question to is: How do we know the verse that we are trying to interpret is abrogated, or has conditions that are not mentioned in Quran, or has exceptions? Certainly, we cannot find answer to any of these questions unless we first refer to the commentaries of Ahlul-Bayt (AS).

It would also be beneficial to point out the background of the first type of disagreement between Quran and Hadith for which the Prophet (PBUH&HF) and the Imams (AS) said 'we do not say anything against Quran'. The fact is that there have been some liars who used to fabricate traditions, and the Imams wanted to ring the bells for the Shia narrators, so that they do not transmit any Hadith that has clear contradiction with Quran. Fortunately, the Shia traditionists were smart enough to filter out these traditions and did not transmit them. In addition, the well-known liars such as Mughaira Ibn Sa'id, Abul Khattab (not to be confused with Ibn Abi al-

Khattab who was a trustworthy narrator and was chronologically long after Abul Khattab), and some others were abandoned by our traditionists, as per the saying of the Imams (AS). The Shia traditionists never transmitted a Hadith from a person who is proven a liar unless his narration is also reported by the trusted Shia narrators. Therefore, if, for instance, they report a Hadith from Abu Huraira, it is because that specific Hadith is also mentioned by the trustworthy Shia narrators and they quoted these liars just to provide more documentation to support the Hadith even from the camp of enemies (e.g., narration of Ghadir Khum by Abu Huraira).

The traditions saying 'leave whatever disagrees with Quran' does not mean we should slaughter a couple of Hadiths every day to fulfill this command of Imam (AS)! It is really rare to find traditions in reliable Shia sources that have explicit contradiction with established concepts in Quran. It becomes much harder to find when we see other traditions extend the criteria to 'Quran or established traditions'. It is clear that the traditions stating 'leave whatever disagrees with Quran' do not mean that we should not use Hadith to understand Quran (see the above arguments) nor does it license us to interpret a verse of Quran by another verse or by opinion.

If you look at Tabatabai's Mizaan, you will see that the main method of Tafseer which he uses is interpreting the Qur'an by the Qur'an. Some verses explain what other verses mean. "alQur'an yufassiru Ba'Duhu Ba'Dan" (see his introduction) also is a hadeeth of Imam 'Ali (as).

Well my dear brother, the action of a Mufassir does not legalize it for us as a Sunna while he is responsible for his deeds. Only the action of the infallibles constitutes the Sunna. Never Quran alone interprets its own verses for us fallible people. If it were so, we would not have any need to the divinely appointed teachers of Quran. Quran is just a piece of paper that can be interpreted in so many ways. Also, the Arabic term you quoted is not accurate. It should be "Yantiq Ba'dhuhu bi Baidhin". I do not dispute this fact, but I say according to so many traditions, only Imam (AS) knows which part of Quran speaks for another part. Then he (AS) informs us of this fact and we should get it from him.

There are other traditions that relate to the meaning of the Qur'an which are related to Batin, according to some, and basically give "Al Misdaq al Kamil" best example of the meaning of a verse, to others. To the later these are not really tafseer but simply give the most perfect application of the meaning of a verse. See Tabatabai's Mizaan for examples.

Great! Now the explanation of Imam (AS) on the verse is not Tafsir, but what came to the mind of a fallible person at the middle of the night is the divine commentary! May Allah save us from the footsteps of Satan.

This is the method that the Ahlul-bayt (as) taught us and this is the method they employ themselves in so many traditions we have.

As Ahlul-Bayt (AS) have all the knowledge every part of Quran, they did relate any part of Quran to another as they wanted. At the same time, they prohibited us to do the same and have explained to us the reason for this prohibition. They said that they are the only people who know what are the abrogated, abrogating, general, specific, unconditional, conditional parts of Quran. They are the only people who know all the hidden meanings of

Quran as well as the relations between each part of Quran. They cursed any one who claim this knowledge and imitate their job independently. I guess you need to recall the traditions I provided in my recent posting beside the traditions quoted in this article. After all these, I am very surprised to see your comments above. Where did the Imams say we could learn this skill and do it independently?! This technique is only reserved for them. Our job is to obtain the information they have provided and analyze it within that context.

