

# Schools of Qur'anic Exegesis

Genesis and development

Hussein Abdul-Raof



Culture and Civilization in the Middle East

# Schools of Qur'anic Exegesis

Qur'anic exegesis has become the battleground of political Islam and theological conflict among various Muslim schools of thought. Using comparative and contrastive methodology, examples from the Qur'an are investigated in the light of various theological views to delineate the birth, development and growth of Qur'anic exegesis.

The political status quo, in the past and at present, has impinged upon Qur'anic exegesis more than on any other discipline in Islamic studies. This book illustrates the dichotomy between mainstream and non-mainstream Islam, showing how Qur'anic exegesis reflects the subtle dogmatic differences and political cleavages in Islamic thought. Chapters explore in depth the intrusive views of the compilers of early exegesis manuscripts, the scepticism among Western scholars about the authenticity of early Muslim works of exegesis and of prophetic tradition, and the role of exegesis as a tool to reaffirm the Qur'an as a canon. Broader themes encompassed include the interpretations of exegetical terms; use of the notion of free will and pre-determinism to justify the political misfortunes of Muslim leaders and the sufferings of their people; politicization of Ramadan; and the disparity between jihād and non-jihād.

Written to appeal to those with comparative exegetical interests as well as those focused on Islamic studies in general, this book will be an important reference for research students, scholars and students of Islamic studies, Theology, Religious studies and Middle Eastern studies.

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*Hussein Abdul-Raof*

# **Schools of Qur'anic Exegesis**

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# Preface

Qur'anic exegesis is a literary activity whose function is the elucidation of the clear and ambiguous aspects of the Scripture and its major principles. Schools of exegesis constitute a major discipline in Qur'anic studies referred to in Arabic as *manāhij al-tafsīr*, meaning 'methodologies of exegesis'. Qur'anic exegesis has gone through a historical marathon journey that has lasted fourteen centuries, from the seventh to the end of the twentieth century. The present book delineates precisely the odyssey of the birth, development and growth of Qur'anic exegesis and its various schools. This book, however, is not merely a historiographical account of the development of exegesis but rather a methodologically academic investigation of the genesis and proliferation of the discipline and techniques of exegesis.

*Schools of Qur'anic Exegesis* taps a rich vein of information in this valuable discipline of Islamic studies. This work presents a holistic survey of exegesis scholarship of classical and modern, mainstream and non-mainstream exegetes that has started since the first/seventh century and continued until our present time. *Schools of Qur'anic Exegesis* also provides a theoretical insight into the early and modern Qur'anic exegesis activity and its related disciplines from both a Muslim perspective and a non-Muslim critical eye. This work illustrates the major characteristic features and exegetical techniques ad hoc to each school of exegesis together with the theological and/or political implications of a given exegetical point of view. The exegetical activity of mainstream Islam is represented by the Sunni (ahl al-Sunnah wal-jamā'ah) approach to the Qur'ān, while the exegetical activity of the non-mainstream Islam is represented by Sunni and non-Sunni approaches to the Qur'ān. Thus, the non-mainstream approach to the exegesis of the Scripture of Islam is represented by the Shī'ah, Ismā'īli, Khawārij, Ibāḍi, Ash'ari, Mu'tazilah and Sufi. Therefore, although the Khawārij and Ibāḍi are within the non-mainstream Muslim faith, they neither represent the Shī'ī nor the Sunni views. Similarly, while the Ash'ari, Mu'tazilah and Sufi are classified within the non-mainstream Muslim faith, they still represent the general Sunni views. The dichotomy between mainstream and non-mainstream Islam is related to the binary opposition in exegesis between *al-tafsīr bil-ma'thūr*, that is, traditional, and *al-tafsīr bil-ra'i*, that is, rational/hypothetical.

This dichotomy reflects subtle dogmatic differences and political cleavages in Islamic thought. Since its infancy during the formative phase of the first/seventh century and up to our present time, Qur'anic exegesis has become the channel through which opposing, politically motivated theological views are expressed by different mainstream and non-mainstream students of the Qur'ān. Most importantly, mainstream and non-mainstream exegetical views have significantly influenced the political agenda of Muslim political parties and organizations of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Out of Qur'anic exegesis, political Islam is born. The theologically oriented āyahs related to fighting and the development of divergent religious dogmas such as jihād and political allegiance to the ruler have, for instance, found their place at the heart of Qur'anic exegesis. Thus, the tafsīr tradition and written works have evolved in response to varying political, theological, historical and intellectual conditions. The growing polarity between traditional and rational schools of exegesis has significantly contributed to the genesis of the sectarian tafsīr. The exegesis of the Qur'ān has acquired a politico-religious function.

Anyone who employs a hypothetical opinion with regards to the meaning(s) of a given Qur'anic passage or word is dubbed as mu'awwil (interpreter of the Qur'ān by personal reasoning) and his tafsīr is classified as wrong and counter to the Qur'ān and the standard practice of Muḥammad. The historical dichotomy between mainstream and non-mainstream Islam has been firmly established in the community due to the emergence of polarity in tafsīr tradition.

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For their generous time and informative debate, my special thanks are also due to all the scholars who I met with for consultation during my research trips.

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# Arabic transliteration system

Throughout the present work, the Library of Congress transliteration system has been consistently employed whenever an Arabic expression is quoted. The following table explains the Arabic transliteration system for Arabic consonants and vowels:

Arabic	Transliteration	Arabic	Transliteration
أ	a	ط	t
ء	'	ظ	ẓ
ب	b	ع	ʿ
ت	t	ح	gh
ث	th	ق	f
ج	j	ك	k
ح	ḥ	ل	l
خ	kh	م	m
د	d	ن	n
ذ	dh	هـ	h
ر	r	و	w
ز	z	ي	y
س	s		
ش	sh		
ص	ṣ		
ض	ḍ		

Arabic short-long vowels and case endings:

Arabic	Transliteration	Arabic	Transliteration
ا	ā	اُ	-an
ـ	ū	ـُ	-un
ـي	ī	ـِ	-in
اَ	a		
اِ	u		
اِي	i		

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# Introduction

Classical and modern Qur'anic exegesis works have not been taken on board by Muslim scholars as reliable sources for the explication of the Qur'anic text. Yet the role of exegesis has remained as a tool to reaffirm the Qur'ān as a canon. Tafsīr activity began its odyssey from the very early days of the inception of Islam in the first/seventh century. However, tafsīr scholarship flourished and gained momentum only during the end of the formative phase during the end of the first/seventh and early second/eighth century onwards.

The role of Muḥammad (d.570–632) in Qur'anic exegesis is announced by Q16:44, 'anzalnā ilaika al-dhikra litubaiyina lil-nāsi mā nuzzila ilaihim [We have revealed to you the Qur'ān so that you can explain to people what was sent down for them].' Through his words and deeds, Muḥammad has become the first and best commentator after the Qur'ān, as the Qur'ān is claimed to have explained itself via intertextual reference within it (al-qur'ānu yufassiru nafsahu). However, there is little known how much in fact Muḥammad, as an exegete, has explained to his companions. Nevertheless, Muḥammad's sunnah (standard practice, that is, his words and actions) and the Scripture of Islam have soon established exegetical interrelationship. In terms of Qur'anic exegesis, this relationship between the Qur'ān and the sunnah has become a matter of interdependence. In the view of mainstream and non-mainstream Muslim scholars, it is the Qur'ān which is in need of the sunnah and not vice versa. Although the sunnah elucidates the Qur'ān, it is the Qur'ān, and not the sunnah, which can abrogate some Qur'anic āyahs. After the death of Muḥammad, the Muslim community has witnessed a period of intense theological and political ferment. The fitnah (civil war) in 41/662 was sparked off by the assassination of the third caliph ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān in 35/656. This is a major juncture in Islamic history, which together with the evolution of hypothetical opinion based on speculative thought has led to political and theological wrangling, the emergence of non-mainstream exegesis, ḥadīth fabrication, and fabricated exegetical views falsely ascribed to iconic companions. Qur'anic exegesis has, therefore, become the vehicle through which dogmatic and political views are funneled. With the proliferation of personal reasoning exegesis, exegetical polemics have flourished, too.

The majority of Muslim exegetes have let their imagination run wild and had the opportunity of using their personal opinion to provide a specific sense to a

given Qur'anic expression. We often encounter numerous semantic details for a single lexical item, at times exceeding a dozen. One is left wondering which meaning is true and which one is purely hypothetical. This fact has led Rippin (1983, p. 320) to conclude that many generations of Muslim scholars studied the Qur'ān with a freedom and a resultant unleashing of creativity which has been obscured by the unhistorical nature of the Arabic lexicons. An examination of Qur'anic exegetical sources reveals the story behind some of the more preposterous meanings recorded in those works. According to Rippin (1983, p. 316), 'the exegetes had the opportunity of using their imaginations to provide an appropriate meaning.' Rippin (1983, p. 320) concludes that the definition of certain Qur'anic words is arbitrary and results from a desire to solve intra-Qur'anic and Qur'ān versus dogma conflict.

The exegete is expected to be an encyclopaedic Qur'ān scholar who is well-acquainted with Arabic linguistics, stylistics, and most importantly, the semantically oriented pragmatic functions of Arabic rhetoric. These three pre-requisites have contributed to the evolution of non-mainstream Qur'anic exegesis. For mainstream exegetes, the partisans of non-mainstream exegetes have gone far astray in their exegetical analysis. Unlike the mainstream school of exegesis which takes into account the exoteric (non-allegorical, literal) meaning of the Qur'ān, Shī'ī, Ismā'īli and Ibāḍī tafsīrs come in contact with Mu'tazili and Sufi tafsīrs where they all resort to the esoteric (allegorical, underlying) meaning of the multi-faceted meanings of Qur'anic expressions. Thus, each commentator espouses different theological and political views for some Qur'anic passages. This in fact depends on whether an exegete advocates or rejects independent reasoning.

The politico-religious impact has been felt right from the early years of Islam and the evolution of exegesis. In the view of Watt (1973, p. 216), politico-religious movements have developed during the first/seventh century. Different religious attitudes have political implications and both developed under the Umayyad rule (Watt 1973, p. 230). Thus, tafsīr activity has suffered during the new politico-religious milieu. Moreover, a large number of early and classical works of exegesis of the recording phase from the first quarter of the second/eighth century onwards underwent redactional processes and intrusive exegetical views of the compilers. Thus, the authenticity of early Muslim tafsīr works has raised scepticism among Western scholars. This scepticism is attributed to the fact that there are weak and fabricated isnād, intrusive poetic citations falsely ascribed to pre-Islamic poets and contradictory exegetical reports which are ascribed to iconic companions pervaded a large number of early tafsīr works.

Modern research in Qur'anic exegesis, both theoretical and practical, is a vital discipline for the understanding of the Scripture of Islam in the twenty-first century. Andrew Rippin (1982 and 1999) has highlighted the lack of research in exegesis and the need for it as well as for the need to study other early tafsīr manuscripts in order to appreciate the development of early tafsīr and the periodization of the exegetical enterprise based upon a sequential emergence of exegetical tools (Rippin 1999, p. xv). While Rippin (1999, p. xix) asserts that 'the study of

tafsīr is still very much in its infancy,' Wild (1996, p. vii) observes that 'the genesis of the Qur'anic text continues to absorb the interest of scholars.' Moreover, Charles Adams (1976; see also Rippin 1982, p. 224) brings to our attention an important research fact: 'Qur'anic study is also badly neglected in another of its aspects, that which deals with the traditional interpretation of the Scripture of the Islamic community itself.' We hope that the present work will plug the research gap in this vital discipline of Qur'anic studies. Although the present work provides a historical account of the various phases of Qur'anic exegesis, we are not concerned with the history of redaction. Our aim remains a practical one ultimately.

The present work comprises nine chapters:

**Chapter 1** sets the scene for the evolution of exegesis as a discipline. It examines tafsīr scholarship, classification of schools of exegesis, different approaches to exegesis, categories of the views of companions and successors, and the progression stages of Qur'anic exegesis. It also accounts for the three major companion exegetes and their impact on later exegetes. This chapter also provides a discussion of the authenticity of tafsīr sources and the many issues related to exegesis based on the views of Western Qur'ān scholars such as Wansbrough, Nöldeke, Schwally, Goldziher, Rippin, Abbot, Gätje, Gilliot, Versteegh, Leemhuis, Watt, Birkeland, Speight, Rubin, Weil, Schacht, Juynboll, Schoeler and many others. Their views are consulted with regards to controversial issues in Qur'anic exegesis such as the early opposition to exegesis, the authenticity of tradition (ḥadīth), forged traditions, ascription of exegesis works to different authors, historical authenticity of sources and the ascription of exegetical views to companion exegetes. This chapter also accounts for the difference between the two major schools of exegesis: traditional (al-tafsīr bil-ma'thūr) and hypothetical opinion (al-tafsīr bil-ra'i) and the reasons why the latter is objectionable to mainstream Muslim scholars. Thus, this chapter highlights the distinction between mainstream and non-mainstream Qur'anic exegesis. In **Chapter 1**, details are also provided about the functions of exegesis, the phase of recording exegesis, the classification of the transmission of exegetical sources, the impact of the Judeo-Christian milieu, reference to Judaic exegetes, the various traditional and modern genres of Qur'anic exegesis, and the lexicographical and phraseological works on Qur'anic exegesis.

**Chapter 2** investigates the relationship between exegesis and ḥadīth. It provides an informative analysis of ḥadīth as a second major canonical source for Qur'anic exegesis. This chapter investigates the functions of ḥadīth and why it constitutes a bridge to the elucidation of the Qur'ān, the collection and recording of ḥadīth, the problems of chain of authorities, the biographical analysis of ḥadīth transmitters, the spread of spurious ḥadīths that are politically and dogmatically driven, the factors attributed to the fabrication of ḥadīth, the factors that determine the validity of ḥadīth, informative details about the notions of al-jarḥ wal-ta'dīl (impugment and validation) in ḥadīth literature, the grounds of impugment and validation, the classification of ḥadīth under one of several major categories of trustworthiness, the various kinds of defects that affect the

chain of authorities, the three-point scale used in the classification of ḥadīth, the authenticity and date of origin of the ḥadīth material according to Western ḥadīth scholars, the criteria of ḥadīth authenticity and ḥadīth genres.

**Chapter 3** accounts for the heterogeneous nature of Qur'anic exegesis. It provides interesting details about the floodgates of tendentious political semantics and the binary opposition between *al-tafsīr bil-ra'i* (rational exegesis which employs personal opinion) and *al-tafsīr bil-ma'thūr* (traditional or mainstream exegesis). It also discusses how Qur'anic exegesis has been abused for political ends by old and modern Arab and Muslim rulers. This chapter also accounts for the fact that exegesis has become the channel through which opposing theological views are expressed and the polemical discourse employed by different exegetes with regards to various dogmas adopted by different mainstream and non-mainstream exegetes.

**Chapter 4** investigates the binary distinction between *tafsīr* (exegesis) and *ta'wīl* (interpretation) and how this distinction has led to the evolution of the second major school of exegesis, namely, hypothetical opinion exegesis. This chapter provides the definitions for these two notions, discusses them as separate disciplines, accounts for the major genres in exegesis, the companion views and Wansbrough's exegetical typology. **Chapter 2** also accounts for the classification of interpretation (*ta'wīl*), the categories of interpretation, and the reasons that make interpretation objectionable among mainstream theologians. Thus, the word '*ta'wīl*' has assumed a double-edged meaning: *al-ta'wīl al-mamḥmūd* (commendable, worthy of praise interpretation) and *al-ta'wīl al-madhīm* (objectionable, not worthy of praise interpretation).

**Chapter 5** provides a comprehensive investigation of the evolution of Qur'anic exegesis. It accounts for the various phases of development, namely, the formative phase, the recording phase, and the modern phase. It also investigates in detail the features, sources and differences in exegetical views among the exegetes of each phase. This chapter also provides an account of the Andalus (Spain and Portugal) school of exegesis and its major characteristics, as well as the Sufi school of exegesis and its distinguishing features.

**Chapter 6** investigates the four formative schools of Qur'anic exegesis: the Ḥijāz school of Makkah and Madīnah, and the Iraqi school of Kūfah and Baṣrah. This chapter also accounts for the prototypical features and tools of exegesis of these schools. It also provides a comparative analysis of these four schools.

**Chapter 7** is an explicated informative and detailed account of the linguistic tools of exegesis. It expounds the pre-requisites of the exegete and his linguistic and stylistic competencies and skills that are required in the process of exegesis. Copious examples will be furnished to illustrate the possible semantic differences that may lead to theological cleavages among the various schools of exegesis.

**Chapter 8** accounts for the jurisprudential tools employed in Qur'anic exegesis. This chapter also explains in detail why the exegete is required to be armed with the knowledge of exegetical theological devices such as the circumstances of revelation, abrogating and abrogated āyahs, and clear and ambiguous āyahs. Through numerous examples, this chapter provides an explicated account of the

required jurisprudential techniques adopted by the exegete. Each example will be analysed thoroughly and the various theological views based on mainstream and non-mainstream theologians will also be provided. It also investigates the variant modes of reading which involve vocalic or diacritic differences. The modes of reading are accounted for with regards to their impact on the linguistic and semantic change in meaning.

**Chapter 9** furnishes a concluding discussion of our work on the odyssey of Qur'anic exegesis from its infancy in the first/seventh century to the end of the twentieth century.

The bibliography of the present work provides a comprehensive list of sources that are of value to Islamic studies in general and to Qur'anic exegesis in particular.

The Library of Congress transliteration system has been applied throughout this work. The translation of the Qur'ān is based upon Şaḥeeḥ International (1997) as it adopts a communicative approach and employs a modern English style.

The equivalent Western dates have been added to citations of Arabic Hijri dates. In the alphabetical ordering of the bibliography, the Arabic definite article (al-) is disregarded.

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# 1 Preamble to Qur'anic exegesis

## 1.1 Introduction

The present chapter provides an informative account of the evolution of Qur'anic exegesis since the inception of Islam in the first/seventh century and up to the twentieth century, as well as the diverse approaches that have developed over the past centuries. This detailed investigation takes into consideration the views of both Muslim and non-Muslim Qur'ān scholars with regards to early tafsīr tradition, the controversy over the authenticity and historicity of tafsīr sources and works, the reliability as opposed to the sceptical views about the genuine and spurious chain of authorities, the validity of prophetic tradition, the relationship between the Qur'ān and the ḥadīth, the impact of fabricated prophetic traditions on exegesis and the reliability of ascription of exegetical views to iconic companion exegetes. This chapter also provides a classification of the exegetical views of the companions and successors as well as a ramification of the schools of exegesis that have evolved since the first/seventh century. The documentation and transmission of Qur'anic exegesis is also provided together with the classification of exegetical sources. Through our investigation of historiography and exegesis, the present discussion also accounts for the impact of the Judeo-Christian milieu and the influence of Jewish anecdotes, as a recurrent feature, on some schools of Qur'anic exegesis and, in particular, on some companion and successor exegetes of the formative phase. This chapter also provides an outline of the major genres in exegesis throughout the three distinct phases: formative, recording and modern. These include paraphrastic, narrative, legal, linguistic, thematic, synoptic and scientific genres. A classification of lexicographical tafsīr works has been made which accounts for the distinct approaches in Qur'anic exegesis such as intra-lingual translation of the Qur'ān, gharīb, wujūh, ashbāh and mutashābihāt works.

## 1.2 Examination of Tafsīr scholarship

While the Qur'ān, for the Muslim, is the word of God and textually inerrant, its written elucidation is the word of the exegete, a man whose sources are mostly characterized by augmentations; interpolations (see [Sections 1.4](#) and [1.5](#) of the present chapter); internal contradiction; intrusive comments ascribed to the original scholar; spurious prophetic traditions (see [Chapter 2](#), [Sections 2.2](#) and [2.3](#));

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intrusive exegetical tools such as poetic loci falsely ascribed to pre-Islamic poets; and most interestingly, theological cleavages echoing the exegete's own politico-religious dogma. These dogmatic leanings have rendered some early and medieval Qur'ān commentators as doctrinally suspects. In a similar vein, some tafsīr works have undergone redactional processes and are marked by extrapolation techniques. Therefore, the exegete, unlike God, is not impartial. In his humble attempt to illuminate and explicate the speech of God, the exegete, as a human, remains conditioned by the surrounding circumstances, and is, more often than not, driven by his theological and political dogmatic agenda (see [Chapter 3, Sections 3.2 and 3.3](#)). This is true of the theological views of rebel protagonists, for instance, such as the Khawārij.<sup>1</sup> Although the 'Uthmānic master codex remains the official text for the majority of Qur'ān commentators, one cannot deny the following facts:

- (i) Many codices of the Qur'ān have existed where each one may have its own prototypical textual features and at times intrusive, that is, non-canonical, expressions such as the codex of Ubai b. Ka'ab (d.20/640).
- (ii) There exist many modes of reading in oral circulation which are contrary to the master codex and are categorized as irregular modes.
- (iii) Exoteric and esoteric meaning of the Qur'anic text continues to exist.
- (iv) There exist different circumstances of revelation to the same āyah(s).
- (v) There exist different views with regards to the abrogating and abrogated āyahs.

This leads us to the conclusion that although the 'Uthmānic master codex has achieved the textual unity of the revelation, it has not solved the theological and exegetical cleavages among theologians and exegetes. One can easily pin point the serious impact on tafsīr tradition and exegetical views. Nevertheless, the scholarship of tafsīr has continued and so has its oral and written transmission.

The Qur'ān, for Wild (1996, p. 140), is the most meta-textual, most self-referential holy text known in the history of world religions. There is no other holy text which would refer so often to its own textual nature and reflect so constantly and pervasively its own divine origin. While the Qur'ān as a Scripture took shape within 23 years, its tafsīr started from the very first day of its revelation in the night between the 26th or 27th of Ramaḍān of the first/seventh century and the diverse approaches to its multi-faceted discourse will continue to the very last day of its existence as a Scripture. Thus, the odyssey of Qur'anic exegesis has started in earnest during the lifetime of Muḥammad in the first/seventh century. However, after Muḥammad's death, students of Qur'anic exegesis have politicized the Qur'ān either through the manipulation of the allegorical signification, that is, esoteric meaning, the adoption of prophetic traditions (ḥadīth)<sup>2</sup> whose chain of authorities (isnād)<sup>3</sup> may be questioned, or through the ascription of fabricated views to early authoritative companion names such as Ibn 'Abbās (d.68/687) whose name has turned into an exegetical high street trade mark. Thus, the controversy about political and/or forged isnād as well as subjective exegetical views in early tafsīr works have begun in earnest. For further details, see [Section 1.5](#).

It is an accepted fact by Muslim and non-Muslim scholars that the first exegete of the Muslim scripture is Muḥammad, the mouthpiece of the Qur'ān, who explicated to his companions Qur'anic expressions and passages which were either unclear or difficult. We are also informed by Q16:44 about the role of Muḥammad as an exegete (We revealed to you the Qur'ān that you may make clear to the people what was sent down to them). If one conceives of Qur'anic exegesis in the widest sense, it can be said, Gätje (1971, p. 31) argues, that it is as old as the revelations of Muḥammad. Thus, it is statements by the Prophet and testimonies of his companions that stand in the centre of the older exegesis, as tradition handed down from the first generation of Islam (ibid.). However, Muḥammad has not explained the whole text of the Qur'ān to his companions as there was no need for it. This is attributed to the fact that, as pure Arabs, the companions understood the Qur'ān and witnessed its circumstances of revelation at first hand. Thus, the Qur'ān has been partially elucidated by the Prophet and his verbal explanation is recalled and passed on by the companions to the early successors (awā'il al-tābi'in). Therefore, the first tafsīr tradition is that initiated by Muḥammad and referred to as exegesis of the Prophet (tafsīr al-nabi) and is told on the authority of his companions. After the death of Muḥammad, the companions' exegetical views have gained an extraordinary authority and are held in great esteem. Their views have gained a special status and are referred to as marfūc, that is, attributed to Muḥammad (literally meaning 'elevated'). A companion's view is accepted even though it is not supported by a prophetic tradition (ḥadīth) and their views have become one of the three criteria, after the Qur'ān and ḥadīth, of traditional exegesis (al-tafsīr bil-ma'thūr).<sup>4</sup> The main reason for this is attributed to a number of factors, including the following:

- (i) The companions witnessed the revelation.
- (ii) They witnessed historical events and some important incidents.
- (iii) They did not rely on Jewish anecdotes.<sup>5</sup>
- (iv) They possessed pure linguistic competence and advanced literary skills.
- (v) They did not rely heavily on their hypothetical opinion<sup>6</sup> in tafsīr.
- (vi) When companion exegetes, like Ibn 'Abbās (d.68/687) or Ibn Mas'ūd (d.32/653) employ their personal, that is, rational, opinions on an exegetical matter, their hypothetical views are considered as commended (maḥmūd) as opposed to uncommended (madhmūm). In other words, their exegesis is still traditional (tafsīr bil-ma'thūr) rather than purely hypothetical (tafsīr bil-ra'i). The main reasons for classifying the exegetical views of Ibn 'Abbās and Ibn Mas'ūd as commended are due to the following facts:
  - (a) Their views are compatible with the Qur'ān and the sunnah (the customary practice of Muḥammad that indicates his actions and sayings).
  - (b) Although Ibn 'Abbās has dealt with the controversial notion of mutashābihāt like the names and attributes of God, he does not approach them in an esoteric mode. Rather, he deals with them in a *bilā kaif* (without asking how) manner. As for Ibn Mas'ūd and Ubai b. ka'b, they do not deal with them at all.

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- (c) Both Ibn ʿAbbās and Ibn Masʿūd are referred to as bil-raʿi exegetes. However, this does not mean they are hypothetical opinion exegetes, that is, non-mainstream. For instance, Ibn Masʿūd gives his hypothetical opinion about jurisprudential problems. Therefore, he cannot be classified as a hypothetical opinion exegete. However, the school of Kūfah is known as a school of raʿi (personal opinion).
- (d) Most importantly, the word raʿi has adopted a new shade of meaning in our modern time. This word has acquired a negative connotative meaning which is directly linked to uncommended (madhmūm) exegesis. Exegetes who resort to their hypothetical opinion with regards to mutashābihāt problems are dubbed as bil-raʿi exegetes. However, the word raʿi between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>, centuries does not have a negative meaning. Rather, it means personal opinion about jurisprudential matters only.

However, not all of the companions' views are considered as a source for mainstream exegesis. Thus, we have two categories of companion:

- (i) Companions of first category: They are the companions whose exegetical views are classified as marfūʿ, that is, ascribed to Muḥammad.
- (ii) Companions of second category: They are the companions whose exegetical views are classified as mawqūf, that is, based on one's own viewpoint (literally meaning 'stopped'). Such an opinion for some theologians, therefore, is not commended and cannot be accepted.

The dichotomy between marfūʿ and mawqūf is related to isnād (chain of authorities) and the exegetical views of the companions and the school of traditional exegesis. Due to the fact that the companions have witnessed the revelation, accompanied Muḥammad throughout his prophetic mission and have been his students, their exegetical views are considered as marfūʿ. Thus, it is categorized as conclusive evidence (ḥujjah). However, there are five conditions for a companion's viewpoint to be marfūʿ, if his or her view is

- (i) related to explaining the reason for a particular revelation;
- (ii) based either on Muḥammad's point of view or his action, that is, his sunnah (the standard practice);
- (iii) related to explaining an incident or a historical event that has taken place during the lifetime of Muḥammad, as in ʿĀ'ishah's exegetical view concerning Q33:10, 'idh jā'ūkum min fawqikum wamin asfala minkum w'idh zāghat al-abṣāru wabalaghat al-qulūbu al-ḥanājira [They massed against you from above and below; your eyes rolled with fear, your hearts rose into your throats]'. This, in her opinion, is related to the day of the battle of al-Khandaq (fifth/eleventh century). As a companion, her view is regarded as marfūʿ, that is, taken as ḥujjah for the elucidation of this historical event. In other words, although this is a personal point of view of a companion which is not directly

- ascribed to Muḥammad, °Ā'ishah's exegetical view, as a companion, is still considered as marfū° since she has witnessed or known at first hand about a given historical incident that has occurred before the death of Muḥammad;
- (iv) not a hypothetical opinion; in other words, if an opinion is not based upon uncommended personal reasoning (al-ra'i al-madhīm) and there is no overwhelming scepticism about it that it may have been borrowed from or influenced by Jewish anecdotes (al-isrā'iliyyāt) such as stories of the Prophets, the beginning of creation, paradise and the hell fire (e.g. the long anecdote narrated by Ibn °Abbās about Ishmael, his mother, his father Abraham and the construction of Ka°bah without mentioning the direct narrator, that is Muḥammad, by saying, 'qāla al-nabī [The Prophet said]');
  - (v) related to the explication of a grammatical, semantic, or stylistic problem. A companion's linguistic views are of a marfū° status and are favoured over later linguists' views such as those of al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī (d.776/1374), al-Farrā' (d.207/822), and Abu °Ubaidah (d.210/825).

However, a companion's point of view is classified as mawqūf according to the following conditions:

- (i) If his or her view is about a particular matter that is not related to, that is, has not taken place during, the lifetime of Muḥammad;
- (ii) If he or she is known to have been influenced by Jewish anecdotes, such as °Abd Allāh b. °Amru b. al-°Āṣṣ and Abu Hurairah;
- (iii) If his or her view is based on hypothetical personal reasoning (al-ra'i).

Given the above three conditions, a companion's point of view is a mawqūf and, therefore, is inconclusive evidence (ghair ḥujjah) in matters related to the elucidation of the Qur'ān. Therefore, the views of the first category of companions are dubbed as 'conclusive evidence' while the views of the second category companions are labelled as 'inconclusive evidence' of a given exegetical problem. For instance, the views of companions like °Abd Allāh b. °Amru b. al-°Āṣṣ and Abu Hurairah are characterized as mawqūf rather than marfū° because they are known to be heavily influenced by Jewish anecdotes.

Compared to the marfū°/mawqūf dichotomy, it is worthwhile to note that the opinion of a successor, early or late, is categorized as maqtū° (literally meaning 'terminated', 'cut off' because such views are disconnected from Muḥammad's period) and, thus, cannot be taken as conclusive evidence for exegetical matters. The successors' exegetical views are of much less authority. Therefore, a successor's opinion on Qur'anic subject matters is categorized as inconclusive evidence (Ibn Kathīr 1994, pp. 54–56; al-°Irāqī 1996, pp. 56–57; al-Suyūṭī 1996a, 1, pp. 94–101; al-Judai° 2001, pp. 304–307). This is attributed to a number of reasons, such as

- (i) The successors did not witness the revelation.
- (ii) They did not witness historical events like battles, or some incidents during the lifetime of Muḥammad.

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- (iii) They relied on Jewish anecdotes.
- (iv) They relied upon their personal hypothetical opinions.
- (v) They had non-mainstream dogmatic theological and political views.<sup>7</sup>

This dichotomy between companion and successor's opinions on Qur'anic subject-matters is explained in the following diagram:

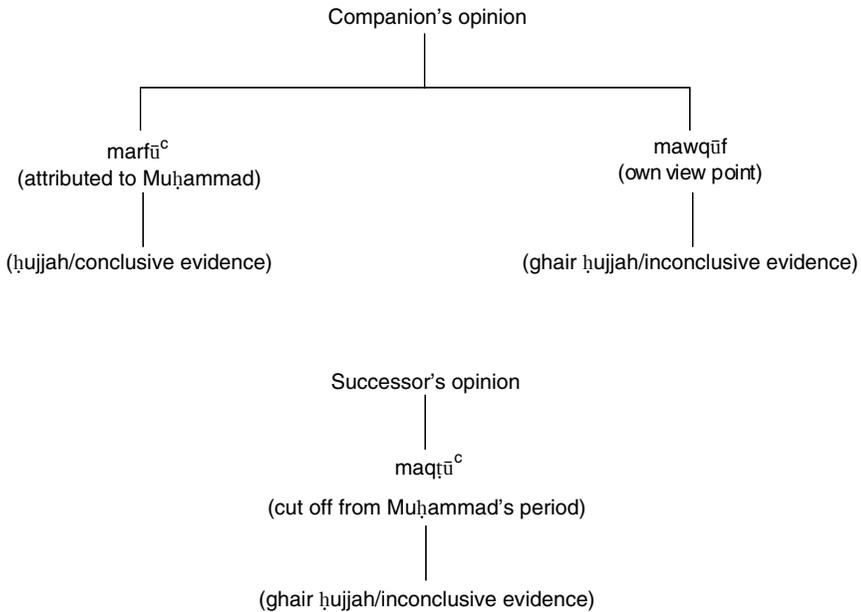


Figure 1 Dichotomy between marfūc, mawqūf and maqṭūc exegetical views

Although the companions are considered as sacrosanct by mainstream and most non-mainstream exegetes, their intellectual capacity and level of comprehending the Qur'ān vary from one companion to another. This is true of lexical problems, circumstances of revelation, *mutashābihāt*, and abrogating/abrogated āyahs. Among the companions whose exegetical views are held in high esteem are ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib (d.40/661) and Ibn ʿAbbās (d.68/687) of the evolutionary phase of tafsīr (for more details, see [Chapter 5, Section: 5.2.1.2.1](#)). The major sources from which the companions derive their exegetical analysis and which are employed as exegetical devices include the Qur'ān through intertextuality which is based on the widely held view that the Qur'ān elucidates itself (*al-Qur'ānu yufassiru nafsahu*), prophetic tradition, general and specific meaning (*takhṣīṣ al-ʿāmm*), paraphrase (*tabyīn al-mujmal*), unrestricted and restricted meaning (*taqyīd al-muṭlaq*), context, Qur'anic parables, explanation of lexically related expressions, hypothetical opinion and some Jewish anecdotes (for more details on the sources of companion exegesis see [Chapter 5, Section 5.2.1.2.2](#)).

The tafsīr activity of the companions is primarily oral, part of ḥadīth, unstructured, and is practised for teaching and learning. The companions' tafsīr can be characterized as synoptic where the general meaning of a Qur'anic passage is provided. Also, in their tafsīr, the companions refer to two modes of reading only: the mutawātir (multiple source) and the shāhdhah (irregular) modes of reading.<sup>8</sup> Another striking feature of the companions' tafsīr is that they do not touch upon the mutashābihāt, especially the anthropomorphic expressions such as the notion of al-istiwā' ʿalā al-ʿarsh (literally meaning 'sitting on the throne'), al-rahmānu ʿalā al-ʿarshi istawā (the Lord of Mercy, established on the throne [Q20: 5]) and God's attributes (for more details, see [Chapter 5, Section: 5.2.1.2.3](#)). After the death of Muḥammad, that is, during the formative phase, some of the first category companions established their own schools of Qur'anic exegesis in the areas they settled in. Three prominent schools of Qur'anic exegesis have evolved. They are set up by three prominent and authoritative companion exegetes (see [Chapter 5, Section: 5.2.1.3.1](#), for further details). These are as follows:

- (i) Makkah school of exegesis set up by Ibn ʿAbbās (d.68/687),
- (ii) Madīnah school of exegesis set up by Ubai b. Kaʿb (d.20/640),
- (iii) Kūfah school of exegesis set up by ʿAbd Allāh b. Masʿūd (d.32/653).

Leading early successor exegetes have studied in one of these three schools and are supervised by their relevant companion teachers. Thus, the tafsīr activity of the successors is heavily dependant on the companions' views who have acted as supervisors of their successor students. However, a leading early successor exegete has also laid down a prominent school of Qur'anic exegesis. Thus, we have

- (iv) Baṣrah school of exegesis set up by al-Ḥasan al-Baṣri (d.110/728).

During the successors' phase, Qur'anic exegesis has begun to be recorded. However, the tafsīr activity of the successors, particularly the late successors (awākhir al-tābiʿīn), is characterized by hypothetical opinion, weak chain of authorities of ḥadīth, paraphrase, Jewish anecdotes, variant modes of reading, theological cleavages and politically oriented theological views. Among the exegetical tools of the successors are the circumstances of revelation and abrogation (for more details on the main characteristics of successors' exegesis, see [Chapter 5, Section: 5.2.1.3.3](#)). It is during the successors' phase that the mutashābihāt āyahs have begun to be accounted for by exegetes and, most importantly, the different schools of thought (madhāhib – [sects]) have evolved. With the evolution of madhāhib, the views of mainstream and non-mainstream exegetes have seeped into tafsīr works. It is worthwhile to note that the activity of writing down (tadwīn) tafsīr works has started during the post-successors' period in the first quarter of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries during which tafsīr has gained limited autonomy and become more independent of ḥadīth studies. However, interest in Qur'anic gharīb works and the recording of gharīb works have started during the first half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries. *Gharīb al-qur'ān* refers to Qur'anic expressions that are not widely used by native speakers of Arabic.

Although the companions and the successors have shown tremendous interest in the teaching and learning of Qur'anic exegesis, Western scholars such as Ignác Goldziher (1920; cf. Rippin 1987, p. 237), Abbot (1967, pp. 111–113) and Wansbrough (1977, p. 158) are of the opinion that there has been opposition to the exegesis of the Qur'ān, especially the *mutashābihāt* (unclear) āyahs.<sup>9</sup> It was not until the close of the second century that *tafsīr al-mutashābihāt* was permitted to be studied by fully qualified religious scholars. In the opinion of Wansbrough (1997), the objections to *tafsīr* are to be understood only secondarily as disapproval of independent reasoning (*ra'i*) as opposed to traditional science (*'ilm*). However, Birkeland (1955, p. 19) rejects this contention and asserts that opposition to Qur'anic exegesis did not exist in the first century, but had a short-lived existence from the end of the first till the end of the second century. Similarly, Gätje (1971, p. 32) argues that 'already in the early exegesis, there was a tendency to interpret as many of the ambiguous passages (*mutashābihāt*) of the Qur'ān as possible, if not all of them, including even unimportant detail.' If there really was such an opposition, Versteegh (1993, p. 56) argues, it must have come from certain circles which were, however, unable to prevent its widespread practice. Leemhuis (1988, p. 16) and Gilliot (1999, p. 7) support Birkeland's hypothesis as the most satisfactory. There is no reason to think, Gilliot (1999) asserts, that the very first generations of Muslims were opposed, in any general way, to giving explanations of the Qur'ān. We are of the opinion, however, that if there was such an opposition to the exegesis of the Qur'ān, it must have been justified in the light of

- (i) undue concern over the likelihood of confusing the prophetic tradition, that is, ḥadīth, with exegetical views especially those hinged upon hypothetical opinion, and
- (ii) over zealous concern by early companions about the analysis of theological *mutashābihāt* āyahs.

However, during the companions' phase of exegesis, the opposition to *tafsīr* has been adopted as an orthodox defence against independent reasoning and heretics, especially against the *tafsīr* of the theological *mutashābihāt*. The reason for this is that while the *muḥkamāt* are āyahs that are clear and self-explanatory, comprehending the *mutashābihāt* is not an easy task for every one. Early Muslim scholars are concerned that the discussion of a *mutashābihāt* āyah may lead to theological confusion and the spread of heretical views in the Muslim community. The *mutashābihāt* are 'ambiguous' theologically, stylistically and linguistically (cf. Abdul-Raof 2004). Thus, hypothetical personal opinion plays a major role in their exegesis. According to Rippin (1999, p. xviii; 2000, p. 86), the lack of documentary evidence makes the issue of the legitimacy of and opposition to *tafsīr* a difficult one to adjudicate, and the debate among the views of Ignác Goldziher, Harris Birkeland, Nabia Abbot, John Wansbrough and Fred Leemhuis remains unresolved. The opposition to the exegesis of the Qur'ān suggested by Abbot can be seen in view of the following factors:

- (i) Both the ḥadīth and exegesis of the Qur'ān were parallel to each other in terms of recording.
- (ii) The recording of exegesis was not as paramount as that of ḥadīth.
- (iii) Qur'anic exegesis was entirely backed up by ḥadīth.
- (iv) Qur'anic exegesis was part of ḥadīth studies.
- (v) And most importantly, the companions' priority, after the Prophet's death, was to collect and record ḥadīth.

Although the early verbal and written tafsīr of the Qur'ān ascribed to the companions and the successors is mostly hinged upon Qur'anic and ḥadīth intertextuality which, in general terms, belongs to the school of traditional exegesis (al-tafsīr bil-ma'thūr), the early tafsīr tradition of the companions and the successors contains some hypothetical personal opinions (al-tafsīr bil-ra'i). Thus, their tafsīr is slightly mixed with what has become to be known as al-tafsīr bil-ra'i which is not based on tafsīr al-nabi; that is, it is not compatible with Muḥammad's tradition. However, some of this tafsīr literature is dubbed as 'commended' (maḥmūd), although it has no intertextual backing from the ḥadīth. The rest of early tafsīr tradition ascribed to the early successors is also categorized as al-tafsīr bil-ra'i but is stigmatized as 'uncommended' (madhmūm) due to reliance on their own independent reasoning and speculative periphrasis of Qur'anic passages and expressions. This has marked the development of speculative tafsīr tradition and the emergence of non-mainstream tafsīr represented by the Shī'ah,<sup>10</sup> Mu'tazilah, Khawārij and the Sufis who do not rely much on ḥadīth, as opposed to mainstream tafsīr represented mostly by Sunni scholars, that is, the traditionists. The dichotomy between mainstream and non-mainstream schools of Qur'anic exegesis has become a dogmatically oriented approach to the linguistic and theological analysis of the Qur'anic text. This dichotomy and its ramifications can be illustrated by the following diagram:

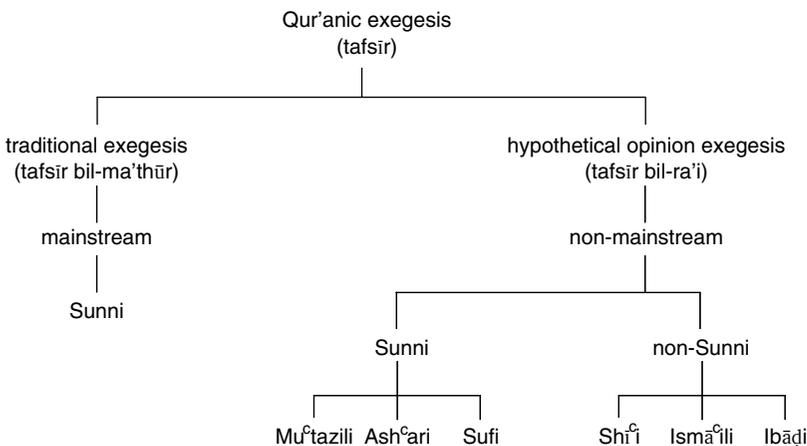


Figure 2 Ramifications of approaches to Qur'anic exegesis

In a similar vein, philosophical and scientific approaches to tafsīr are classified as a non-mainstream school of exegesis. For mainstream Muslim scholars, the premise on which al-tafsīr bil-ma'thūr is based is backed up by the ḥadīth narrated by Ibn ʿAbbās in which Muḥammad is believed to have said, that is, the Prophet of God said, 'man qāla fi al-qur'ān bira'yihī falyatabawwa' maq'adahū min al-nār [Those who explain the Qur'ān by independent reasoning will have their place prepared for them in the fire of hell],' and also on the ḥadīth narrated by Jundub b. ʿAbd Allāh, that is, the messenger of God said, 'man takallama fi al-qur'ān bira'yihī fa'aṣāb faqad akhṭa' [Those who interpret the Qur'ān by independent reasoning are wrong even if they arrive at the right meaning]' (al-Mubārakfūrī 1990, 8, p. 223, 225; Ibn Ḥanbal 1993, 1, p. 420). For mainstream scholars, al-tafsīr bil-ra'i is fanciful. Thus, anyone who dares to employ a hypothetical opinion with regards to the meaning(s) of a given Qur'anic passage or word is dubbed, and in fact stigmatized, as 'mu'awwil' (interpreter of the Qur'ān by hypothetical opinion, that is, personal reasoning) and his tafsīr is considered wrong and counter to the Qur'ān and the sunnah (the standard practice) of Muḥammad.

Due to the fact that the partisans of the school of personal hypothetical opinion have gone far astray in their exegetical analysis, al-tafsīr bil-ra'i has been called into question since the companions' phase of exegesis during the early first/seventh century. The historical and political polarity between mainstream and non-mainstream Islam has been firmly established in the community due to the emergence of polarity in tafsīr methodology. In the view of Saeedullah (1977, p. 131), the religious rivalries among the Sunnis and Shī'is have shaken the foundation of the Abbasid society. This political turmoil has significantly influenced the two major schools of exegesis: al-tafsīr bil-ma'thūr and al-tafsīr bil-ra'i. As a result, a dichotomy between the two schools of Qur'anic exegesis has now evolved. Mainstream scholars have rejected al-tafsīr bil-ra'i and branded it as objectionable (*madhmūm*), as opposed to commended (*mamdūh*), for the following reasons:

- (i) Non-mainstream exegetes invoke esoteric meanings (allegorical, underlying meanings) of Qur'anic words. This approach to Qur'anic exegesis is not adopted by Muḥammad and his companions.
- (ii) They have made Qur'anic commentary a political and theological platform to advance their own dogmas.
- (iii) They are anthropomorphic.
- (iv) They minimize the role of ḥadīth in their commentaries.
- (v) They include forged ḥadīths and ascribe them to authoritative companions to substantiate a political or a theological premise.
- (vi) They include fabricated exegetical views and ascribe them to authoritative companion or successor exegetes to substantiate their dogmas.
- (vii) Some of the non-mainstream exegesis works are marked by polemics against the companions of Muḥammad.

- (viii) They provide different reasons for the revelation of some āyahs.
- (ix) They provide different abrogated āyahs.
- (x) They use unknown (majhūl) individuals in their chain of authorities with regards to a given ḥadīth or an exegetical view.
- (xi) They avoid exegetical elaboration on āyahs that are counter to their political or theological views.
- (xii) They are influenced by scholastic theology.
- (xiii) And most seriously, their exegesis includes pernicious innovations (bid'ah).

Although tafsīr scholarship evolved and flourished in the countries of today's Middle East, the Western flank of the Muslim empire, namely, the Andalus, which is today's Spain and Portugal, witnessed under the Muslim rule in the third/ninth century a robust tafsīr activity as a continuation of the phase of recording exegesis and culminated in the eighth/fourteenth century (for more details, see [Chapter 5, Sections 5.2.2.3 and 5.2.2.3.1](#)). The Andalus school of exegesis, however, enjoys its own prototypical features:

- (i) The Andalusī exegetes focus primarily on linguistic and jurisprudential exegesis.
- (ii) They are influenced by mainstream traditional exegesis.
- (iii) They oppose esoteric and allegorical approaches to Qur'anic exegesis.
- (iv) Although they refer in their exegesis to al-Zamakhshari who is a non-mainstream exegete, the Andalusī exegetes are not influenced by his Mu'tazilī views. They only quote him with regards to linguistic matters.
- (v) They are not keen on Jewish anecdotes.

The modern phase of tafsīr, however, is a continuation of the mainstream and non-mainstream schools of exegesis. As a result of post-World War II, and post-independence, political tafsīr activity of the modern phase has been characterized by the evolution of literary exegesis with political leanings, exhortation exegesis for the less educated general public, as well as the emergence of scientific tafsīr which has emerged as a result of the scientific and medical developments during the twentieth century (for more details on modern tafsīr scholarship, see [Chapter 5, Sections 5.2.3 and 5.2.3.1](#)). In tracing the historical development of tafsīr, we have now provided three major phases of Qur'anic exegesis:

- (1) Formative phase: This includes the formative phase under which the exegesis of Muḥammad, the companions and the successors is subsumed. It, thus, has begun during the lifetime of Muḥammad until the early years of the second/eighth century.
- (2) Recording phase: This has begun during the first quarter of the second/eighth century.
- (3) Modern phase: This has begun during the nineteenth century.

These periods of tafsir development are illustrated below:

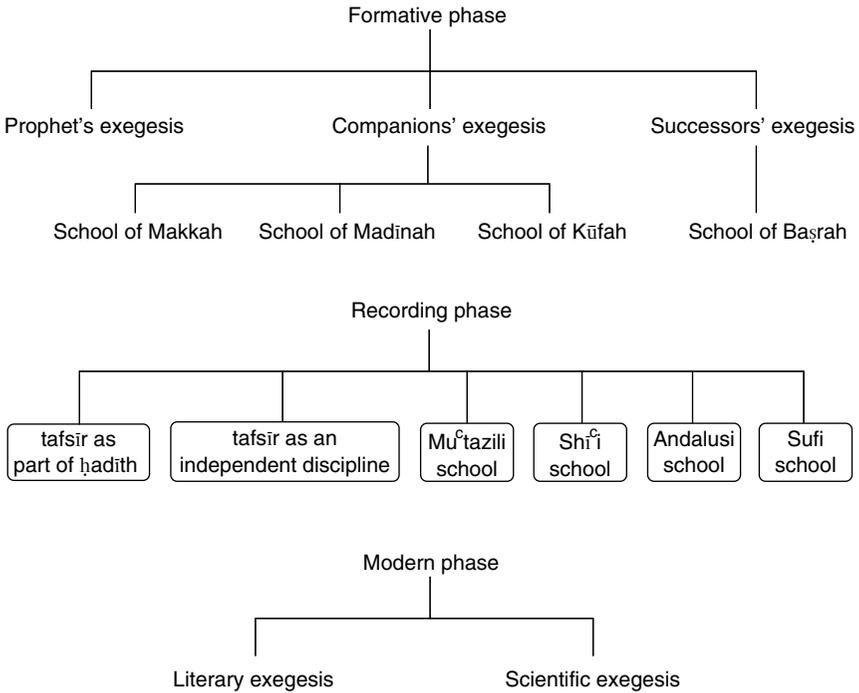


Figure 3 Progression periods of Qur'anic exegesis

However, Rippin (2000, p. 85) provides four different periods of tafsir: formative, classical, mature and contemporary. Rippin (2000) also claims that the separation is artificial, particularly fuzzy at the edges and certainly in need of refinement.

### 1.3 Function of exegesis

Tafsir is a vehicle of written elucidation of the Qur'anic material. Through textual elucidation, the reader is shown how the Qur'an becomes divested of time and space. As an activity, its methodological approach is based, in principle, on the Qur'an; prophetic tradition; the customary practice (sunnah) of Muḥammad; and the views of his companions. Qur'anic exegesis is a literary activity whose function is the clarification of the theological, grammatical, semantic and historical aspects of the Scripture. A work of tafsir also aims to expound the Qur'an's recurrent prototypical tenets of faith such as monotheism (al-tawḥīd), prophethood (al-nubuwwah), eschatology (al-ma'ād/al-ba'ṭh) and reward and

punishment (al-thawāb wal-<sup>ci</sup>iqāb), as well as its textual features such as God's omnipotence (qudrat allāh), exhortation, the thematic structure of its sūrahs and the conceptual chaining (al-munāsabah/alrābuṭ al-manṭiqi) among its constituent āyahs and sūrahs. Most importantly, the function of the literary activity of Qur'anic exegesis is to achieve spiritual salvation to the reader. The exegete attempts to show how the Qur'ān, as a canon, can revive human life and be a source of spiritual deliverance.

As a human scholarship, Qur'anic exegesis attempts to unravel the multi-faceted aspects of the Qur'anic text which is taken as a canon of theology. Qur'anic exegesis also aims to extract the social and spiritual import of Qur'anic passages and investigate the possible ways of putting them into socio-religious practice. The study of tafsīr contributes to the understanding of the development of early Islamic thought. Tafsīr has had a major role in the development of other Islamic intellectual disciplines. Qur'anic exegesis encompasses other sub-disciplines such as the variant modes of readings, abrogation, clear and ambiguous āyahs, reasons for revelation, Qur'anic linguistics, Qur'anic stylistics, stories of the Prophets, prophetic tradition, prophetic biography, the development of Islamic law and its varied schools of jurisprudence; the development of mainstream and non-mainstream schools of thought, Arabic linguistics, Islamic history and philosophy; the influence of the Jueo-Christian milieu; and most importantly, the theologically oriented āyahs related to fighting and the development of divergent religious dogmas such as jihād and political allegiance to the ruler. Thus, the tafsīr tradition and written works have evolved in response to varying political, theological, historical and intellectual conditions. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that the dichotomy between the ḥaqīqi (exoteric, literal, non-allegorical, surface, denotative) and majāzi (exoteric, allegorical, underlying, non-literal) significations of Qur'anic expressions and passages has also evolved and become at the heart of tafsīr scholarship right from the evolutionary phase. In the view of Wild (1996, p. 151) and Heinrichs (1992, pp. 258–270), the question of ḥaqīqah and majāz (truth and metaphor) was one of the factors which decisively shaped Muslim exegesis.

In terms of political and theological cleavages, the growing polarity between traditional and rational schools of exegesis has significantly contributed to the genesis of the sectarian tafsīr. The exegesis of the Qur'ān has acquired a politico-religious function. Qur'anic exegesis has evolved into sectarian exegesis favouring esoteric shades of meaning of Qur'anic expressions or passages. Tafsīr has ultimately become the battleground of political Islam and theological conflict among various Muslim schools of thought. As a result, exegetical views have drawn the geo-political map of the Muslim population across the Muslim world.<sup>11</sup> Various mainstream and non-mainstream sects of Islam have been nesting next to, or far away from, each other as a natural consequence of different theological views that have emerged from Qur'anic exegesis. Therefore, an exegetical work mirrors vividly the politico-theological orientation of a given commentator and his school of exegesis. For Hanafi (1996, p. 203), each tafsīr expresses the

socio-political commitment of the exegete. Thus, Qur'anic exegesis has become an ideological weapon employed by various socio-political powers to maintain or to change the *status quo*, a conservative weapon to maintain and a revolutionary weapon to change. In fact, Hanafi has gone to the extreme by accusing modern thematic exegesis of Marxist leanings, given its high and clear commitment to the poor, the oppressed and the wretched of the earth. In the Arab and Muslim world, Hanafi (1996, p. 211) enthusiastically argues, colonialism, oppression, social injustice, poverty, ignorance, dictatorship and other evils are socio-political facts. 'Thematic exegesis of the Qur'ān begins with this reality. . . It appears in a Marxist language . . . and, because it uses a philosophical and technical language, it can be quickly accused of being the victim of westernization' (for more details on thematic exegesis, see [Chapter 4, Section 4.2.3.4](#)).

It is worthwhile to note that the function of Qur'anic exegesis is influenced by the polarity between traditional (mainstream) and rational (non-mainstream) schools of exegesis. This is illustrated by the following diagram:



Figure 4 Approach-oriented function of Qur'anic exegesis

#### 1.4 Historical authenticity of sources

Just as understanding early Islam is related to the development of the activity of tafsīr during the formative phase in the first/seventh century, understanding the historicity of early tafsīr works of the same phase is equally related to understanding the status of a given tafsīr work. The nature of Qur'anic exegesis as an activity of the formative phase, the actual tafsīr works which can be extracted from this particular phase and the divergence and proliferation of ascription of tafsīr works to authors of different dates have triggered justifiable suspicion and have been investigated with a sceptical eye by Western scholars. One prominent problematic instance is the work, known as *Tanwīr al-Miqbās min Tafsīr Ibn ʿAbbās*,<sup>12</sup> ascribed in some secondary sources to al-Kalbi (d.146/763); in others, to Ibn ʿAbbās (d.68/687) and al-Fairūzābādī (d.817/1415); and still others, for example, to al-Dīnawari (d.308/920). Most likely, however, this particular tafsīr work can only be attributed to al-Dīnawari (cf. Rippin 1994, p. 39; 1999, p. xii; and 2000, p. 86). The early years of the formative phase of Qur'anic exegesis has been a

major source of controversy in Oriental Qur'anic studies. For Muslim scholars, the exegesis of Muḥammad constitutes the historical landmark of early hermeneutics and his companions are the authentic transmitters of his tradition and exegetical views who have transferred their exegetical knowledge and tools to the successors. Like Rippin (1982, p. 229), Gilliot (2002, pp. 103–104) suggests that additional research as well as work is needed on early tafsīr works which remain available only in manuscript form and for which there is a desperate need for proper editions to elucidate more fully the problems of the beginning and early development of Qur'anic exegesis.

Whether out of theological conviction or merely unconsciously, Rippin (1985, p. 152) argues, modern scholarship has approached Islam in the same way that it has traditionally treated Judaism and Christianity – as a religion of history, that is, as a religion that has a stake in history. In his account of the methodologies of John Wansbrough who tried to understand the beginnings of Islam, Rippin (1985) draws our attention to the questionable historical authenticity of the early Islamic sources and warns us of the literary qualities of these sources available to us and of the availability of very little material of 'neutral' testimonial quality for the study of early Islam if we are to achieve positive results. Gilliot (2002, p. 103) also refers to Orientalists who question the reliability of the authoritative chain of transmission as a means of reconstructing supposedly early tafsīr works. For John Wansbrough (1978, pp. 116–117), such information contains and documents the basis of Islam as written within the first two centuries (1<sup>st</sup>–2<sup>nd</sup>/7<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup>) and seems to have a stake in the Islamic history being recounted. For Wansbrough (1970, p. 247), Qur'anic exegesis is not likely to have been articulated before the third/ninth century. Unlike Wansbrough, Sezgin believes in the existence of early documents in order to substantiate the claim for the validity of ḥadīth transmission and the isnād mechanism. Sezgin's treatment of tafsīr specifically appears to document the notion of written texts existing and being transmitted from very early on in the Muslim world (Rippin 1982, p. 228; Gilliot 2002, p. 103). Nowhere, Rippin (1985, p. 153) asserts, has the attitude toward the historical character of the sources about the foundation of Islam proved to be more resilient than in the exegesis of the Qur'ān, especially the reasons for revelation known as *asbāb al-nuzūl*, as one of the categories of exegetical information that record the historical events concerning the revelation of a given āyah. However, Wansbrough is rather radical in his scepticism of the authenticity of the early Muslim sources and corpus that constitute the foundation of Islam. His argument is that we do not know and probably never can know what really happened (p. 157). On the other hand, Wansbrough's results and methodological validity have also become a rallying point for many objections by other Qur'ān scholars. In his attempt to elucidate the meaning of (al-ṣamad) of Q112, Rubin (1984, p. 197) argues that Q112 is one of the most typical examples of the reluctance of Western scholars to rely upon Muslim tafsīr as a source for understanding the meaning of the Qur'anic text. Their reluctance is due to the various opinions presented in Muslim tafsīr which are offered by later Muslim commentators (p. 197).

The ḥadīth literature has been the object of an intense search during the first two and a half centuries of the Islamic era. There is, however, much obscurity and

dispute, in the view of Watt (1973, p. 258), about the beginnings of the process of writing down the ḥadīth. The ḥadīths are collected into many written compilations, and gradually six of these (al-kutub al-sittah) have become recognized in much of the Sunni world as the most authoritative ones (Speight 1988, p. 63).<sup>13</sup> As the science of ḥadīth developed and the opinions of scholars emerged regarding the relationship of the sunnah to the Qur'ān, emphasis was largely placed on the practical nature of tafsīr (p. 64). However, no matter how significant the sunnah or prophetic ḥadīths are, the sunnah or a ḥadīth cannot abrogate any āyah in the Qur'ān. This is the major position of Muslim scholars. The main function of ḥadīth is to explain the doubtful and to expound the brief, but never to add a new element to the Islamic doctrine (al-Husayni 1960, p. 297). Only the Qur'ān can abrogate a given āyah in the Qur'ān or a given sunnah.

The ḥadīth has been considered as a major reference in the exegesis of the Qur'ān since the formative phase during which the companions and the successors have relied heavily on the intertextual relationship between the two canonical texts of the ḥadīth and the Qur'ān. Sadly, however, 'extensive forgery in ḥadīth was commonly known and acknowledged to have occurred in the early decades of the advent of Islam' (Kamali 2005, p. 66).<sup>14</sup> Similarly, for al-Husayni (1960, p. 297), the authentic ḥadīths 'are like a handful of grain in a heap of chaff'. It is also worthwhile to note that during the documentation phase, exegetes do not refer to the full chain of authorities, that is, the isnād, but rather mention only the last name in the chain of a given ḥadīth. The reason for this may be attributed to the fact that the arrangement of the isnād and matn (content and text) of ḥadīths has already been established by the traditionists (cf. Abdus Sattar 1977, p. 123). Some modern Muslim scholars have undermined the function of ḥadīth in Qur'anic exegesis and expressed scepticism about its authenticity. For instance, Aḥmad Amīn (1969) and Maḥmūd Abu Raiyah (1976) argue that the ḥadīth cannot be a canonical source like the Qur'ān and that the sunnah should not be considered as conclusive evidence (ḥujjah). Their scepticism is shored up by the following factors:

- (i) the fact that the traditionists are not critical enough;
- (ii) the traditionists have been concerned more about the chain of authorities than the matn of the ḥadīth;
- (iii) the personality of some ḥadīth transmitters, like Abu Hurairah, should not be taken for granted.

### **1.5 Scepticism about Isnād and ascription**

The isnād methodology in both tafsīr and ḥadīth<sup>15</sup> started during the successors' phase in the second half of the first/seventh century as a reliable means of scholarship to authenticate the transmitted materials and to act as a safety valve against interpolation and augmentation. However, fabricated ḥadīths and forged exegetical views have continued to flow and are transmitted by unscrupulous transmitters for their own politico-theological ends. Rival mainstream and non-mainstream schools

of thought have played a role in the fabrication of ḥadīths. Thus, forged ḥadīths proliferated out of control across the Muslim world. The isnād-based exegesis has been shrouded in doubt because a Qur'anic commentary is hinged upon the isnād of ḥadīths adduced by a given exegete. The isnād that permeates Qur'anic exegesis has been, justifiably, engulfed by moderate to extreme scepticism on the part of Western Qur'ān scholars for possible corruption related to a forged isnād (chain of authorities). For instance, for āyah 87 of Q15, 'walaqad ātaināka sab'an min al-mathāni wal-qur'āna al-azīm [We have certainly given you (O Muḥammad) seven of the often repeated āyahs and the great Qur'ān]', al-Ṭabari (d.311/923) provides over eighty-three exegetical narrations related to this āyah (cf. Rubin 1993; al-Ṭabari 2005, 7, pp. 533–542). Among the famous advocates of scepticism are Schacht, Juynboll, Wansbrough, Sprenger, Nöldeke and Goldziher. Political isnād has also been practised by some exegetes such as the Shī'ī commentator al-Ṭabarsi (1997, 6, p. 10) who ascribes a ḥadīth claimed to have been related on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās in an attempt to substantiate the legitimacy of the caliphate of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib. Muḥammad, in the view of Shī'ī scholars, is also reported to have said, 'man ankara al-qā'im min waladī faqad kafar [Whoever denies the Qā'im, that is, Imām al-Mahdī, is a disbeliever]' in an attempt to substantiate their dogmatic stance with regards to the occultation (ghaibah) of their Imām Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan known as al-Mahdī who was born in 255/868 and, in their opinion, who has been in occultation, that is, is still alive.

Although isnāds, in the view of Rubin (1993, p. 152), cannot be the starting point for dating exegetical ideas, they corroborate the relative dating of the various interpretations of the Qur'ān. However, Fuat Sezgin has drawn attention to the reliability of the chain of transmission and his work has prompted a reconstruction of the Orientalists' traditional critical view of the soundness of authoritative chains, especially in exegesis (Gilliot 2002, p. 103). Leemhuis (1988, p. 14) is also sceptical about the source material of the exegetical activity during the early history of tafsīr and that such source material from the middle of the second/eighth century which contains the exegesis of earlier authorities is virtually non-existent. Unlike Sezgin, Leemhuis (1988) claims that original material, such as papyri from this early period that could substantiate these claims, has as yet not been found. Leemhuis and Wansbrough are not sure whether the claims of the authors of the late second and third Islamic centuries are historically correct, that they merely pass on the material of older authorities. Thus, the controversy is about the reconstruction of early tafsīr and in particular the tafsīr works that are actually written by Ibn 'Abbās and transmitted from him by his pupils and the ones that are recorded in writing as lecture notes from him by his pupils. In the view of Sezgin (Leemhuis 1988, p. 15), we have directly preserved commentaries on the Qur'ān of the pupils of Ibn 'Abbās. In pages 19 to 49 of his first volume of *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*, Fuat Sezgin produces an impressive list of early tafsīr works in an attempt to prove the existence of early written documents (Rippin 1984, p. 22). In a similar vein, Abbott (1967, pp. 96–106) is of the opinion that ascriptions of early tafsīr works are authentic and the transmission of tafsīr is connected with written documents. From the end of the

second/eighth century onward, Leemhuis (1988, p. 30) claims, tafsīr material of different kinds that could be considered authoritative on the basis of a sound isnād was collected more and more into compilatory tafsīrs. This process had in fact started when the living tradition had become fixed.

Confusion over the ascription of a given work to a given author has not been limited to the formative phase of Qur'anic exegesis. The confusion over the names of scholars has also extended to the fourth/tenth century. For instance, some scholars hold the view that Abu Bakr al-Rāzi and al-Jaṣṣāṣ are two different persons, while others think that Abu Bakr al-Rāzi al-Jaṣṣāṣ is the name of the same person. Saeedullah (1977, p. 133) argues that actually there are three persons who bear the name of Abu Bakr al-Rāzi: one is Abu Bakr Aḥmad Ibn ʿAli Ibn Ḥusain (d.315/927), the second is Abu Bakr Aḥmad Ibn ʿAli al-Rāzi al-Jaṣṣāṣ (d.370/980), and the third is Abu Bakr Aḥmad Ibn ʿAli al-Rāzi al-Isfarāʾini who died at the end of the first or beginning of the second quarter of the fifth/eleventh century. Further, for Saeedullah, Muḥammad Zāhid al-Kawthari and Frederik Kirn (1977, pp. 135–136), the ascription to Abu Bakr Aḥmad Ibn ʿAli al-Rāzi al-Jaṣṣāṣ of *Mukhtaṣar Ikhtilāf al-Fuqahāʾ* has been an established fact. Similarly, Ḥajji Khalīfah, (d.1068/1658) in his work *Kaṣhḥ al-Zunūn*, ascribes this work to al-Jaṣṣāṣ. However, for Muḥammad Ṣaghīr al-Maʿṣūmi, the same work is ascribed to al-Ṭahāwī (d.239–321/853–933) and that al-Jaṣṣāṣ has not written any work of this title (1977, p. 135).

Due to questions of authenticity and dating of early Muslim works, it has become difficult for the Orientalist sceptics like Leemhuis and Wansbrough to discern the genuine isnād from the spurious. Augmented works on tafsīr such as the tafsīr book attributed to Ibn ʿAbbās (d.68/687), known as *Tanwīr al-Miqbās min Tafsīr Ibn ʿAbbās*, the paternal cousin of Muḥammad and the ancestor of the Abbasids, have even more fuelled the sceptical approach to Muslim exegetical tradition. In fact, Ibn ʿAbbās's tafsīr book still remains mythical. Thus, the transmitted views of a companion or successor exegete may not be accepted as his authentic source material even though isnād is mentioned. The seeds of their sceptical stance are watered by weak isnād and unreliable chain of transmitters. This is attributed to the fact that some of the isnāds are fabricated and pervaded various Qur'anic commentaries. However, other Western scholars are exponents of both isnād and ḥadīths and believe that isnād and ḥadīths are sufficiently reliable and authentic. Ibn ʿAbbās, the symbol of the formative Muslim community and one of the most frequently cited exegete by Qur'ān commentators, is regarded by Muslim scholars as the ḥabr (encyclopaedic, learned scholar, [ḥaver in Hebrew]), one of the most venerable instruments of Qur'anic exegesis, and whose views are attested and sacrosanct. However, for Nöldeke and Schwally (cf. Berg 2000, p. 133), Ibn ʿAbbās' prominence is a fiction; for Nagel (cf. Berg 2000, p. 133), he is the progenitor of the Abbasid dynasty who served as the surest foundation upon which to base their dynastic claims; and for Sprenger, Ibn ʿAbbās is a liar. If so, the edifice of Qur'anic exegesis crumbles like a digestive biscuit. However, al-Dhahabi (1987, 1, pp. 75–77, 81–82, 163–164 and 176) provides a counter argument to Ignaz Goldziher's attack on the influence of Ibn ʿAbbās by Jewish anecdotes, the isnād attributed to Ibn ʿAbbās, and the contradictory views ascribed to him.

Going back to the problem of isnād as the major source of scepticism, we encounter different statements transmitted by different transmitters on the authority of Ibn ʿAbbās. For instance, the parable of Abraham's son, that is, the intended sacrifice (al-dhabīḥ), includes different narrations on the authority of Ibn ʿAbbās, such as ʿIkramah on the authority of Ibn ʿAbbās that the intended sacrifice is Isaac, while we also encounter other narrations by Saʿīd b. Jubair, ʿĀmir al-Shaʿbi, Yūsuf b. Mahrān, Mujāhid and ʿAṭāʾ on the authority of Ibn ʿAbbās that the intended sacrifice is Ishmael (Ibn Kathīr 1993, 4, pp. 18–19). Similarly, Ibn ʿAbbās has been quoted by several classical and modern exegetes with regards to whether Q22 is a Makkan or Madīnan sūrah. For some, he is quoted as saying Q22 is Makkan, while in others as Madīnan.

According to Brockelmann (cf. Rippin 1994, p. 56), the *Tanwīr al-Miqbās min Tafṣīr Ibn ʿAbbās* is said to exist in some 20 manuscript copies. On account of its isnād, this commentary came to be called *Tafṣīr Ibn ʿAbbās*, as it is with the manuscript based on the narration by ʿAbd Allāh Ibn al-Maʾmūn al-Harawī (d.401/1011) published by Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, Beirut (2000). However, the ascription of a given commentary to someone constitutes at times a controversial issue. Allowing a single text concerned with Qur'anic exegesis to be entered under a multitude of authors is not an uncommon practice. For instance, the *Tafṣīr Ibn ʿAbbās* has been ascribed to different authors such as Ibn ʿAbbās (d.68/687), al-Kalbi (d.146/763), al-Dīnawari (d.308/920), and to al-Fairūzābādī (d.729–817/1329–1414). Thus, four different names are listed as the authors of the same tafṣīr work which is of a lexicographical nature, that is, it is a paraphrastic tafṣīr genre. In his positive scepticism of determining the time of origin of the commentary ascribed to Ibn ʿAbbās, the pivotal figure in tafṣīr, Rippin launches his mission as a detective on the trail of a fraud. He raises the intriguing and controversial problem of ascription of *Tafṣīr Ibn ʿAbbās*. There is, in the view of Rippin (1984, p. 24, footnote 15), some variation in isnād between these various manuscripts and the various printed versions. However, Rippin (1994, pp. 71–72) concludes that there is no way of proving the fact, that Ibn ʿAbbās is connected to the material found in this *Tafṣīr*. For Wansbrough (1977, p. 146), al-Dīnawari's work, which seems to originate from use in a popular preaching context, is a nearly verbatim reproduction of al-Kalbi. Rippin (1981, 1983 and 2000) also refers to other works and texts that are ascribed to Ibn ʿAbbās but appear in different titles or occur in titles by other authors. These works are related to Qur'anic lexicography, they highlight the semantic analysis through brief definitions of Qur'anic words listed either with or without sūrah order and a quotation from pre-Islamic poetry (shawāhid) to back up the meaning of a given Qur'anic word and its occurrence in pre-Islamic profane literature. These works are like *Gharīb al-Qur'ān*, *Masā'il Nāfi' Ibn al-Azraq* and *al-Lughāt fī al-Qur'ān*.

*Gharīb al-Qur'ān*, for instance, occurs in two manuscripts, one of them under a different title which is of a different book (*al-Lughāt fī al-Qur'ān*), but in fact it contains the text of the original title (*Gharīb al-Qur'ān*). As an independent text *Gharīb al-Qur'ān* attributed to Ibn ʿAbbās does not exist (Rippin 1983, p. 332). Thus, a proliferation of titles has taken place regarding this text and, most significantly of

course, around the figure of Ibn ʿAbbās and his role in Qur'anic exegesis. This is an example of transmission of the basic text through multiple paths (ibid.).

*Masā'il Nāfi' Ibn al-Azraq*, however, is a glossary of 189 Qur'anic words with a brief definition supported by lines of pre-Islamic poetry. These words are asked by the Khārijī Nāfi' Ibn al-Azraq to Ibn ʿAbbās who provides the answers with poetic quotations. The compiler of the text is al-Suyūṭī (d.911/1505) who, in his section of Arabic tribal dialect words (1996a, 1, pp. 326–358), selects the passages which comprise the text from two sources: al-Ṭabarānī's (d.360/971) *al-Muʿjam al-Kabīr* and al-Anbārī's (d.328/940) *Kitāb Ḍḡāḥ al-Waqf wal-Ibtidā'*. Discrepancies are found in the number of Qur'anic words and their same definitions found in the original texts. Rippin (1981, p. 16) concludes that the grounds on which the ascription of *Masā'il Nāfi' Ibn al-Azraq* to Ibn ʿAbbās are not totally evident. Wansbrough (1977, pp. 216–217) has called this ascription into question, too, and claims the sporadic reference to Ibn ʿAbbās is understood as appeal to an authority especially qualified in the sphere of lexicology.

*al-Lughāt fī al-Qur'ān* is another text that is ascribed to Ibn ʿAbbās and deals with Qur'anic lexical items; their brief semantic analysis; Arabic tribal dialects (such as Quraish, Hudhail, Kinānah, Ḥimyar, Tamīm); and foreign words in the Qur'ān such as those related to Aramaic, Syriac, Ethiopic, Persian, and Hebrew. The text of *al-Lughāt fī al-Qur'ān* consists of a collection of some 325 Qur'anic words listed by sūrah order and occurs in three manuscript sources (Rippin 1981, p. 17). The introduction of this text, Rippin argues, may have been added later to the whole text that is ascribed to Ibn ʿAbbās and may have probably been imported from another source and grafted onto the text (pp. 20, 22). The work as a whole exhibits a confused structure which is more likely to be a distillation of several centuries of scholarly work (Rippin, 1981). Textual amendations are several times proposed under the guise of dialect variation. It is perhaps not a very surprising conclusion to state that this text *al-Lughāt fī al-Qur'ān*, like the other two texts, *Gharīb al-Qur'ān* and *Masā'il Nāfi' Ibn al-Azraq*, although attributed to Ibn ʿAbbās, can hardly stem from him. The three works clearly do not even originate from the same pen (Rippin, 1981, p. 25). The ascription of tafsīr works to Ibn ʿAbbās, in the view of Rippin (1999, p. xvi), is an appeal to authority in the past, to the family of the Prophet and to a name which is gathering an association with exegetical activity in general.

We have also encountered different circumstances of revelation quoted by different exegetes who attribute them to Ibn ʿAbbās. We are not sure which circumstance of revelation in relation to the same āyah has actually been said by Ibn ʿAbbās. Let us consider the following example:

am turīdūna an tas'alū rasūlakum kamā su'ila mūsā min qablu [Do you intend to ask your messenger as Moses was asked before?]

(Q2:108)

According to al-Wāḥidī (d.468/1075; 2000, p. 19), Ibn ʿAbbās is narrated to have said that the reason for the revelation of this āyah is related to ʿAbd Allāh b.

Abī Kaʿb and a group of people from Quraish who asked Muḥammad to turn al-Ṣafā into gold, to enlarge the space of the area of Makkah, and to create rivers in Makkah. However, al-Qurṭubī (1997, 2, p. 69) quotes Ibn ʿAbbās to have said that the circumstance of revelation of this āyah is related to Rāfiʿ b. Khuzaimah and Wahab b. Zaid who challenged Muḥammad to bring down a scripture from the heaven to read and to create rivers so that they believe him as a Prophet.

We have also encountered different views attributed to Ibn ʿAbbās and quoted by different exegetes or narrators with regards to whether a given sūrah is Makkan or Madīnan. Thus, we cannot be certain which opinion is truly attributed to Ibn ʿAbbās, as in Q10 where Ibn ʿAbbās is narrated to have said that Q10 is Makkan; however, other narrators quote him as saying that it is a Madīnan sūrah. The same applies to Q22 where Ibn ʿAbbās is narrated by some exegetes to have said that it is Makkan and by others as Madīnan.

The variant isnāds pertaining to a given ḥadīth has also its impact on the stories of the Prophets which are related to Jewish anecdotes such as the name of Abraham's sacrifice (al-dhabīḥ) in Q37:101, 107 ('fabashsharnāhu bighulāmin ḥalīm . . . wafadaināhu bidhibḥin ʿaẓīm' [So We gave him good tidings of a forbearing boy . . . and We ransomed him with a great sacrifice]) where different exegetes cite different ḥadīths with different isnāds and conflicting ideas whether the sacrifice is Ishmael or Isaac. For ʿUmar, ʿAli, al-ʿAbbās b. ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib, Ibn Masʿūd, Kaʿb al-Aḥbār, Qatādah, Saʿīd b. Jubair, Masrūq, ʿIkramah, al-Zuhri, al-Suddi and Muqātil, Abraham's sacrifice is Isaac. However, for Ibn ʿAbbās, al-Thawri, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣri, al-Shaʿbi, Mujāhid, al-Kalbi, Abraham's sacrifice is Ishmael (al-Rāzi 1990, 26, pp. 133–134; Mujāhid 2005, p. 227; Muqātil 2003, 3, p. 104; al-Thawri 1983, p. 253; al-Baṣri 1992, 2, p. 240; Ibn Kathīr 1993, 4, pp. 18–19; al-Kkāzin 1995, 4, pp. 23–24; al-Nasafi 1996, 4, p. 41; Bashear 1990, Firestone 1989). Although the views of the companions have been a major source for the genesis of tafsīr, we have encountered conflicting views about this exegetical problem of the identity of al-dhabīḥ. However, other exegetes like al-Ḍaḥḥāk (1999, 2, p. 709) are undecided.

The isnād of a given ḥadīth or a given exegetical view of a companion exegete has taken a political twist. Due to the political and theological turmoil the Muslim community was thrown into over the murder of the third caliph ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān (d.35/656) in the first half of the first/seventh century, Qur'anic exegetes often abused the name of Ibn ʿAbbās in order to justify their exegetical views (for more details on political and theological differences in Qur'anic exegesis, see [Chapter 3](#), [Sections 3.2](#) and [3.3](#) and n. 14 of the present chapter). This was true when the school of hypothetical opinion, that is, rational, exegesis found its way in the Muslim community and new non-mainstream schools of thought have taken shape. In other words, to substantiate an exegetical point of view with regards to either the traditional school of exegesis or the hypothetical school of exegesis, a given exegete resorts to the mythic exemplum of Ibn ʿAbbās. Thus, we encounter an arbitrary nature of ascriptions to Ibn ʿAbbās, and on so many occasions, Rippin (1994, p. 72) adds, it is simply no longer possible to distinguish the false from the true in the matter of opinions ascribed to Ibn ʿAbbās and that the presence of the

isnād is a signalling device indicating that a given tafsīr is not the opinion of the author but rather as a distillation of the most honourable material found in the tradition. Rippin (1994, p. 44), therefore, asserts that the ascription of *Tafsīr Ibn ʿAbbās* to al-Fairūzābādi is just a result of ignorance based on no real substance and is suggested by the isnād of the text found at the very beginning of virtually every copy (both printed and manuscript) which ends sometime in the fourth/tenth century. The problem of the date and method of composition of early exegetical works also applies to the text entitled *Gharīb al-Qurʿān* (manuscript ʿĀṭif Afendi, 2815/8), which is the most flagrant case as discussed by three different authors (Rippin 1984, p. 22).

In the view of Rippin (1984, p. 24), there are other early Qurʿanic exegesis texts whose status raises grave doubts due to their non-cohesive nature and fragmentary composition such as *al-Lughāt fī al-Qurʿān* by Ibn ʿAbbās (d.68/687), *Tafsīr Mujāhid* by Mujāhid Ibn Jabr (d.104/722), *Naskh al-Qurʿān* by al-Zuhri (d.124/742), *Tafsīr al-Qurʿān* by Sufyān al-Thawri (d.161/778), and *Tafsīr ʿAbd al-Razzāq* by ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Ṣanʿāni (d.211/827). Other early tafsīr works which are quite technical and cohesive can be safely ascribed to their single authors (but with possible editorial intrusion and reformulation). These include *Mutashābihāt al-Qurʿān* by al-Kisāʿi (d.187/802), *Maʿāni al-Qurʿān* by al-Farrāʾ (d.207/822), *Majāz al-Qurʿān* by Abu ʿUbaidah (d.210/825) and *Faḍāʾil al-Qurʿān* by Abu ʿUbaid (d.224/834; Rippin, 1984, p. 24).