Now, my last question to you my very respected brother is, suppose we have two people down here who claim the following:

A fallible scholar: "I can interpret a part of Quran by another part."

Imam Ali (AS): "I can interpret a part of Quran by another part."

For the sake of argument, suppose both of them are Islamically allowed to make such a claim. My sincere question to you is that which interpreter you would choose. I am sure you are smart enough to choose Imam Ali (AS).

Surprise... Surprise... We have reached to the same conclusion. Next time we refer to the commentary of Imam Ali (AS) given in our Hadith-Based Tafasir. Because they are the places where you can find the commentary of Imam Ali (AS) instead of a man-made commentary.



## Introducing Some of the Hadith-Based Exegeses

I should say that there are many Shia Tafasir whose authors have not indulged into opinion. They understood this issue perfectly and they did not produce any independent Tafsir by themselves. What they did was to just collect all the reliable traditions in which the Imam (AS) used a specific verse and then put all of those traditions beside that verse. This way they have made a Tafsir book that reflects purely the commentaries of Ahlul-Bayt (AS). Some authors went a good step further and explained the traditions of Ahlul-Bayt (AS) under each verse and also provided a final conclusion from all the traditions under that verse. Unlike the verses of Quran, we are allowed to deeply comment over the traditions and relate them to each other without need to any auxiliary teacher. Of course, our comments on the traditions still should not be mixed with our opinion, and should not contradict Quran and other Hadith and should only be a direct conclusion from what the majority of the traditions convey on a specific subject.

Here I would like to introduce some of the nice and highly regarded Hadith-Based Tafasir of the Shia that I have personally examined and learnt about their styles and found them very rich and informative.

Amongst the early Shia Tafasir are:

Tafsir Imam Hasan al-Askari (AS) (d. 260 AH) which is the collection of the writings of Imam Hasan al-Askari (AS) for two of his students on the interpretation of some of the verses of Quran.

Tafsir Ali Ibn Ibrahim al-Qummi (d. 307) (one of the students of Imam Hasan al-Askari (AS) and the teacher of al-Kulaini)

Tafsir al-Ayyashi, Muhammad Ibn Mas'ud Ayyashi (d. 320)

Tafsir Furat, by Ibrahim Furat al-Kufi (lived during the minor occultation)

As for the later Shia Tafasir, I can name:

Ta'wil al-Ayat al-Dhahira, Sayyid Sharaf al-Din Ali Husaini Astarabadi, (d. 940 AH) It is only the commentary of the verses revealed on the virtues of Ahlul-Bayt (AS)

Tafsir al-Safi, Mulla Muhsin Faidh al-Kashani (d. 1091 AH)

Tafsir al-Burhan, Sayyid Hashim al-Bahrani (d. 1107 AH)

Tafsir Nur al-Thaqalain, Shaikh al-Arusi al-Huwayzi (d. 1112)

Also, note that the last three (#6,7,8) are the most extensive ones that cover the first four early Tafasir as well as a large number of traditions from our reliable Hadith books. Furthermore, as far as I could observe, Tafsir al-Burhan is the most comprehensive of all. They are all available on CD. Moreover Tafsir al-Qummi, al-Ayyashi, Nur al-Thaqalain, and some others are available on Internet. (Check out [www.al-kawthar.com/maktaba/](http://www.al-kawthar.com/maktaba/)) Nonetheless there are more good Tafasir which I cannot specify all of them here. Unfortunately all of these Tafasir are in Arabic.

## Side Comments

You admit that "we realize that as we do not know a specific verse belongs to which category..."

When you say "we" do you really put yourself in the same category as our great scholars?

Well maybe that which is confusing to you is not confusion to them. Maybe that which is ambiguous to you of the Qur'an, about which verse belongs in which of the three categories, is not ambiguous at all to them.