Rippin (1999, p. xiv) also raises the problem of works of doubtful historical authenticity which have been printed recently and the reconstruction of early tafsīr texts by contemporary editors on the basis of ascriptions found in later texts. Rippin further argues that such 'books' are historically said to have existed, but they are no longer found in manuscript forms. Reconstruction, therefore, is the only solution. However, it is clear, Rippin (1999, p. xiii) asserts, that the fourth/tenth century was one of intense development of works of tafsīr and several significant works from authors who lived roughly in the same period as al-Ṭabari still exist and need to be viewed as a part of classical tafsīr. This includes other works which express differing theological viewpoints such as the tafsīr work of the Ibāḍī scholar Hūd Ibn Muḥkim (d.towards the end of the third/ninth century), the tafsīr works by Shīʿī scholars such as Furāt Ibn Furāt al-Kūfī (d.third/ninth century), al-Aiyāshi (d.320/932) and al-Qummi (end of fourth/tenth century) and the Sufi tafsīr work by al-Tustari (d.283/896).

The reliability of ascription of works to certain authors is not confined to tafsīr literature only. Forged ascription to other authors has also been extended to early treaties on the abrogating and abrogated āyahs<sup>16</sup> which developed during the successors' phase in the second/eighth century such as those by Qatādah (d.117/735), al-Zuhri (d.124/742), and al-Ḥārith Ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān (d.130/747). Some understanding of the origin of some abrogation works must be reached (Powers 1988, p. 120; Rippin 1984). The literary genre of nāsikh wamansūkh emerged during the successors' phase, that is, second/eighth century. Works on the circumstances of revelation have also suffered false ascription. The earliest extant work on this subject is ascribed to Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhri (d.124/742) and entitled

*Tanzīl al-Qur'ān*. For Wansbrough (1977, p. 180), the ascription is arbitrary and the recension is that of the Sufi exegete al-Sulami (d.412/1021). Different successor exegetes have attributed distinct meanings to the notions of muḥkam and mutashābih. For al-Ṭabari (2005, 3, p. 172), for instance, an āyah that is not abrogated is considered as being muḥkam, while an āyah that is abrogated is classified as a mutashābih. Although the companions are reported to have discussed naskh (abrogation), and even disagreed over the abrogation of a particular āyah, references to the companions in the naskh literature are relatively infrequent (Powers 1988, p. 119). For instance, Aḥmad Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Salāmah al-Ṭahāwī (d.239–321/853–933) in his *al-Nāsikh wal-Mansūkh* (pp. 142–143) refers to the disagreement between ʿAli b. Abī Ṭālib and Ibn ʿAbbās over the abrogation of Q4:94. ʿAli maintains that this āyah is abrogated by Q4:115, while Ibn ʿAbbās holds the view that it remains a muḥkam āyah (Powers 1988, p. 119). However, during the successors' phase, the phenomenon of abrogation has come into its own and disagreements among the successors over the status of a particular āyah have surfaced vividly. Different successor exegetes classify the same āyah as either a muḥkam or a mutashābih as in Q2:62. For Mujāhid b. Jabr (d.104/722) and al-Ḍaḥḥāk Ibn Muzāḥim (d.105/723), this āyah is a muḥkam, while Muqātil b. Sulaimān (d.150/767) and Sufyān al-Thawri (d.161/777) are quiet about it.

Scepticism is not confined to the isnād of a given ḥadīth or to the ascription of a given tafsīr work to someone else other than the original author. The authenticity of poetic citations (shawāhid), as a tafsīr tool, has also been shrouded in doubt. Some tafsīr works employ shawāhid to elucidate Qur'anic expressions and linguistic problems. However, Rippin (1983) and Boullata (1990) claim that some of these shawāhid taken from profane literature and which occur in some tafsīr works are in fact invented by the authors of these tafsīr works who have felt the pressure to substantiate their tafsīr of a given Qur'anic expression. Thus, poetic citations, as an exegetical technique, have also been abused by some exegetes. An example of exegetes who refer to forged poetic citations is al-Qaṣṣāb (d.360/970) who attacks the Jahmiyyah who were the followers of Jahm b. Ṣafwān (d.128/745) who established this doctrine which theologically overlapped with the Muʿtazilah. al-Qaṣṣāb (2003, 1, pp. 178–179) discusses Q2:255 'wasiʿa kursiyyuhu al-samāwāti wal-arḍ [His chair extends over the heavens and the earth]' and claims that the Jahmiyyah forged a poetic citation wrongly ascribed to the well-known early Muslim poet Ḥassān b. Thābit (d.54/673): 'wala yukarsi' ʿilm allāh makhluq [No creature can reach the knowledge of God]'. Thus, according to the second half of this verse, the word *kursiy* in Q2:255 is, according to the Jahmiyyah, similar in meaning to the word *kursi*' (knowledge) in the verse; therefore, the āyah should be interpreted as 'His *knowledge* extends over the heavens and the earth'. However, al-Qaṣṣāb (2003) claims that the two words are morphologically distinct since the poetic word (*kursi*') ends with a glottal stop (mahmūzah) and undoubled (khaffah), while the Qur'anic word (*kursiy*) is both doubled (muthqalah, that is, mushaddadah) and without a glottal stop (ghair mahmūzah).

The elucidation of the theological notion of free will and predestination, that is, qadar, has had a significant impact on Qur'anic exegesis both theologically

and politically (see [Chapter 3, Sections 3.2 and 3.3](#)). Since the notion of qadar is directly related to human acts, the Umayyads sought theological refuge in this sensitive question which has given them a comfortable room for political manoeuvrability. When the debate raged between Muslim scholars and the rulers about the tafsīr of qadar, a letter is believed to have been sent by al-Ḥasan al-Baṣri (d.110/728) in reply to a letter from the caliph ʿAbd al-Malik b. Marwān (d.86/705) who requested the former to explain the meaning of qadar. There is scepticism about the ascription to al-Ḥasan al-Baṣri of the reply letter and that it may not have been penned by him but rather by one of his contemporaries (cf. Rauf 1970, p. 294; Watt 1973, p. 101). For al-Shahrastāni (1986, 1, p. 47), this letter can be ascribed to Wāṣil b. ʿAṭāʾ (d.131/748) since al-Ḥasan al-Baṣri, in al-Shahrastāni's opinion, does not believe in qadarism (al-qadariyyah). More interestingly, there is also scepticism about the authorship of *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafā*. In the view of al-Hamdani (1932), different authors have been ascribed to this work, for example, Muʿtazili, metaphysician; the Shīʿi Imām, Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq; Abu al-Qāsim Maslama al-Majrīṭi (d.398/1007); and a committee of a few learned men of Baghdād or Baṣrah about the middle of the fourth/tenth century. The Muʿtazilah, on their part, have also provided traditions that have a theological bearing for their rejection of the doctrine of Muḥammad's intercession (al-shafāʿah) on behalf of people.

In the twentieth century, however, it is interesting to note that ascription of a given work is arranged by the author himself with someone else. In the end, the work appears bearing a different name, not that of the original author. This is due to a number of reasons:

- (i) The sensitivity of the piece of work,
- (ii) fear of the author from backlash,
- (iii) the 'forged' author's name is of a high religious status,
- (iv) readers will be more willing to accept the views expressed in the book if it bears the name of a religious authority than if it bears a controversial author.

For instance, Ṭāhā Ḥussain wrote a book called *al-Islām wa-Uṣūl al-Ḥukm*. However, Ṭāhā Ḥussain asked ʿAli ʿAbd al-Razzāq, a well-known scholar from al-Azahar, to publish the book in his (ʿAli ʿAbd al-Razzāq) name. The latter agreed and the book is still in ʿAli ʿAbd al-Razzāq's name who did not author it. Similarly, Muḥammad ʿAbdu authored a book called *Taḥrīr al-Marʾah*. However, Qāsim Amīn, a well-known religious judge (qāḍī sharʿi) in Cairo, agreed to have the book appear in his name as the author.

## 1.6 Recording and transmission of exegesis

Although Qur'anic exegesis has begun to be documented during the first quarter of the second/eighth century, it is difficult to pin point the first exegete who has provided a written form of exegesis that is independent from the ḥadīth, holistic, and accounts for the whole Qurʾān according to the arrangement of its āyahs and

sūrahs. We believe that the recording phase started during the first quarter of the second/eighth century. Similarly, for Gilliot (2002, p. 104), the beginning and development of tafsīr goes back to the early second/eighth century and perhaps even earlier. For Wansbrough (1970, p. 247), however, Qur'anic exegesis is not likely to have been articulated before the third/ninth century.<sup>17</sup> With regards to Qur'anic lexicography, we may be able to nominate exegetes like Sa'īd b. Jubair (d.95/714) as the earliest written commentary although it is in a glossary form that has appeared in the first/seventh century. For Gilliot (1999, p. 1), 'the introduction of grammar into Qur'anic exegesis or proto-exegesis takes us to the middle of the second/eighth century with the *Kitāb al-Ma'āni* of 'Alī b. Ḥamzah al-Kisā'i (d.189/805). The irruption of grammar into exegesis represented an important turning point.' Other exegetes who have recorded their Qur'anic exegesis include Zaid b. 'Alī (78/697–120/737), Yahya b. Salām (124/742–200/815), 'Amru b. 'Ubaid (d.143/760), Ibn Juraj (d.150/767), al-Farrā' (d.207/822), Abu 'Ubaidah (d.210/825), and al-Akhfash al-Awsaṭ al-Qaṣṣāb (d.215/830); however, al-Dhahabi (1987, 1, pp. 147–149) remains undecided about this historically controversial matter.

The availability of a Qur'anic exegesis work that is marked as a coherent whole is dated back to the first decades of the second/eighth century. Versteegh (1993, p. 52) suggests Abu 'Ubaidah's *Majāz al-Qur'ān* as an example of such a text if we go by the internal references which the author uses. Gilliot (1999, p. 4) is also of the opinion that the first to compose a work on the rare words and usages of the Qur'ān is Abu 'Ubaidah. Versteegh (1993) also provides an interesting distinction based on scholar's assessment (1985, 1989a, 1989b and 1992) which distinguishes between two types of transmitted sources for later compilation of a Qur'anic commentary. We shall elaborate below on this classification of the transmission of exegetical sources:

- (i) Transmitter-led exegesis: This is a form of co-authoring such as Mujāhid's exegesis which is an example of co-authoring. This is due to the fact that Mujāhid's exegetical views, which are delivered as lectures, are in fact a transmitted text from one authority, that is, Mujāhid himself. However, we encounter additions, deletions, elaborations, glosses by later transmitters, sometimes to such a degree that a later transmitter could be regarded as some kind of a co-author. In other words, one can feel the loud voice of the transmitter(s) who have interfered with the original authority's views and blended them with their own without any form of views' identification. For instance, transmitters attribute some Jewish anecdotes to Mujāhid in spite of the fact that his exegesis is characterized by non-reliance on Jewish anecdotes. Also, other transmitters have labelled his exegesis as being heavily dependent upon the Jewish anecdotes (Mujāhid 2005). Also, Shī'i transmitters like 'Abd al-Jabbār have attributed to Mujāhid some exegetical views in support of their school of thought. For instance, they quote Mujāhid as saying that Q39:33, 'walladhi jā'a bil-ṣidqi waṣaddaqa bihi ulā'ika hum al-muttaqūn' [The one who has brought the truth and those who believed in it are those who are the doers of good], is a direct reference to 'Alī b. Abī

Ṭālib in an attempt to implicate Mujāhid in Shī'ism. Nawfal (1990, p. 96) has repeatedly referred to this controversial problem with regards to Mujāhid's exegesis. For this reason, we believe, Leemhuis (1981; cf. Versteegh 1993, p. 53), is uncertain of which one of the transmitted versions of Mujāhid's tafsīr is the original one, while Schoeler is of the opinion that they are all original since the variation is the natural result of the fact that the earliest mode of transmission in the Islamic world was the transmission of lecture notes by students.

- (ii) Author-oriented exegesis: For instance, Sufyān al-Thawri's exegesis belongs to this type of exegetical sources and is considered as a collection of sayings or teachings by many different authorities, in which the transmitted lectures from one particular authority played a dominant role. It is worthwhile to note that the transmitter of Sufyān al-Thawri's exegetical views is his student Mūsā Ibn Mas'ūd al-Nahdi al-Baṣri (d.220/835), but there are many transmitters and copyists who came afterwards narrating from the former transmitter (ʿArshi 1983, pp. 36–37). However, Sufyān al-Thawri's exegetical views remain the dominant component of the commentary.
- (iii) Author plus transmitter-oriented exegesis: This form of transmission is represented by Muqātil b. Sulaimān's exegesis in which the transmitters indicate their own exegetical views while referring mostly to the source authority.

### 1.7 Exegesis and historiography

Qur'anic exegesis and historiography are interrelated since Arab and Judeo-Christian historical details are required for the elucidation of certain Qur'anic passages. This is true of the exegesis of Prophets' parables which are hinged upon the Jewish anecdotes. Interest in Jewish anecdotes has featured in the formative phase during the companions, the successors and especially during the recording phase. Jewish anecdotes refer to Prophets' parables which have attracted the attention of a wide range of exegetes and have become, with varying degrees of elaboration, a recurrent feature of the majority of schools of Qur'anic exegesis. This can be attributed to the fact that the companions have learned them as an element of spiritual guidance and admonition without asking Muḥammad for details. Some of these parables are re-told by the Qur'ān and are found in the Old Testament in a more or less identical form such as the story of Joseph as in Genesis 37–50 which deals with Joseph's story in almost the same form as that of Q12, except that the Biblical version has more genealogical and historical details. By the same token, we encounter similar details about the story of the binding of Abraham's son which appears both in Genesis 22:1–19 and Q37:102–107. In the view of Rippin (1993, p. 251) and Firestone (1989, p. 95), the Qur'anic parables are truncated to such an extent that reference to the Biblical tradition is necessary in order to make sense of the narrative elements provided in the Qur'ān and that some of the stories are influenced by the exegetical tradition within Judaism, and, to a lesser extent, Christianity. Throughout Muslim exegetical tradition, the parables of Prophets are 'supplemented by Biblical exegetical

tradition (Rippin 1999, p. 253) with varying degrees of elaboration. This has prompted Hirschfeld (1902, p. ii) to claim that 'the Qur'ān, the text-book of Islam, is in reality nothing but a counterfeit of the Bible.' In a similar vein, Torrey (1933, p. 107) argues that in the last years in Makkah and the beginning of the career in Madīnah, Muḥammad had in store relative portions of Jewish and Christian material, although the supply obtained from Jewish sources greatly predominates. Moreover, in the case of the only one of the longer stories which is distinctly of Christian origin, there is good evidence that it came to Muḥammad through the medium of a Jewish document (Torrey, 1993). Torrey (1993, p. 113) also claims that the material of the narrative of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba (Q27:16–45) is taken from the Jewish haggada.

The parallel between Judaic and Muslim exegetes' views pertaining the ransom of Abraham's son, that is, the sacrifice (*al-dhabīḥ*), is brought to our attention by Rodwell (1915, p. 83) who also refers to a Madrashic view by Rabbi Joshua (cf. Bashear 1990). For Bell (1945, p. 1), the Qur'ān contains much material which in some relation to the Old Testament is evident to anyone who dips into it and that Biblical material is hardly ever exactly reproduced in the Qur'ān, while the quotations from the Old Testament are not verbal. Bell (1945, p. 2) further asserts that 'the Qur'ān is so strongly Jewish in character' and that Muḥammad's 'informants were Jews or Christians.' With regards to *al-isrā'iliyyāt*, Bell (1932, p. 43) argues that it is so obvious that the passage of Q7:44 is founded upon a reminiscence of the parable of the Foolish Virgins (Matthew xxv, 1ff.) and that Muḥammad was acquainted with something in that chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel. Waldman (1985, p. 1), however, argues that when non-Muslims look at Q12, or any other Qur'anic chapter containing a story that appears in another Scripture, they naturally tend to place it in a dependency relationship, to see it as a 'version', as something passed on in altered, if not debased, form. Waldman (1985, p. 5) further argues that after comparing the Biblical and Qur'anic stories and despite the extensive presence of numerous formal affinities (such as overall plot, title, names), the two do not tell the same story in thematic, theological, or moral terms. In fact, they are probably just as much like other stories as they are like each other. Waldman (1985, p. 13) concludes that an affinity between the two stories exists only to an extent. Among the major differences between the two stories is the role of God. Within the overall purposes of the Qur'ān, the Joseph story serves as a didactic vehicle, in this case to show how God sends signs and constantly guides and rewards the God-fearing. In the Bible, the telling of the Joseph story is an indispensable step in the unfolding of God's divine plan and manipulation of history to ensure the future of the Hebrews. Consequently, the figure of God seems somewhat more distant in the Bible story, less concentrated on a relationship with Joseph and more involved with the lives of all the many characters, whereas in the Qur'ān God interferes with and guides His messenger constantly, the other characters remaining more shadowy and less clearly defined (Waldman 1985, p. 5). In his brief account of Christ in the Qur'ān, al-Husayni (1960) refers to the āyahs in which Jesus Christ features such as Q3:45, Q4:171, Q19:30 and 57:27 and concludes that the bone

of contention between the two religions, Christianity and Islam, lies in the interpretation of the 'symbolism' which occurred in the Prophets' utterances, rather than in the essence of the faith which is found in the New Testament and the Qur'ān in full compatibility (al-Husayni, 1960, p. 302).

In addition to Jewish anecdotes, Western Qur'ān scholars are of the view that Muḥammad has some knowledge of the legal matters involved in the Torah and the Bible. Thus, the impact of the Judeo-Christian milieu has also been under investigation with regards to Qur'anic passages that deal with Islamic law and how much they are influenced by the previous Scriptures. For instance, Goitein (1960, pp. 28–29) refers to Q5 which refers to the Jewish rabbis and scholars who gave judgments according to the Law revealed by God. The quotation from the Pentateuch, which deals not with theological matters but with questions of criminal law, and the occasion which gave rise to the promulgation of Q5:41–52 suggest, for Goitein (1960), that Muḥammad, at a certain stage of his prophetic and political career in Madinah, suddenly became aware of the fact that the Scriptures revealed before him contained not only religious and moral injunctions but also detailed laws concerning matters which were religiously irrelevant. Goitein (1960) argues that this new knowledge on the part of Muḥammad, together with some difficulties incurred in practice, created in him the belief that he, too, had to recognize the details of civil law as inseparable constitutions of God's message. In other words, the idea of the *sharī'ah* (Islamic law), in the view of Goitein, has been formulated by Muḥammad himself as a direct influence of the Judeo-Christian milieu and after envisaging law as part of divine revelation. We are also told by Robson (1950) that in A. Mingana's *Catalogue of the Arabic Manuscripts in the John Rylands Library, Manchester*, he has found a manuscript No. 664 dated by the copyist as 15th Safar 1173/8 October 1759. Mingana remarks that the work consists of anecdotes concerning Jesus and Mary, and of miracles performed by the former, most of which are of a puerile character not mentioned in the canonical Gospels. In this manuscript, Robson (1950, p. 237) has also noticed the name of Ibn ʿAbbās quoted as saying that when Jesus was born, Iblīs came to the Children of Israel in the guise of an old wood-cutter to tell them. Robson claims that the account of Iblīs appearing in two different forms to Jesus and attempting to make him claim that he is divine must have behind it some information about the Temptation in the Wilderness. In the Gospel story Jesus counters Satan by quoting the Old Testament, and, according to this manuscript, by quoting the Qur'ān. The appearance of the angels at the end of the story is also clearly a suggestion of the Gospel account (Robson 1950, p. 243).

### **1.8 Genres of exegesis**

During the genesis journey of Qur'anic exegesis, different genres have evolved to meet the current needs of the Muslim community. For instance, during the successors' phase, and the early recording phase of exegesis in the second/eighth century, four broad *tafsīr* genres of Qur'anic exegesis have evolved (cf. Gilliot 1999, pp. 13–19; 2002, pp. 105–108):

- (i) Paraphrastic exegesis: This is concerned with brief exegetical details and often provides synonyms to specific Qur'anic expressions. In other words, it is a form of a glossary that provides brief semantic details of Qur'anic words. Representative paraphrastic commentaries include *Tafsīr Mujāhid* (d.104/722), *Tafsīr Gharīb al-Qur'ān* of Zaid b. 'Ali (78/697–120/737), *Gharīb al-Qur'ān* of Abān b. Taghlab b. Rabāh (d.141/758), *Tafsīr Sufyān al-Thawri* (d.161/777), *Ma'āni al-Qur'ān* of Muḥammad b. 'Ali b. Sārah al-Ru'āsi (d.187/802) who was the teacher of al-Farrā' and al-Kisā'i, *Ma'āni al-Qur'ān* of Abu al-Ḥasan b. Ḥamzah al-Kisā'i (d.197/812), *Tafsīr 'Abd Allāh Ibn Wahab* (d.197/812), *Tafsīr Sufyān b. 'Uyainah* (d.107/725–198/813), *Ma'āni al-Qur'ān* of Muḥammad b. al-Mustanīr Quṭrub (d.206/821), *Ma'āni al-Qur'ān* of al-Farrā' (d.207/822), *Majāz al-Qur'ān* of Abu 'Ubaidah (d.210/825), and *Ma'āni al-Qur'ān* of al-Akhfash al-Awsaṭ (d.215/830).
- (ii) Narrative exegesis: This is concerned with textual exegesis which aims to furnish the Qur'anic passage with details based on prophetic tradition (ḥadīth). This genre also edifies narratives of the Judeo-Christian milieu which later on have become known as al-isrā'īliyyāt (Jewish anecdotes) and makes use of historiographical materials. In other words, it is a midrashic type of exegesis. Narrative commentaries that represent this genre include al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim (d.105/723), al-Suddī al-Kabīr (d.127/746), al-Kalbi (d.146/763), and Muqātil b. Sulaimān (d.150/767).
- (iii) Legal exegesis: This genre of exegesis features legal topics such as faith, prayer, alms giving, fasting, pilgrimage, usury, theft and marriage and is represented by Muqātil b. Sulaimān's *Khams Mi'at Āyah* and 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan'āni's *al-Muṣannaḥ*.
- (iv) Linguistic exegesis: This genre features grammatical and philological Qur'anic problems and the variant modes of reading (al-qirā'āt) and is represented by *Ma'āni al-Qur'ān* of Abān b. Taghlab al-Kūfī (d.141/758), *Ma'āni al-Qur'ān* of Muḥammad b. 'Ali b. Sārah al-Ru'āsi (d.187/802), *Ma'āni al-Qur'ān* of Abu al-Ḥasan b. Ḥamzah al-Kisā'i (d.187/802), *Ma'āni al-Qur'ān* of Muḥammad b. al-Mustanīr Quṭrub (d.206/821), *Majāz al-Qur'ān* of al-Farrā' (d.207/822), *Majāz al-Qur'ān* of Abu 'Ubaidah Ma'mar b. al-Muthannā (d.210/825), and *Ma'āni al-Qur'ān* of al-Akhfash al-Awsaṭ (d.215/830).

However, during our modern phase of the 20th and 21st centuries, contemporary needs of the Muslim community and modern scientific developments have given rise to the evolution of four new genres of Qur'anic exegesis:

- (i) Thematic exegesis that is distinct from the traditional musalsal (āyah-by-āyah) tafsīr in order to provide a well-balanced over-view of the major Qur'anic themes of each sūrah; this new tafsīr genre is of particular interest to the native speakers of Arabic who do not possess advanced linguistic skills to comprehend the Qur'ān's classical Arabic, as well as for the Muslim communities in Europe and undergraduate courses in European academic institutions. As an approach, thematic tafsīr genre has also been

- adopted by scientific exegetes to account for natural sciences and phenomena that are represented by God's omnipotence āyahs such as those that deal with cosmology, the womb, creation and the mountains. As a modern genre, thematic tafsīr is similar to the classical tafsīr of Muqātil b. Sulaimān (d.150/767) in terms of brevity and paraphrastic exegetical details.
- (ii) Synoptic exegesis is another genre born out of the modern community needs but is still a musalsal tafsīr with gist paraphrastic details without recourse to details on jurisprudence, variant readings, linguistics, or Jewish anecdotes. This has proved its value for television programmes, especially those during the month of Ramḍān and for Friday sermons.
- (iii) Scientific exegesis, a form of thematic tafsīr genre, is concerned with the scientific aspects of some āyahs that demonstrate God's omnipotence, on the one hand, and, on the other, that the two canonical sources of Islam are compatible with the modern age of sciences. Thus, this exegetical approach is selective rather than āyah-by-āyah exegesis. Scientific tafsīr works include *al-Fjāz al-ʿIlmī fī al-Qur'ān* of Zakariyah Hamīmi, *al-Maḥmūd al-ʿIlmī lil-Jibāl fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* of Zaḡhlūl al-Najjār and *al-Jawāhir fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* of Ṭanṭāwī Jawhari. Television programmes such as the one on the satellite television channel *Iqra'* also provide scientific tafsīr of Qur'anic passages, such as Q2:61 and in particular, 'atastabdilūna alladhī huwa adnā billadhī huwa khair?' [Would you exchange what is better for what is worse?], where scientific medical details are provided to distinguish between the nutritional values of meat and vegetarian foods. Scientific exegetes argue that Q2:61 is compatible with medical facts. According to new research, people who get their protein from vegetables rather than meat have lower blood pressure and that the amino acids and magnesium found in vegetables help lower blood pressure. Also, among Shī'ī exegetes who have been concerned with scientific exegesis of the Qur'ān are the Iranian exegete Ayatollah Maḥmūd Taleqani (d.1980), and the Iranian scholar Abdolkarim Soroush, a chemist by profession and training, has lectured and written extensively on the Qur'an and sciences (Amirpur 2005, pp. 337, 339).
- (iv) Paraphrastic exegesis, a very brief commentary in the form of a glossary, provides brief semantic details and is represented by modern commentators like Sālim ʿAli Haikal, whose commentary is a glossary of words with their brief meanings, with an outline of each sūrah provided before the list of words.

For more details on genres in Qur'anic exegesis such as analytical exegesis, synoptic exegesis, comparative exegesis, thematic exegesis, literary exegesis, and the classification of early tafsīr literature by John Wansbrough, see [Chapter 4](#), [Sections 4.2.3.1](#), [4.2.3.2](#), [4.2.3.3](#), [4.2.3.4](#), [4.2.3.5](#), and [4.2.4.1](#).

## 1.9 Lexicographical approaches in exegesis

Lexicographical and phraseological works on the Qur'anic text are also related to Qur'anic exegesis. Muslim philologists and grammarians have shown interest in

the collection and semantic analysis of difficult Qur'anic expressions since the second/eighth century. Rippin in his article *Lexicographical Texts and the Qur'ān* (1988, pp. 158–174) deals with how the Qur'anic lexicographical tradition developed. He refers to various genres of dictionaries of the Qur'ān and provides a valuable analysis of the approaches to Qur'anic vocabulary and the medieval Arab lexicography. Lexicographical tradition was developed through the following works and approaches:

- (i) Intra-lingual translation tafsīr works which are Arabic translations of the Qur'ān and which aim to provide simple glosses to the Qur'anic text in sūrah order include *Tanwīr al-Miqbās min Tafsīr Ibn 'Abbās* ascribed to Ibn 'Abbās (d.68/687) and *Tafsīr al-Jalālain* of Jalāl al-Dīn al-Maḥallī (d.864/1459) and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d.911/1505).
- (ii) Gharīb works which deal with the collection in sūrah order of Qur'anic expressions that are semantically ambiguous due to their rare use, such as foreign words, tribal dialect words, and lexical oddities, as in the less commonly used 'garīb' expressions fāṭir – (creator, Q6:14) and abban – (grass, Q80:31). The word gharīb literally means 'strange, unusual', that is, 'of ambiguous or hidden meaning'. However, for al-Zajjāji (d.311/923), al-Āmidī (d.371/981), al-Batlayūsi (d.521/1127), and Ibn al-Athīr (d.637/1239), the word gharīb in Qur'anic exegesis refers to expressions that are not often used by native speakers. Thus, they are 'strange' words. Gharīb works are like *Tafsīr Gharīb al-Qur'ān* of Zaid b. 'Alī (d.120/737), *Gharīb al-Qur'ān* of Abān b. Taghlib b. Rabāḥ (d.141/758), *Gharīb al-Qur'ān* of Mu'rij b. 'Amru al-'Ijlī al-Sadūsi (d.195/810), *Tafsīr Gharīb al-Qur'ān* of Ibn Qutaibah (d.276/889), and *Ma'āni al-Qur'ān wa Frābuhu* of al-Zajjāj (d.311/923). However, a unique example of gharīb tafsīr works that deal with Qur'anic expressions that may have more than one syntactic analysis where of course each bears a distinct meaning is *al-Bayān fī Gharīb Frāb al-Qur'ān* of Abu al-Barakāt 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. al-Anbārī (d.577/1181) which is like a practical application of Arabic grammar on Qur'anic discourse. The second type of gharīb tafsīr works are those which also deal with the collection of semantically difficult words but are arranged in an alphabetical order like a dictionary system. These works include *Nuzhat al-Qulūb fī Gharīb al-Qur'ān* of al-Sijistāni (d.330/942), *al-Gharībain* of Abu 'Ubaid Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Harawī (d.401/1011), *al-Mufradāt fī Gharīb al-Qur'ān* of al-Rāghib al-Aṣbahāni (d.502/1108), as well as works by other scholars such as *Tafsīr Gharīb al-Qur'ān* of Zain al-Dīn b. 'Abd al-Qādir al-Rāzi (d.666/1267).
- (iii) Wujūh, nazā'ir and ashbāh works which deal with the multiple senses of Qur'anic expressions. We also encounter other titles, including al-wujūh wal-nazā'ir, al-nazā'ir, or al-alfāz al-mushtarakah. However, wujūh works deal with Qur'anic expressions that are orthographically similar but have different shades of meaning in different contexts, such as the word 'hudā' which has 17 contextually distinct meanings (Islam, Q2:120; prophets,

Q2:38, Q20:123; the Qur'ān, Q3:138, Q18:55, Q12:111; the Old Testament, Q17:2, Q32:23; to explain, Q20:128; increase in belief, Q19:98; to invite, Q21:73; and to know the path, Q21:31). However, al-ashbāh works deal with the expressions that are orthographically distinct but semantically similar, that is, words that are synonyms although they have different spellings. Works of al-naẓā'ir represent the first step in Arabic lexicographical studies. Examples of wujūh works include *al-Taṣārif* of Yaḥyā b. Sallām (d.124/742–200/815), *Kitāb al-Wujūh wal-Naẓā'ir* and *al-Ashbāh wal-Naẓā'ir* of Muqātil b. Sulaimān (d.150/767), *Ta'wīl Mushkil al-Qur'ān* of Ibn Qutaibah (d.276/889), *Majāz al-Qur'ān* of Abu 'Uбайдah (d.210/825), *Mattaḥaqa Lafẓuhu Wakhtalafa Ma'nāhu min al-Qur'ān al-Majīd* of Abu al-'Abbās al-Mubarrad (d.285/898), *Taḥṣīl Naẓā'ir al-Qur'ān* of al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhi (d.285/898), *Iṣlāḥ al-Wujūh wal-Naẓā'ir fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* of al-Damaghāni (d.478/1085), and *Nuzhat al-Nawāẓir fī 'ilm al-Wujūh wal-Naẓā'ir* of al-Jawzi (d.597/1200). Other Qur'ān scholars who have shown interest in wujūh studies include 'Ikramah (d.105/723; cf. Abdus Sattar 1978).<sup>18</sup>

- (iv) Mutashābihāt works which deal with the stylistically distinct but grammatically similar āyahs, such as the work that is known under two titles *Kitāb al-Mutashābihāt fī al-Qur'ān* and *Kitāb al-Mushtabihāt* which are ascribed to the Qur'ān reciter 'Alī Ibn Ḥamzah al-Kisā'i (d.187/802), *Durrat al-Tanzīl wa Ghurrat al-Ta'wīl fī Bayān al-Āyāt al-Mutashābihāt fī Kitāb Allāh al-'Azīz* of al-Iskāfi (d.420/1029) and *al-Burhān fī Mutashābih al-Qur'ān* of al-Karmāni (d.500/1106).

## 2 Exegesis and Ḥadīth

### 2.1 Introduction

Prophetic tradition (ḥadīth) impinges on Qur'anic exegesis and the two have become inseparable entities in Islamic studies. In fact, the study of Qur'anic exegesis cannot be undertaken without reference to ḥadīth. Through the study of schools of exegesis one can feel how ḥadīth plays a more central role in the school of traditional exegesis (al-tafsīr bil-ma'thūr) than in any other school. However, in any school of Qur'anic exegesis, ḥadīth has been taken as a demystifying exegetical tool in the elucidation of a given Qur'anic passage. Yet the authenticity of ḥadīth has been shrouded with scepticism due to the widespread proliferation of fabricated ḥadīths. As a result, it has become difficult to ascertain the correct signification of some Qur'anic materials whose linguistic or non-linguistic account is hinged upon ḥadīth literature. The present chapter investigates the interrelation between ḥadīth and exegesis, how ḥadīth literature has been documented, the major factors behind the forgery of ḥadīth, the textual corruption of some ḥadīths, concerns over the accuracy of both the matn (text, content) and isnād (chain of authorities) of ḥadīth, the efforts by traditionists (al-muḥaddithūn) to sift through the spurious ḥadīths and how they acted as both validators of sound ḥadīths and at times as exegetes themselves. As a prophetic tradition depends on a chain of authorities, major defects may be attributed to the chain of authorities in which case the ḥadīth authenticity may be dented. The present account will also highlight the classification of ḥadīth and its main genres.

### 2.2 The prophetic Ḥadīth

Due to the centrality of ḥadīth material to Qur'anic exegesis and the correlation between the two canonical sources (the Qur'ān and ḥadīth) in Islamic studies, we shall provide informative details about ḥadīth in the present section. The conduct or custom, referred to as sunnah (the standard practice of Muḥammad), is embodied in the Prophet's ḥadīths (reports or anecdotes) narrating his words and deeds. The Prophet's ḥadīths are told on the authority of Muḥammad's companions. They are, therefore, regarded by Muslims as a canonical source of Islamic law, dogma and ritual second only in importance to the Qur'ān itself. Muslims are

urged by the Qur'ān (Q3:132 and Q33:21) to follow the role model of Muḥammad. Therefore, the sayings and actions of Muḥammad have become binding upon the lives of Muslims from the very beginning of the advent of Islam. Abdul Rauf (1983, p. 271) notes that the companions and early successors, for most of the first/seventh century were ambivalent to the benefits of recording the ḥadīths, although there were many personal manuscripts (*ṣuḥuf*, sing. *ṣaḥīfah*) in which some ḥadīths were included (cf. Abbott 1983, p. 289). By the end of the first/seventh century, fears about the purity of the Qur'ān had subsided since it was then memorized, uniformly recited by many scholars and its copies were widely circulated. Like the factors that led to the compilation of the Qur'ān, many ḥadīth scholars were gradually disappearing and corruption began to threaten its authenticity. Civil strife, starting with the third caliph's murder in 35/656, gave rise to political and theological divisions and disputes involving quotations and misquotations of ḥadīths in support of partisan causes and doctrines (Abbott 1983). For instance, Shī'ite ḥadīths began to circulate during the first half of the second/eighth century when the rift between Shī'ites and non-Shī'ites, which originated in a politico-religious controversy regarding the succession of the Prophet, had resulted in bloody battles and merciless persecutions (Kohlberg 1983, p. 299).

One should not forget the fact that there were many unscrupulous transmitters and politically oriented unqualified narrators, who led to the fabrication of a large number of ḥadīths. We also encounter the same ḥadīth with different variants or different transmitters (cf. Kister 1970). For these reasons, Muslim and Western scholars are sceptical about the authenticity of a large number of ḥadīths. Modern exegetes like 'Izzat Darwaza (1888–1984) contends that a large number of ḥadīths attributed to the companions in various classical exegetical works such as Ibn 'Abbās (d.68/687), Mujāhid (d.104/722), Qatādah b. Di'āmah (d.117/735) and al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d.110/728) are forged and reflect the politico-religious conflicts which developed within the Muslim community during the early decades of Islam (Poonawala 1993, p. 236). Although prominent exegetes like al-Ṭabarī (d.311/923), Ibn Kathīr (d.774/1372), al-Qurṭubī (d.671/1272) and al-Baiḍāwī (d.685/1286) assert that 'Ā'ishah's ḥadīths are indisputably authentic, they sometimes provide an exegetical account of some āyahs such as Q53:11 without any supportive citation of exegetical ḥadīths narrated by her (cf. Geissinger 2004). They have admitted the problem of forgery of some ḥadīths as well as the paraphrasing and distortion of other ḥadīths that have taken place in early Islam during transmission. Their concern over the integrity of ḥadīths is focused on both the chain of authorities and the text of a given ḥadīth. A ḥadīth is rejected if it contradicts the Qur'ān, a *mutawātīr* ḥadīth, the consensus (*al-ijmā'*) of the community, the tenets of Islam or common sense (Ṣiddīqī 1993; cf. Berg 2000, p. 51). However, discerning authentic ḥadīths from fabricated ones is not a straightforward task. Berg (2000, p. 136) reports that the study and evaluation of the transmitters of ḥadīths is an important branch of the ḥadīth studies (*'ulūm al-ḥadīth*) known as *'ilm al-rijāl*. It is on the basis of this *rijāl* material that any individual ḥadīth can be judged authentic, suspicious or spurious. Berg (Berg

2000, pp. 136–137) is also sceptical about the rijāl literature due to the possibility of isnād fabrication which makes the rijāl material lose its value as a viable source. Thus, as a result of widespread scepticism about the authenticity of a large number of ḥadīths, ḥadīth scholars, during the third/ninth century, launched a *ṣaḥīḥ* movement (critical study of ḥadīths) which looks vigorously into the isnād and the matn of a given ḥadīth. The critical study of ḥadīths has become a well-established discipline within ḥadīth studies known as *al-jarḥ wal-ta'dīl* (impugnment and vindication) whose major objective is to scrutinize the credibility of the transmitter or narrator.

A ḥadīth is traditionally supported by a chain of authorities and it contains a main text (matn). Ḥadīths and their isnāds have been subjected to a wide range of types of categorization. For a matn to be recognized as an authentic record of one of Muḥammad's acts or sayings, it needs to have attached to it the list of the people who were transmitters (*muḥaddithūn*) of the matn. This isnād provides the name of the eyewitness of the actual event, the person to whom he or she has related the event, the person to whom this transmitter has related the matn and so forth until the ḥadīth is recorded. The isnād portion of the ḥadīth has been an early standard practice by Muslim ḥadīth scholars. However, for Muḥammad Ibn Sīrīn (d.110/728), the isnād is attributed to the *fitnah* (civil war) that has occurred after the assassination of the third caliph °Uthmān b. °Affān (d.35/656). Thus, the regular use of isnād for ḥadīth is thought to have begun shortly after 35/656. This date also marks the beginning of the study of ḥadīth as an independent discipline by Muslim scholars. In the view of Berg (2000, p. 7), the implication of Ibn Sīrīn's statement is that well-meaning but misguided or even unscrupulous people have fabricated or altered ḥadīths for political, dogmatic or personal accounts. It is for these reasons that we find vast numbers of obviously false and doubtful ḥadīths that have to be eliminated. Goldziher (1971; cf. Berg 2000, pp. 9–10) holds a similar view with regards to invention of and interpolation into ḥadīths for political and paraenetic reasons. For example, Berg (2000, p. 52) argues that ḥadīths, while praising the immediate family of the Prophet (*ahl al-bait*) but not overtly anti-Umayyad, have served the pro-°Ali cause. The Umayyads (d.41–132/661–749) respond in kind by inventing or urging their theologians to invent ḥadīths in their political favour while suppressing the arguments of their opponents in the form of ḥadīths. However, the Abbasids (d.132–655/749–1257), who are the successors to the Umayyads, have also suppressed political ḥadīths that support the Umayyads (d.132–655/749–1257). Shī'ah, the Umayyads, the Murji'ah, the Khawārij and later the Abbasids, Goldziher (1971, 2, pp. 43–59, 89–108, cf. Berg 2000, p. 52) claims, have all participated in polemics and apologetics in the form of ḥadīths. Goldziher's views are also in line with those of Lammens (1943; cf. Berg 2000, p. 54).

During the third/ninth century, the sifting out of these spurious ḥadīths has focused largely on the isnād. In other words, the ḥadīth compilers systematically examined each of the transmitters of every ḥadīth. Their analysis has focused on the transmitter's date and place of birth, familial connections, teachers, students, journeys, moral behaviour, religious beliefs, literary output and date of death.

These are the criteria against which ḥadīth collectors can establish reliable transmitters (al-thuqāt), contemporaneity and geographical proximity of transmitters juxtaposed within the isnād. The continuity of the isnād is also evaluated for missing or unknown transmitters or for not reaching back to the Prophet and stopping at a companion or successor. The number of simultaneous transmitters is also tallied. Thus, a ḥadīth with numerous transmitters at every level of the isnād is called ḥadīth mutawātir and is deemed to be beyond doubt or forgery. However, the ḥadīth with three or more at each level of isnād is called ḥadīth mashhūr (well-known), while a ḥadīth with just one at a particular level of isnād is referred to as ḥadīth gharīb (strange) and the ḥadīth with one transmitter at each level of isnād is called ḥadīth fard (single) which has no weight (for more details on the classification of ḥadīth, see [Section 2.9](#) of the present chapter).

Ḥadīths are classified under one of several major categories of trustworthiness:

- (i) Ḥadīth ṣaḥīḥ (sound, authentic), which indicates the highest level of trustworthiness in a tradition. The compilation of traditions by al-Bukhāri (d.194/810–256/870) and Muslim (d.202/817–261/875) bear the title *The Sound*, that is, the true (al-ṣaḥīḥ), and together they are known as ‘the two ṣaḥīhs – al-ṣaḥīhān’.
- (ii) Ḥadīth ḥasan (fair, good) is not regarded as quite as strong as one which is ḥadīth ṣaḥīḥ, but it is better than those which are ḍa‘īf (weak) or saqīm (infirm).
- (iii) Ḥadīth ḍa‘īf (weak) is criticized by lack of strength and reliability of a tradition.
- (iv) Ḥadīth saqīm (literally ‘sick’, infirm’) is a criticism that indicates the lowest level of trustworthiness in a tradition.

### 2.3 The recording of Ḥadīth

While the revelation of the Qur’ān is still going on, Muḥammad has instructed his companions not to record any of his ḥadīths for fear of being confused with the Qur’ān. Thus, the major objective is to preserve the purity of the Qur’ān and prevent the possibility of confusing Qur’anic āyahs with ḥadīths. Muḥammad is reported to have said, ‘lā taktubū ‘annī waman kataba ‘annī ghair al-qur’ān falyamḥuhu. Waḥaddīthū ‘annī walā ḥaraj. Waman kadhaba ‘alaiyah muta‘amidan falyatabawwa’ maq‘adahu min al-nār [Do not write what I say. Anyone who has written from me anything other than the Qur’ān, let him bolt it out. You may speak about me and there is no objection to that, but one who attributes a lie to me deliberately should prepare himself for a place in hell].’ The four caliphs after the Prophet have also expressed the same reservation. It is generally believed that neither the companions nor the successors used to write down the ḥadīths. Instead, they would only transmit them verbally and learn them by memorizing. Opposition to the writing down of ḥadīth has been expressed by companions like ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb and Abu Mūsā al-Ash‘ari (cf. Donner 1998, p. 93; Berg 2000, p. 7). The accounts of opposition suggest that in the earliest

period, the Qur'ān was originally seen by some companions as the only true source of guidance and that the act of writing down pious sayings and maxims was seen by them as a potential threat to the primacy of the Qur'ān's role (Donner 1998, p. 93; Berg 2000, p. 7). The first collection of the Qur'ān is instigated by the second caliph ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (d.23/644) who feared that some of the Qur'ān may be lost after the death of 70 companions in the battle of Yamāmah (d.11/632) who used to know the Qur'ān by heart, known as ḥuffāz (singular ḥāfiẓ), meaning memorizers of the Qur'ān.

However, it is believed that even during the lifetime of Muḥammad, some companions used to write some ḥadīths for their own use in the form of a ṣaḥīfah (booklet; see Section 2.11, Point i. below; Kamali 2005, p. 22). After a delay of nearly a century, the need to collect and record the ḥadīths had begun. This need led the Umayyad governor of Egypt, ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Marwān (d.65–85/684/704) and his son, the caliph ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (d.97–101/715–719) to instruct certain renowned theologians to commit ḥadīths to writing. The first collection of ḥadīths has begun in an official manner at the behest of the Umayyad caliph ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (d.101/719) who has become concerned that some of it may be lost. During the first/seventh century and early part of the second/eighth century, compilation was limited to writing down those ḥadīths which were in oral circulation. Two scholars have been entrusted with the task of ḥadīth collection: Abu Bakr Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Ḥazm (d.120/737) and Muḥammad Ibn Muslim Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhri (d.124/742) (Netton 1997, p. 90; Berg 2000, pp. 6–8). The phase of recording prophetic ḥadīths has been launched.

At a later stage, the recording of prophetic tradition has gained a methodological structure. Thus, the evolution of thematic classification of ḥadīth has begun and scholars started grouping ḥadīths under titles indicating their topic. This type of ḥadīths grouping is referred to as muṣannaf (classified or systemized compilation). In his introduction to his *Jāmiʿ al-Uṣūl*, Ibn al-Athīr al-Jazā'iri (d.637/1239) claims that as the territories of Islam expanded, the companions dispersed and the great majority of them died, and people recognized the great need for recording ḥadīths. Recording, thus, was undertaken by people like ʿAbd al-Malik b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Juraij (d.150/767) and Imām Mālik b. Anas (d.94/712–179/795). It is also claimed that the first book on ḥadīth composed in Islam was that of Ibn Juraij or the *Muwattaʿa* of Imām Mālik. Imām Mālik composed his *Muwattaʿa* over a period of 40 years. It is claimed that the contents of the *Muwattaʿa* were agreed upon unanimously by the people of Madīnah. The title of his book, therefore, is derived accordingly and means (the well-trodden path, or the many times agreed upon [by the people of Madīnah]). However, it is also believed that the first man to compile ḥadīths and arrange according to chapters was al-Rabīʿ Ibn Ṣabīḥ in Baṣrah. al-Jazari (d.606/1209) also states that, among the ḥadīth compilers, ʿUbaid Allāh Ibn Mūsā al-ʿAbsī (d.213/828), Abu Dāwūd al-Ṭayālīsī (d.203/818) and Imām Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal have established the ḥadīth according the chain of authorities of their narrators. However, Mālik b. Anas (d.94/712–179/795) claims that the first to collect the ḥadīth was Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhri (d.124/742) during the caliphate of ʿUmar Ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz at his behest (al-Aṣḥāhānī n.d., 3, p. 363). It

is also claimed that, after the year 140/757, ḥadīth scholars like Mālik in Madīnah, Ibn Juraij in Makkah, Sufyān al-Thawri in Kūfah were among the first who started the compilation and arrangement of ḥadīth in chapters and these scholars were all contemporaries. Thus, no one knows which of them was first. However, there is disagreement as to who the first compiler of ḥadīths was according to their chain of authorities. Among the suggested names of ḥadīth scholars are Asad Ibn Mūsā al-Amawi (d.132/749–212/827), Nuʿaim Ibn Ḥammād al-Khuzaiʿi (d.228/842), ʿUbaid Allāh Ibn Mūsā al-ʿAbsi (d.213/828) and Yahyā al-Ḥimmāni (d.202/817) (al-Shaibāni 2004, pp. 2–6).

The compilers of ḥadīth systematically examined each of the transmitters (al-muḥaddithūn) of every ḥadīth. They focused on the biographical analysis of transmitters (ʿilm al-rijāl) through which the compilers analysed the transmitter’s date and place of birth, familial connections, teachers, students, journeys, moral behaviour, religious beliefs, literary output and date of death. This allowed the compilers to determine not only the reliability of transmitters (al-muḥaddithūn al-thuqāt) but also the contemporaneity and geographical proximity of transmitters juxtaposed within the isnād, in an attempt to ascertain whether they could have come in contact. The compilers also examined the cohesion (al-ittiṣāl) of the isnād. The ḥadīth would be evaluated if there are missing or unknown transmitters or if it does not reach back to Muḥammad and stopping at a companion or successor. At this stage, the ḥadīths were classified into different categories (Berg 2000, p. 8).

## 2.4 Ḥadīth as a bridge to Qur’anic exegesis

Prophetic ḥadīths play an interpretive role that is pivotal to all schools of Qur’anic exegesis. However, the degree of reliance on ḥadīth varies from one school to another. In order to appreciate the link between the Qur’ān and ḥadīth and the purpose for which a given ḥadīth is employed, we need to account for the function of ḥadīth with regards to Qur’anic exegesis.

### 2.4.1 Function of Ḥadīth

Proponents of tradition (ḥadīth) and mainstream exegesis (al-tafsīr bil-ma’thūr) highlight the close interrelation between the Qur’ān and ḥadīth. For them, the ḥadīth represents a practical mechanism for tafsīr. Therefore, ḥadīth performs an interpretive role and is the most reliable source for elucidating the Qur’anic text. Exegetical ḥadīths have one of the following four functions:

- (i) bayān al-mujmal: to explain the general meaning of a religious matter such as the amount of zakāt and the exact rites of the ḥajj,
- (ii) tawḍīḥ al-mushkil: to explain an ambiguous Qur’anic expression such as (al-khaiṭ al-abyaḍ – the white thread) and (al-khaiṭ al-aswad – the black thread) in Q2:187,
- (iii) takhṣīṣ al-ʿāmm: to demarcate the generic meaning of an expression such as the sense of the expression (ẓulm) in Q6:82 and
- (iv) taqyīd al-muṭlaq: to restrict the non-restricted meaning of an expression such as the meaning of the expression (yadd – hand) in Q5:38.

For a detailed and explicated account of the role of ḥadīth in Qur'anic exegesis, see [Chapter 5, Section 5.2.1.1.1](#). Similarly, in Qur'anic exegesis, ḥadīths are frequently employed for various purposes, including the following:

- (i) The introduction of a new injunction or a punishment (ḥadd) that is not stipulated by the Qur'ān. Apostasy (al-riddah), for instance, is referred to only once in the Qur'ān, 'man yartadda minkum 'an dīnihi [whoever of you should revert from his or her religion]' (Q5:54), but its punishment is not specified. We are only admonished by the same āyah of what will take place if a Muslim goes back on his or her faith, 'fasawfa ya'tī allāhu biqawmin yuḥibbuhum wayuḥibbūnah adhillatin 'alā al-mu'minīn a'izzatin 'alā al-kāfirīn yujāhidūna fī sabīli allāh walā yakhāfūna lawmata lā'im [God will bring forth in place of them a people He will love and who will love Him, who are humble towards the believers, hard on the disbelievers, strive in the cause of God and do not fear the blame of a critic],' (Q5:54) where a list of the genuine faithful is provided rather than the ḥadd of the apostate (al-murtadd). However, we are told specifically about the kind of punishment by the ḥadīth, 'man baddala dīnahū faqtulūhu [If a Muslim discards his or her religion, then kill him or her]' (al-ʿAsqalānī 1982, 2, p.173; Khan 1997, 4, p. 159; al-Qaṣṭalānī 1996, 6, p. 489). Although the Qur'ān refers to stoning to death (al-rajm) of someone who commits adultery, it does not provide the required punishment. Exegetes have established the ḥadd for al-rajm on the ḥadīth 'alwalad lil-firāsh walil-ʿāhir al-ḥajar [The stone, that is, the punishment of stoning to death]' for anyone who commits an illegal sexual intercourse, but the born baby should be given to the man who was involved in this sexual intercourse (al-ʿAsqalānī 1982, 12, p. 130; al-Qaṣṭalānī 1996, 14, p. 224). Also, the Qur'ān does not specify the ḥadd for homosexuality although reference has been made to this by Q7:80–81 and Q11:78–79. However, the ḥadd is made explicit through the ḥadīth, 'man wajadtumūhu yaʿmal ʿamal qawm lūṭ faqtulū al-fāʿil wal-mafʿūl bihi [If you find anyone doing as Lot's people did, kill the one who does it and the one to whom it is done]' (ḥadīth no. 1481, al-Mubārakfūrī 1990, 5, p. 21).
- (ii) The abrogation of a given āyah is made explicit through ḥadīth literature, as in 'yas'alūnaka 'an al-khamri wal-maisiri qul fihimā ithmun kabīrun wamanāfi'ū lil-nāsi wa'ithmuhumā akbaru min naf'ihimā [They will ask you about liquor and gambling. Say, 'in each of them, there lies serious vice as well as some benefits for mankind. Yet their vice is greater than their usefulness']' (Q2:219) whose abrogation is explained through a ḥadīth: 'man la'iba bil-nardi faqad ʿaṣā allāha warasūlahu [Whoever plays backgammon (dice, that is, gambling), he or she has disobeyed God and His messenger],' 'man la'iba bil-nardshīr faka'annamā ṣabagha yadahū fī laḥmi khinzīrin wadamihī [Whoever plays backgammon (i.e. gambles), it is as if he or she had dyed his or her hand with the pig's meat and blood],' 'inna alladhī ḥarrama shurbahā ḥarrama bai'ahā [The one (i.e. God) who has forbidden its (i.e. liquor, intoxicants) consumption has also forbidden its sale],' 'innahā qad ḥurrimat [It (i.e. liquor) has become forbidden]' and 'inna

allāha ḥarrama al-khamra wal-maisira . . . wakullu muskirin ḥarām [God has forbidden intoxicants and gambling . . . and anything that intoxicates is forbidden]’ (Ibn Kathīr 1993, 2, pp. 87–91).

- (iii) The reasons for revelation is made explicit through ḥadīth literature, as in the ḥadīth, ‘natazawwaju nisā’a ahl al-kitāb walā yatazawwajūna nisā’anā [We marry women from the People of the Book but the men of the People of the Book are not allowed to marry our women]’ which explains Q2:221, ‘walā tankihū al-mushrikāti ḥattā yu’minna [Do not marry polytheistic women until they believe]’ (al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī 1992, 1, p. 151). Also, the ḥadīth, ‘man ḥalafa ‘alā yamīn yaqṭaṭiḥ bihā māla imri’ in huwa ‘alaihi fājir laqiya allāha wahuwa ‘alaihi ḡḥḏbān [Whoever takes oath in order to take the wealth of someone, he will meet God angry with him]’ has been followed by the revelation of Q3:77, ‘inna alladhīna yashtarūna bi’ahdi allāhi wa’aimānihim thamanan qalīlan ulā’ika lā khalāqa lahum fi al-ākhirati walā yukallimuhum allāhu walā yanzuru ilaihim yawma al-qiyāmah [Indeed, those who exchange the covenant of God and their own oaths for a small price will have no share in the hereafter, and God will not speak to them or look at them on the day of resurrection]’ (al-Wāḏi’i n.d., p. 32). Similarly, the ḥadīth narrated by Sa’id b. Jubair, ‘taṣaddaqū ‘alā ahl al-adyān [Give charity to the People of the Book]’ is claimed to have been said to explain the revelation of Q2:272, ‘laisa ‘alaika hudāhum . . . wamā tunfiqū min khairin falī’anfusikum . . . wamā tunfiqū min khairin yuwaffa ilaikum wa’antum lā tuzlamūn [It is not for you (Prophet) to guide them . . . Whatever charity you give benefits your own soul . . . Whatever you give will be repaid to you in full and you will not be wronged].’
- (iv) Ambiguous passages or expressions are explained through ḥadīth literature, such as ‘man ḥalafa ‘alā yamīn fara’ā ḡhairahā khairan minhā falya’ti alladhī huwa khairun walyukaffir ‘an yamīnihi [Whoever takes an oath about something, but he or she finds something else better than the first, then he or she should keep the thing that is better and do atonement for his oath]’ which explains Q2:224, ‘walā taj’alū allāha ‘urḍatan li’aimānikum an tabarrū watattaqū watuṣliḥū baina al-nāsi [Do not make your oath by God an excuse against being righteous and fearing God and making peace among people]’ and Q2:225, ‘lā yu’ākhidhkum allāhu billaghwi fi aimānikum [God does not impose blame upon you for what is unintentional in your oaths].’
- (v) Elucidation to a query about worship or social behaviour is provided by a given ḥadīth, as in the ḥadīth, ‘addī al-amānata ilā man i’tamanaka walā takhun man khānaka [Give back the trust to its owner who left it with you and do not betray whoever betrays you].’ In this ḥadīth, we are told explicitly about the social etiquette related to the trusted things such as cash or goods and how to behave towards people who betray others. This ḥadīth elucidates Q4:58, ‘inna allāha ya’murukum an tu’addū al-amānāti ilā ahlihā [Indeed, God commands you to render trusts to whom they are due].

With regards to the role of ḥadīth in Qur’anic exegesis, Speight (1988, p. 73) notes that no sūrah is completely lacking in comment. However, there are 31

sūrahs with no ḥadīth pertaining to them, but most of these, as well as the others, have lexical and brief interpretive helps. The ḥadīth literature, Speight (1988) adds, reveals three preoccupations of the Islamic community: the person of Muḥammad, piety and social behaviour. Since the Qur'ān is so vital an element in all three, it is natural that the ḥadīth should be a vast repertory of references to the Scripture. Ḥadīth and the Qur'ān are the first two sources for jurisprudence since they enshrine the revealed law (sharī'ah; Speight 1988, p. 77). The sunnah has become the key to the application of Qur'anic principles to the life of Muslim society (Speight 1988, p. 80). In the absence of a matn of a ḥadīth, the customary practice of Muḥammad, that is, his sunnah, has been implemented literally by his companions in their daily life. For instance, Muḥammad used to wipe (yamsah<sup>alā</sup>) his leather socks (al-khuffain) (Nadā 1972, p. 53)

## 2.5 Scepticism about Ḥadīth

It is an acknowledged fact that early tafsīr tradition has been plagued by doubts over the forgery of ḥadīth which has become a widespread practice after the death of the Prophet when the recording of ḥadīth started during the closing years of the first/seventh century.<sup>1</sup> In the view of Gätje (1971, p. 32), the material of tradition grew very soon in such a manner and to such an extent that considerable doubt has often existed concerning its authenticity. In addition, contradictions occur among the statements of various companions and even within accounts attributed to the same person. Although the ḥadīth literature constitutes a major source in Qur'anic exegesis and its value has a special appeal to the school of mainstream exegesis during the formative phase and the subsequent phases (see [Chapter 5, Sections 5.2.1, 5.2.1.1, 5.2.1.2 and 5.2.1.3](#)), its authenticity has been shrouded by sceptical views by both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars (for more details on the forgery of ḥadīth, reliability of chain of authorities and attribution of tafsīr works and views, see [Chapter 1, Section 1.4](#)). In the view of Kamali (2005, p. 2), personal motives, sectarian bias, political, scholastic and theological factors had been known, from very early times, to have prompted misguided individuals to fabricate ḥadīth in order to advance their partisan objectives.

In the view of Donner (1998, pp. 40–41), one of the most striking aspects of the corpus of ḥadīth is the degree to which they reflect the salient political issues of the first/seventh and second/eighth centuries. The ḥadīth books are full of traditions about what constitutes good and bad leadership of the community and under what circumstances Muslims are required to follow their leaders. There are ḥadīths which state flatly that the Imāms (religious leaders) must be obeyed. This duty to obey is sometimes even said to apply in cases where the ruler is a tyrant. Other ḥadīths temper this duty to obey in varying degrees. Some state that obedience is due only as long as the Imām performs prayer; others make it clear that no obedience is due to a person in disobedience to God (for more details on the politics of Qur'anic exegesis and support to the Muslim ruler, see [Chapter 3, Section 3.2, Points 12 and 16](#)).

The authenticity and the date of origin of the ḥadīth material have attracted Western scholars' interest and have, therefore, become issues of heated debate.

According to Gustav Weil (1848; cf. Berg 2000, p. 9), al-Bukhārī deemed only 4,000 of his original 600,000 ḥadīths to be authentic. Having noted this, Weil suggests that a European critic is further required to reject without hesitation half of these 4,000 ḥadīths. Gustav's investigation of the authenticity of ḥadīth has also been followed up by other scholars such as Aloys Sprenger, Ignaz Goldziher and Joseph Schacht. Schacht, for instance, has focused on the role of ḥadīths in the origin and development of early Muslim jurisprudence. While Western ḥadīth scholars have expressed their reservations about the authenticity of ḥadīths, Abdul Rauf (1989) and Azami (1985 and 1992) have put forward a counter argument to the claims made by Western scholars through which they aim to support the authenticity of ḥadīths and the reliability of the isnāds which back up the ḥadīths.

## 2.6 The fabrication of Ḥadīth

A ḥadīth fabricator is usually referred to as *zindīq* (an atheist, plural *zanādiqah* [atheists]) who, according to Islamic law, is a hypocrite, is not a true believer and attempts to undermine the Islamic faith through the narration of fabricated ḥadīths. Ḥadīth fabricators used to go to other towns and pretend as genuine ḥadīth scholars through the way they are dressed and their claim that they are taught by prominent genuine ḥadīth scholars. Among them are °Abd al-Karīm b. Abī al-°Awjā' (d.160/776) who said he fabricated 4,000 ḥadīths, Muḥammad b. Sa°id al-Shāmi (d.65/684), al-Ḥārith al-Kadhhdhāb °Abd al-Raḥmān b. °Udais who came to Damascus and claimed prophethood during the period of °Abd al-Malik b. Marwān (d.86/705) and was executed by °Abd al-Malik b. Marwān. Moments before his execution, °Abd al-Karīm b. Abī al-°Awjā' said: 'I fabricated 4000 ḥadīths for you in which I made you fast when you should have not, and made unlawful what was lawful, and made lawful what was unlawful.' Ḥadīth fabricators have made ḥadīths in various aspects of Islam such as creed (al-°aqīdah), jurisprudence, social manners and etiquettes and worship matters (al-°ibādāt) to deceive (al-talbīs) for personal, political or theological ends (Ḥammādah 2003, pp. 100–101). Ibn Qaiyim al-Jawziyyah (d.691–751/1291–1350) wrote his *al-Manār* which is a list of forged ḥadīths.

The forgery of ḥadīth can be attributed to the following factors:

- (i) During the second half of the caliphate of °Uthmān b. °Affān (d.35/656), the civil war has broken out among the Muslim community which led to the evolution of political tendencies among theologians, in particular, and exegetes, in general. As a result, a large number of forged ḥadīths have emerged either supporting °Uthmān or °Ali. Also, Iraq, and specifically Kūfah, the capital of the Muslim empire, has become the political arena for the transmission of both authentic and forged ḥadīths. °Abd Allāh b. °Adīs, a well-known companion, for instance, narrates a ḥadīth from °Abd Allāh b. Mas°ūd who is reported to have said that the Prophet told him, 'alā inna °Uthmān aḍallu min °abidah °alā ba°lihā [°Uthmān is more misguided and confused than any one else].' When °Abd Allāh b. Mas°ūd was informed

about this ḥadīth, he denied it and said: ‘kadhība ʿaduw allāh. mā samiʿahā min Ibn Masʿūd, wamā samiʿahā Ibn Masʿūd min rasūl allāh [The enemy of God has lied. He has never heard it from Ibn Masʿūd, and Ibn Masʿūd has never heard it from the messenger of God].’

- (ii) Non-mainstream innovative theological views as well as scholastic theology have emerged such as (1) those who claim that the Qurʾān is created (see [Chapter 3, Section: 3.3](#), Point 5); (2) the Murjiʿah who believe in suspended judgement (irjāʾ al-ḥukm) and that the judgement whether a grave sinner belongs to ‘the people of paradise’ or ‘the people of hell’ cannot be answered by ordinary men or by jurists but rather be left (yurjaʾ) to the mercy of God on the day of judgement; (3) the Qadariyyah who believe that the individual determines (yuqaddiru) his or her own acts and not his or her creator, that the individual is able to create his or her good and bad acts; that is, the qadar is his or her own and not God’s and (4) the Jahmiyyah (or jabriyyah [predestination]) who believe that the individual’s good and bad actions are predestined by God, that is, dictated by the will of God. Supporters of each of these theological movements have fabricated ḥadīths to substantiate their doctrine. Some of the forged ḥadīths classify other Muslims as non-Muslims, that is, disbelievers. For instance, the Prophet, in the view of Shiʿi scholars, is reported to have said the ḥadīth, ‘man ankara al-qāʾim min waladī faqad kafar [Whoever denies the Qāʾim, that is, Imām al-Mahdi, is a disbeliever]’ in an attempt to substantiate their dogmatic stance with regards to the occultation (ghaibah) of their Imām Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan known as al-Mahdi who was born in 255/868 and, in their opinion, who has been in occultation, which is still alive.
- (iii) In order to win the hearts and minds of the general public, preachers known as quṣṣāṣ (singular qāṣṣ) and beggars used to transmit fabricated ḥadīths. To drive the message home more effectively about reward and punishment, the hereafter and the punishment in the fire, preachers used to exaggerate with their exhortation accounts adding forged ḥadīths to make their audience more attracted to their admonition. Beggars have also jumped on the band wagon of fabricated ḥadīth. For instance, the forged ḥadīth, ‘al-qurʾān hwa al-dawāʾ [The Qurʾān is the medicine]’ is given by preachers in order to encourage people to read the Qurʾān frequently and made them aware of the virtues of the Qurʾān (al-Albāni 1988, 4, p. 63). However, there are sound ḥadīths which refer to the virtues of the Qurʾān such as ‘man qaraʾa bil-āyataini min ākhir sūrat al-baqarah fi lailatin kafatāhu [Whoever reads the last two āyahs of the Cow, they will be sufficient for him; that is he or she will be protected by them]’ (al-ʿAsqalāni 1982, 8, p. 671)
- (iv) Over-zealous believers and ascetics (al-ṣāliḥūn wal-zuhhād) have wrongly thought that forging some ḥadīths can motivate the lukewarm members of the Muslim community. This is part of their attempt to encourage people to do good and forbid evil. For instance, followers of Muḥammad b. Karrām (d.255/868) who are known as al-Karrāmiyyah, believe that the act of fabricating a ḥadīth is lawful since it ‘softens people’s hearts’ (li-tarqīq qulūb

al-<sup>ʿ</sup>āmmah), as they claim. Other over-zealous ḥadīth fabricators claim that forged ḥadīths are allowed to attract the Muslims to the Qurʾān at a time when they have become more attracted to the teachings of Imām Abu Ḥanīfah (d.80/699–150/767) and history books of Ibn Ishāq (d.85/704–150/767). An example of a fabricated ḥadīth in this regard is

dhikru al-anbiyāʾi min al-<sup>ʿ</sup>ibādati, wadhikru al-ṣāliḥīna kaffāratu al-dhunūbi, wadhikru al-mawti ṣadaqatun, wadhikru al-nāri min al-jihādi, wadhikru al-qabri yuqarribukum min al-jannati, wadhikru al-nāri yubāʿidkum min al-nāri, wa-afḍalu al-<sup>ʿ</sup>ibādati tarku al-jahli, wa-raʾsu māli al-<sup>ʿ</sup>ālimi tarku al-kibri, wathamanu al-jannati tarku al-ḥasadi, wal-nadāmatu min al-dhunūbi al-tawbatu al-ṣādiqatu [Mentioning the Prophets is part of worshipping, mentioning the righteous people is an atonement for sins, mentioning death is charity, mentioning the fire is part of jihād, mentioning the grave brings you closer to paradise, mentioning the fire keeps you away from it, the best worship is to abandon ignorance, the wealth of the scholar is to abandon pride, the price of paradise is to abandon envy and the best way to repent of sins is the genuine repentance].’ (al-Albāni 1988, 4, p. 404)

In the view of al-<sup>ʿ</sup>Irāqī (1996, pp. 108–111), the fabricated ḥadīth is the weakest ḥadīth and that some individuals have forged ḥadīths for exhortation purposes in order to attract the Muslims to the Qurʾān after they have overlooked its value and have been instead engaged in reading jurisprudence instructions such as those of Imām Abu Ḥanīfah and conquest books (maghāzi) such as the work of Muḥammad b. Ishāq. An example of a forged ḥadīth in this connection is the one narrated by Abu ʿIsmah Nūḥ b. Abi Maryam from ʿIkramah, from Ibn ʿAbbās, which highlights the virtues of Qurʾanic sūrahs.

- (v) Sectarian forged ḥadīths have also emerged in favour of a given school of thought over others. Examples of sectarian forged ḥadīths are as follows: ‘abū bakr wa ʿumar minnī bimanzilāt hārūn min mūsā [The relationship of Abu Bakr and ʿUmar with me is like the relationship of Aaron with Moses],’ ‘abū bakr wa ʿumar khairu al-awwalīna wakhairu al-ākharīna wakhairu ahli al-samāwāti wakhairu ahli al-arḍi illā al-nabiyyīna wal-mursalīna [Abu Bakr and ʿUmar are the best of the first people, the best of the last people, the best of the people of the heavens and the best of the people of earth except the Prophets and Messengers],’ ‘aḥabbu ahli baiti ilaiyah al-ḥasanu wal-ḥusain [al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusain are the most I like in my family]’ and aḥabbu ahli ilaiyah fāṭimatu [The most I like in my family is Fāṭimah]’ (al-Albāni 1988, 4, p. 219, 227 and 322).
- (vi) Fabricated ḥadīths have also proliferated in support of ʿAli b. Abī Ṭālib. Shīʿi scholars claim that there are ḥadīths which the companions know but have suppressed them in an attempt to undermine ʿAli’s position, as in ‘When the Prophet and the companions came back from the Farewell Pilgrimage, he held ʿAli’s hand and all the companions were watching.

The Prophet then asked ʿAli to stand up so that everyone would recognize him, then the Prophet said, ‘hādhā waṣiyyi wa’akhī wal-khalifatu min baʿdī fasmaʿū lahū wa’atīʿū [This is my regent, my brother and my successor after me. Listen to him and respect his orders].’ Shīʿi scholars also claim that ‘It was afternoon time but the sun came back again in respect for ʿAli and all people were watching it. However, they claim, Umm Salamah, the Prophet’s wife, suppressed this incident’ (Ibn Qaiyim al-Jawziyyah n.d., p. 22).

- (vii) Tribal solidarity has also been a factor that has led to the emergence of fabricated ḥadīths. Unscrupulous individuals proliferated ḥadīths that favour some cities or countries over others.
- (viii) Political solidarity with a ruler has also led to the fabrication of ḥadīths, as in ‘al-sulṭānu ḡillu allāhi fi al-arḍi, ya’wī ilaihi al-ḡaʿīfu, wabihi yantaṣiru al-maḡlūmu, waman akrama sulṭāna allāhi ʿazza wajal fi al-dunyā, akramahū allāhu yawma al-qiyāmati [The ruler is the shade of God on earth; he is the one to whom the weak comes, and through him the oppressed become victorious; whoever supports the ruler of God, he will be rewarded by God on the day of judgement]’ (Ibn Qaiyim al-Jawziyyah n.d., p. 161).
- (ix) Heretics have also proliferated forged ḥadīths, as in ‘al-naḡaru ilā al-wajh al-ḡasin yaḡlū al-baṣar [Looking at a beautiful face (i.e. lady), improves the eyesight]’ and ‘al-naḡaru ilā al-wajh al-ḡasin ʿibādah [Looking at a beautiful face (i.e. lady) is worshipping]’ (Ibn Qaiyim al-Jawziyyah n.d., p. 24). In order to diminish the authority of ḥadīth, the heretics forged, ‘idhā jā’akum ʿannī ḡadīth fa’riḡūhu ʿalā kitāb allāh famā wāfaḡahu fakhudhūhu wamā khālafā fatrukūhu [Should you hear any ḡadīth ascribed to me, you should refer it to the Book of God. Whatever that is compatible with it (i.e. with the Qur’ān), take it, and whatever that is incompatible with it, leave it].’ The heretics claimed that this ḡadīth was incompatible with the Book of Allāh according to Q59:7, ‘wamā ātākum al-rasūlu fakhudhūhu wamā nahākum ʿanhu fantahū [Whatever the Messenger has given you, take, and what he has forbidden you, refrain from].’ Thus, for them, prophetic ḡadīths had no value (al-Nāṣir 2001, p. 63).

## 2.7 Validity of Ḥadīth transmission

According to Muslim scholars, a ḡadīth transmitter should be a Muslim, morally upright, rational (ʿāqil), has reached the age of puberty and does not commit wrong deeds (ḡhair fāsiḡ) (al-Suyūṭi 1996b, 1, p. 163). Forged hadiths, weak and fabricated isnād are transmitted by unscrupulous individuals and have pervaded a large number of early tafṣir works in spite of the fact that Muḡammad is reported to have warned his companions on two occasions about forging and misquoting his ḡadīths: if anyone tells a lie about me intentionally, let him be sure of his place in the hell fire; if anyone speaks of a ḡadīth in my name while knowing that I have not said it, he is a liar. It is worthwhile to note that there are several errors that can take place in the matn (text, content) and isnād (chain of authorities)

during the transmission of ḥadīth such as the addition or deletion of some words in a ḥadīth, reversing its word order, changing its content and fabricating a ḥadīth. For this reason, the companions have taken extra care in the narration of a given ḥadīth. As the ḥadīth enjoys an authoritative weight, the forgery of ḥadīth has begun primarily for political and theological reasons. The ḥadīth is employed as a tool to credit or discredit a given individual, party or doctrine (see [Chapter 3, Sections 3.2 and 3.3](#)). In the view of Kamali (2005, p. 82), the year 41/661 marks the beginning of ḥadīth forgery after the assassination of ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān and the ensuing civil war between ʿAli and Muʿāwiyah. On the controversial issue of forged ḥadīth, Kamali (2005, p. 81) argues that the narration and transmission of ḥadīth are no less important than testimony and are only accepted from upright and trustworthy narrators. In the view of Muslim scholars, the fabrication of isnād amounts to disbelief (kufr) and the perpetrator deserves the death penalty.

However, concern over the accuracy of both the text and chain of authorities of ḥadīth has increased as textual corruption of ḥadīth has proliferated. Rigorous and critical criteria have become urgently required in the compilation of ḥadīth from different individuals and in particular the transmitter’s reliability. This is a discipline of ḥadīth studies that has become known as impugnement and validation (al-jarḥ wal-taʿdīl) or ḥadīth criticism (naqd al-ḥadīth) whose beginnings go back to the lifetime of the companions who have spoken of reliable or unreliable transmitters (Kamali 2005, p. 81; al-Suyūṭī 1996b, 1, 209ff; Ḥammādah 2003, p. 26). For Ḥammādah (2003, pp. 28–34), the procedure of al-jarḥ wal-taʿdīl is related to Q49:6, ‘yā aiyuha alladhīna āmanū in jāʾakum fāsiqun binabaʾin fatabaiyanū in tuṣībū qawman bijahālatin fatuṣbiḥū ʿalā mā faʿaltum nādimīn [O you who have believed, if there comes to you a disobedient one with information, investigate, lest you harm a people out of ignorance and become regretful over what you have done]’ which calls for careful consideration before accepting one’s claim or witness, that Muḥammad has practised this procedure and that Abu Bakr, ʿUmar, ʿAli and Zaid b. Thābit have also practised al-jarḥ wal-taʿdīl. By the end of the successors’ phase around 150/767, al-jarḥ wal-taʿdīl has become a discipline in ḥadīth studies and a procedure that has to be observed due to the increase in the number of ḥadīth transmitters. According to Kamali (2005, p. 81) and Ḥammādah (2003, p. 75), works on the biographies of ḥadīth transmitters and their reliability in terms of character and qualifications have not begun until the third/ninth century by traditionists like al-Bukhārī (d.256/870) and his student Muslim (d.261/875). In order to ascertain textual accuracy of a given ḥadīth, traditionists have applied two tools:

- (1) the comparison of text of ḥadīth, and
- (2) cross-examining the ḥadīth.

This approach, in the view of Kamali (2005, p. 83), aims to evaluate the accuracy of ḥadīth and the reliability of its transmitter. Traditionists, therefore, launch their investigation mission as detectives on the trail of a fraud. They work as

validators of ḥadīth literature. Their aim is to discern the genuine from the spurious ḥadīths. Among the methods they have applied are the following:

- (i) The comparison between the ḥadīths of different students of the same scholar,
- (ii) The comparison between the oral and written forms of the same ḥadīth,
- (iii) The compatibility between the ḥadīth and the Qur'ān and
- (iv) The comparison of the same ḥadīth said by the same scholar at different times.

The reliability of a ḥadīth transmitter may be proved or questioned. When his or her reliability is validated on the basis of his or her uprightness, this is referred to as *al-ta'dīl*. Therefore, the ḥadīth narrator is described as *ʿadl* if he is morally upright, pious and does not commit grave sins. Also, a ḥadīth narrator achieves the esteemed status of *ʿadl* if he or she is described by specific expressions such as 'the most reliable person', 'reliable and retentive' (*thiqah ḥāfīz*), 'proficient' (*mutqin*), 'conclusive evidence' (*ḥujjah*) and 'truthful' (*ṣadūq*). However, when a ḥadīth transmitter's reliability is in doubt and is not proved on the basis of his or her uprightness, the method of *jarḥ* is invoked and the valid grounds for the *jarḥ* should be provided by the ḥadīth investigator. The expression '*jarḥ*' literally means 'wounding', that is, taking a blood sample for a blood test, so to speak, in order to diagnose the source of 'unreliability in ḥadīth transmission'. Among the grounds of *jarḥ* are the following points that constitute the criteria of impugment (*jarḥ*):

- (i) The belief by the ḥadīth narrator in theological matters that may be classified as innovation (*bid'ah*) which is counter to the Qur'ān and the sunnah;
- (ii) The ḥadīth narrator is known for involvement in illegal financial matters such as fraud;
- (iii) The ḥadīth narrator is well known for committing grave sins (*al-kabā'ir*) such as associating other deities with God, sorcery, usury, abusing the property of an orphan, not taking part in *jihād*, slander, false accusation of believing women with fornication and adultery, false testimony, the consumption of alcohol, homosexuality and fraudulent dealings in financial matters;
- (iv) The ḥadīth transmitter charges a fee for transmitting ḥadīth;
- (v) For the Ḥanafis, when a ḥadīth transmitter narrates a ḥadīth but subsequently forgets what he narrated, his or her ḥadīth is rejected;
- (vi) The denial of a reliable ḥadīth narrator that he or she transmitted a ḥadīth to another reliable narrator even though the latter reported him or her as saying the ḥadīth. Such a ḥadīth is rejected;
- (vii) The ḥadīth transmitter is described by morally negative expressions such as 'liar' (*kadhḥāb*), 'not trust worthy' (*laisa bithiqah*) and 'fabricator' (*waḍḍāʿ*) which characterize his or her doubtful reliability. However, the narration of a ḥadīth by an individual who repents from committing wrong deeds (*al-fisq*) is accepted and *jarḥ* is not invoked;

- (viii) The ḥadīth transmitter is well known for lack of seriousness in learning or transmitting ḥadīth, forgetfulness, accepting as right what is classified as wrong by the majority of people and reliability on irregular ḥadīths;
- (ix) The upright character of the ḥadīth transmitter is unknown to the community;
- (x) The character of the ḥadīth transmitter is characterized by contradictory statements, one as ‘upright’ (ʿadl), and the other as ‘jarḥ’. Due to this discrepancy in recommendation, his or her narration of a ḥadīth is rejected and the jarḥ is invoked (al-Suyūṭī 1996b, 1, pp. 163–189, 2, pp. 209–210; Kamali 2005, pp. 85–95) and
- (xi) The ḥadīth transmitter is unaware of the fact that a given ḥadīth has got some sort of impugment and validation.