I have nothing personal against any respected scholar. However, I am sure we agree at least that they did not have direct communications with Allah and thus, to realize which verse belongs to which of the three categories, there is no difference between any of us in the first place. We all have to refer to the Ahlul-Bayt (AS) to figure this out, and to get their commentaries. This is what is referred as submission to them, which is mentioned by Imam Ali (AS) on the second category:

2."He made another part such that none knows it but he who cleanse his mind and soften his senses and correct his discernment from amongst those whom Allah have opened their breast for submission"

When we submit to their explanations, then Allah opens the door for us to get insight to the verses that belong to the second category by the guidance that Ahlul-Bayt (AS) will provide. Thus, even for the second category of verses we are not left on our own and we need Ahlul-Bayt (AS) to first tell us which verses belong to which category and what is their explanation, and then by Allah's help we get some insight to those verses based on our capacity. I agree that the capacities of the believers are different, but in submitting to the words and commentaries of Ahlul-Bayt (AS) non is exempted. This is all I wanted to say. To explain the verses of Quran without first referring to Ahlul-Bayt (AS) and submitting to their words is wrong. This is because, Allah has not opened any other door to learn about his religion except through them, no matter how much one has studied human sciences.

When someone claims that he can relate a part of Quran with another no matter if Ahlul-Bayt (AS) related those specific parts or not, it shows he has not submitted to the words of Ahlul-Bayt (AS) (check the traditions I have quoted already), and thus he does not belong to people that Imam Ali (AS) described in the second category. Imam Ali (AS) said they are "from amongst those whom Allah have opened their breast for submission". Rest assured, what comes out of such person is just innovation, and he has gone astray and causes others to go astray as the traditions clearly expressed.

As for the first category of verses whose understanding is shared by all people independently, they are the verses that refer us to the Prophet (PBUH&HF) and his Ahlul-Bayt (AS). In the very same Hadith that Imam Ali (AS) mentioned those three categories, he (AS) mentioned what the first category of verses refer to and also provided examples of it in the rest of the Hadith:

Imam Ali (AS) said: "... As for what the ignorant and the learned understand are those verses that gives preference to the Apostle of Allah in the Book of Allah, such as His saying: 'Whoever obeys the Apostle, he

indeed obeyed Allah (4:80)' and His saying: 'Allah and His angels send blessings on the Prophet: O you who believe! Send blessings on him, and salute/submit (Sallimu) to him in all respect (33:56).' And for this (latter) verse, there is an apparent and a hidden meaning. The apparent meaning is sending blessings/salutation on him while the internal meaning on His saying 'Sallimu Tasliman (i.e., submit to him a complete submission)' is to submit to whoever he chooses as his executor and his successor whom he gave preference over you and charged him with authority. This (hidden) meaning is what I informed you that none knows it but he who cleanse his mind and soften his senses and correct his discernment..."

- al-Ihtijaj, v1, p253

- Bihar al-Anwar, v90/93, p119

Thus, what all people share its correct understanding from Quran are those verses that urge us to submit to the Prophet (PBUH&HF) and his Ahlul-Bayt (AS) in all matters. A person who does not refer to them and does not submit to their commentary of the verses of Quran, did not even comply with the order of Allah in the verses of the first category!!

Therefore it is clear that before making any comment on the verses of Quran (other than those verses that clearly direct us to Prophet and his family, peace be upon them) we need to see what Ahlul-Bayt (AS) said in this regard, and to submit to the context that Ahlul-Bayt (AS) provided us, otherwise we will not be blessed with the understanding of the second category. Submission to the commentary of Ahlul-Bayt (AS) is the first and foremost requirement to understand the second category.

Also just a sincere and brotherly reminder: I quoted so many traditions on this subject and was disappointed to see that you hanged on just to one them that, in the first glance, appeared to be in conformity with your opinion. Is this the way of submission to Ahlul-Bayt (AS)? Actually, before I post that article I was predicting that someone would pick up this one against all others and I was thinking to whether keep that in the article or not. Then I said to myself if I remove it, I have not provided a fair presentation of the traditions of Ahlul-Bayt (AS) in this regard. I now think, however, the message of this Hadith is fully compatible with all others as I just explained above.