## 2.8 Forms of defects in Ḥadīth chain of authorities

There are many defects that may infect the chain of authorities of a ḥadīth. One of the most important rules of an authentic and sound ḥadīth is that its chain of authorities should be connected from the beginning to the end. Traditionists have classified the major defects that may take place during the chain of narration (Ḥammādah 2003, pp. 283–290). These defects are as follows:

- (i) al-mursal: If in the chain of authorities of a ḥadīth the name of a companion is dropped by a successor narrating the ḥadīth, this defect in the chain of authorities is called mursal. For instance, a successor says, The Prophet said ‘so and so’ without giving the name of the companion in the isnād of this ḥadīth. An example of a ḥadīth mursal is, ‘yā asmā’ idhā balaghat al-mar’atu al-mahīd lā yaṣuḥḥu an yurā minhā illā hādihā wadhāk wa’ashāra ilā al-wajh wal-kaffain [O Asmā’, when a lady menstruates, nothing should be seen of her except this and that, then the Prophet indicated to his face and palms of his hands]’ (al-ʿAẓīmābādi 1968, 11, p. 161).
- (ii) al-munqaṭiʿ: If in the chain of authorities of a ḥadīth the name of one narrator is dropped before the name of the companion or when in the chain of authorities of a ḥadīth the name of an unknown narrator is mentioned before the name of a companion, this form of defect in the chain of authorities is called munqaṭiʿ. An example of a ḥadīth munqaṭiʿ is, ‘allāhumma innī asʾaluka al-thabāta fī al-amri [O God, I ask you to make me firm in my faith]’ (al-Halāwī 1977, p. 34).
- (iii) al-muʿḍal: If in the chain of authorities of a ḥadīth two or more narrators are consecutively dropped, this defect in the chain of authorities is called muʿḍal. An example of a ḥadīth muʿḍal is, ‘lil-mamlūki ṭaʿāmuhū wak-  
iswatuḥū bil-maʿrūfi walā yukallafu min al-ʿamali illā mā yuṭīqu [The slave should be fairly fed and clothed, and should only be asked to do work that he can do]’ (al-Halāwī 1977, p. 32).
- (iv) al-mudallas: If in the chain of authorities of a ḥadīth the transmitter narrates from someone from whom he or she has not in fact heard the ḥadīth

directly but makes the reader feel that he or she has, this form of defect in the chain of authorities is called *mudallas*. An example of a ḥadīth *mudallas* is, ‘lā taḥmidū islāma al-mar’i ḥattā ta’rifū ‘uqdata ra’yihī [Do not praise someone’s conversion to Islam until you know him or her very well]’ (Halāwi 1977, p. 38).

- (v) *al-maqlūb*: If in the chain of authorities of a ḥadīth the transmitter changes the word order of one of the names such as *zyx* instead of the correct order *xyz* or when someone changes the transmitter’s name with another name that is more famous so that the ḥadīth becomes more acceptable, this form of defect in the chain of authorities is called *maqlūb*. An example of a ḥadīth *maqlūb* is, ‘idhā laqītum al-mushrikīna fī ṭarīqin falā tabda’ūhum bil-salām [If you meet polytheists outside, do not greet them first]’ (Halāwi 1977, p. 67).
- (vi) *al-mu‘allaq*: If in the chain of authorities of a ḥadīth the transmitter omits one or more initial narrators, this form of defect in the chain of authorities is called *mu‘allaq*. An example of a ḥadīth *mu‘allaq* is, ‘aḥabbu al-dīni ilā allāh al-ḥanafīyyah al-samḥā’ [The best religion to God is the simple religion (i.e. Islam)]’ (al-‘Asqalāni 1982, 1, p. 116).
- (vii) *al-mawqūf*: If in the chain of authorities of a ḥadīth the transmitter attributes to a companion a statement or an action whether this chain of authorities is linked (*muttaṣil*) or not linked (*ghair muttaṣil*), such as when the transmitter says that Abu Bakr narrates that the Prophet has said ‘xyz’, this form of defect in the chain of authorities is called *mawqūf*. An example of a ḥadīth *mawqūf* is, ‘ḥaddithū al-nāsa bimā ya’rifūn. aturīdūna an yukadhdhaba allāhu warasūluh [Talk to people according to their level of understanding. Do you want people to disbelieve in God and His Messenger?]- (viii) *al-maqtū‘*: If in the chain of authorities of a ḥadīth the transmitter attributes to a successor a statement or an action whether this chain of authorities is linked or not linked, this form of defect in the chain of authorities is called *maqtū‘*. An example of a ḥadīth *maqtū‘* is, ‘ṣalli wa‘alaihi bid‘atuh [Pray (behind him), as he will be responsible for his innovation].’ This ḥadīth was narrated by al-Ḥasan al-Baṣri when he was asked about praying behind an innovative person (*mubtadi‘*), (al-Halāwi 1977, p. 98).

## 2.9 Classification of Ḥadīth

A ḥadīth is usually judged on a three-point-scale: either as *ṣaḥīḥ* (sound, authentic), *ḥasan* (fair, good) or *ḍa‘īf* (weak). Ḥadīths, however, can be classified into the following (al-Suyūṭi 1996a, al-‘Irāqi 1996, Kamali 2005, pp. 164–175, Berg 2000, p. 8, Ḥammādah 2003, pp. 427–455):

- (i) The category *mutawātir* (multiple source) applies to a ḥadīth that has been passed on from one transmitter to another through numerous transmitters at every level of the *isnād*; this category of ḥadīth was deemed to be beyond doubt or forgery. Thus, all the narrators could not have collaborated to

perpetuate a forgery due to the fact that there are many narrators, diverse localities and different times. However, the credibility of a mutawātir ḥadīth is based on number of transmitters; they are not required to meet the requirement of ʿadālah (uprightness, decency). The narrator of a mutawātir ḥadīth can be anyone, even a child or a non-Muslim. The mutawātir ḥadīth can be either a mutawātir lafẓī, that is, a mutawātir ḥadīth which consists of verbatim transmission of the same text (matn) of the ḥadīth or a mutawātir maʿnawī, that is, a mutawātir ḥadīth which has the same meaning or theme. An example of a mutawātir ḥadīth is, ‘ṭalabu al-ʿilmi farīḍatun ʿalā kulli muslimin wamuslimatin [The pursuit of knowledge is an obligation for every Muslim]’ (al-Kittāni 1983, p. 35).

- (ii) The category mashhūr (well-known, wide-spread) applies to a ḥadīth with three or more transmitters at each level of the isnād. It is due to the large number of narrators that this kind of ḥadīth has become known as mashhūr especially during the first three generations of the advent of Islam. Examples of mashhūr ḥadīths are ‘ṭalabu al-ʿilmi farīḍatun ʿalā kulli muslimin wamuslimatin [The pursuit of knowledge is an obligation for every Muslim]’ and ‘kullu maʿrūfin ṣadaqatun [Every good deed partakes in charity].’
- (iii) The category termed fard (single) applies to ḥadīth with one transmitter. The fard ḥadīth is sub-divided into the following:
  - (a) The category fard muṭlaq (absolute single) applies to a narrator who is a companion who has narrated the ḥadīth from the Prophet, even if the ḥadīth has become well-known (mashhūr) and reported by many at the lower levels of the isnād, as in ‘innamā al-aʿmālu bil-niyyāt [Indeed, one’s deeds are to be judged by their intentions].’ This ḥadīth is narrated by ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, a companion to the Prophet, and has thus become acceptable in all the six ḥadīth collections. This kind of ḥadīth is also referred to as fard muṭlaq.
  - (b) The category fard nisbī (relative single) which applies to narrators as a group, narrators from a single place, or a single teacher, such as people of Kūfah, Baṣrah, Madīnah, as in ‘al-qaḍā’u thalāthah, fa’ithnān fī al-nārr wawāḥid fī al-jannah: fa’ammā al-ithnān faqāḍin qaḍā bighair al-ḥaqq wahuwa yaʿlam fahuwa fī al-nārr, waqaḍin qaḍā bighair al-ḥaqq wahuwa lā yaʿlam fahuwa fī al-nārr. Wa’ammā al-wāḥid alladhī fī al-jannah faqāḍin bil-ḥaqq fahuwa fī al-jannah [Judges are of three types, two of whom are in hell and one in paradise. The two include a judge who knowingly renders a wrong judgement and another who renders a wrong judgement unknowingly. The judge who is in paradise is the one who renders a right judgement].’

For Berg (2000, p. 8), however, the fard category of ḥadīth was considered binding but with less weight.

- (iv) The category gharīb (strange) applies to a ḥadīth with just one transmitter at any one link of its isnād, be it the middle, lower or upper end. However, so

long as there is a link, that is, one narrator, in the isnād, this would qualify the ḥadīth as gharīb. Therefore, it can be said that every fard ḥadīth is also a gharīb ḥadīth but not vice versa. A gharīb ḥadīth is similar to fard ḥadīth, but it may differ with it at the lower levels of the isnād, as in ‘inna hādhā al-dīn matīn fa’awghil fīhī birifqin walā tubghīd ilā nafsika ‘ibādat allāh fa’inna al-munbit lā arḍan qaṭa’ walā ḡahran abqā [This religion is firm so penetrate into it gently without causing yourself repulsion in the worship of God. For a camel rider who does not take rest breaks the animal’s back without traversing the earth]’ (Kamali 2005, p. 165; Ḥammādah 2003, p. 433).

- (v) The category āḥād (solitary), which is also known as khabar al-āḥād, applies to a ḥadīth that is narrated by one, two or three narrators at every level, but the number of narrators does not reach that of the mutāwatir ḥadīth. Thus, according to jurists and traditionists, the ḥadīth literature includes gharīb, ‘azīz and mashhūr ḥadīths. An example of a gharīb ḥadīth is, ‘innamā al-a‘mālu bil-niyyāt [Indeed, one’s deeds are to be judged by their intentions]’; an example of a ‘azīz ḥadīth is, ‘lā yu’minu aḥadukum ḥattā akūna aḥabba ilaihi min wālidīhi wawaladihi [None of you truly believes unless he loves me more than he loves his father and son]’ and an example of a mashhūr ḥadīth is, ‘man kāna lahū imāmun faqirā’atu al-imāmi lahū qirā’atun [Whoever has an Imām (when praying), whatever the Imam recites is considered a recitation for him or her].’
- (vi) The category ‘azīz (strong) applies to a ḥadīth in which at least one link of its isnād consists of two narrators. The strength of this category of ḥadīth is derived from the minimum of the two transmitters in every link of the isnād, as in the ḥadīth narrated by Anas b. Mālik and Abu Hurairah, ‘lā yu’minu aḥadukum ḥattā akūna aḥabba ilaihi min wālidīhi wawaladihi [None of you truly believes unless he loves me more than he loves his father and son].’

## 2.10 Criteria of Ḥadīth authenticity

Traditionists have laid down the criteria of the authenticity of a given ḥadīth. An authentic ḥadīth should fulfil the following requirements of authenticity (Kamali 2005, pp. 181–200; Ḥammādah 2003, pp. 167–273):

- (i) Each ḥadīth is hinged upon an isnād; that is, a ḥadīth must be supported by a chain of authorities in which the transmitter gives the name of the authority from whom he learned the ḥadīth and that authority must give the name of his source or teacher from whom he received the same ḥadīth and so on until it reaches the Prophet. Thus, the chain of transmitters constitutes the isnād.
- (ii) The term ‘adālah (uprightness, decency) requires that every level of isnād must be marked by the following:
  - (1) An upright person (‘ādil or ‘adl) who has not committed a grave sin,
  - (2) He has not committed minor sins and
  - (3) He is not linked to people of ill-repute or bad manners.

- (iii) None of the narrators in the chain of authorities is known to be implicated in forgery, sectarian, political or theological disputes.
- (iv) The narrator of a ḥadīth must be a contemporary of the teacher on whose authority he relates the ḥadīth; that is, he must have been born before the death of his teacher by a period long enough to enable him to acquire the knowledge of ḥadīth.
- (v) The narrator of ḥadīth must enjoy a retentive memory; that is, he should not be known for lapse of memory and committing frequent errors.
- (vi) The text of the ḥadīth must be void of forgery in terms of linguistic and stylistic features that are characteristic of the Prophet's discourse. Weak style, inconsistency in genre, corruption of purpose, the use of obscene expressions, theologically rejected beliefs that are contrary to the Qur'ān are all features of a forged ḥadīth.
- (vii) The text of the ḥadīth must be compatible with the Qur'ān. For instance, the following ḥadīth: 'The offspring of adultery (zinā) shall not enter paradise down to seven generations, was rejected by 'Ā'ishah as it is inconsistent with Q6:164, 'wālā taziru wāziratun wizra ukhrā [No soul shall carry the burden of another soul].'
- (viii) A ḥadīth must enjoy historical validity, as in 'The Prophet levied the jizyah (poll tax) on the Jews of Khaibar and relieved them of hardship' which is claimed to have been narrated by Sa'ad b. Mu'ādh and Mu'āwiyah. This ḥadīth is discredited historically since:
  - (a) the jizyah was not known at that time, that is, during the year of Khaibar (d.7/628),
  - (b) the Qur'ānic legal injunction on jizyah was only revealed later in the year of Tabūk (d.9/630) and
  - (c) Sa'ad b. Mu'ādh died before the year of Khaibar.
- (ix) A ḥadīth must be in agreement with reason and common sense, as in 'God revived from the dead the parents of the Prophet Muḥammad and they embraced Islam in his presence.'
- (x) The narrator of a ḥadīth must not be unknown (majhūl). This includes names like 'Amr dhū Murr al-Hamadāni al-Kūfi (d.74/693) and Jabbār al-Ṭā'i.
- (xi) Closeness of the student narrator to his teacher (shaikh). Both the student and his teacher must have established a strong teaching and learning relationship that can qualify the student to be a ḥadīth transmitter.
- (xii) The text and chain of authorities must be
  - (a) clear of hidden defects ('ilal) related to the text of the ḥadīth such as the insertion of words, change of a word into another. It may be also related to the chain of authorities of the ḥadīth. For instance, the ḥadīth narrated by Yūnus, from al-Zuhri, from Sālim, from Ibn 'Umar, from the Prophet: 'One who captures one rak'ah (unit) of the Friday or other prayers, has captured the whole' is regarded as a defective ḥadīth (ma'lūl) in terms of transmission and content. The correct names in the chain of authorities (from al-Zuhri upwards) should be al-Zuhri, from Abu Salamah, from Abu Hurairah, from the Prophet.

Also, the word Friday in the text is forged. Thus, the correct text is, ‘Whoever captures one rak‘ah of a (congregational) prayer has captured all of it.’

- (b) clear of concealment (al-tadlīs) which applies to the narrator who knows what he chooses not to reveal and remains silent. This refers to a narrator who was a contemporary of his immediate source but has not met him, yet he makes out as if he did, or the narrator, who may or may not have met with his immediate source, employs an expression which implies direct or indirect learning. This is to do with the concealment of the direct source or hiding some weaknesses in the isnād which is referred to as tadlīs al-isnād and the concealment in the identification of the teachers which is referred to as tadlīs al-shuyūkh.

## 2.11 Genres of Ḥadīth

In terms of documentation, the ḥadīth literature, according to Kamali (2005, pp. 31–45), can be classified into the following genres:

- (i) The ṣaḥīfah (booklet) genre of the early first/seventh century to early second/eighth century: Some companions have collected, for their own use, some ḥadīths during the lifetime of Muḥammad. This collection of ḥadīth is neither systematic nor thematic. Among the companions who have documented ḥadīths in a ṣaḥīfah format are Sa‘ad b. ‘Ubādah (d.15/636), Samura b. Jundub (d.60/679), Jābir b. ‘Abd Allāh (d.78/697) and ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣṣ (d.65/684), whose ṣaḥīfah is called al-Ṣaḥīfah al-Ṣādiqah (the true booklet of ḥadīth); ‘Ali b. Abī Ṭālib (d.40/661); Ibn ‘Abbās (d.68/687); Anas b. Mālīk (d.179/795) and Hammām b. Munabbih (d.34/654–110/728), a student of Abu Hurairah (d.58/677), whose ṣaḥīfah is called al-Ṣaḥīfah al-Ṣaḥīḥah (the correct booklet of ḥadīth).
- (ii) The muṣannaf (classified) genre of mid-second/eighth century. This is based on thematic classification of ḥadīths. This genre includes the muwaṭṭa’ of Imām Mālīk (d.179/795), the muṣannaf of Ma‘mar b. Rāshid (d.154/771) and the muṣannaf of ‘Abd al-Razzāq b. Humām al-Ṣan‘āni (d.211/826).
- (iii) The musnad (supported) genre of the end of the second/eighth century: This is one of the richest phases of ḥadīth documentation where a greater role has been given to isnād which links directly the ḥadīth to Muḥammad through the reports of reliable narrators that usually start with a companion. However, this genre is not based on the themes of ḥadīth. It includes the musnad of Imām Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d.164–241/780–855), the musnad of Ibn al-Najjār (d.262/875) and the musnad of Abu Dāwūd Sulaimān b. Dāwūd al-Ṭayālīsī (d.204/819).
- (iv) The ṣaḥīḥ (sound) genre of the third/ninth century: This is represented by *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* of Muḥammad b. Ismā‘il al-Bukhārī (d.194–256/809–869) and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* of Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj al-Naisābūrī (d.206–261/821–874) which are referred to as al-ṣaḥīḥain (the two sound

collections of ḥadīth) and are the most authoritative and comprehensive of all ḥadīth collections. The ṣaḥīḥain are based on wide travelling to undertake the task of ḥadīth collection through interviews with various people who have knowledge of ḥadīth. The ṣaḥīḥain are also marked by reliable isnād and verification of ḥadīths. The ṣaḥīḥain are arranged in chapters thematically. However, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* is better than *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* in terms of thematic arrangement of chapters and is, thus, user friendly.

- (v) The sunan genre of the third/ninth century: This genre specializes in the collection of legal ḥadīths related to matters like cleanliness, prayer, zakāt, pilgrimage, lawful, unlawful, marriage and divorce. This genre is represented by *Sunan Abu Dāwūd* of Sulaimān b. Ash‘ath al-Sijistāni (d.275/888). This is marked by reference to weak ḥadīths (ḍa‘īf) that are identified as weak by the author, the various sources through which the author receives the ḥadīth and the different versions of the text of the ḥadīth. The other sunan works are *Sunan Ibn Mājah* of Muḥammad b. Yazīd al-Qazwīni (d.273/886) known as Ibn Mājah and *Sunan al-Nasā‘i* of Abu ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Aḥmad b. Shu‘aib al-Nasā‘i (d.303/915).
- (i) The jāmi‘ (comprehensive) genre from the fourth/tenth century: This is a comprehensive ḥadīth collection marked by thematic chapters on belief (‘aqīdah), Islamic legal rulings, admonition, social etiquette, Qur’anic exegesis and the biography of the Prophet. This genre is represented by *Jāmi‘ al-Tirmidhi* of al-Ḥākim al-Naisābūri (d.405/1014) known as al-Tirmidhi; al-Tirmidhi’s work is marked by listing ṣaḥīḥ (sound), ḥasan (fair), ḍa‘īf (weak) and mu‘allal (defective) ḥadīths, alternative isnāds to a given ḥadīth.
- (ii) The mu‘jam genre of the fourth/tenth century: This genre lists the contents alphabetically under the names of the narrators, their teachers, the cities and tribes to which the narrators belong. This is represented by *al-Mu‘jam al-Kabīr*, *al-Mu‘jam al-Awsaṭ* and *al-Mu‘jam al-Ṣaghīr* of Abu al-Qāsim Sulaimān b. Aḥmad al-Ṭabarāni (d.360/970) and *Ḥāṭib al-Lail wa Jāriḥ al-Sail* of al-Suyūṭi (d.911/1505).
- (iii) The mustakhraj (extracted) genre of the fourth/tenth century: In this genre, the new compiler gathers new isnāds to the same ḥadīths collected by a previous author. In other words, new transmitters are added to the chain of authorities of a given ḥadīth. This is represented by the *Mustakhraj* of Abu Bakr b. Ibrāhīm al-Isma‘īli (d.371/981) on *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, and the *Mustakhraj ‘alā al-Ṣaḥīḥain* of Abu ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Ya‘qūb al-Shaibāni al-Naisābūri (d.344/955) known as Ibn al-Akḥram.
- (iv) The mustadrak (complementary) genre of the fifth/eleventh century: This genre refers to a ḥadīth work whose author supplements the work of a previous ḥadīth compiler by following the same methodology of the previous scholar. Thus, more ḥadīths are added to previous works of ḥadīth. This is represented by the *Mustadrak ‘alā al-Ṣaḥīḥain* of al-Ḥākim al-Naisābūri (d.405/1014) in which the new author adds more ḥadīths to the ones collected by the previous compilers al-Bukhārī and Muslim of the third/ninth century.

## 3 The politics of exegesis

### 3.1 Introduction

Soon after the death of Muḥammad, Qur'anic exegesis has become heterogeneous when it began as an oral tradition during the first/seventh century and when it began to be recorded during the first quarter of the second/eighth century (see [Chapter 5, Section: 5.2.2](#)). Since then, Muslim exegetes have been working in politically pressurized and hostile environments. The political status quo has impinged upon exegesis more than on any other discipline in Islamic studies. The impact of the Muslim political arena has begun to be felt ever more strongly at the inception of the Umayyad dynasty than at any other time. Similarly, theological cleavages among mainstream and non-mainstream Islam have encroached upon Qur'anic exegesis. With the evolution of sectarian Islam during the Umayyad period, the theological veil of Qur'anic exegesis has been lifted and exegesis emerged in its sectarian cloak. The present chapter provides an insight into the politico-theological aspects of Qur'anic exegesis and how Qur'anic semantics has been manipulated by Muslim exegetes to justify and propagate their political or theological ends.

### 3.2 Politicizing Qur'anic exegesis

Exegesis, as a discipline of Qur'anic studies, has opened the floodgates of tendentious political semantics. Each Qur'anic lexical item can have as many shades of meaning as commentators can identify. No sooner had the students of the Qur'ān embarked upon the process of tafsir than the clash between exoteric and esoteric significations intensified, sparking off the opposing theological, and then political, hermeneutical views among Qur'ān commentators. Thus, the binary opposition between al-tafsir bil-ma'thūr (traditional exegesis) and al-tafsir bil-ra'i (hypothetical opinion, that is, personal reasoning or rational exegesis) has emerged signalling the traditional distinction between mainstream, that is, traditional and mainly Sunni, and non-mainstream, that is, rational, exegetical tradition that combines Sunni and non-Sunni schools of thought (see [Figure 2 in Chapter 1](#)).

- (1) Allegorical interpretation has become the major feature of sectarian exegesis. While the Shī'ī<sup>1</sup> theologians exploit the allegorical, that is, the esoteric, meaning in Q13:7, 'innamā anta mundhirun walikulli qawmin hād [You are only a warner and for every people is a guide]' and Q42:23, 'qul lā as'alukum 'alaihi ajran illa al-mawaddata fi al-qurbā [I do not ask you for this message any payment but only good will due to kinship]' to justify their dogmatic views, the Sunni Umayyads consolidate their claims to the caliphate through the passage about Adam in Q2:30: 'wa'idh qāla rabbuka lil-malā'ikati innī jā'ilun fi al-arḍi khalifah. qālū ataj'alu fihā man yufsidu fihā wayasfiku al-dimā'a wanaḥnu nusabbiḥu biḥamdika wanuqaddisu laka. qāla innī a'lamu mā lā ta'lamūn [Mention O Muḥammad, when your Lord said to the angels: 'Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority.' They said: 'Will you place upon it one who causes corruption therein and sheds blood, while we declare Your praise and sanctify You?' God said: 'Indeed, I know that which you do not know.']. Pro-Umayyad poets such as Jarīr and al-Farazdaq compare the mothers of Walid I and Yazīd II to the sun and the Virgin Mary, respectively.
- (2) In a similar vein, the Abbasids are looking for a sound foundation upon which they can establish their dynasty. Ibn 'Abbās, a versatile and exemplum companion in Islamic law and exegesis and is considered a guarantee of religious truth has soon become embroiled in the politics of exegesis. For Western scholars like Nagel (see Berg 2000, p. 133), Ibn 'Abbās has acted as the progenitor of the Abbasid dynasty (132–655/749–1257). The Shī'ī exegete al-Ḥasan b. 'Ali b. Mūsā al-Riḍā (d.203/818), in his exegesis *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, attributes exegetical views to 'Ali b. Abī Ṭālib in an attempt to support his dogmatic Shī'ī views based on linguistic allegorical interpretation. He argues that, in the view of 'Ali, the meaning of al-raḥmān (the entirely Merciful), Q1:3) is morphologically derived from the word al-raḥam (the womb) and that every male and female Shī'ī is from the raḥam (womb) of Muḥammad (fol. 9r).
- (3) Through profane literature, the Umayyads used arguments to justify the monopoly of the caliphate in their family and that the caliphate has been bestowed upon the Umayyads by God (Watt 1990, pp. 60, 62). Their political premise has, therefore, a theological foundation and is based on Q21:105, 'anna al-arḍa yarithuhā 'ibādiya al-ṣāliḥūn [The land (of paradise) is inherited by My righteous servants]. Thus, for the Umayyads, the earth belongs to God and He has entrusted it to the khalīfah, that is, the Umayyad caliph who is the head of the Islamic state.

Among the poets who supported the Umayyads are Miskīn al-Dārimi who wrote poetry in support of Mu'āwiyah and his son, Yazīd, and Jarīr who wrote poetry in support of the Umayyad ruler, Sulaimān b. 'Abd al-Malik. Also, al-Farazdaq wrote political poetry in favour of the Umayyad rule. However, there were poets who supported Shī'ism and expressed their support to 'Ali's priority

for the succession of Muḥammad, including al-Kumait Ibn Zaid, Aiman Ibn Khuzaim and Asmā' Bint °Aqīl.

- (4) The Umayyads, in a similar vein, have sought a scapegoat through the notion of free will and pre-determinism to justify their political misfortunes and the sufferings of the Muslims under their rule (see Rauf 1970, p. 289). The reign of Mu°āwiyah b. Abī Sufyān (d.60/679), the founder of the Umayyad dynasty, and that of his son Yazīd (64/683), witnessed the growth of a deliberate attempt to link the concept of qadar<sup>2</sup> (determinism, predestination) more closely with human acts. While °Ali discouraged speculation over qadar, though he sought comfort in it in distress, Mu°āwiyah justified his unpopular actions by attributing them to qadar. Subsequent Umayyad rulers and governors were also said to be of the habit of attributing their licentiousness and iniquities to qadar (Rauf 1970, p. 290). The dispute over the meaning of the term qadar is a major factor in the rise and growth of the early Muslim sects (Rauf 1970, p. 297). Thus, the exegesis of qadar has taken a political twist through which a fatalistic interpretation is provided in order to gag the opposition, exonerate the unscrupulous rulers and justify their political misfortunes.
- (5) The Mu°tazilah views have begun to evolve and take roots during the close of the first/seventh century of the Umayyad dynasty when the debate over al-jabr (predestination) has gained momentum and become a wide spread topic. This is a politically motivated approach by the Umayyad rulers in an attempt to justify their rule. For instance, Mu°āwiyah b. Abī Sufyān encouraged freedom of speech and debate about al-jabr so that he can gain political authority and support for his rule and discredit °Ali's legitimacy over him. However, Mu°āwiyah's policy was opposed by prominent jurist companions such as Abu al-Dardā' (d.33/653) and °Ubādah b. al-°āmit (d.34/654).
- (6) The Mu°tazilah do not believe in the attributes of God but believe in the createdness of the Qur'ān. For al-Shahrastāni (1986, 1, p. 103), this Mu°tazili theological stance has been supported by the Abbasid rulers. Some Qur'anic āyahs articulate sectarian and political boundaries.<sup>3</sup>
- (7) The doctrine of the uncreatedness versus createdness of the Qur'ān has become a contentious and controversial political issue.<sup>4</sup> al-Ma'mūn (170/786–218/833) has been attracted by the possibility of compromise contained in the doctrine of the createdness of the Qur'ān which is held by the Mu°tazilah. This has become an official order by al-Ma'mūn in April 833/1429 and his instruction that the Qur'ān is the created speech of God has to be implemented by all jurists (quḍāt). However, some scholars like Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (164/780–241/855) firmly refused to abandon their belief that the Qur'ān is not created. As a result, they were imprisoned and some of them died. The view that it is uncreated speech asserts that events have occurred by the qadar (determinism, predestination) of God. Since certain historical events are mentioned in the Qur'ān, these events must have been eternally known by God (and, therefore, predetermined for the apparent

agent) and it was believed that the Qur'ān had appeared in time and not created by mortals. The opposing views of createdness and uncreatedness had political implications. To say the Qur'ān was created as speech of God implied that He might have created it otherwise, just as he might create a man tall or short or of medium height. Uncreated speech, on the other hand, would somehow express the essence of God and so be unchangeable. This unchangeable character of the Qur'ān was part of the justification for making it the basis of the empire and also increased the authority of the theologians ('ulamā') as the authorized interpreters of it. However, a created Qur'ān had not the same prestige, and there could not be the same objection, not as fervent as one opposing its createdness, to its provisions being overruled by the decree of an inspired imām. Thus, just as the doctrine of createdness enhanced the power of the caliph and the secretaries, so has uncreatedness entailed power to the 'ulamā' (Watt 1973, pp. 178–179).

- (8) We often encounter two opposing readings of the same Qur'anic text which reflect the fact of doctrinal and political approaches. For instance, non-mainstream scholars like the Shī'ī exegetes and exegetes with Shī'ī leanings such as Mujāhid b. Jabr attribute (Q39:33): 'walladhī jā'a bil-ṣidqī waṣad-daqa bihī ulā'ika hum al-muttaqūn [The one who has brought the truth and those who believed in it are the righteous]' to 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, while Ibn Taimiyyah, a mainstream exegete, disagrees with Mujāhid and attributes this āyah to Abu Bakr al-Ṣiddīq.
- (9) Circumstances of revelation have been politicized by exegetes. For instance, Shī'ī exegetes do not regard the āyahs 11 to 20 of Q24 as a direct reference to 'Ā'ishah, the Prophet's wife, but rather to the Coptic Mary (Māriyyah al-Qibṭiyyah), the other wife of the Prophet and the mother of Ibrāhīm, the Prophet's son. Shī'ī exegetes like Abu al-Ḥasan 'Alī Ibn Ibrāhīm Ibn Hāshim al-Qummi (d.309/921) claim that there were hypocritical women who made the false accusation (al-ifk) against the Coptic Mary and accused her of fornication (al-zinā) and that one of these hypocritical women was 'Ā'ishah who made this false accusation. However, the rest of non-mainstream exegetes such as the Mu'tazilah, the Ash'ari, the Sufīs and the philosophers argue that Q24:11–20 specifically refer to 'Ā'ishah (al-Sālūs 2002, 2, pp. 189–190).
- (10) Modes of reading (al-qirā'āt) have also been politicized by exegetes. It is understandable, Gätje (1971, p. 39) comments, that Shī'ī exegetes choose from among the Qur'anic variants those favourable for their theology. They go still further, however, and undertake changes and expansions of the 'Uthmānic master codex, which, they claim, derive from the 'genuine' Qur'ān of the Shī'ī Imāms. For instance, Q3:110 for Shī'ī scholars reads as 'kuntum khaira a'immatin ukhrijat lil-nās [You are the best Imāms produced as an example for mankind]' where the word 'ummatin [nation]' in the 'Uthmānic master codex is replaced by 'a'immatin [Imāms]'. Thus, the Shī'ī Imāms, according to the Shī'ī mode of reading, are given a high political status. Shī'ī theologians justify their mode of

reading by claiming that the Muslim nation cannot be the best of nations (khaira ummatin) since they murdered al-Ḥusain, the grandson of Muḥammad. For this reason, they claim that the correct mode of reading should be the one above. However, mainstream exegetes state that this is an irregular mode of reading (qirā'ah shādhah) and should be 'kuntum khaira ummatin ukhrijat lil-nās [You are the best nation produced as an example for mankind].'

- (11) Among the political views that have seeped into Qur'anic exegesis is the legitimate successor to Moḥammad, that is, whether it should be Abu Bakr or ʿAli. Shīʿi exegetes like al-Ṭabarsi (d.552/1157; 1997, 6, p. 10) ascribe exegetical traditions related to the authority of Ibn ʿAbbās in which Muḥammad is claimed to have said, 'anā al-mundhiru wa ʿali al-hādī min baʿdī. yā ʿali bika yahtadī al-muhtadūn [I am the warner and ʿAli is the one who guides after me. O, ʿAli, people who are guided will be guided through you],'
- which is connected to Q13:7, 'innamā anta mundhirun walikulli qawmin hād [You are only a warner, and for every people is a guide].'
- For the Shīʿi exegetes, this prophetic tradition together with Q13:7 represent Muḥammad's intention to appoint ʿAli as his successor. In order to discredit the Shīʿi politics and theology, the mainstream exegetes have labelled them as 'rejectors' (rāfiḍah), that is, those who reject legitimacy of the caliphate of Abu Bakr, ʿUmar and ʿUthmān.<sup>5</sup> Also, mainstream exegetes like al-Qaṣṣāb (2003, 3, p. 649), use this stigmatized attribute as part of their polemics throughout their tafsīr works, as in the exegesis of Q33:28 to 29. Similarly, in their exegesis of Q42:23, mainstream exegetes like Ibn ʿAṭīyyah (1991, 13, pp. 161–162) and Ibn Kathīr (1993, 4, p. 115) rebut the Shīʿi claims with regards to ʿAli being the legitimate successor to Moḥammad. Also Ibn ʿAṭīyyah and Ibn Kathīr reject the tradition provided by Shīʿi exegetes that highlight the compulsory obedience to the family of ʿAli (ahl al-bait) who are ʿAli, his wife Fāṭimah and their children, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusain. For these two mainstream exegetes, the Shīʿi exegesis of Q42:23 is politically oriented due to the following reasons:
- (a) The chain of authorities of the tradition provided by Shīʿi exegetes is weak;
  - (b) The narrator of this tradition, Ḥusain al-Ashqar, is unknown, and this is counter to the rules of narration (see [Chapter 2, Sections 2.6 and 2.7](#));
  - (c) Q42:23 is a Makkan āyah. Thus, Fāṭimah and ʿAli were still unmarried; and
  - (d) Fāṭimah and ʿAli got married after the battle of Badr (d.2/624) which was after Muḥammad migrated to Madīnah.

Shīʿi exegetes also claim that whoever opposes the succession of ʿAli after the death of Muḥammad is a disbeliever, a liar and a hypocrite. They establish their claim on Q2:4: 'walladhīna yu'minūna bimā unzila ilaika wamā unzila min qablīka wabil-ākhirati hum yūqīnūn [Those who believe in what has been revealed to you, and what was revealed before you, and of the hereafter they are

certain in faith]’ and Q2:9: ‘yukhādī<sup>‘</sup>ūna allāha walladhīna āmanū [They think to deceive God and those who believe]’ which, for them, are evidence for their political theology (al-Sālūs 2002, 2, pp. 164, 167–168). In a similar vein, the Shī‘i exegete al-Qummi (d.309/921) in his analysis of ‘alam tara ila alladhīna yuzakkūna anfasahum [Have you not seen those who claim themselves to be pure?]]’ (Q4:49) is sarcastic about the titles al-ṣiddīq (the truthful one), al-fārūq (the one who distinguishes truth from falsehood) and dhū al-nūrain (the one with two lights) which mainstream Sunni exegetes attribute to Abu Bakr, ‘Umar and ‘Uthmān, respectively.

- (12) The non-mainstream Murji’i belief recognizes law and order and that the grave sinner should be tolerated rather than opposed or excluded from the Muslim community. The Murji’i doctrine is hinged upon two notions (al-Shahrastāni 1986, 1, p. 139):
- (a) Where there is faith, sin does not harm;
  - (b) There is hope for pardon for all the Muslims who publicly profess their faith.

Their doctrine has provided a political shelter for the Umayyad rulers whose political misfortunes, according to the Murji’ah, cannot be regarded as grave sins or clear crimes. Theologically, therefore, political opposition or a revolt against them will be deemed as unlawful (Watt 1962, p. 33). Regardless of their political misdemeanors, political allegiance to the head of state must be announced on a weekly basis. This has been in the past and is still practiced in our present time throughout most of the mosques of the Muslim world, especially in the Arab world. At the end of speech of the Friday prayer, for instance, the Imām of the mosque is obliged to read a du‘ā’ (a supplication to God) in support of his head of state.

Fabricated ḥadīths were also employed by rulers as a political tool to impose their authority, as in ‘al-sultānu ḡillu allāhi fī al-arḑi faman akramahu akramahu allāhu waman ahānahu ahānahu allāhu [The Muslim ruler is the shade of God on earth. Whoever supports him (the ruler), God will support him (the supportive citizen), and whoever does not support him, God will disgrace him (the unsupportive citizen)]’ (al-Albāni 2000, 4, p. 66).

- (13) The notions of free will and predestination are politically abused. Thus, the Umayyad claims that they were caliphs of God and that their rule is divinely predetermined are to some extent an abuse of predestinarian views. al-Ḥasan al-Baṣri, however, was critical of the Umayyads’ assertion that their acts were by God’s determination and boldly said: ‘The enemies of God lie’ (Watt 1973, p. 114). Likewise, the Khawārij and the Mu‘tazilah are exponents of free will. Thus, for their stand point, the Umayyads and their officials are responsible for their misdemeanors and sins (Watt 1962, p. 31). The Khawārij in particular call for revolt against the ruler who does not apply the sunnah in his administration (al-Shahrastāni 1986, 1, p. 115).

- (14) Political and theological cleavages can also be traced to the theological infighting that took place between the mainstream Shāfi'is and Ḥanafis, on the one hand, and between the mainstream Shāfi'is and non-mainstream Shi'is, on the other, in Persia during the eighth/fourteenth century. al-Baiḍāwī's *Anwār al-Tanzīl wa Asrār al-Ta'wīl* is a unique example of this politico-religious conflict. More recently, the Iraq–Iran conflict between 1980 and 1989 has been clothed with a politico-sectarian garment and blessed by state-appointed jurists. It was justified by Iraq on sectarian grounds, namely, to stop the Shi'i Islamic revolution of Khomeini. Thus, Saddam Hussein managed to win the hearts and minds of the Sunni Muslim countries, while the Khomeini regime won the support of the Shi'i communities outside Iran.
- (15) The Shi'ah of Iran opposed the Ottoman rule on theological grounds. As a result, during the second half of the sixteenth century, they were executed by the Sunni Ottoman authorities on charges of heretics and cursing the rightly guided caliphs Abu Bakr al-Ṣiddīq, °Umar and °Uthmān (Imber 1979).
- (16) Muslim heads of state have recently taken a political shelter in theologically twisted notions. Some of them have claimed lineage to the Prophet, that is, they are the descendants of Muḥammad. This has been claimed by Saddam Hussein when he included his name in the family tree of Muḥammad in an attempt to discredit the Shi'i rulers of Iran, such as Khomeini who also claims to have been the descendant of the Prophet. In a similar vein, other Arab rulers have claimed that they are the descendants of Muḥammad such as Muḥammad °Ali Pasha (d.1847) of Egypt, Ḥāfiẓ al-Asad of Syria, the royal family of Jordan and the royal family of Morocco. Also, when an Islamic activist movement is suppressed and their supporters gagged or imprisoned, the government seeks support from religious leaders to bless their political misdemeanors. A religious legal judgement (fatwā) is soon issued which is punctuated by Qur'anic passages found in abundance and given either exoteric or esoteric meanings in support of the government's political adventure. Similarly, on their part, political Islamic organizations or parties, extreme or moderate, have their own exegetical account to support their activities and actions. Qur'anic passages are also manipulated to back up their political agendas. As a result, the dichotomy between jihād (holy war) and no-jihād has evolved recently. The Muslim general public innocently got caught in the politico-religious crossfire of Qur'anic exegesis.<sup>6</sup>
- (17) Mainstream and non-mainstream exegetes provide politically oriented account of Qur'anic passages. An interesting example of political Qur'anic exegesis is represented by Q5:44–45, 47 which justify revolt against a ruler who does not rule according to the Qur'ān and the sunnah (the standard practice of Muḥammad). Also, āyahs like Q3:110 and Q9:71 which call for commanding the right and forbidding the wrong constitute a politico-religious stance. If these āyahs entail a religious obligation to

enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong, then the ruler must be held responsible for this injunction. This can lead either to revolt against the ruler who does not forbid what is wrong or may lead to political support to the ruler who commands right. According to Watt (1973, p. 257), even the phrase ‘the sunnah of the Prophet’ had been used in the past by political leaders claiming a religious basis for their activity.

- (18) Crude fanaticism has also found its way in ḥadīth literature which attempts to discredit a given school of thought, as in: ‘There will be a man in my ummah by the name of Muḥammad b. Idrīs (al-Shāfi‘i) who will be more harmful to my ummah than the devil (iblis), and there will be a man in my ummah by the name of Abu Ḥanīfah who will be the shining light (sirāj) of my community’ (Kamali 2005, p. 192; Khalīfah 1984, 1, p. 442 and Ḥammādah 2003, p. 109). Another example of a politically oriented ḥadīth that aims to discredit a theological point of view is, ‘Whoever says that the Qur’ān is the created speech of God becomes an infidel and his wife stands divorced from him as of that moment.’ Qur’anic exegesis has become point scoring. By quoting a well-known exegete, you can back up your politico-religious standpoint. Mujāhid’s name, for instance, has been quoted by ‘Abd al-Jabbār, a Shī‘i transmitter, who attributes to Mujāhid exegetical views with regards to Q39:33 and claims that it is a direct reference to ‘Ali b. Abī Ṭālib in an attempt to implicate Mujāhid in Shī‘ism.
- (19) For Shī‘i scholars, any one who does not recognize ‘Ali b. Abī Ṭālib as the legitimate successor to Muḥammad is a disbeliever. They support their claim by the exegesis of Q2:4: ‘walladhīna yu‘minūna bimā unzila ilaika . . . [Those who believe in what has been revealed to you]’, and Q2:9: ‘yukhādī‘ūna allāha . . . [They think to deceive God].’ For Shī‘i scholars, Abu Bakr, U‘mar and ‘Uthmān are hypocrites, liars and disbelievers (al-Sālūs 2002, 2, pp. 164, 167–168). Shī‘i exegetes employ the ḥadīth, ‘inna al-madīnah lā taṣluḥ illā biya aw bika [Madīnah can only become fitting through either me (i.e. Muḥammad) or you (i.e. ‘Ali)].’ For them, the appointment of ‘Ali by Muḥammad as the ruler of Madīnah in Muḥammad’s absence due to a battle is a proof of Muḥammad’s intention to appoint ‘Ali as his successor. However, for mainstream scholars, this is a forged ḥadīth. Sunni exegetes also discredit the Shī‘i claim by referring to historical facts such as
- (i) ‘Ali was with Muḥammad in the battles of Badr (d.2/624), Khaibar (d.7/628) and Ḥunain (d.8/630);
  - (ii) Muḥammad appointed other companions as rulers of Madīnah other than ‘Ali on many occasions, such as ‘Uthmān b. ‘Affān, Ibn Umm Maktūm, Abu Lubābah b. ‘Abd al-Mundhir. Therefore, for Sunni scholars, this does not mean that whoever is appointed as ruler of Madīnah should be the legitimate successor to Muḥammad.

In his exegesis of Q1:2: ‘al-ḥamdu lillāhi rabbi al-‘ālamīn [All praise is due to God, Lord of the worlds],’ the Shī‘i exegete al-Ḥasan b. ‘Ali b. Mūsā al-Riḍā

(d.148/765) refers in his exegesis *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* to a ḥadīth with an anecdote about God and Moses in which Moses asks God about the virtues of the household of the Prophets (āḥ al-nabiyyīn). God replies: 'the virtues (faḍl) of the household of Muḥammad are the greatest and that their virtues are greater than those of the households of other Prophets' (fol. 8v).

- (20) While the Shī'ī scholars are of the opinion that the three caliphs (Abu Bakr, °Umar and °Uthmān) are not worthy of the caliphate, Sunni scholars have a rebuttal to this claim and argue:
  - (i) Why did °Ali give his allegiance to the three caliphs (bāya°ahum)?
  - (ii) Why did °Ali accept to work with them willingly and served as a minister (wazīr) with each caliph?
  - (iii) Why did °Ali allow his daughter Umm Kulthūm to marry U°mar?
- (21) Shī'ī scholars are of the opinion that the °Uthmānic master codex of the Qur'ān has suffered interpolation with regards to the name of °Ali b. Abī Ṭālib. This position is aimed to elevate the status of °Ali and his legitimate succession to Muḥammad (see Ali 2005, p. 84).
- (22) In the modern time of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, politics has crept into the holy month of Ramaḍān. The āyah Q2:185, 'faman shahida minkum al-shahra falyaṣumhu [Whoever sights the new moon of the month (of Ramaḍān) let him or her fast it],' has been accounted for differently. Consequently, the sighting of the moon for the fasting or the end of fasting of Ramaḍān has been politicized, too. Some mosques in Britain, for instance, claim that Saudi jurists are coerced by the Saudi state to announce the beginning and end of Ramaḍān regardless of the correct sighting of the moon. There is also a widespread view among the Muslim population in the Middle East that some Muslim countries agree to the beginning and end of Ramaḍān as a political gesture for or against other Muslim or Arab countries.

### 3.3 Exegesis and theological cleavages

Qur'anic exegesis has become the channel through which opposing theological views can be expressed by different mainstream and non-mainstream scholars. Exegetes representing different schools of Qur'anic exegesis have also traded polemical statements. For instance, mainstream exegetes of the Andalus school, such Ibn al-°Arabi (d.543/1148) and Ibn °Aṭīyyah (d.546/1151), describe Sufī exegesis as mughālāt (excess, exceeding of proper Islamic bounds) and ilḥād (heresy), respectively. The clash of exegetical opinions over theologically controversial issues is represented by the following examples:

- (1) God's names and attributes (asmā' waṣifāt allāh) have featured prominently in the theological discussion among the various mainstream and non-mainstream schools of thought and their relevant tafsīr literature. While Mu°tazilī, Ibāḍī, Ismā'īlī and Shī'ī theologians take the hand of God as representation of His power, the anthropomorphists (al-mushabbihūn, al-mujassimūn) have

taken it too literally as the member of a body with flesh and blood, the Ash‘aris have understood it with the qualification of de-anthropomorphism (al-tanzīh) to signify ‘hand as a quality, just as hearing and sight’ (Wensinck 1932, p. 92). While mainstream and non-mainstream theologians believe in the ‘beautiful names’ of God recurrently referred to in the Qur’ān such as the Seeing (al-baṣīr) and the Hearing (al-samī‘), the Mu‘tazilah, on the basis of their doctrine of unity of God (tawḥīd), reject this because they believe that it introduces an element of multiplicity into the unity of the divine or essence (nafs, dhāt), and in insisting on ‘unity’, they are asserting that these multiple attributes or names have no independent or hypostatic existence, but are merged in the unity of God’s being. In so far as God knows, He knows by Himself or His essence and not by any hypostatic Knowledge (Watt 1962, pp. 63–64). For al-Shahrastāni (1986, 1, p. 45), the Mu‘tazilah believe that God is eternal and that eternity is the most peculiar description of His essence. They absolutely reject all other eternal qualities and attributes . . . and that sight and hearing are not ideas inherent in His essence. Thus, the Mu‘tazilah appear unanimously to deny that God possesses any eternal quality except eternity (see Wensinck 1932, pp. 75, 92).

- (2) The fate of the grave sinner (murtakib al-kabīrah, literally ‘the one who commits a big sin’) has also raged between the mainstream and non-mainstream scholars. Examples of this heated debate are represented by the exegetical views of al-Zamakhshari, who is a non-mainstream Sunni Mu‘tazili, and al-Baiḍāwī and al-Rāzi, who are also Sunnis. For the Mu‘tazilah and the Khawārij, if a grave sinner dies without seeking repentance, he or she will have a perpetual punishment in the hell fire (mukhallad fī al-nār) and that he or she will not benefit from any form of intercession (shafā‘ah). This is part of the Mu‘tazili doctrine of reward and punishment (al-wa‘d wal-wa‘id). The grave sinner for the Mu‘tazilah is neither a disbeliever nor a believer, that is, he or she is at a level that is between these two levels (manzilah baina al-manzilatain). The grave sinner, in their view, is neither a disbeliever (kāfir) nor a believer (mu‘min). The grave sinner, for them, is called fāsiq (licentious). This theological view about the grave sinner is also held by the Khawārij, the Ibāḍī and the Qadariyyah, who also hold the view that the grave sinner’s sins cannot be forgiven unless through repentance, that on the day of judgement their sins will not be forgiven if they have not repented before their death and that intercession will not be granted to them. For the Mu‘tazilah, the Khawārij and the Ibāḍī, the grave sinner is a disbeliever and is outside the Muslim faith. As the Mu‘tazilah, the Khawārij and the Ibāḍī reject the intercession for the grave sinner, they claim that Q2:255, ‘man dha alladhī yashfa‘u ‘indahū illā bi’idhnihi? [Who is there who can intercede with Him except by His leave?],’ means that God accepts intercession by the Prophets and the allies of God (awliyā’ allāh) for those who have good deeds and have not been admitted to the fire. They also claim that Q2:48, ‘wattaqū yawman lā tajzi nafsun ‘an nafsin shai’an walā yuqbalu minhā shafā‘atun [Fear a day when no soul will suffice for another soul at all, nor will intercession be

accepted from it],’ is in support of their theological point of view. For the Ibāḍī exegete Iṭḥaiyish (d.1914; 1994, 1, p. 159), Q2:81, ‘balā man kasaba saiyyi’atan wa aḥāṭat bihī khaṭī’atuhu fa’ulā’ika aṣḥābu al-nāri hum fihā khālidūn [Yes, whoever earns evil and his sin has encompassed him, those are the companions of the fire; they will abide therein eternally],’ refers to the perpetual punishment in the hell fire to the grave sinner; even his or her belief in monotheism (al-tawḥīd) will not save him or her from the perpetual punishment in the hell fire (al-Shahrastāni 1986, 1, p. 114; al-<sup>c</sup>Aql 1995, p. 95). Similarly, for the Mu<sup>c</sup>tazilah, the Khawārij and Ibāḍī theologians, those who do not perform ḥajj are classified as unbelievers and refer to Q3:97, ‘walillāhi <sup>c</sup>alā al-nāsi ḥijju al-baiti man istaṭā’a ilaihi sabilā waman kafara fa’inna allāha ghaniyyun <sup>c</sup>an al-<sup>c</sup>ālamīn [Due to God from people is a pilgrimage to the house, for whoever is able to find thereof a way. But whoever, disbelieves, then indeed, God is free from need of the worlds],’ to substantiate their claim. For them, every fāsiq (licentious) is a disbeliever. Their exegetical view is based on Q64:2, ‘huwa alladhī khalaqakum faminkum kāfirun waminkum mu’minun [It is He who created you, and among you is the disbeliever, and among you is the believer].’

For the Ash<sup>c</sup>aris, who are non-mainstream Sunnis, the grave sinner, unlike the unbelievers, will not be a perpetual resident in the hell fire. Instead, the Muslim grave sinner, in their view, will be forgiven and taken back to the garden, al-jannah (al-Shahrastāni 1986, 1, p. 101). For mainstream theologians, the grave sinner has an incomplete belief (nāqiṣ al-īmān) and that he or she is subject to God’s will (taḥta al-mashī’ah) where he or she may be forgiven or may be punished according to the will of God. The sins of the grave sinner, for mainstream exegetes, can be forgiven by repentance. Even without repentance, the sins can also be forgiven by means of shafā’ah (intercession) and the mercy of God. For them, Q2:48 is contextually related to the disbelievers rather than to the believers who have committed grave sins. Thus, for them, the believer’s grave sins will be pardoned through intercession. Also, in their opinion, the grave sinner will not have a perpetual punishment in the hell fire but will be discharged due to his or her tiny belief in God. Their view is based on Q39:53 and Q4:48 and 116. This view is held by Ibn Kathīr and al-Shawkāni who rely on the prophetic tradition narrated by al-Bukhāri: ‘yakhruju min al-nār man kāna fī qalbihi adnā mithqāl dharrah min imān [Whoever has got a tiny particle of belief will be discharged from the fire].’ Similarly, the mainstream Murji’ah theologians hope for pardon for all the Muslims since they are ‘people of the qiblah’ – facing Makkah when performing their prayers, that is, believing in the prophethood of Muḥammad.

On the question of those who have committed grave sins, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣri (d.110/728) has taken the view that although they are considered as ‘hypocrites’ (munāfiqūn), that is, nominal Muslims, they should not be excluded from the community; they are in great danger of hell and they should be encouraged and aided to mend their ways (Watt 1962, p. 32). For the non-mainstream Murji’i theologians, they believe in suspended judgement (irjā’ al-ḥukm). In other words, on

the membership of the community for those who commit a grave sin, the Murji'ah believe that the judgement whether a grave sinner belongs to 'the people of paradise' or 'the people of hell' can neither be answered by ordinary men nor by jurists but must be left (yurja') to God's decision on the day of judgement (Watt 1962, 33; al-Shahrastāni 1986, 1, p. 139). The Murji'ah's theological stance is based on Q9:106: 'wa'ākharūna murjawna li-amr allāh immā yu'adhhibuhum wa'immā yatūbu 'alaihim [There are others deferred until the command of God, whether He will punish them or whether He will forgive them].' As for the Shi'ah, they believe that God may forgive all kinds of sin, with or without repentance, except polytheism that cannot be forgiven. The Shi'i stance on this matter is, therefore, similar to that of the Sunni theologians.

- (3) Mainstream and non-mainstream exegetes unanimously agree that the fate of the polytheist (al-mushrik), that is, the person who associates others with God, is hinged upon his or her repentance before death and that no intercession will be granted. In other words, without repentance, the fate of the polytheist is the hell fire. Muslim theologians have based their view on the contentious āyah Q4:48, 'inna allāha lā yaghfiru an yushraka bihī wayaghfiru mā dūna dhālika liman yashā' [Indeed, God does not forgive association with Him but He forgives what is less than that for whom He wills].
- (4) For the Sufi exegetes, al-raḥmah al-raḥmāniyyah (divine mercy) supercedes all other epithets of God. Thus, the two epithets al-raḥmān al-raḥīm (the Lord of mercy, giver of mercy, Q1:1) have, as a unit, a distinct signification from that when it occurs in the body of the same sūrah Q1 in the third āyah. For them, their claim is substantiated by textual evidence where these two epithets have preceded other epithets like (rabb al-'ālamīn [Lord of the worlds], Q1:2) which denotes monotheism and (māliki yawm al-dīn [Master of the day of judgement] Q1:4) which signifies eschatology. The Sufi notion of al-raḥmah al-raḥmāniyyah, therefore, overlaps with the Murji'ah's theology with regards to the grave sinner. In other words, God's mercy is overwhelming. Although mainstream and non-mainstream exegetes provide a similar componential analysis of the epithets (al-raḥmān) and (al-raḥīm) where the former signifies a more general meaning of mercy while the latter denotes a specific meaning, Sufi exegetes add another spiritual dimension to the epithet (al-raḥmān) which, for them, signifies the One who gives existence to his creatures. Thus, the Sufi exegetical account of (al-raḥmān) is (the existential giver) and that this giving of existence is free. Thus, our existence is in itself a mercy from God.
- (5) With regards to the doctrine of the uncreatedness versus createdness of the Qur'ān, there is another significant theological clash between mainstream and non-mainstream theologians and exegetes. While mainstream scholars represented by Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d.164/780–241/855) believe that the Qur'ān is uncreated, non-mainstream scholars represented by Mu'tazili and Ibāḍī theologians argue that the Qur'ān is created. The Mu'tazili and Ibāḍī scholars substantiate their claim by Q6:102, 'dhālikum allāhu rabbukum lā

ilāha illā hū khāliqū kullī shai [That is God, your Lord; there is no deity except Him, the Creator of all things],’ which, for them, means that since the Qur’ān is a ‘thing’ (shai’), it is, therefore, ‘created’ (makhlūq) like other things that are created by God. However, for the Ash‘ari, Shī‘i and Ismā‘ili non-mainstream theologians, the Qur’ān is uncreated and is the Word of God (kalām allāh) (see al-Shahrastāni 1986). This doctrine has become a philosophically contentious and controversial issue that has ‘a direct bearing on the problem of time and eternity’. In other words, this theological notion has led to the ‘philosophical and metaphysical problems of the relation of the temporal and the eternal’ (Watt 1950, pp. 27–28). From the earliest days of Islam, Watt (1950) argues, there had been two firm and, for the Muslim, entirely justified convictions which belonged to the inmost fiber of Islam. These convictions are as follows:

- (a) The Qur’ān is the Word of God.
- (b) The Qur’ān appeared in time.

Since both these convictions express something fundamental to the Muslim faith, they have a direct impact on Qur’anic exegesis. The ultimate basis of this was the belief that God had spoken to Muḥammad or perhaps rather had spoken through him to the Arabs and other Muslims. The Qur’ān was what had been said; therefore, it must be God’s word or speech. But just as clearly the appearance of the Qur’ān was an event in the sequence of history. In the terse Arabic phrase ‘lam yakun thumma kān [It was not, then it was].’ It was precisely from this event, the coming of God’s word to Muḥammad, that Islam as a historical movement had sprung (Watt 1950). For mainstream theologians, the notion of createdness of the Qur’ān is a heretical doctrine. On this theologically contentious notion, see Note 4 of this chapter. In terms of Qur’anic exegesis, the doctrine of the uncreatedness versus createdness of the Qur’ān is exemplified by Q7:143 (When Moses arrived at Our appointed time and his Lord spoke to him, he said: ‘My Lord, show me (Yourself) that I may look at You.’ God said, ‘You will not see Me, but look at the mountain; if it should remain in place, then you will see Me.’ But when his Lord appeared to the mountain, He rendered it level, and Moses fell unconscious. When he awoke, he said: ‘Exalted are You! I have repented to You, and I am the first of the believers’). This āyah features two theologically contested views:

- (a) Whether Moses heard God speaking to him, that is, the speech of God, and
- (b) Whether God will be seen in the hereafter.

For Mu‘tazili, Ibāḍi, Shī‘i and Ismā‘ili theologians, āyah 143 of Q7 designates an allegorical signification, that is, what Moses heard was merely a speech created by God and that God would not be seen in the hereafter. However, mainstream theologians, including the Ash‘ari and Sufi, argue that if the speech is said to be created, it is a creature in the form of a tree, as the non-mainstream exegetes

claim, which is saying these words to Moses, and this, for the mainstream Sunnis, represents polytheism (shirk) and heresy (zandaqah/ilḥād). In order to substantiate the thesis that the Qurʾān was created, Muʿtazili exegetes also refer to Q2:106, ‘mā nansakh min āyatīn aw nunsihā naʿti bikhairin minhā aw mithlihā [We do not abrogate an āyah or cause it to be forgotten except that We bring forth one better than it or similar to it],’ which, in their view, indicates that the Qurʾān had not been eternal and that it was ‘created’ according to circumstances. Therefore, for the Muʿtazilah, according to Madigan (2004, pp. 446), what we have on earth is never the word of God itself but rather an account or report (ḥikāyah) of what God said, a kind of indirect speech. The speech of God is created in a physical substrate, for example, the burning bush associated with Moses. Even in Gabriel it is created. For them, the human language is unable to express and convey fully the divine thought.

- (6) Seeing God in the hereafter: For mainstream and Ashʿari exegetes, Q7:143, ‘qāla rabbi arinī anṣur ilaika [He (Moses) said: ‘My Lord, show me Yourself’],’ indicates that God will be seen in the hereafter by the believers who win paradise. With regards to this āyah, the philosophical school of exegesis represented by theologians like al-Rāzi (d.544–604) have also launched their attack on mainstream theologians represented by the Ḥanbali school of thought, and on the Muʿtazilah, and the anthropomorphists, who he refers to as al-ḥashawīyah (al-Rāzi 1990, ch. 14, pp. 186–187; al-Shahrastāni 1986, 1, p. 106). However, the Muʿtazilah, the Khawārij, the Ibāḍi and the Shīʿah vehemently object to the notion of seeing God in the hereafter. For them, Q7:143 does not mean that God will be seen in the hereafter. They also claim that ‘lā tudrikuhu al-abṣāru [Vision perceives Him not]’ (Q6:103) adds further support to their theological stance.
- (7) The personality of Muḥammad: This is a politically motivated doctrine. For non-mainstream theologians like the Shīʿah and the Ismāʿīliyyah, Muḥammad possesses a divinely inspired wisdom by which he carried on his work as a political and religious leader. Although both mainstream (Ashʿari, Muʿtazili) and non-mainstream (Ibāḍi) theologians acknowledge Muḥammad’s divinely inspired wisdom, the Shīʿi and the Ismāʿīli theologians argue that Muḥammad’s divine inspiration had been inherited by his physical descendants. In other words, the latter theologians and exegetes want to substantiate their conviction that after Muḥammad, ʿAli b. Abī Ṭālib is the chiefest of mankind, the dogma on which the divine imāmate or spiritual leadership, is built up and is vested from time to time in some member of the house of ʿAli (see Watt 1950, pp. 34–35). On the notion of imāmate, see Point 23 below.
- (8) The notion of (ahl al-bait): This notion implies a political overtone due to its semantic dichotomy where we have the household of Muḥammad versus the household of ʿAli. This expression occurs in Q33:33 and has dominated the dichotomy between Sunni and Shīʿi exegetes. For Sunni theologians, (ahl al-bait) refers to the Prophet’s household, that is, his wives and the houses where his wives used to live in (Q33:34). Sunni exegetes substantiate their

view through the intertextual reference between Q33:32 and Q33:33–34 where āyah 32 makes an explicit reference to the Prophet's wives, 'yā nisā' al-nabiy [O wives of the Prophet]'. However, for Shi'ī exegetes, the notion of (ahl al-bait) refers to 'Ali; his wife, Fāṭimah and his two sons, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusain.

- (9) The question of free will and predestination is another theological issue that has featured in Qur'anic exegesis. In the view of Rauf (1970, p. 292), the dispute over the notion of qadar and its relation to free will has matured by 71/690 and become an important issue during the lifetime of 'Abd Allāh b. 'Umar (d.73/692). Exegetes expressed different views with regards to āyahs like 'yuḏillu bihī kathīran wayahdī bhī kathīran [He misleads many thereby and guides many thereby]' (Q2:26), as well as Q14:4, Q16:93 and Q18:28, where the exegetical difference lies in the semantic analysis of the verbs (yahdī [to guide], yaḏillu [to misguide] and aghfala [to make someone heedless of something]). The qadari exegetes (the Qadarite) and the Mu'tazili exegetes such as al-Qāḏī 'Abd al-Jabbār b. Aḥmad al-Hamadāni (d.414/1023) claim that, as humans, we are responsible for all of our good and bad actions and deeds and that God has made us able to do them. Thus, we are the agents of our good and bad acts. The Qadarite scholars are opposed by the predestination (jabriyyah) scholars such as the jahmiyyah exegetes who claim that all our actions and deeds, good and bad, are predestined by God; that is, our own actions are dictated by the will of God. However, for the Sunni traditional exegetes, although God creates all people's actions as well as their will (irādah) and abilities to execute these actions, the person is still free and in full control of doing whatever he or she wants to do. Thus, men and women are the agents of their own good and bad deeds and are in control of them (al-Sulaim 2006, pp. 92–93; al-Ṭūkhī: fol. 4v).

Although the Qur'ān recurrently refers to the notion of free will and holds the person to be responsible for his or her own deeds, it also makes reference to the notion of pre-determinism (al-qaḏā' wal-qadar) which signifies fatalism. For Thomson (1950, p. 207), this is 'contradiction' and that the orthodox theologians of Islam have brought to light no new answer to this riddle with all their argument. Thus, pre-destination designates the divine acts that refer to pre-determined creation and some human acts as foretold by God in eternity. However, the fatalistic tendencies which are reminiscent of pre-Islamic expressions and the days of ignorance (al-jāhiliyyah) have been condemned by the early Muslim scholars such as the four rightly caliphs (see Rauf 1970, p. 289). Pre-Islamic poetry is full of references to the determination or control of human life by 'time' (al-dahr, al-zamān) which is an abstract, impersonal force and can be rendered by 'fate' or 'destiny'. All that happens to a person is brought about by 'time' from which comes his or her success and still more his or her misfortune (Watt 1973, p. 88). The objection by mainstream Sunni scholars to fatalism is attributed to the fact that the term has been misinterpreted and made people resign to inevitability. In other words, people have searched for comfort under the shelter of qadar in adverse circumstances

(Rauf 1970, p. 290). However, people have wondered whether the inconclusive assault on Makkah by the Umayyads and the burning of the Ka'bah in 64/684 could have occurred by the decree of God (qadar) and in this way served as a spark leading to the outbreak of the debate (Rauf 1970, 293). The dispute over the exegesis of the notion of qadar has led to the division of the Muslim theologians into a group of Qadarites holding a liberal interpretation of the word and a majority extending the term to all happenings in the universe, including human good and evil deeds (Rauf 1970, 297). Like the Mu'tazilah, the Shī'ah also believe in the free will of man who is responsible for all his acts, good and bad. However, for the proponents of the doctrine of al-Qadariyyah, God is in total control (determination) of all events and that one should willingly accept all favourable and unfavourable matters without any complaint (al-Ṭūkhi fol. 36v). While the Mu'tazilah are disliked because they are proponents of free will, al-Ṭabari has been disliked by the Ḥanābilah who frown on his exegesis because, for them, he holds theological stance similar to that of the Mu'tazilah on free will when he deals with the controversial passage Q7:54, 'thumma istawā 'alā al-'arsh [God established Himself on the throne].' For al-Ṭabari, this āyah means that God took control of the universe. This is an esoteric, that is, allegorical, account; therefore, the Ḥanābilah during al-Ṭabari's lifetime have been the most vocal opponents to him.

- (10) According to the Mu'tazili doctrine of monotheism, all God's acts are good; He does not do bad deeds; He does not provide with the means of unlawful subsistence (lā yazuq al-ḥarām) but only the means for lawful subsistence and that He does not create the acts of the individual but rather the individual creates his or her own acts. For them, if God creates the individual's acts, His divine justice will turn into injustice. However, for mainstream and some non-mainstream commentators, bad deeds are not part of rizq (the provision with the means of subsistence) but rather only the things that are good and that God is the creator of the individual's acts, but the individual acquires these acts and accordingly he or she is either rewarded or punished. They also refer to Q2:38: 'qulnā ihbiṭū minhā jamī'an fa'immā ya'tiyannakum minnī hudan faman tabi'ā hudāya falā khawfun 'alaihim walā hum yaḥzanūn [We said: 'Go down from it, all of you. When guidance comes to you from Me, whoever follows My guidance, there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve']' where the word (minnī [from Me]) substantiates the mainstream theological stance that the individual's acts are created by God and that the individual has nothing more than the acquisition of his or her acts. We can explain this by the example of the manufacturer of knives. If a person purchases a knife, he or she can either employ it for some good use in the kitchen or use it for a bad deed of murder. The manufacturer who created the knife cannot be responsible for the act of murder, but the person who acquired the knife is. Q2:213, 'wallāhu yahdī man yashā'u ilā ṣirāṭin mustaqīm [God guides whom He wills to a straight path],' is another āyah which is claimed to refute the Mu'tazili view. Mainstream exegetes argue that God provides guidance to the individual but he or she becomes despotic about his or her guidance.

- (11) The exclusion of the *fāsiq/fājir* (licentious) from acting as a legal witness and whether a man is to have the name of believer, unbeliever or wrong-doer. The *fāsiq/fājir*, for the Mu<sup>t</sup>azilah, Khawārij, Ibādī and Qadariyyah, is at a level that is between these two levels (*manzilah baina al-manzilatain*). The *fāsiq/fājir*, in their view, is neither a disbeliever (*kāfir*) nor a believer (*mu'min*). They claim that the *fāsiq/fājir* is at a level that is between these two levels (*manzilah baina al-manzilatain*). The grave sinner, for them, is called *fāsiq* (wrong-doer). They also hold the view that the *fāsiq/fājir*'s sins cannot be forgiven unless through repentance before his or her death.
- (12) The attributes of God (*ṣifāt allāh*): For the Mu<sup>t</sup>azilah, the attributes of God are not eternal (*ghair azali*). However, mainstream exegetes have stressed that the attributes of God are eternal (*azali*), that is, they are as old as the existence of God.
- (13) Anthropomorphism (*al-tashbīh*) and corporealism (*al-tajsīm*): The notion of *tashbīh* and *tajsīm* falls within the Qur'anic exegesis of theological *mutashābihāt*. While mainstream and the majority of non-mainstream schools of thought reject the notion of anthropomorphism, the non-mainstream sect called *al-mushabbihah* (also *al-mushabbihūn* [the anthropomorphists]) believes that God's names have similarities (*yashbahu*) to those of the human beings and other creatures, and still others, who are called *al-mujassimah* (also *al-mujassimūn* [corporealists]), believe that God has a body (*jism*) that has blood and physical parts like two hands, two ears and a mouth, can be seen in this life, who visits people in a physical form and has attributes (*ṣifāt*) like generosity (*karīm*), strength (*qawiy*) and knowledge (*ʿālim*). However, for them, God's body parts are different from human parts. Non-mainstream Mu<sup>t</sup>azili, Ash<sup>c</sup>ari and Sufi Sunni scholars as well as non-mainstream Shī<sup>c</sup>i, Ismā<sup>c</sup>īli and Ibādī scholars do not hold this belief of anthropomorphism (see al-Shahrastāni 1986, 1, 103–105; Wensinck 1932, pp. 66, 68, 92).
- (14) Non-mainstream exegetes like the Shī<sup>c</sup>ah, the Ibādīyyah, the Ash<sup>c</sup>ariyyah and the Mu<sup>t</sup>azilah argue that the literal exegetical analysis, that is, the non-allegorical meanings, of God's attributes such as *al-majī'* (coming), *al-istiwā'* (sitting on), *al-ma<sup>c</sup>iyyah* (being with, accompanying someone) and *al-kalām* (speaking) constitute an insult to God and are not compatible with His divinity and lordship. Therefore, the non-mainstream school of exegesis adopts the allegorical (*majāzi*) approach in the exegetical analysis of God's names and attributes which uncovers the underlying signification of God's names and attributes. However, the school of mainstream exegesis rejects this exegetical approach and calls for the non-allegorical (*ḥaqīqi*) semantic analysis. In other words, mainstream exegetes adopt a literal exegetical analysis of God's names and attributes and do not attach to them any connotative meanings. According to the mainstream school of exegesis, God's names and attributes are befitting to Him alone. For them, although God has certain attributes like face, hands, hearing, sight, being

over the throne and coming, He is free from the limitations of human and non-human attributes and is above human cognitive faculties and imagination. For them, God's names and attributes cannot be applied to human or non-human beings.

The use of allegory in the exegetical analysis of Qur'anic expressions has been one of the most controversial issues that divide mainstream and non-mainstream schools of exegesis. However, allegorical meaning, outside God's names and attributes, is acceptable to mainstream exegetes, as in the expression (al-awṭād) in Q38:12 and Q89:6–14. Here, the word al-awṭād may have an allegorical meaning referring to 'the soldiers of Pharaoh who supported him' just like the pegs which support the tent. Thus, Pharaoh's soldiers are 'the pillars on which his regime was firmly established'. Similarly, the word a'mā in Q17:72, 'waman kāna fī hādhhī a'mā' has been given an esoteric rather than an exoteric signification by both mainstream and non-mainstream exegetes. They unanimously claim that a'mā means 'the person who does not fully appreciate, that is, 'cannot see' (literally meaning 'blind'), the infinite blessings of God in this world while he or she is enjoying them on a daily basis and that he or she has forgotten about eschatology, the reward with paradise and the punishment with the hell fire in the hereafter (for more details, see [Chapter 8, Section: 8.2, Point 3](#)).

- (15) Opposition to the ruler or governor is a duty and a right for every individual if a ruler or governor does not rule according to the Qur'ān and the sunnah. This theological position is adopted by the Khawārij and the Murji'ah who disowned 'Uthmān b. 'Affān and fought against 'Ali b. Abī Ṭālib (al-Shahrastāni 1986, 1, pp. 114; al-Sālūs 2002, 1, p. 39; al-Baghdādi 2005, p. 61). However, for mainstream exegetes and theologians, such as the Ḥanābilah, political allegiance to the ruler is compulsory regardless of his uprightness and application of the Qur'ān and the sunnah in his administration.
- (16) Shī'ism evolved during the Umayyad dynasty but it took firm roots during the Abbasid rule. In their attempt to promote Shī'ism, Shī'i exegetes resorted to esoteric exegesis. Thus, their exegetical approaches are based on the following:
  - (a) Language where their exegesis is characterized by scholastic views similar to those of the Mu'tazilah, and
  - (b) interpretation and personal opinion (ta'wīl) in an attempt to substantiate their support to 'Ali's household (ahl al-bait).
- (17) Proto-Shī'i phenomena include the following doctrines undertaken by the Shī'ah (Donaldson 1936; Watt 1973, pp. 54–59; al-Shahrastāni 1986, 1, 146–148; al-Dhahabi 1987, 2, pp. 5–274; al-'Āmili 1993, 21, pp. 5–80; al-Rūmi 2002, 1, p. 146–148):
  - (a) intercession of the 12 Imāms (al-shafā'ah);
  - (b) infallibility of the 12 Imāms (al-'iṣmah);
  - (c) temporary marriage (zawāj al-mut'ah);
  - (d) the imāmate (al-imāmah – the legitimate succession of 'Ali and his descendants from his wife Fāṭimah after the death of Muḥammad);

- (e) the awaited guided one, a kind of messiah (al-mahdī al-muntaẓar – the awaited al-Mahdi);
- (f) occultation (al-ghaibah), that is, the hidden Imām who is al-Mahdī al-muntaẓar;
- (g) the return of al-Mahdī al-muntaẓar (al-rajʿah);
- (h) the practice of al-taqiyyah, that is, the dissimulation of shīʿism in time of persecution or danger whether from other non-Shīʿi Muslims or from non-Muslims;
- (i) ʿAli’s household (ahl al-bait);
- (j) the views of companions and successors;
- (k) inheriting the Prophets;
- (l) Friday prayer should be led by either an infallible Imām (al-imām al-maʿṣūm) or by a just Imām and
- (m) the beginning anew (al-badāʿ) which refers to the renewal of knowledge about something which someone has not known before. Therefore, abrogation in the Qurʾān justifies the notion of al-badāʿ. In other words, when something was ordained earlier but abrogated at a later stage shows that having known at the present time the harm or benefit of something, God has ordained the cancellation or the introduction of something else. Thus, God has begun anew to do and to learn something else.

All of the above points (a-m) are prototypical Shīʿi and Ismāʿīli beliefs which are rejected by mainstream exegetes as well as by non-mainstream exegetes such as the Ashʿari, Sufi, Muʿtazili and Ibāḍī.

- (18) Shīʿi exegetes do not attribute Qurʾanic reference to any of the three rightly guided caliphs Abu Bakr, ʿUmar and ʿUthmān. Unlike mainstream Sunni exegetes, the Shīʿi scholars explain some āyahs as reference to ʿAli b. Abī Ṭālib. For instance, ʿAli b. Ibrāhīm al-Qummī (d.328/939), who is a Shīʿi exegete, adduces a ḥadīth that identifies the seven al-mathāni (sabʿan min al-mathāni [the seven oft-recited āyahs]) of Q15:87 with the Shīʿi Imāms (Berg 2000, p. 81).
- (19) Mainstream Shīʿi scholars, known as twelver Shīʿis (al-Shīʿah al-ithnā ʿashariyyah), believe that Muḥammad explicitly appointed ʿAli as his successor (khalīfah or Imām) after him. Thus, they illegitimize the succession (khalīfah or imāmate) of Abu Bakr. However, other non-mainstream Shīʿi scholars outside the twelver Shīʿi doctrine claim that Muḥammad did not appoint ʿAli explicitly to be his legitimate successor. Thus, they legitimize the succession of Abu Bakr. In other words, for the former, that is, the mainstream (twelver) Shīʿah, there is a text (naṣṣ) which stipulates Muḥammad’s testament (waṣīyyah); however, for the latter, that is, the non-mainstream Shīʿah, there is no text, that is, no testament by Muḥammad for ʿAli.
- (20) For the Shīʿi exegetes, the Shīʿi Imām, like the Prophets, possesses the knowledge of the unseen (ʿilm al-ghaib). However, mainstream and

non-mainstream exegetes claim that Q3:179, ‘wamā kāna allāhu liyuṭṭilī-‘akum ‘ala al-ghaibi walākinna allāha yajtabī min rusulihī man yashā’ [God would not reveal to you the unseen but instead God chooses of His messengers whom He wills],’ is counter to the Shī‘i doctrine.

- (21) Esoteric meaning of the Qur’ān is central to the Shī‘i doctrine. For Shī‘i scholars, ‘Ali’s high rank among the companions is attributed to his knowledge of the esoteric meaning of the Qur’ān and that this knowledge has been passed on to him by Muḥammad.
- (22) For the Shī‘ah, ‘Ali and his sons are the inheritors of prophethood according to Q29:27, ‘wawahabnā lahū ishāqqa waya‘qūba waja‘alnā fī dhurriyatihī al-nubuwwah [We gave to him Isaac and Jacob and placed in his descendants prophethood],’ and Q57:26, ‘walaqad arsalnā nūḥan wa’ibrāhīma waja‘alnā fī dhurriyatihimā al-nubuwwah [We have already sent Noah and Abraham and placed in their descendants prophethood].’ For them, prophethood is given to the descendants of the Prophets. Shī‘i theologians claim that prophethood passes on to the descendants.
- (23) The notion of imāmate (the religious and political role of the Shī‘i Imām) for Shī‘i exegetes is a continuous divine obligation (sunnah ilāyhiyyah mustamirrah). For them, the imāmate is interrelated to the notion of religious authority (al-marjī‘iyyah) and that the Imām is divinely selected and infallible (ma‘ṣūm). To prove the obligation of imāmate and that it is one of the principles of Islam, Shī‘i scholars invoke a ḥadīth, ‘man māta lā imāma lahū māta mītatan jāhiliyyah [Whoever dies without having an Imām, dies like an idolater].’ For mainstream exegetes, this is a fabricated ḥadīth and the Shī‘i Imāms were fallible (ghair ma‘ṣūm) since they were not Prophets but ordinary pious human beings.
- (24) Shī‘i scholars express their belief in the doctrine of infallibility (al-‘iṣmah) of the 12 Imāms. They also claim that their 12 Imāms are always infallible because the Imām does not have a waḥī (divine revelation) like the Prophets. Thus, for them, the Prophets can be, at times, fallible and may make mistakes but the waḥī reminds them to correct their mistakes. Shī‘i exegetes have substantiated their theological stance on Q48:2, ‘liyaghfira laka allāhu mā taqaddama min dhanbika wamā ta’akhhara [that God may forgive for you (Muḥammad) what preceded of your sin (errors) and what will follow]’. They argue that Muḥammad has made errors but is reminded, corrected and forgiven. For the Shī‘i exegetes, Q48:2 refers to Muḥammad when he took ransom (fidā’) from the prisoners of war of the battle of Badr in 2/624 which was an error but God had forgiven him. For mainstream and non-mainstream exegetes, Muḥammad is an infallible Prophet and Q48:2 refers to the errors Muḥammad may have made before his prophethood. Shī‘i exegetes go even further and claim that Q48:2 refers to the forgiveness of God to all the sins made by the Shī‘is (al-Ṭabarsi 1997, 9, p. 140).
- (25) Intercession (al-shafā‘ah) is a reality on the day of judgement for mainstream and non-mainstream theologians and exegetes. The Qur’ān and

ḥadīth make reference to the intercession of Muḥammad for the Muslims, including the wrongdoers, on the day of judgement. This view is held by mainstream and some non-mainstream theologians and exegetes. For instance, the non-mainstream Muʿtazili scholars provide traditions that have a theological bearing for their rejection of the doctrine of Muḥammad's intercession on behalf of people. However, the Shīʿi non-mainstream exegetes decorate their Imāms with the special privilege of intercession on the day of judgement. Thus, for the Shīʿah, intercession will be exercised by Muḥammad and the Shīʿi Imāms. As for the Khawārij and the Muʿtazilah, the notion of intercession violates the doctrine of the punishment of the grave sinner. Thus, they do not hold the view that the grave sinner will enjoy the intercession of Muḥammad. Also, for mainstream exegetes, intercession will be exercised by the Prophets and the virtuous people. By the same token, Sufi exegetes claim that Sufī saints will be empowered with intercession on the day of judgement.

- (26) The doctrine of al-taqiyyah refers to the dissimulation of one's religion, especially in times of persecution or danger. Scholars who are in favour of the exercise of al-taqiyyah by Muslims are Ibn ʿAbbās, Ibn Maʿūd, al-Shāfiʿi, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣri and the Shīʿis. However, for the Shīʿah, al-taqiyyah has a different application from that held by mainstream theologians (see Point 17h above). Those against the practice of al-taqiyyah are exegetes like Mujāhid and al-Jaṣṣāṣ. For mainstream scholars, the belief in al-taqiyyah is hypocritical (al-Ṭūkhi: fol. 36v).
- (27) Shīʿi exegetes such as al-Ṭabarsi hold the view that the ʿUthmanic master codex of the Qurʾan suffered some form of interpolation (taḥrīf) by anti-Shīʿism. For him (1997, 3, p. 46), the phrase 'ilā ajalīn musammā [for a specified term]' is missing from Q4:24. Thus, this āyah should read: '... fama istamtaʿtum bihī (ilā ajalīn musammā) minhunna . . . [So for whatever you enjoy of marriage (for a specified term) from them give them . . .].' This Shīʿi jurisprudential view aims to justify the Shīʿi belief in temporary marriage.
- (28) The Sufis, through the allegorical approach to tafsīr and the esoteric signification (al-maʿnā al-bāṭin) of the Qurʾān, have strived towards purification of the soul and immersion in God. While real allegory (al-majāz) aims at a directly implied inner meaning as, for example, in the case of the Flood and Noah's Ark, where the sea is related to matter and the saving ship to divine law, this approach of using parallels sees actual events and lawful decisions as symbols for the spiritual world (Gätje 1971, pp. 40–41; Heinrichs 1992, pp. 258–270; Wansbrough 1977, pp. 219–226). The influence of Greek thought has had significant impact upon the exegesis of the phenomenon and content of the Qurʾān and led to variant interpretations.
- (29) For Sufi exegetes, Muḥammad is the 'light of God'. To justify their belief, Sufi scholars provide an esoteric reference to Q61:8, 'yurīdūna liyuṭfiʿū nūra allāhi biʾafwāhihim [They want to extinguish the light of God with their mouths].'

- (30) Modern Sufi exegetes such as Muḥyi al-Dīn al-Ṭaʿmi (2007, 1, pp. 96, 113) are polemical towards Sunni scholars whom he refers to as ‘Wahhābis’ (followers of the teachings of the Sunni theologian Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb [1115–1206/1703–1792]; al-Ṭaʿmi 2007, 1, pp. 61, 96, 113, 371, 377, 421, 823, 837; al-Ṭaʿmi 2007, 2, pp. 490, 502, 560). al-Ṭaʿmi (2007) also attacks the Sunni scholar Ibn Taimiyyah (d.661–728/1263–1328) and accuses him of polytheism. By the same token, al-Ṭaʿmi provides examples such as Q3:31 which, in his view, substantiates Sufism and the belief in Sufi saints (al-awliyāʾ [friends of God]).
- (31) For Sufi exegetes, the Sufi saints enjoy a special Holy status:
- (i) Sufi saints have an equal status to that of the Prophets with regards to the knowledge of the unseen (al-Ṭaʿmi 2007, 1, p. 113).
  - (ii) The divine secret, rūḥ al-qudus (Holy Spirit; Q2:87, Q5:110), is a divine secret whose knowledge is also shared by Sufi saints such as ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jailāni (d.561/1165) (ibid.:149).
  - (iii) The Sufi saints (friends of God) are empowered with intercession on the day of judgement.
  - (iv) Sufi saints are workers of miracles (ṣāḥib karāmāt) and they establish this belief on the esoteric meaning of Q19:24–25.
- (32) For Sufi exegetes, the building of tombs and shrines for Sufi saints is tolerated. They justify this view through the esoteric meaning of Q18:21, ‘ibnū ʿalaihim bunyānan. rabbuhum aʿlamu bihim [Construct a building over them. Their Lord knows best about them].’ For Sufi scholars, the shrine serves to highlight the Holy status of the Sufi saint.
- (33) For Sufi exegetes, Q2:284, ‘in tubdū mā fi anfusikum aw tukhfūhu yuḥāsibkum bihī allāh [Whether you show what is within yourselves or conceal it, God will bring you to account for it],’ is abrogated by Q2:286, ‘lā yukallifu allāhu nafsān illā wuṣʿahā lahā mā kasabat waʿalaihā mā iktasabat [God does not charge a soul except with that within its capacity. It will have the consequence of what good it has gained, and it will bear the consequence of what evil it has earned]’ with regards to only the non-Sufis (al-ʿawāmm), but it remains as a non-abrogated āyah with regards to the Sufis (al-khawāṣṣ). For mainstream and non-mainstream exegetes, Q2:284 is abrogated by Q2:286.
- (34) For Sufi exegetes, Prophets ascend to heavens (isrāʾ, miʿrāj) in body and soul (jasadan warūḥan), but Sufi saints ascend to heavens in soul only. Ibn ʿArabi (d.638/1240) and al-Jīli (d.822/1419), for instance, claim that they ascended to heavens (al-Ṭaʿmi 2007, 1, p. 327). Mainstream and non-mainstream exegetes reject this view.
- (35) For Sufi scholars, al-Khiḍr, the mystical Islamic character mentioned in Q18:60, is considered a Sufi saint with knowledge of the unseen. Sufi exegetes refer to this view in their analysis of Q18:67–68.
- (36) For the Sufis, every created being is God. This is a Sufi notion of the union of existence (wiḥdat al-wujūd) which evolved during the third/ninth century. In their exegetical account of Q17:23, Sufi theologians claim that

God (the Truth) and the creation are inseparable and one entity and that the universe is nothing but God (°Arābi 2006, 1, p. 491; °Abd al-Khāliq 2006, p. 54). The Iraqi Sufi scholar, al-Ḥusain b. Maṣūir al-Ḥallāj advocated this belief and, as a result, was accused of heresy and disbelief and was executed on the bridge of Baghdad in 309/921. In his account of Q112:1, the Sufi exegete, °Abd al-Karīm al-Jili (d.822/1419), claims that ‘the human being is God’ (°Abd al-Khāliq 2006, p. 123).

- (37) The non-mainstream exegetes invoke a *majāzi* (allegorical, esoteric) meaning while the mainstream exegetes adopt a *ḥaqīqi* (non-allegorical, exoteric) meaning to Qur’anic expressions, as in Q33:57, ‘inna alladhīna yu’dhūna allāha warasūlahu [those who hurt God and His Messenger]’ (Q33:57). For instance, al-Jaṣṣāṣ (d.370/980; 1994, 3, p. 485) and al-Zamakhshari (d.538/1144; 1995, 3, pp. 541–542), the first object of the verb (yu’dhi [to hurt]) is ellipted which is implicitly understood as ‘friends’ (awliyā’); that is, the āyah should read, ‘inna alladhīna yu’dhūna (awliyā’a) allāhi warasūlahu [those who hurt (friends) of God and His Messenger]’. In other words, they have advanced an esoteric (allegorical) meaning. al-Qushairi (2000, 3, p. 44), a Sufi exegete, advances a similar meaning. The non-mainstream Ibāḍī exegete Iṭfaiyish (1994, 10, pp. 315–316) also provides a ‘*majāzi*’ meaning to this āyah. However, mainstream exegetes like Ibn Kathīr (1993, 3, p. 496) and al-Qaṣṣāb (2003, 3, p. 680) provide an exoteric meaning to this āyah supported by an exegetical tradition. The latter approach reflects a major characteristic feature of al-tafsīr bil-ma’thūr school of exegesis. Interestingly, the Shī’i exegetes such as al-Ṭabāṭabā’i (1962, 16, p. 360) and al-Ṭabarsī (1997, 8, p. 137), also provide an exoteric, that is, non-allegorical meaning to this problem but without giving an exegetical tradition. However, in his analysis of ‘qul in kuntum tuḥibbūna allāha fattabi’ūnī yuḥbibkum allāhu wayaghfir lakum dhunūbakum [Say (O Muḥammad): ‘If you should love God, then follow me, so God will love you and forgive your sins]’ (Q3:31), al-Rāzi, a philosophical exegete, repeatedly calls for ḥaml al-lafẓ ‘alā al-ḥaqīqah (to take the non-allegorical meaning of the word into consideration; al-Rāzi 1990, 8, p. 17) and in an attempt to discredit the Mu’tazili scholars, he carries on his polemics against °Abd al-Jabbār Ābādi (d.415/1024) and al-Zamakhshari (d.538/1144) during his account of Q3:31 which, for al-Rāzi, is a direct reference to awliyā’ allāh (friends of God). On his part, al-Zamakhshari (1995, 1, p. 347) launches his polemics against ‘some people who call themselves awliyā’ allāh’.
- (38) The priority of belief (al-īmān) over bad deeds (al-ma’āṣī): This doctrine is held by the Murji’ah (al-Shahrestāni 1986, 1, p. 139). According to al-Shahrestāni (1986; Watt 1973, p. 120), the word Murji’ah is morphologically derived from the nominalized noun (irjā’) which means: (a) postponing, that is, putting after, and (b) giving hope. The Murji’ah’s doctrine asserts ‘where there is faith, sin does no harm.’ It also calls for the postponement of the decision of the grave sinner (murtakib al-kabīrah) until the resurrection. The Murji’ah also assert that all the people of the qiblah, that is, the Muslims, are

- believers through their public profession of faith. Therefore, the Murji'ah hope for pardon for all the Muslims (al-Shahrastāni 1986; Watt 1973, p. 121).
- (39) For the Mu'tazilah, avoiding the spread of false accusation of all external sexual intercourse between a man and a woman which is referred to as (al-qadhf) is an integral part of faith. Therefore, a person who spreads false accusation of adultery against a man or a woman becomes an unbeliever. For mainstream and other non-mainstream exegetes, a person who spreads false accusation of adultery commits no more than a sin but remains a believer; that is, he or she is still a Muslim. Their theological stance against the Mu'tazilah is backed up by Q24:11, 'inna alladhīna jā'ū bil-ifki 'uṣbatun minkum [Indeed, those who came with false accusation are a group from among you].' Therefore, the word minkum (from among you) means those who spread the false accusation of adultery against 'Āi'shah, the Prophet's wife, are believers from among the other believers; therefore, they remain as believers.
- (40) Mainstream and non-mainstream exegetes have expressed different theological views with regards to the period of punishment in the hell fire. This is related to Q6:128, 'al-nāru mathwākum khālidīna fihā illā mā shā' allāh [The fire is your residence wherein you will remain eternally unless God wills otherwise].' Thus, the period of residence in the hell fire may be eternal or for a limited time. For Ibn 'Abbās, Muqātil as well as for the Mu'tazilah and other non-mainstream exegetes, this āyah signifies perpetual punishment in the hell fire. However, the exception (illā [unless]) signifies the period when people are in their graves till the day of resurrection. This period is not part of the perpetual punishment (al-Razi 1990, 13, p. 158). It can also be as a reference to the exception period when those tortured are moved from one place of punishment to another, that is, from the hell fire (jahannam) to the freezing cold (zamharīr). Thus, for linguist exegetes like Abu Ḥaiyān (2001, 4, pp. 223–224) and Ibn 'Aṭīyah (1991, 5, pp. 349–350) who represent the mainstream school of traditional exegesis, this āyah represents a non-allegorical exception (istithnā' ḥaqīqi) rather than allegorical exception (istithnā' majāzi). If the exception particle (illā) functions as a non-allegorical exception, it can mean
- some people will be punished for a certain period of time but later on exempted from perpetual punishment,
  - some Muslims will be punished for a certain period of time but later on taken out of the hell fire,
  - the period of time while they are alive in this world without any punishment and
  - any other type of additional punishment (al-'adhāb al-zā'id) that may be added to those in the hell fire.

Thus, āyah Q6:128 also constitutes a theological cleavage among exegetes. The controversy is on whether the speech of God refers to the present world or to the hereafter. In other words, whether it is a speech directed to people in the present world or to people in the hereafter on the day of judgement.

- (41) The āyahs Q24:2–6 have become theologically controversial. For the Khawārij theologians, the punishment of stoning until death for illegal sexual intercourse outside marriage (ḥadd al-zinā) by the married man or married woman should be dropped as, in their view, there is no textual reference to it in the Qur’ān. The Khawārij also argue that the punishment of 80 lashes for the person who slanders a married man and falsely accusing him of having an illegal sexual intercourse outside his marriage should be dropped. In other words, the false accuser should not be punished. For other mainstream and non-mainstream theologians, the accuser is punished with 80 lashes regardless of being married/single or male/female (al-Shahrastāni 1986, 1, p. 121).
- (42) Although illegal sexual intercourse (al-zinā), that is, adultery or fornication, and its punishment are referred to in Q24:2–3, mainstream and non-mainstream exegetes have expressed diverse views with regards to the specific physical definition of an illegal sexual intercourse. For the Ḥanafī exegetes, for instance, an illegal sexual intercourse takes place when the glans penis is fully inserted into the vagina and not when the glans penis enters the rectum of the female partner. For the Māliki, Shāfi‘i and Ḥanbali exegetes, an illegal sexual intercourse takes place when the glans penis enters the rectum of the female partner. Therefore, for the latter jurists, the punishment of either a 100 lashes or stoning to death should be applied (al-Kāsāni 2003, 9, p. 184).
- (43) For the Khawārij, the dogma of dissimulation (taqiyyah) in words or action is illegal. This theological stance is counter to the Shī‘i views (see point 17h above); (al-Shahrastāni 1986, 1, p. 122). The Shī‘i dogma of taqiyyah is also rejected by mainstream Sunni exegetes, non-mainstream Mu‘tazilah, Ash‘ari, Sufi Sunni exegetes, as well as by the non-mainstream Ibādi exegetes.
- (44) According to the Khawārij, ‘Ali b. Abī Tālib is accused of disbelief (kufr). Their mufti (official expounder of Islamic law) ‘Imrān b. Ḥiṭṭān (d.84/703) wrote poetry celebrating the assassination of ‘Ali (al-Shahrastāni 1986, 1, p. 121; al-Sālūs 2002, 1, p. 39; al-Baghdādi 2005, p. 75).
- (45) For the Khawārij, the punishment (ḥadd) for an illegal sexual intercourse committed by either a virgin or a married woman should be only a 100 lashes but not stoning to death. However, for the Māliki, Shāfi‘i, Ḥanbali and Shī‘i exegetes, the punishment of either a 100 lashes or stoning to death should be applied depending on the married or unmarried status of the woman found guilty of an illegal sexual intercourse.
- (46) Mainstream and non-mainstream exegetes have distinct theological points of view with regards to apostasy (al-riddah). The Qur’ān refers to apostasy in Q5:54, ‘man yartadda minkum ‘an dīnihi [whoever of you should revert from his or her religion]’, but does not state the specific punishment for apostasy. Thus, a theological cleavage has emerged. For instance, the Ḥanafī school of thought excludes apostasy and its punishment. For Ḥanafī theologians, the punishment for apostasy can be delivered by God alone in the hereafter. However, for the Māliki, Shāfi‘i, Ḥanbali and Shī‘i schools of

thought, the punishment for apostasy is capital punishment (al-qaṭl). Their exegetes have established this Islamic legal ruling on the ḥadīth, ‘man bad-dala dīnahu faqṭulūhu [If a Muslim discards his or her religion, then kill him or her]’ (al-ʿAsqalānī 1982, 12, p. 279; al-Qaṣṭalānī 1996, 6, p. 489). On 14 February 1989, the British Muslim author, Salman Rushdie, for instance, was charged with blasphemy and apostasy and condemned to death by a religious legal judgement (fatwā) pronounced by the Iranian cleric Ayatollah Khomeini because he (Salman Rushdie) was classified as an apostate as a result of the publication of his controversial novel *The Satanic Verses*. For the West, however, this was an attack on freedom of speech.

- (47) For some companions like Abu Dharr and Abu Hurairah as well as for mainstream exegetes like Ibn ʿAbbās, Muqātil, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and al-Qurṭubi, animals and birds will be resurrected on the day of judgement. This theological view is related to Q6:38, ‘wamā min dābbatin fi al-arḍi walā ṭāʿirin yaṭīru bijanāḥihaihi illā umamun amthālukum mā farratnā fi al-kitābi min shaiʿin thumma ilā rabbihim yuḥsharūn [There is no creature on or within the earth or bird that flies with its wings except that they are communities like you. We have not neglected in the register a thing. Then unto their Lord they will be gathered].’ Likewise, non-mainstream scholars like Iṭṭaiyish, an Ibāḍī exegete, and al-Zamakhshari, a Muʿtazili exegete, hold a similar view to that propagated by mainstream exegetes. However, some mainstream exegetes like al-Ḍaḥḥāk and Ibn ʿAṭīyyah are against this exegetical view. Similarly, al-Ṭabarsi, a Shīʿī exegete, provides a counter argument in which he claims that animals and birds will not be resurrected on the day of judgement.
- (48) Māliki, Shāfiʿī, Ḥanbali and Shīʿī exegetes consider wine (al-khamr) as part of the category of general intoxicants (al-muskirāt). However, because the word ‘al-khamr’ is specifically mentioned in Q2:219 and Q5:90–91, Ḥanafī exegetes do not regard ‘wine’ as part of the general intoxicants. Therefore, a theological difference has emerged with regards to the required punishment for the person who consumes either wine or a general intoxicant. For the Ḥanafī exegetes, the punishment of 80 lashes is administered to the person who is found guilty of consuming wine. In the view of Ḥanafī scholars, however, this punishment should not be given to the person who consumes any kind of general intoxicants. However, for the Māliki, Shāfiʿī, Ḥanbali and Shīʿī exegetes, the punishment of 80 lashes should be given to anyone who consumes any kind of general intoxicants, including wine.
- (49) The Qurʾān refers to homosexuality in Q7:80–81 and in Q11:78–79. However, the Qurʾān does not specify the punishment for this act. This has led to diverse theological views among mainstream and non-mainstream exegetes. For the Ḥanafī scholars, homosexuality does not fall into any category of punishment (ḥadd). For this reason, Ḥanafī exegetes recommend for homosexuality the punishment of taʿzīr (censure).<sup>7</sup> However, for Māliki and Ḥanbali exegetes, stoning to death should be applied to the person who is found guilty of homosexuality whether he or she is married or not. For the

Shīʿi exegetes, the punishment for homosexuality is either lashing or stoning to death, depending on the status of being married or unmarried.

- (50) For mainstream exegetes like the Ḥanābilah and the Shāfiʿiyyah, as well as for non-mainstream Muʿtazili exegetes, the sunnah cannot abrogate the Qurʾān. It is the Qurʾān which abrogates the sunnah. Their theological stance is based upon the āyah, ‘qul mā yakūnu li an ubaddilāhū min tilqāʾi nafsi [Say (O Muḥammad): ‘It is not for me to change it on my own accord’]’ (Q10:15). However, mainstream Ḥanafi and Māliki exegetes argue that the sunnah can also abrogate an injunction of an āyah since, for them, both the sunnah and the Qurʾān are revelations from God.
- (51) For the Muʿtazilah and the Jahmiyyah, the negation particle (lan [never]) has a different grammatical function from the negation particle (lā). For them, the particle ‘lan’ negates the future only but not the present continuous (al-ḥāl al-mustamirr), as in ‘lā aʿbudu mā taʿbudūn [I do not worship what you worship]’ (Q109:2), where the negation particle (lā), for the Muʿtazilah and the Jahmiyyah, has negated the present tense verb (aʿbud [to worship]) which signifies the future (saʿaʿbud [will worship]). For mainstream linguist exegetes like Abu Ḥaiyān, the negation particle (lā) negates the present verb (aʿbud) which signifies the present tense, that is, at the moment (I do not).
- (52) Mainstream and non-mainstream theologians were interested in the notion of iʿjāz (inimitability of Qurʾanic style) which emerged for scholastic debate during the years of the Abbasid dynasty (d.132–655/749–1257). This is to do with the Qurʾanic text on the rhetorical level. As a matter of fact, it was the scholastics (al-mutakallimūn) who were heavily involved in the heated debate on the notion of iʿjāz. Although Qurʾān scholars were primarily concerned with the substantiation of the theological premise ‘no one can imitate what God makes,’ Muslim scholastic and non-scholastic theologians adopted distinct linguistic and rhetorical approaches to verify this thesis. During the fourth/tenth century, the debate raged among the scholars such as ʿAli b. ʿĪsā al-Rummāni, a Muʿtazili, (d.386/996); Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Khaṭṭābi, a Muʿtazili, (d.388/998); Abu Bakr Muḥammad b. al-Ṭaiyib al-Bāqillāni, an Ashʿari (d.403/1012) and ʿAbd al-Jabbār al-Asad Ābādi, a Muʿtazili, (d.415/1024) and continued to flourish during the fifth/eleventh century by the non-scholastic theologians such as the Ashʿari mainstream linguist and rhetorician, al-Jurjāni (d.471/1078 or 474/1081); the Muʿtazili linguist, rhetorician and exegete al-Zamakhshari (d.538/1144) and the non-mainstream Ashʿari exegete al-Rāzi (d.606/1209). During their debate with the Syriacs, Buddhists and Magians, the scholastic theologians talked about Qurʾān’s stylistic prototypical features, sublime discourse and order system (al-naẓm). The debate raged between the Muʿtazili and the Ashʿari linguists and rhetoricians. Abu ʿUthmān b. Baḥr b. Maḥbūb al-Jāḥiẓ (d.255/868) was a Muʿtazili rhetorician and Qurʾān scholar. However, when Muʿtazili scholars, such as al-Jāḥiẓ, al-Zamakhshari, Ibn Sinān al-Khafāji (d.466/1073), refer to the iʿjāz of the Qurʾān, they employ the

expression *al-ḥaṣṣāh* (eloquence) and made *ḥaṣṣāh* parallel to *iʿjāz*. However, for the Ashʿari theologians, such as al-Jurjāni, al-Bāqillāni and al-Rāzi, they employ the expression *al-naẓm* (order system) when they account for *iʿjāz*. For the Muʿtazili scholar al-Rummāni, *āyah-final* expressions (*fawāṣil al-āyāt*) and assonance (*al-sajʿ*) represent Qurʿanic *iʿjāz* while his point of view is rejected by the Ashʿari theologians such as al-Bāqillāni and al-Jurjāni who attribute *iʿjāz* to Qurʿanic order system. Modern exegetes like Muṣṭafā Ṣādiq al-Rāfiʿi (d.1880–1937) is of the opinion that *iʿjāz* is attributed to cadence (*iqāʿ al-ṣawṭ*) and euphony (*rakhāmat al-ṣawṭ*). However, for Saiyid Quṭb (d.1906–1966), artistic imagery is a major feature of Qurʿanic *iʿjāz* (for more details, see [ch. 2, section: 2.5](#) in Abdul-Raof 2006).

- (53) Muʿtazili and Ashʿari theologians expressed different points of view with regards to the notion of *al-ṣarfah* (dissuasion) which was put forward by the Muʿtazili theologian Wāṣil b. ʿAṭāʾ (d.131/748) and adopted by the Muʿtazili Ibrāhīm al-Nazzām (d.231/845), who was the teacher of al-Jāhīz. Thus, the notion of *al-ṣarfah* has been associated with and adopted by the Muʿtazilah. According to the Muʿtazili Qurʿān scholars, the Arabs possessed the linguistic and stylistic faculties and could have imitated Qurʿanic discourse but God dissuaded them from doing so. This view is not held by mainstream exegesis (for more details, see [ch. 2, section: 2.5](#) in Abdul-Raof 2006).
- (54) Muʿtazili and Ashʿari theologians agree that assonance in Qurʿanic discourse is an effective rhetorical feature. They also agree that Qurʿanic assonance (*al-sajʿ*) is subservient to meaning. By doing so, they have made a distinction between profane literature assonance and Qurʿanic assonance. For them, meaning is subservient to assonance in poetic discourse. The mainstream Andalus school of exegesis is silent about this phenomenon and expresses interest only in conceptual chaining in Qurʿanic discourse.
- (55) For the Māliki, Ḥanafī, Sāhfiʿi and Ḥanbali theologians, a Muslim who abandons the daily prayers (*tārik al-ṣalāt*) deliberately (*juḥūdān*) is a disbeliever and an apostate (*murtadd*) and, therefore, should be killed. After being killed, he or she should not be shrouded, offered a funeral prayer or buried in a Muslim graveyard. Their view is based on Q9:5, ‘*faʿin tābū waʿaqāmū al-ṣalāta . . . [If they should repent, establish prayer . . . ]*.’ For the Māliki, Ḥanafī and Sāhfiʿi scholars, if he or she abandons daily prayers for lack of motivation (*kasalan*), he or she should be killed but be shrouded, offered a funeral prayer and buried in a Muslim graveyard. However, for the Ḥanbali theologians, if a Muslim abandons the daily prayers due to lack of motivation, he or she is considered as licentious but is not a disbeliever since he or she still testifies monotheism and, therefore, should not be killed (al-Mawsūʿah al-Fiqhiyyah 1992, 27, pp. 53–54).
- (56) Mainstream and non-mainstream exegetes have distinct theological points of view with regards to *jihād* (holy war). The Islamic legal ruling of *jihād* is considered by Muslim scholars as either

- (i) *farḍ kifāyah* (communal obligation), that is, although *jihād* is an obligatory duty, it can be performed by a representative number of mature Muslim individuals. Thus, when it is performed by a given number of individuals, the rest of the Muslim community cannot be regarded as sinful and are excused for not performing *jihād*, or
- (ii) *farḍ ʿain* (individual obligation), that is, *jihād* is an obligatory duty incumbent upon every individual mature Muslim and that it is a sin if a Muslim does not take part in it.<sup>8</sup>

For the non-mainstream Sufi school of exegesis, the notion of *jihād* has a mystical meaning only and is void of any physical sense. Sufi exegetes claim that the meaning of *jihād* in Q2:216, 274 and Q3:121, 169 denotes the fighting against the real enemy who is the self (*al-nafs*), Satan and desire (*al-hawā*).

# 4 Dichotomy between tafsīr and ta'wīl

## 4.1 Introduction

The present chapter introduces the key terms and concepts that will be employed in subsequent chapters. In order to set the scene for the following chapters of this work, an in-depth account of the binary opposition between exegesis (tafsīr) and interpretation (ta'wīl) will be investigated from morphological, semantic and theological perspectives. We shall also list the major areas to which exegesis is related; the aspects of exegesis; kinds of exegesis; the companion's views on an exegetical problem which are taken as evidence, though not being backed up by a ḥadīth<sup>1</sup> and those that are not accepted as evidence, the different meanings of interpretation, commendable as opposed to objectionable interpretation and categories of interpretation.

## 4.2 What is tafsīr?

The definition of the expression tafsīr (exegesis, hermeneutics) will be investigated from morphological, grammatical, semantic, theological and historical perspectives.

- (i) Morphologically, the expression tafsīr is related to the verb fassara (to disintegrate or break down into pieces) as in fassarat al-nūrah (the lime disintegrated; al-<sup>c</sup>Akk 1986, p. 52). In other words, as a text analyst, the exegete breaks the Qur'anic word into its semantic constituents in order to deduct its signification(s). However, for al-Zamakhshari (1988, 2, p. 163) and al-Qinnūji (1995, 1, p. 29), tafsīr is morphologically related to the word 'tafsīrah' meaning either:
  - (a) 'the little amount of a sample water which the doctor examines to find out the reason of the patient's illness' for al-Zarkashi, or
  - (b) 'the lead that is followed in order to reach the source of a given matter' for al-Qinnūji. Therefore, both meanings signify 'an investigation into a given matter'.
- (ii) Grammatically, the expression tafsīr is a nominalized noun (maṣḍar) whose root verb is fa<sup>cc</sup>ala and whose nominalized noun is tafīlah. The expression tafsīr can also be morphologically related to the verb fasara (to expose, to uncover) whose nominalized noun is tafsīrah. Therefore, the

verb *fasara* is a reversed form (*maqlūb*) of the verb *safara* meaning 'to expose, to uncover'. Thus, we have in Arabic 'safarat al-mar'atu,' meaning 'She exposed her face, that is, she removed her face cover'; 'imra'ah sufūr', meaning a lady wearing Western clothes with no head and face cover; 'fasara al-ṣubḥu,' meaning 'It has become morning, that is, darkness has disappeared'; 'safara al-ʿimāmah 'an ra'sihi,' meaning 'He took off the turban from his head' and 'wal-ṣubḥi idhā asfara' (Q74:34) meaning 'by the morning when it brightens'. Also, we have the active participle form (*safir*) meaning (the intermediary or messenger who attempts to eliminate the misunderstanding between two parties). In modern standard Arabic, however, *safir* means ambassador. Thus, the *safir*, that is, the 'exegete' if we keep the reversed form, is the one who provides the correct details for the readers who have different views about a given matter. However, the main linguistic reason for making the expression *tafsīr* on the pattern *tafīl* is to signify hyperbole. In other words, *tafsīr* signifies the provision of a large amount of minute details about a given Qur'anic word or *āyah*. Thus, for Ibn 'Abbās, the meaning of the Qur'anic phrase 'wa aḥsana tafsīran' (Q25:33) is the best explanation. Thus, the two verbs *fasara* and *safara* overlap semantically (cf. al-Rāghib al-Aṣḥāhānī 1997, p. 262; al-Zarkashi 1988, 2, p. 163).

Gilliot (2002, p. 100), however, is not sure whether the word *tafsīr* is of an Arabic origin and claims that the verb *fassara* (to discover something hidden) is a borrowing from Aramaic, Syriac or Christian-Palestinian words (*peshar*, *pashshar*) and that the same verb is also found in Jewish-Aramaic. For Rippin (1987, p. 236), the word *tafsīr* appears to have evolved from a description of a poetic figure in which one hemistich contains an explanation of the preceding one. Although the word *tafsīr* is historically related to the exegesis of the Qur'ān, Rippin (2000, p. 83) notes that the word *tafsīr* is also used by Muslim scholars for commentaries on Greek scientific and philosophical works, being equivalent to *sharḥ* (explanation, explication). For example, we find the word *tafsīr* applied to the Greek and Arabic commentaries on the works of Aristotle. Jews and Christians writing in Arabic also use the word *tafsīr* in the context of translations and commentaries on the Bible, as it is demonstrated by the works of Saadia Gaon.

- (iii) Semantically, the expression exegesis (*tafsīr*) signifies 'clarification, elucidation and elaboration' as it is designated by the following *āyah*: 'walā ya'tūnaka bimathalin illā ji'nāka bil-ḥaqqi wa-aḥsana tafsīran [They do not come to you with an example except that We bring you the truth and the best explanation]' (Q25:33).

It is worthwhile to note that Q25:33 is the only citation of the expression *tafsīr* in the Qur'ān. In other words, the word *tafsīr* has occurred only once in the Qur'ān. However, *tafsīr* overlaps semantically with the expression *ta'wīl*, meaning interpretation (see [Section 4.3](#) below). Thus, one can say either *tafsīr al-ru'yā*

or ta'wīl al-ru'yā and both mean the explanation of a dream (al-Rāghib al-Aṣḥāhī 1997, p. 425). For this reason, during the lifetime of Muḥammad, the companions viewed the expression tafsīr as synonymous with ta'wīl. This semantic overlap is manifest in the ḥadīth: 'allāhumma faqqihhu fi al-dīn wa'allimhu al-ta'wīl [O God, make him (°Abd Allāh b. °Abbās) knowledgeable in religion and teach him the ta'wīl]' (Muslim, ḥadīth no. 2477, 1994, 16, p. 55) which is a supplication (du'ā') by the Prophet for Ibn °Abbās, his cousin on the father's side. In his exegesis, al-Ṭabari has also employed tafsīr to signify ta'wīl. However, in later generations, the meaning of tafsīr has become distinct from that of ta'wīl. Unlike ta'wīl that is primarily concerned with hypothetical and personal opinion as well as the allegorical and esoteric signification (al-ma'na al-majāzī and al-ma'na al-bāṭin) of a given expression, tafsīr is concerned with both the allegorical and non-allegorical, that is, exoteric, signification (al-ma'na al-zāhir and al-ma'na al-ḥaqīqī) of a given word, provided the account given is in line with sound prophetic tradition. In other words, tafsīr is concerned with the denotative (non-allegorical) and connotative (allegorical) meaning of Qur'anic words.<sup>2</sup>

(iv) Theologically, tafsīr involves two aspects:

- (a) It is concerned with the understanding of Qur'anic discourse, its admonition and legal rulings; the sound chain of authorities and sound narration from the Prophet; his companions and the early successors and is mainly hinged upon the Qur'anic text itself. In other words, the exegesis of a Qur'anic matter, such as a word or an Islamic legal ruling, is established through either the Qur'ān, ḥadīth or a companion's view. If the exegete does not find any of these sources of exegesis, he can establish his judgement upon the opinion of an early successor. However, when the exegete encounters differences of opinion among the companions, he is required to take the opinion of either Ibn °Abbās for al-Zarkashi (1988, 2, p. 189) or that of °Alī b. Abī Ṭālib for al-Judai° (2001, p. 316).
  - (b) Muslim scholars agree unanimously that exegesis is a communal obligation (farḍ kifāyah).<sup>3</sup> In other words, exegesis is a duty that is incumbent upon a representative number of Muslim individuals in a given Muslim community.
- (v) Historically, tafsīr has begun as a natural practice during the lifetime of Muḥammad who has acted as the main authority on the semantic and theological problems of the Qur'anic text. His exegetical explanation has become known as the exegesis of the Prophet (tafsīr al-nabī; for more details on the Prophet's exegesis, see [Chapter 5, Sections 5.2.1.1, 5.2.1.1.1 and 5.2.1.1.2](#)). The companions have also provided exegetical details to their respective communities during their teaching in Makkah, Madīnah and Kūfah. This has become known as the exegesis of the companions (for more details on companion exegesis, see [Chapter 5, Sections 5.2.1.2, 5.2.1.2.2 and 5.2.1.2.3](#), and for more details on the historical developments of tafsīr, see [Chapter 1](#)).

#### 4.2.1 Exegesis as a discipline

As a discipline, exegesis is hinged upon the direct narration from Muḥammad himself, from one of his companions or narration from an early successor. Thus, it can only be achieved through conclusive evidence (*dalīl qāṭi'ī*). For this reason, exegesis is concerned with the transparent signification of Qur'anic words that do not require any personal or hypothetical opinion on the part of the exegete. Therefore, tafsīr depends primarily upon a sound chain of narration (*isnād ṣaḥīḥ*).

For Qur'ān scholars and exegetes such as al-Zarkashi (1988, 2, pp. 162–169), al-Suyūṭī (1996a, 2, pp. 489–493), al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī (1997, p. 425), and al-Dhahabī (1987, 1, pp. 14–16), exegesis is mainly concerned with

- (i) the unearthing of the hidden signification of a Qur'anic word *gharīb* al-Qur'ān and which needs to be based on sound narration, as in *junāḥ*, meaning *ḥaraj* (objection); *khuṭuwāt al-shaiṭān*, meaning *ʿamal al-shaiṭān* (the work of Satan); *al-mass*, meaning *al-jimāʿ* (sexual intercourse); *al-jibt*, meaning *al-shirk* (disbelief); *jaraḥtum*, meaning *kasabtum min al-ithm* (what you have earned of wrongdoing); *jāsū*, meaning *mashū* (they walk); *dīnahum*, meaning *ḥisābahum* (their account) and *sakanun lahum*, meaning *raḥmatun lahum* (mercy for them);
- (ii) the denotative meanings of Qur'anic words, as in *khairan*, meaning *mālan* (wealth, money) in Q2:180, and *mu'riḍūn*, meaning *mukadhhibūn* (those who turn away, disbelieve) in Q21:1;
- (iii) the linguistic rules of words in isolation and in combination with other words, as in *bil-ākhirati hum yūqinūn* (in the hereafter they have firm faith; Q2:4) where *bil-ākhirati* (in the hereafter) is a prepositional phrase which is fronted (foregrounded), that is, *muqaddam*, in order to achieve the pragmatic function of prominence of information value and to show respect to those who believe. It is also the object of the verb *yūqin* (to have a firm faith);
- (iv) the manner of articulation of Qur'anic words, that is, the Qur'anic modes of reading, as in *'wa'idhā ra'aita thumma ra'aita na'imān wamulkan kabīran* [When you look there (in paradise), you will see pleasure and great dominion], (Q76:20) where the word *mulkan* can mean either pleasure, if it is pronounced like *mulkan* where the letter (m) takes the short vowel /u/ (*al-ḍammah*) and the letter (l) is made vowelless (*ḥaruf sākin*), or it would mean king or sovereign, if it is pronounced as *malikan* where the letter (m) is given the short vowel /a/ (*al-faṭḥah*) while the letter (l) takes the short vowel /i/ (*al-kasrah*);
- (v) the detailed semantic componential features of a Qur'anic word, as in *ṣafwān* (very soft stone), *wābil* (torrential rain) and *ṭal* (tiny drops of rain) in Q2:264;
- (vi) the multiple significations of Qur'anic words when they occur in a given context, that is, the allegorical and non-allegorical significations of a given Qur'anic word (*al-ḥaqīqah wal-majāz*), as in *fī qulūbihim maraḍun* (there

is disease in their hearts, Q2:10) where the word *maraḍun* can either have an allegorical meaning such as wrong belief, envy, desire to do evil actions and weakness or a non-allegorical meaning, which is pain;

- (vii) the reasons for revelation;
- (viii) Makkan and Madinan revelations;
- (ix) clear and ambiguous āyahs;<sup>4</sup>
- (x) abrogating and abrogated āyahs;
- (xi) Qur'anic parables;
- (xii) Islamic legal rulings;
- (xiii) The specific and general meaning (al-ma<sup>c</sup>nā al-khāṣṣ wal-<sup>c</sup>āmm), the restricted and unrestricted meaning (al-ma<sup>c</sup>nā al-muṭlaq wal-muqaiyad) and the brief and the detailed meaning (al-ma<sup>c</sup>nā al-mujmal wal-mufassar; for further details, see [Chapter 5, Section 5.2.1.1.1](#));
- (xiv) Arabic morphology, syntax and the three disciplines of Arabic rhetoric: <sup>c</sup>ilm al-ma<sup>c</sup>āni (word order, that is, semantic syntax), <sup>c</sup>ilm al-bayān (figures of speech) and <sup>c</sup>ilm al-badī<sup>c</sup> (embellishments) and
- (xv) the orthography of Qur'anic words, as in *amman yamshī sawiyyā* (or one who walks erect on a straight path? Q67:22) where the particle *amm* (or) is assimilated with the word *man* (who) to get *amman* (one who). Also, in *amm man yakūnu <sup>c</sup>alaihī wakīlā* (but who will then be their representative? Q4:109) where the detached particle *amm* means *bal* (but).

In his exegesis *Jami<sup>c</sup> al-Bayān fī Ta'wīl al-Qur'ān*, al-Ṭabari (2005, 1, p. 57) quotes Ibn <sup>c</sup>Abbās's classification of exegesis. According to Ibn <sup>c</sup>Abbās, there are four aspects of exegesis:

- (i) An aspect which the Arabs know from their native language: We are told by Q26:195 that the Qur'ān is revealed in a clear Arabic language (*bilisānin <sup>c</sup>arabiyyin mubīn*). Therefore, a native speaker of Arabic is expected to be familiar with Arabic syntax and semantics. In other words, a native speaker of Arabic is expected to be acquainted with Arabic grammatical and morphological rules and with Arabic vocabulary and its linguistic usage. The major source of this linguistic awareness is derived from classical Arabic poetry. Arabic grammatical and lexical meaning and usage, however, should be in line with that of the companions, the successors, Qur'ān scholars and linguists;
- (ii) An aspect which every one should be aware of: This refers to Qur'anic matters whose understanding are straightforward to the native Arab, are not unclear and do not require an explanation, such as the lawful and unlawful, of commands, as in *'fa'aqimū al-ṣalāta wa'ātū al-zakāta wa'aṭī<sup>c</sup>ū allāha warasūlahu* [Establish prayer and give zakāt and obey God and His messenger]' (Q58:13); prohibitions, as in *'walā tajassasū walā yaghtab ba<sup>c</sup>ḍukum ba<sup>c</sup>ḍā* [Do not spy or backbite each other]' (Q49:12) and the āyahs that designate monotheism and creed, as in *'fa<sup>c</sup>lam annahū lā ilāha illā allāh* [So know that there is no deity except God]' (Q47:19);

- (iii) An aspect which scholars are familiar with: This aspect of exegesis is related to (a) the discovery of Islamic legal rulings from Qur'anic āyahs, such as those that have occurred in Q2–Q5, and (b) the āyahs that may involve more than two meanings, as in 'allāhu alladhī rafa'ā al-samāwāti bighairi 'amadin tarawnahā [It is God who erected the heavens without pillars as you can see them]' (Q13:2) and
- (iv) An aspect which only God knows: This is an aspect of tafsīr that is part of the unseen which is known only to God, such as the time of the day of judgement, the blowing of the horn, the sending down of Jesus, the conditions of the hereafter, the angels, the jinn, cryptic letters and the theologically ambiguous āyahs (al-mutashābihāt).

For al-<sup>c</sup>Akk (1986, p. 47), exegesis is of two kinds:

- (i) Lexical exegesis (al-tafsīr al-lafẓi): This is concerned with Arabic morphology, syntax, the various modes of reading that are multiple source, irregular and well known, as well as with individual Qur'anic words which are of foreign origin, and
- (ii) Semantic exegesis (tafsīr ma'āni al-āyāt): This is concerned with creed which is referred to as the tenets of faith, jurisprudence and the discovery of Islamic legal rulings and with the three disciplines of Arabic rhetoric: word order, that is, semantic syntax, figures of speech and embellishments.

Although tafsīr does not rely on personal opinion, the exegete is allowed to exercise the discovery (istinbāt) of significations of Qur'anic words when there is no chain of narration for the matter under investigation. In other words, the exegete can employ his personal judgement to discover the meanings of a polysemous word or an āyah in a given context, provided the meaning discovered is not in violation of the Qur'ān and tradition. Thus, for al-Zarkashi (1988, 2, p. 166), sound hypothetical opinion (al-ra'yu al-maḥmūd)<sup>5</sup> can be exercised by the exegete. For instance, an exegete is allowed to discover the significations of the word al-mā'ūn in wayamna'ūna al-mā'ūn (Q107:7). The word al-mā'ūn can either mean

- (a) the obligatory zakāt,
- (b) the poor woman,
- (c) water,
- (d) fire taken to light up the wood used for cooking,
- (e) pasture,
- (f) help or
- (g) knowledge.

Each of these seven significations is a possible alternative to other meanings and none of them violates the Qur'ān or the tradition. However, the discovery of an āyah's sense that is not regarded as ta'wīl is 'walā tulqū bi'aidikum ilā

al-tahlukah' (Q2:195) for which exegetes have discovered various meanings none of which is counter to the Qur'ān or the tradition. These meanings may be represented by one of the following:

- (a) The man who fights against a hundred men,
- (b) The one who despairs of God's mercy,
- (c) The one who does not spend in charity,
- (d) The one who spends his or her money earned through means that are disallowed by Islamic law or
- (e) the one who spends all of his wealth in charity and then begs people for financial aid.

All of these significations are possible and contextually justified since each of these meanings signifies 'sin'. Thus, the above significations are not regarded as ta'wīl. It is for this very reason the Qur'ān states, 'wabtighā'a ta'wīlihi [seeking an interpretation suitable to them]' (Q3:7) which does not make it forbidden for exegetes to discover the polysemous significations of a given word. It is in this sense that the expressions tafsīr and ta'wīl semantically overlap. Also, it is in this sense that the supplication was made by Muḥammad for his cousin Ibn 'Abbās, 'allāhumma faqqihhu fī al-dīn wa'allimhu al-ta'wīl [O God, make him (Ibn 'Abbās) knowledgeable in religion and teach him the ta'wīl]' (Muslim, ḥadīth no. 2477, 1994, 16, p. 55) should be understood.

The exegesis of the Qur'ān, however, which is based upon hypothetical opinion only and without an authentic source and a sound chain of authorities, is not acceptable to orthodox Muslim scholars whose point of view is backed up by several Qur'anic āyahs, such as 'wa'an taqūlū 'ala allāhi mā lā ta'lamūn [To say about God what you do not know]' (Q2:169); 'walā taqfu mā laisa laka bihi 'ilmun [Do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge]' (Q17:36) and 'litubaiyina lil-nāsi mā nuzzila ilaihim [To make clear to the people what was sent down to them]' (Q16:44), and by the ḥadīth narrated on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās, 'man qāla fī al-Qur'āni bighairi 'ilmin falyatabawwa' maq'adahū min al-nār [Whoever explains the Qur'ān without knowledge, he has prepared for himself a place in fire]' (al-Tirmidhi, ḥadīth no. 4022, 1994, 8, p. 277); by 'man takallama fī al-Qur'āni bira'yihī fa'ṣāb faqad akhṭa [Whoever talks about the Qur'ān from his own opinion and achieves correctness, he has, indeed, been mistaken]' (al-Tirmidhi, ḥadīth no. 4024, 1994, 8, p. 279) and 'man fassara al-qur'āna bira'yihī faqad akhṭa' [Whoever provides an exegesis of the Qur'ān by his own opinion, then he must have committed an error]' (al-Zarkashi 1988, 2, p. 181). However, the Qur'ān encourages the discovery of meanings by personal opinion, 'liyaddabbarū āyātihī wa liyadhakkara ulu al-albābi [So that they might reflect upon its verses and that those of understanding would be reminded]' (Q38:29) and so does the ḥadīth 'al-qur'ānu dhalūlun dhū wujūhin muḥtamalah, faḥmilūhu 'alā aḥsani wujūhih [The Qur'ān is semantically straightforward and has many aspects; therefore, take it at its best significations]' (al-Zarkashi 1988, 2, p. 180)

#### 4.2.2 Companions' views on exegesis

In terms of the companions' opinions and narration from Muḥammad, we encounter two notions in Qur'anic exegesis (al-Zarkashi 1988, 2, p. 174; al-Suyūṭi 1996, ch. 2, pp. 505–506; Abu Ḥajar 1996, pp. 36–38):

- (i) *al-marfū'*: This expression means 'attributed to the Prophet'; that is, it refers to 'a companion's opinion that goes back to the tradition but without any narration of a specific ḥadīth'. It, therefore, designates a companion's own hypothetical opinion (*ra'i*) that is in line with the tradition. Thus, the exegetical views of a companion enjoy the status of *al-marfū'*. The companions are believed to have witnessed the revelation and are aware of the circumstances of revelation. For this reason, their views represent a sound hypothetical judgement. A companion's views can also be categorized as *marfū'* if he or she is not known for his or her reliance on the views of the People of the Book, that is, influenced by Jewish anecdotes.<sup>6</sup> Thus, the companions' views are referred to as *ḥujjah* 'sound evidence'. For instance, a companion may explain a given reason for revelation, an incident that has taken place which he or she has witnessed or the meaning of a given Qur'anic expression. In the view of Abu Ḥajar (1991, pp. 38), a companion's opinion can be *marfū'* if it fulfils two conditions: The first is related to the narrator (*al-rāwi*) and the second is related to the narrated opinion (*al-marwiyy*):
- (a) The narrator companion should not be known for his or her reliance on Jewish anecdotes, and
  - (b) The narrated opinion is related to matters that are taken for granted such as the reasons for revelation, the conditions of the day of judgement and the hereafter.

For instance, *Ā'ishah* has explained the meaning of Q33:10, '*idh jā'ūkum min fawqikum wamin asfala minkum wa'idh zāghat al-abṣāru wabalaghat al-qulūbu al-ḥanājira* [Remember when they came at you from above you and from below you, and when eyes shifted in fear and hearts reached the throats]' as '*kāna dhālika yauma al-khandaqī* [That was the day of the battle of al-Khandaq<sup>7</sup> (the trench, the ditch)].' Thus, her commentary is of a *marfū'* status because *Ā'ishah*'s commentary on this exegetical problem is made without reference to any specific ḥadīth.

Also, the detailed commentary provided by Ibn *Abbās* on the story of the Prophet Ishmael, his father Abraham, his mother Hagar and the building of the Ka'bah is provided without reference to a particular ḥadīth. Thus, it is considered as *marfū'* since the information given represents Ibn *Abbās*'s views. However, the exegesis of Abu Hurairah of Q28:46, '*wamā kunta bijānibi al-ṭūri idh nādainā* [You were not at the side of the mount when We called]' as meaning '*yā ummata muḥammadin, aṭaitukum qabla an tas'alūnī, wa'ajabtukum qabla an tad'ūnī* [O the nation of Muḥammad, I have given you before you have asked Me, and have answered you before you have called Me]' is not considered as *marfū'* because

he is known for his heavy reliance on Jewish anecdotes. Therefore, his exegetical views have been based upon direct quotation from non-Muslim sources.

- (ii) *al-mawqūf*: This expression means ‘own viewpoint’; that is, it refers to ‘a companion’s opinion that is not attributed to the tradition’. It, therefore, refers to the narration of a companion which is not based on the tradition but rather on his personal opinion. In other words, the companion’s exegetical views are not backed up by the tradition and represent his or her own personal opinion. Thus, the companions’ views cannot be considered as *ḥujjah*. For instance, Abu Hurairah’s exegetical commentary on Q28:46 mentioned in the above point is an example of a *mawqūf* exegetical opinion; that is, his exegesis represents his own hypothetical judgement and his opinions are based on Jewish anecdotes rather than tradition.

### 4.2.3 *Genres in Qur’anic exegesis*

The expression ‘genre’ is employed in the present discussion to designate the approach (*uslūb*) which a given exegete employs in his Qur’anic text analysis. Therefore, in Qur’anic exegesis scholarship, the expression *uslūb* which we often encounter does not refer to the literal meaning ‘style’. Rather, it refers to an exegetical approach. The main distinctions between exegesis genres are related to the following:

- (i) The amount of details provided by the exegete;
- (ii) The use of intertextuality;
- (iii) Whether all or some āyahs are accounted for and
- (iv) whether exegesis is provided at word, sentence or text level.

Although these genres are different from each other, some exegesis books that adopt a given genre may be coloured by some features of other genres. *al-Ṭabari*’s work, for instance, features the analytical genre, but it includes comparative genre as well. There are five major genres in Qur’anic exegesis which have evolved during the different historical phases of exegesis (see [Chapter 2](#) for more details). These genres are investigated below:

#### 4.2.3.1 *Analytical exegesis*

This is referred to as *al-tafsīr al-taḥlīlī* which is the most common genre of exegesis in which all the āyahs according to their arrangement in a given *sūrah* are analysed. In other words, it is an āyah-by-āyah exegesis (*tafsīr musalsal*). Thus, a comprehensive analysis of the whole Qur’ān is provided. This genre may also include the analysis of a selected number of consecutive āyahs of a given *sūrah* or the analysis of a selected *sūrah* only. An example of an analytical exegesis that deals with one *sūrah* only is *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Ḥujūrāt fī Su’ālīn wa Jawāb* of Abu ‘Abd Allāh Muṣṭafā b. al-‘Adawī in which he investigates various jurisprudential

problems in a question–answer method. It belongs to the school of traditional exegesis (*al-tafsīr bil-ma'thūr*) and also provides exhortation and details on the circumstances of revelation. Analytical exegesis also provides a comprehensive investigation of each āyah in terms of significations of its expressions, semantic ambiguity, grammatical problems, rhetorical features, the reasons for its revelation and its legal rulings. Therefore, it is an āyah-based exegesis.

Analytical exegesis belongs to the early phase of exegesis during the Prophet and the companions' phase. It has also continued during other phases until the present time. However, analytical exegesis books vary in detail and in-depth analysis from one exegete to another. Thus, one may find an exegesis of one volume or of several volumes, such as those by al-Ṭabari, al-Tha'labi, al-Wāḥidi, al-Baghawi, Ibn 'Aṭīyyah, al-Ṭabarsi and Ibn Kathīr. It is also worthwhile to note that exegetes of this genre vary in their analytical approach in terms of narration from Muḥammad and the companions; Qur'anic intertextuality; opinions in support of a given school of law; grammatical, rhetorical, jurisprudence, historical, mystical, scientific and cosmic details; exegetical information based upon Jewish anecdotes and reference to scholastic views.

#### *4.2.3.2 Synoptic exegesis*

This is referred to as *al-tafsīr al-ijmāli* which is a gist āyah-by-āyah (*musalsal*) exegesis in which the exegete provides a periphrastic exegetical outline of the āyahs according to their arrangement in a given sūrah. Synoptic exegesis belongs to the modern phase and attempts to provide the general meaning, the communicative function and the moral aims of the āyahs in a Qur'ān-made-easy style and a straightforward presentation technique. In this *tafsīr* genre, however, the sūrah may be divided into units each made up of a number of āyahs that are linked together by a common aim, meaning and conceptual signification. Intertextual semantic links may also be referred to in an attempt to illustrate the conceptual relatedness and thematic connectivity of some words and the common conceptual aim they share.

Synoptic exegesis does not account for grammatical, rhetorical, variant readings and jurisprudential details. However, in an attempt to capture the aim of an āyah, the exegete may refer to its reasons for revelation and its relevant story. Therefore, synoptic exegesis is āyah based and is an overall semantic paraphrase of a sūrah. It is a simple genre that is adopted in radio and television religious programmes that aim to appeal to the general public and attract a wider section of society. It is also found as an outline of the sūrah in Qur'ān recitation tapes. More recently, a synoptic *tafsīr* by Fu'ād al-'Irrīs (2005) has also briefly accounted for the linguistic problems and their impact on the meaning of an āyah. He, as a synoptic exegete, also employs a simple literary language. His synoptic *tafsīr* focuses on the linguistic and psychological matters and is linked to contemporary life and problems which the reader may encounter in his or her daily life. Exegetes of synoptic *tafsīr* are like Muḥammad Sulaimān al-Ashqar, 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sa'di, Muḥammad al-Makki al-Nāṣiri, Wabḥah al-Zuḥaili and Maḥmūd Shaltūt.

Shawqī Ḍaif's *al-Wajīz* is a unique example of a synoptic tafsīr genre. In English, there is *The Qur'an Outlined: Theme and Text* by Hussein Abdul-Raof, which is also a synoptic exegesis that is primarily concerned with the gist of the sūrah. Wahbah al-Zuhāili's *al-Tafsīr al-Wasīṭ* (2001) is meant for readers of average educational background and is based on the radio tafsīr programmes 'Qaṣaṣ min al-Qur'ān [stories from the Qur'ān]' and 'al-Qur'ān wal-Ḥayāt [the Qur'ān and life]', which he used to give on 'Idhā'at Ṣawt al-Sha'ab [the voice of people radio]' of Damascus from Saturday to Thursday during the period between 1992 and 1998.

#### 4.2.3.3 *Comparative exegesis*

This is referred to as *al-tafsīr al-muqārīn* which is a comparative-contrastive exegetical analysis in which the exegete compares and contrasts between different views of exegetes on an exegetical problem represented by a given āyah. The contrasted views may represent different schools of law. The exegete provides a critical account of other views and introduces his own solution favouring one opinion over the other and supports his position by evidence from the Qur'ān, prophetic tradition, views of the companions or the successors and reference to other Scriptures. Comparative exegesis has started during the recording phase and continued to the present time. This genre is represented by exegetes like al-Ṭabari and Ibrāhīm Khalīl. The exegesis radio programme by °Abd al-Raḥmān b. °Aqīl al-Zāhiri is also an example of a comparative exegesis genre.

Comparative exegesis genre, therefore, is an āyah-based commentary which is concerned with various problems such as the grammatically and syntactically ambiguous āyahs (*al-mutashābihāt*); conceptual relatedness between Qur'anic parables that occur in different sūrahs and which complement each other's overall meaning; the comparison between āyahs that are specific or restricted and those that are general and non-restricted; the comparison between an āyah and a ḥadīth and the comparison between a given Qur'anic notion, āyah, or sūrah and their counterpart notions, sentence, or chapters in the Old or New Testament. The latter area of comparative genre exegesis has featured in modern research by Muslim and non-Muslim scholars such as the notion of Jesus and Mary in the Qur'ān and the New Testament, the notion of creation in the Qur'ān and the Old and New Testament and the comparison between the Qur'anic and Biblical story of Joseph. Most of this research has appeared in academic journals, conferences and postgraduate theses.

#### 4.2.3.4 *Thematic exegesis*

This is referred to as *al-tafsīr al-mawḍū'ī* which has emerged during the early years of the formative phase, that is, during the Prophet's phase (see [Chapter 5, Section 5.2.1.1](#)) and continued up to the modern phase (see [Chapter 5, Section 5.2.3](#)). Thematic exegesis is not a musalsal tafsīr; that is, thematic tafsīr genre does not follow the arrangement of the āyahs or sūrahs and occurs at different

levels of analysis. It can be provided at three levels of analysis: at word level, at āyah level and at text level. This tafsīr genre is not concerned with grammatical analysis, variant modes of reading and grammatical/rhetorical features of the āyahs. In this genre, the āyahs, which occur in one or more sūrah and share the same 'theme' or same Islamic legal ruling, are put together and their communicative function, general meaning and jurisprudential rulings explained. In other words, the āyahs that share a common concept but occur in different sūrah are collected together and provided with a brief exegetical analysis. Thus, thematic commentary is theme based. Thematic exegesis, for instance, deals with a given expression such as 'the believers in the Qur'ān' in which expressions like *ṣifāt 'ibād al-raḥmān* (the characteristic features of servants of the Most Merciful) or *al-mu'minūn* (the believers) is accounted for throughout the Qur'ān. It also deals with the meaning of a given āyah such as *alladhīna fi qulūbihim maraḍun* (those in whose hearts is disease) that has occurred throughout the Qur'ān.

The thematic tafsīr genre is also concerned with a given notion such as the notions of *al-ṣabr* (patience) or eschatology in a given sūrah or in the whole Qur'ān, and is also concerned with morality and exhortation of some āyahs in a given sūrah or the exhortation of a sūrah such as exhortation of Q12. An interesting example of thematic exegesis is the *Tafsīr of Abu al-Ḥasan al-Ḥarālī al-Marākishi* (d.638/1240). In this tafsīr, al-Ḥarālī collects all the thematically related āyahs and provides an exegetical outline. His methodical approach in his tafsīr work, however, is based on conceptual chaining (*al-munāsabah*).<sup>8</sup> In her recent thematic tafsīr work, Zainab 'Aṭīyyah Muḥammad (1995) deals with the āyahs that share the same theme. However, Zainab also provides a synoptic exegesis where she explains each āyah separately but very briefly, two lines at most. Her tafsīr is thematic because several āyahs from different sūrah are put together and these āyahs share a common theme.

More recently, however, thematic tafsīr genre has attracted the attention of Muslim scientists who have made attempts to account for the āyahs that refer to the notion of God's omnipotence. This has led to the emergence of what is now known today as *al-tafsīr al-'ilmī* (scientific exegesis) such as that of Zakariyah Hamīmi (*al-Ijāz al-'Ilmī fi al-Qur'ān*) and Zaghlūl al-Najjār (*al-Maḥmūd al-'Ilmī lil-Jibāl fi al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*). Ṭanṭāwi Jawhari (*al-Jawāhir fi Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*) is another representative of *al-tafsīr al-'ilmī* (cf. Wielandt 2002, p. 130).

#### 4.2.3.4.1 FORMS OF THEMATIC EXEGESIS

The most common forms of thematic exegesis genre are as follows:

- (a) The analysis of āyahs through Qur'anic intertextuality: Although based on narration and verbally transmitted, the exegesis of the Prophet and the companions is an example of this form of genre. An example of a modern thematic exegesis which adopts this genre is *Uṣūl al-'Ulūm al-Insāniyyah min al-Qur'ān al-Karīm: Kashshāf Mawḍi'i* (1995) by Zainab 'Aṭīyyah Muḥammad in which she collects the āyahs from different sūrah that are

thematically and intertextually related and provides a brief exegesis in a simple style of the theme of each āyah. In the twenty-first century, Abu Bakr Jābir al-Jazā'iri has also provided a thematic genre exegesis in his *Aisar al-Tafsīr li Kalām al-ʿAlīy al-Kabīr* where he lists the themes of a group of āyahs and gives a brief discussion of some words. Abu al-Ḥasan al-Ḥarālī al-Marākishi (d.638/1240) in his *Tafsīr Abu al-Ḥasan al-Ḥarālī al-Marākishi* also provides a brief thematic exegesis of a number of āyahs that are conceptually related. al-Ḥarālī's tafsīr work is now available under the title of *Turāth Abi al-Ḥasan al-Ḥarālī al-Marākishi fi al-Tafsīr*, which is edited by Muḥmādi b. ʿAbd al-Salām al-Khayyāṭi (1997). al-Ḥarālī's approach of ʿilm al-munāsabah (thematic chaining and conceptual relatedness among some consecutive āyahs) has been adopted by al-Rāzi (d.604/1207) and al-Biqāʿi (d.885/1480). This form of exegetical genre is an āyah level thematic exegesis.

- (b) The collection of the āyahs that share an Islamic legal ruling, that is, āyahs which are conceptually related, such as jurisprudential āyahs: this form of thematic genre exegesis has featured in the recording phase (see [Chapter 5](#), [Sections 5.2.2.1](#) and [5.2.2.2](#)) by exegetes like al-Qurtubi, al-Jaṣṣāṣ and Ibn al-ʿArabi, as well as in the modern phase by exegetes like Muḥammad Ṣiddīq Ḥasan in his *Nail al-Marām min Tafsīr Āyāt al-Aḥkām*. This is an āyah-level thematic exegesis.
- (c) The collection and analysis of the stylistic and linguistic mutashābihāt āyahs through Qur'anic intertextuality (for details on the stylistic and linguistic mutashābihāt āyahs, see Note 4, Point ii of the present chapter). This form of exegesis features in the recording phase by exegetes such as Abu ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Iskāfi (d.420/1029; *Durrat al-Tanzīl wa Ghurra al-Ta'wīl*), Maḥmūd b. Ḥamzah al-Karmāni (d.500/1106; *al-Burhān fi Mutashābih al-Qur'ān*) and Badr al-Dīn b. Jamā'ah (d.733/1332; *Kashf al-Ma'āni fi Mutashābih al-Mathāni*). This is an āyah-level thematic exegesis which accounts for the linguistically similar but stylistically dissimilar āyahs.
- (d) The collection and analysis of sarcasm (al-sukhriyah) āyahs is another form of thematic exegesis by modern exegetes like ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Ḥafni (*Uslūb al-Sukhriyah fi al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*) and (*al-Taṣwīr al-Sākhir fi al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*). This is an āyah-level thematic exegesis.
- (e) The investigation of context and lexis is another form of thematic exegesis genre. This is referred to as al-ashbāh wal-naẓā'ir which is a linguistic account of Qur'anic words and is mainly concerned with the study of a given lexical item and the analysis of its various significations according to the different contexts in which it occurs throughout the Qur'ān. Among exegetes who have dealt with this form of genre are Muqātil b. Sulaimān (*al-Ashbāh wal-Naẓā'ir fi al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*), Yaḥyā b. Salām (*al-Taṣwīf*), al-Fairūzābādī (*Baṣā'ir Dhawi al-Tamyīz fi Laṭā'if al-Kitāb al-ʿAzīz*), Ibn al-Jawzi (*Nuzhat al-A'yun al-Nawāzīr fi ʿIlm al-Wujūh wal-Naẓā'ir*), al-Thaʿlabī (*al-Ashbāh wal-Naẓā'ir fi al-Alfāz al-Qur'āniyyah Allatī Tarādafat Mabāniḥā wa Tanawwaʿat Ma'āniḥā*) and Masʿūd Būbu (*al-Ishṭirāk al-Lafẓi fi al-Qur'ān al-Karīm Baina al-Nazariyyah wal-Taṭbīq*). This is a word-level thematic exegesis.

- (f) The collection of āyahs that involve grammatical or semantic problems: This has featured in the recording phase by exegetes like Abu Muḥammad °Abd Allāh b. Muslim Ibn Qutaibah (d.276/889; *Ta'wīl Mushkil al-Qur'ān*). This is an āyah-level thematic exegesis.
- (g) Topic-based exegesis which is concerned with the collection of āyahs that deal with topics like abrogation, oath and similitudes (al-amthāl): This is an āyah-level thematic exegesis.
- (h) Topic-based exegesis which is concerned with the collection of God's omnipotence āyahs that have a scientific background such as cosmology, the cattle, the womb and the mountains: This is referred to as al-tafsīr al-'ilmi (scientific exegesis) which attempts to substantiate the i'jāz (inimitability) of the Qur'ān. Some among the representative scientific exegetes are Ṭaṇṭāwi Jawhari, Zakariyah Hamīmi and Zaghlūl al-Najjār. This is an āyah-level thematic exegesis.
- (i) The collection of āyahs which have specific reasons for revelation: This form of thematic exegesis has featured during the recording phase by exegetes like Abu al-Ḥasan °Ali b. Aḥmad al-Wāḥidi al-Naisābūri (d.468/1075; *Asbāb al-Nuzūl*). This is an āyah-level thematic exegesis.
- (j) The analysis of a major theme, that is, leitmotif, of a given sūrah, such as the conceptual analysis of monotheism in Q3 or Q112. This form of thematic exegesis has featured in the modern phase. Among exegetes of this form of genre are Ibrāhīm al-Kailāni (*Taṣawwur al-Ilūhiyyah Kamā Ta'riḍuhu Sūrat al-An'ām*), Kamāl Muḥammad °Isā (*Qaḍāyā al-'Aqīdah fī Ḍaw' Sūrat Qāf*) and Muḥammad Yūsuf (*Qaḍāyā al-Mar'ah fī Sūrat al-Nisā'*). This is a text-level thematic analysis because the text of the whole sūrah is investigated.
- (k) The exegesis of the whole Qur'ān in a thematic fashion different from traditional musalsal (āyah-by-āyah) tafsīr. This has featured during the modern phase by exegetes like Muḥammad al-Ghazāli (*Naḥwa Tafsīr Mawḍi'i Lisuwar al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*). This is also a text-level thematic exegesis.

#### 4.2.3.5 Literary exegesis

This type of genre has begun in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries by exegetes like Saiyid Quṭb, Muḥammad al-Ghazāli, Muḥammad Mutwalli al-Sh'rāwi and Ḥasan al-Turābi. Among the Shī'i exegetes who have adopted the modern literary approach to Qur'anic exegesis is the Iranian exegete Ayatollah Maḥmūd Taleqani (d.1980) who also called for a political analysis of the Qur'ān. Taleqani was influenced by the Egyptian exegete Muḥammad °Abdu (d.1849–1905; Amirpur 2005, p. 337).

The major feature of literary exegesis genre is simple language and style in order to make it more accessible to the ordinary reader. This tafsīr genre is not concerned with linguistic problems, variant modes of reading, Jewish anecdotes, abrogating and abrogated notions, Islamic legal rulings or the reasons for revelation. At times, literary exegetes attempt to explain some grammatical and rhetorical problems in a simple approach. However, the main objective of literary

exegesis is to provide admonition through the underlying message of the āyah or the Qur'anic parable and attempts to make the exhortation similar in temperament with the current socio-political milieu.

#### 4.2.3.6 *Radio exegesis*

Radio exegesis (al-tafsīr al-idhā'i) is a synoptic modern phase Qur'anic exegesis that has evolved during the second half of the twentieth century. Radio exegesis is 'the Qur'ān-made-easy' tafsīr genre whose primary objective is to make the radio audience understand the meanings of the Qur'ān in a simplified way. Radio exegesis is characterized by the following features:

- (i) Time limitation: Since the radio programme has a limited time, radio exegesis genre is not only synoptic in nature but may also be a musalsal tafsīr (āyah-by-āyah).
- (ii) Type of audience: Radio exegesis is more often than not directed towards audience with an average education who are not interested in in-depth exegetical details that account for grammatical, stylistic or jurisprudential problems.
- (iii) Exhortation: The exegete aims to provide an admonition session through the analysis of a set of āyahs, as in the two radio programmes by Wahbah al-Zuhāili, 'Qaṣaṣ min al-Qur'ān [stories from the Qur'ān]' and 'al-Qur'ān wal-Ḥayāt [the Qur'ān and life]' on 'Idhā'at Ṣawt al-Sha'ab [the voice of people radio]' of Damascus from Saturday to Thursday, during the period 1992 to 1998.
- (iv) Thematic unit: The exegete attempts to discuss a set of āyahs that constitute a thematic unit (wiḥdah mawḍū'iyyah) which can be explained within the time allowed for the radio programme.
- (v) Simplicity and brevity: The exegete provides a simple approach to the sūrah or the set of āyahs avoiding technical expressions and lengthy details. The semantic details of Qur'anic expressions are provided in a simple language. The meaning of a Qur'anic word is supported by intertextual reference to other āyahs, the ḥadīth and at times Arabic poetry. The exegete also refers to sound ḥadīths and avoids weak and fabricated ones in order to save time. When the āyah involves more than one exegetical opinion from different schools of exegesis, the exegete usually refers to the most common exegetical view shared by the majority of exegetes who represent different schools of thought. Similarly, the exegete does not deal with the notion of abrogation and also does not account for the circumstances of revelation in detail.
- (vi) Outline: The exegete provides introductory details to the sūrah referring to its name(s), number of āyahs, time and place of revelation, general themes and sometimes its thematic relationship with the preceding sūrah.
- (vii) Jewish anecdotes: The exegete does not refer to Jewish anecdotes in his radio exegesis programme.

- (viii) Radio vocal skills: To get the message across and achieve psychological impact on the audience, the exegete employs intonation techniques compatible with the exegesis programme. His intonation contours differ from one set of āyahs or one Qur'anic expression to another as in āyahs referring to paradise which are produced with an intonation different from those that refer to the hell fire or the wrath of God. Also, the exegete recites the āyah(s) under discussion in order to psychologically prepare the audience.

Fu'ād al-°Irrīs's tafsīr book is originally a Labanese radio programme broadcast through the Qur'ān radio (idhā°at al-Qur'ān). However, it is aimed for an educated audience. Other radio exegesis programmes are by Muḥammad al-Makki al-Nāṣiri (d.1994) (Morocco), °Abdullāh al-Ṭaiyib (d.2003) (Sudan), Faḍil Ḥasan °Abbās (Jordan), Muḥammad al-Sa°di Farhūd (Egypt), Wahbah Muṣṭafa al-Zuḥaili (Syria; al-Ḍāmir 2006), Muḥammad al-Nābulsi (Palestine) and °Īsā °Abdu (Saudi Arabia).

#### **4.2.4 Categories of exegesis**

Exegesis, in the view of al-°Akk (1986, p. 47), can be classified into two categories. These are as follows:

- (i) Word-form exegesis (al-tafsīr al-lafẓī): This category of Qur'anic exegesis deals with the orthographic shape of the word and accounts for the semantically and syntactically ambiguous words, authentic versus unauthentic modes of reading of a given word, morphological and grammatical aspects of a word, as well as the linguistic aspects of the constituent words of a given āyah.
- (ii) Semantic exegesis (tafsīr al-ma°ānī): This category of Qur'anic exegesis is based on the three disciplines of (a) belief (°ilm al-°aqīdah) that is referred to as uṣūl al-dīn (sources of religion), (b) Islamic jurisprudence that deals with the discovery of Islamic legal rulings and (c) Arabic rhetoric that deals with the semantically oriented word order (°ilm al-ma°ānī) and figures of speech (°ilm al-bayān).

Wansbrough (1977, pp. 119–246) offers a typology of tafsīr works which include narrative, legal, textual, rhetorical and allegorical (see [Section 4.2.4.1](#) for more details). Wansbrough (1977, p. 121; cf. Berg 2000, pp. 148–155) also employs 12 exegetical devices:

1. *Variae lectiones*: They refer to the variant modes of reading adopted by major Qur'ān reciters. *Variae lectiones* involve vocalic or diacritic differences and at times they involve lexical differences; that is, two different words that are synonymous are employed by different reciters. *Variae lectiones* can lead to a change in meaning that marks a theological cleavage. This exegetical device has been employed by a number of exegetes like al-Ṭabari.
2. *Poetic loci probantes*: They refer to poetic citations from pre-Islamic poetry that are employed to explain a grammatical or semantic problem in a given

Qur'anic passage. The exegete usually refers to one or two lines of poetry to substantiate his exegetical analysis. Although the poetic loci probantes are taken from profane literature, pre-Islamic Arabic poetry has been praised as an exegetical tool and is supported by Ibn 'Abbās who is reported to have said, 'al-shi'ru diwān al-'arab [Poetry is the register of the Arabs],' meaning that Arabic (pre-Islamic) poetry is the linguistic and stylistic pool of information that can be employed to elucidate a grammatical or semantic problem.

3. Lexical explanation: This involves the use of variant modes of reading, poetry and synonymous words. A word can also be explicated through reference to the foreign origin of the word or its Bedouin usage.
4. Grammatical explanation: This exegetical tool provides a periphrasis of grammatical problems which lead to distinct meanings. This is true of problems like a noun which can be either in the nominative or the accusative case.
5. Rhetorical explanation: This device has emerged and developed with the notion of i'jāz (inimitability of Qur'anic style). This exegetical device involves the employment of the three constituents of Arabic rhetoric: word order, figures of speech and embellishments in order to uncover the aesthetic and stylistic prototypical features of Qur'anic discourse.
6. Periphrasis: The exegete provides brief exegetical details of a Qur'anic expression or a grammatical problem. This exegetical tool is encountered in the majāz tafsīr works such as *Majāz al-Qur'ān* by Abu 'Ubaidah (d.210/825).
7. Analogy: This is referred to as qiyās through which the exegete explains the meaning of a word that occurs in two different Qur'anic passages through the comparison of their semantic properties. In other words, the commentator needs to establish the analogous relationship between the two expressions.
8. Abrogation: This exegetical technique revolves around the abrogating and abrogated āyahs (al-nāsikh wal-mansūkh), that is, the āyahs that are cancelled by other āyahs.
9. Circumstances of revelation: In this exegetical device, the exegete deals with the reasons for revelation (asbāb al-nuzūl), that is, the elucidation of the context that precipitated a given Qur'anic passage. We usually encounter extended narratives that explain the circumstances of a given revelation.
10. Identification: This technique is related to the identification of people who are related to a given āyah. In his exegetical analysis of an expression, the exegete provides a one-word gloss for the identification of an individual or a group of people.
11. Prophetic tradition: Prophetic ḥadīths are employed as an exegetical technique and may include an anecdote elucidating a Qur'anic passage.
12. Anecdote: A narrative is used as an exegetical tool to describe an event that is referred to by an āyah and may also refer to a companion.

#### 4.2.4.1 Wansbrough's exegetical typology

In his classification of early tafsīr literature, Wansbrough (1977, pp. 119–246; cf. Rippin 1987, pp. 238–239) offers a typology of Islamic exegetical literature. He

provides a literary approach based on the style of the exegete and the function of his tafsīr. In his exegetical typology, Wansbrough proposes two different criteria of classification, functional and stylistic, which can produce five sequential formative categories of tafsīr texts. The literary characteristics of exegesis during its formative phase are as follows:

- (i) Narrative (haggadic) exegesis: This category of tafsīr provides contextual information related to reasons for revelation. An example of this category is *Tafsīr Muqātil b. Sulaimān* by Muqātil b. Sulaimān al-Balkhi (d.150/767) which provides brief folklore details influenced by the Judeo-Christian milieu, as in Q3:39, 'muṣaddiqan bi-kalimatīn min allāhi [confirming a word from God]' (2003, 1, p. 168) and Q20:80, 'wanazzalnā 'alikum al-manna wal-salwā [We sent down manna and quails for you]' (2003, 2, p. 336). For some āyahs, we may encounter a lengthy commentary as in Q18:9–26 and 83–98.
- (ii) Allegorical exegesis: This is a tafsīr category that is concerned with allegorical (majāzi), that is, esoteric (bāṭin) interpretation (ta'wīl) of Qur'anic passages in the light of mystical experience. Non-mainstream Muslim students of the Qur'ān have found this genre appropriate for their political and theological points of view supported by the underlying (bāṭin, majāzi) meaning, such as the Sufi tafsīr of Sahl al-Tustari (d.896/1490). The esoteric approach reflects the Sufi meditations on the Qur'ān.
- (iii) Legal (halakhic) exegesis: It is a tafsīr category in which the āyahs whose topics are of legal value and indicate Islamic legal rulings are isolated, arranged and explained by this category of tafsīr. These include daily ritual prayer, almsgiving, holy war, fasting, pilgrimage, lesser pilgrimage, abrogation and the imposition of poll tax. An example of an early tafsīr literature is represented by *Tafsīr Khams Mi'at Āyah min al-Qur'ān* by Muqātil b. Sulaimān al-Balkhi.
- (iv) Textual (masoretic) exegesis: In this category of early tafsīr literature, grammatical, semantic and phonetic problems are investigated by philologists such as al-Farrā' (d.207/822) in his *Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān* and Abu 'Ubaidah Ma'mar b. al-Muthannā (d.210/225) in his *Faḍā'il al-Qur'ān* which features grammatical problems and the textual variants of some expressions that lead to different meanings, different grammatical inflections and different modes of reading. Textual exegesis that deals with the semantic analysis of the Qur'ān is represented by the works of Muqātil b. Sulaimān al-Balkhi, whose work *al-Ashbāh wal-Nazā'ir* deals with Qur'anic polysemy and semantic collation, and al-Kisā'i (d.187/802), whose work *Mushtabihāt al-Qur'ān* features the grammatically similar but stylistically distinct āyahs and their contextually different meanings. For Wansbrough (1977, p. 215), the exegetical procedures symbolized by the terms wujūh, nazā'ir and mutashābihāt were derived from a view of scripture as self-contained and self-explanatory.
- (v) Rhetorical exegesis: This is a tafsīr category which is concerned with the prototypical stylistic and literary features of Qur'anic discourse such as

*Majāz al-Qur'ān* by Abu 'Ubaidah (d.210/825), which focuses on the notion of i'jāz from a rhetorical perspective, and *Ta'wīl Mushkil al-Qur'ān* of Ibn Qutaibah (d.276/889).

### 4.3 What is ta'wīl?

Interpretation is referred to as ta'wīl in Qur'anic studies and has been a controversial notion in Qur'anic exegesis due to the ideological manipulation. This controversy is mainly attributed to the fact that ta'wīl has acquired a double-edged meaning. The present discussion provides an in-depth account of the expression ta'wīl in terms of its morphological, semantic, theological and historical overtones.

- (i) Morphologically, the expression ta'wīl is a nominalised noun derived from the verb āla (to bounce or return from). Thus, awala al-kalāma ta'wīlan means he reflected upon someone's speech thoroughly and provided it with an accurate explanation. In other words, he has provided an exegesis for it. Also, awala al-shai' means to return something; al-Zarkashi 1988, 2, p. 164; al-Suyūṭī 1996a, 2, p. 491; al-Dhahabi 1987, 1, p. 16; Abu Ḥajar 1991, p. 18. The nominalised noun (ta'wīl) can also be derived from the verb awwala (to provide an exegetical account, that is, meaning [fassara]; al-Zamakhshari n.d.:12; al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahāni 1997, p. 38).
- (ii) Semantically, the notion of ta'wīl is the analysis of the signification of a Qur'anic lexical item through hypothetical evidence (dalīl ḡannī). It is primarily concerned with the discovery (istinbāt) of underlying significations of Qur'anic words. In other words, it unearths the allegorical and esoteric significations of a given expression. Thus, the text analyst ignores the denotative and literal meaning of the word and provides an interpreted signification that is established on probability (al-iḥtimāl). Probability of signification takes one of the following forms:
  - (1) The restricted meaning (al-ma'nā al-muqaiyad) probably designates an unrestricted meaning (al-ma'nā al-muṭlaq), as in 'wahuwa alladhī yaqbalu al-tawbata 'an 'ibādih [It is He who accepts repentance from His servants]' (Q42:25), which refers to the general meaning of accepting 'repentance' from anyone anywhere. However, there are āyahs which signify that repentance in some cases cannot be accepted by God such as at the moment of death, seeing the major signs of the Hour (al-āyāt al-kubrā lil-sā'ah), when someone dies while he or she is still a disbeliever, as in Q2:187; Q3:90; Q4:17, 18; Q5:34, 39; Q85:10. These āyahs designate the restricted meaning of repentance. The same applies to 'fataḥrīru raqabatin [to free a slave]' (Q58:3) where the word raqabah (literally meaning 'neck') has an unrestricted (muṭlaq) meaning which has been made restricted (muqaiyad) by the word mu'minatīn (a believer) in 'fataḥrīru raqabatin mu'minatīn [to free a believing slave]' (Q4:92; al-Khuḍaribik 1969, p. 188).