If you look carefully, you can find many people who have put human thoughts (such as philosophy whose root is from the ancient Greece) as the base of their belief system, and then they search within our traditions to find out something to somehow justify their belief system. They accept those traditions and ignore the rest. Such people have not really submitted to the words of Ahlul-Bayt (AS), even though they may highly regard Ahlul-Bayt (AS) and truly love them. Even if they really accept some of the Hadiths, they have not followed Ahlul-Bayt (AS), in reality, even in those Hadiths. They rather followed their own opinion that happened to be consistent with those Hadiths. The only way to stay away from such danger is to prefer the words of Ahlul-Bayt (as is) to ours and other human thoughts and to be much more doubtful about our own opinion.

We must always try to harmonize our opinion to the meaning of the Hadith and should avoid transforming the meaning of the Hadith to

harmonize it with our opinion. This is the only way we could progress and could truly benefit from the teachings of Ahlul-Bayt (AS). Of course, when the straightforward meaning of a Hadith contradicts the message conveyed by other established traditions, it should be interpreted in such a way that becomes compatible to other traditions, but not to our personal feelings, tendencies, and opinion. As you see, submission to Ahlul-Bayt (AS) is not as easy as it looks like. Even going to theological schools and studying many years and earning titles do not necessarily create this attitude.

You also commented my article to sister Issaf, which I integrate here: Truly so. The fact is that Quran without its teacher is not beneficial.

I'm sorry brother but I strongly disagree. You yourself produced a tradition from Imam 'Ali (as) that proves this. Would you consider understanding the Qur'an based on the first two categories as useless?

What I meant was that if one rejects the teacher of Quran, Quran will no longer be beneficial for him. I mentioned in that article that Umar and his followers accepted the Quran but rejected the teachers that Allah assigned for it. Since they did not really believe in the first category of verses that urges people to submit to the Prophet (PBUH&HF), Quran alone does not benefit them at all, and they will face Fire forever.

Of course, if you put any verse of Quran in front of a Sunni, he understands something out of it. However, the point is that: is his understanding necessarily correct? Since they do not submit to the words of the Prophet (PBUH&HF) and his Ahlul-Bayt (AS), Quran turns to a useless piece of paper for them.

Once they submit to the words of Ahlul-Bayt (AS), they have to submit to their commentaries too. This comes with that as one package...

It may be that they are much more critical than you regarding submitting to the authenticity of a hadeeth in terms of narrators and conformity with the Qur'an.

I am preparing an article that addresses this issue In-Shaa-Allah. However, to give a short description, many notable Usuli scholars act upon many weak traditions that are narrated in our generally trusted collections of the traditions regardless of their weak documentations. If they find a couple of weak traditions that imply the same meaning and if the meaning does not contradict well-established traditions and does not explicitly contradict the well-established concepts in Quran, they rate those traditions as conclusive and issue Fatwa based on them (In-Shaa- Allah, I will quote instances that great Usuli scholars who issued Fatwa based on such traditions.) The reliability of a Hadith is not necessarily based on the authenticity of its documentation. It can be also based on a confidence that the meaning of the Hadith has been originated from Ma'sum and its compatibility with other teachings of Ahlul-Bayt (AS).

Testing the documentation of a Shi'i-reported-Hadith becomes important only when the conflict between the traditions arise. When a conflict between two sets of traditions on a subject cannot be rectified anyhow, then Ahlul-Bayt (AS) have provided us some criteria to prefer one set of Hadiths over another. These criteria include, but are not limited to: checking the degree of compatibility with Quran and the established traditions, the quantity of

similar narrations in terms of text or meaning (Tawatur in text or in meaning), the quality of narrators (Ilm al-Rijal), etc. If, in a special case, non of these criteria could give us determinant answer and both sets of Hadiths would end up with equal credit, then Ahlul-Bayt (AS) have allowed us to choose and act upon one of the two sets of Hadith as a way submission to Allah without denying the other set, and they (AS) said this would be excusable before Allah. In-Shaa-Allah, I will quote the traditions of Ahlul-Bayt (AS) in this regard too.

Now, on the issue that we were discussing, I have provided tens of traditions that compel us to get the commentary of Quran only from Ahlul-Bayt (AS). They well pass the level of Tawatur in meaning, beside the fact that some of those traditions have been individually reported in parallel. If some scholars chose to neglect them, this I consider a double standard on their part, as they do act upon similar cases in Fiqh with much less number of traditions.