- (2) The general meaning (al-ma'na al-*amm*) probably designates a specific meaning (al-ma'na al-*khāṣṣ*), as in 'wa'uḥilla lakum mā warā'a dhalikum [All others beyond these are lawful to you]' (Q4:24) which has a general meaning that has been specified by the ḥadīth, 'lā tunkaḥ al-mar'atu 'alā 'ammatihā wakhālatihā [Do not marry your wife's aunt while your wife is still alive with you].' Tradition, that is, ḥadīth or sunnah, can specify the meaning of an āya that has a general meaning, as in 'waman yaqtul mu'minan muta'ammidan fajazā'uḥū jahannam [Whoever kills a believer intentionally, his recompense is hell]' (Q4:93) whose general meaning is made specific by the ḥadīth, 'man jā'akum wa'amrakum jamī'un yuridu an yufarriqa jamā'atakum faqtulūhu [When you are united and someone comes to you aiming to divide your unity, then kill him].' Similarly, the general meaning of 'wal-sāriqu wal-sāriqatu faqṭa'ū aidiyahumā [You should amputate the hands of the male and the female thief]' (Q5:38) is made specific by the ḥadīth 'lā tuqṭa' al-yadu illā fī rub'ī dīnārin faṣā'idan [The thief's hand should not be amputated unless he or she steals the value of a quarter of a Dīnār or more]' (Q5:38).
- (3) The polysemous meaning (al-ma'na al-*mushtarak*) probably designates one of its other meanings. In Qur'anic discourse, we have (a) polysemous words and (b) polysemous phrases. Examples of polysemous words are like 'wal-muṭallaqātu yatarabaṣna bi'anfusihinna thalāthata qurū'in [Divorced women should not remarry for three menstrual periods]' (Q2:228) where the word al-qar' (singular), meaning a menstrual period, and the word qurū', meaning menstrual period(s) in plural, are polysemous, which means either al-ṭuhr (cleanliness of or free from menstrual blood) or al-ḥaiḍ (menstruation, period). Another example of polysemy at word level is the expression 'as'asa (Q81:17) which can mean either aqbalā (to come, arrive) or adbara (to go away, to leave). Examples of polysemous phrases are 'aw ya'fuwa alladhī biyadihī 'uqdatu al-nikāḥi' [or the one in whose hand is the marriage contract foregoes it]' (Q2:237) where the phrase 'uqdatu al-nikāḥi is polysemous, meaning either al-waliy (the legal guardian) because he has 'the tie' before the marriage contract or al-zawj (the husband) because he has 'the tie' after the marriage contract.
- (4) A non-allegorical (ḥaqīqī) expression probably designates an allegorical signification(9), as in 'wal-ṣubḥi idhā tanaffasa [And the dawn when it breathes]' (Q81:18) where the expression tanaffasa can have a non-allegorical meaning (to breathe) and an allegorical meaning (to come, arrive), and also in 'wa'ulā'ika al-aghālālu fī a'nāqihim [Those will have shackles upon their necks]' (Q13:5) where the word al-aghālālu can allegorically mean 'maghlūlūn 'an al-imān [There is a veil upon their hearts, they cannot see the truth]' and can also allegorically mean 'al-a'māl alfāsīdah [the wrong deeds that have controlled them and led them to hell]'. However, the word al-aghālālu can non-allegorically mean iron collars, shackles (Abu Ḥaiyān 2001, 5, p. 359)

The expression *ta'wīl* has occurred 17 times in the Qur'ān as a polysemous expression that denotes distinct significations, including the following:

- (a) 'Interpretation' and 'specific meaning' as in Q3:7, 'fa'ammā alladhīna fi qulūbihim zaighun fayattabi'ūna mā tashābaha minhu ibtighā'a al-fitnati wabtighā'a ta'wīlihi [As for those in whose hearts is deviation from truth, they will follow that of it which is unspecific, seeking discord and seeking an interpretation suitable to them]';
- (b) 'The result, outcome or end' as in Q4:59, 'dhālika khairun wa aḥsanu ta'wīlan [That is the best way and best in result]' and also in Q7:53;
- (c) 'Interpretation of deeds' as in Q18:78 and 82, 'dhālika ta'wīlu mā lam tas-ṭi' 'alaihi ṣabran [That is the interpretation of that about which you could not have patience]' and
- (d) 'Interpretation of dreams' as in Q12:6, 37, 44, 45, and 100, 'hādha ta'wīlu ru'yāya [This is the explanation of my dream].
- (iii) Theologically, the expression ta'wīl has also become a demarcation point between sound and unsound exegesis. However, this theological controversy did not develop during the lifetime of Muḥammad, his companions or the early successors. During that time, the two notions of tafsīr and ta'wīl were synonymously used and whose signification overlapped semantically. At that time, both expressions meant 'to explain the meaning of an expression and its underlying signification'. This overlap in meaning between tafsīr and ta'wīl is encountered in Q3:7, 'wamā ya'lamu ta'wīlahū illa allāhu [No one knows its true interpretation except God]' and also in the ḥadīth, 'allāhumma faqqihhu fī al-dīn wa'allimhu al-ta'wīl [O God, make him (Ibn 'Abbās) knowledgeable in religion and teach him the ta'wīl]' (Muslim, hadith no. 2477, 1994, 16, p. 55). However, the controversy found its way during the emergence of the Muslim scholastic theology ('ilm al-kalām) and the Mu'tazilite philosophy during the second half of the third/tenth century. In their Qur'anic text analysis, Muslim scholastics rely heavily on their rational approach rather than analogy (al-qiyās) on Qur'anic intertextuality and the tradition transmitted through a chain of authorities from the earliest period of Islam preferably from Muḥammad or one of his companions. However, they may adopt examples based on the Qur'ān or tradition if they comply with their own hypothetical opinion. If these examples do not match their reasoning, they ignore them (al-'Akk 1986, p. 55). Thus, a discredited work of exegesis can be categorized as tafsīr mu'awwal (an interpreted exegesis) meaning an exegesis that is allegorical (majāzi), based upon personal hypothetical opinion (al-ijtihād or al-dirāyah) and the discovery (al-istinbāt) of underlying signification of a given Qur'anic word as opposed to tafsīr bil-ma'thūr (traditional, mainstream exegesis). Similarly, a given commentator is labelled as mu'awwil (an interpreter), an expression with semantically negative connotation, rather than being referred to as mufassir (an exegete) and his commentary is categorized as tafsīr bilra'i (hypothetical opinion exegesis). The semantic distinction between tafsīr and ta'wīl has begun to show theological delineation and has been coloured by a political overtone. Historically, therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that the dispute over tafsīr

and ta'wīl can be traced back to the earliest sectarian disputes in Islam between the general community and the followers of Muḥammad's son-in-law and cousin, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib (d.40/661), known as the Shīʿah, who wished to appropriate the word ta'wīl for reference to interpretation of 'concealed', that is, esoteric, Qur'anic expressions as demanded by Shīʿi doctrine (cf. Rippin 1987, p. 236).

- (iv) Historically, the synonymous and overlapping signification between the two technical terms tafsīr and ta'wīl is also encountered in early exegesis works by al-Ṭabari (d.310/927) and al-Māturīdī (d.333/944) in which the two expressions are interchangeably employed in the titles of their works, as well as in the work of other Qur'ān scholars such as Muḥāhid b. Jabr (d.104/722) (Abu Ḥajar 1991, p. 18). However, early exegetes like Muqātil b. Sulaimān (d.150/767) have made a distinction between tafsīr and ta'wīl. For Muqātil, tafsīr refers to what is known on the human level and ta'wīl as what is known to God alone (Rippin 1987, p. 236). For Versteegh (1993, p. 63), the verb ta'awwala is used in the early commentaries and tradition meaning 'to apply a verse to a given situation' since the main motive for examining and discussing the text of the Qur'ān is to investigate its applicability to religious and social practices. For Gilliot (2002, p. 100), the distinction between tafsīr and ta'wīl has been attested since the first half of the second/eighth century, and probably before, in the earliest rudimentary attempts to classify exegesis. Representation of this distinction between tafsīr and ta'wīl is the opposition between the transmission (riwāyah) of exegesis from early authorities, such as the companions, and an exegesis built upon critical reflection (dirāyah), as a declaration of al-Māturīdī (d.333/944) in his Qur'anic commentary indicates: 'The tafsīr belongs to the companions, the ta'wīl to the scholars (fuqahā'), because the companions saw the events and knew the circumstances of the revelation of the Qur'ān' (Gilliot 2002, pp. 100–101).

#### **4.3.1 Classification of interpretation**

Unlike tafsīr, which is based on conclusive evidence (dalīl qāṭiʿ), ta'wīl is hinged upon hypothetical evidence (dalīl ḡanni), that is, personal opinion, and, at times, is marred by subjective political and dogmatic leanings. The objection of Muslim orthodox scholars against ta'wīl as an approach in Qur'anic hermeneutics is based on three references in the Qur'ān. These are Q17:36, 'walā taqfu mā laisa laka bihī ʿilmun [Do not pursue that which you have no knowledge]'; Q2:169, 'wa'an taqūlū ʿala allāhi mā lā taʿlamūn [(Satan orders you) to say about God what you do not know]' and Q16:44, 'litubaiyina lil-nāsi mā nuzzila ilaihim [To make clear to people what was sent down to them]'. Accordingly, the word ta'wīl has assumed a double-edged meaning. Therefore, the notion of ta'wīl can be classified into commendable ta'wīl and objectionable ta'wīl:

- (i) Commendable ta'wīl (al-ta'wīl al-maḥmūd)<sup>10</sup> depends upon sound personal understanding of the significations of a given Qur'anic word and is

adopted only after exhausting other sources of tafsīr such as Qur'anic intertextuality, the tradition, sound narration and views of the companions or early successors. In other words, commendable ta'wīl takes the context of a given āyah into account and the commentary provided is in line with the Qur'ān and the tradition. Thus, although a Qur'anic commentary adopts a ta'wīl approach based on the Qur'ān, the tradition and sound narration, it is classified as tafsīr bil-ma'thūr (mainstream, traditional exegesis).<sup>11</sup> For instance, 'inna rabbaka labilmirṣād [Indeed, your Lord is in observation]' (Q89:14), where the word labilmirṣād can be exegetically accounted for as an expression that is related to the nominalized noun al-raṣd (observation). Thus, one can say, 'raṣada sālimun al-binta,' meaning Sālim observed the girl. Thus, Sālim is a rāsid – an observer (al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahāni 1997, p. 221). However, the expression labilmirṣād can be interpreted, that is, as given a ta'wīl, 'al-taḥdīr min al-tahāwun bi'amr allāh wal-ghaflati 'an al-ahbati wal-isti'dādi lil-ʿarḍi ʿalaihi [a warning against indifference towards God's commands and negligence of and unpreparedness for meeting Him]' (al-Dhahabi 1987, 1, p. 21). Thus, the second meaning is regarded as ta'wīl because it accounts for the underlying rather than the denotative meaning.

- (ii) Objectionable ta'wīl (al-ta'wīl al-madhmūm)<sup>12</sup> is the most controversial area of Qur'anic exegesis. It is established primarily upon personal critical reflection and hypothetical judgement (al-dirāyah) without any reference to Qur'anic intertextuality, the tradition, sound narration and views of the companions or the early successors, as in Q55:19, 'maraja al-baḥraini yaltaqiyāni [He released ʿAli and Fāṭimah, meeting side by side]' whose ta'wīl is ʿAli b. Abi Ṭālib and his wife Fāṭimah; that is, the expression al-baḥraini is taken as symbolic, an allusion (ishārah) to ʿAli and Fāṭimah, rather than an explanation of the expression's denotative meaning (the two seas). An interesting example of an objectionable ta'wīl that is symbolic and transformed into imagery is given by the Shīʿi exegete al-Qummi (d.309/921). In Q18:60–82, a long dialogue takes place between al-Khiḍr and Mūsā. For al-Qummi, this is related to a prognosis of Muḥammad's appearance as herald of the true faith (Wansbrough 1977, p. 245).

By the same token, Sufi exegetes heavily rely on esoteric analysis which is considered by mainstream exegetes as objectionable interpretation, as in al-kahf in Q18:16, 'al-khalwah maʿa allāh,' which means the seclusion with God; al-kalb in Q18:18, meaning the self (al-nafs) (al-Ṭaʿmi 2007, 1, pp. 344–345); al-insāna in Q96:5, meaning Muḥammad (al-Ṭaʿmi 2007, 2, p. 862); al-arḍa in Q99:1, meaning the human being (al-Ṭaʿmi 2007, 2, p. 875); al-baqarah in Q2:68–69, meaning the self (al-nafs; ʿArābi 2006, 1, p. 18); al-wālid in Q17:23, meaning the educator who is the Sufi scholar; al-wālid al-rūḥi, meaning the spiritual educator (ibid., 1, p. 491), but al-wālid in Q90:3 means God, since He feeds people (ibid., 2, p. 837); al-naʿal in Q20:12, meaning the self (al-nafs) (ibid., 1:365) and al-māʾ in Q21:30, meaning God (ibid., 1:375).

Also, in Q20:5, ‘al-rahmānu ‘ala al-‘arshi istawā [The most Merciful who is above the Throne established],’ an allegorical meaning is provided that is different from that given in the translation. The word involved in Q20:5 is *istawā*, which is interpreted as *istawlā*, meaning ‘to capture, seize’. However, this esoteric signification is linguistically flawed because the verb *istawā* means ‘to get established on, to settle on’. Therefore, in Arabic one can say, ‘*istawaitu ‘ala al-kursi*,’ meaning ‘I sat on the chair’ but it does not mean, ‘I seized the chair.’ The meaning of *istawā* as ‘to get established on, to settle on’ is backed up by Qur’anic intertextuality in Q23:28, ‘*fa’idha istawaita anta waman ma‘aka ‘ala al-fulki* [When you and those with you have boarded the ship].’ Thus, *istawā* here also signifies ‘to board, that is, to settle on the ship’.

The application of grammatical rules with disregard to sound narration also gives rise to objectionable *ta'wīl*, as in Q5:6, ‘*yā aiyuha alladhīna āmanū idhā qumtum ila al-ṣalāti faghsilū wujūhakum wa-aidiyakum ila al-marāfiqi wamsaḥū biru’ūsikum wa arjulakum ila al-ka‘baini* [O you who have believed, when you rise to perform prayer, wash your faces and your forearms to the elbows and wipe over your heads and wash your feet to the ankles].’ The *ta'wīl* involved in this āyah is represented by the word *arjulakum* (your feet). An exegetical account which relies on ḥadīth provides the accusative case (*al-naṣb*), that is, the short vowel /a/ (*al-fatḥah*) to the noun *arjula* (feet).

Objectionable *ta'wīl* also stems from the explanation of theologically ambiguous expressions and notions (*al-mutashābihāt*; see Note 4 of the present chapter), such as the unravelling of the underlying significations of cryptic letters and the names and attributes of God. For mainstream theologians, the knowledge of such matters is exclusive to God alone. These theologically ambiguous matters are referred to by Q3:7, ‘*huwa alladhī anazal ‘alaika al-kitāba minhu āyātun muḥkamātun hunna ummu al-kitābi wa’ukharu mutashābihātun fa’amma alladhīna fī qulūbihim zaighun fayattabi‘ūna mā tashābaha minhu ibtighā’a al-fītnati wabtighā’a ta’wīlih wamā ya‘lamu ta’wīlahū illa allāhu. wal-rāsikhūna fī al-‘ilmi yaqūlūna āmannā bihi, kullun min ‘indi rabbinā* [It is He who has sent down to you (O Muḥammad) the Book. There are verses in it that are precise – they are the foundation of the Book – and others ambiguous. As for those in whose hearts is deviation from truth, they will follow that of it which is ambiguous, seeking discord and seeking an interpretation suitable to them. No one knows its true interpretation except God. However, those firm in knowledge say, ‘We believe in it. All of it is from our Lord.’ It is the last section of this āyah, ‘*wamā ya‘lamu ta’wīlahū illa allāhu* [No one knows its true interpretation except God]’ that confirms the position adopted by orthodox Muslim scholars with regard to objectionable *ta'wīl* that deals with theologically ambiguous expressions and notions whose knowledge lies with God alone. Their position is also derived from the end part of this āyah, ‘*wal-rāsikhūna fī al-‘ilmi yaqūlūna āmannā bihi, kullun min ‘indi rabbinā* [However, those firm in knowledge say, ‘We believe in it. All of it is from our Lord].’ Also in the light of this āyah, an exegete who dares to deal with such impermissible matters, is claimed to be aiming to stir discord among people, ‘*ibtighā’a al-fītnati* [seeking discord].’

Therefore, although we are urged by the Qur'ān to reflect upon it, as in Q38:29, 'kitābun anzalnāhu ilaika mubārakun liyaddabbarū āyātihi waliyatadhakkara ulū al-albāb [This is a blessed Book which We have revealed to you (O Muḥammad) that they might reflect upon its āyahs and that those of understanding would be reminded]' Q47:24, 'afalā yatadabbarūna al-qur'āna am 'alā qulūbin aqfāluhā [Then do they not reflect upon the Qur'ān, or are there locks upon their hearts?]' and Q54:17, 'walaqad yassarnā al-qur'āna lil-dhikri fahal min muddakir [We have certainly made the Qur'ān easy for remembrance, so is there any who will remember?],' we are not entirely free to employ our personal judgement without being armed with substantiating evidence based on Qur'anic intertextuality and sound tradition.

#### *4.3.1.1 Forms of objectionable interpretation*

For traditional mainstream theologians, objectionable ta'wīl applies to one of the following five forms:

- (a) An exegesis provided by an unqualified exegete; that is, the exegete does not possess the required linguistic/stylistic and jurisprudential skills of exegesis (for more details see [Chapters 7](#) and [8](#), respectively);
- (b) The exegesis of theologically ambiguous notions and expressions, such as the cryptic letters, the names and attributes of God;
- (c) The exegesis of those who are claimed to belong to a non-mainstream school of law;
- (d) The exegesis which is based on allusion (al-ishārah) in an attempt to unravel the underlying (esoteric) meaning of Qur'anic expressions and
- (e) The exegesis that is based on personal desire (al-hawā) and imitation (al-taqlīd), that is, without sound sources or critical talent.

Thus, the outcome of any of the above forms represents impermissible Qur'anic commentary; that is, it is considered by mainstream Muslim scholars as being objectionable ta'wīl (al-Qinnūji 1995, 1, p. 17–18).

#### *4.3.2 Categories of interpretation*

There are two major prerequisites for interpretation to be commendable and acceptable. When the following two conditions are met, the Qur'anic commentator can ignore the denotative, that is, the literal or surface, meaning of a given expression and adopt the underlying signification. This also applies to Islamic legal rulings and jurisprudential matters whose derivation of meaning is based upon the literal meaning of the relevant expression (al-ʿAkk 1986, pp. 58–62). The two prerequisites of ta'wīl are as follows:

- (a) The meaning derived is one of the probable significations which the text involves. This meaning should also be compatible with Arabic language linguistic norms, on the one hand, and,

- (b) On the other hand, interpretation also needs to be substantiated by sound evidence (dalīl ṣaḥīḥ) in terms of Qur'anic intertextuality, sound tradition and the standard practice of the Prophet.

Therefore, the major distinguishing factor between the two categories is the weight of the evidence (al-murajjah) available to the exegete. Based on the above two conditions, ta'wīl is of two categories:

- (i) Close interpretation (ta'wīl qarīb): This kind of interpretation requires minimum evidence. For instance, the interpretation of the Qur'anic expression *ḡahara* in 'walā yubdīna zīnatahunna illā mā ḡahara minhā [They (i.e. women) do not expose their adornment (i.e. beauty) except that which necessarily appears thereof]' (Q24:31). For Imām al-Shāfi'ī, the verb *ḡahara* is interpreted as the lady's face and the palms of her hands, since this is the most probable signification for al-Shāfi'ī. His evidence, however, is supported by the story that has been narrated by 'Ā'ishah: 'When 'Ā'ishah was with her husband, Muḡammad, Asmā' Bint Abī Bakr entered the house wearing a thin Syrian dress. On seeing her, the Prophet looked down and said, 'O Asmā', what is this? When a lady menstruates, it is not recommended that anything of her body is shown except this and that, and he referred to the palm of his hand and face.'

Another example of close interpretation is the word *qumtum* in 'yā aiyuha alladhīna āmanū idhā qumtum ila al-ṣalāti faghsilū wujūhakum wa-aidiyakum ila al-marāfiqi wamsahū biru'ūsikum wa arjulakum ila al-ka'baini [O you who have believed, when you rise to perform prayer, wash your faces and your forearms to the elbows and wipe over your heads and wash your feet to the ankles]' (Q5:6). The denotative, that is, literal or surface, meaning of the verb *qumtum* is to stand up, which should not be taken into consideration. Instead, the close interpretation, 'azamtum (to decide, to determine), which is also the closest probable signification, has to be adopted. Thus, the context of *qumtum* signifies 'determination, decision' in Q5:6 rather than 'standing up'. The evidence for this interpretation is based on the fact that a Muslim is not required to have the ablution after he or she has started the act of praying.

- (ii) Distant interpretation (ta'wīl ba'īd): This kind of interpretation requires strong evidence based on sound narration, as in 'wamsahū biru'ūsikum wa (arjulakum)/(arjulikum) ila al-ka'baini [Wipe over your heads and (wash)/(wipe) your feet to the ankles]' (Q5:6) where we have two modes of reading: (1) A mode of reading in which the expression *arjulakum* occurs in the accusative case *manṣūb* (*arjula* [feet], in the accusative case). Thus, it is coordinated to the first noun *wujūhakum* (your faces) which is also in the accusative case; that is, both nouns, *wujūhakum* and *arjulakum*, are the direct objects of the same verb *aghsilū* (to wash). This interpreted meaning is also backed up by the standard practice of Muḡammad where he was seen

frequently washing his feet during his ablution and that he had not been seen wiping over his feet except over his leather socks. This meaning is also supported by a prophetic tradition. It has been narrated by Muslim that Muḥammad saw a man performing his ablution without washing his ankles. Muḥammad said to the man, ‘wailun lil-a°qābi min al-nāri [Woe to the ankles from fire].’ This mode of reading Q5:6 (arjulakum) is also supported by ‘Ali b. Abī Ṭālib, who notes that ‘this is a form of foregrounding and backgrounding’; that is, it is a syntactic matter related to word order that places a word at either the end or the beginning of the same sentence. In other words, the word arjulakum should have occurred next to the noun wujūhakum. Moreover, the mode of reading with the accusative case is a multiple source reading. Thus, based upon this sound narration, the interpreted meaning of the expression arjulakum is not considered as a distant interpretation but rather it is a close one that is commendable and acceptable. (2) The other interpreted meaning provides the same noun in the genitive case – majrūr (arjuli [feet], in the genitive case). Thus, it is coordinated to the first noun ru’ūsi (faces) which is also in the genitive case; that is, both nouns, ru’ūsikum and arjulikum, are the direct objects of the same verb amsaḥū (to wipe over). This interpreted meaning allows the individual during the ablution for prayer not to wash his or her feet but only to wipe over them. Because this interpreted meaning is not backed up by any sound prophetic tradition, it is considered as a distant interpretation. However, this distant interpreted meaning is also based on a multiple source mode of reading, but it is not based on a prophetic tradition. In other words, this interpreted meaning is established on a mode of reading but not on a sound ḥadīth.

## 5 Evolution of exegesis

### 5.1 Introduction

The present chapter provides an informative analysis of the origins of Qur'anic exegesis as a procedure. The main focus of our discussion is to offer an in-depth account of the various historical stages of Qur'anic exegesis that has started from the early first/seventh century to our present time, the exegetical tools employed by given exegetes of a particular school of exegesis during an evolutionary phase, as well as the characteristic features and sources of each phase. Our account focuses on the degree of authority in tafsīr, whether Muḥammad has authorized the exegesis of the Qur'ān, how much exegesis Muḥammad has actually provided to his companions, whether his companions' exegetical views can be taken for granted and whether there has been reluctance to the exegesis of the mutashābihāt (the stylistically and linguistically similar or dissimilar) āyahs.

Three major evolutionary phases have been identified in our historical analysis. The nascent phase of Qur'anic exegesis is represented by the classical formative phase that has become the bedrock of the subsequent two phases. An evaluation is also provided of the role of Muḥammad, the companions, early and late successors as well as contemporary exegetes. The present chapter also provides details about the controversial exegetical tool of Judaeo-Christian anecdotes, whether Muḥammad and his companions have used them in their exegesis, the degree of leniency and/or reluctance among companion and successor exegetes with regards to the employment of Judaeo-Christian anecdotes as an exegetical tool and whether they are employed in jurisprudential matters. Most interestingly, the present chapter traces the evolution of rational exegesis known as 'hypothetical opinion' exegesis and why it is stigmatized by other schools of exegesis. It also provides an account of why the Qur'ān is in need of prophetic tradition. The impact of ḥadīth on Qur'anic exegesis and the autonomy of tafsīr from ḥadīth will also be discussed.

### 5.2 Evolutionary phases of exegesis

Throughout the last 1,400 years, the exegesis of the Qur'ān has gone through many historical and controversial stages. The present study provides an in-depth

historical investigation of the development of exegesis during its three major evolutionary phases which are formative (Section 5.2.1), recording (Section 5.2.2) and modern (Section 5.2.3). What follows is a thorough historical account of the development of Qur'ānic exegesis.

### 5.2.1 *The formative phase*

This phase represents the classical period of Qur'ānic exegesis and extends over three crucial stages: stage 1 of the formative phase is during Muḥammad's lifetime, stage 2 of the formative phase starts after the death of Muḥammad and is led mainly by companion exegetes and stage 3 of the formative phase is led by early and late successor exegetes. This is illustrated by the following diagram:

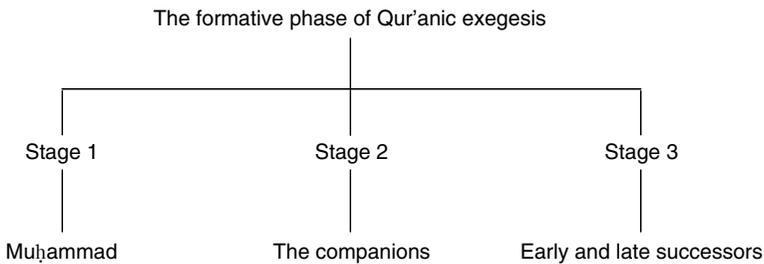


Figure 4 Stages of the formative phase

It is worthwhile to note that it is during the third stage of the formative phase which starts from the first quarter of the second/eighth century, that is, during the late successors' lifetime, that Qur'ānic exegesis has begun to be recorded in a volume form. This formative phase represents the major foundation stage in the historical development of Qur'ānic exegesis. During the formative phase, exegesis has gone through three different yet interrelated foundation phases that are featured in the exegesis of the Prophet, the companions and the successors. It is also worthwhile to note that exegesis has largely remained during the three stages of the initial formative phase as an integral part of ḥadīth and is based mainly on oral transmission, that is, without being recorded in a written volume form. However, during the third stage of the formative phase of the successors, Qur'ānic exegesis has become independent of ḥadīth and begun to be recorded.

#### 5.2.1.1 *Exegesis of the prophet*

This is known as tafsīr al-nabi (exegesis of the Prophet) and is referred to as tafsīr al-qur'ān bil-sunnah (exegesis of the Qur'ān by prophetic tradition). The exegesis of the Qur'ān goes back to the lifetime of Muḥammad. As a receiver of the revelation, Muḥammad has been the mouthpiece of the Islamic religion as we are informed by Q16:44, 'wa'anẓalnā ilaika al-dhikra litubaiyina lil-nāsi mā nuzzila

ilaihim wala<sup>o</sup>allahum yatafakkarūn [We revealed to you the message (i.e. the Qur'<sup>ān</sup>) that you may make clear to the people what was sent down to them and that they might give thought].'

Muḥammad's commentary has been the cornerstone of the exegesis of the Qur'<sup>ān</sup> as Q59:7 explains, 'wamā ātakum al-rasūlu fakhudhūhu wamā nahākum <sup>o</sup>anhu fantahu [Whatever the messenger has given to you – take it, and what he has forbidden you – refrain from].' The Prophet's commentary is also related to his sunnah, that is, his customary practice that indicates his actions and sayings. For instance, when Ṭāwūs b. Kaisān al-Yamāni (d.106/724) used to read two units of prayer (two rak<sup>o</sup>ahs) after the afternoon (<sup>o</sup>aṣr) prayer, he is advised by Ibn <sup>o</sup>Abbās to abandon this practice as Muḥammad has ordered them not to do so. For Muslim scholars, Muḥammad is given the eloquence (al-bayān) which involves linguistic and rhetorical competence that enables him to elucidate the Qur'<sup>anic</sup> text to his companions. Thus, what is not explained in the Qur'<sup>ān</sup> is made clear by the prophetic tradition as in the rituals of pilgrimage and the five daily prayers. This is based on the following ḥadīths: 'khudhū <sup>o</sup>annī manāsikakum [Take your rituals from me]' and 'ṣallū kamā ra'aitumūnī uṣalli [Pray as you have seen me pray]' (al-Qurṭubi 1997, 1, p. 74).

#### 5.2.1.1.1 EXEGETICAL TECHNIQUES OF THE PROPHET'S EXEGESIS

The Prophet's exegesis takes the form of unravelling the significations of Qur'<sup>anic</sup> expressions or āyahs that are unknown to his companions. His exegesis has become the tradition and features in one of the following exegetical techniques:

- (i) Explaining a general meaning or a theological matter (bayānun limujmalin): The Prophet, for instance, has shown and explained precisely the form and manner of the five daily prayers, the amount of zakāt and the specific rites of pilgrimage, which are referred to in a general way by Q2:42, 'wa'aqimū al-ṣalāta wa'ātū al-zakāta warka<sup>o</sup>ū ma<sup>o</sup>a al-rāki<sup>o</sup>in [Establish prayer and give zakāt and bow with those who bow in worship and obedience].' Muḥammad has also said, 'khudhū <sup>o</sup>annī manāsikakum [Learn your rites from me]' and 'ṣallū kamā ra'aitumūnī uṣalli [Pray as you have seen me praying]' (al-Qurṭubi 1997, 1, p. 74).
- (ii) Explaining a semantic ambiguity (tawḍīḥun limushkilin): The companions have encountered semantically unclear expressions which have been explained by Muḥammad, as in Q2:187, 'wakulū washrabu ḥattā yatabayyana lakum al-khayṭu al-abyaḍu min al-khayṭi al-aswadi min al-fajri [Eat and drink until the white thread of dawn becomes distinct to you from the black thread of night].' It is narrated by <sup>o</sup>Udai b. Ḥātim that when he asked Muḥammad about the meanings of the expressions al-khayṭ al-abyaḍ and al-khayṭ al-aswad and whether they were al-khaiṭān (the two threads). The Prophet answered, 'lā bal huwa sawādu al-laili wabayāḍu al-nahāri [No, it is the darkness of the night and the whiteness of the day]' (al-Qurṭubi 1997, 2, p. 315).

Also, Q14:27, ‘yuthabbitu allāhu alladhīna āmanū bil-qawli al-thābiti fi al-ḥay-āti al-dunyā wafī al-ākhirati [God keeps firm those who believe, with the firm word, in worldly life and in the hereafter],’ is semantically ambiguous. However, this ambiguity is unravelled by the Prophet’s exegesis through his ḥadīth: ‘al-muslimu idhā su’ila fi al-qabri yashhadu an lā ilāha illa allāhu wa’anna muḥammadan rasūlu allāhi [The Muslim, when he or she is asked in his or her grave, he or she answers. “There is no deity worthy of worship but God and that Muḥammad is His messenger”]’ (al-Bukhārī 1981, ḥadīth no. 1303, Muslim 1994, ḥadīth no. 2871).

Also, the expression *quwwah* (literally meaning ‘strength’, Q8:60) is explained by the Prophet as *al-rami* (throwing, that is, throwing of arches in the battle field). It is also narrated from ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib that he asked the Prophet about the meaning of *al-ḥajj al-akbar* (the greater pilgrimage) in Q9:3 and the Prophet answered, ‘It means *yawm al-naḥr* (the day of immolation)’.<sup>1</sup> It is also narrated from Ubai b. Ka‘b that he asked the Prophet about the meaning of *al-taqwā* in Q48:26, ‘fa’anzala allāhu sakiā natahū ‘alā rasūlihi wa‘alā al-mu‘minīna wa‘al-zamānahum kalimata al-taqwā [God sent down His tranquillity upon His messenger and upon the believers and imposed upon them the word of righteousness]’ and the Prophet answered, ‘It means *lā ilāha illa allāh* [There is no deity worthy of worship but God].’ Muḥammad also explained to his companions the meaning of *muṭahharatun* as in ‘*muṭahharatun min al-ḥaiḍ wal-buzāq wal-nukhāmah* [purified from menstruation, saliva and mucus]’ which occurs in Q2:25, ‘lahum fihā azwājūn muṭahharatun [They will have therein purified spouses]’ (al-Zarkashi 1988, 2, p. 173; al-Dhahabi 1987, 1, pp. 49–60).

Similarly in:

‘*asā an yab‘athaka rabbuka maqāman maḥmūdān* [So that your Lord may raise you to a highly praised status]’ (Q17:79) where the expression *maqāman maḥmūdān* (a highly praised status) is semantically ambiguous. The Prophet, however, explains this phrase as *al-shafā‘ah* (intercession).

- (iii) Specifying the generic (*takhṣīs al-‘āmm*): For instance, the expression *ẓulm* in Q6:82 literally means aggression. However, when Ibn ‘Abbās enquires about the meaning of this word that occurs in the āyah, ‘*alladhīna āmanū walam yalbīsū imānahum biẓulmin* [They who believe and do not mix their belief with injustice]’ (Q6:82), the Prophet provides a different signification, that is, *al-shirk* (association of others with God). In his explanation of this expression to the companions, Muḥammad has referred to Qur’anic intertextual reference in Q31:13, ‘*yā bunaiyah lā tushrik billāhi, inna al-shirka laẓulmun ‘azīmun* [O my son, do not associate anything with God. Indeed, association with Him is great injustice]’ where the expression *ẓulm* is explained by this āyah as *al-shirk*. Thus, the Prophet adopts the exegetical technique of Qur’anic intertextuality which is referred to as *tafsīr al-qur’ān bil-qur’ān* (the exegesis of the Qur’ān by the Qur’ān).

Muḥammad also explained to his companions the general meaning of the expression *mafātiḥu al-ghaibi* (the keys of the unseen) in Q6:59, ‘*wa‘indahu mafātiḥu*

al-ghaibi lā ya<sup>l</sup>lamuhā illā hū [With Him are the keys of the unseen; none knows them except Him].’ For this expression, the Prophet says, ‘mafātiḥu al-ghaibi khams [the keys of the unseen are five]’ and then refers to Q31:34, ‘inna allāha ‘indahū ‘ilmu al-sā‘ati wayunazzilu al-ghaitha waya<sup>l</sup>lamu mā fi al-arḥāmi wamā tadri nafsun mādhā taksibu ghadan wamā tadri nafsun bi‘aiyi arḍin tamūt inna allāha ‘alimun khabīr [Indeed, God alone has knowledge of the hour and sends down the rain and knows what is in the wombs. No soul perceives what it will earn tomorrow, and no soul perceives in what land it will die. Indeed, God is Knowing and Acquainted].’

Also, the expression al-maitatu (the dead animals) in ḥurrimat ‘alaikum al-maitatu (The dead animals are prohibited to you) in Q5:3 occurs in a generic sense, but the Prophet’s exegesis provides a specific meaning for some dead animals when he makes it permissible for the Muslim to eat dead fish according to the ḥadīth: ‘huwa al-ṭahūru mā’uhu, al-ḥillu maitatuhu [It (the sea) is that whose water is clean and whose dead is allowed]’ (Mālik 1996, ḥadīth no. 45).

- (iv) Restricting the unrestricted (taqyīd al-muṭlaq): For instance, the expression yadd (hand) in Q5:38, ‘al-sāriqu wal-sāriqatu faṭṭa‘ū aidiyahumā [As for the male and female thief, amputate their hands]’ refers to an unrestricted signification which has been restricted by the Prophet to mean al-yamīn (the right hand). Also, an Islamic legal ruling may occur with an unrestricted meaning, as in Q4:11–12, ‘min ba‘di waṣiyyatin [after any bequest he may have made]’ which has been given a restricted signification as al-thuluth (the third) by the Prophet (al-Bukhārī 1981, ḥadīth no. 1233, and Muslim 1994, ḥadīth no. 1628).

Although Muḥammad has been often asked by the companions, the amount of details the companions have got through his exegesis is still unknown. It can be claimed, however, that Muḥammad must have explained what was unclear to his inquisitive companions. ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb was also narrated as saying that the last revelation was Q2:281 known as āyat al-ribā (the interest āyah): ‘wattaqū yawman turja‘ūna fihi ilā allāhi thumma tuwaffā kullu nafsīn mā kasabat wahum lā yuḥlamūn [Fear a day when you will be returned to God. Then every soul will be compensated for what it earned, and they will not be wronged]’ (Q2:281) and that it was left unexplained by the Prophet who passed away soon after.

#### 5.2.1.1.2 FEATURES OF THE PROPHET’S PHASE

The exegesis of Muḥammad can be characterized by the following features:

- (i) Lexical paraphrase: The exegetical details provided to the companions are informative but marked by brevity and the paraphrastic details of Qur’anic expressions.
- (ii) Non-holistic: The commentary does not include the entire Qur’ān but rather specific āyahs or expressions are explained briefly.

- (iii) Qur'anic intertextuality: The Prophet's exegesis is hinged upon the exegesis of the Qur'ān by the Qur'ān.
- (iv) Jewish anecdotes: The commentary of the Prophet does not include reference to Jewish anecdotes.<sup>2</sup>
- (v) Oral transmission: Although the exegesis provided by the Prophet is the companions' major source of understanding the Qur'ān, it has remained unrecorded. The companions are instructed by Muḥammad not to record his ḥadīth or his exegetical views for fear of confusing what he says with the Qur'ān. The other reason for not having the Prophet's exegesis recorded is attributed to the fact that most of the companions are illiterate and the writing materials are not easily available.
- (vi) Absence of poetic loci: This is referred to in Arabic as al-shawāhid which means quotations from pre-Islamic Arabic poetry. These are not relied upon in the Qur'anic exegesis of the Prophet.
- (vii) Absence of variant readings: The exegetical details provided by the Prophet to his companions do not refer to modes of reading.
- (viii) Absence of anthropomorphism and ambiguous āyahs: The Prophet has not dealt with the controversial theological issues like the theological mutashābihāt expressions or the names and attributes of God (for more details on theological mutashābihāt, see n. 9 of [Chapter 1](#)).

### 5.2.1.2 *Exegesis of the companions*

The companions have shown remarkable interest in Qur'anic exegesis from the early stage of the revelation. Although the Qur'ān is in Arabic and the companions enjoy a high degree of linguistic skills, they have encountered some semantic difficulties. After the death of the Prophet, the expansion of the Muslim state and the need and influence of the foreign non-Arab converts, the need for Qur'anic exegesis has increased. The informative details given by different companions vary from one to another depending on a number of factors, including the following:

- (i) The companion's volume of contact with and enquiries made to the Prophet,
- (ii) The companion's knowledge of Islamic legal rulings,
- (iii) The companion's knowledge of the various circumstances of revelation and
- (iv) The companion's own general knowledge.

The successor Masrūq b. al-Ajda<sup>c</sup> (d.63/682) describes the level of knowledge among the companions as ikhādh which is the plural of ikhādhah, meaning brooks, which signifies that different brooks have different levels of water (cf. Abu Ḥajar 1991, p. 33). 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (d.23/644), for instance, asks about the meaning of takhawwuf in Q16:47, 'aw ya'khudhahum 'alā takhawwufin [or that He would seize them gradually in a state of dread]. A man from the tribe of Hadhīl informs him of its meaning as tanaqquṣ (decrease, diminution), which is a dialect of this tribe. Also, 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abbās (d.68/687), known as al-baḥr (the sea of knowledge), turjumān al-qur'ān (the Qur'ān's translator) and ḥabru al-ummah (the

learned man of the Muslim nation), seeks help for the expressions (fāṭir) in Q6:14, ‘fāṭir al-samāwāti wal-arḍ [creator of the heavens and earth]’ and iftaḥ in Q7:89, ‘rabbanā iftaḥ bainanā wabaina qawminā bil-ḥaqqi [Our Lord, decide between us and our people in truth]’ whose significations are explained to him as *ibtada’a* (to begin, that is, to create) and *yukhāṣim* (to decide, to judge), respectively. ‘Umar and Ibn ‘Abbās also enquired about the meanings of other expressions like *abban* (grass, Q80:31), *ḥanānan* (affection, Q19:13), *ghislin* (discharge of wounds, Q69:36) and *al-raqīm* (inscription, Q18:9). Similarly, ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Umar (d.73/692) is unable to provide an answer to the meaning of Q21:30 when he is asked by a man. He recommends Ibn ‘Abbās for this matter who provides the meaning: ‘the heavens was a joined entity and did not rain, the earth was a joined entity and did not grow vegetation. Later on, God separated the heavens and made it rain, and separated the earth and made it grow vegetation’ (al-Zarkashi 1988, 2, p. 191; Abu Ḥajar 1991, p. 34; al-Dhahabi 1987, 1, p. 72). The companions’ understanding of Qur’anic intertextuality, the circumstances of revelation and abrogating āyahs vary from one to another. For instance, Qudāmah b. Maẓ‘ūn al-Jamḥi was given a senior post in Baḥrain by ‘Umar. When Qudāmah was reported to ‘Umar as having alcohol and got drunk, he was summoned by ‘Umar to explain his position. Qudāmah, however, admitted what was reported and justified his position by Q5:93, ‘There is not upon those who believe and do righteousness any blame concerning what they have eaten in the past if they now fear God and believe and do righteous deeds, and then fear God and believe, and then fear God and do good. God loves the doers of good’ and claimed that this applied to him as he was among those who believed, did righteousness, then feared God, believed in Him, feared God, did good and took part in Badr, Uḥud and al-Khandaq battles with the Prophet. Qudāmah, however, was unaware of the circumstances of revelation relevant to Q5:93 which he used to support his case. As ‘Umar was unable to take a final decision about this matter, he asked Ibn ‘Abbās for an explanation who referred to Q5:90, ‘O you who have believed, indeed, intoxicants, gambling, sacrificing on stone alters to other than God, and divining arrows are but defilement from the work of Satan, so avoid it that you may be successful’ as an exegesis of the Qur’ān by the Qur’ān and explained to them its circumstance of revelation. ‘Umar supported Ibn ‘Abbās’s exegesis and Qudāmah was found guilty (Abu Ḥajar 1991, p. 35). Similarly, ‘Umar asks Ibn ‘Abbās about the meaning of Q2:266, ‘ayawaddu aḥadukum an takūna lahū jan-natun min nakhīlin wa-a‘nābin [Would one of you like to have a garden of palm trees and grapevines underneath which rivers flow in which he has from every fruit?]' and Ibn ‘Abbās explains it to him as ‘This is a similitude which God has given meaning: “Would anyone of you like to do good deeds all his life but just before his death he commits wrong deeds which destroy all his good deeds for which he is in desperate need?”’ (Yaḥyā 2002, p. 184).

#### 5.2.1.2.1 PROMINENT COMPANION EXEGETES

After the death of Muḥammad, a number of companions have provided an invaluable service to Qur’anic exegesis. Among them are Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq

(d.13/634), °Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (d.23/644), °Uthmān b. °Affān (d.35/656), °Ali b. Abī Ṭālib (d.40/660), °Abd Allāh b. °Abbās (d.68/687), °Abd Allāh b. Mas°ūd (d.32/652), Ubai b. Ka°b (d.20/640), Zaid b. Thābit (d.45/665), °Ā'ishah (d.58/677), Abu Mūsā al-Ash°ari (d.44/664), Ma°ādh b. Jabal (d.18/639), Abu al-Dardā' (d.33/653), °Abd Allāh b. °Umar (d.73/692), Anas b. Mālik (d.91/709), Umm Salamah (Hind) (d.59/678) and °Abd Allāh b. °Amru b. al-°Āṣṣ (d.65/684). However, the most knowledgeable of all these companions are believed to be °Ali b. Abī Ṭālib, °Abd Allāh b. °Abbās, °Abd Allāh b. Mas°ūd and Ubai b. Ka°b whose names are recurrently referred to in exegesis works throughout the evolutionary stages of exegesis (al-Zarkashi 1988, 2, p. 174; al-Suyūṭī 1996a, 2, p. 529; Abu Ḥajar 1991, p. 33; al-Judai° 2001, p. 314; Yaḥyā 2002, p. 180). Below is an outline of the four most prominent companion exegetes:

- (i) °Ali b. Abī Ṭālib (d.40/660): He is well-known among the companions for his knowledge in jurisprudence, eloquence, oration and poetry. His knowledge of exegesis is also attributed to his being one of the households of the Prophet. Ibn °Abbās acknowledges that he has learned exegesis from °Ali. However, the volume of narration from °Ali varies among exegetes and the different schools of exegesis. Most importantly, there are sound and false narrations attributed to him. The false narrations from °Ali are usually referred to by a given school of thought to support a given theological position. Among the prominent scholars who narrate from °Ali are Abu Hurairah (d.58/677) and Sufyān Ibn °Uyainah (d.107/725–198/813) (al-Suyūṭī 1996a, 2, p. 529; al-Dhahabi 1987, 1, pp. 91–94; Yaḥyā 2002, p. 197).
- (ii) °Abd Allāh b. °Abbās (d.68/687): He is well-known for his sharp discovery, hypothetical analysis, knowledge of the significations of Qur'anic discourse, knowledge of the semantically ambiguous Qur'anic expressions and his command of Arabic poetry. His knowledge of exegesis is also attributed to his being one of the households of the Prophet and his close friendship with prominent companions who are also knowledgeable about the Qur'ān. The most characteristic feature of °Abd Allāh b. °Abbās is his inquisitive mind which has led him to investigate Qur'anic expressions and learn their significations from the People of the Book who have accepted Islam, such as °Abd Allāh b. Salām Ibn al-Ḥārith al-Isrā'īli (d.43/663) and Ka°b al-Aḥbār (Ka°b Ibn Māti° al-Ḥimyari al-Yamāni; d.34/654). Thus, Ibn °Abbās's exegesis is claimed to have been influenced by the People of the Book's views. Among the ambiguous matters which are investigated by the companions like Ibn °Abbās are those that are explained by the Old Testament such as the name of the man whom al-Kiḍr killed, the colour of the dog of the companions of the cave and the size of Noah's ark (al-Dhahabi 1987, 1, p. 76; Yaḥyā 2002, p. 188). However, Ibn °Abbās has been criticized by other exegetes for his reliance in some of his exegesis on Arabic poetry and the People of the Book's views. Their opposition to Ibn °Abbās's approach to exegesis is based on the view that the Prophet is narrated to have said, 'lā tusaddiqū ahla al-kitābi walā tukadhhdhibūhum

[Neither disbelieve nor believe the People of the Book],’ on the one hand, and that poetry is madhmūm (blameworthy, objectionable), on the other (al-Dhahabi 1987, 1, p. 76). However, his approach, based on the disentanglement of meaning through pre-Islamic poetry, has continued its way in the exegesis of the successors and reference to him is recurrently made by major exegetes throughout the various stages of Qur’anic exegesis. Among the prominent scholars who narrate from Ibn ‘Abbās are al-Bukhārī and Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabari (al-Suyūṭi 1996a, 2, pp. 530–535). Ibn ‘Abbās has also established his school of exegesis in Makkah. His school has been supportive to the recording of Qur’anic exegesis and his students have managed to take lecture notes and produce them in a book form.

- (iii) ‘Abd Allāh b. Mas‘ūd (d.32/652): He is well-known for being one of the first six people who accepted Islam, his close companionship with the Prophet, being one of the best memorizers of the Qur’ān and for his hypothetical opinion approach to exegesis with regards to jurisprudential matters. Among the prominent scholars who narrate from Ibn Mas‘ūd are al-Bukhārī and Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabari (al-Dhahabi 1987, 1, pp. 90–91; Yaḥyā 2002, pp. 191–196). Ibn Mas‘ūd is the founder of the Kūfah school of exegesis. His school, however, is mainly interested in ḥadīth studies and jurisprudence and is unenthusiastic towards the recording of Qur’anic exegesis.
- (iv) Ubai b. Ka‘b (d.20/640): He is well-known for being the first scribe of the Prophet in Madīnah, the master of Qur’ān reciters and one of the most prominent memorizers of the Qur’ān. He is also known for his extensive knowledge of the meanings of Qur’anic expressions and for his knowledge of the Old and New Testaments due to his Jewish background. Among the prominent scholars who narrate from Ubai b. Ka‘b are Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabari and Imām Aḥmad in his *Musnad* (The Principal Work) (al-Dhahabi 1987, 1, pp. 94–95; Yaḥyā 2002, pp. 198–199). Ubai b. Ka‘b has established the Madīnah school of exegesis. His school, however, is against the recording of Qur’anic exegesis and is unresponsive towards the teaching of exegesis.

#### 5.2.1.2.2 SOURCES OF COMPANIONS’ EXEGESIS

The exegesis of the companions is hinged upon four major sources (al-Dhahabi 1987, 1, p. 40; al-Shinqīṭi 1996, 1, p. 7; Yaḥyā 2002, p. 200). These exegetical sources are as follows:

- (i) The Qur’ān: The unravelling of an exegetical problem can be achieved through reference to the Qur’ān. This is referred to as Qur’anic intertextuality, ‘tafsīr al-qur’ān bil-qur’ān’ (the exegesis of the Qur’ān by the Qur’ān) which is an approach that attempts to disentangle a linguistic or theological Qur’anic expression or āyah through another textual reference to it in the Qur’ān. The manifestation of exegesis of the Qur’ān by the Qur’ān is recurrently featured in many examples throughout the Qur’ān, as in Q2:168, ‘walā tattabi‘ū khuṭuwāti al-shaiṭāni [Do not follow the footsteps of Satan]’

which is further explained by Q24:21, ‘waman yattabi<sup>c</sup> khuṭuwāti al-shai-ṭāni fa’innahū ya’ muru bil-faḥshā’i wal-munkari [Do not follow the footsteps of Satan. Whoever follows the footsteps of Satan, indeed, he enjoins immorality and wrongdoing]’ and Q18:4, ‘wayundhira alladhīna qālū ittakhadha allāhu waladā [It (the Qur’ān) warns those who say, “God has taken a son”]’ which is explained by a number of āyahs: ‘kaburat kalimatan takhruju min afwāhihim [Grave is the word that comes out of their mouths]’ (Q18:5), ‘waqālu ittakhadha al-raḥmānu waladā. laqad ji’tum shai’an iddā [They say, “The Most Merciful has taken for Himself a son.” You have done an atrocious thing]’ (Q19:88–89), ‘afa’ aṣḥāḥum rabbukum bil-banīna wattakhadha min al-malā’ikati ināthā [Has your Lord chosen you for having sons and taken from among the angels daughters?]’ (Q17:40), ‘waqālat al-yahūdu ‘uzairun ibn allāh waqālat al-naṣārā al-masīḥu ibn allāh [The Jews say, “Ezra is the son of God,” and the Christians say, “The Messiah is the son of Allāh”]’ (Q9:30) and ‘wayaj<sup>c</sup> alūna lillāhi al-banāti subḥānahū [They attribute to God daughters, exalted is He]’ (Q16:57).

This exegetical approach can be adopted in exegesis and occurs in one of the following exegetical techniques:<sup>3</sup>

- (a) Generic and specific meaning (takhṣiṣ al-‘āmm or ḥaml al-‘āmm ‘ala al-khāṣṣ): The generic signification that underlies a given expression can be extracted through Qur’anic intertextual reference to its counterpart specific signification, as in Q1:7, ‘ṣirāṭa alladhīna an‘amta ‘alaihim [the path of those whom You have bestowed favour]’ whose general meaning is furnished with specific details by Q4:69, ‘fa’ulā’ika ma‘a alladhīna an‘ama allāhu ‘alaihim min al-nabiyyīna wal-ṣiddīqīna wal-shuhadā’i wal-ṣāliḥīna [Those will be with the ones upon whom God has bestowed favour of the Prophets, the steadfast affirmers of truth, the martyrs and the righteous. Those are the excellent companions].’ The prohibition made by Q2:228, ‘wal-muṭallaqātu yatarabbaṣna bi’ anfusihinna thalāthatu qurū’in [Divorced women remain in waiting (i.e. do not remarry) for three periods]’ signifies a general prohibition which is made specific by Q33:49, ‘yā aiyuha alladhīna āmanū idhā nakaḥtum al-mu’mināti thumma ṭallaqtumūhunna min qabli an tamassūhunna famā lakum ‘alaihinna min ‘iddatin ta’taddūnahā [O you who believed, when you marry believing women and then divorce them before you have touched them (i.e. consummated the marriage), then there is not for you any waiting period to count concerning them]’ and by Q65:4, ‘wa’ulātu al-aḥmālī ajaluhunna an yaḍa‘na ḥamlaḥunna [For those who are pregnant, their term is until they give birth].’ Similarly, the prohibition made in Q4:22, ‘walā tankiḥū mā nakaḥa ābā’ukum min al-nisā’i [Do not marry women whom your fathers married]’ is too general; that is, does nikāḥ (marriage) refer to al-waṭ’ (to have sexual intercourse with the wife) or al-‘aqd (marriage contract)? However, the signification of this general āyah is made specific by Q33:49, ‘yā aiyuha alladhīna āmanū idhā nakaḥtum al-mu’mināti thumma ṭallaqtumūhunna min qabli an

tamassūhunna [O you who believed, when you marry believing women and then divorce them before you have touched them (i.e. consummated the marriage' which explains to us that the specific meaning is al-waṭ' (to have sexual intercourse with the wife).

Similarly, in Q5:1, 'uḥillat lakum bahīmatu al-an'āmi illā mā yutlā 'alaikum [Lawful for you are the animals of grazing livestock except for that which is recited to you in this Qur'ān]'; here, the signification is too general with regard to what is not allowed. This general meaning is untied by a Qur'anic reference in Q5:3 which specifies the required signification:

ḥurrimat 'alaikum al-maitatu wal-damu walaḥmu al-khinzīri wamā uhillā lighairi allāhi bihī wal-munkhaniqatu wal-mawqūdhatu wal-mutaraddiyatu wal-naṭīḥatu wamā akala al-sab'ū illā mā dhakkaitum wamā dhubiḥa 'ala al-nuṣubi wa'an tastaqsimū bil-azlāmi dhālikum fisqun [Prohibited to you are dead animals, blood, the flesh of swine and that which has been dedicated to other than God and those animals killed by strangling or by a violent blow or by a head-long fall or by the goring of horns and those from which a wild animal has eaten, except what you are able to slaughter before its death, and those which are sacrificed on stone alters and prohibited is that you seek decision through divining arrows. That is grave disobedience].

Similarly, Q24:27, 'yā aiyuha alladhīna āmanū lā tadkhalū buyūtan ghaira buyūtikum ḥattā tasta'nīsū [O you who have believed, do not enter houses other than your own houses until you ascertain welcome]' which denotes the general signification of 'entering other people's houses should not be made before we are greeted by the inhabitants.' This general meaning is made specific by Q24:29, 'laisa 'alaikum junāḥun an tadkhalū buyūtan ghaira maskūnatin fihā matā'un lakum [There is no blame upon you for entering houses not inhabited in which there is convenience for you]' which refers to 'the entering without permission of houses that are not inhabited and in which there is something that belongs to us'. Also, the general meaning of the expression kalimāt (words) in Q2:37, 'fatalaqqā ādamu min rabbihī kalimātin fatāba 'alaihi [Adam received from his Lord some words and He accepted his repentance]' is unravelled by the specific meaning referred to by Q7:23, 'qālā rabbanā ḡalamnā anfusānā wa'in lam taḡfir lanā watarḡamnā lanakūnanna min al-khāsirīn [They (Adam and Eve) said, "Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves, and if You do not forgive us and have mercy upon us we will surely be among the losers"]' which explains what these 'words' are. This also applies to Q40:28, 'wa'in yaku ṣādiqan yuṣibkum ba'ḡdu alladhī ya'idukum [If he should be truthful, there will strike you some of what he promises you]' whose general meaning is made specific by Q40:77, 'fa'immā nuriyanaka ba'ḡḡa alladhī na'iduhum aw natawaffayannaka fa'ilainā yurja'un [Whether We show you some of what We have promised them or We take you in death, it is to Us they will be returned].'

- (b) Semantic ambiguity and paraphrase (tabyīn al-mujmal or ḥamlu al-mujmal ‘ala al-mubaiyan): Semantic ambiguity occurs when a given Qur’anic expression occurs unexplained. However, paraphrastic informative details may occur later on in the Qur’ān. This form of Qur’anic intertextuality holds between two different sūrahs, as in Q1:4, yawm al-dīn (the day of judgement), which is explained by Q82:17–19, ‘wamā adrāka mā yawm al-dīn. thumma mā adrāka mā yawm al-dīn. yawma lā tamliku nafsun linafsin shai’an wal-amru yawma’idhin lillāh [What can make you know what is the day of judgement? Then what can make you know what is the day of judgement? It is the day when a soul will not possess for another soul power to do a thing, and the command, that day, is entirely with God].’ Qur’anic intertextuality also occurs within the same sūrah, as in Q101:1, al-qārī‘ah (the striking calamity), which constitutes a semantic ambiguity that is explained later on by Q101:4–5, ‘yawma yakūnu al-nāsu kal-farāshi al-mabthūth. watakūnu al-jibālu kal-‘ihni al-manfūsh [It is the day when people will be like dispersed moths, and the mountains will be like fluffed up wool].’ A section of an āyah may also constitute a semantic ambiguity as in Q2:284, ‘wa’in tubdū mā fī anfusikum aw tukhfūhu yuḥāsibkum bihi allāh [Whether you show what is within yourselves or conceal it, God will bring you to account for it]’ which is explained by the other āyahs, Q2:285–286:

‘The Messenger has believed in what was revealed to him from his Lord and so have the believers. All of them have believed in God and His angels and His Books and His Messengers . . . and they say, ”We hear and we obey. We seek Your forgiveness, our Lord, and to You is the final destination . . . Our Lord . . . do not burden us with that which we have no ability to bear, and pardon us, forgive us and have mercy upon us. You are our protector . . .

- (c) Unrestricted (muṭlaq) and restricted (muqaiyad) meaning (taqyīd al-muṭlaq or ḥaml al- muṭlaq ‘ala al-muqaiyad): An āyah may signify an unrestricted meaning such as in Q58:3, taḥrīru raqabatin (the freeing of a slave) where the expression raqabah (a slave, literally meaning ‘a neck’) may refer either to a believer or an unbeliever. However, another āyah provides a restricted meaning untangling the first reference by Q58:3 to the same semantic problem, as in Q4:92, ‘taḥrīru raqabatin mu’minatīn [the freeing of a believing slave]’ which clarifies the unrestricted meaning of Q58:3 by giving us a more restricted reference to the person; that is, reference is made to ‘the believer’ only. Also, in Q4:92, ‘faṣiyyāmu shahraini mutatābi‘ain [a fast for 2 months consecutively]’; here, reference to ‘fasting’ occurs in an unrestricted way. However, the employment of the expression mutatābi‘ain (consecutively) restricts the signification of ‘a fast for 2 months’. Similarly, in Q3:102, ‘yā aiyuha alladhīna āmanū ittaqu allāha ḥaqqa tuqātihī [O you who have believed, fear God as He should be feared]’; here, the command to fear God is referred to in an unrestricted way, while in Q64:16 reference to the fear of God is made in a restricted way, ‘ittaqu allāha mā istaṭa‘tum [Fear God as

much as you are able.’ In Q5:3, ‘ḥurrimat ‘alaikum al-maitatu wal-damu . . . [Dead animals, blood, . . . are prohibited to you],’ reference is made to an unrestricted prohibition which is the word al-damu (blood) because it includes both the spilled-out (al-masfūḥ) and the non-spilled-out (ghair al-masfūḥ) blood. However, this unrestricted signification is made restricted by Q6:145, ‘qul lā ajidu . . . fa’innahu rijsun [I do not find within that . . . indeed, it is impure],’ where we are told about the nature of blood that is prohibited, namely, al-masfūḥ ( spilled out) only.

- (d) Variant modes of reading disambiguate the meaning: Although there are different modes of reading, a given mode of reading may disentangle the semantic ambiguity of a given expression, as in Q2:198, ‘laisa ‘alaikum junāḥun an tabtaghū faḍlan min rabbikum [There is no blame upon you for seeking bounty from your Lord],’ whose meaning and context are explained by another mode of reading that is attributed to Ibn ‘Abbās, ‘laisa ‘alaikum junāḥun an tabtaghū faḍlan min rabbikum fi mawāsimi al-ḥajji [There is no blame upon you for seeking bounty from your Lord during the pilgrimage season],’ which includes the exegetical details (fi mawāsimi al-ḥajji [during the pilgrimage season]). Similarly, the meaning of Q17:93, ‘yakūna laka baitun min zukhrufin [You have a house of ornament],’ is explained by another mode of reading attributed to Ibn Mas‘ūd: ‘yakūna laka baitun min dhahabin [You have a house of gold]’; this explains the meaning of zukhrufin (ornament) by the word dhahabin (gold). Also, in Q62:9 the word fas‘ū (to proceed) is explained by another mode of reading which employs the synonym famḍū that reflects the same signification of fas‘ū. Similarly, the meaning of an Islamic legal ruling can be explained as in Q4:12, ‘wa’in kāna rajulun yūrathu kalālatan aw imra’atun walahū akhun aw ukhtun falikulli wāḥidin minhumā al-sudus [If a man or woman leaves neither ascendants nor descendants but has a brother or a sister, then for each one of them is a sixth],’ where we are not told whether the akhun aw ukhtun (a brother or a sister) are a step brother and a step sister from the father or the mother. However, the other mode of reading attributed to Sa‘ad b. Abī Waqqāṣ clarifies this matter: ‘wa’in kāna rajulun yūrathu kalālatan aw imra’atun walahū akhun aw ukhtun min umm falikulli wāḥidin minhumā al-sudus [If a man or woman leaves neither ascendants nor descendants but has a brother or a sister from the mother, then for each one of them is a sixth]’ where min umm (from the mother) untangles the meaning of the first mode of reading. However, these modes of reading by Ibn ‘Abbās, Ibn Mas‘ūd and Sa‘ad b. Abī Waqqāṣ are classified as irregular modes of reading (qirā’ah shādhah) (for more details on modes of reading, see point xx of [Section 5.2.1.2.3](#) below).
- (e) Context and implicit meaning: The context in which a given āyah occurs can disambiguate its meaning as in Q13:31, ‘law anna qur’ānan suyyirat bihi al-jibālu aw quṭṭi‘at bihi al-arḍu aw kullima bihi al-mawtā bal lillāhi al-amru jamī‘an [If there was any Qur’ān by which the mountains would be removed or the earth would be broken apart or the dead would be made to speak, it would be this Qur’ān],’ where the answer to the conditional sentence that

begins with the conditional particle *law* (if) is not provided by the subordinate sentence *jawāb al-shart*; that is, there is no answer after the conditional sentence ‘*law anna qur’ānan suyyirat bihi al-jibālu aw quṭṭi’at bihi al-arḍu aw kullima bihi al-mawtā.*’ However, through context we can extract the meaning as ‘*lakāna hādha al-qur’ān* [It would have been this Qur’ān].’

- (f) Qur’anic parables: Some Qur’anic parables are referred to briefly in a given *sūrah* but are explained in detail in another *sūrah* such as the story of Ādam and Iblīs where a brief reference is made in Q3:59, Q4:1, Q7:189 but details are given in Q2:30–39, Q7:11–25 and Q15:26–44. Similarly, the parable of Moses and Pharaoh is briefly mentioned in Q28:3–4 but occurs in detail in Q26:10–68, and the parable of Mūsā and al-Khiḍr is briefly referred to by Q20:40 but details are given by Q18:60–82.
- (g) Semantically related expressions: Qur’anic intertextuality provides examples of expressions that occur in different places of the Qur’ān but complement each other semantically as in the reference to the creation of Adam where different expressions are employed such as *min turāb* (from dust, Q3:59), *min ṭīn* (from clay, Q23:12), *min ḥama’in masnūn* (from an altered black mud, Q15:26) and *min ṣalṣāl kal-fakkkhār* (from clay like that of pottery, Q55:14). However, semantically, all these expressions refer to the same notion of creation and the evolutionary phases of man’s creation.
- (ii) The Prophet’s opinion: The companions have also established their exegesis on Muḥammad’s views who used to answer their queries and explain to them various semantic and theological matters. This includes the unravelling of a general meaning or a theological problem, semantically ambiguous expressions and specifying the signification of an expression which signifies a generic meaning. These points have been discussed in [Section 5.2.1.1.1](#) where the categories of the Prophet’s exegesis are explicated.
- (iii) Hypothetical opinion and discovery of significations (*al-ijtihād wal-istinbāt*): The companions’ main sources for the unravelling of Qur’anic expressions are the Qur’ān and the tradition (*al-sunnah wal-ḥadīth*). However, if they are unsuccessful in finding the answer for a given exegetical problem through one of these two sources, some of the companions, such as Ibn ‘Abbās and Ibn Mas‘ūd, used to discover (*yastanbiṭ*) the meaning and employ their hypothetical opinion (*yajtahid*). This approach is based on their sound knowledge of Arabic language, poetry, culture as well as the culture of their contemporary People of the Book. Such linguistic and cultural awareness is of high value to the understanding and discovery of the multi-faceted significations of the Qur’anic text or the Islamic legal rulings. For instance, the extraction of the meanings of *āyahs* such as ‘*laisa al-birru bi’an ta’tu al-buyūta min zuhūrihā* [It is not righteousness to enter houses from the back]’ (Q2:189), *innama al-nasī’u ziyādatun fī al-kufri* [Indeed, the postponing of restriction within sacred months is an increase in disbelief]’ (Q9:37), ‘*qutila aṣḥābu al-ukhdūd* [The companions of the trench were cursed]’ (Q85:4) and ‘*walā takūnū kallatī naqaḍat ghazlahā min ba’di*

quwwatin ankāthan [Do not be like she who untwisted her spun thread after it was strong]’ (Q16:92) requires sound acquaintance with ancient Arabic history and anecdotes in addition to the knowledge of their circumstances of revelation that surround each of the above āyahs. However, both Ibn ‘Abbās and Ibn Mas‘ūd employed personal opinion (ra’i) with regards to jurisprudential matters (iftā’) only and did not resort to their own personal opinion for mutashābih āyah analysis.

- (iv) Jewish anecdotes: It is worthwhile to note that this is a minor source of exegesis on which the companions used to rely (see n. 5 of [Chapter 1](#)). The companions, more often than not, ask the Jews or the Christians who have accepted Islam about some matters with which they are more familiar through their Scriptures. The new converts may have different views on those which occur briefly in the Qur’ān such as the parables of the Qur’ān and some stories of ancient nations related to Judaism and Christianity. While the Qur’ān employs the parables of ancient nations as a point of departure for admonition and makes a brief reference to them, the Old and New Testaments provide more details about these parables. Thus, reference to these Scriptures is part of some of the companions’ critical research such as that of Ibn ‘Abbās.

#### 5.2.1.2.3 FEATURES OF COMPANIONS’ PHASE

The exegesis of the companions is marked by the following features:

- (i) Exegesis as part of ḥadīth: Exegesis has still not become an independent discipline in its own right but continued to be part of the study of ḥadīth and general Islamic studies.
- (ii) lack of structure: Because exegesis is still part of ḥadīth, it has not enjoyed a methodological structure in terms of āyahs or sūrahhs. In other words, the companions’ exegesis is marked by āyahs from different sūrahhs and āyahs that belong to distinct themes rather than being systematically arranged according to the arrangement of the āyahs and sūrahhs. Therefore, the companion’s exegesis is not a musalsal (āyah-by-āyah) commentary.
- (iii) Recording: After Muḥammad’s death, the companions have started the process of recording his ḥadīth. At this stage, no effort has been made yet on the part of the companions to record the commentary on the Qur’ān they have learned from the Prophet.<sup>4</sup> However, some of the companions used to include within-the-text exegetical notes in their personal codices of the Qur’ān for teaching or learning purposes. The only recorded document written by a companion is al-Ṣaḥīfah al-Ṣādiqah (the truthful booklet) by ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Amru b. al-‘Āṣṣ (d.65/684) which, according to this companion, is based on his personal communication with the Prophet (al-Rūmi 2002, 1, p. 29). It should also be noted that Ibn ‘Abbās has not penned what we have today *Tafsīr Ibn ‘Abbās*.

However, it is only the Makkah school of exegesis led by Ibn ʿAbbās which allows its students to record the lecture notes of their teacher. Students of the Madīnah and Kūfah schools of exegesis are not sanctioned by their teachers to note down their lecture notes.

- (iv) Transmission: The transmission of exegesis has started in different parts of the larger Muslim state.
- (v) Teaching and learning: Major exegesis scholars have emerged and passed their knowledge of exegesis to their students in different parts of the Muslim state.
- (vi) Marfuʿ status: The narration of a given companion enjoys the status of marfuʿ (a point of view attributed to Muḥammad) even though it is not supported by a ḥadīth (see [Chapter 1, Section 1.2](#) and [Figure 1 in Chapter 1](#)). This applies to exegetical matters such as the circumstances of revelation and the notion of eschatology which the companions are well-acquainted with.
- (vii) Brevity: Exegesis is marked by brief linguistic commentaries, characterized by lack of in-depth account and reference to the general meaning of the āyah is not made (for instance, the exegesis by Ibn ʿAbbās [d.68/687] and Mujāhid [d.104/722]).
- (viii) Non-holistic: The companions' exegesis is a partial account of the Qurʾān. It does not account for all the āyahs and sūrahs of the Qurʾān. Instead, only some āyahs or expressions of different sūrahs are explained.
- (ix) Qurʾanic intertextuality and ḥadīth: The companions' exegesis is hinged upon the exegesis of the Qurʾān by the Qurʾān and the exegesis of the Qurʾān by the ḥadīth they have heard directly from the Prophet.
- (x) Jewish anecdotes: The companions' exegesis does not include a large amount of details taken from the new Jewish and Christian converts. The companions' reliance on the converts takes the form of clarification of a given meaning that can neither be explained by Qurʾanic intertextuality nor supported by a ḥadīth.
- (xi) Oral transmission: Exegesis has been transmitted orally by the companions' students and remained unrecorded during this formative stage.
- (xii) Verbatim transmission: During their exegesis of the Qurʾān in the light of ḥadīth, the companion exegetes transmitted the prophetic tradition verbatim.
- (xiii) Similar exegetical views: Due the fact that the companions live in a small geographical area, they have had the opportunity to see each other. These two factors justify the unanimity and harmony of their exegetical views with regards to the majority of linguistic and theological problems. The companions have also expressed similar views with regards to Islamic legal rulings. However, their views differ in terms of their sound understanding of the reasons for revelation,<sup>5</sup> their varied linguistic skills and cultural awareness.
- (xiv) Discovery and hypothetical opinion: When the companions fail to unravel the signification of an exegetical problem through Qurʾanic intertextuality

or the ḥadīth, they discover the meaning and employ their personal opinions based on their sharp linguistic competence; extensive awareness of various matters related to the revelation, such as circumstances of revelation and abrogating and abrogated āyahs and sound awareness of the Arabic culture, Arabic poetry and the People of the Book's culture and circumstances. The companions, such as Ibn Mas'ūd, have also employed the approach of hypothetical opinion for the discovery of Islamic legal rulings since Islamic schools of thought have not emerged yet at this formative stage of exegesis. However, their exegesis is based on commendable personal opinions. Discovery and personal opinion were resorted to by some companions only in the absence of sound traditions.

- (xv) Synoptic exegesis: This is referred to as *al-tafsīr al-ijmāli* which is only concerned with the overall signification of a given āyah without any details.
- (xvi) Absence of poetic loci: Companion exegetes do not refer to *al-shawāhid* which are quotations from pre-Islamic or early Islamic Arabic poetry to substantiate an exegetical or philological point of view.
- (xvii) Absence of anthropomorphism and ambiguous āyahs: The companions have not got involved in the sensitive and controversial theological issues like the theological *mutashābihāt* and the names and attributes of God.
- (xviii) Absence of scholastic theological views since scholastic theology has not been introduced in Qur'anic exegesis: Scholastic theology is concerned with the names and attributes of God, anthropomorphism and predestination and is adopted by Mu'tazili exegetes.
- (xix) Reasons for revelation, abrogating and abrogated: The exegetical comments provided by the companions to their students also deal with the circumstances surrounding the revelation of a given āyah and the *nāsikh* and *mansūkh* āyahs.
- (xx) Different modes of reading(6): Among the companions, we encounter two modes of reading:
  - (a) The multiple source mode of reading, which is referred to as *al-qirā'ah al-mutawātirah*, is passed on from one Qur'ān reciter to another and is the common and well-known mode among the companions, and
  - (b) The irregular mode of reading, which is referred to as *al-qirā'ah al-shādhah*, is considered as an unreliable source of exegesis. An irregular mode of reading is sub-classified into two kinds:
    - (1) Single-source mode of reading, as in 'faṣiyāmu thalāthati aiyāmin mutatābi'āt [to fast 3 consecutive days]' which is read by 'Abd Allāh b. Mas'ūd where the word *mutatābi'āt* (consecutive) has not been adopted by any other companion and is not found in the 'Uthmānic master codex of the Qur'ān, and
    - (2) Inserted mode of reading, as in 'walahū akhun aw ukhtun min umm [and he has a step brother or a step sister from his mother]' which is adopted by Sa'ad b. Abī Waqqāṣ where he inserts the expression *min umm* (from [his] mother) which is not part of the original āyah.

**5.2.1.3 Exegesis of the successors**

With the departure of the companions, a third phase begins with the emergence of prominent successor exegetes who are the students of the companion exegetes and have established their own approaches to Qur'anic exegesis. The views of the successor exegetes have featured in many prominent works of subsequent classical exegetes such as Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabari, al-Suyūṭī, al-Baghawi and Ibn Kathīr. However, the authenticity of the successors' exegesis is that of mawqūf.<sup>7</sup> This is attributed to the following factors:

- (i) The majority of the successors are taught by the companions.
- (ii) They have not witnessed the incidents surrounding the circumstances of revelation or met the Prophet.
- (iii) There are differences in opinions among the successors with regards to exegetical matters.
- (iv) Some of their exegesis is marked by the lack of sound chain of authorities and
- (v) The successors are influenced by hypothetical opinion and discovery of meanings.

For these reasons, the successors' views on exegesis have not been considered as conclusive evidence (ḥujjah) against the views of other exegetes in subsequent phases. It is also worthwhile to note that their views have been questioned by scholars like Ibn Taymiyyah and Imām Abu Ḥanīfah (al-Zarkashi 1988, 2, p. 174; Ibn Taimiyyah 1997, p. 96; al-Dhahabi 1987, 1, p. 132; Abu Ḥajar 1991, p. 44).

**5.2.1.3.1 THE BIRTH OF FORMATIVE SCHOOLS OF EXEGESIS**

This phase is characterized by the emergence of four schools of Qur'anic exegesis<sup>8</sup> established by companion exegetes whose students are called 'the early successors' (ru'ūs al-tābi'īn) or by successor exegetes (al-Zarkashi 1988, 2, pp. 174–175; al-Suyūṭī 1996a, 2, pp. 536–537; al-Dhahabi 1987, 1, pp. 105–130, Abu Ḥajar 1991, pp. 41–43; al-Khuḍairi 1999; Yaḥyā 2002, pp. 214–221). The four formative schools of Qur'anic exegesis are

- (i) Makkah,
- (ii) Madīnah,
- (iii) Kūfah and
- (iv) Baṣrah.

It is also worthwhile to note that the first two schools, Makkah and Madīnah, are sometimes subsumed as the school of Ḥijāz, while the other two schools, Kūfah and Baṣrah, are also at times subsumed as the school of Iraq.

**5.2.1.3.1.1 The formative school of exegesis in Makkah** This is established by °Abd Allāh b. °Abbās whose prominent students include the following:

- (a) Sa'īd b. Jubair al-Asadi (d.95/713): He is of an Ethiopian origin, has narrated from Ibn 'Abbās and Ibn Mas'ūd and noted for his knowledge in ḥadīth, jurisprudence and modes of reading. He is the first to record a booklet on Qur'anic exegesis on the request of 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān (d.86/705). Sa'īd has been executed in 95/713 by al-Ḥajjāj in the city of Wāsiṭ, southern Iraq.
- (b) Mujāhid b. Jabr al-Makhzūmi (d.21–104/641–722): He is a well-known jurist, has revised the Qur'ān three times under Ibn 'Abbās's supervision in terms of exegesis but does not always narrate from his teacher Ibn 'Abbās.
- (c) 'Ikramah al-Barbari (d.25–105/645–723): He is the slave (mawlā) of Ibn 'Abbās and is originally a Moroccan Berber. He has narrated from Ibn 'Abbās, 'Ali b. Abī Ṭālib and Abu Hurairah. Among scholars who narrate from him are al-Bukhāri, Muslim and Abu al-Dardā'.
- (d) Ṭāwūs b. Kaisān al-Yamāni (d.106/724): He is from Yemen and is well-known for his piety and contact with major companions.
- (e) 'Aṭā' b. Abī Rabāḥ (d.27–114/247–732): He is known for his knowledge in jurisprudence and of the ceremonies of pilgrimage as well as for his piety.

5.2.1.3.1.2 *The formative school of exegesis in Madīnah* This is established by Ubai b. Ka'b whose prominent students are

- (a) Abu al-'Āliyah Rafī' b. Mahrān al-Riyāḥi (d.93/711): He is well-known for his knowledge of the modes of reading. He has narrated from 'Ali b. Abī Ṭālib, Ibn 'Abbās, Ibn Mas'ūd and Ubai b. Ka'b. He is also taught by Ibn 'Abbās for 4 years while he (Ibn 'Abbās) was the ruler of Baṣrah.
- (b) Muḥammad b. Ka'b al-Quraẓi (d.118/736): He is well-known for his knowledge in ḥadīth and jurisprudence, his piety and the reliance on personal hypothetical opinion with regard to jurisprudential matters.
- (c) Zaid b. Aslam al-'Adawi (d.136/753): He is noted for his extensive knowledge in exegesis and jurisprudence. He is also known for adopting a hypothetical opinion approach to exegesis with regards to jurisprudential matters.

It is worthwhile to note that the Makkah and Madīnah schools of exegesis are referred to as al-Ḥijāz school of exegesis (for more details, see [Chapter 6](#) on the formative schools of exegesis).

5.2.1.3.1.3 *The formative school of exegesis in Kūfah* This is established by 'Abd Allāh b. Mas'ūd whose prominent students include

- (a) 'Alqamah b. Qais (d.61/680): He is known for his sharp memory and piety. 'Alqamah has narrated from 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, 'Uthmān b. 'Affān and 'Ali b. Abī Ṭālib and is the most well-known narrator from Ibn Mas'ūd.
- (b) Masrūq b. al-Ajda' al-Hamadāni (d.63/682): He is noted for his knowledge of exegesis and the semantic problems of Qur'anic expressions.<sup>9</sup>
- (c) al-Aswad b. Yazīd b. Qais al-Nakh'i (d.74/693): He is a jurist and has narrated from Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Ali, Bilāl and Ibn Mas'ūd.

- (d) Murrah b. Sharāḥīl al-Hamadāni (d.76/695): He narrated from Abu Bakr, °Umar, °Ali and Ibn Mas°ūd and is known for his piety.
- (e) °Āmir b. Sharāḥīl al-Sha°bi (d.20–109/640–727): He is the jurist of Kūfah and well-known for his knowledge of jurisprudence. He narrates from °Umar, °Ali, Ibn Mas°ūd, Abu Hurairah, °Ā'ishah, Ibn °Abbās and Abu Mūsā al-Ash°ari.

*5.2.1.3.1.4 The formative school of exegesis in Baṣrah* This is established by al-Ḥasan al-Baṣri (d.110/728), a successor exegete, who is noted for his piety, detachment from worldly gains and for his knowledge of Islamic legal rulings. As a renowned preacher (qāṣṣ), al-Ḥasan is admired in Baṣrah for his emotionally charged sermons and admonition speeches. As an exegete, he is influenced by Sa°id b. al-Musaiyab of the Madīnah school and narrates from °Ali, Ibn °Umar, and Anas. Among al-Ḥasan al-Baṣri's prominent students is Qatādah b. Di°āmah al-Sadūsi (d.117/735). Although blind, Qatādah was well-known for his sharp memory, and knowledge of Arabic linguistics, poetry and history. Qatādah narrates from Anas, Abu al-Ṭufail, Ibn Sīrīn, °Ikramah and °Aṭā' b. Abī Rabāḥ.

It is worthwhile to note that the successor exegetes who belong to the school of exegesis of Iraq reside in Kūfah are °Alqamah, Masrūq, al-Aswad al-Nakh°i, Murrah al-Hamadāni and °Āmir al-Sha°bi. Other exegetes who belong to the school of Iraq have lived in Baṣrah such as al-Ḥasan al-Baṣri and Qatādah al-Sadūsi. For this reason, the Iraqi school of exegesis subsumes the Kūfah and the Baṣrah schools of exegesis (see [Chapter 6](#) on the formative schools of exegesis).

#### 5.2.1.3.2 SOURCES OF SUCCESSORS' EXEGESIS

Early and late successors have established their Qur'anic exegesis on the same two major sources which the companions have relied upon, namely, the Qur'ān and the tradition, in addition to the views of the companions, hypothetical opinion and Jewish anecdotes.

#### 5.2.1.3.3 FEATURES OF SUCCESSORS' PHASE

The major features of the successors' Qur'anic exegesis are as follows:

- (i) Glosses and periphrasis: The exegesis of the successors is brief, concerned with lexical paraphrase and deals with word level semantic analysis. Their exegesis is confined to glossary details which is a periphrastic analysis of Qur'anic expressions.
- (ii) Partial: The successors have not provided a holistic exegetical account of the Qur'ān. Only some of the āyahs or expressions are dealt with according to the learning needs of the successor exegete.

- (iii) Reliance on companions' opinions: The exegesis of the successors is hinged upon the companions' views upon which the schools of exegesis in Makkah, Madinah and Iraq are established. In other words, the exegesis of the successors is still based upon narration and oral dictation from the companions.
- (iv) Recording: Although the environment has been marked by teaching and learning exegesis, the successors have not taken serious steps to provide a comprehensively recoded exegesis of the entire Qur'ān. The recording of exegesis is still brief and basic.<sup>10</sup>
- (v) Lecture notes: The transmission of Qur'anic exegesis in a recorded mode has been based on the lecture notes taken by students from the teachings of their exegete teachers.
- (vi) Own comments: The pupils have acted as transmitters of their teacher exegetes' views. However, these students have often added their own views as well as, in some cases, the views from other sources. Therefore, as transmitters, the students' recorded Qur'anic commentaries are marked by their own glosses and comments which are inserted in the original text of the teacher exegete. Thus, at this stage, tafsīr works have begun to undergo redactional processes, and some tafsīr works have later on become marked by extrapolation techniques. Most importantly, at this stage, political and theological cleavages have become more apparent than ever before. As a result, Qur'anic exegesis has suffered, at the hands of unscrupulous transmitters, from interpolation and augmentation. It is not surprising, therefore, to find different exegetical views about a given Qur'anic expression attributed to the same companion exegete such as Ibn ʿAbbās.
- (vii) Lack of structure: The recorded exegesis of the successors is neither well-structured nor methodological. More often than not, the ḥadīths are listed unsystematically and are sandwiched by āyahs of some Islamic legal rulings. Therefore, the successor exegetes have not provided a well-structured exegesis in terms of the arrangement of the āyahs and sūrahs. Only selected āyahs of different sūrahs are dealt with. Although the exegetical works of the successors are marked by the arrangement of āyahs as they occur in the Qur'ān, we do not encounter a 100 percent musalsal tafsīr. In other words, some āyahs in each sūrah are left out without a commentary. Thus, it is a selective exegesis.
- (viii) Polarization: This is attributed to the influence of the companions' schools of exegesis. The exegesis of the successors has been coloured by the views of the three companion exegetes who have taught them; for instance, in terms of narration, the views of Ibn ʿAbbās feature in the exegesis of the successors in Makkah, the views of Ubai b. Kaʿb feature in the exegesis of the successors in Madinah and the views of Ibn Masʿūd feature in the exegesis of the successors in Iraq.
- (ix) Hypothetical opinion and discovery of signification: The successors have employed their hypothetical opinion for theological and non-theological

matters in an attempt to discover the underlying significations of Qur'anic expressions. This is due to the pressing needs of the time, especially the need for the discovery of contemporary Islamic legal rulings and other jurisprudential matters.

- (x) Anthropomorphism and theological *mutashābihāt āyahs*: The successors have shown interest in the exegesis of controversial theological issues like the *mutashābihāt* expressions and the names and attributes of Allāh. Some of their exegetical views are categorized by orthodox Muslim scholars as an objectionable and unsound discovery.
- (xi) Differences in opinion: Due to the expansion of the Muslim state, successor exegetes have lived in various places and, therefore, do not have the opportunity to see each other in order to discover a meaning unanimously. Their exegetical views, however, have not differed significantly from one to another.
- (xii) Emergence of schools of thought (*al-madhāhib*): Serious differences in opinion with regard to the exegesis of the Qur'ān have begun to emerge and their influence has begun to be felt. These cleavages are mainly attributed to the contemporary political circumstances are related to Islamic legal rulings, circumstances of revelation, abrogating and abrogated, linguistic and theological problems that have a direct bearing upon the exegetical account provided by different exegetes according to their schools of law.
- (xiii) *Tafsīr* as part of *ḥadīth*: Exegesis, as a discipline, has not yet become independent. The study of Qur'anic exegesis by the successors is still part of the study of *ḥadīth*.
- (xiv) Heavy reference to Judaeo-Christian anecdotes: While the companions are reluctant to rely heavily on the Jewish and Christian converts' views, the successors have relied heavily on the views of their convert informants. However, the views derived from the Jewish and Christian converts have not influenced jurisprudential matters. The exegetical views that are taken from the converts are related to genesis and other metaphysical matters as well as details related to the parables of ancient nations that are referred to by the Old and New Testaments. The successors have mainly learned about the Jewish anecdotes from the converts such as °Abd Allāh b. Salām Ibn al-Ḥārith (d.43/663); Ka'b Ibn Māti° al-Ḥimyari al-Yamāni, known as Ka'b al-Aḥbār (d.34/654); Wahab b. Munabbih (d.34–110/654–728) and °Abd al-Malik b. Jurajj (d.150/767).
- (xv) Absence of poetic loci: Successor exegetes do not refer to quotations from pre-Islamic or early Islamic Arabic poetry in their exegetical analysis.
- (xvi) Variant modes of reading: Commentaries of the successors refer to different modes of reading to explain grammatical or semantic problems involved in a given āyah.
- (xvii) Circumstances of revelation, abrogating and abrogated: The successor exegetes have also provided brief explanations for the circumstances surrounding the revelation of a given āyah and the abrogating and abrogated āyahs.

5.2.1.3.4 DIFFERENCES IN THE EXEGESIS OF COMPANIONS AND SUCCESSORS

Although the companions' exegesis is characterized by unanimous agreement on major exegetical problems, one can still encounter disagreement among them with regard to some Qur'anic expressions. We have also noticed exegetical differences in the successors' commentaries. The present discussion attempts to provide an explicated account of the exegetical differences among the companions and those that are felt among the successors. The major differences are encountered in one of the following exegetical aspects:

- (i) Semantic problems: These include polysemous expressions like *qaswarah* (Q74:51) which can signify either *al-rāmi* (the arch thrower) or *al-asad* (the lion) or *ʿasʿasa* (Q81:17) which can mean either *iqbāl al-lail* (the arrival of the night) or *idbār al-lail* (the departure of the night); the expression *qurūʾ* (Q2:228), which is the plural of (*qarʾ*), signifies either *al-ḥaiḍ* (a menstrual period) or *al-ṭuhr* (purity between menstruation) and the expression *mukhal-ladūn* (Q56:17) means either *lā yahramūn* (They do not get old) or *ʿalā sin wāḥid* (of the same age). Similarly, the word *al-ṣarīm* in Q68:20 is polysemous which has four meanings: as dark as night time, as white as day time, black ashes and cut off.
- (ii) Shades of meaning: Some Qur'anic expressions have shades of meaning which are not inconsistent with each other, as in, *ʿfaminhum ḡālimun linafsih waminhum muḡtaṣidun waminhum sābiqun bil-khairāt* [Among them is he who wrongs himself, and among them is he who is moderate and among them is he who is foremost in good deeds] (Q35:32). According to this context, the word *ḡālim* is given three different meanings:

(a) The person who says his or her prayer late, that is, after its specified time is finished, (b) the person who does not pay the prescribed *zakāt*, or (c) the person who accepts interest. Also, the word *muḡtaṣid* is given the following meanings: (a) the person who says his or her prayer during its specified time, (b) the person who pays the *zakāt* only or (c) the person who does not accept interest. The expression *sābiq* has also been given various significations such as (a) the person who says his or her prayers at the beginning of its time, or (b) the person who pays the prescribed *zakāt* as well as the payment of charity (*ṣadaqah*). All of these significations represent shades of meaning. In other words, all the three significations enjoy the same general meaning that denotes a common theme of prayer and charity with varying degrees of righteousness.

- (iii) Different words for the same referent: The companions and the successors describe the same referent with different expressions, for example, *ʿal-ṣirāt al-mustaḡim* [the straight path] (Q1:6), which is given distinct significations: (a) Islam, (b) the path of being an obedient servant of God, (c) the obedience of God and the Prophet and (d) the following of the Sunni school of law. All these significations have a common meaning related to each other. In other words, they have interrelated rather than separate meanings.

- (iv) Circumstances of revelation: The companions and the successors have provided different circumstances of the revelation of the same āyah, as in ‘lā ikrāha fi al-dīn [There shall be no compulsion in acceptance of the religion]’ Q2:256, which has been given three distinct circumstances of revelation. For Ibn ʿAbbās, this āyah is about the wives of the Anṣār who used to allow their only son to accept Judaism. When the Jewish tribe of Banu al-Naḍīr are evicted, Q2:256 is revealed informing the families whose sons are living with this tribe to give them the choice of either to remain with the Jews or to come back to their Muslim parents. For Mujāhid, Q2:256 is about a gentleman from the Anṣār who wanted to force his slave to accept Islam. However, for Masrūq, the reason for revelation of this āyah is about a gentleman who accepted Islam and was one of the Anṣār but his two sons remained Christians. When he asked them to accept Islam, they refused. The father complained to the Prophet and Q2:256 was revealed (al-Wāḥidi 2000, p. 45).
- (v) Variant modes of reading: Different companions and successors have different modes of reading. This difference may have influenced the signification of a given expression according to the mode of articulation of the same word, as in Q15:15 where we have the word sukkrat meaning sudat (be blocked) because the letter (k) is doubled. However, the other mode of reading is sukirat meaning suḥirat (got fascinated) because the letter (k) is not doubled. The same applies to Q14:50 which has the mode of reading, min qīṭrin ānin (very hot molten brass), where we have two separate words, qīṭrin (molten brass) and ānin (very hot), and in the other mode of reading, min qaṭīrānin (of liquid pitch), we have a preposition min (from) followed by a single word qaṭīrānin (liquid pitch). The same applies to the mode of reading, lāmastum (to have a sexual intercourse) or the other mode of reading, lamastum (to touch by hand) in Q4:43.
- (vi) Synonymy: Some Qurʾanic expressions have been provided with synonymous significations, as in tubsal in Q6:70 which is given similar meanings through the synonymous words: (a) turtahan (to be deposited as security) and (b) tuḥbas (to be arrested, detained) where both meanings signify ‘keeping someone’.
- (vii) Grammatical analysis: The companion and successor exegetes have provided different significations for the same āyah which they have analysed grammatically in different ways, as in Q2:37, ‘fatalaqqā ādam min rabbihi kalimāt’ which can either mean ‘Adam received from his Lord some words’ where the word ādam should be in the nominative case, that is, ādamu and the word kalimāt (words) are in the accusative (genitive) case as the direct object, ‘kalimatin’; thus, we get ‘fatalaqqā ādamu min rabbihi kalimatin.’ The other meaning is, the words from his Lord received Adam, that is, Adam was received by his Lord’s words where ādam is used in the accusative case as the direct object, that is, ādama and the word kalimāt occurs in the nominative case, that is, kalimātun; thus, we get ‘fatalaqqā ādama min rabbihi kalimātun.’

Implicit pronouns in Arabic may also lead to different exegetical views due to distinct grammatical analyses. For instance, in ‘*thumma danā fatadallā fakāna qāba qawsaini aw adnā* [Then he approached and descended, and was at a distance of two bow lengths or nearer]’ (Q53:8–9) we have the implicit masculine singular pronoun *huwa* (he) in the verb *danā* (to approach) which can refer either to Jibril (Gabriel), according to the views of ‘Ā’ishah, Ibn Mas‘ūd, Ubai b. Ka‘b and Abu Hurairah or the implicit pronoun *huwa* (he) refers to the Prophet, according to Ibn ‘Abbās and Anas b. Mālik (al-Rūmi 1996, p. 52).

- (viii) Abrogating and abrogated āyahs: Different exegetical views are provided to the same āyah due to disagreement among companion and successor exegetes on whether it is an abrogated āyah or not, as in Q2:115, ‘*walillāhi al-mashriqu wal-maghribu fa’ainamā tuwallū fathamma wajhu allāhi* [To God belongs the east and the west. So wherever you might turn, there is the face of God].’ For Jābir b. ‘Abd Allāh, Ibn ‘Umar, Sa‘īd b. al-Musaiyab, ‘Aṭā’, al-Sha‘bi and al-Nakh‘i, this āyah has not been abrogated and its legal ruling remains intact. However, for Ibn ‘Abbās, it has been abrogated by Q2:144, ‘*fawalli wajhaka shaṭra al-masjidi al-ḥarāmi waḥaithu mā kuntum fawallū wujūhakum shaṭrah* [So turn your face (i.e. yourself) towards the sacred mosque. And wherever you are, turn your faces towards it in prayer].’
- (ix) Different narrations from the Prophet: This is due to the fact that, at times, the companions are not in the company of Muḥammad, and they miss out some of his statements (ḥadīth) regarding some Islamic legal rulings. Therefore, some companions have narrated more ḥadīths from the Prophet than others on jurisprudential matters. This has a knock on effect on exegetical views with regard to the meaning of a given āyah. For instance, the views of ‘Ali b. Abī Ṭālib and Ibn ‘Abbās regarding Q2:234, ‘*walladhīna yutawaffawna minkum wayadharūna azwājan yatarabbaṣna bi’anfusihinna arba‘ata ashhurin wa‘ashran* [Those who are taken in death among you and leave wives behind, their wives shall wait 4 months and 10 days],’ and Q65:4, ‘*wa’ulātu al-aḥmāli ajalahunna an yaḍa‘na ḥamlahunna* [For those who are pregnant, their term is until they give birth],’ are based on the literal meanings of these two āyahs. In other words, the widow should wait for 4 full months after her husband’s death before she can get married again, and when her husband dies while she is pregnant, she cannot get married again until she has given birth. However, for Ibn Mas‘ūd, the second case is different where the pregnant widow can get married again immediately after giving birth. Ibn Mas‘ūd’s view is based on the story of a lady called Subai‘ah al-Aslamiyyah who was pregnant when her husband died and gave birth a few days after his death. When she mentioned this to the Prophet, he allowed her to get married again. According to the narration of this story, ‘Ali b. Abī Ṭālib and Ibn ‘Abbās have changed their opinion. Thus, giving birth for the pregnant widow is the decisive factor; therefore, the period of waiting for 4 months and 10 days applies only to the non-pregnant widow (al-Qurṭubi 1997, 3, p. 166).

The factor of different narrations also applies to Q22:19, ‘hādihāni khaṣmāni ikhtaṣamū fi rabbihim [These are two adversaries who have disputed over their Lord].’ For Ibn ‘Abbās, this refers to the believers and the people of the Book. However, for Mujāhid, this āyah refers to the believers and the pagans who dispute about eschatology; for ‘Ikramah, it refers to paradise and the hell fire, and for Qatādah, this āyah refers to the person who believes and that who disbelieves (Ibn Kathīr 1993, 3, p. 206).

- (x) Allegorical and non-allegorical significations: Some successor exegetes have provided an allegorical, that is, implicit, esoteric and hypothetical, meaning al-ma‘nā al-majāzi for some āyahs, for example, in Q111:4, ‘ham-mālata al-ḥaṭabi [the carrier of firewood]’ where the expression al-ḥaṭabi is given an allegorical signification by Mujāhid and Qatādah al-Suddi alluding to al-namimah (slander and backbiting). However, for Sa‘īd b. Jubair, al-ḥaṭabi is given a non-allegorical, that is, literal, exoteric signification al-ma‘nā al-ḥaqīqi which means firewood (al-Rāzi 1990, 32, p. 158). Similarly, Q53:43, ‘wa’annahū huwa aḍḥaka wa’abkā [And that it is He who makes one laugh and weep]’ has been given a hypothetical opinion signification by Sahl b. ‘Abd Allāh, ‘God has made the obedient cheerful due to the mercy bestowed upon them and has made the disobedient miserable by inflicting them with His wrath’; an allegorical meaning by al-Ḍaḥḥāk, ‘God makes the earth laugh through plantation and makes the sky cry through the rain’ and a non-allegorical meaning by al-Ḥasan al-Baṣri and al-Kalbi, ‘God makes the companions of paradise laugh and the companions of the hell fire cry’ (al-Shawkāni 1996, 5, p. 144; cf. al-Rūmi 1996, p. 51).

### 5.2.2 *The recording phase*

During the Prophet’s lifetime, exegesis has not been written down by the companions who only learn by heart what they ask and narrate what they hear of ḥadīth from the Prophet. Like the ḥadīth, the process of recording exegesis has started after Muḥammad’s death. The caliphate of ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz (d.66–101/685–719)<sup>11</sup> is characterized by the recording of Qur’anic exegesis which is still part of the ḥadīth collection effort on the part of Muslim scholars. Although the narration and teaching of exegesis have started in different parts of the Muslim state during the phases of the companions and the successors, the process of recording and serious scholarship in exegesis have in fact begun during the phase of the post-successors. In other words, the companion and successor exegetes of these two phases have not undertaken the task of writing any Qur’anic exegesis. Instead, the post-successors have collected exegetical and narration details based on the views of the prominent companion and successor exegetes, as in *Tafsīr Mujāhid* which is not written, in fact, by Mujāhid himself but rather is recorded by Ibn Abi Najīḥ as a transmission from (‘an) Mujāhid. The same applies to Ibn ‘Abbās who has not written any book on exegesis. In other words, ‘most scholars contended themselves with the transmission by pupils’ (Versteegh 1993, p. 51).

The phase of recording exegesis marks the post-successors' period which starts from the first quarter of the second/eighth century, that is, the end of the Umayyads (d.41/661–132/749), and the beginning of the Abbāsids, that is, 132/749, and extends to our present time. During the recording phase, there have been two separate but interrelated phases. These are as follows:

- (i) **Tafsīr as part of ḥadīth phase:** Qur'anic exegesis during this phase has remained part of the collection of ḥadīth by major ḥadīth scholars who have not dealt with all the āyahs or sūrah. The exegesis of some āyahs is sandwiched between the ḥadīths. This phase has started from the end of the first/seventh century and lasted until the first half of the second/eighth century. Ḥadīth scholars who have collected the ḥadīth and included the tafsīr of some āyahs at the same time are like Yazid b. Hārūn al-Salāmī (d.117/735), Shu'bah b. al-Ḥajjāj (d.160/776), Sufyān al-Thawrī (d.161/777), Wakī' b. al-Jarrāḥ (d.197/812), Sufyān b. 'Uyaynah (d.198/813), Rūḥ b. 'Ubādah al-Baṣrī (d.205/820), 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan'ānī (d.211/826), Ādam b. Abī Iyās (d.220/835) and 'Abd b. Ḥumaid (d.249/863). This phase is also characterized by partial rather than holistic approach; that is, only some āyahs from various sūrah are accounted for, and only selected expressions of the āyah are explained. None of these exegesis books are available today.
- (ii) **Tafsīr as an independent discipline phase:** Qur'anic exegesis has gained an autonomous research status from the beginning of the second/eighth century onwards and has become independent from ḥadīth. This phase is characterized by a well-structured and holistic approach that accounts for the whole Qur'ān according to its āyahs and sūrah as they are arranged in the Qur'ān. Among the prominent exegetes of this phase are al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Muẓāḥim al-Balkhī (d.105/723),<sup>12</sup> Muqātil b. Sulaimān al-Balkhī (d.150/767), 'Abd al-Malik b. 'Abd al-'Azīz b. Jurajj (d.80–150/699–767), Sufiyān b. Sa'īd b. Masrūq al-Thawrī (d.161/777), Yaḥyā b. Salām (d.124–200/741–815), Abu Zakariyah 'Abd Allāh al-Farrā' (d.207/822), Abu Bakr 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan'ānī (d.211/826), Ibn Mājah (d.273/886), Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d.310/922), Abu Bakr b. al-Mundhir al-Naisābūrī (d.318/930), 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Ḥātim (d.327/938), Abu al-Shaikh b. Ḥabbān (d.369/979), al-Ḥākīm (d.405/1014) and Abu Bakr b. Mirdawaih (d.410/1019). The exegesis of those scholars is based on the narration from the Prophet, the companions, the successors and the post-successors. In other words, it belongs to the mainstream exegesis, al-tafsīr bil-ma'thūr.

### **5.2.2.1 Forms of early recorded exegesis**

Since Qur'anic exegesis has begun to be documented in book form, four major forms of Qur'anic exegesis have been adopted by early successors during the end of the first/seventh and early second/eighth centuries. Although these recorded Qur'anic exegesis works are marked by being methodologically independent of ḥadīth, they are characterized by their succinct approach to exegesis. The four main forms of early recorded Qur'anic exegesis are as follows:

- (i) Glossary exegesis: This form deals mainly with semantically ambiguous and polysemous Qur'anic expressions.<sup>13</sup> Most importantly, this form of early recorded exegesis provides a definition form of selected words from selected āyahs, as in the exegesis works by Muḡāhid (d.21–104/),<sup>14</sup> Ibn Juraij (d.150/767) and Sufiyān al-Thawri (d.161/777). Although the whole sūrahs are accounted for, only selected expressions from selected āyahs are dealt with.
- (ii) Linguistically based exegesis: This is a form of Qur'anic exegesis which mainly provides linguistically based glossaries and brief details about semantically ambiguous and polysemous Qur'anic expressions and grammatical problems as in the exegesis works by al-Kisā'i (d.187/802)<sup>15</sup> and al-Farrā' (d.207/822). Although the whole sūrahs are accounted for, only selected expressions from selected āyahs are dealt with.
- (iii) Brief paraphrastic incomplete exegesis: Although this form of Qur'anic exegesis accounts for all the sūrahs, it only provides brief exegetical details about selected phrases or expressions of selected āyahs, as in the exegesis work by al-Ḍaḡḡāk (d.105/723).
- (iv) Detailed and holistic paraphrastic exegesis: This is a form of exegesis that provides informative paraphrastic details of all the sūrahs and their constituent āyahs, as in the exegesis work by Muḡātil b. Sulaimān (d.150/767). It can, therefore, be safely claimed that Muḡātil is the first Qur'ān exegete who has provided an āyah-by-āyah (musalsal) exegesis.

### 5.2.2.2 *Features of recording phase*

This is the longest phase in the history of exegesis and is marked by a variety of interesting features:

- (i) Recording: Qur'anic exegesis has now begun to be recorded either as part of ḡadīth or as an independent discipline.
- (ii) Systematic structure: Qur'anic exegesis has now become musalsal (āyah-by-āyah). Thus, it has taken a methodological structure in terms of a consistent account of all the āyahs and sūrahs and according to their arrangement in the Qur'ān. Thus, it has become known as tafsīr musalsal (āyah-by-āyah exegesis).
- (iii) Independent discipline: Qur'anic exegesis has become at a later stage an independent discipline and no longer part of ḡadīth.
- (iv) Lack of isnād (chain of authorities): Although Qur'anic exegesis of this phase is based on sound narration, some exegetes do not refer to the whole chain of authorities. Narration has been exclusive to the circumstances of revelation.
- (v) Unsound chain of authorities: Some unauthentic exegetical views have found their way in some books of exegesis as a result of reliance on ḡadīths that are not backed up by a sound chain of authorities. As forged ḡadīths proliferated out of control, it has become difficult to discern the genuine chain of authorities from the spurious.

- (vi) Incomplete narration: Some Qur'anic commentaries are marked by an incomplete chain of authorities. The exegete quotes the views of his predecessor exegetes without reference to their names. Thus, unauthentic and unsound views have seeped through Qur'anic exegesis during this phase.
- (vii) Uncritical: Some exegetes of this phase do not provide a critical account of the meaning of a given āyah or a Qur'anic expression. They mainly rely upon the views of other predecessor exegetes without providing a critical account of their own. Thus, we encounter both objective and subjective exegetical views of the scholars quoted. This has led to the listing of both sound and unsound exegetical views.
- (viii) Hypothetical opinion (al-dirāyah, al-fihm al-<sup>ḥ</sup>aqli): Some exegetes have provided details based on their hypothetical opinions and discovery of significations. Although both narration and hypothetical personal views have dominated the recording phase, rational exegetical studies have been the favourable approach among Muslim scholars. Qur'anic exegesis has become limited to specific Qur'anic disciplines such as reasons for revelation which are provided with limited chain of authorities.
- (ix) Grammar-based exegesis: Grammar-based Qur'anic exegesis is a form of the hypothetical opinion (non-mainstream) approach to exegesis. This approach has flourished during this phase and prominent linguists have written down their commentaries such as al-Zajjāj (d.311/923), al-Naḥḥās (d.338/949), al-Wāḥidi (d.468/1075) and Abu Ḥaiyān (d.745/1344).
- (x) Differences among exegetes: Some exegetes have favoured the views of some scholars over others, with regard to some jurisprudential matters and the views related to a given school of law or sect.
- (xi) Spread of sects: Different schools of law have emerged and sectarian fanaticism has begun to influence exegesis.
- (xii) Misquotation for political ends: Transmitters of exegetical views of an authority often blend the views of an exegete with their own and misquote the original source in an attempt either to gain support for the dogmas of their school of thought or to substantiate a theological point of view.
- (xiii) Philosophy, scholastic theology and cosmic sciences: Philosophical views, scholastic theology and cosmic details have been employed in Qur'anic exegesis. Some of the major scholastic exegetes are al-Qāḍi <sup>ḥ</sup>Abd al-Jabbār Ābādi (d.414/1023), al-Zamakhshari (d.538/1144) and Ibn <sup>ḥ</sup>Arabi (d.560–638/1164–1240), and there are also philosophical and cosmic exegetes, for example, al-Rāzi (d.609/1209).
- (xiv) Mysticism: Some exegetes have taken a mystical dimension in their exegetical account of the Qur'ān, such as *al-Ḥaqā'iq* which is an abridged exegesis by Abu <sup>ḥ</sup>Abd al-Raḥmān Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusain al-Salli al-Naisābūri (d.413/1022) and Muḥyi al-Dīn b. <sup>ḥ</sup>Arabi (d.638/1240).
- (xv) Different schools of exegesis: Different schools of Qur'anic exegesis have begun to flourish. Each school has adopted a distinct approach to the textual and semantic analysis of the Qur'ān and the various approaches are provided as follows:

- (1) Syntactic exegesis adopted by al-Zajjāj in his *Ma'āni al-Qur'ān*, al-Wāḥidi in his *al-Basiṭ* and Abu Ḥaiyān in his *al-Baḥr al-Muḥiṭ*;
  - (2) Philosophical exegesis adopted by exegetes, for example, al-Rāzi in his *Maḥāṣin al-Ghaib*;
  - (3) Jurisprudential exegesis adopted by jurists such as Abu Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ in his *Tafsīr Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* and Abu 'Abd Allāh al-Qurṭubi in *al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*;
  - (4) Historical exegesis adopted by exegetes like Abu Ishāq al-Tha'labi (d.427/1035) in his *al-Kashf wal-Bayān 'an Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* and Abu al-Ḥasan al-Khāzin in his *Lubāb al-Ta'wil fī Ma'āni al-Tanzīl*;
  - (5) Scholastic (Mu'tazili) exegesis adopted by 'Abd al-Jabbār in his *Tanzīh al-Qur'ān 'an al-Maṭā'in*, Abu 'Ali Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Jibā'i (d.303/915) in his *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, Abu al-Qāsim al-Ka'bi al-Balkhi (d.319/931) in his *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, 'Ali b. 'Īsā al-Rummāni (d.384/994) in his *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, 'Abd al-Jabbār al-Asad Ābādi (d.414/1023) in his *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* and al-Zamakhshari (d.538/1144) in his *al-Kashshāf*;
  - (6) Mystical exegesis adopted by Sufi exegetes like Abu 'Abd al-Raḥmān Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusain al-Salli al-Naisābūri (d.413/1022) in his *al-Ḥaqā'iq*, Abu al-Qāsim 'Abd al-Karīm al-Qushairi (d.465/1072) in his *Laṭā'if al-Ishārāt*, and Muḥyi al-Dīn b. 'Arabi (d.638/1240) in his *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* and
  - (7) Sectarian exegesis adopted by Shī'ī exegetes such as al-Ḥasan b. 'Ali al-'Askari (d.231–260/) in his *Tafsīr*, Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan Abu Ja'far al-Ṭūsi (d.351/962) in his *al-Muwaḍḍiḥ fī Ma'āni al-Qur'ān* and Abu Maṣ'ūr al-Ḥasan b. Yūsuf b. 'Ali Ibn al-Muṭṭahir al-Hilli (d.726/1325) in his *Kanz al-'Irfān fī Fiqh al-Qur'ān*.
- (xvi) Topical exegesis: Some exegetes have researched in one aspect of exegesis such as Ibn Qaiyim al-Jawziyyah (d.691/1291–751/1350) in his *al-Tibyān fī Aqsām al-Qur'ān* which deals with the major parts of the Qur'ān, al-Rāghib al-Aṣḥāhāni (d.502/1108) in his *Mufradāt al-Qur'ān* which deals with Qur'anic lexical items, Abu Zakariyyā Yaḥyā al-Farrā' (d.207/822) in his *Majāz al-Qur'ān* which deals with semantic ambiguity and polysemous significations of Qur'anic expressions, Abu 'Ubaidah Ma'mar b. al-Muthannā (d.210/825) in his *Majāz al-Qur'ān* which deals with the multiple meanings of Qur'anic expressions, al-Wāḥidi in his *Asbāb al-Nuzūl* which deals with the reasons for revelation, al-Naḥḥās in his *al-Nāsikh wal-Mansūkh* which deals with abrogating and abrogated āyahs and Abu Bakr Ibn al-'Arabi (d.543/1148) in his *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* which deals with jurisprudential matters.
- (xvii) Jurisprudence: Juristic studies have matured during the recording phase and several jurisprudential exegesis works have emerged whose major concern is focused on the explication of Islamic legal rulings. Jurisprudential exegesis is not holistic and focuses only on jurisprudence āyahs. Major jurisprudential exegetes are Abu Bakr Aḥmad al-Jaṣṣāṣ

(d.370/980), who provides a Ḥanafī school of law exegesis; Abu al-Ḥasan ʿAli al-Ṭabari, known as Ilkiyā (d.504/1110), whose exegesis represents the Shāfiʿī school of law and Abu Bakr Muḥammad Ibn al-ʿArabi, whose exegesis represents the Māliki school of law.

- (xviii) Jewish anecdotes: Qurʿanic exegesis of the recording phase is characterized by reference to the Judeo-Christian anecdotes. This is the result of the influence of the successor and post-successor exegetes upon exegetical studies of this phase.
- (xix) Historical commentaries: During the recording phase, exegetical historical studies have flourished and extensive historical details have been added to Qurʿanic parables and historical matters. Major historical exegetes are like Abu Iṣḥāq al-Thaʿlabī (d.427/1035) and Abu al-Ḥasan al-Khāzin (d.725/1324).
- (xx) Poetic loci: Quotations from pre-Islamic or early Islamic Arabic poetry are abundant in the majority of commentaries during the recording phase. Poetic loci are employed to back up or explicate a grammatical or a semantic problem involved in a given āyah. However, this is not the case with early recorded Qurʿanic commentaries of the first half of the second/eighth century.
- (xxi) Variant modes of reading: Commentators of the recording phase refer in varying degrees to different modes of reading related to different meanings of the same Qurʿanic expression.
- (xxii) Conceptual chaining: Commentators of the recording phase have shown interest in the textual features of thematic connectivity, textual allusion and intertextuality, such as al-Rāzi, Abu Ḥaiyān and al-Biqāʿī.
- (xxiii) Anthropomorphism and ambiguous āyahs: This is a major feature of this phase during which commentators have freely referred to the controversial theological issues like the *mutashābihāt* expressions and the names and attributes of God. These exegetical views are categorized by orthodox Muslim scholars as an objectionable and unsound discovery.
- (xxiv) Interpolations: Textual corruption of tafsīr works has proliferated where augmentation and interpolation by unscrupulous transmitters have featured during this phase. We encounter recurrent augmentations and redactions by copyists of earlier manuscripts in order to substantiate their own theological or political views. Editorial intrusion and reformulation have also taken place through transmitters.
- (xxv) Own comments: As recensionists, recorded Qurʿanic commentaries have often included own comments of the recensionist and are marked by their own glosses and comments which are inserted in the commentary text of the original exegete. The reader is led to believe that the compiler's own comments are the iconic companions' exegetical views.
- (xxvi) Different transmissions: A recorded Qurʿanic commentary of an early exegete sometimes includes different transmissions where the usual chain of authorities is replaced by new transmitters. Thus, all of a sudden, we may encounter more than one informant.

- (xxvii) Different recensions: There seem to have been in circulation variant recensions of the same commentary by the same early second/eighth century exegetes such as Muqātil (d.150/767). These different recensions include different chains of authorities and transmitters. Thus, the authenticity of a given recension cannot be guaranteed. This leads to a more serious problem of whether the views of a given exegete quoted in one recension are indeed his, the transmitter's or the recensionist's.
- (xxviii) Different transmissions: The exegetical views of the companions such as the views of Ibn ʿAbbās (d.68/687) have been recorded and transmitted with different versions by later transmitters. This has created scepticism about the authenticity of views of the original exegete.
- (xxix) Glosses and paraphrase: Explanatory lexical comments are adopted by early Qur'anic commentators, such as Muqātil (d.150/767), who provide a word-level account and are merely concerned with lexical explanations through glosses and brief periphrastic explanations of Qur'anic expressions.
- (xxx) Circumstances of revelation, abrogating and abrogated: Recorded Qur'anic commentaries refer with varying degrees of elaboration to the circumstances surrounding the revelation of a given āyah and the abrogating and abrogated āyahs.

### 5.2.2.3 *The Andalus school of exegesis*

Under the Muslim rule, Spain and Portugal, known as al-Andalus, have witnessed a robust tafsīr activity which evolved during the third/ninth century and culminated in the eighth/fourteenth century. The first Andalusī recorded works of tafsīr are *Tafsīr Baqīyyu b. Makhḥlad* of Abu ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Baqīyyu b. Makhḥlad b. Yazīd (d.201–276/816–889), *Kitāb al-Hidāyah ilā Bulūgh al-Nihāyah* of Makki b. Abī Ṭālib al-Qaisi (d.437/1045), *Aḥkām al-Qurʾān* of Abu Bakr Ibn al-ʿArabi (d.543/1148), *al-Muḥarrar al-Wajīz fī Tafsīr al-Kitāb al-ʿAzīz* of ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq b. ʿAṭīyyah (d.546/1151), *Jāmiʿ Aḥkām al-Qurʾān* of Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Farah al-Qurṭubi (d.671/1272), *al-Tashīl fī ʿUlūm al-Tanzīl* of Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. al-Juzzi al-Kalbi (d.741/1340) and *al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ fī Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-Karīm* of Muḥammad b. Yūsuf Abu Ḥaiyān (d.754/1353).

The scholarship of the Andalusī exegetes has been marked by two approaches:

- (i) Linguistic exegesis: This school of exegesis is based on the grammatical analysis of the Qur'anic text and is represented by Makki b. Abī Ṭālib al-Qaisi, Ibn ʿAṭīyyah, Ibn al-Juzzi al-Kalbi and Abu Ḥaiyān.
- (ii) Jurisprudential exegesis: The focus of this school of exegesis is on jurisprudential analysis of injunctions in the Qur'ān. This is represented by Baqīyyu b. Makhḥlad b. Yazīd, Abu Bakr b. al-ʿArabi and al-Qurṭubi.

#### 5.2.2.3.1 FEATURES OF THE ANDALUS SCHOOL

The Andalus school of exegesis is marked by the following exegetical characteristics:

- (i) Mainstream exegesis: Exegeses of the Andalus school are proponents of the traditional exegesis. We encounter Qur'anic intertextuality examples, exegetical details backed up by traditions as well as companion and successor exegetes' points of view which are the major constituents of mainstream Qur'anic exegesis.
- (ii) Variant modes of reading: Tafsīr works of the Andalus school of exegesis make recurrent reference to the modes of reading. This is evident in both linguistic and jurisprudential Andalus school of exegesis where syntactically based semantic subtleties can be captured by distinct grammatical analyses.
- (iii) Anti-Mu'tazilah views: Andalusī exegetes are proponents of traditional mainstream Islam which vehemently opposes Mu'tazilah theological views.
- (iv) No interest in hypothetical opinion exegesis: As the Andalus school of exegesis is hinged upon mainstream tafsīr, the Andalusī exegetes do not favour esoteric significations. However, they resort to hypothetical opinion in terms of linguistic analysis of Qur'anic expressions and passages but have shown no allegorical tendencies in their exegesis.
- (v) Opposition to Judeo-Christian anecdotes: Commentaries of the Andalus school are critical of Jewish anecdotes, disapprove them and do not refer to them in detail. Although the Andalusī commentators reject the Jewish anecdotes as an exegetical device such as Ibn al-ʿArabi, we encounter, at times, very brief reference to them.
- (vi) Poetic loci: Quotations from pre-Islamic or early Islamic Arabic poetry vary from one Andalusī commentary to another. For instance, Ibn ʿAṭīyyah and Abu Ḥaiyān do not employ many poetic citations while al-Qurṭubī employs poetic citations abundantly, but Ibn al-ʿArabi refers to poetic loci only occasionally.
- (vii) Grammar-based account: Some Andalusī exegetes have provided grammar-based exegetical account of Qur'anic passages.
- (viii) Legal-based account: The tafsīr works of some Andalusī exegetes are primarily concerned with jurisprudential details.
- (ix) Impact of early exegetes: The Andalus school of exegesis has been influenced heavily by the views of early exegetes such as al-Ṭabari (d.310/922), Ilkiyā al-Ṭabari (d.504/1110), al-Zamakhshari (d.538/1144) and al-Rāzi (d.606/1209).

#### 5.2.2.4 The Sufi school of exegesis

Sufism is Islamic mysticism that appeared during the end of the second/eighth century and developed as a mystical practice during the end of the third/ninth century. The major objective of early Sufism was to fill in a moral vacuum and most importantly to abandon the pursuit of material gains. Thus, it shared the moral concerns of the Baṣrah school of exegesis. It began as total devotion to worship, piety and asceticism within the framework of mainstream Islamic law. At a later stage, however, Sufism was influenced by beliefs and practices that were not compatible with its original spiritual aims. The first recorded Sufi works of tafsīr are *Ḥaqā'iq al-Tafsīr* of Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusain al-Salami (d.412/1021), *Laṭā'if al-Ishārāt* of ʿAbd al-Karīm b. Hawāzin al-Qushairi (d.465/1072) and *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* of

Muḥyi al-Dīn b. ʿArabi (d.638/1240). The latter, however, has been the most influential Sufi work of Qurʾanic exegesis. Bin ʿArabi lived in Seville (ishbilyā), Spain, and travelled to the Middle East and North Africa in pursuit of Sufi saints who were regarded as friends of God.

#### 5.2.2.4.1 FEATURES OF THE SUFI SCHOOL

The Sufi school of exegesis is characterized by the following exegetical features:

- (i) Esoteric exegesis: Exegeses of the Sufi school are mainly concerned with the allegorical sense of a Qurʾanic expression or āyah. For them, an expression has an underlying meaning that alludes to a mystical experience or notion.
- (ii) Mystical approach: Sufi exegetes stress mysticism and the struggle between the body and the soul, that is, the fight against the self and body desires.
- (iii) Mystical anecdotes: Sufi exegetes highlight anecdotes of Sufi saints who witnessed a supernatural experience or worked a miracle.
- (iv) Impact of other beliefs: Some Sufi exegetes expressed exegetical views that demonstrate the impact of other faiths and spiritual practices on Sufi tafsīr such as Christianity, Buddhism and Persian neo-platonic philosophy. This is evident in the discussion of Sufi saints' anecdotes. In terms of Christian theology, Sufi exegetes echoed a similar view with regards to God's essence and the union of existence.
- (iv) Jurisprudential matters: Sufi exegetes do not elaborate on problems related to Islamic legal rulings.
- (v) Judeo-Christian anecdotes: Sufi exegetes do not refer to Jewish or Christian anecdotes.
- (vi) No interest in the variant modes of reading, circumstances of revelation or grammatical or stylistic analysis.
- (vii) Reference to statements by ʿAli b. Abī Ṭālib or the Shīʿi Imām Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq: For Sufi theologians, ʿAli was the first friend of God.
- (viii) Prophetic tradition: Sufi exegesis makes little intertextual reference to ḥadīths.
- (ix) Potic loci: Sufi exegetes do not employ quotations from pre-Islamic or early Islamic Arabic poetry to substantiate their exegetical views.
- (x) historical details are not found as Sufi exegetes do not deal with Qurʾanic parables and historical matters.
- (xi) Allusion in meaning prevails in Sufi exegetical works, and the details are mainly based on Sufi hypothetical opinions and discovery of meanings.
- (xii) Polemic: Modern Sufi exegetes such as Muḥyi al-Dīn al-Ṭaʿmi (2007) are very critical of Sunni scholars such as Ibn Taimiyyah (d.661–728/1263–1328) and accuses him of polytheism. Muḥyi al-Dīn al-Ṭaʿmi makes recurrent polemics against what he calls al-wahhābiyyah (the Wahhābis), followers of the teachings of the Sunni theologian Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb (d.1115–1206/1703–1792) (Muḥyi al-Dīn al-Ṭaʿmi 2007, 1, pp. 96, 113, 371, 377, 421, 823, 837; 2, pp. 490, 502, 560)
- (xiii) Lack of reference to companion and successor exegetical views.

### **5.2.3 The modern phase**

The modern school of Qur'anic exegesis has evolved during the twentieth and early twenty-first century. Exegetes of the recording phase have exhausted the approaches to Qur'anic exegesis and their relevant sources. Numerous tafsir works have been written by exegetes since the second/eighth century of the previous phase and the major schools of exegesis have been thoroughly accounted for. Exegetes of the modern phase, therefore, have not provided a significant contribution to Qur'anic exegesis in terms of a new school that adopts a fresh approach different from the already well-established approaches to exegesis. However, modern exegetes are influenced by contemporary socio-political needs and scientific developments which have led to the emergence of a school in exegesis that takes into account modern scientific, medical, social and political developments.

#### **5.2.3.1 Features of the modern phase**

The modern school of Qur'anic exegesis is characterized by the emergence of new trends in exegesis. These include the following:

- (i) Stagnation: The modern phase can be considered as a stagnation phase of scholarship during which no significant contribution is being made in exegesis. Schools of exegesis have already taken shape and the Qur'ān has been accounted for comprehensively by exegetes during the recording phase.
- (ii) Hypothetical opinion: Exegesis of the modern phase is characterized by hypothetical opinion. However, in addition to hypothetical opinions and discovery of significations, some modern exegetes refer to prophetic tradition and the views of companions and successors.
- (iii) Anthropomorphism and mutashābihāt āyahs: The majority of modern commentators provide their personal hypothetical opinions on the controversial theological issues like the mutashābihāt expressions and the names and attributes of God. Other modern commentators have adopted the mainstream orthodox approach to these matters and provided a commendable analysis based on the bilā kaif notion (to believe without asking how).
- (iv) Articles and books: Exegetes of the modern phase have accounted for some āyahs or sūrahs in the form of papers read in conferences or published in either magazines or academic journals of Islamic studies. Other exegetes have also accounted for the whole Qur'ān.
- (v) Non-Muslim views: The Qur'ān has also captured the attention of non-Muslims. Exegesis by non-Muslim scholars has also emerged during the modern phase. Their exegesis, however, is limited to papers either read in conferences or published in academic journals of Islamic studies. Their views are mainly based on hypothetical opinion. Exegesis by non-Muslim scholars is also limited to some Qur'anic expressions, some āyahs or sūrahs, such as Ian Netton's analysis of Q18 (2000) and Antony Johns' analysis of the story of Job (1999 and 2001).

- (vi) Surah structure: Modern exegetes have shown interest in the structure of the sūrah dividing it into thematic units, such as Saʿīd Ḥawwa’s *al-Asās fi al-Tafsīr*.
- (vii) Conceptual chaining: Some modern commentators refer to thematic connectivity and textual allusion between consecutive sūrahs and āyahs such as those by al-Zuhāili, Saiyid Quṭb and Saʿīd Ḥawwa.
- (viii) Synoptic commentaries: Modern commentators have shown interest in gist exegesis which provides brief periphrastic details of āyahs, such as al-Saʿdī’s *Taisīr al-Karīm al-Raḥmān*.
- (ix) Stylistic simplicity: Modern commentaries are characterized by the stylistic patterns of modern standard Arabic that are accessible to the ordinary reader.
- (x) Literary style: Modern commentators have adopted a literary genre in their commentaries with simple narrative style that can be accessible by the layman reader, such as commentaries by Saiyid Quṭb, Muḥammad Mutwalli al-Shaʿrāwī and Muḥammad al-Ghazālī.
- (xi) Grammar-based and stylistic analysis: Modern Qur’ān scholars have provided a comprehensive word-by-word syntactic analysis of every single āyah of the Qur’ān but without any exegetical details such as Muḥyi al-Dīn al-Darwīsh’s *Iʿrāb al-Qur’ān al-Karīm wa Bayānuhu* (10 volumes). This grammatical approach is different from that of Abu Ḥaiyān and al-Naḥḥās who provide a detailed commentary with particular interest in grammatical problems. Modern Qur’ān scholars also provided a detailed stylistic account of Qur’anic particles and conjuncts, for example, Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Khālīq ʿAḍīmah’s *Dirāsāt li-Isḫūb al-Qur’ān al-Karīm* (11 volumes). This stylistic analysis is not a Qur’anic commentary and is different from al-Zamakhshari’s *Kashshāf*.
- (xii) No interest in the variant modes of reading: Exegetical details about the variant modes of reading has been shunned by the exegetes of the modern school of Qur’anic exegesis.
- (xiii) Radio and TV programmes: This is referred to as al-tafsīr al-idhāʿī. Some modern Qur’ān scholars provide weekly Qur’anic exegesis programmes. It is a form of synoptic commentary (for more details, see [Chapter 4, Section 4.2.3.6](#)).

# 6 The formative schools of exegesis

## 6.1 Introduction

In the present chapter, we shall investigate the four major formative schools of exegesis that have evolved during the lifetime of the companions and early successors whose views have significantly shaped up the later generations of both classical and modern Qur’ān scholars. In other words, the formative schools encompass the second and third stages of the formative phase (for more details, see Sections 5.2.1.2 and 5.2.1.3). These major schools are as follows:

- (i) The school of Ḥijāz which subsumes the two schools of Makkah and Madīnah, and
- (ii) The school of Iraq which subsumes the two schools of Kūfah and Baṣrah.

The four schools of the formative phase are illustrated by Figure 5 below:

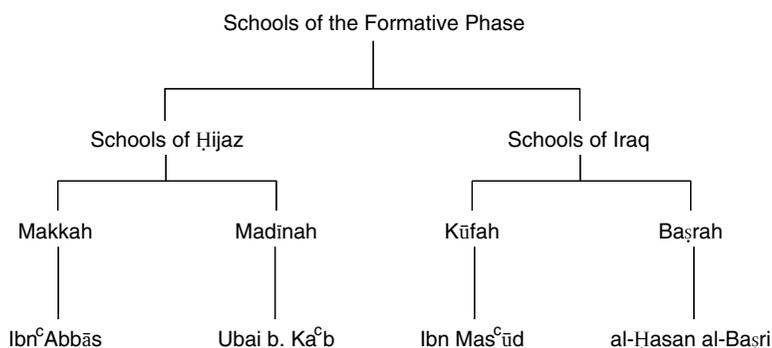


Figure 5 The four schools of the formative phase

Each of the four schools of Qur’anic exegesis can be distinguished by prototypical features specific to its approach and exegetical techniques employed in the textual analysis of the Qur’ān. Although these schools were contemporary to each other and were founded by companion or early successor exegetes, there were

some divergent exegetical views and approaches among them. In this chapter, we aim to explore the prototypical exegetical features of each school and the process of inter-fertilization among the proponents of the four schools. The present account is based on the exegetical works of the formative phase such as those by Ibn ʿAbbās, Mujāhid, Muqātil and al-Ḥasan al-Baṣri as well on other sources such as al-Khuḍairi (1999).

## 6.2 The Makkah school of exegesis

The school of Makkah was founded by Ibn ʿAbbās (d.68/687) and was the most influential in Qurʿanic exegesis. Ibn ʿAbbās was the Prophet’s paternal cousin and well-known for his extensive knowledge of the Qurʿān, Arabic language, pre-Islamic poetry, Arabic history and culture (ayyām al-ʿarab) and Arabic genealogy (ansāb al-ʿarab). He was rightly nicknamed as ḥabir al-ummah (the encyclopaedic man of the Muslim nation) and turjumān al-qurʿān (the translator of the Qurʿān). He enjoyed a special status among the companions, and for his encyclopaedic knowledge, Ibn ʿAbbās was ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb’s close aide. He was appointed by ʿAli b. Abi Ṭālib the ruler of Baṣrah for four years. Among the students of Ibn ʿAbbās are Mujāhid (d.104/722), Saʿīd b. Jubair (d.95/713), ʿIkramah (d.105/723), ʿAṭāʾ (d.114/732) and Ṭāwūs (d.106/724). It is worthwhile to note that when Ibn ʿAbbās was in Baṣrah, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣri left for Madīnah and the two scholars neither met in Baṣrah nor in Makkah during any of the ḥajj seasons. However, when Ibn ʿAbbās was in Baṣrah, Abu al-ʿĀliyah (d.90/708) attended the study circles of Ibn ʿAbbās. Most importantly, however, Abu al-ʿĀliyah remained a pro-Madīnah school scholar and was not influenced by Ibn ʿAbbās’s exegetical views. The influence of his teacher, Ubai b. Kaʿb, remained evident in Abu al-ʿĀliyah’s journey of studying Qurʿanic exegesis.

### 6.2.1 Features of Makkah school of exegesis

The major prototypical exegetical features of the Makkah school are:

- (i) Hypothetical opinion (ijtihād) and discovery (istinbāt): This is attributed to the fact that the founder of the school, Ibn ʿAbbās, encouraged his students, such as Mujāhid and ʿIkramah, to critically debate Qurʿanic matters and provide their exegetical personal opinions, that is, to practise ijtihād and istinbāt in Qurʿanic exegesis. This, however, is contrary to the schools of exegesis led by Ibn Masʿūd in Kūfah, Ubai b. Kaʿb in Madīnah and al-Ḥasan al-Baṣri in Baṣrah. The personal opinion approach, among other factors, made the Makkah school’s reputation broaden and the number of its proponents swell (see [Section 6.2.3](#)). To a limited extent, however, the Baṣrah school’s exegetes were influenced by the Makkah school’s practice of ijtihād. Although the Makkah school exegetes adopted the approach of personal opinion and discovery of significations in the analysis of Qurʿanic expressions related to the names and attributes of God (asmāʾ wa-ṣifāt allāh) and

theological *mutashābihāt*, their exegesis was based upon mainstream theological views. In other words, their personal opinion account aimed at proving rather than disproving the literal, that is, exoteric, meaning of the names and attributes of God. For instance, both Ibn ʿAbbās and Mujāhid confirmed the *yadd* (hand) of God in Q39:67, ‘*wal-samāwātu maṭwiyyātun biyamīnih* [The heavens will be folded in His right hand],’ and the ʿ*ain* (eyes) of God in Q11:37, ‘*waṣnaʿ al-fulka bi-aʿyuninā* [Construct the ship under Our eyes].’

- (ii) The recording of exegesis in the form of lecture notes: Ibn ʿAbbās encouraged his students to take notes of his exegesis-teaching sessions. These basic lecture notes, however, should not be confused with recording Qurʿanic exegesis in the form of volumes.<sup>1</sup>
- (iii) The use of Jewish anecdotes in exegesis: Ibn ʿAbbās was highly influenced by the Jewish converts Kaʿb Ibn Mātiʿ al-Ḥimyari al-Yamāni known as Kaʿb al-Aḥbār (d.34/654) and ʿAbd Allāh b. Salām Ibn al-Ḥārith (d.43/663). Students of the Makkah school, such as Mujāhid, Saʿīd b. Jubair and ʿIkramah, were also influenced by Jewish anecdotes. This influence was extended to their successor students, such as al-Suddi (d.127/744).
- (iv) The use of poetic loci in Qurʿanic exegesis.
- (v) The study of Qurʿanic exegesis as a discipline independent of ḥadīth. The major reason for this can be attributed to the fact that the Makkah school was not as much enthusiastic about the study of ḥadīth as its counterparts, the schools of Madīnah and Kūfah.
- (vi) Special interest in the exegesis of pilgrimage āyahs and their jurisprudential rulings: This interest can be attributed to the large numbers of pilgrims coming to Makkah who used to enquire about matters related to pilgrimage and minor pilgrimage (al-ʿumrah).
- (vii) Interest in admonition (al-waʿz) and urging people for the renunciation of pleasure in worldly things (al-zuhd).
- (viii) Special interest in linguistic analysis: Exegetes of the Makkah school demonstrated, more than any other school, an interest in linguistic exegesis such as the following:
  - (a) Semantic comparison of Qurʿanic expressions;
  - (b) Semantically ambiguous Qurʿanic expressions (*gharīb al-Qurʿān*), polysemous and synonymous Qurʿanic expressions (*al-ashbāh* or *al-wujūh wal-naẓāʾir*) and semantic ambiguity;
  - (c) Etymological analysis of Arabicized Qurʿanic words (*al-mufradāt al-muʿarrabah*), their meanings and original language. The reason for this particular interest in Arabicized expressions can be attributed to the geographical fact that Makkah is adjacent to Ḥijāz and that the Arab tribes living there are well-known for their linguistic purity, and linguistic environment, which is sought after by exegetes. Also, the reason why the Makkah school is more successful in the study of Arabicized words is attributed to the fact that a large number of pilgrims come to Makkah who are native speakers of Arabicized Qurʿanic words. Thus, non-native Arab-convert exegetes such as Mujāhid,

Sa'īd b. Jubair, °Aṭā' and °Ikramah of the Makkah school excelled in this etymological analysis of Qur'anic words and their meanings in their original language, such as ḥaṣab meaning ḥaṭab (firewood), al-qistās meaning al-°adl (justice), al-ṭūr meaning al-jabal (mountain), ṭāhā meaning yā rajul (O, gentleman), al-jibt meaning al-shaitān (Satan) and al-ṭāghūt meaning al-kāhin (soothsayer or priest). °Ikramah, for instance, used to provide the meanings in Nabatean and Abyssinian languages, while Mujāhid used to deal with the meanings of Greek and Syriac words.

### **6.2.2 Success of Makkah school**

One may wonder why the Makkah school of Qur'anic exegesis is more widely narrated by various exegetes than the other three schools of the formative phase. The success of the Makkah school can be attributed to the following major factors:

- (i) The founder of the Makkah school, Ibn °Abbās, outlived other companion exegetes. He died in 68/687, while Ibn Mas°ūd, the founder of the Kūfah school, died in 32/653, and Ubai b. Ka°b of the Madīnah school died in 20/640. Thus, the teaching of Ibn °Abbās continued, his students increased and his views spread to more parts of the Muslim world through his students. However, although al-Ḥasan al-Baṣri, the founder of the Baṣrah school, died in 110/728, he had only one student, Qatādah.
- (ii) The large number of pilgrims who come annually to Makkah used to convey his exegetical views as well as the views of his students to their local communities in various parts of the Muslim world.
- (iii) Ibn °Abbās encouraged his students to travel to other Muslim countries to teach exegesis and be his ambassadors for his exegetical views. Both Mujāhid and °Ikramah travelled to several countries such as Egypt, Morocco and Iraq where they lived in either Baṣrah or Kūfah.
- (iv) Ibn °Abbās encouraged his students to record exegesis as lecture notes. His students' lecture notes and books became valuable sources for Qur'ān scholars elsewhere. Thus, Ibn °Abbās' views disseminated rapidly and widely.
- (v) The political stability in Makkah was a source of attraction to Qur'ān scholars who immigrated to it to learn Qur'anic exegesis. Sa'īd b. Jubair, for instance, immigrated from Kūfah and settled in Makkah as a result of the civil war (fitnah) in his home town which broke out between °Ali and Mu°āwiyah in 36/656. Stability also provided an appropriate environment for teaching and recording exegesis.

### **6.2.3 Impact of Makkah school on other exegetes**

The Makkah school of exegesis had significantly influenced the views of exegetes from other schools of exegesis. The impact of the Makkah school was evident on the school of Kūfah and the school of Baṣrah:

- (i) Sa'īd b. Jubair, for instance, influenced some exegetes from the Kūfah school such as al-Ḍaḥḥāk and al-Suddi who both narrated from Ibn 'Abbās's student, Sa'īd b. Jubair. Similarly, Sufyān al-Thawri from Kūfah was also influenced by Ibn 'Abbās' views through his students Mujāhid, 'Aṭā', 'Ikramah and Sa'īd b. Jubair.
- (ii) The Baṣrah school was also influenced by the Makkah school. Ibn 'Abbās was appointed the Amīr (ruler) of Baṣrah by 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib for four years during which he taught Abu al-'Āliyah who became a close friend of Ibn 'Abbās and visited him in Makkah several times when he went for pilgrimage. Academically, however, Abu al-'Āliyah was more attached to Ubai b. Ka'b of the Madīnah school. 'Ikramah also lived in Baṣrah and was admired by both al-Ḥasan al-Baṣri and Qatādah, al-Ḥasan's student. However, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣri was more attached to the Madīnah school of exegesis and its student Sa'īd b. al-Musaiyab. The other main reason why the Makkah school did not influence al-Ḥasan could be attributed to the fact that he was living in Madīnah for the whole period of Ibn 'Abbās's four-year rule of Baṣrah. al-Ḥasan had no chance of meeting Ibn 'Abbās neither in Baṣrah nor during pilgrimage. One cannot verify, however, whether this was a deliberate action by al-Ḥasan to avoid Ibn 'Abbās or a mere co-incidence.

The Makkah school, however, was not able to influence the exegetes of the Madīnah school. On the contrary, the Madīnah school frowned upon the Makkah school for their indulgence in *istinbāt* (discovery) and *ijtihād* (independent personal judgement) and the discussion of controversial theological matters such as the theological *mutashābihāt* and the names and attributes of God.

### **6.3 The Madīnah school of exegesis**

The school of exegesis in Madīnah was founded by Ubai b. Ka'b (d.20/640) who was the first scribe of the Prophet and renowned for his advanced skills in articulatory phonetics and intonation techniques required for the modes of reading. Ubai, a well-educated Jewish convert, was also well-known for his accurate memorization of the Qur'ān and sound knowledge of the Old and New Testaments. Among his students were Abu al-'Āliyah (d.93/711), al-Quraḏī (d.118/736), 'Urwah b. al-Zubair (d.93/711) and Zaid al-'Adawi (d.136/753). The scholars of Madīnah had a lukewarm interest in the study and teaching of exegesis. Instead, they were more fascinated by the study and teaching of ḥadīth, Islamic history, biographies and conquests or military expeditions (*maghāzi*). The large number of companions who were still living in Madīnah such as 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb and Abu Hurairah helped in the study of ḥadīth to flourish and most importantly to be the centre for sound ḥadīths in terms of their sound chain of authorities (*isnād*) and sound text (*matn*). However, the reputation of the Madīnah school failed to gain wide circulation due to the fact that the major scholars of the Madīnah school, such as Ubai b. Ka'b and Zaid b. Thābit (d.45/665), were too busy with the teaching of ḥadīth and the modes of reading. Thus, limited narrations had been cited from this school due to

- (i) lack of students of exegesis who could convey their teachers' exegetical views to other parts of the Muslim world, and
- (ii) lack of lecture notes that could have been passed on to late successors. Scholars of the Madīnah school did not allow their students to record exegetical views of their teachers. In other words, the Madīnah school of Qur'anic exegesis did not sanction the recording of exegesis lecture notes.

### **6.3.1 Features of Madīnah school of exegesis**

The following are the major characteristics of the Madīnah school:

- (i) The Madīnah school was interested in the exegesis of Islamic legal ruling āyahs such as those related to marriage, and in giving reasons as to why a given legal ruling is favoured over the other.
- (ii) The Madīnah school was interested in explaining some circumstances of revelation.
- (iii) The Madīnah school was interested in the traditional approach to modes of reading which is concerned mainly with the articulatory phonetics of Qur'anic expressions. In other words, the Madīnah school focused on the different phonetic forms which a given Qur'anic word may have; that is, a word can be pronounced differently with or without a change of meaning. This included phonetic problems such as double sound (mushaddad) or single sound (sukūn) as well as accusative (manṣūb) or nominative (marfū<sup>c</sup>) case sounds. Therefore, the Madīnah exegetes were not influenced by exegetical modes of reading (al-qirā'ah al-tafsīriyyah) as an exegetical, semantically based technique developed by the Kūfah school. An example of an ordinary mode of reading that takes into account the criteria of articulatory phonetics is Q17:106, 'waqur'ānan faraqnāhu [It is a Qur'ān which We have revealed in parts],' which has another mode of reading in terms of articulatory phonetics which is waqur'ānan farraqnāhu where the letter /r/ is doubled, and Q104:9, 'fi 'amadin mumaddadah [in towering columns],' which has a different mode of reading as in 'fi 'umudin mumaddadah' where the short vowel /a/ (fatḥah) in 'amadin is replaced by the short vowel /u/ (ḍammah), that is, 'umudin.
- (iv) The Madīnah school objected strongly to the teaching and recording as lecture notes of Qur'anic exegesis. 'Urwah b. al-Zubair (d.93/711), for instance, burnt his books and lecture notes of Qur'anic exegesis.
- (v) The Madīnah school did not sanction Jewish anecdotes in Qur'anic exegesis.

### **6.4 The Kūfah school of exegesis**

The founder of the Kūfah school was the companion exegete Ibn Mas'ūd (d.32/653) who was influenced by 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb with regards to extreme rigour and scrutiny in ḥadīth in order to avoid fabricated and weak ones. Although Ibn Mas'ūd laid down the foundation of the Kūfah school of exegesis, he was heavily involved and more interested in giving a formal legal judgement

(iftā') and jurisprudence than in Qur'anic exegesis. The city of Kūfah, therefore, had become the centre for jurists and became more famous than the school of Makkah in this regard. Among the students of Ibn Mas'ūd were °Alqamah b. Qais (d.61/680), Masrūq b. al-Ajda° (d.63/682), al-Sha°bi (d.20–109/640–727) and °Abidah b. °Amru al-Salmāni (d.72/691). Among the followers of the Kūfah school from the successors were Ibrāhīm al-Nakh°i (d.74/693) who was the student of °Alqamah. The Kūfah school was called the personal opinion school (madrasat al-ra'i). However, the expression 'personal opinion' (al-ra'i) should not be confused with the same expression that was later on used in the literature of Qur'anic exegesis to refer to 'rational' or 'hypothetical opinion' whose connotative meaning, for mainstream exegetes, denoted a stigmatized exegetical approach adopted by non-mainstream exegetes of various approaches to exegesis, such as the Mu'tazili, Ash°ari, Sufi, Shī°i and Ibādi exegetes. As the non-mainstream exegetes employ al-ra'i in their Qur'anic exegesis, they are dubbed as 'interpreters' (mu'awwilūn), that is, those who employ their 'hypothetical personal opinion' especially when dealing with theological mutashābihāt and the names and attributes of God. However, during the formative phase of Qur'anic exegesis, the expression 'personal opinion' (al-ra'i) was employed by the Kūfah school in the context of jurisprudence and giving formal legal judgement only. In other words, exegetes of the Kūfah school relied upon their personal opinion when they answered a problem related to an Islamic legal ruling and āyahs related to the allowed and the prohibited. Thus, their personal opinion was limited to jurisprudential matters. Most importantly, their views on any Islamic legal ruling āyah is supported first by a ḥadīth with a sound chain of authorities and a sound text. If they had no such ḥadīth, they had to provide an answer based on their personal opinion. Thus, exegetes of the Kūfah school were neither concerned with theological mutashābihāt nor with the names and attributes of God. Therefore, their ra'i was commendable, and thus, they were not 'interpreters' (mu'awwilūn) and their personal opinions were mainly jurisprudence-oriented. Also, the city of Kūfah was the centre for the modes of reading led by Ibn Mas'ūd. Later on, however, it was plagued with civil war in 36/656.

#### **6.4.1 Features of Kūfah school of exegesis**

The Kūfah school was characterized by the following prototypical features:

- (i) The Kūfah school was interested in the analysis of Islamic legal rulings āyahs. For this reason, their personal opinion approach to jurisprudential matters was introduced.
- (ii) The Kūfah school was neither interested in the analysis of the theological mutashābihāt āyahs nor in the analysis of Qur'anic expressions that are related to the names and attributes of God.
- (iii) The Kūfah school was interested in the analysis of modes of reading āyahs. They developed a new exegetical technique in exegesis, namely, the exegetical mode of reading (al-qirā'ah al-tafsīriyyah) which is semantically based.

In other words, unlike the Madīnah school of exegesis, the Kūfah school is not phonetically oriented; that is, it is not concerned with the articulatory phonetics of words and their different modes of pronunciation. The technique of exegetical modes of reading is concerned with the elimination of semantic ambiguity. Thus, the inserted, that is, additional, disambiguating words are not part of the °Uthmānic master codex. The exegetical mode of reading involves the addition of one word or more in the interest of disambiguating an āyah or a word within the āyah. For instance, Q5:89 is read as ‘faṣiyāmu thalāthati aiyāmin mutatābi°āt [to fast for three consecutive days]’ according to the exegetical mode of reading by Ibn Mas°ūd where the word mutatābi°āt (consecutively) is inserted in order to provide exegetical clarification. Also, Q5:38, ‘wal-sāriqu wal-sāriqatu faqṭa°ū aidiyahumā [the thief, male and female, amputate their hands],’ constituted a jurisprudential problem as to which hand to be cut off, the right or the left. This problem was resolved by Ibn Mas°ūd’s exegetical mode of reading: ‘wal-sāriqūna wal-sāriqātu faqṭa°ū aimānahum [the thief, male and female, amputate their right hands].’ Explaining a Qur’anic word can be achieved through lexical substitution by means of the exegetical modes of reading, as in Q66:4, ‘faqad ṣaghat qulūbukumā [your hearts listened to falsehood],’ which has Ibn Mas°ūd’s exegetical mode of reading as ‘faqad zāghat qulūbukumā [your hearts deviated]’ where the word ṣaghat (to lean towards, that is, listen to falsehood) is replaced by zāghat (to deviate).

- (iv) The Kūfah school expressed no interest in the teaching and recording of Qur’anic exegesis for fear of giving an erroneous meaning to a Qur’anic expression or a flawed exegetical analysis to an āyah. The Kūfah school showed only limited interest in the exegesis of Islamic legal ruling āyahs. However, this position in Kūfah had changed during the late successors’ phase where interest in the study, teaching and recording Qur’anic exegesis had increased.
- (v) The Kūfah school was not interested in Judeo-Christian anecdotes.
- (vi) The Kūfah school represented by Ibn Mas°ūd and his students °Alqamah b. Qais, °Ubaidah b. °Amru al-Salmāni and Masrūq b. al-Ajda° opposed the recording of exegesis. °Ubaidah, for instance, asked his students to bring back to him all their lecture notes so that he could destroy them and make sure that he was not misquoted.

## 6.5 The Baṣrah school of exegesis

The founder of the Baṣrah school was the early successor exegete al-Ḥasan al-Baṣri (d.110/728) who was born and grew up in Madīnah. He was brought up by Umm Salamah (Hind), the Prophet’s wife. He was highly influenced by °Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb and later became one of the students of Anas b. Mālik (d.91/709) who was a companion and the servant of the Prophet. Like his father, al-Ḥasan was a well-known preacher (qāṣṣ or qaṣṣās), led an ascetic life and was heavily involved in preaching morality, admonition and the renunciation of pleasure in worldly

things. This ascetic life style of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣri became the fingerprints of his approach to Qur'anic exegesis. This exegetical technique, however, was opposed by other scholars from other schools of exegesis such as Abu al-ʿĀliyah, a Madīnan school scholar. Also, ʿAli b. Abī Ṭālib was reported to have objected to the admonition approach (*uslūb al-qaṣṣāṣīn*). The main objection of scholars to the Baṣrah school's approach of admonition was based on the fact that the students of al-Ḥasan employed fabricated and weak ḥadīths which were employed to support the topic of their admonition lectures. The two major figures of the Baṣrah school were al-Ḥasan and his student Qatādah al-Sadūsi (d.117/735). Both scholars, however, were known for their leniency towards acceptance of ḥadīths without either sound chain of authorities or even without any chain of authorities. Unlike Kūfah, Baṣrah enjoyed stability and was not inflicted by the civil war and sectarian beliefs. Baṣrah was well-known for its ascetic life pattern and Ibn Sīrīn (d.110/728) was the unique product of this spiritual milieu. Ibn Sīrīn, however, was critical of his contemporary scholar al-Ḥasan al-Baṣri with regard to the latter's encouragement of teaching exegesis, recording it, using a hypothetical approach based on personal judgement and discovery of meanings (*ijtihād* and *istinbāṭ*) in exegetical matters, and most importantly, of al-Ḥasan's *tadlīs*<sup>2</sup> in his narration of ḥadīth. Although both Ibn Sīrīn and al-Ḥasan al-Baṣri were well-known for their ascetic life style, the former was more known for his joyful attitude (*mizāḥ*), laughing and joking (*mujāmalah*) than the latter. On the contrary, al-Ḥasan was known for his stressed-out look, feeling sad (*maḥzūn*), being preoccupied with death and the hereafter. Moreover, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣri used to complain of forgetfulness (*al-nisyān*). This is contrary to his student, Qatādah, who, although blind, was well-known for his sharp memory and the memorization of a vast number of ḥadīths. The city of Baṣrah was an attractive place to other Qur'ān scholars from other schools of exegesis such as ʿIkramah of the Makkah school. The views of the Baṣrah school was also felt in the exegesis of ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Ṣanʿāni from Yemen who was influenced by Qatādah when the latter visited Yemen. However, al-Ṣanʿāni was the student of the late successor exegete Sufyān b. ʿUyaynah (d.107-198/725–813) who was the advocate of the Makkah school.

### **6.5.1 Features of Baṣrah school of exegesis**

Among the major prototypical features of the Baṣrah school are as follows:

- (i) The Baṣrah school was influenced by the Madīnah school of exegesis. Both al-Ḥasan al-Baṣri and his student Qatādah were influenced by Saʿīd b. al-Musaiyab of the Madīnah school.
- (ii) The Baṣrah school showed a limited interest in hypothetical opinion (*ijtihād*). However, hypothetical opinion was not employed in the analysis of theological *mutashābihāt* and the names and attributes of God. In his exegesis of Q2:102, 'wamā unzila ʿalā al-malakaini bibābila hārūta wamārūta [that which was revealed to the two angels at Babylon, Hārūt and Mārūt],' al-Ḥasan al-Baṣri, for instance, denied that Hārūt and Mārūt were angels because he argued that angels did not teach people magic.

- (iii) Less interested in Jewish anecdotes. This can be attributed to the influence of the Madīnah school on al-Ḥasan al-Baṣri and his student Qatādah. Although Qatādah mentioned some Jewish anecdotes, he expressed reservation and referred to them very briefly.
- (iv) The Baṣrah school was not stringent enough with ḥadīth in terms of its text and chain of authorities. In other words, exegetes of the Baṣrah school accepted the ḥadīth that was without sound chain of narration (ḥadīth mural). This is a direct influence of Anas b. Mālīk who was known for his flexibility and leniency (*mutasāhil*) towards ḥadīth's chain of authorities, sound text of ḥadīth and acceptance of a ḥadīth without chain of authorities. The other major reason for the use of ḥadīths without sound chain of authorities was due to the fact that the Baṣrah school was interested in the gist of the ḥadīth rather than its accurate text (*matn*) so long as it could support the admonition topic they were talking about during their admonition session.
- (v) The Baṣrah school was interested in admonition (*al-wa'z*) and urging people to renounce the pleasure of worldly gains. Both al-Ḥasan al-Baṣri and his student Qatādah were excellent preachers (*quṣṣāṣ*, singular *qāṣṣ*). Through their emotionally charged admonition sessions, they attempted to raise the emotional temperature and spiritual sentiments of their audience by urging them to adopt an ascetic life style and abandon the worldly pleasure of the present life. Thus, the Baṣrah school had sown the seeds of Sufism.
- (vi) The Baṣrah school was interested in the detailed and emotively charged analysis of āyahs related to the stories of Prophets and reward and punishment. This is interrelated and complementary to their approach of admonition in Qur'anic exegesis.
- (vii) The Baṣrah school employed elevated style and highly eloquent expressions for effective psychological and emotional impact on the audience. Their exegesis is also marked by emotive expressions as an exegetical and psychological technique required for morality lessons.
- (viii) The Baṣrah school was interested in the contextual approach to exegesis. This is a linguistic exegetical technique that is concerned with the thematic chaining (*al-munāsabah*) of āyahs and the thematic relationship that binds consecutive sūrahs together.
- (ix) The Baṣrah school was highly interested in linguistic exegesis. This was represented by their interest in Arabic grammar as well as in the modes of reading as a linguistic exegetical technique. The Arab linguist Abu al-Aswad al-Du'ali (d.69/688), who lived in Baṣrah, laid down the first rules of Arabic grammar. A large number of non-native Arabs, converts or non-converts, came to Baṣrah which was the commercial window of Iraq. It was felt extremely important to lay down the rules of Arabic grammar to preserve Arabic from linguistic corruption. Thus, the widespread atmosphere of linguistic interest in Baṣrah had influenced the Baṣrah school of exegesis.

- (x) Although the Baṣrah school was influenced by Ibn Masʿūd of the Kūfah school in terms of his exegetical modes of reading (*al-qirāʾah al-tafsīriyyah*), the Baṣrah school was more interested in the traditional articulatory phonetics approach to modes of reading adopted by the Madīnah school of Ubai b. Kaʿb. In other words, the Baṣrah school focused on the different phonetic forms which a given word might have; that is, a word could be pronounced differently according to different vowels with or without a change of meaning.

## 6.6 Exegetical techniques of the formative phase

The four schools of the formative phase adopted a number of exegetical techniques, such as follows:

- (i) Exegesis of the Qurʾān through the Qurʾān, that is, Qurʾanic intertextuality (*tafsīr al-qurʾān bil-qurʾān*): This is an intertextual exegesis technique which aims to explain the meaning of a Qurʾanic expression or an āyah through one of the following linguistic approaches:
- (1) Semantic similarity, that is, synonymy (*al-ashbāh*): In this technique, the exegete makes a semantic analogy between two āyahs through synonymy that exists between them either at the word level or at the thematic level. Therefore, semantic similarity is sub-classified into the following:
- (a) Word-level semantic similarity: The exegete compares two different āyahs that share lexical items with similar meanings. For instance, Q2:28, ‘*kaifa takfurūna billāhi wakuntum amwātan faʾaḥyākum thumma yumītukum thumma yuḥyīkum* [How can you disbelieve in God when you were lifeless and He brought you to life, then He will cause you to die, then He will bring you back to life],’ is semantically similar, that is, synonymous, to Q40:11, ‘*qālū rabbanā amattanā ithnataini waʾaḥyaitanā ithnataini* [They will say, ‘Our Lord, You made us lifeless twice and gave us life twice],’ and Q19:87, ‘*lā yamlikūna al-shafāʿata illā man ittakhadha ʿinda al-raḥmāni ʿahdā* [None will have the power of intercession except he who had taken a covenant from the Most Merciful],’ is semantically similar to Q20:109, ‘*yawma idhin lā tanfaʿu al-shafāʿatu illā man adhina lahu al-raḥmānu waraḍiya lahu qawlā* [That day, no intercession will benefit except that of one to whom the Most Merciful has given permission and has accepted his word],’ and
- (b) Thematic-level semantic similarity: This is the most common exegetical tool adopted by the exegetes of the formative phase. It is a comparison at the thematic level in which the exegete finds two different āyahs with different words, but they share the same leitmotif that is expressed in different words. Thus, the two āyahs are conceptually linked, as in Q2:37, ‘*fatalaqqā ādamu min rabbihī kalimātin fatāba ʿalaihi* [Adam received from his Lord some

words, and He accepted his repentance],’ which is thematically related to Q7:23, ‘qālā rabbanā ḡalamnā anfanā wa’in lam taḡfir lanā watarḡamnā lanakūnanna min al-kḡsīrīn [They said, “Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves, and if You do not forgive us and have mercy upon us, we will surely be among the losers”],’ and Q7:205, ‘wadhkur rabbaka fī nafsika taḡarru’an wakhīfatan wadūna al-jahri min al-qawli bil-ḡhuduwwi wal-aḡḡālī walā takun min al-ḡḡāfilīn [Remember your Lord within yourself in humility and in fear without being apparent in speech, in the mornings and the evenings and do not be among the heedless],’ which is thematically chained to Q17:110, ‘qul ud‘u allāḡa aw ud‘u al-raḡḡmāna aiyan mā tad‘ū falahu al-asmā’u al-ḡḡsnā [Say, “Call upon the Most Merciful. Whichever name you call, to Him belong the best names”].’ Thus, these āyahs are thematically synonymous.