Let me try giving a short example without getting to complicated:

And We did not send before you any but men to whom We sent revelation-- so ask the followers of the REMINDER if you do not know-- With clear arguments and scriptures; and We have revealed to you the REMINDER that you may make clear to men what has been revealed to them, and that haply they may reflect. 16:45

Many of the Shi'ah 'ulama argue, using the argument of the traditions, that if "ahl al dhikr" here meant the Christians and jews, and you asked them if you didn't know they would cause you to sway towards their own religion. Even Tijani used this argument thoroughly in His book "Ask those who know if you don't know".

The second part of the verse uses the word "Reminder" for the Qur'an. It is quite a logical argument that if the second part of the verse uses "Reminder" to mean Qur'an then the word "reminder" in the first part of the verse should also mean Qur'an hence the first part of the verse should mean "ask the people of the Qur'an" if you don't know. It can not be possible that the christians and jews are the ones being referred to because there is no way that they could be "People of the Qur'an". "Ahl al Dhikr" must mean the Ahlul-bayt, at least that is what I thought.

Then I read the commentaries of Tabatabai, Shirazis, FaDlullah's and several others and I got a great shock!

They all said that the "ahl al Dhikr" in the verse does mean the christians and jews and I almost became an Akhbari (excuse the expression).

I said, "how can this be? Are they rejecting the traditions related to this verse?"

Then I read the explanation and here it goes: In its specific context the ones being addressed are the Mushirkeen of Mecca.

Thank you for providing this example. This, in fact, verifies the saying of Imam al-Sadiq (AS) that I quoted previously. Various authorities narrated from both Imam al-Baqir (AS) and Imam al-Sadiq (AS) who said:

"Nothing is farther than the reasons of men from the interpretation of Quran. Certainly, the beginning of a verse can be about something, its middle is about another thing, and its end is (yet) about another thing."

- Tafsir al-Ayyashi, v1, pp 11,12,17 (four traditions)
- Wasa'il al-Shia, v27, p192, Hadith #33572; pp 203-204, Hadith #33600, #33604, #33605
- Bihar al-Anwar, v89/92, p91, Hadith #37; p94, Hadith #45; p95, Hadith #48; p110, Hadith #10; p111, Hadith #14

The issue of Ahlul-Bayt (AS) being "Ahl al-Dhikr" is certainly beyond the level of Tawatur in our Hadith literature. It even pops up in many of our Ziyarat including Ziyarat Jami'a al-Kabira, which is a very well documented one.

The above saying of Imam al-Sadiq (AS) can also be verified by examining the Verse 33:33 whose beginning is about the wives while its end is about Ahlul-Bayt (AS). As I discussed earlier, the appearance of the verse does suggest that the wives are included in Ahlul-Bayt (AS).

All these examples show that this way of treatment of Quran (i.e., relating different parts of Quran regardless of the commentaries of Ahlul-Bayt (AS)) is wrong!

If you compare our Hadith-based Tafasir with the man-made commentaries that we have, you find a lot more examples of such controversies.

This explanation of our great 'Ulama literally saved my neck. If I used the ahlul-dhikr are the ahlul-bayt argument and the sunni used the above argument the sunni would win.

If I were you, instead of compromising on my belief just to win over the Sunnis, I would leave the Sunnis alone to go to Hell with their beliefs and would try to save my neck before Imam al-Mahdi (AS) by upholding to their commentaries. Actually, if we accept in front of the Sunnis that "Ahl al-Dhikr" are not Ahlul-Bayt (AS) we have not really won. we have rather submitted to their interpretation, which means total loss in front of the Sunnis and in front of Allah as well!

Self-interpretation of Quran and acting upon opinion are the real polytheism that we all should be afraid of, not seeking help from Ahlul-Bayt which constitutes pure Tawhid. This is because he who seeks from Ahlul-Bayt (AS) will not fall into innovation. May Allah save us from His curse and give us enough wisdom to contend ourselves to the interpretation of the Quranic verses given by Ahlul-Bayt (AS) and keep us away from innovation and falling into polytheism, the unforgivable sin!