- (2) Orthographic similarity, that is, polysemy (al-naḡā’ir, al-wujūḡ): In this technique, the exegete provides the different meanings which a single Qur’anic expression may have in the same sūrah or in different sūrahs.
- (3) Semantic ambiguity (ḡharīb, mushkil): In this exegetical technique, the exegete provides the meaning(s) of a Qur’anic expression that is semantically ambiguous because it is rarely used by the Arabs due to being a foreign word or dialect-specific.
- (4) Explaining the generic by the specific (tafsīr al-‘āmm bil-kḡḡḡḡ): This is an exegetical technique through which the exegete explains an āyah that has a generic meaning by means of another āyah that has a specific meaning, as in Q3:92, ‘lan tanālu al-birra ḡattā tunfiqū mim mā tuḡhib-būn [Never will you attain the good reward until you spend in the way of God from that which you love],’ which generally refers to al-infāq (spending). Through Qur’anic intertextuality, the generic meaning of al-infāq is explained by Q76:8, ‘wayuḡ‘imūna al-ḡa‘āma ‘alā ḡubbihi miskīnan wayatīman wa’asīran [They give food in spite of love for it to the needy, the orphan and the captive]’ which provides a specific meaning to how al-infāq should be made. Similarly, Q5:32, ‘min ajli dhālika katabnā ‘alā banī isrā’īla annahu man qatala nafsān bighairi nafsīn aw faḡādin fī al-arḡi faka’annamā qatala al-nāsa jamī’an waman aḡyāḡā fak’annamā aḡya al-nāsa jamī’an [Because of that, We decreed upon the Children of Israel that whoever kills a soul unless for a soul or for corruption done in the land, it is as if he had slain mankind entirely. And whoever saves one, it is as if he had saved mankind entirely],’ provides a generic meaning because the word nafs (soul) occurs in the indefinite form and bears a generic meaning. However, Q4:93, ‘waman yaqtul mu’minān muta‘ammīdan faḡazā’uhū jahannamu khāliḡan fīḡ [Whoever kills a believer intentionally, his recompense is hell wherein he will abide eternally],’ explains the specific meaning of what nafs actually means. Therefore, through Q4:93, the word nafs specifically

means a believer. Also, the generic meaning of the expression *sū'an* (a wrong deed) in Q4:123, 'man ya<sup>c</sup>mal *sū'an* yujzā bihī [Whoever does a wrong will be recompensed for it]' is made more specific by the expression *kafarū* (to disbelieve) in Q34:17, 'dhālika jazaināhum bimā kafarū [We repaid them because they disbelieved].'

- (5) Explaining the ambiguous (*tawḍīḥ al-mubham*): Through this linguistic exegetical tool, the exegete finds an *āyah* that can disambiguate the meaning of another *āyah*, as in Q9:106, 'wa<sup>c</sup>ākharūna murjawna li'amri allāhi immā yu<sup>c</sup>adhdhibuhum wa<sup>c</sup>immā yatūbu <sup>c</sup>alaihim [There are others deferred until the command of God whether He will punish them or whether He will forgive them]' where the word *ākharūn* (others) is semantically ambiguous. Through Qur'anic intertextuality, this ambiguity in meaning can be explained by Q9:118, 'wa<sup>c</sup>alā al-thalāthati alladhīna khullifū ḥattā idhā ḍāqat <sup>c</sup>alaihim al-arḍu bimā raḥubat waḍāqat <sup>c</sup>alaihim anfusuhum waẓannū an lā malja'a min allāhi illā ilaihi thumma tāba <sup>c</sup>alaihim liyatūbū [He also forgave the three who were left behind and regretted their error to the point that the earth closed in on them in spite of its vastness and their souls anguished them and they were certain that there is no refuge from God except in Him. Then He turned to them so they could repent]' whose circumstance of revelation refers to Hilāl b. Umayyah, Marārah b. Rabī<sup>c</sup> and Ka<sup>c</sup>b b. Mālik. Similarly, Q79:25, 'nakāla al-ākhirati wal-ūlā [exemplary punishment for the last and the first transgression]' is a semantically ambiguous *āyah* whose meaning can be explained by two more *āyahs*: Q28:38, 'waqāla fir<sup>c</sup>awnu yā aiyuha al-mala'u mā <sup>c</sup>alimtu lakum min ilāhin ghairi fa<sup>c</sup>awqid li yā hāmānu <sup>c</sup>ala al-ṭīni faj<sup>c</sup>al li ṣarḥan la'alli aṭṭali<sup>c</sup>u ilā ilāhi mūsā wa<sup>c</sup>innī la'azunnuhū min al-kādhībīn [Pharaoh said, "O eminent ones, I have not known you to have a god other than me. Then ignite for me, O Hāmān, a fire upon the clay and make for me a tower that I may look at the god of Moses. Indeed, I do think he is among the liars], which explains the meaning of the word *al-ūlā*, that is, the first transgression made by Pharaoh, and Q79:24, 'anā rabbukum al-a<sup>c</sup>lā [I (Pharaoh) am your most exalted lord], which explains the meaning of *al-ākhirati*, that is, the second transgression made by Pharaoh.

- (ii) Exegesis of the Qur'*ān* through prophetic tradition (*tafsīr al-qur'*ān* bil-sunnah*):

- (1) The use of a ḥadīth that can disambiguate the meaning of an *āyah*, as in Q2:230, 'fa<sup>c</sup>in ṭallaqahā falā taḥillu lahū min ba<sup>c</sup>du ḥattā tankiḥa zawjan ghairahu [If he has divorced her for the third time, then she is not lawful to him afterward until after she marries a husband other than him], which can involve one of the following different meanings. Q2:230 means either

- (a) a divorced lady has to re-marry another man through a marriage contract (*'aqd nikāḥ*) only without any physical contact with the second husband. This means that in order for her first husband to be allowed to re-marry her, she is legally required to have a new

marriage contract with her second husband. The new marriage contract with her second husband allows her first husband to re-marry her even though her second husband has made no sexual intercourse with her. However, there is no ḥadīth in support of this meaning, or

- (b) a divorced lady has to re-marry another man and is required to have a marriage contract and a sexual intercourse with the second husband. This means that in order for her first husband to be allowed to re-marry her, she is legally required to have a new marriage contract as well as a sexual intercourse with her second husband. This meaning is supported by a ḥadīth. The meaning of Q2:230 is disambiguated by the ḥadīth narrated by al-Bukhārī: ‘lā taḥillu laka ḥattā tadhūqa al-<sup>°</sup>usailah [You are not allowed to re-marry her unless she tastes the glans],’ which literally means, ‘You are not allowed to re-marry the wife you divorced unless the glans of her new husband enters her vagina’ (al-<sup>°</sup>Asqalāni 1982, 9, p. 464)
- (2) The use of a ḥadīth that can explain an āyah that has a general meaning (tafṣīl mā huwa mujmal), as in Q4:103, ‘inna al-ṣalāta kānat <sup>°</sup>ala almu’minīna kitāban mawqūtan [Indeed, prayer has been decreed upon the believers a decree of specified times],’ whose meaning is too general since we are neither informed about the prescribed number of times of the daily prayers nor of the traveller’s prayer. Similarly, in Q9:103, ‘khudh min amwālihim ṣadaqatan tuṭahhiruhum waturaddu min aghniyā’ihim [Take from their wealth a charity by which you purify them and cause them increase],’ the meaning is general; in other words, we are not informed about the amount and conditions of zakāt. Therefore, Q4:103 and Q9:103 provide a general meaning. However, the general meanings of both of these āyahs are made clear by different ḥadīths. The prophetic ḥadīth makes it clear: ‘buniya al-islāmu <sup>°</sup>alā khmasin . . . wa’itā’ al-zakāt [Islam is based upon five pillars . . . and the payment of charity (zakāt)]’ (al-<sup>°</sup>Asqalāni 1982, 1, p. 49). Also, the Prophet sent Ma<sup>°</sup>adh to the people of Yemen and told him, ‘a<sup>°</sup>limhum anna allāha iftaraḍa <sup>°</sup>alaihim ṣadaqatan fī amwālihim tu’khadhu min aghniyā’ihim waturaddu <sup>°</sup>alā fuqarā’ihim [Inform them that God imposed upon them the payment of charity from their wealth taken from their rich people and given to their poor]’ (al-<sup>°</sup>Asqalāni 1982, 3, p. 261). Thus, the ḥadīth has explained and made the general meaning of the Qur’ān more specific.
- (3) The use of a ḥadīth that has a specific meaning in order to explain an āyah that has a generic meaning (takhṣīṣ mā huwa <sup>°</sup>amm), as in Q5:38, ‘wal-sāriqu wal-sāriqatu faṭṭa<sup>°</sup>ū aidiyahumā jazā’an bimā kasabā nakālan min allāh [Amputate the hands of the male and female thief in recompense for what they committed as a deterrent punishment from God],’ whose generic meaning has been made specific by the standard practice of the Prophet (al-sunnah). According to the generic meaning,

whoever steals, his or her hand should be cut off whether the stolen thing is valuable or invaluable, or the quantity is little or large. However, the sunnah has specified the generic meaning of Q5:38. The Prophet has explained to his companions that the amputation of the hand should not be carried out for stolen fruits regardless of the quantity stolen. Similarly amputation of the hand should not be carried out for any stolen thing whose value is less than a quarter of a Dīnār which was the currency then. Q5:38 is made specific by the ḥadīth: ‘lā tuqṭa’ al-yadu illā fi rub’i dīnārin faṣā’idan [The thief’s hand should not be amputated unless he or she steals the value of a quarter of a Dīnār or more]’ (al-Khuḍaribik 1969, p. 188)

Similarly, Q4:11, ‘yūṣīkum allāhu fi awlādikum lil-dhakari mithlu ḥaẓẓi al-unthayain fa’in kunna niṣā’an fawqa ithnain falahunna thuluthā mā tarak wa’in kānat wāḥidatan falahā al-niṣfu wali’abawaihi likulli wāḥidin minhumā al-sudus mimmā tarak in kāna lahū walad [God instructs you concerning your children (i.e. their portions of inheritance): for the male, what is equal to the share of two females. But if there are only daughters, two or more, for them is two-thirds of one’s estate. And if there is only one, for her is half. And for one’s parents, to each one of them is a sixth of his estate if he left children]’ and Q4:12, walakum niṣfu mā taraka azwājukum . . . [For you is half of what your wives leave . . .]’ whose meanings are generic and show that the will (al-waṣiyyah) can precede muqaddamah ‘alā and inheritance (al-mīrāth) regardless of its value and quantity. However, this generic meaning is made specific by the ḥadīth narrated by Ma’ādh: ‘anna allāha qad taṣaddaqa ‘alaikum bithuluthi amwālikum ‘inda wafātikum ziyādatan fi ḥasanātikum [God has given you as charity the third of your wealth after your death in order to increase your good deeds]’ as well as the ḥadīth narrated by ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, ‘anna al-rasūla qaḍā bil-daini qabla al-waṣiyyati wal-mīrāthi [The Prophet gave preference to the debt to be paid before the will is read and the inheritance is given],’ where we are told specifically that the will can precede the inheritance if the will does not exceed third of the value of what is inherited. In other words, the inheritors should respect, that is, read, the will of the deceased before they divide his or her inheritance.

(iii) Exegesis of the Qur’ān through the companions’ views (tafsīr al-qur’ān bi-aqwāl al-ṣaḥābah). The exegetical views of the companions had become authoritative for early and late successor exegetes, as in the following examples:

Example 1: ‘wayarā alladhīna ūtū al-‘ilma alladhī unzila ilaika min rabbika huwa al-ḥaqq [Those who have been given knowledge see that what is revealed to you from your Lord is the truth]’ (Q34:6).

According to Mujāhid, as narrated from Ibn ‘Abbās, the phrase, ‘alladhīna ūtū al-‘ilma [those who have been given knowledge]’ means ‘the scholars’ which means ‘the companions of Muḥammad’.

Example 2: ‘aw lāmastum al-nisā’a [or you have contacted women]’ (Q4:43):

According to ʿAli and Ibn ʿAbbās, the expression lāmastum is a metonymy whose meaning is ‘to have a sexual intercourse’.

Example 3: Although there is no direct reference to prostration (al-sajdah) in Q6:90, ‘ulā’ika alladhīna hadā allāhu [Those are the ones whom God has guided],’ Mujāhid, as narrated from Ibn ʿAbbās, states that there should be a compulsory prostration (sajdah wājibah) with this āyah since Ibn ʿAbbās used to perform prostration with this particular āyah.

Example 4: ‘ḥattā idhā jā’a aḥadakum al-mawtu tawaffathu rusulunā wahum lā yufariṭūn [When death comes to one of you, Our angels of death take him, and they do not fail in their duties]’ (Q6:61) where for Mujāhid and Qatādah, as narrated from Ibn ʿAbbās, the expression rusulunā (literally meaning ‘messengers’) means malak al-mawt (angel of death) and that ‘the death angel has supporters from other angels.’

### 6.7 Ḥadīth as an exegetical tool by the four schools

Although the prophetic ḥadīth and the sunnah are the second major source in Qur’anic exegesis, there was a divergence of interest among the exegetes of the formative schools of exegesis with regard to the use of ḥadīth in Qur’anic exegesis. This is illustrated in terms of the position of each school towards the use of ḥadīth in exegesis:

- (i) The Makkah school: Although this school of exegesis adopted and encouraged the hypothetical approach to Qur’anic exegesis, its exegetes were not interested in the employment of ḥadīth that can support the meaning of a given āyah. Thus, we do not encounter much reference to ḥadīth in the exegetical works of this school. Exegetes of the Makkah school rely heavily on two sources: (a) the exegetical technique of Qur’anic intertextuality (tafsīr al-qur’ān bil-qur’ān), as in Mujāhid’s tafsīr, and (b) the views of Ibn ʿAbbās, as in the tafsīr works by the successors.
- (ii) The Madīnah school of exegesis: Scholars of this school relied heavily on ḥadīth in Qur’anic exegesis. However, recurrent reference to ḥadīth is more evident in the ḥadīth and sunnah works by scholars of this school than in tafsīr works because the Madīnah school was lukewarm towards the study and teaching of Qur’anic exegesis.
- (iii) The Kūfah school of exegesis: Exegetes of this school were reluctant to employ ḥadīth as an exegetical tool in explaining the Qur’ān for fear of making a mistake in their exegetical analysis and for fear of using forged ones which were in circulation. Although the Kūfah school was vigorous in the acceptance of a ḥadīth in terms of its sound chain of authorities and sound text (matn), for its founder, Ibn Masʿūd, explaining the meaning of an āyah by a ḥadīth is regarded as being based on personal judgement (ijtihād) and, therefore, should be avoided in Qur’anic exegesis. Instead, Ibn Masʿūd encouraged the use of a very limited number of ḥadīths and the employment of personal opinion. The Kūfah school rejected the employment of personal

judgement and discovery of meaning with regard to explaining the meaning of a Qur'anic expression. However, Ibn Mas'ūd encouraged the use of personal judgement and discovery of meaning only with regards to āyahs of jurisprudential problems.

- (iv) The Baṣrah school of exegesis: As preachers (quṣṣās), exegetes of this school were more interested in the employment of ḥadīth in Qur'anic exegesis than the other three schools. This is due to the fact that this school was influenced by the Madīnah school and also it was interested in admonition and preaching (al-wa'z). Thus, ḥadīth was a major source in the tafsīr works of the Baṣrah school. Qatādah, for instance, was well-known for his sharp memorization of ḥadīths which he employed in his exegesis of circumstances of revelation and the Makkan and Madīnan revelations. However, the ḥadīths used by this school were without sound chain of narration (ḥadīth mursal) and were mainly related to morality.

## **6.8 Evolution of sects and impact on the formative schools**

The word *firqah* in Islamic studies is translated as sect whose plural is *firaq* (sects). However, in military Arabic, the word *firqah* means regiment. In Islamic studies, the plural word *firaq* is also referred to as *ahl al-ahwā'* (people of personal desire). The word *ahwā'* is the plural of *hawā'* and is morphologically derived from the verb *yahwā'* meaning to fall into. Thus, we have *al-hāwīyah* (hell), which, according to Q101:9, also means abyss, infernal depth, and the political diplomatic idiom *ḥāffat al-hāwīyah* means the beginning/edge of a deteriorating political/diplomatic situation. However, the word *yahwā'* also signifies seeking a personal desire (i.e. to wish). Thus, the expression *ahl al-ahwā'* is theologically motivated and connotatively designates those whose mistaken belief makes them 'fall into the hellfire'. The same expression is also referred to in tafsīr literature as *ahl al-bida'* meaning innovationists, that is, people of innovation. However, this stigmatized expression is rejected by non-mainstream theologians and exegetes.

Among the sects that materialized during the formative phase of exegesis were the Shī'ah, al-Khāwarij, al-Qadariyyah and al-Murji'ah. The dissemination of these sects had some form of impact in one way or another on Qur'anic exegesis activity during this phase of tafsīr evolution. The emergence of these sects led to divergent political, ideological and theological points of view with regard to the exegesis of a given Qur'anic āyah (for further details on these sects and the political and theological cleavages among exegetes, see [Chapter 3, Sections 3.2 and 3.3](#)). These sects made their presence felt among successor exegetes of the formative phase. However, none of the companion exegetes of the formative phase was dubbed by any of these sects. Below are the major observations about the impact of sects upon early and late successor exegetes:

- 1 The impact of sects was mostly felt by the Iraqī school of exegesis. Views of these sects were attributed to the exegetes of the school of Kūfah and the school of Baṣrah.

- 2 The city of Kūfah was plagued by the civil war in 36/656. Shī'ism and Murji'ah emerged and took firm roots in Kūfah.
- 3 The city of Baṣrah witnessed the emergence of al-Khāwarij and al-Qadariyyah (for more details, see n. 1 of [Chapter 1](#) and n. 2 of [Chapter 3](#), respectively).
- 4 Mujāhid of the Makkah school was not popular among some Muslim communities in the Muslim world due to his exegetical views that did not take into account the exoteric, that is, literal meaning of Qur'anic expressions. Mujāhid provided an esoteric, that is, allegorical, non-literal, rather than exoteric, that is, non-allegorical, literal, exegesis. This esoteric exegetical approach was rejected by mainstream exegetes who were pro-exoteric exegesis.
- 5 'Ikramah of the Makkah school of exegesis was accused of Khawārij leanings.
- 6 The founder of the Baṣrah school, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣri, was accused of mild Qadariyyah leanings.
- 7 Ibn Sīrīn, a Qur'ān scholar who lived in Baṣrah, criticized the Qadariyyah which spread in his city.
- 8 al-Nakh'ī of the Kūfah school criticized al-Murji'ah which spread in his city.
- 9 al-Sha'bi, al-Nakh'ī and al-Suddi of the Kūfah school of exegesis were accused of Shī'ism. It was believed that they expressed some views which were understood as having some form of Shī'ī leanings in their tafsīr but later on abandoned their views and denounced Shī'ism.
- 10 The impact of sects was not felt by the Ḥijāz school of exegesis represented by the school of Makkah and the school of Madīnah. The Ḥijāz school strongly warned against the views of sects that had spread in Kūfah and Baṣrah. There were, however, some reservations towards the views of Mujāhid of the Makkah school.
- 11 The influence of sects and their ideological views could not penetrate the school of Madīnah. This was attributed to (a) the large number of companions living in Madīnah, (b) the strong impact of the teaching of ḥadīth by this school and (c) the non-existence of philosophical views.
- 12 Late successor exegetes were more influenced by the ideological views of sects than the early successors.

## 6.9 Comparative analysis of the four schools

In order to appreciate the achievement, influence of each of the four schools of exegesis, and the process of inter-fertilization among them, we need to provide a comparative investigation of the schools' approaches, exegetical techniques and the impact of the evolution of sects on their exegetical views. In the light of what we have discussed above, we can propose the following contrastive and comparative details of the epic journey of the formative schools represented by the four major schools of Qur'anic exegesis:

- 1 There was inter-fertilization among the four schools of Qur'anic exegesis. Although the Ḥijāzi (Makkah and Madīnah) and the Iraqi (Kūfah and

Başrah) schools of exegesis were independent of each other, the influence of one school over the other was evident. Sa'īd b. Jubair, for instance, was from Kūfah but became a student of the Makkah school. However, Sa'īd b. Jubair was influenced by the Kūfah school with regard to abandoning *ijtihād* (personal judgement) and *istinbāṭ* (discovery of meaning), which were not encouraged by Ibn Mas'ūd of the Kūfah school, although the Makkah school welcomed this exegetical approach. Similarly, the late successors, al-Suddi (d.127/744) and al-Ḍaḥḥāk (d.105/723), who were educated in Kūfah, were proponents of the Makkah school and adopted the exegetical views of Ibn 'Abbās. The same applies to Sufyān al-Thawri (d.161/777), who was educated in Kūfah, but adopted the exegetical approach and views of Ibn 'Abbās. Another interesting example of inter-fertilization in Qur'anic exegesis is the case of Mujāhid and Qatādah. Although Mujāhid was from the Makkah school and Qatādah from the Başrah school, they were both influenced by Ibn Mas'ūd of the Kūfah school with regard to modes of reading. More interestingly, the founder of the Başrah school of exegesis, al-Ḥasan al-Bašri, was influenced by Sa'īd b. al-Musaiyab, who was a student of the Madīnah school. Similarly, Qatādah from the Başrah school, a student of its founder al-Ḥasan al-Bašri, went to Madīnah and was taught by Sa'īd b. al-Musaiyab. Therefore, it is safe to claim that the place of birth of a given exegete is not a guarantee of his exegetical views with regard to the school of exegesis of his domicile or birth place.

- 2 The school of Madīnah was suspicious of the school of Makkah. For instance, when Mujāhid visited Madīnah, he found himself unpopular due to his use of *ijtihād* and *istinbāṭ* which were frowned upon by the scholars of the Madīnah school who opposed these two exegetical techniques in the analysis of Qur'anic expressions and theological *mutashābihāt*. Similarly, 'Ikramah of the Makkah school encountered the same unenthusiastic reception from Madīnah exegetes. Sa'īd b. al-Musaiyab of the Madīnah school expressed critical remarks against 'Ikramah when he visited Madīnah.
- 3 Although the two schools of Madīnah and Kūfah expressed half-hearted interest towards the study of exegesis and explaining Qur'anic expressions or *āyahs* for fear of making an inaccurate judgement or saying something wrong, narration from scholars of the Madīnah school was less frequent than that from scholars of the Kūfah school. This is clear evidence that the Madīnah school was more cautious towards and less interested in the study of exegesis. Scholars of the Madīnah school repeatedly warned against indulgence in Qur'anic exegesis to avoid erroneous analysis of the word of God.
- 4 Although the two schools of Madīnah and Kūfah were engaged in the teaching of Qur'anic exegesis, both schools were against the recording of exegesis. Therefore, lecture notes were not allowed. If lecture notes were documented, students were requested by their teachers to burn their notes for fear of recording flawed exegetical views that could be passed on to other scholars elsewhere and in order to stop the dissemination of erroneous Qur'anic exegesis through inadvertent misquotation. For instance, 'Urwah b.

al-Zubair (d.93/711), a Madīnah school exegete, and °Alqamah b. Qais (d.61/680), a Kūfah school exegete, burnt their books and lecture notes on Qur'anic exegesis. Similarly, °Ubaidah b. °Amru al-Salmāni (d.72/691), a student of Ibn Mas°ūd, asked his students to bring back to him all their lecture notes so that he could destroy them in their presence. However, the schools of Makkah and Baṣrah encouraged the teaching and learning of Qur'anic exegesis as well as the recording of lecture notes and writing on exegesis.

- 5 Although the two schools of Madīnah and Kūfah demonstrated interest in the study of ḥadīth, the Madīnah school was characterized by ḥadīths that were narrated with sound chain of authorities. This was due to the fact that
  - (i) a number of major companions such as Abu Hurairah (d.58/677) and Zaid b. Thābit (d.45/665)<sup>3</sup> lived in Madīnah and influenced successor exegetes such as Sa°id b. al-Musaiyab (d.93/711) of Madīnah, and
  - (ii) the influence of °Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (d.23/644) on the school of Madīnah with regard to ḥadīth and his advice to scholars not to use it unless supported by a sound chain of authorities. Although Ibn Mas°ūd, the founder of the Kūfah school, was also influenced by the views of °Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb with regard to ḥadīth, the Kūfah school exegetes were interested in the exegetical analysis of jurisprudential āyahs. Therefore, in the absence of a soundly narrated ḥadīth, the Kūfah scholars relied on their personal opinion judgement in their verdict on a given jurisprudential problem. This exegetical approach of the Kūfah school seems to be a safety valve to avoid fabricated ḥadīths that were in circulation.
- 6 Although the two schools of Madīnah and Kūfah were rigorous with the text of ḥadīths and their sound chain of authorities, the Baṣrah school was lenient towards the acceptance of ḥadīths without verification of the accuracy of their content or chain of authorities.
- 7 Although the Baṣrah school was influenced by the Madīnah school, the Baṣrah school was less rigorous in the acceptance of ḥadīths, their chain of narration and acceptance of ḥadīths without any chain of narration.
- 8 Although the two schools of Madīnah and Kūfah were ḥadīth-centred, that is, they heavily relied on ḥadīth, the Madīnah school was not willing to pass a personal opinion judgement on a jurisprudential problem in the absence of a soundly narrated ḥadīth. In other words, the Madīnah school would not accept a ḥadīth without a sound chain of authorities. However, the Kūfah school did not hesitate to express a personal opinion judgement on a jurisprudential problem when there was no soundly narrated ḥadīth available to the exegete.
- 9 Although the Kūfah school of exegesis was classified as a hypothetical opinion school (*madrasat ra'i*), exegetes of this school expressed their personal opinions only with regard to lawful and prohibited jurisprudential matters but had neither indulged in the exegetical analysis of Qur'anic expressions related to the names and attributes of God nor in the analysis of theological

mutashābihāt.<sup>4</sup> On the contrary, the two schools of Makkah and Baṣrah were heavily involved in the exegetical analysis of the names and attributes of God and freely expressed their personal opinions towards these theologically controversial problems.

- 10 Although the two schools of Makkah and Baṣrah were interested in admonition, learning about and taking a moral lesson from the previous unbelieving nations, urging people to lead an ascetic life and renounce the pleasure in worldly things, the exegetes of the Makkah school were not as much enthusiastic about this approach as their Baṣrah counterparts.
- 11 Although Saʿīd b. al-Musaiyab (d.93/711) of the Madīnah school revised the Qurʾān with Ibn ʿAbbās, Saʿīd was not influenced by Ibn ʿAbbās’s exegetical views, interest in teaching and recording exegesis, and the use of raʿī.
- 12 Although Abu al-ʿĀliyah (d.93/711) was a resident of Baṣrah, he was hardly influenced by the Makkah school of exegesis. However, Abu al-ʿĀliyah became one of the students of its founder, Ibn ʿAbbās, when the latter was appointed as the ruler of Baṣrah for four years.
- 13 Although Abu al-ʿĀliyah was a proponent of the Makkah school of exegesis, he was not interested in teaching exegesis. Thus, he had no students, and his reputation and the narration of his views were limited. This is further evidence of the impact of the Madīnah school on Abu al-ʿĀliyah as he was more attached to the views of Ubai b. Kaʿb and Saʿīd b. al-Musaiyab of the Madīnah school than to the views of the Makkah school. Most of the views of Ubai b. Kaʿb are narrated by Abu al-ʿĀliyah.
- 14 Although the Baṣrah school was a proponent of the Madīnah school, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣri adopted a limited amount of hypothetical opinion but not with regard to theological mutashābihāt and the names and attributes of God. He expressed his personal opinion in his exegesis of Q2:102 where he denied that Hārūt and Mārūt were angels.
- 15 The Baṣrah school was heavily influenced by Saʿīd b. al-Musaiyab (d.93/711) of Madīnah in jurisprudence. This was evident in the religious legal judgement of both al-Ḥasan al-Baṣri and his student Qatādah.
- 16 Ibn Sīrīn (d.110/728) was a Qurʾān scholar who lived in Baṣrah but was originally from Madīnah. Like al-Ḥasan al-Baṣri, Ibn Sīrīn was well-known for his extreme piety. Although Ibn Sīrīn lived in Baṣrah and was contemporary to al-Ḥasan al-Baṣri, he was critical of al-Ḥasan for his encouragement of teaching Qurʾanic exegesis, recording it and giving his personal opinion about it. Most importantly, Ibn Sīrīn was critical of al-Ḥasan for his tadlīs (see n. 2 of the present chapter).
- 17 Jābir b. Zaid al-Baṣri (Abū al-Shaʿthāʿ; d.93/711) was an authority in Qurʾanic exegesis and was influenced by the Makkah school. When Ibn ʿAbbās lived in Baṣrah, Jābir was influenced by his views. However, Jābir was more influenced by the spiritual environment of Baṣrah. He preferred the ascetic way of life, discouraged the recording and teaching of exegesis and preferred to deal with jurisprudence and giving formal legal judgement (iftāʾ). This is evidence of the impact of the Madīnah school on Jabir.

- 18 The eruption of political and religious civil war (fitnah) in Kūfah forced Qur'ān scholars to immigrate to politically more stable towns such as Makkah. The political stability in Makkah attracted many Qur'ān scholars such as Sa'īd b. Jubair, who immigrated from Kūfah and settled in Makkah as a result of the civil war in his home town.
- 19 The personal opinion and discovery of meaning approach adopted by the Makkah school constituted the beginning of the rational non-mainstream exegesis adopted by most late successor and modern exegetes.
- 20 Although the school of Makkah sanctioned personal judgement and discovery of meaning, exegetes of this school were in line with the mainstream theological standpoint shared by the other three schools with regard to the theological notion of 'without asking how' (bilā kaif). None of the four schools questioned 'how' an attribute, or how a name of God came about. In other words, they firmly believe in the names and attributes of God without questioning their meanings or how they came about and what they look like.
- 21 The Madīnah school was the least narrated from among the other schools of exegesis. This was attributed to the fact that the scholars of Madīnah expressed half-hearted interest in the study and teaching of Qur'anic exegesis. Instead, they were passionately involved in the study and teaching of ḥadīth.

# 7 Linguistic and stylistic tools of exegesis

## 7.1 Introduction

The present discussion is concerned with the linguistic pre-requisites of the exegete. For both mainstream and non-main stream scholars, the exegete of the Qur'ān should possess advanced linguistic and stylistic competence in order to qualify for the elucidation of the Qur'anic text. The exegete is expected to be a professional linguist dexterous to provide an encyclopaedic bird's-eye analysis of Qur'anic expressions. As a Qur'ān scholar, the exegete should be acquainted with linguistic resources that deal with semantic syntax such as

- (i) those that account for expressions that are not commonly used and also for the grammatically ambiguous expressions, that is, words which may have more than one grammatical analysis in terms of case ending or morphology, as well as
- (ii) those which investigate the semantically ambiguous words and polysemous expressions.

Since Qur'anic discourse is characterized as a multi-faceted genre, stylistic analysis should also be involved to account for semantic problems from the perspective of Arabic rhetoric. It is, therefore, highly significant for an informative exegetical analysis to account for

- (i) genre variations which involve semantically oriented distinct stylistic patterns which share similar linguistic structures and
- (ii) different pragmatic functions of expressions according to the rhetorical role or the position of a word in the āyah.

The present chapter provides a comprehensive list of the grammatical, semantic, stylistic and rhetorical devices which an exegete is required to be armed with in order for his or her exegesis to be in line with the commonly held views of Qur'anic exegesis. Throughout this account, we shall provide explicated linguistic details to back up each linguistic pre-requisite. Our account of the linguistic and stylistic devices of exegesis is based on reputable exegetes, linguists and rhetoricians such as al-Ṭabari (2005), b. al-Anbārī (1970), °Aḏīmah (1972), al-Karmāni (1996),

al-Tirmidhi (1988), al-Rāzi (1990), al-Kafawi (1993), Ibn Qaiyim al-Jauziyyah (1994), al-Iskāfi (1995), al-Zamakhshari (1995), al-Nasafi (1996), al-Qurṭubi (1997), Abu Ḥaiyān (2001), al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahāni (n.d.) and Ibn ʿĀshūr (n.d.)

## 7.2 Prerequisites of the exegete

For a Qurʾān scholar to be a qualified exegete of the Qurʾanic text, he or she is required to be well-acquainted with a pool of linguistic and stylistic devices that enable him or her to undertake the linguistic, rhetorical and textual analysis of the Qurʾān. This set of linguistic-stylistic tools is employed by the exegete as an illuminating device that enables him or her to penetrate the complex syntactic, semantic and rhetorical defences of the multi-faceted Qurʾanic discourse. This involves the following exegetical linguistic-stylistic tools:

1. **Co-referentiality:** In Qurʾanic exegesis and Arabic linguistics, this grammatical problem is referred to as *ʿawdat al-ḍamīr* and is referred to in European linguistics as ‘co-referentiality’ or ‘pronominalization’. Co-referentiality is the most recurrent linguistic problem in Qurʾanic exegesis as it may lead to different exegetical analyses. An explicated account is provided below to illustrate this grammatical Qurʾanic feature:

faʿanzala allāhu sakīnatahū ʿalaihi waʿaiyadahū, Q9:40, where co-referentiality is represented by the attached pronoun (al-ḍamīr al-muttaṣil) -hi (him) in ʿalaihi which may refer to

- (i) Muḥammad, which is the most acceptable grammatical analysis. Thus, the meaning is, ‘God sent down His tranquillity upon Muḥammad and supported him,’
- (ii) Abu Bakr al-Ṣiddīq. Thus, the meaning is, ‘God sent down His tranquillity upon Abu Bakr and supported him,’ or
- (iii) To both Muḥammad and Abu Bakr al-Ṣiddīq. In other words, we should have ʿalahimā (on both of them). Therefore, the meaning is, ‘God sent down His tranquillity upon Muḥammad and Abu Bakr and supported them.’ The reason why we find the singular co-referential pronoun -hi instead of the dual -himā (both of them) is to signify their, that is, Muḥammad and Abu Bakr, unity as one person. For this reason, we encounter a different orthographic version, that is, mode of reading, in other codices such as that of Ḥafṣah, the Prophet’s wife, as ‘faʿanzala allāhu sakīnatahū ʿalahimā waʿaiyadahumā [God sent down His tranquillity upon Muḥammad and Abu Bakr and supported both of them].’
- (iv) However, the co-referential pronoun -hu (him) attached to the verb waʿaiyadahū refers to Muḥammad only.

We may have a series of co-referential pronouns in the same āyah. For instance, in Q48:9, the co-referential pronoun -hu (him) in watusabbihūhu (and

exalt Him) must refer to God only, ‘litu’minū billāhi warasūlihī watu<sup>o</sup>azzirūhu watuwaqqirūhu watusabbiḥūhu bukratan wa’aṣilā [That you (people) may believe in God and His Messenger and honour him (the Prophet) and respect him (the Prophet) and exalt Him (God) morning and afternoon]’ (Q48:9).

A co-referential pronoun may cause semantic ambiguity as in the āyah about Mary (maryam) in ‘fanādāhā min taḥtiḥā allā taḥzanī,’ Q19:24) where the pronoun -hā may refer either

- (i) to Jesus where the meaning will be, ‘But he (Jesus) called her from below,’ or
- (ii) to Gabriel where the meaning is, ‘But he (Gabriel) called her from below.’ This exegetical analysis is backed up by the linguistic feature of intertextuality in Q19:17, where reference has already been made to Gabriel: ‘fa’arsalnā ilaiḥā rūḥanā fatamaththala lahā basharan sawiyyā [We sent to her Our Spirit (Gabriel) to appear before her in the form of a perfected man].’

Also in:

ulā’ika yu’minūna biḥi [‘They are the ones who believe in the Book/Muḥammad/God/guidance]’ (Q2:121) where the co-referential pronoun -hi may refer either to the Book (i.e. the Qur’ān), Muḥammad, God or guidance (al-hudā).

Similarly in:

‘innamā al-nasī’u ziyādatun fī al-kufri yuḍallu biḥi alladhīna kafarū [Indeed, the postponing of restriction within sacred months is an increase in disbelief by which those who have disbelieved are led further astray]’ (Q9:37) where the co-referential pronoun -hī (it) should refer to al-nasī’u (the postponing [of restriction within sacred months]) and not to ziyādatun (an increase). Therefore, we get the meaning: postponing sacred months is an increase in disbelief by which those disregard God are led further astray. For this reason, the passive voice yuḍallu (are led further astray) refers to the other passive voice zuyyina (something, that is, this deed of postponing) is made pleasing (i.e. alluring to them).

Also in:

‘wa’ātainā mūsā al-kitāba waja<sup>o</sup>alnāhu hudan libanī isrā’īla [We gave Moses the Scripture and made it a guide for the Children of Israel]’ (Q17:2) where the co-referential pronoun -hu attached to the verb waja<sup>o</sup>alnā (made) may refer to either

- (i) Mūsā (Moses), where the meaning will be, ‘We gave Moses the Scripture and made him a guide for the Children of Israel,’ or

- (ii) al-kitāba (the Scripture), where the meaning is, ‘We gave Moses the Scripture and made it a guide for the Children of Israel.’

Similarly, in

‘walaw shi’ nā larafa<sup>‘</sup>nāhu bihā [If We had willed, We could have elevated him thereby]’ (Q7:176), where the co-referential pronoun -hu attached to the verb larafa<sup>‘</sup>nā (to elevate) may refer to either

- (i) al-insān (man, that is, mankind). Thus, the meaning is, ‘If We had willed, We could have raised him high by them (i.e. by our signs),’ which is the commended exegesis, or  
 (ii) al-kufr (disbelief) where the meaning changes to ‘If We had willed, We could have taken from him the disbelief in Our signs.’ This is the view of Mujāhid.

Also, in:

‘alladhīna ātaināhum al-kitāba ya<sup>‘</sup>rifūnahu kamā ya<sup>‘</sup>rifūna abnā’ahum’ (Q2:146) where the masculine co-referential pronoun -hu attached to the verb ya<sup>‘</sup>rifūna (to know) may refer to either

- (i) the expression al-ḥaqq (the truth) which is a masculine noun as well. This is the exegetical view of Ibn ‘Abbās where the meaning is, ‘Those to whom We gave the Scripture know it’ (i.e. the truth’ as they know their own children), or  
 (ii) the implicit noun, Muḥammad, according to Mujāhid where the meaning will be, ‘Those to whom We gave the Scripture know him (i.e. Muḥammad) as they know their own children.’

A controversial example of co-referentiality is found in the exegesis of Q13:2 explained below:

‘allāhu alladhī rafa<sup>‘</sup>a al-samāwāti bighairi ‘amadin trawnahā [It is God who erected the heavens without pillars that you can see]’ (Q13:2) where the co-referential pronoun -hā attached to the verb tarawna (to see) can refer to either

- (i) the noun al-samāwāti (the heavens), where the meaning is, ‘God has raised up the heavens with no visible supports,’ or  
 (ii) the noun ‘amadin (supports, pillars) where this exegesis becomes uncommended which means, ‘God has raised up the heavens with invisible supports.’ In other words, there are pillars which are used to raise up the heavens but these pillars cannot be seen by humans.)

A co-referential pronoun can also undertake the semantic function of cause and effect, as in

‘fa’idhā qara’ta al-qur’āna fasta’idh billāhi min al-shaiṭāni al-rajīm. . . innamā sultānuhū ‘ala alladhīna yatawallawnahū walladhīna hum bihī mushrikūn [When you recite the Qur’ān, first seek refuge in God from the outcast Satan . . . His authority is only over those who ally themselves with him and those who, because of him, join partners with God]’ (Q16:98–100) where the co-referential pronoun -hi (him) may refer to allāh (God) or al-shaiṭān (Satan). However, if the linguistic analysis is based on the second alternative, that is, -hi (him) refers to al-shaiṭān (Satan), the exegetical account of the co-referential pronoun would mean ‘because of’ or ‘as a result of’.

2. **Repetition and co-referentiality:** It is of value to the reader if he or she is made aware of the textual feature of repetition and its semantic function in Qur’anic textual analysis. Let us consider the following example:

‘wal-samā’a rafa’ahā wawaḍa’a al-mīzān. allā taṭghaw fī al-mīzān. wa’aqīmū al-wazn bil-qīṣṭi walā tukhsirū al-mīzān [He raised the heaven and made the human being erected in a straight form, that you should judge with justice and that you should establish weight in justice and do not make the balance deficient]’ (Q55:7–9) where the noun al-mīzān is repeated three times. The reader may wonder why a co-referential pronoun is not employed in the second and third āyahs. In his exegetical analysis, the exegete is expected to explain that the expression (al-mīzān) cannot be replaced by a co-referential pronoun to get:

‘wal-samā’a rafa’ahā wawaḍa’a al-mīzān. allā taṭghaw fīhi . . . walā tukhsirūhu [He raised the heaven and made the human being erected in a straight form, that you should judge with justice by it . . . and do not make it deficient]’ where we have the co-referential pronouns -hi (it) and -hu (it) attached to fīhi and tukhsirūhu in the second and third āyahs, respectively, and which refer to the same noun, al-mīzān. Although this alternative stylistic structure is grammatically sound, it distorts the meaning of the original āyahs Q55:7–9. The major reasons for the repetition of the noun al-mīzān and the non-occurrence of co-referentiality are attributed to the following semantic factors:

- (i) These three āyahs have been revealed at different times and not as a unit during one circumstance of revelation.
- (ii) The expression (al-mīzān) is a polysemous word that has three different meanings:
  - (1) In Q55:7, it means ‘i’tidāl al-insān [the straight erection of man’s body],’ that is, ‘bunyat al-insān [the physical straight shape of the human being],’
  - (2) In Q55:8, it means, ‘al-ḥukm bil-‘adl’ [to judge (rule) with justice]’ and
  - (3) In Q55:9, it means, ‘ālat al-wazn [the balance, that is, the tool used in the shop to weigh things up],’ and

(iii) the expression *al-mīzān* is not semantically repeated in the second and third āyah. Therefore, the use of co-referentiality will not convey the three distinct meanings. Thus, the expression *al-mīzān* is semantically polysemous.

**3. Intertextuality:** The exegete is expected to enjoy the memorization of the Qur'ān by heart. Knowing the Qur'ān by heart enables the exegete to establish intertextuality easily. For the mainstream school of exegesis, there are three major sources of Qur'anic exegesis: the Qur'ān, the tradition and the companions' views. Intertextuality refers to the first source of exegesis where a Qur'anic expression or an āyah is elucidated by another āyah, as in

'*wa'idhā aradnā an nuhlika qaryatan amarnā mutrafihā fafasaqū fihā faḥaqqā 'alaihā al-qawlu fadamarnāhā tadmīrā* [When We intend to destroy a city, We command its affluent but they defiantly disobey therein. So the word comes into effect upon it, and We destroy it completely]' (Q17:16).

This is a controversial āyah which constitutes a theological cleavage between different schools of exegesis. The Mu'tazili exegetes who belong to the non-mainstream school of exegesis claim that God commands people to commit evil deeds and then destroy them for these deeds. Thus, the meaning will be, 'When We intend to destroy a city, We command its affluent and they will do the evil deeds for which they deserve to be punished, and We destroy it completely.' For the Mu'tazilah, 'God's command' to the affluent of the city is allegorical (*majāzi*), that is, God gave them wealth but they abused it and therefore, deserved His wrath. The Qadariyyah<sup>1</sup> advocate a similar exegetical view to that of the Mu'tazilah. However, for other mainstream and non-mainstream exegetes, God does not order people to commit wrong deeds for which they will be held accountable and punished. On the contrary, they argue, people are commanded to do good deeds but they disobey the command of their Lord. Thus, this exegetical view is based on Qur'anic intertextuality represented by the following āyahs:

'*wamā kunnā mu'adhhibīna ḥattā nab'atha rasūlā* [We would never punish until We sent a messenger]' (Q17:15), '*wamā kāna rabbuka muhlika al-qurā ḥattā yab'atha fī ummihā rasūlā* [Your Lord would never destroy cities without first raising a messenger in their midst]' (Q28:59), '*mā yaf' al allāhu bi'adhābikum in shakartum wa'āmantum ?* [What will God do with your punishment if you are grateful and believe?]' (Q4:147), '*wamā kunnā muhlikī al-qurā illā wa'ahluhā ḡālimūn* [We would not destroy the cities except while their people were wrongdoers]' (Q28:59), '*inna allāha lā ya'muru bil-faḥshā*' [Indeed, God does not order immorality]' (Q7:28) and '*wamā arsalnā fī qaryatin min nadhīrin illā qāla mutrafūhā innā bimā ursiltum bihī kāfirūn* [We did not send into a city any warner except that its affluent said, "Indeed, we are disbelievers in that which you were sent"]' (Q34:34)

In their attempt to rebut the view advocated by the Muʿtazilah and the Qadariyyah, mainstream and other non-mainstream exegetes support their exegetical view by grammar-based details where the āyah Q17:16 is regarded as an elliptical sentence in which the expression ‘biṭāʿati allāh watawḥīdihī [to heed God and observe monotheism]’ which occurs after the object mutrafihā (its affluent). Thus, the non-elliptical grammatical structure should be ‘wa’idhā aradnā an nuhlika qaryatan amarnā mutrafihā (biṭāʿati allāh watawḥīdihī) fafasaqū fihā faḥaqqā ‘alaihā al-qawlu fadamarnāhā tadmīrā.’ Based on this grammatical analysis, the meaning of Q17:16 is, ‘When We decide to destroy a town, We command those corrupted by wealth to reform (and heed God and observe monotheism) but they persist in their disobedience. Our sentence is passed, and We destroy them utterly.’

Some Qur’anic exegesis works such as *Aḍwā’ al-Bayān* by al-Shinqīṭī are entirely based on Qur’anic intertextuality where an āyah is explained through reference to intertextually related āyahs, as in, ‘waman kafara fa’inna allāha ghaniyyun ‘an al-‘ālamīn [Whoever disbelieves, then indeed God is free of need of the worlds]’ (Q3:97), which is explained by the āyahs ‘waqāla mūsā in takfurū antum waman fī al-arḍi jamī’an fa’inna allāha laghaniyyun ‘an al-‘ālamīn [Moses said, “If you should disbelieve, you and whoever is on the earth entirely, indeed, God is free of need and praiseworthy]’ (Q14:8), ‘qālū ittakhadha allāhu waladan subḥānahū huwa al-ghaniyyu [They have said, “God has taken a son.” Exalted is He. He is the one free of need]’ (Q10:68), ‘yā aiyuhā al-nāsu antum al-fuqarā’u ilā allāhi wallāhu huwa al-ghaniyyu al-ḥamīd [O mankind, you are those in need of God, while God is the free of need, the praiseworthy]’ (Q35:15), ‘in takfurū fa’inna allāha ghaniyyun ‘ankum walā yardā li‘ibādihī al-kufra [If you disbelieve, indeed, God is free of need of you. He does not approve for His servants disbelief]’ (Q39:7) and ‘fakafarū watawallaw wastaghna allāhu wallāhu ghaniyyun ḥamīd [They disbelieved and turned away. God dispensed with them and God is free of need and praiseworthy]’ (Q64:6).

In other cases of intertextuality, prophetic ḥadīths are employed to elucidate a given āyah. In other words, the Qur’ān is accounted for through the second source of Qur’anic exegesis, that is, the tradition, as in ‘yuthabbitu allāhu alladhīna āmanū bilqawli al-thābiti fī al-ḥayāti al-dunyā wafī al-ākhirati wayuḍillu allāhu al-zālimīna wayaf’alu allāhu mā yashā’ [God will give firmness to those who believe in the firmly rooted word, both in this world and the hereafter, but He leaves the evildoers to stray: God does whatever He wills]’ (Q14:27) where a tradition is cited explaining this āyah: ‘idhā uq’ida al-mu’minu fī qabrihī atāhu ātin thumma yashhadu an lā ilāha illa allāh wa’anna muḥammadan rasūl allāh [When the believer is awoken in his or her grave, a person comes to see him or her, and then he or she gives the testimony that there is no deity but God and that Muḥammad is the messenger of God].’ According to exegetes, Q14:27 is intertextually linked to this tradition by which we are informed that the believer is enabled by God to remember the shahādah (the profession of faith) when he or she is questioned in the grave.

- 4. Lexical morphology:** The exegete should be aware of the morphological system (al-ishtiqāq) of Qur'anic words and the relationship between derivation and the various nuances of a given word, as in 'arsilhu ma'anā ghadan yarta<sup>c</sup> wayal<sup>c</sup>ab [Send him with us tomorrow and he will enjoy himself and play]' (Q12:12) where the word yarta<sup>c</sup> (to enjoy) should end with a vowel-less consonant ḥarf sākin which is the letter /<sup>c</sup>ain/ and cannot be read as yarta<sup>c</sup>ī because the word yarta<sup>c</sup> is derived from the verb rata<sup>c</sup>tu (to enjoy oneself) and not from the verb ra<sup>c</sup>aitu (to watch over, to guard).

Also in 'ya'jūju wama'jūju mufsidūna fi al-arḍi [Gog and Magog are ruining this land]' (Q18:94) where the two nouns ya'jūju (Gog) and ma'jūju (Magog) are morphologically derived from ajjī al-nār (the flame of fire) and are both of an Arabic origin. Since they are derived from ajjī al-nār, this means that they start with the initial vowel /alif/, that is, the hamzah. Therefore, the initial letter, that is, the hamzah (the letter /alif/, that is, the vowel /a/) should be maintained. Also in 'al-rabbāniyyūn wal-aḥbār [the rabbis and scholars]' (Q5:44) where the word al-aḥbār is a plural noun which is morphologically related to either

- (i) the singular noun al-ḥabr which means a rabbi,
- (ii) the noun al-ḥabr which means al-surūr wal-ni<sup>c</sup>mah (joy and blessing),
- (iii) the noun al-ḥabar which means athar (a mark),
- (iv) the noun al-ḥibr which means handsome or
- (v) the noun al-ḥibr which means equal, parallel, as in sālimun laisa lahu ḥibr (Sālim has no parallel, that is, no one can match him).

Of course, the qualified exegete selects one of the above different meanings according to the context in which the word occurs. For Q5:44, the exegetical meaning of the word al-aḥbār is 'rabbis', that is, meaning number (i) above.

Morphology has caused serious semantic problems in Qur'anic exegesis. For instance, the word imām is wrongly analysed as a plural noun that is morphologically related to umm. This is unacceptable to linguist exegetes and has thus been considered as an uncommended exegesis (tafsīr madhmūm) and is thought of as belonging to bida<sup>c</sup> al-tafāsīr (an innovation exegesis). This is a sectarian tafsīr which claims that the word imām in 'yawma nad<sup>c</sup>ū kulla unāsin bi'imāmihim [We shall summon each community, along with its leader]' (Q17:71) is a plural noun whose singular form is 'umm' which means 'mother'. Thus, sectarian exegetes claim that, on the day of judgement, individuals from different communities will be summoned represented by their 'mothers', that is, 'by their imām'. In their view, the reasons why people, on the day of judgement, are called forth by their mothers rather than by their fathers are

- (i) to establish justice for Jesus and substantiate the motherhood of his mother Mary,
- (ii) to demonstrate the honourable status of al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusain when their mother Fāṭimah accompanies them and

- (iii) to cover up for the individuals who were born out of adultery and had no legal fathers. Thus, when they are accompanied by their mothers only, no one will find out about their past and that their mothers were adulteresses.

However, for other mainstream and non-mainstream exegetes, especially linguist exegetes, the above exegetical analysis is counter to Arabic grammar and that the plural of the word *umm* (mother) is not (*imām*) but rather *ummahāt* (mothers). Therefore, the exegete is expected to investigate this linguistic problem in order to provide other exegetical avenues supported by the Qur'ān, tradition or companions' views. The accurate meaning of (*imām*) can be either

- (i) the record of deeds (*kitāb al-a<sup>c</sup>māl*): This exegetical account is supported by Qur'anic intertextuality between Q17:71 and Q36:12, 'wakulla shai'in aḥṣaināhu fi imāmin mubīn [We keep an account of everything in a clear record]' and also between Q17:71 and Q18:49, 'wawuḍī<sup>a</sup> al-kitābu fatarā al-mujrimīna mushfiqīna mimmā fihi [The record of deeds will be placed open and you will see the criminals fearful of that within it],'
- (ii) scripture: This exegetical analysis is backed up by companion and successor exegetes like Abu Hurairah, Ibn <sup>c</sup>Abbās, Mujāhid and Muqātil or
- (iii) prophet: This exegetical account is supported by the ḥadīth, 'latattabi<sup>c</sup> kullu ummatin mā kānat ta<sup>b</sup>budu. fayattabi<sup>c</sup>u man kāna ya<sup>b</sup>budu al-ṭawāghīta al-ṭawāghīt [Every nation will follow whatever they used to worship. Those who used to worship false gods, will follow the false gods].'

5. **Context:** The occurrence of an āyah or a segment of an āyah is decided by its context. The impact of context in Qur'anic discourse and its relationship to exegesis is illustrated by examples like, 'lā ilāha illā hū khāliq kullī shai [There is no deity except Him, the creator of all things]' (Q6:102) and 'khāliq kullī shai' lā ilāha illā hū [The creator of all things, there is no deity except Him]' (Q40:62). The exegete needs to alert the reader to the stylistic change in these two āyahs where we have different stylistic patterns:

(lā ilāha illā hū + khāliq kullī shai') and  
(khāliq kullī shai' + lā ilāha illā hū).

The study of the text linguistic feature of context in Qur'anic exegesis has not been employed by exegetes. Thus, we highly recommend it in Qur'anic exegesis. The exegete is required to provide an informative analysis of the stylistic variation that has taken place in the above two āyahs which are similar linguistically but distinct stylistically. It is beneficial to illustrate to the reader why a shift in genre has taken place in the initial or final segments of Q6:102 and Q40:62. It is only through reference to the context of cases like these that an accurate elucidation of meaning can be achieved. The change in genre lies in the occurrence of the segment *lā ilāha illā hū* (there is no deity except Him) sentence-initially in Q6:102. This segment, however, occurs sentence-finally in Q40:62. The reason

for this change in genre is attributed to the fact that the context of Q6:102 refers to the leitmotif of polytheism in the previous āyah Q6:101 which constitutes the context of situation for Q6:102. Therefore, Q6:102 is employed as substantiation of the tenet of faith of monotheism and a rebuttal to polytheism. However, in Q40:62, a stylistic change has taken place where the segment *khāliqū kullī shai'* (the creator of all things) occurs sentence-initially which is attributed to the fact that the context of Q40:62 deals with the notion of creation in Q40:57 and God's omnipotence in Q40:60 and 61. Thus, to achieve thematic continuity and maintain the conceptual flow of argument, the segment that deals with a given theme has to be shifted to the beginning of the āyah to achieve conceptual chaining with its context. Context as a text linguistic feature in Qur'anic discourse is concerned with stylistic variation either at segment, that is, phrase, level or sentence, that is, āyah, level (for more details, see Abdul-Raof 2004).

Context in Qur'anic exegesis also plays a decisive role in the diagnosis of the specific meaning required by the āyah under investigation. For instance, the word *sū'* is a unique polysemous lexical item which involves 20 different meanings, each one is context-sensitive, as expounded by the following examples:

- (i) Infidelity (*al-khiyānah*), as in '*kadhālika linaṣrifa 'anhu al-sū'a wal-faḥshā'a* [We did this in order to keep infidelity and indecency away from him]' (Q12:24),
- (ii) Adultery (*al-zinā*), as in '*mā jazā'u man arāda bi'ahlīka sū'* [What should be the reward of someone who tried to commit adultery with your wife?]' (Q12:25),
- (iii) Sexual desire towards women (*al-ma'il ilā al-nisā'*), as in '*mā 'alimnā 'alihi min sū'* [We have not found in him any sexual desire towards women]' (Q12:51),
- (iv) The genitals (*al-awrah*), as in '*yuwāri saw'ātikum* [to conceal your private parts]' (Q7 :26),
- (v) Hurt (*al-adhā*), as in '*walā tamassūhā bisū'* [and do not hurt her (the she-camel)]' (Q7:73),
- (vi) Evil (*al-munkar*), as in '*anjainā alladhīna yanhawna 'an al-sū'* [We saved those who forbade evil]' (Q7 :165),
- (vii) Harm (*al-ḍurr*), as in '*lastakthartu min al-khairi wamā massaniya al-sū'* [I would have abundant good things and no harm could touch me]' (Q7:188),
- (viii) Sin (*al-dhanb*), as in '*innamā al-tawbatu 'ala allāhi lilladhīna ya'malūna al-sū'a bijahālatin* [The repentance accepted by God is only for those who commit sins in ignorance]' (Q4:17),
- (ix) An act of injustice (*al-ẓulm*), as in '*in tubdū khairan aw tukhfūhū aw ta'fū 'an sū'* [If you do good, openly or in secret, or if you pardon an act of injustice]' (Q4:149),
- (x) Destruction (*al-halāk*), as in '*wa'idhā arāda allāhu biqawmin sū'an falā maradda lah* [If God wills destruction on a people, no one can ward it off]' (Q13:11),

- (xi) Punishment (al-<sup>o</sup>adhāb), as in ‘qul man dha alladhī ya<sup>o</sup>ṣimukum min allāhi in arāda bikum sū’an aw arāda bikum raḥmatan [Say, “Who is it that can protect you from God if he intends for you a punishment or a mercy”]’ (Q33:17),
- (xii) Ignominy (al-qubḥ), as in ‘yatawārā min al-qawmi min sū’i mā bushshira bih [He hides himself from the people because of the ignominy of which he has been informed]’ (Q16:59),
- (xiii) Distress (al-balā’), as in ‘wayakshifu al-sū’ [He answers the distressed]’ (Q27:62),
- (xiv) Grief (al-ḥuzn), as in ‘in tamsaskum ḥasanatun tasu’hum [They grieve at any good that befalls you]’ (Q3:120),
- (xv) Defeat (al-hazimah), as in ‘fanqalabū bini<sup>o</sup>matin min allāhi wafaḍlin lam yamsashum sū’ [They returned with favour from God and bounty, no defeat having touched them]’ (Q3:174),
- (xvi) Corpse (al-juththah), as in ‘liyuriyahū kaifa yuwārī saw’ata akhihī [To show him how to cover his brother’s corpse]’ (Q5:31),
- (xvii) Disbelief (al-kufr), as in ‘thumma kāna <sup>o</sup>āqibatu alladhīna asā’ū al-sū’a an kadhhabū bi’āyāti allāhi wakānū bihā yastahzi’ūn [Then the end of those who disbelieved was the worst consequence because they denied the signs of God and used to ridicule them]’ (Q30:10),
- (xviii) Verbal abuse (al-sabāb), as in ‘wayabsiṭū ilaikum aidiyahum wa’alsinatahum bil-sū’ [They will stretch out their hands and verbally abuse you]’ (Q60:2),
- (xix) Mental illness (al-junūn), as in ‘i<sup>o</sup>tarāka ba<sup>o</sup>ḍu ālihatinā bisū’ [One of our gods may have inflicted mental illness on you]’ (Q11:54) and
- (xx) Black features (al-sawād), as in ‘takhruj baiḍā’a min ghairi sū’ [It (the hand) will come out white rather than black]’ (Q20:22).

The word *qur’ānahu* is an interesting example of how context specifies the meaning of a given word, as in

fa’idhā qara’nāhu fattabi<sup>o</sup> qur’ānah [When We have explained the Qur’ān, you have to act according to it]’ (Q75:18)

According to the context of Q75:18, the meaning of *qur’ānahu* is, ‘to act upon the instruction of the Qur’ān after it has been explained to you’.

**6. Co-text:** This is another text linguistic feature of Qur’anic discourse that is concerned with the surrounding linguistic environment that conditions the occurrence of lexical items and their morphological form. Co-text has been an under-researched area by exegetes, although it provides highly valuable exegetical details about Qur’anic discourse. The study of the text linguistic feature of co-text in Qur’anic exegesis has neither been employed by mainstream nor by non-mainstream exegetes. Thus, we highly recommend it in Qur’anic exegesis. The following examples illustrate the role of co-text in the exegetical analysis of the Qur’anic text:

‘wamā arsalnāka illā mubashshiran wanadhīran [We sent you only to give good news and warning]’ (Q17:105) where the phrase mubashshiran wanadhīran (to give good news and warning) contains the word mubashshiran (to give good news) rather than bashīran (bringer of good news)<sup>2</sup> as we have encountered elsewhere in the Qur’ān, as in Q2:119, Q34:28, Q35:24 and Q41:4. The reason for the occurrence of the expression mubashshiran in this particular morphological form in Q17:105 is attributed to the impact of the grammatical co-text in which we have expressions of the same morphological form like mab‘ūthūn (to be resurrected), mashūrā (to be affected by magic) and mathbūrā (to be destroyed) in Q17:98, 101 and 102, respectively. To achieve stylistic symmetry, the morphological form needs to be preserved. Co-text as a text linguistic feature in Qur’anic discourse is concerned with stylistic variation at the word level. It is worthwhile to note that co-text and grammatical consonance also occurs in Q3:27, Q10:31 and Q30:19 which can be accounted for through the grammatical co-text of Q6:95 (for more details, see Abdul-Raof 2004 and *ch. 6*, section 6.8.1 of Abdul-Raof 2005).

7. **Linguistic and stylistic mutashābihāt:** Stylistic variation is a prototypical linguistic feature in Qur’anic discourse which is interrelated to Qur’anic exegesis. Generally, this linguistic problem involves the text linguistic components of context and co-text as well as their stylistic impact on Qur’anic genre.<sup>3</sup> However, there is another form of linguistic and stylistic mutashābihāt which the exegete is required to elucidate to the reader where we encounter two āyahs from different sūrahs which are different stylistically due to a grammatical change in

- (i) morphological form, as in

ya’tūka bikulli sāḥirin ‘alīm [who will bring you every learned magician] (Q7:112)

‘ya’tūka bikulli saḥḥārin ‘alīm [who will bring you every accomplished magician]’ (Q26:37) where these mutashābih āyahs are stylistically dissimilar in the morphological form of their respective nouns sāḥirin (magician) in Q7:112 and saḥḥārin (magician) in Q26:37. Due to the lexical co-text in Q7:109 in which the same word sāḥirin is used, the word sāḥirin is also employed by Q7:112 in the same form. Lexical co-text has also influenced the occurrence of sāḥirin in a different morphological form, namely, saḥḥārin in Q26:37 due to the occurrence of the same morphological form in Q26:153 and 185 where the word musaḥḥar is employed.

- (ii) case ending, as in

‘wa‘ada allāhu alladhīna āmanū wa‘amilū al-ṣāliḥāti lahum maghfiratun wa’ajrun ‘azīmun [God has promised those who believe and do righteous deeds that for them there is forgiveness and great reward]’ (Q5:9)

‘wa<sup>ʿ</sup>ada allāhu alladhīna āmanū wa<sup>ʿ</sup>amilū al-ṣāliḥāti minhum lahum maghfiratan wa’ajran ‘aẓīman [God has promised those who believe and do righteous deeds that for them there is forgiveness and great reward]’ (Q48:29) where we have a stylistic variation in these mutashābih āyahs represented by the nominative case in the segment maghfiratan wa’ajrun ‘aẓīmun (forgiveness and great reward) of Q5:9 while the segment maghfiratan wa’ajran ‘aẓīman (forgiveness and great reward) of Q48:29 has an accusative case. The reason for the accusative case in Q48:29 is attributed to the verb wa<sup>ʿ</sup>ada (to promise) whose direct object is the segment maghfiratan wa’ajran ‘aẓīman. However, for Q5:9, the exegete needs to divide it into two structural units:

Unit 1: wa<sup>ʿ</sup>ada allāhu alladhīna āmanū wa<sup>ʿ</sup>amilū al-ṣāliḥāti and

Unit 2: lahum maghfiratan wa’ajrun ‘aẓīmun.

Because Q5:9 has undergone the grammatical process of ellipsis, it occurs in the nominative case. In other words, the ellipted element can be either qāla allāhu (God said) or *anna* –(that) after the first unit of the āyah. Therefore, the second unit of Q5:9 is in the nominative case because it represents a complete nominal sentence, ‘jumlah ismiyyah’, with an inchoative and predicate, ‘mubtada’ wakhabar’, which both occur in the nominative case. Thus, the second unit should read as qāla allāhu: ‘lahum maghfiratan wa’ajrun ‘aẓīmun [God said, “for them there is forgiveness and great reward”],

or as ‘anna lahum maghfiratan wa’ajrun ‘aẓīmun [that for them there is forgiveness and great reward]’.

(iii) singular and plural form, as in

‘dhālika bimā qaddamat aidikum [That is for what your hands have put forth]’ (Q3:182) and ‘dhālika bimā qaddamat yadāka [That is for what your hands have put forth]’ (Q22:10). In these mutashābih āyahs, the stylistic change is represented by the plural noun aidikum (your hands – plural form for more than one person) in Q3:182 and the dual noun yadāka (your hands – dual, masculine) in Q22:10. An informative exegetical account is expected to provide details about the linguistic pattern of Q3:182 and refers to the context in which it has occurred. The context of Q3:182 refers to the wealthy people who are depicted by Q3:180 and 181 as greedy and do not help the poor. For this contextual reason, the plural noun aidikum is employed. Similarly, the context of Q22:10 refers to one individual called al-Naḍar b. al-Hārith in Q22:8 and 9 and for this reason the dual noun yadāka is used referring to his two hands.

(iv) definite and indefinite nouns, as in

‘waman aẓlamu mimman iftarā ‘alā allāhi al-kadhibā [Who could be more wrong than someone who invents lies against God]’ (Q61:7) and ‘waman aẓlamu mimman iftarā ‘alā allāhi kadhiban [Who could be more wrong than

someone who invents lies against God]’ (Q6:21). It is beneficial to provide a linguistic account to the reader explaining the reason why a definite noun, al-kadhība (lying, lies), is employed in Q61:7 but an indefinite noun, kadhīban, occurs in Q6:21. This is concerned with the linguistic process of collocation where the definite noun al-kadhība collocates with the expression iftarā (to invent lies against someone) when the definite noun is followed by the conjunctive particle wa (and) + a new sentence. Our linguistic observation is also supported by other examples like Q3:75, 78; Q4:50 and Q5:103. However, the indefinite noun kadhīban collocates with the same expression, iftarā, but the indefinite noun is followed by the conjunctive particle aw (or) + a new sentence. Our observation is also supported by Q7:37, Q10:17 and Q29:68.

- 8. Irregular grammatical analysis:** The exegete needs to provide an accurate grammatical account of a given āyah since an irregular (shādhdh/gharīb) grammatical analysis leads to incorrect meaning of the Qur’anic passage, as in ‘wabāṭilun mā kānū ya‘malūn [They were doing futile deeds]’ (Q11:16) where the word bāṭilun (futile, worthless) should be in the nominative case (marfū‘) so that the accurate signification can be provided. Accordingly, the word bāṭilun performs the grammatical function of inchoative (mubtada’) and (mā kānū ya‘malūn [what they were doing]) is the predicate (khabar). Even if the noun bāṭil is considered as a foregrounded predicate (khabar muqaddam), it should still be with the nominative case, that is, bāṭilun, and mā kānū ya‘malūn acts as a backgrounded inchoative (mubtada’ mu’akhhkar). However, an irregular grammatical account will provide the accusative case marking (maṣṣūb) for this word. Thus, we get bāṭilan. This grammatical view is held by the Kūfan grammarian and Qur’ān recitor ‘Ali b. Ḥamzah al-Kisā’i (d.187/802). The noun bāṭilan, for al-Kisā’i, is in the accusative case because it has become the object of the verb ya‘malūn (they were doing) while the particle mā is accounted for as a grammatically redundant item. Therefore, the underlying meaning, for al-Kisā’i, is ‘wakānū ya‘malūna bāṭilan [They were doing futile deeds].’ The latter grammatical analysis is a mode of reading supported by Ubai b. Ka‘b and Ibn Maṣ‘ūd. There is a second grammatical justification for the accusative noun bāṭilan. This noun occurs in the accusative case because it has the underlying meaning of a nominalized noun (maṣṣdar) which is baṭula buṭlānan (it has become completely futile) + mā kānū ya‘malūn (what they were doing) where the particle mā is not grammatically active. Thus, we have the maṣṣdar (buṭlānan) in the accusative case.
- 9. Different grammatical functions lead to distinct meanings:** Grammatical case endings designate distinct exegetical analyses, as in ‘anna allāha barī’un min al-mushrikīna warasūluhu [God and His messenger are released from the treaty obligations to the idolaters]’ (Q9:3) where the āyah has two subjects, allāh (God) and rasūlu (messenger). For this reason, the second subject, rasūlu, occurs in the nominative case (-u). This means that the segment warasūluhu is

coordinated to ma<sup>ʿ</sup>tūf ʿalā the first segment, ‘anna allāha bari’un min al-mushrikīna [God is released from the treaty obligations to the idolaters].’ Thus, the coordinated segment warasūluhu should mean ‘and so is His messenger’. Therefore, grammatically, warasūluhu is in the nominative case due to initial position having the grammatical function of mubtada’ (inchoative). Accordingly, it has the implicit meaning, warasūluhu bari’un minhum (and His messenger is also released from the treaty obligations to them [the idolaters]).

However, if the noun rasūlu occurs in the genitive case as ‘anna allāha bari’un min al-mushrikīna warasūlihi’, where we have rasūli, in this case, the meaning of the āyah has changed dramatically to ‘God is released from the treaty obligations to both His messenger and the idolaters’.<sup>4</sup> For more details, see point 13 on the variant modes of reading that follow.

Similarly in ‘kallama allāhu mūsā taklimā [God spoke to Moses],’ (Q4:164) where the subject noun allāh occurs in the nominative case -u. Therefore, the object of the verb kallama is the noun mūsā. However, this grammatical analysis provides a counter argument for the non-mainstream Mu<sup>ʿ</sup>tazili exegetes. For this reason, the Mu<sup>ʿ</sup>tazilah change the grammatical nominative case of the subject (allāhu) to the accusative case (allāha) so that mūsā will be the subject with an implicit nominative case and God the object in order to suit their dogmatic approach that God did not speak to Moses and also, for them, Q4:164 signifies an allegorical, that is, esoteric, meaning where the verb kallama denotes ‘trial’ rather than ‘speaking’. Thus, for non-mainstream exegetes, Q4:164 means, ‘God tested Moses.’

**10. The semantic function of particles and prepositions:** Arabic particles<sup>5</sup> have preoccupied Qur’ān exegetes due to their impact upon the meaning of a given āyah. The exegete is required to be aware of the semantic functions of particles and prepositions as explicated below:

**(a) Particles in Qur’anic discourse**

- (i) The particles in and idhā are employed in conditional sentences and signify different levels of probability although they are both conditional particles (shartīyyah) and both mean if, as in, ‘in ʿudtum ʿudnā [If you do the same again, so shall we]’ (Q17:8) and ‘in yantahū yughfar lahum mā qad salaf [If they cease, what has previously occurred will be forgiven for them]’ (Q8:38) where both particles, in and idhā, are conditional. However, the meaning of the particle in (if) of Q17:8 and Q8:38 signifies improbability; that is, some thing is unlikely to take place. The semantic function of improbability of the particle (in) applies to other āyahs like ‘in taḥruṣ ʿalā hudāhum [If you should strive for their guidance]’ (Q16:37). However, the semantic function of the particle (in) may change in other contexts. Let us consider other examples: ‘in ʿindakum min sulṭānin bihādihā [You have no authority for this claim]’ (Q10:68), ‘in kānat illā ṣaiḥatan wāḥidatan [It was not but one blast]’ (Q36:29), in al-kāfirūna illā fī ghurūr [The disbelievers

are not but in delusion]’ (Q67:20) and ‘wa in minkum illā wāriduhā [And there is none of you except he or she will be exposed to it]’ (Q19:71). The semantic function of the particle (in) has changed in yet another context and has acquired the grammatical function of a negation particle (nāfiyah) meaning mā (is not). In Q36:29, Q67:20 and Q19:71, the particle (in) signifies negation. It is worthwhile to note that when the particle (in) assumes the grammatical function of negation, it occurs with the stylistic pattern of ‘in . . . illā . . . [not . . . but . . .].’ We also encounter this function in other examples such as ‘in huwa illā waḥyun yūḥā [It is not but a revelation]’ (Q53:4). Grammatically, therefore, the noun like al-kāfirūna (the disbelievers) or the pronoun like huwa (he) that occurs immediately after the particle (in) functions as an inchoative (mubtada’).

However, the particle (in) assumes a different meaning as in ‘in hādhāni lasāḥirāni [These two men are sorcerers]’ (Q20:63). In this āyah, the particle (in) means yes and is grammatically redundant, that is, has no grammatical function. For this reason, the demonstrative pronoun hādhāni (these) occurs in the nominative case and has the grammatical function of inchoative whose predicate (khabar) is sāḥirāni (sorcerers) which is also in the nominative case. However, the meaning of the particle idhā (if) denotes a high probability that something will take place, as in ‘idhā jā’a naṣru allāhi wal-faṭḥu [If God’s help comes and he opens up your way]’ (Q110:2). The meaning of high probability designated by idhā also applies to āyahs that depict (a) eschatological phenomena, as in Q56:1–4, Q82:1–2, Q84:1 and Q99:1, and (b) natural phenomena, as in Q81:17 and Q84:18, as demonstrated below:

‘idhā waqa‘at al-wāqī‘ah . . . idhā rujjat al-arḍu rajjan . . .’ [When the occurrence occurs . . . When the earth is shaken with convulsion . . .]’ (Q56:1–4), ‘idhā al-samā’u infaṭarat wa idhā al-kawākibu intatharat . . . [When the sky breaks apart. When the stars fall, scattering]’ (Q82:1–2), ‘idhā al-samā’u inshaqqat [When the sky split open]’ (Q84:1) and ‘idhā zulzilāt al-arḍu zilzālahā [When the earth is shaken with its final earthquake]’ (Q99:1). However, when the context of situation changes, other conditional particles are encountered such as law (if) and la’in (if), as in ‘law nashā’u laja‘alnāhu ḥuṭāman [If We willed, We could make it dry debris]’ (Q56:65), ‘law nashā’u ja‘alnāhu ujājan [If We willed, We could make it bitter]’ (Q56:70) and ‘la’in raja‘nā ilā al-madīnati . . . [If we return to the city . . .]’ (Q63:8). The meaning of the conditional particle law depicts threat and warning while the particle la’in signifies indecision, lack of guarantee and very low probability. Thus, the particle idhā is stylistically inappropriate for this context of situation.

(ii) The particle inna, as in

‘inna lanā la’ajran . . . ? [Shall we be rewarded . . . ?]’ (Q7:113) and ‘inna laka allā tajū‘a fihā walā ta‘rā [Indeed, it is promised for you not to be

hungry therein or be unclothed]’ (Q20:118) where the particle *inna* in Q7:113 means *lābudda* (there must be). However, in Q20:118, the meaning of the particle *inna* is understood by merging it with the word *laka* (to you) to get *annaka* (that you, that is, that you will not be hungry. . .). The meaning of *inna* in Q20:118 can also be *‘alainā* (we guarantee that . . .).

(iii) The particle (an), as in:

‘*falā tattabi‘ū al-hawā an ta‘dilū* [Refrain from following your own desire so that you can act justly]’ (Q4:135) where the particle *an* means *maḥabbata an* (as a desire from you in order to). In other words, there is an ellipted word before *an* which is *maḥabbata*.

Similarly, in

‘*yubaiyinu allāhu lakum an taḍillū* [God makes this clear to you so that you do not make mistakes]’ (Q4:176) where the meaning of *an* can only be arrived at if we account for the ellipted expression *li’an lā* (in order for you not to). In other words, the sentence structure should be ‘*yubaiyinu allāhu lakum li’an lā taḍillū*.’ This meaning also applies to ‘*inna allāha yumsiku al-samāwāti wal-arḍa an tazūlā* [God holds the heavens and the earth lest they vanish]’ (Q35:41) where the ellipted expression *li’an lā* (in order for you not to) should be taken into consideration in the exegetical analysis of this āyah. Thus, the sentence structure is ‘*inna allāha yumsiku al-samāwāti wal-arḍa li’an lā tazūlā*.’

- (iv) The particle *la‘alla* usually signifies hope (*al-rajā’*), as in ‘*wamā yudrika la‘allahū yazzakkā* [What would make you perceive, (O Muḥammad), that perhaps he might be purified]’ (Q80:3). However, in other contexts, *la‘alla* has other shades of meaning, such as
- an interrogative meaning (*al-istifhām*), as in ‘*lā tadri la‘alla allāha yuḥdithu ba‘da dhālika amran*’ [You do not know, perhaps God will bring about after that a different matter]’ (Q65:1) and
  - a wish (*al-tamannī*), as in ‘*la‘allī ablughā al-asbāba* [I may reach the ways]’ (Q40:36).

However, other linguist exegetes consider the particle *la‘alla* in Q40:36 as conveying the meaning of doubt (*al-shakk*); that is, it has the underlying meaning of *‘asā ablughu* (I am not sure that I will reach).

- (v) The particle *lākinna* has the meaning of confirmation, that is, stress (*al-ta’kīd*), as in ‘*lākinna ‘adhāba allāhi shadīd* [But the punishment of God is severe]’ (Q22:2).
- (vi) The negation particles *lā* (do not) and *lan* (never): The exegete is required to be familiar with the semantically oriented stylistic variation between the negation particles *lā* and *lan*. In Arabic rhetoric, the negation of an action through

the negation particle *lā* (do not) is stylistically more effective than through the employment of the negation particle *lan* (never). This is due to the grammatical fact that the particle *lā* signifies continuity of negation (*al-dawām fi al-nafi*) as well as its length in terms of time. In other words, a verb that is negated by *lā* expresses a longer period of negation than the verb negated by *lan*. However, the Mu<sup>c</sup>tazilah and the Jahmiyyah reject this grammatical point of view and claim that *lan* negates the future but not the present continuous, as in

‘*lā a<sup>c</sup>budu mā ta<sup>c</sup>budūn* [I do not worship what you worship]’ (Q109:2) where the negation particle *lā* denotes the present time; that is, ‘the Prophet does not accept to worship the idols in the present time and also in the future.’

- (vii) The co-ordination particle *wa* (and) means *aw* (or): The conjunction particle *wa* does not always have the meaning of ‘and’, but it also occurs with the semantic function of ‘possibility of choice’ (*wāw al-taqṣim* [the possibility particle]) where more than one choice may take place, as in Q22:27, ‘*wa’adhdhin fi al-nāsi bil-ḥajji ya’ tūka riḡālan wa’alā kulli ḡāmirin* [Proclaim to the people the pilgrimage; they will come to you on foot or on every lean camel]’ and in Q66:5, ‘*ṡaiyibātin wa’abkārā* [previously married or virgins]’.

#### (b) Prepositions in Qur’anic discourse

- (i) The preposition <sup>c</sup>an in ‘*alladhīna hum <sup>c</sup>an ṡalātihim ṡāhūn* [Those who are heedless of their prayer]’ (Q107:5) signals the exegetical meaning ‘missing one of the five daily prayers’. However, if the preposition <sup>c</sup>an is replaced by *fi*, that is, we have ‘*alladhīna hum fi ṡalātihim ṡāhūn*’, the meaning of the āyah changes to ‘Those who are not sure of the number of rak<sup>c</sup>ahs they have done in one of the prayers.’
- (ii) The preposition *fi* (in) means <sup>c</sup>alā (on), as in ‘*wala’uṡallibannakum fi judhū<sup>c</sup>i al-nakhli* [I will crucify you on the trunks of palm trees]’ (Q20:71) where the preposition *fi* occurs while the expected preposition is <sup>c</sup>alā. However, the occurrence of *fi* in this āyah refers to the fact that the middle part of the palm tree is used for crucifying. Thus, although the preposition <sup>c</sup>alā is grammatically accurate, its usage is semantically inaccurate.
- (iii) The preposition *li* means <sup>c</sup>alā, as in ‘*yakhirrūna lil-adhḡāni sujḡadan* [They fall upon their faces in prostration]’ (Q17:107) since the act of *sujūd* (prostration) is done with their face down and the forehead ‘upon’ the floor.
- (iv) The meaning of the preposition *li* (to) means *bi* (with), as in ‘*falamḡa tajallā rabbuhū lil-jabali* [When his Lord revealed Himself to the mountain]’ (Q7:143) since the Lord was seen by the mountain and the mountain, having seen the greatness of the Lord, crumbled to dust.
- (v) The preposition *bi* has the semantic function of + Accompaniment, as in

‘*ṡubḡāna alladhī asrā bi<sup>c</sup>abdiḡi lailan* [Glory to Him who made His servant travel by night]’ (Q17:1). This exegetical analysis is supported by the intertextually related tradition ‘*allāhumma anta al-ṡāḡibu fi al-safari* [O my

Lord, You are the best companion in travelling, that is, You are the best to accompany me].’ Thus, it is ungrammatical to read the same āyah without the preposition bi, that is, ‘subhāna alladhī asrā ‘abdahu lailan.’

- (vi) The meaning of the preposition bi (with) means min (from), as in ‘‘ainan yashrabu bihā ‘ibādu allāhi [A spring of which the righteous servants of God will drink]’ (Q76:6) where the underlying meaning of the preposition bi is related to the collocation of this preposition with the implicitly understood verbs such as yataladhdhadhu (to take pleasure in) and yurwā (to quench one’s thirst) which both collocate with the preposition bi.
- (vii) The meaning of the preposition ‘an (about) means min (from), as in ‘yaqbalu al-tawbata ‘an ‘ibādihi [It is He who accepts repentance from His servants]’ (Q42:25) where the underlying meaning of the preposition ‘an is min.
- (viii) The preposition ‘inda has different meanings, as in ‘wa’inahum ‘indanā lamin al-muṣṭafain al-akhyār [Indeed, they are to Us among the chosen and outstanding]’ (Q38:47). The first meaning is, ‘With Us (i.e. God), they will be among the elect,’ which is advocated by the mainstream school of exegesis. The second meaning is, ‘In Our (i.e. God’s) knowledge, they will be among the elect,’ which is advocated by the non-mainstream school of exegesis. This āyah, therefore, has led to theological cleavages among exegetes. For the mainstream school of exegesis, the preposition ‘inda signifies an adverb of place meaning with. Thus, meaning to be with God. This has the semantic entailment of ‘seeing God’. However, for the Mu‘tazili non-mainstream school of exegesis, the preposition ‘inda is allegorical which means fi ‘ilminā (in God’s knowledge).
- (ix) The preposition ‘alā means ‘alā al-raghmi min, walaw anna (although, in spite of), as in ‘wayuṭ‘imūna al-ṭa‘āma ‘alā ḥubbihi miskīnan wayatīman wa’asīran [They give food, to the needy, the orphan and the captive, although they love it themselves]’ (Q76:8)

**11. Definite and indefinite noun:** The exegete is also required to be familiar with the use of the definite as opposed to the indefinite noun and the impact of the definite/indefinite case on the overall meaning of the āyah, as in

‘subhāna alladhī asrā bi‘abdihi lailan [Glory to Him who made His servant (Muḥammad) travel by night]’ (Q17:1) where the expression lailan (by night) is employed in the indefinite case instead of the definite al-laila (the night) for two reasons:

- (i) To achieve the pragmatic function of glorification, that is, to glorify this particular night, and
- (ii) To denote the semantic function of portioning (al-ba‘ḍiyyah), that is, to signify ‘the extremely short time’ which the night journey required by the Burāq (a creature on which Muḥammad made his ascension to the seven heavens).

Let us consider the following examples:

- (i) ‘balā man kasaba saiyyi’atan wa’ahāṭat bihī khaṭī’atuhu fa’ulā’ika aṣḥābu al-nāri [Yes, on the contrary, whoever earns evil and his sin has encompassed him, those are the companions of the fire]’ (Q2:81) where we have two singular nouns *saiyyi’a* (evil) and *khaṭī’ah* (sin). The exegete is required to explain that the singular noun forms indeed signify the plural since the evil doer commits several evil deeds and sins.
- (ii) ‘allāhu waliyyu alladhīna āmanū yukhrijuhum min al-ẓulumāti ilā al-nūri walladhīna kafarū awliyā’uhum al-ṭāghūtu yukhrijūnahum min al-nūri ilā al-ẓulumāt [God is the ally of those who believe. He brings them out from darkness into the light. As for the disbelievers, their allies are false gods who take them from the light into darkness]’ (Q2:257) where the word *nūr* (light) occurs in the singular in order to refer to God since monotheism is a major Qur’anic tenet of faith. However, the expression *ẓulumāt* (darkness) occurs in the plural in the Qur’ān because it implies the notion of polytheism which has several forms such as false gods and sources of disbelief. Thus, although the word *al-ṭāghūt* (false gods) occurs in the singular, its co-referential pronoun *-hum* (them) occurs in the plural to denote the multiple sources of polytheism.

**12. The direct objects of the same verb:** A verb may take more than one object. Let us consider Q16:5–8: ‘*wal-an‘āma khalaqahā lakum fihā dif’un wamānafi‘u . . . walakum fihā jamālun ḥīna turīḥūna . . . wataḥmilu athqālakum ilā baladīn lam takūnū bālighīhi . . . wal-khaila wal-bighāla wal-ḥamīra litarkabūhā wazīnatan . . .* [He has created for you the grazing livestock. In them is warmth and numerous benefits . . . and for you in them is the enjoyment of beauty when you bring them in for the evening . . . and they carry your loads to a land you could not have reached . . . and He created the horses, mules and donkeys for you to ride and as adornment . . .].’ In this āyah, the verb *khalaqa* (to create) occurs with four objects. However, the second, third and fourth objects are far away from the first object which may cause a grammatical ambiguity. Thus, in Q16:5, the first object is *al-an‘āma* (livestock) which is provided with more descriptive sentences, that is, āyahs 6–7 which have led to the postponement of the other objects which occur at the beginning of āyah 8. Therefore, according to Arabic grammar, the nouns *al-khaila* (horses), *al-bighāla* (mules) and *al-ḥamīra* (donkeys) are also the objects of the same verb *khalaqa* in Q16:5.

**13. Variant modes of reading:** Variant Qur’anic modes of reading (*al-qirā’āt*) can produce semantically different interpretations. A qualified exegete has to be aware of the semantic subtleties involved, as in ‘*anna allāha barī’un min al-mushrikīna warasūluhu* [God and His messenger are released from the treaty obligations to the idolaters]’ (Q9:3) where the noun *rasūl* (Prophet) should occur in the nominative case, that is, *rasūlu* plus the co-referential pronoun *-hu* (his) attached to it that refers to *allāh*. However, an irregular mode of reading will provide an accusative case to the noun *rasūl*. Thus, we

get rasūli, which generates a significant change of meaning. An uneducated Bedouin heard a man reading Q9:3 with the irregular mode of reading and commented, ‘in kāna allāhu barī’an min rasūlihi fa’anā minhu barī’un [If God is dissociated from His messenger, so am I.]’ With regard to the variant modes of reading, the exegete needs to consider the following linguistic matters:

- (i) It is possible to read the noun rasūl with a nominative case, that is, rasūlu and that this is the most common mode of reading.
- (ii) It is possible to read Q9:3 with inna instead of anna.
- (iii) It is possible to read the noun rasūl in the accusative case, that is, rasūla, which is considered as a coordinated noun to the first noun allāha, where both have the grammatical function of the noun of anna.
- (iv) That the accusative case rasūla is the mode of reading of Ibn ‘Abbās and Ya‘qūb Ibn Ishāq al-Baṣri (d.205/820).
- (v) It is possible to read the noun rasūl with a genitive case, that is, rasūli where the full expression will be rasūlihi, and this is the mode of reading adopted by al-Ḥasan al-Baṣri who considers the conjunctive particle wa (and) as an oath particle, wāw al-qasam, meaning, waḥaqqi rasūlihi. Thus, we get the genitive case (rasūlihi).

Different exegetical views stem from the variant modes of reading of the preposition, as in Q69:9, which can be read as either

‘wajā’a fir‘awnu waman qablahu [And there came Pharaoh and those before him]’ (Q69:9) where the preposition qabla (before) refers to the past disbelieving nations that came before Pharaoh, or

‘wajā’a fir‘awnu waman qibalahu [And there came Pharaoh and those in front of him]’ (Q69:9) where the preposition qibala (in front of) refers to Pharaoh’s army. We are told by historical exegetes that Pharaoh used to march behind his advancing army. Thus, his army is in front of him.

**14. Exegetical modes of reading:** It is imperative that the exegete is aware of the paraphrastic notes that are inserted by some companions in their own codices of the Qur’ān which they have kept for teaching in their locality and for their own personal use. The exegetical modes of reading (qirā’ah ‘alā al-tafsīr) aim to elucidate some semantically ambiguous Qur’anic expressions but are not part of the revelation; that is, they are not compatible with the orthography of the ‘Uthmānic master codex (khaṭ or rasm al-miṣḥaf al-‘uthmāni), as in ‘wamā ya‘lamu ta’wīlahu illa allāhu wal-rāsikhūna fī al-‘ilmi yaqūlūna . . . [Only God knows its true meaning. Those firmly grounded in knowledge say . . . ]’ (Q3:7). However, in Ubai b. Ka‘b’s codex we find a different stylistic structure:

‘wamā ya‘lamu ta’wilahu illa allāhu (wayaqūlu) al-rāsikhūna fi al-‘ilmi . . . [Only God knows its true meaning. Those firmly grounded in knowledge (they) say . . .].’ This is an attempt by Ubai b. Ka‘b to disambiguate the original grammatical structure and make it easy for him to understand what this particular āyah signifies. The translation, however, does not reflect the complex versus simplex stylistic structures between the two modes of reading.

Similarly in

famā istamta‘tum bihī minhunna fa’tūhunna ujūrahunna farīḍatan [So for whatever you enjoy of marriage from them, give them their due bride-gift as an obligation]. (Q4:24)

However, the codex of Sa‘īd b. Jubair includes the following exegetical mode of reading:

‘famā istamta‘tum bihī minhunna (ilā ajalīn musammā) fa’tūhunna ujūrahunna farīḍatan [So for whatever you enjoy of marriage from them (for a specific period of time), give them their due bride-gift as an obligation]’ where he includes the exegetical details, *ilā ajalīn musammā* (for a specific period of time), as paraphrastic information to elucidate the meaning of the original āyah.

- 15. Semantic ambiguity:** Semantic ambiguity results from the linguistic fact that some words are polysemous. In Arabic linguistics, polysemy is referred to as *al-ashbāh wal-naẓā’ir* which is an integral part of Qur’anic exegesis as it leads to different exegetical accounts, as in ‘waḍmum yadaka ilā janāḥika takhruj baiḍā’ min ḡairi sū’in [Place your hand under your armpit and it will come out white, though unharmed]’ (Q20:22). In the view of Muqātil and Abu Ḥaiyān, the noun *janāḥ* means the area which includes the upper arm to the armpit. Thus, the meaning becomes, ‘Place your hand under your armpit and it will come out white, though unharmed.’ However, for al-Rāzi, the noun *janāḥ* means *al-ṣadr* (the chest). Thus, the meaning is, ‘Place your hand on your chest and it will come out white, though unharmed.’

Also in

‘ḥāfiẓū ‘alā al-ṣalāti wal-ṣalāti al-wuṣṭā [Maintain with care the obligatory prayers and in particular the middle prayer]’ (Q2:238) where the expression *al-ṣalāt al-wuṣṭā* is semantically ambiguous and exegetes have attributed different meanings to it.

This expression can mean either

- (i) the dawn prayer (*ṣalāt al-fajr*),
- (ii) the noon prayer (*ṣalāt al-zuhr*),
- (iii) the afternoon prayer (*ṣalāt al-‘aṣr*),
- (iv) the sunset prayer (*ṣalāt al-maghrib*),

- (v) Friday prayer (ṣalāt al-jum‘ah),
- (vi) the five daily prayers (al-ṣalawāt al-khams) or
- (vii) an unspecific prayer (ṣalāt ghair mu‘aiyanah), that is, no one knows to which prayer it specifically refers. Therefore, this is similar to the unspecific day of the night of glory (lailat al-qadr).

However, the majority of mainstream and non-mainstream exegetes are of the opinion that the expression ‘al-ṣalāt al-wuṣṭā’ denotes the third meaning, that is, ‘ṣalāt al-‘aṣr’. This exegetical view is supported by the view of ‘Ā’ishah. Thus, we have the meaning, ‘Maintain with care the obligatory prayers and in particular the middle, that is, afternoon, prayer.’

Similarly in ‘allāhu yarzuqu man yashā’u bighairi ḥisāb [God gives provision to whom He wills without account]’ (Q2:212) the word ḥisāb poses a semantic ambiguity and is, therefore, a polysemous expression which entails one of the following significations:

- (i) That God gives a considerable amount of provision for whoever He pleases without any limit,
- (ii) That God gives provision freely for whoever He pleases without being asked by anyone why He has done so,
- (iii) That God gives provision for whoever He pleases without blaming Himself for what He has done,
- (iv) That God gives provision for whoever He pleases and that the person rewarded does not know the source of this provision and the way it is provided and
- (v) That God gives provision for whoever He pleases without holding the person rewarded accountable or blamed for the bad deeds he or she has been doing because God forgives and punishes whoever he pleases without taking their deeds into account.

However, in the foregoing list, the most plausible exegetical analysis relates to (i) and the least plausible account relates to (v).

An interesting example of semantic ambiguity is represented by the verb (qaṣṣa) in

‘waqālat li’ukhtihī quṣṣihī [She said to his sister, “Follow him”]’ (Q28:11), where the verb qaṣṣa in quṣṣihī is not semantically related to the meaning ‘to narrate’ but rather to a different meaning, ‘to follow up, to trace one’s news’. Thus, the meaning of Q28:11 should be, ‘She said to his sister, “Follow up his news.”’

Divergent exegetical views are well-represented by the distinct significations of the semantically ambiguous polysemous word istawā in

‘dhū mirratin fastawā wahuwa bil-ufuqi al-a‘lā [He rose to his true form while he was in the higher part of the horizon]’ (Q53:6–7) where the word istawā has been given seven diverse meanings:

- (i) That Gibriel ascended to the sky after he taught Muḥammad the Qur'ān,
- (ii) That Gibriel stood up and appeared in his natural form in which he was created when he met Muḥammad,
- (iii) That the Qur'ān became well-established in the chest of Gibriel when he ascended to Muḥammad,
- (iv) That the Qur'ān became well-established in the chest of Muḥammad when it was revealed to him,
- (v) That Muḥammad stood upright in his strength and prophetic mission,
- (vi) That Muḥammad ascended through the ascension to heaven and
- (vii) That God sat upon the throne.

**16. Ellipsis:** This is referred to as al-ḥadhf in Arabic rhetoric and is closely related to Qur'anic exegesis, as in 'inna raḥmata allāhi qarībun min al-muḥsinīna [The mercy of God is close to those who do good]' (Q7:56). This is an elliptical āyah in which the ellipted word is the modified noun, al-ism al-mawṣūf, which is the implicit noun shai'un (something). Thus, the linguistic structure of the non-elliptical āyah should be 'inna raḥmata allāhi (shai'un) qarībun min al-muḥsinīna [The mercy of God is something close to those who do good].' This linguistic elucidation provides an answer to the inquisitive reader who may wonder why the adjective qarībun (near) occurs in the masculine form. Having discussed the problem of ellipsis, the exegete explains that since the ellipted noun (shai'un) is masculine, its modifier, that is, the adjective, should also occur in the masculine form as a requirement of Arabic grammar. Thus, Q7:56 does not constitute a grammatical incongruity. Arabic grammar has been observed by Q7:56 through the grammatical process of ellipsis which is a prototypical characteristic of Qur'anic Arabic.

Similar to 'walaw shā'a allāhu lajama'ahum 'alā al-hudā [If God had willed, He would have brought them all to guidance]' (Q6:35) and 'falaw shā'a lahadākum ajma'in [Had He so willed, He would have guided you all]' (Q6:149), in Q6:35, there is no ellipsis involved and the verb shā'a (to will) has an explicit subject (allāhu). However, Q6:149 is an elliptical āyah in which the subject of the verb shā'a is ellipted. The exegetical account for this linguistic problem is that the subject (allāhu) is employed in Q6:35 in order to eliminate misunderstanding and inaccurate entailment on the part of the reader. Q6:35 aims to make it clear to the reader that the action denoted by the verb jama'a (to bring together) is performed by the subject (allāhu) rather than by the other nearby subject (Muḥammad) which occurs in the previous āyahs Q6:33, 34 and the initial segment of āyah 35. Thus, ellipsis of subject is not permitted and it has become a grammatical requirement that the actual doer of the action (jama'a) which is the subject (allāhu) should be employed. This is not the case in Q6:149 where the subject (allāh) occurs in the initial segment of the same āyah. Thus, it is grammatically possible to have the subject of the verb (shā'a) ellipted since this grammatical process will not lead to misunderstanding.

**17. Foregrounding and backgrounding:** This is referred to as *al-taqdīm wa-ta'khīr* in Arabic rhetoric. The translation, however, does not reflect the stylistic change involved in the foregrounding and backgrounding grammatical processes. Examples of this stylistic problem are 'iqtarabat al-sā'atu wan-shaqqa al-qamaru [The hour draws near and the moon is split in two]' (Q54:1) where the original linguistic structure is '(inshaqqa al-qamaru) waqtarabat al-sā'atu [the moon is split in two and the hour draws near].'

The predicate of the particle (*inna*) should not be foregrounded; however, it can be foregrounded for the following reasons:

- (i) It occurs as a construct noun phrase (*ẓarf*, that is, *muḍāf wamuḍāf ilaihi*), as in 'inna ladainā ankālan wajaḥīman [Indeed, with Us for them are shackles and burning fire]' (Q73:12), and in 'inna laka allā tajū'a fihā walā ta'rā [Indeed, it is promised for you not to be hungry therein or be unclothed]' (Q20:118).
- (ii) It occurs as a genitive noun phrase (*jār wamajrūr*), as in 'inna fihā qawman jabbārīna [Indeed, within is a people of tyrannical strength]' (Q5:22).

Similarly in 'walawlā kalimatun sabaqat min rabbika lakāna lizāman wa'ajalun musamman [And if not a word that preceded from your Lord, it (the punishment) would have been an obligation due immediately, and if not for a specified term decreed]' (Q20:129) the original grammatical structure is 'walawlā kalimatun sabaqat min rabbika (wa'ajalun musamman) lakāna lizāman.'

The Qur'ān talks to an audience. Thus, Arabic rhetoric is of value to the exegetical analysis of the Qur'anic text. With regards to the rhetorical notion of deviation from the linguistic norms (*al-khurūj 'alā muqtaḍā al-ẓāhir*), the exegete is required to explain the contextual and pragmatic reasons of āyahs that have undergone the foregrounding process which involves the occurrence of the noun (phrase) at the beginning of the sentence. In Arabic rhetoric, this initial noun (phrase) is referred to as *al-musnad ilaihi*. It is worthwhile to alert the reader to the fact that the foregrounded *musnad ilaihi* is employed as a feature of God's omnipotence for a number of pragmatic, that is, communicative, functions such as:

- (i) the elimination of doubt in the addressee's (reader's) mind,
- (ii) the rebuttal of opponent's thesis,
- (iii) the substantiation of God's omnipotence and
- (iv) the rhetorical function of specification (*al-takhsīṣ*).

These pragmatic functions are illustrated below by the examples in Q16:65, 70, 71, 72, 78, 80 and 81, 'allāhu anzala min al-samā'i mā'an [God sent down rain from the sky]'; 'allāhu khalaqakum [God created you]'; 'allāhu faḍḍala ba'ḍakum 'alā ba'ḍin fi al-rizq [God has favoured some of you over others in provision]'; 'allāhu ja'ala lakum min anfusikum azwājan [God has made for you from yourselves mates]'; 'allāhu akhrajakum min buṭūni ummahātikum [God has extracted you from

the wombs of your mothers]'; 'allāhu ja<sup>ʿ</sup>ala lakum min buyūtikum sakanan [God has made for you from your homes a place of rest]' and 'allāhu ja<sup>ʿ</sup>ala lakum mim mā khalaqa ḡilālan [God has made for you shades from that which He has created].'

However, alternative verb-initial (musnad) sentences will fail to deliver the foregoing communicative functions because the initial verb signifies non-continuity. Noun-initial structures beginning with allāhu are context-sensitive; that is, they occur in the context of denial, for example, denial of God's blessings, accepting polytheism, denial of Muḥammad's prophethood or disbelief in eschatology.

**18. Partial synonymy:**<sup>6</sup> Qur'anic exegesis is hinged upon the analysis of semantic subtleties of expressions. The exegete is required to provide a detailed semantic investigation of words to elucidate their similarity with or difference from other words that have occurred elsewhere in the Qur'ān. The same āyah may have two words that are partially synonymous, as in 'innamā ashkū baththī waḡuznī ilā allāh [I only complain of my suffering and my grief to God]' (Q12:86), where the word bathth (suffering) is partially synonymous with ḡuzn (grief). Although some Qur'anic expressions occur as synonyms, Qur'anic discourse provides interesting examples of incomplete synonymy. In other words, although two or more words may have similar significations, they do not semantically represent an identical meaning since they occur in different contexts, for example, in the following:

- (i) al-ṣafḡ: This means 'to abandon the punishment of a person for something wrong he or she has done, and, moreover, to abandon the blame for doing it'. Its meaning denotes clemency and, therefore, is more general than that of the expression al-<sup>ʿ</sup>afu. It is like granting someone 'general amnesty', so to speak. The expression (al-ṣafḡ) is morphologically related to ṣafḡat al-waḡh (the side of the face). Therefore, it means that someone has turned his or her face aside from the wrong doer, that is, to completely ignore and forgive the wrong deed of the accused, as in 'fa<sup>ʿ</sup>fū waṣfaḡū [Pardon and overlook]' (Q2:109).
- (ii) al-<sup>ʿ</sup>afu: This means 'to forgive the wrong deed of a person and not to demand his or her punishment', as in 'faman <sup>ʿ</sup>afā wa'aṣḡlaḡa [Whoever pardons and makes reconciliation]' (Q42:40). The word al-<sup>ʿ</sup>afu is semantically related to the word al-faḡl (doing someone a favour) and is also employed in the sense of writing off someone's debt, as in 'afawtu lisālimin bimāli [I told Sālim not to give me back the money he borrowed from me].'
- (iii) al-maḡfirah: This means, 'to forgive the wrong deed of a person, not to demand his or her punishment, and to cover up for his or her wrong deed'. Its meaning, therefore, is more specific than that of al-<sup>ʿ</sup>afu. The meaning of al-maḡfirah is semantically related to the word (al-ḡafr) which signifies al-ḡhiṡā (the cover of something). Thus, al-maḡfirah denotes 'to cover up for the bad deed committed by someone', as in 'maḡfiratin min rabbikum [forgiveness from your Lord]' (Q3:133).

Similarly in

- (i) *al-asaf*: This signifies ‘severe grief with a state of rage and anxiety’, as in ‘*watawallā ‘anhum waqāla yā asafā ‘alā yūsufa* [He turned away from them and said, “Oh, my sorrow over Joseph”]’ (Q12:84). This expression is morphologically related to *al-asāfah* which means ‘the delicate and soft ground’. Thus, a person with *al-asaf* is described as a person who is ‘psychologically fragile and sensitive’, that is, *raqīq al-nafs*. Therefore, he or she quickly becomes sad, in rage and overwhelmed by anxiety, ‘*sari‘u al-ḥuzni wal-jaza‘i wal-ghaḍabi.*’
- (ii) *al-asā*: It means ‘sadness for what had taken place’, as in ‘*likailā ta’saw ‘alā mā fātakum* [In order that you do not grieve for what you miss]’ (Q57:23). It signifies ‘*al-inkisār wal-dhubūl wakhaibat al-amal* [despondency, being withered and frustration]’.
- (iii) *al-bathth*: This expression signifies ‘grief with serious illness’, as in ‘*innamā ashkū baththī waḥuznī ilā allāh* [I only complain of my suffering and grief to God]’ (Q12:86) in which Joseph’s father is depicted as a person who cannot bear the severity of sadness and this has led to his illness. Therefore, the person is expected to complain about it.
- (iv) *al-ḥazan*: This is the antonym of *al-faraḥ* (happiness, joy), as in, ‘*waqālū al-ḥamdu lillāhi alladhī adhhaba ‘annā al-ḥazana* [They will say, “Praise to God who has removed from us all sorrow”]’ (Q35:34).
- (v) *al-ḥasrah*: This word means ‘severe grief and the feeling of remorse for what had been missed’, as in, ‘*yā ḥasratā ‘alā mā farrattū* [Oh, how great is my regret over what I neglected]’ (Q39:56). This expression is semantically related to
  - (a) ‘*ḥasarat al-dābbatu* [The animal has stopped walking]’; that is, it is unable to walk anymore, that is, crippled. Therefore, the person with severe grief and remorse is likened to an animal which is of no use to its owner, and
  - (b) ‘*inḥasarat quwāhu* [His or her physical power has weakened]’ due to his or her grief and distress.

Within the semantic analysis required by Qur’anic exegesis, the exegete also needs to be aware of the linguistic fact that some expressions that are orthographically similar denote distinct meanings due to their respective collocation, as in *al-kurh* and *al-karh* in the āyahs, ‘*kutiba ‘alaikum al-qitālu wahuwa kurhun lakum* [Fighting has been enjoined upon you, though you dislike it]’ (Q2:216) where the word *kurh* (to dislike something) is employed to denote ‘something hard to be done. Although it is voluntary, it is not liked by people. Nevertheless, someone makes an effort to undertake it without compulsion.’ Thus, the expression (*kurh*) collocates with the word *al-qitāl* (fighting) which was voluntary, hard and disliked by people. Nevertheless, some companions undertook it willingly.

‘*thumma istawā ilā al-samā’i wahiya dukhānun faqāla lahā walil-arḍi a’tiyā ṭaw‘an aw karhan* [Then He directed Himself to the heaven while it was smoke

and said to it and to the earth, “Come into being willingly or by compulsion.”]’ (Q41:11) where the word *karh* (to do something by compulsion) is employed to signify that ‘someone else has forced you to do something.’ In other words, there is compulsion since a command is given to someone/something to execute an action. Thus, the expression (*karh*) collocates with the context in which coercion is involved as in Q41:11 in which *al-samā’i wal-arḍi* (the heaven and the earth) were ordered by God to come and they did.

**19. Selectional restrictions:**<sup>7</sup> A word which is normally known to have a negative connotative meaning may be clothed with a new positive connotation as a stylistic technique at the lexical level. In other words, stylistically, such an expression with a negative connotation is expected to collocate with words of a negative connotation. For instance, the verb *yaqtarif* usually co-occurs with the inherent componential feature (negative) that has the semantic entailment of bad deeds. Therefore, it qualifies for the meaning ‘to commit’ that semantically entails ‘to do bad deeds’, as in

‘*walitaṣṣha ilaihi af’idatu alldhīna lā yu’minūna bil-ākhirati waliyarḍawhu waliyaqtarifū mā hum muqtarifūn* [So the hearts of those who disbelieve in the hereafter will incline towards deceptive speech and that they will be satisfied with it and that they will commit that which they are committing]’ (Q6:113), ‘*inna alladhīna yaksibūna al-ithma sayujzawna bimā kānū yaqtarifūn* [Indeed, those who earn blame for sin will be recompensed for that which they used to commit]’ (Q6:120) and ‘*amwālun iqtaraftumūhā* [Wealth which you have obtained]’ (Q9:24) where the semantically negative word *yaqtarif* has co-occurred with the (negative) words ‘*alldhīna lā yu’minūna* [those who disbelieve]’ in Q6:113, ‘*inna alladhīna yaksibūna al-ithma* [those who commit sin]’ in Q6:120 and the wider context that alludes to ‘those who love the fleeting materialistic things more than God and the Prophet’ in Q9:24. The exegete should be aware of the following semantic analysis of the verb (*yaqtarif*):

- (i) It is morphologically related to the nominalized noun (*iqtirāf*) which means (earning, gaining).
- (ii) It is morphologically related to the noun *al-qarf* which means the bark of the tree or the scab of a wound.
- (iii) It is employed for the rhetorical function of hyperbole.
- (iv) It usually collocates with (negative) and (bad deeds).
- (v) It may collocate with *positive* and *good news* if it is employed allegorically (*isti’ārah*).
- (vi) It is derived from the verb *qarafa* (to peel the bark) as in, ‘*qarafa sālimun al-shajarata* [Sālim peeled the bark of the tree].’ Thus, we have *qarf* (the bark of the tree).

However, the selection restriction rule, negative and bad deeds, that is imposed upon the verb *yaqtarif* is violated in Q42:23. This word has occurred in a new

stylistic environment, ‘waman yaqtarif ḥasanatan nazid lahū fihā ḥusnā [Whoever does a good deed, We shall increase it for him]’ (Q42:23) where (yaqtarif)<sup>8</sup> has, stylistically speaking, unexpectedly collocated with the word ḥasanatan (a good deed) that has the semantic feature (positive). Therefore, yaqtarif entails fresh componential features (positive) and (good deeds). However, the verb (yaqtarif) adopts a new meaning in ‘wa’amwālun iqtaraftumūhā [Wealth which you have obtained]’ (Q9:24) where yaqtarif co-occurs with amwāl (money, wealth).

20. **The past tense that signifies a future tense:** In Qur’anic discourse, some verbs occur in the past but their meaning refers to the future, as in, ‘atā amru allāhi [The command of God is coming]’ (Q16:1), ‘wanufikha fī al-ṣūri faṣa’iqa man fī al-samāwāti waman fī al-arḍi [The horn will be blown and whoever is in the heavens and whoever is on the earth will fall dead]’ (Q39:68) and ‘wabarazū lillāhi jamī’an [They will come out for judgement before God]’ (Q14:21) where the verbs atā (came), ṣa’iqa (fell dead) and barazū (came out) are in the past tense but their meaning denotes a future tense.
21. **The present tense that signifies a past tense:** Some present tense verbs denote a past tense, as in ‘qad ya’lamu mā antum ‘alaihi [Already He knows that upon which you stand]’ (Q24:64), and ‘falima taqtulūna anbiyā’a allāhi [Why did you kill the Prophets of God?]’ (Q2:91) where the verbs ya’lamu (to know) and taqtulūna (to kill) are in the present tense but their meaning refers to an action that had taken place in the past.
22. **The active participle (ism al-fā’il) and passive participle (ism al-maf’ūl) signify a future tense,** as in ‘wa’inna al-dīna lawāqi’un [The judgement will take place]’ (Q51:6) and ‘ba’aiyikumū al-maftūn [Which of you is afflicted with madness]’ (Q68:6) where the active participle wāqi’un (taking place) has the meaning of a nominalized noun, ‘definitely taking place’ (al-wuqu‘) and signifies the underlying meaning of disbelief in eschatology. The same applies to the passive participle maftūn (afflicted) which signifies the nominalized noun al-fitnah (affliction).
23. **The use of the active participle to denote the meaning of a passive participle,** as in mā’in dāfiq (spurting fluid, Q86:6), lā ‘āṣima al-yawma min amri allāh [There is no protector today from the decree of God]’ (Q11:43) and ‘ja’alnā ḥaraman āminan [We made (Makkah) a safe sanctuary]’ (Q29:67), where the active participles dāfiq (spurting), ‘āṣim (protector) and āmin (safe) have the meaning of a passive participle madfūq (spurted), ma’ṣūm (protected) and ma’mūn (made safe), respectively. This is referred to in Arabic rhetoric as cognitive allegory (al-majāz al-‘aqlī) with an object relationship because the intended passive participle functions as the object of the sentence.
24. **The use of the passive participle to denote the meaning of an active participle,** as in ‘innahū kāna wa’duhū ma’tiyā [His promise has ever been

coming]’ (Q19:61) and ‘*ḥijāban mastūrā* [concealed partition]’ (Q17:45) where the passive participles *ma’tiyyā* (has been coming) and *mastūrā* (concealed) have the meaning of an active participle *ātiyā* (coming) and *sātirā* (concealing), respectively. This is referred to in Arabic rhetoric as cognitive allegory (*al-majāz al-‘aqlī*) with a subject relationship because the intended active participle functions as the subject of the sentence.

- 25. The use of a plural noun that signifies a singular meaning**, as in ‘*fanādathu al-malā’ikatu* [The angels called him]’ (Q3:39) and ‘*yunazzilu al-malā’ikata bil-rūḥi* [He sends down the angels with the inspiration]’ (Q16:2) where the nouns *al-malā’ikatu* (the angels) and *al-malā’ikata* (the angels) occur in the plural but in fact they mean one angel, namely, *jibrīl* (Gabriel).

Also in, *rabbī arji‘ūnī* [My Lord, let me return]’ (Q23:99) where the addressee pronoun *-ū* (you, plural) refers to an addressee in the plural while in fact the meaning in terms of the underlying grammatical status of the pronoun should be an addressee in the singular because the addressee is meant to be God. Therefore, while the surface meaning of Q23:99 is, ‘My Lord, You (plural) return me,’ its exegesis should be based upon the singular pronoun, ‘*rabbī arji‘ni*’ (My Lord, return me) so that misunderstanding is eliminated by the entailment of the angels in the act of ‘returning someone to life’.

- 26. The use of a singular noun that signifies a plural meaning**, as in ‘*inna al-insāna lafi khusrin* [Indeed, mankind is in deep loss],’ (Q103:2) where the noun *al-insāna* (man, that is, mankind) occurs in the singular but whose underlying meaning is the plural *al-anāsiy* (people). However, it is also worthwhile for the exegete to highlight the fact that the same noun (*al-insāna*) occurs in ‘*khuliqa al-insānu min ‘ajal* [Man was created hasty]’ (Q21:37) and in ‘*inna al-insāna khuliqa halū‘ā* [Man was truly created anxious]’ (Q70:19) with the meaning of the singular referring to Adam. In other words, unlike Q103:2, the noun *al-insāna* in Q21:37 and Q70:19 denotes the singular meaning only. This exegetical analysis is based on the exegetes’ views of Mujāhid, Sa‘īd b. Jubair, ‘Ikramah, al-Suddi, al-Kalbi, Muqātil and al-Ḍaḥḥāk.

- 27. The use of the singular that signifies a dual meaning**, as in ‘*wallāhu warasūluḥū aḥaqqu an yurḍūhu* [It would be more fitting for them to please God and His messenger]’ (Q9:62) where the co-referential pronoun *-hu* (Him/him) attached to the verb *yurḍū* (to please) is singular which may refer either to *allāh* (God) or to *rasūl* (messenger, that is, Muḥammad). The reader should be informed that the underlying grammatical status of the singular co-referential pronoun *-hu* is dual *-mā* (both of them). Thus, the exegetical analysis of Q9:62 should highlight the grammatical fact that a dual pronoun

is meant and the meaning involves the word *kilāhumā* (both of them). Therefore, Q9:62 involves the underlying grammatical structure: ‘*wallāhu warasūlūhū aḥaqqu an yurḏūhumā* [It would be more fitting for them to please both God and His messenger].’

- 28. The use of the dual (al-muthannā) that signifies a singular meaning**, as in ‘*alqiyā fi jahannama . . .* [Hurl into hell . . .]’ (Q50:24), where the dual pronoun *-ā* (you two) attached to the verb *alqi* (to throw) signifies the singular which refers to the angel in charge of the hell fire. The occurrence of the noun in the dual form is to achieve the rhetorical functions of hyperbole and affirmation. The dual verb form (*alqiyā*) is equal to saying the singular verb form (*alqi*) twice, that is, *alqi, alqi* (You [singular] throw, throw [him or her] into hell).
- 29. The use of the plural that signifies a dual meaning**, as in ‘*in tatūbā ilā allāhi faqad ṣaghat qulūbukumā* [If both of you (wives) repent to God, for your hearts have deviated, (all will be well)]’ (Q66:4) where the plural noun *qulūbu* (hearts) should be understood as a dual noun *qalbā* (two hearts). Thus, with the attachment of the possessive dual pronoun *kumā* (your, possessive, dual), the underlying dual noun is *qalbākumā* (your two hearts of you two).
- 30. The use of the masculine that signifies the feminine**, as in ‘*faman jā’ahū maw‘izatun min rabbihī* [Whoever has received an admonition from his Lord]’ (Q2 :275) and ‘*inna raḥmata allāhi qarībun min al-muḥsinīn* [The mercy of God is near to those who do good]’ (Q7 :56) where, in the first example, there is a feminine noun *maw‘izatun* (feminine, singular) but its implicit co-referential pronoun occurs as a masculine *-t* (it [masculine, singular]) which, stylistically speaking, should be *jā’at + hū* (i.e. *jā’athū*). This implicit feminine co-referential pronoun is referred to in Arabic grammar as *tā’ al-ta’nith* (the /t/ of the feminine). Similarly, in the second example, we encounter an adjective, *qarībun* (near). As a grammatical requirement in Arabic, the adjective takes the feminine and the masculine form of its noun. In other words, if the noun is masculine, its adjective occurs in the masculine form, and if the noun is feminine, its adjective occurs in the feminine form. However, the noun *raḥmata* (mercy) is feminine but its adjective, *qarībun*, occurs in the masculine. The reason for this is attributed to the grammatical fact that the feminine word *raḥmata* is a false feminine noun whose underlying meaning should be understood as masculine, that is, *al-taraḥḥum* (forgiveness, mercy) or *al-iḥsān* (kindness). The exegete is required to alert the reader to this grammatical problem and should refer to the false feminine noun (*al-mu’annath ghair al-ḥaqīqī*) in Arabic grammar whose underlying signification denotes a masculine noun.

- 31. The use of the feminine that signifies the masculine**, as in ‘*alladhīna yarithūna al-firdawsa hum fihā khālidūn* [Those who will inherit the highest part of paradise will abide therein eternally]’ (Q23:11) where we have a masculine noun *al-firdawsa* (the highest part of paradise) but its co-referential pronoun occurs in the feminine form *-hā* (it, feminine). To eliminate this stylistic misunderstanding on the part of the reader who is unaware of advanced Arabic grammar, the exegete is expected to elucidate this exegetical and linguistic problem. This stylistic problem is attributed to the grammatical fact that the word *al-firdawsa* is a false masculine noun (*mudhakkār ghair haqīqī*) whose underlying meaning should be understood as feminine, that is, *al-jannata* (paradise).
- 32. The vocative (yā – O):** The vocative particle *yā* is usually employed when addressing someone. However, the vocative is used for the pragmatic function of surprise (*al-ta‘ajjub*) rather than an address to someone, as in, ‘*yā ḥasratan ‘alā al-‘ibādī* [How regretful for the servants]’ (Q36:30) and ‘*an taqūla nafsun yā ḥasratī ‘alā mā farratū fī janbi allāhi* [Lest a soul should say, “Oh, how great is my regret over what I neglected in regard to God”]’ (Q39:56) where the noun *ḥasratan* (regret) is an abstract noun that cannot be addressed. Therefore, the vocative is employed as a pragmatic signal for surprise and whose rhetorical value is to achieve a warning to those who are not heeding their Lord.
- 33. Shift:** This is a prototypical stylistic feature of Qur’anic discourse. Shift is employed in the Qur’ān as rhetorical decoration with the pragmatic function of reinforcing the message and the psychological function of awakening the heedless reader. However, shift may lead to misunderstanding on the part of the reader and for this reason the exegete is required to account for it in his textual analysis. Shift is referred to in Arabic as *al-iltifāt* which involves a stylistic change at different levels, as in
- (i) the person: Linguistically, this is referred to as shift in person where some āyahs involve a stylistic change in the pronoun in terms of person, as in
- ‘*qāla lā takhtaṣimū ladaiyah waqad qaddamtu ilaikum bil-wa‘id. mā yubaddalu ladaiyah wamā anā biḥallāmin lil-‘abid. yawma naqūlu lijahannama hal imtala’ti?* [God will say, “Do not dispute before Me while I had already presented to you the warning. The decree will not be changed with Me and never will I be unjust to the servants.” On the day We will say to hell, “Have you been filled?”]’ (Q50:28–30) where there is a shift from the third person singular in *qāla* (He said) to the first person singular in *ladaiyah* (to me), *qaddamtu* (I presented) and *anā* (I) and then another pronoun shift to the first person plural in *naqūlu* (We say). The first person plural that refers to God is referred to as the majestic plural or the plural of majesty. However, all these pronoun shifts grammatically refer to the same person (*allāh*) which occurs implicitly in *ladaiyah*, *qaddamtu* and *naqūlu*.

Similarly in ‘waman ya<sup>ʿ</sup>ṣī allāha warasūlahū fa’inna lahū nāra jahannama khālidīna fihā abadan [Anyone who defies God and His messenger will have hell fire to live in for ever]’ (Q72:23) where we have a pronoun shift from the masculine third person singular pronoun -hū (him) in lahū (to him) to the masculine third person plural pronoun -in (they) which is attached to the active participle khālid (to live in for ever). Other examples of shift are encountered in Q17:97, Q22:8–10, Q24:31 and Q65:11.

(ii) the tense: Verbs in the same āyah may occur in different tenses, as in

‘inna alladhīna kafarū wayaṣuddūna ‘an sabīli allāhi [Those who disbelieved and avert people from the way of God]’ (Q22:25) where we have two verbs; the first, kafarū (disbelieved), occurs in the present tense while the second, yaṣuddūna (to avert), occurs in the past. This also applies to Q30:40.

(iii) verbal-nominal sentence: We also encounter a stylistic shift in the same āyah which has two segments: one with a verb, that is, a verbal sentence, and the other without a verb, that is, a nominal sentence, as in ‘wa’idhā laqū alladhīna āmanū qālū āmannā wa’idhā khalaw ilā shayāṭīnihim qālū innā ma<sup>ʿ</sup>akum innamā naḥnu mustahzi’ūn [When they meet those who believe, they say, “‘We believe,’ but when they are alone with their evil ones, they say, ‘Indeed, we are with you. We were only mockers,’”]’ (Q2:14) where after the first verb qālū (they said), there is a direct speech sentence with a verb āmannā (we believed), while after the second verb qālū (they said), there is a direct speech sentence without a verb; therefore, a shift has taken place where we have a nominal sentence, ‘innā ma<sup>ʿ</sup>akum [Indeed, we are with you]’ followed by another nominal sentence, ‘innamā naḥnu mustahzi’ūn [We were only mockers].’

The exegete is also required to explain that shift, as a rhetorical mechanism, is employed to achieve varied pragmatic functions such as

- (a) rebuke to the unbelievers, an indication of God’s displeasure with them, and a warning to what they claim against Him, as in ‘waqālū ittakhadha al-rahmānu waladā. laqad ji’tum shai’an iddā [They say, “The Most Merciful has taken for Himself a son.” You have done an atrocious thing]’ (Q19:88–89) where shift has occurred from third person plural pronoun -hum (they) implicit in the verb qālū (they say) to the second person plural pronoun antum (you) implicit in the verb ji’tum (you have done).
- (b) to indicate God’s omnipotence, as in ‘wahuwa alladhī arsala al-riyāḥa bushran baina yadai rahmatihī wa’anzalnā min al-samā’i mā’an ṭahūrā [It is He who sends the winds as good tidings before His mercy (i.e. rainfall), and We send down from the sky pure water]’ (Q25:48) where shift has occurred from the third person singular pronoun in huwa (He) to the first person plural pronoun naḥnu (We) that occurs implicitly in the verb anzalnā (We send down).

**34. Coordination:** This is referred to in Arabic grammar as *al-ʿaṭf* which is achieved by the coordination (conjunction) particles like *wa* (and) and *fa* (so, therefore) and takes different forms that are relevant to Qur’anic exegesis, as in

- (i) the coordination of the specific to the general (*ʿaṭf al-khāṣṣ ʿalā al-ʿāmm*) where some thing represents the general subject matter occurs first, followed by something else more specific that is regarded as part of the general thing mentioned earlier, as in

‘*ḥāfiẓū ʿalā al-ṣalawāti wal-ṣalāti alwustā* [Maintain with care the obligatory prayers and in particular the middle prayer]’ (Q2:238) where the general thing is *al-ṣalawāti* (the obligatory five daily prayers) which is followed by the specific kind of prayer represented by the expression *al-ṣalāti alwustā* (the middle prayer) which is part of the general noun, *al-ṣalawāt*.

‘*man kāna ʿaduwwan lillāhi wamalāʾikatihī warusulihī wajibrīla wamikāla . . .* [If anyone is an enemy of God, His angels and His messengers, of Gabriel and Michael . . .]’ (Q2:98) where a general noun *malāʾikatihī* (His angels) occurs and followed by specific nouns *jibrīla* (Gabriel) and *mikāla* (Michael) that are part of the general noun *malāʾikah* (angels). This also applies to ‘*waman yaʿmal sūʿan aw yazlim nafsahū* [Whoever does a wrong or wrongs himself]’ (Q4:110) and ‘*waman aẓlamu mimman iftarā ʿalā allāhi kadhīban aw qāla ūḥiya ilaiyah walam yūḥā ilaihi shaiʿun* [Who could be more unjust than someone who invents a lie against God or claims that “a revelation has come to me” while nothing has been revealed to him] (Q6:93).

- (ii) the coordination of the general to the specific (*ʿaṭf al-ʿāmm ʿalā al-khāṣṣ*) where a specific thing is mentioned first followed by something else that is more general but is regarded as part of it, as in

‘*inna ṣalāti wanusukī* [My prayer and my rites]’ (Q6:162) where *ṣalāt* (prayer) represents a specific act of worship followed by the general acts of worship *nusuk* (rites) which also includes the act of (*ṣalāt*) as part of it.

‘*ātaināka sabʿan min al-mathānī wal-qurʾān al-ʿazīm* [We have certainly given you seven of the often-repeated āyahs and the great Qurʾān]’ (Q15:87) where the specific is ‘*sabʿan min al-mathānī* (the often repeated āyahs, that is, Q1 *al-fātiḥah*) followed by the general noun *al-qurʾān al-ʿazīm* (the great Qurʾān).

However, the exegete does not need to account for the common form of coordination which takes place between two nouns, as in ‘*al-samāʾi wal-arḍi* [the heaven and the earth]’ (Q22:70) or two verbs, as in ‘*walā tahīnū walā taḥzanū* [Do not lose heart and do not despair]’ (Q3:139). This form of coordination, therefore, does not lead to exegetical problems that affect the meaning of the āyah.

Coordination with the particle (fa) also occurs in Qur'anic discourse, as in

'qad khalat min qablikum sunanun fasirū fi al-ardhi fanzurū kaifa kāna 'āqibatū al-mukadhdhibīna [Similar situations as yours have passed on before you, so proceed throughout the earth and observe how was the end of those who denied]' (Q3:137) where coordination is achieved by the particle (fa) attached to the verb *anzurū* (to observe).

- 35. Different words that are semantically related to a single source:** This is related to meaning relations among a set of semantically related words. Some Qur'anic lexical items occur without elaboration but are also intertextually related to other expressions elsewhere in the Qur'ān. On the surface, these expressions are semantically related in the sense that they are concerned with the same source of reference, as in 'khalaqnākum min turābin [We created you from dust]' (Q22:5), 'khalaqnā al-insāna . . . min ḥama'in masnūn [We created man . . . from an altered black mud]' (Q15:26), 'innā khalaqnāhum min ṭīnin lāzib [We have created them from sticky clay]' (Q37:11) and 'khalaqa al-insāna min ṣalṣālin kalfakhhār [He created man from clay like that of pottery]' (Q55:14) where the lexical items *turābin* (dust), *ḥama'in masnūn* (an altered black mud), *ṭīnin lāzib* (sticky clay) and *ṣalṣālin kalfakhhār* (clay like that of pottery) are distinct expressions. Therefore, semantically, these words are the hyponyms of the word *turāb* (dust, soil). This is due to the fact that these words are semantically related in the sense that they are of the same source, namely, *turāb*. Thus, semantically, *turāb* is a superordinate term. The exegete needs to explain this linguistic fact in order to eliminate the misunderstanding that these āyahs are semantically contradictory.
- 36. Arabic rhetoric:** A qualified exegete is required to be familiar with the three disciplines of Arabic rhetoric: word order ('ilm al-ma'āni), figures of speech ('ilm al-bayān) and embellishments ('ilm al-badī'). The most significant element in this diverse stylistic field is the pragmatic functions of each discipline (for more details on Arabic rhetoric and its pragmatic functions, see Abdul-Raof 2006). The exegete is encountered with the controversial rhetorical problem of esoteric (underlying, non-literal) versus exoteric (surface, literal) signification with regards to allegorical, that is, metaphorical and non-allegorical, or non-metaphorical, expressions that lead to different dogmatic and theological views. This makes a significant distinction between a mainstream and a non-mainstream school of exegesis. Exegetes who adopt allegorical signification, that is, the esoteric meaning, are the non-mainstream exegetes such as the Mu'tazilah like al-Zamakhshari, the Shi'ah such as al-Ṭabāṭabā'i and the Ibādīyah such as Iṭfaiyish and Aḥmad al-Khalīlī. However, exegetes who advocate non-allegorical, that is, exoteric signification, are the mainstream exegetes like al-Ṭabari and Ibn Katīr. Let us consider the following examples which depict rhetorical features that are relevant to Qur'anic exegesis and which have led to theological cleavages among schools of exegesis:

- (i) Metaphor or allegory (al-isti<sup>ʿ</sup>ārah): This is the most controversial issue among mainstream and non-mainstream schools of exegesis, as in

‘al-raḥmānu ʿalā al-ʿarsh istawā [The Lord of mercy has established on the throne]’ (Q20:5) where the expression al-ʿarsh is exegetically analysed as either

- (a) non-allegorical, that is, exoteric and literal, meaning ‘the throne, the seat’, or
- (b) allegorical, that is, esoteric and non-literal, meaning ‘sway over, power’.

It is worthwhile to note that the expressions al-ʿarsh istawā, or istawā ʿalā al-ʿarsh, have occurred in the Qurʾān six times (Q7:54, Q10:3, Q13:2, Q25:59, Q32:4 and Q57:4). Therefore, we will encounter distinct exegetical views advocated on this contentious expression depending on the school of exegesis to which the exegete belongs.

- (ii) Epizeuxis (al-takrīr or al-tikrār) occurs recurrently in Qurʾanic discourse and the exegete is required to elucidate the pragmatic functions of this rhetorical feature which include

- (1) to achieve confirmation (al-taʿkīd). Epizeuxis occurs at word level and phrase level, as in

‘walā tulbisū al-ḥaqqā bil-bāṭili wataktumū al-ḥaqqā waʾantum taʿlamūn [Do not mix the truth with falsehood, or hide the truth when you know it]’ (Q2:42) where the word al-ḥaqqā (the truth) is repeated.

‘idh qāla allāhu yā ʿīsā . . . biʾdhnī . . . biʾdhnī . . . biʾdhnī . . . biʾdhnī . . . [God will say, ‘Jesus, . . . by My leave . . .]’ (Q5:110) where the word biʾdhnī (by My leave) is repeated to confirm that the miracle has taken place by God’s licence and power and not by Jesus. Thus, the repetition is a rebuttal to the divinity attributed to Jesus.

‘fabiʾaiyi ālāʾi rabbikumā tukadhdhibān [Which, then, of your Lord’s blessings do you both deny?]’ (Q55:13) where this phrase is repeated 31 times in Q55. It occurs in the context of three different categories of people: (1) the unbelievers, (2) the highly pious believers and (3) the ordinary believers.

- (2) to demonstrate high respect to the noun repeated in the same āyah, as in

‘alam ta<sup>o</sup>lam anna allāha lahū . . . wamā lakum min dūni allāhi . . . [Do you not know that to God belongs . . .? Without God, you will have no . . . ]’ (Q2:107) where the noun allāh is repeated while the expected grammatical form should be min dūnihi (without Him), that is, the use of the co-referential pronoun -hi (Him) attached to the preposition dūni (without), instead of the use of the explicit noun in min dūni allāhi (without God). Thus, the noun allāh is repeated for the pragmatic function of showing God’s majesty and respect to Him.

- (3) to highlight the significant value conveyed by the noun that is repeated, as in

‘al-ḥajju ashhurun ma<sup>o</sup>lūmātun . . . al-ḥajja . . . walā jidāla fī al-ḥajji [The pilgrimage takes place during the prescribed months . . . the pilgrimage . . . and no quarrelling during the pilgrimage . . . ]’ (Q2:197) where the repeated noun is al-ḥajj (the pilgrimage) and the expected grammatical structure should be walā jidāla fīhi (and no quarrelling during it), that is, the employment of the co-referential pronoun -hi (it) attached to the preposition fī (during), instead of walā jidāla fī al-ḥajji (and no quarrelling during the pilgrimage).

- (4) to highlight the high status of the repeated noun, as in

‘qāla yā ādamu anbi’hum bi’asmā’ihim falammā anba’ahum bi’asmā’ihim qāla . . . [He said, “O Adam, inform them their names.” When he had informed them of their names, He said, . . . ]’ (Q2:33) where we see the noun bi’asmā’ihim (with their names) repeated, while the expected grammatical structure should be bihā (with them, that is, with the names), that is, the use of the co-referential pronoun -hā (them) attached to the preposition bi (with), instead of bi’asmā’ihim.

- (5) to avoid semantic ambiguity, as in

‘kullun āmannā billāhi wa malā’ikatihī wa kutubihī wa rusulihī lā nufarriqu baina aḥadin min rusulihī [All of the them have believed in God, His angels, His Scriptures and His messengers. “We make no distinction between any of His messengers,” they say]’ (Q2:285) where we have only one specific noun, namely, rusulihī (His messengers), repeated and not the other nouns malā’ikatihī (His angels) and kutubihī (His Scriptures). The exegete is required to elucidate to the reader the grammatical

reason why this āyah avoids the employment of a different grammatical structure *minhum* (between them), that is, the use of the co-referential pronoun *-hum* (them) attached to the preposition *min* (between, literally meaning ‘from’). The pragmatic reason for this specific style, that is, the repetition of the noun (*rusulihi*) rather than its pronoun is primarily to avoid semantic ambiguity since the use of the pronoun (*-hum*) will lead the reader to believe that the other noun *malā’ikatihi* (His angels) is also included in the act of ‘make no distinction between’ denoted by the negated verb (*lā nufarriqu baina*). Thus, had we got the alternative style, ‘*kullun āmannā billāhi wa malā’ikatihi wa kutubihi wa rusulihi lā nufarriqu baina aḥadin minhum,*’ we would have got an inaccurate exegesis, ‘All of them have believed in God, His angels, His Scriptures and His messengers. “We make no distinction between any of them,” they say’ due to (i) the non-repetition of the noun *rusulihi*, and (ii) the use of the co-referential pronoun *-hum* attached to *min*. However, a comparative linguistic-stylistic analysis between the above āyah Q2:285 and its counterpart Q3:84 will be highly beneficial to the reader. Let us consider Q3:84,

’*qul āmannā billāhi wamā unzila ‘alainā wamā unzila ‘alā ibrahīma wa’ismā‘īla wa’ishāqa waya‘qūba wal-asbāṭi wamā ūtiya mūsā wa’isā wal-nabiyyūna min rabbihim lā nufarriqu baina aḥadin minhum [Say, “We believe in God and in what has been sent down to us and to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob and the Tribes. We believe in what has been given to Moses, Jesus and the Prophets from their Lord. We do not make a distinction between any of them (i.e. between any of the Prophets)”]*’ where we have in the last segment of the āyah ‘*lā nufarriqu baina aḥadin mihum [We do not make a distinction between any of them]*’ a linguistic structure with a style different from that we have already encountered in Q2:285 above. Unlike Q2:285, the āyah Q3:84 does not repeat any of the nouns listed, but instead the co-referential pronoun *-hum* (them) is employed where it is attached to the preposition *min* (between). The reason for this is attributed to the fact that this style does not lead to semantic ambiguity since the exegetical analysis is straightforward, ‘*lā nufarriqu baina aḥadin minhum [making no distinction between any of them]*’, that is, the belief in all of the listed Prophets rather than in one of them specifically.

- (iii) Interrogative question for the pragmatic function of rebuke: This is referred to in Arabic rhetoric as *al-istifhām al-tawbikhī* (rebuke question), *al-istifhām al-inkāri* (denial question) and *al-istifhām al-majāzi* (allegorical/metaphorical question), as in

‘mā lakum idhā qīla lakum anfirū fī sabili allāhi aththāqaltum ilā al-arḍi? [Believers, why, when it is said to you, “Go and fight in God’s way,” do you feel weighed down to the ground?]}’ (Q9:38) where we have an interrogative āyah employed rhetorically to achieve the pragmatic function of denial and rebuke (al-inkār wal-taqrīf), that is, denying their excuses and claims and rebuking them.

Similarly in ‘aṭṭala‘a al-ghaib? [Has he penetrated the unknown?]}’ (Q19:78) this is a rhetorical question employed for sarcasm and rebuke.

However, an interrogative question may convey the pragmatic function of magnifying the horror of the day of judgement and instilling fear in the mind of the reader/hearer, as in ‘mā al-ḥāqqah? [What is the inevitable hour?]}’ (Q69:2). Yet in Q69:3 we encounter another interrogative question, ‘wamā adrāka mā al-ḥāqqah? [What will explain to you what the inevitable hour is?]}’ (Q69:3); this āyah conveys to the reader the pragmatic function of rebuke. We are admonished that mankind do not appreciate the enormity of the horror of the day of judgement because no one has yet experienced it.

- (iv) Noun-initial sentences: According to Arabic rhetoric, the noun occurs sentence-initially as musnad ilaihi (the inchoative, literally meaning someone or something to which something or some action is attributed) for the pragmatic function of specification (al-takhṣīṣ), as in ‘allāhu yabsuṭu al-rizqa liman yashā’ wayaqdir [God extends provision for whom He wills]}’ (Q13:26), ‘allāhu nazzala aḥsana al-ḥadīthi [God has sent down the best statement]}’ (Q39:23) and ‘allāhu yaqūlu al-ḥaqqa [God says the truth]}’ (Q33:4) where the noun allāhu has the rhetorical function of al-musnad ilaihi and which is employed in this stylistic pattern in order to highlight the fact that the acts of baṣṭ al-rizq (the extension of provision), inzāl aḥsan al-ḥadīth (the sending down of the best statement) and qawl al-ḥaqq (the saying of the truth) represented by their relevant verbs yabsuṭ (to extend), anzala (to send down) and yaqūlu (to say) are specific to God alone and no one else is able to do so. However, in the same sūrah, we encounter a noun-initial sentence, but later on the style changes to the ordinary Arabic word order; that is, the verb occurs initially, as in ‘allāhu alladhī sakhkhara lakum al-baḥra [It is God who subjected to you the sea]}’ (Q45:12) where the musnad ilaihi noun (allāhu) occurs sentence-initially for the pragmatic function of specification, that is, the action of taskhīr (the subjection of) belongs to God alone. However, later on, we encounter a different stylistic word order, ‘khalaqa allāhu al-samāwāti wal-arḍa bil-ḥaqqi [God created the heavens and earth in truth]}’ (Q45:22), where the verb khalaqa (to create) which is rhetorically the musnad that occurs sentence-initially for the pragmatic function of highlighting new information to the addressee. The exegete is required to explain that for rhetorical reasons, the verb

(khalāqa) occurs first in order to highlight God's justice rather than God's omnipotence. This is substantiated by the word *bil-ḥaqqi* (in truth). Thus, to highlight the Qur'anic notion of God being Just and that His justice is based on the fact that since the heavens and the earth are created with the utmost precision, His justice also entails utmost precision and without prejudice or the slightest of injustice. This linguistic analysis is also substantiated by the rest of the āyah, 'walatujzā kullu nafsin bimā kasabat wahum lā yuḏlamūn [So that every soul may be recompensated for what it has earned and they will not be wronged]' (Q45:22). Therefore, to highlight the message that on the day of reckoning, no one will be wronged and that each individual person will be rewarded according to his or her own good or bad deeds, the verbal stylistic pattern is required.

# 8 Jurisprudential tools of exegesis

## 8.1 Introduction

Mainstream and non-mainstream exegetes are expected to be aware of Islamic law and its major sources, although their tafsīr work is not primarily concerned with legal exegesis. Jurisprudential exegetical details are particularly indispensable for sūrah's like 2, 4 and 5 which are punctuated by several injunctions. We shall highlight in this chapter the jurisprudential tools and theological devices which the exegete is expected to be armed with. The present discussion argues that, in addition to the linguistic and stylistic competencies, the exegete is also required to be well-acquainted with Qur'anic studies and other exegetical theological devices such as Islamic legal rulings, sources of jurisprudence, circumstances of revelation, abrogating and abrogated āyahs, and the tenets of faith and Makkān and Madīnan revelations. Examples will be provided throughout this discussion.

## 8.2 Jurisprudential tools

Regardless of the school of exegesis to which a tafsīr work is based on, there are several theological devices which are of value to any form of Qur'anic exegesis. These include the following:

1. **Explicit and implicit tenets of faith:** Qur'anic discourse is hinged upon the four tenets of faith (mabādī' al-īmān) which are monotheism (al-tawḥīd), prophethood (al-nubuwwah), eschatology (al-ba'ṭh, al-ma'ād) and reward and punishment (al-thawāb wal-'iqāb).<sup>1</sup> The exegete is required to diagnose each tenet of faith which features in a given āyah. Some āyahs, however, may feature more than one tenet of faith, while others may not represent any. The āyahs that do not feature a tenet of faith may represent other leitmotifs such as admonition, God's omnipotence or an Islamic legal ruling. Most importantly, the exegete is required to explain the two categories of the tenets of faith:

- (i) **Explicit tenets of faith:** These are expressed through expressions that are related to each tenet. For instance, expressions like subḥāna (glory to God) and lā ilāha illā hū (there is no deity except Him; Q2:255, Q11:14,

Q13:30) explicitly denote monotheism, as in *subḥānaka* (May You be glorified; Q2:32), *subḥānahū* an *yakūna lahū waladun* (Glorified is He above having a son, Q4:171) and *subḥānahū wata‘ālā ‘ammā yaṣifun* (Glorified is He and high above what they describe; Q6:100)

Monotheism is also featured by Qur’ān-specific expressions such as *u‘budū allāha mālakum min ilāhin ghairuhū* (Worship God; you have no deity other than Him; Q7:59, 65, 73, 85, Q11:50, 61, 84) and *innamā huwa ilāhun wāḥidun* (He is but one God, Q14:52, Q16:51). However, Q2:21 is not an example of monotheism because the expression *u‘budū rabbakum* (worship your Lord) can be expressed by any faith or Scripture, and also no reference is made to the notion of monotheism by this particular expression. The same applies to ‘*wawahabnā lahū ishāqa waya‘qūba waja‘alnā fi dhurriyyatihī al-nubuwwata wal-kitāba* [We gave him his reward in this world . . . We gave to him Isaac and Jacob and placed in his descendants prophethood and scripture . . . ]’ (Q29:26). Similarly, in ‘*a‘atīnā bi‘adhāb allāh in kunta min al-ṣādiqīn* [Bring us the punishment of God, if you should be the truthful]’ (Q29:27), we cannot claim that the tenet of faith of prophethood has been represented by this āyah. This is due to the fact that the notion of prophethood is strictly applicable to the prophethood of Muḥammad, that is, only when it designates Muḥammad as a Prophet. In the same vein, if reference by the explicit expression *al-kitāb* (the Book) denotes other Scriptures divinely revealed to other Prophets other than Muḥammad, this is not a reference to the tenet of faith of prophethood. Therefore, the word *al-kitāb* (the Book) is not a tenet of faith in Q29:27 because it refers to Abraham.

The tenet of faith of prophethood is introduced according to the following criteria:

- (i) the expression *al-kitāb* (the Book; Q2:2, Q21:10) and *dhālika al-kitābu lā raiba fihi* (This is the Book about which there is no doubt; Q2:2);
- (ii) the expression Qur’ān, as in ‘*wa’idhā qurī’a al-qur’ānu fastami‘ū lahū wa’anṣitū* [When the Qur’ān is recited, then listen to it and pay attention that you may receive mercy]’ (Q7:204);
- (iii) when one of the names of the Qur’ān is mentioned like *al-furqān* (the standard; Q25:1), *al-dhikr* (the message; Q15:9), *al-tanzīl* (the revelation; Q26:192), *nūr* (light; Q4:174, Q5:15), *qawlun faṣl* (decisive speech; Q86:13), *al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm* (the straight road; Q1:6, Q6:153), *al-ḥaqq* (the truth; Q69:51), *burhān* (proof; Q4:174) and *ni‘mah* (blessing; Q93:11);
- (iv) the expression *al-rasūl* (the Prophet; Q29:18) and
- (v) direct speech to Muḥammad, as in ‘*idhā jā’aka al-munāfiqūna* [When the hypocrites come to you]’ (Q63:1) and ‘*wa’idhā ra’awka in yattakhidhūnaka illā huzuwā* [When they see you (Muḥammad), they ridicule you]’ (Q25:41).

The tenet of faith of eschatology is represented by explicit expressions like *al-sā‘ah* (the hour), *mā tū‘adūn* (what you are promised), *yawma al-ba‘th*

(resurrection), yawma yub<sup>°</sup>athūn (the day on which they will be resurrected), ba<sup>°</sup>atha (to resurrect), yawma al-qiyāmati (on the day of judgement) and ilaihi yurja<sup>°</sup>ūn (you will return to Him), as in ‘inna alladhīna yumārūna fī al-sā<sup>°</sup>ati [Those who dispute concerning the Hour]’ (Q42:18), ‘wa’<sup>°</sup>in adri aqaribun am ba<sup>°</sup>idun mā tū<sup>°</sup>adūn [I do not know whether what you are promised is near or far]’ (Q21:109), ‘thumma ba<sup>°</sup>athnākum min ba<sup>°</sup>di mawtikum [Then We revived you after your death]’ (Q2:56) and ‘thumma innakum yawma al-qiyāmati tub<sup>°</sup>athūn [Then indeed you will be resurrected on the day of resurrection]’ (Q23:16).

The expressions like ba<sup>°</sup>atha (to resurrect), ba<sup>°</sup>th (resurrection) and mab<sup>°</sup>ūthūn (resurrected) designate explicitly the tenet of faith of eschatology. However, ba<sup>°</sup>atha is a polysemous word and has other meanings which do not signify eschatology. For instance, the expression ba<sup>°</sup>atha, meaning ‘to send’, does not denote eschatology, as in ‘ba<sup>°</sup>atha allāhu al-nabiyyīna [God sent the Prophets]’ (Q2:213), ‘fab<sup>°</sup>athū ḥakaman min ahlihī waḥakaman min ahlihā [Send an arbitrator from his family and an arbitrator from hers]’ (Q4:35) and ‘faba<sup>°</sup>atha allāhu ghurāban [God sent a crow]’ (Q5:31). It is also important to note that the word ba<sup>°</sup>atha meaning ‘to raise or elevate the status of someone’ does not signify the tenet of faith of eschatology. A rhetorical question may also designate an explicit reference to the tenet of faith of eschatology with one of these expressions, as in ‘a’<sup>°</sup>idhā kunnā ‘izāman warufātan a’<sup>°</sup>innā lamab<sup>°</sup>ūthūna khalqan jadidan? [When we are bones and crumbled particles, will we truly be resurrected as a new creation?]’ (Q17:49 and Q17:98) and ‘a’<sup>°</sup>idhā mitnā wakunnā turāban wa’<sup>°</sup>izāman a’<sup>°</sup>innā lamab<sup>°</sup>ūthūn? [When we have died and become dust and bones, are we indeed to be resurrected?]’ (Q23:82 and Q37:16) where the expression mab<sup>°</sup>ūthūn (to be resurrected) denotes an explicit reference to eschatology.

The tenet of faith of reward and punishment is usually introduced by the explicit expressions like al-jannah, or jannāt, al-firdaws (paradise, the garden), al-nār, jahannam (the fire, hell fire), ‘adhābun alīmun (painful punishment). However, if we encounter the expression ‘adhāb (punishment) that refers to God’s wrath or punishment in this present life, in this case, it does not designate the tenet of faith of reward and punishment. An example of this is ‘i’<sup>°</sup>tinā bi’<sup>°</sup>adhābi allāhi in kunta min al-ṣādiqīn [Bring God’s punishment down on us, if what you say is true]’ (Q29:29) where the word ‘adhāb occurs but does not represent the tenet of faith of reward and punishment because it refers to the punishment in this life and not in the hereafter.

- (ii) Implicit tenets of faith:** These are expressed indirectly by other expressions. Their diagnosis, therefore, requires an in-depth exegetical analysis, as in ‘waqālat al-yahūdu ‘uzairun ibn allāh waqālat al-naṣārā al-masīḥu ibn allāh . . . ittakhdhū aḥbārahum waruhbānahum arbāban min dūn allāh [The Jews say, “Ezra is the son of God,” and the Christians say, “The Messiah is the son of God . . . .” They have taken their scholars and monks as lords besides God]’ (Q9:30–31), ‘afabil-bāṭili yu’<sup>°</sup>minūn? [Then, do they believe in falsehood?]’ (Q29:67) and ‘waman aḏlamu mimman iftarā ‘alā allāhi kadhīban? [Who is more

unjust than one who invents a lie about God?]' (Q29:68) where reference has been made explicitly to polytheism. Therefore, this is an implicit reference to monotheism. Similarly, in Q2:22, the expression *lā taj'alū lillāhi andādan* (do not attribute to God equals) expresses polytheism but indirectly reiterates monotheism. Thus, the expression *min dūnihi* (besides Him [God]) is also an indirect reference to monotheism.

The tenet of faith of eschatology is designated by implicit expressions like *bu (the contents of the graves are scattered), *al-qubūru bu (the contents of graves are scattered), *yubdi'u al-khalqa thumma yu'iduhu* (begins creation and then repeats it), *ilaihi tuqlabūn* (to Him you will be returned), all in Q29:21; *walawlā ajalun musammā* (if not for the decree of a specified term) in Q29:53, and also in 'afalā ya'lamu idhā bu**

The tenet of faith of prophethood is also introduced implicitly through expressions like *yu'min* (to believe), *mu'min/mu'minūn* (believer/believers) and their antonyms *yakfur* (to disbelieve) *kāfir/kuffār* (disbeliever/disbelievers) since they denote the belief or disbelief in the message of Muḥammad and the Qur'ān.

Similarly, in 'qul sīrū fi al-arḍi thumma anzurū kaifa kāna 'āqibatu al-mukadhdhibīna. qul liman mā fi al-samāwāti wal-arḍi. qul lillāh [Say, "Travel through the land, then observe how was the end of the deniers"; say, "To whom belongs whatever is in the heavens and earth?"; say, "To God?"]' (Q6:11–12) where the tenet of faith of prophethood is referred to implicitly through the imperative verb *qul* (say, that is, "you Muḥammad") which is addressed to Muḥammad. The verb *qul* in Q6:11–12 means 'tell them,' 'ask them' and 'tell them,' respectively. Thus, the exegetical meaning of this āyah is, 'O Muḥammad, tell them to travel through the land and then observe how was the end of the deniers. O Muḥammad, ask them to whom belongs whatever is in the heavens and earth? O Muḥammad, tell them it belongs to God.'

It is also imperative that the exegete refers to the fact that some āyahs introduce more than one tenet of faith. Let us consider some āyahs which signify two tenets of faith: 'subḥāna alladhī asrā bi'abdihī lailan [Glorified is He who took His servant (i.e. Muḥammad) by night]' (Q17:1). In this āyah, two tenets of faith have been featured: monotheism through the expression *subḥāna* (glory) and prophethood by the expression 'abdihi (His servant) which is a direct reference to Muḥammad as a Prophet.

'walladhīna kafarū bi'āyāti allāhi waliqā'ihī ulā'ika ya'isū min raḥmatī w'u-lā'ika lahum 'adhābun alimun [The ones who disbelieve in the signs of God and the meeting with Him, those have despaired of My mercy and they will have a painful punishment]' (Q29:23) where the expression *liqā'ihī* (the meeting with Him) expresses eschatology while the expression 'adhābun alimun (a painful

punishment) expresses reward and punishment. The same applies to ‘*waqāla innamā ittakhadhtum min dūni allāhi awthānan . . . thumma yawma al-qiyāmati . . . wama’wākum al-nāru . . . [And (Abraham) said, “You have only taken idols, other than God . . . Then on the day of resurrection . . . Your refuge will be the fire . . . ]”*’ (Q29:25) where we encounter three tenets of faith: (a) implicit monotheism through the expressions *min dūni allāhi* (other than God) and *awthānan* (idols), (b) eschatology by the expression *yawma al-qiyāmati* (on the day of resurrection) and (c) reward and punishment through the expression *wama’wākum al-nāru* (your refuge will be the fire).

More interestingly, some āyahs introduce two tenets of faith as well as a theme, as in

‘*u‘budū allāha warjū al-yawma al-ākhirā walā ta‘thaw fī al-arḍi mufsidīn [Worship God and expect the last day and do not commit abuse on the earth]’* (Q29:36) where we have monotheism in *u‘budū allāha* (worship God), eschatology in *warjū al-yawma al-ākhirā* (expect the last day) and the theme of admonition in *walā ta‘thaw fī al-arḍi mufsidīn* (do not commit abuse on the earth).

It is also worthwhile to note that a single tenet of faith may be represented by the whole sūrah, as in Q112, where monotheism is featured, and Q93 and Q94 where prophethood is featured. A whole sūrah may also introduce two tenets of faith such as Q99 where eschatology is featured in Q99:1–6 and reward and punishment are featured in Q99:7–8 and Q101 where āyahs 1–5 represent eschatology and āyahs 6–11 introduce reward and punishment, respectively.

2. **Islamic legal rulings (al-aḥkām) and sources of jurisprudence (uṣūl al-fiqh):** The exegete is required to have a sound knowledge of Islamic legal rulings, although his exegesis work may not be specifically designed for legal exegesis. Islamic legal rulings include matters related to what is allowed and not allowed, prayers, zakat, fasting the month of Ramaḍān, pilgrimage, marriage, sex outside marriage (*al-zinā*), divorce, transactions and inheritance. However, exegetes who belong to different schools of exegesis and different schools of thought are expected to provide different exegetical views on the same legal problem. The major Islamic legal rulings occur in Q2, Q4 and Q5 where the injunctions are pointed out explicitly. However, some of these injunctions may be explained through the discovery of the āyah’s meaning (*al-istinbāṭ*) as in whether the fasting of someone who has cohabited with his wife before the start of the dawn will still be valid. We are told by Q2:187, ‘You believers are permitted to have a sexual intercourse with your wives during the night of the fast . . . seek what God has ordained for you, eat and drink until the white thread of dawn becomes distinct from the black.’ Thus, the fast of the husband and wife is valid since they cohabited before the start of the dawn which marks the beginning of the new day which they have planned to fast. Therefore, the discovery of meaning of the validity of the fast is based on the exegetical analysis of Q2:187. The discovery of meaning can also be arrived at through the combination of two interrelated āyahs that refer to the same legal problem as in the period of

weaning the baby whether it is 24 months or 30 months as we are told by ‘waḥamluhū wafiṣāluhū thalāthūna shahran [The baby’s bearing and weaning take a full thirty months]’ (Q46:15) and ‘wafiṣāluhū fi ʿāmain [It takes two years to wean the baby]’ (Q31:14). Thus, the discovery of meaning is based on the shortest period of time; that is, the weaning of the baby should be after 24 months.

- 3. The names and attributes of God (asmā’ waṣifāt allāh):** The names and attributes of God have been one of the most controversial issues in Qur’anic exegesis which, since the formative phase, have led to theological cleavages among mainstream and non-mainstream exegetes. The exegetical analysis of the names and attributes of God has led to the conviction among mainstream exegetes that they should be explained non-allegorically (ḥaḥiqī), that is, literally rather than metaphorically. This is the view held by the school of traditional, that is, mainstream, exegesis (al-tafsīr bil-ma’tḥūr). However, non-mainstream exegetes who belong to the school of rational, that is, hypothetical opinion, exegesis (al-tafsīr bil-ra’i, al-tafsīr al-ʿaqli) adopt an allegorical (majāzi) approach to the exegetical analysis of the names and attributes of God. Although the exegetical views of the exegete stems from the school of exegesis he belongs to, the exegete is required to demonstrate a theological insight into this exegetical problem through a contrastive and comparative analysis of a given name or attribute of God.

The prophetic tradition ‘inna lillāhi tisʿatun watisʿina isman māʿatan illā wāḥidan man aḥṣāhā dakhala al-jannah [God has got ninety-nine names, one hundred except one, and whoever knows them will enter paradise]’ does not refer to the exact number of God’s names, that is, that God has got only ninety-nine beautiful names which are referred to as al-asmā’ al-ḥusnā, as we are told by ‘walillāhi al-asmā’u al-ḥusnā fadʿūhu bihā [to God belong the best names, so invoke Him by them]’ (Q7:180), such as al-raḥmānu (the entirely merciful), al-raḥīmu (the giver of mercy), al-raʿūfu (the kind), al-ḥalīmu (the forbearing), al-baṣīru (the seeing), al-jabbāru (the compeller), al-samīʿu (the hearing) and al-ḥaiyu (the ever-living). Qurʾān scholars are of the opinion that God has got other names, and most importantly, the above mentioned ḥadīth is classified as a weak tradition. Based on ‘laisa kamithlihī shaiʿun [There is nothing like unto Him]’ (Q42:11), ‘afaman yakhluqu kaman lā yakhluqu afalā tadhakkarūn [Is He who creates like one who does not create? So will you not be reminded?]’ (Q16:17), ‘hal taʿlamu lahū samiyyā [Do you know of any similarity to Him?]’ (Q19:65) and walam yakun lahū kufuwan aḥad [Nor is there to Him any equivalent]’ (Q112:4), mainstream and the majority of non-mainstream exegetes claim that no human or non-human being can ever be able to have a matching name or attribute of God and that these names and attributes are God-specific. Also, exegetes argue:

- (i) None of God’s names or attributes has deceased, is defective, can be matched or is finite. Thus, there has been a strong objection to the

Jahmiyyah's conviction that some of God's names have ceased to exist. There has also been objection to the anthropomorphists (al-mushabbihūn) and the corporealists (al-mujassimūn) who argue that some creatures have got attributes or names similar to those of God.

- (ii) Although some human or non-human beings have names which sound alike to those of God, none of the creatures' names can be identical in meaning to those of God. A person or an animal may be qawiy (strong, powerful) but his or her or its strength cannot be identical in the literal sense to the might and power of God.
- (iii) God cannot be named with what he has not named himself, such as calling Him al-abb (the father). In the exegetes' view, this is attributed to the fact that God's names are by divine order tawqīfiyyah and no other names can be added to the list other than those given by God Himself.

According to the mainstream school of exegesis, the names and attributes of God are befitting to Him alone. Moreover, mainstream exegetes argue that God has also got two kinds of attribute:

- (i) Entity attributes (ṣifāt dhātiyyah), such as al-<sup>o</sup>ilm (knowledge), al-<sup>o</sup>qudrah (power), al-<sup>o</sup>sam<sup>o</sup> (hearing), al-<sup>o</sup>wajh (face), al-<sup>o</sup>yadain (two hands), al-<sup>o</sup>ainain (two eyes), and
- (ii) Action attributes (ṣifāt fi<sup>o</sup>liyyah) which are taken by God whenever He sees it fit. These attributes include actions like
  - (a) al-<sup>o</sup>istiwā' (to be sitting or establishing Himself on the throne), as in 'al-rahmānu <sup>o</sup>alā al-<sup>o</sup>arshi istawā [The Most Merciful who is established above the throne]' (Q20:5);
  - (b) al-<sup>o</sup>ma<sup>o</sup>iyah (being with, accompanying someone), as in 'inna allāha ma<sup>o</sup>a alladhīna ittaqaw walladhīna hum muḥsinūn [Indeed, God is with those who fear Him and those who are doers of good]' (Q16:128), 'lā takhāfā innī ma<sup>o</sup>akumā asma<sup>o</sup>u wa'arā [Do not be afraid. Indeed, I am with you both. I hear and see]' (Q20:46), 'lā taḥzan inna allāha ma<sup>o</sup>anā [Do not grieve. Indeed, God is with us]' (Q9:40) and 'wahuwa ma<sup>o</sup>akum ainamā kuntum [He is with you wherever you are]' (Q57:4);
  - (c) al-nuzūl ilā al-samā' al-dunyā (coming down to the lower atmosphere), as in the ḥadīth 'yanzilu rabbunā ilā al-samā'i al-dunyā [Our Lord descends to the lower heaven]';
  - (d) al-<sup>o</sup>majī' (coming), as in 'waja'a rabbuka [Your Lord has come]' (Q89:22);
  - (e) al-<sup>o</sup>baṭsh (vengeance), as in 'inna baṭsha rabbika lashedīd [Indeed, the vengeance of your Lord is severe]' (Q85:12);
  - (f) al-<sup>o</sup>imsāk (restraining), as in 'wayumsiku al-samā'a an taqa'a <sup>o</sup>alā al-arḍi [He restrains the sky from falling upon the earth]' (Q22:65);
  - (g) al-<sup>o</sup>akhdh (taking), as in 'fa'akhadhahum allāhu bidhunūbihim [God seized them for their sins]' (Q3:11) and

- (h) al-kalām (speaking), as in ‘wakallama allāhu mūsā taklimā [God spoke to Moses directly]’ (Q4:164)

Although both mainstream and non-mainstream exegetes maintain that God’s attributes signify perfection (al-kamāl), the school of non-mainstream exegesis such as the Shī‘ah, the Ibādīyyah, the Ash‘ariyyah, and the Mu‘tazilah hold the view that the literal, that is, non-allegorical (ḥaqīqī) exegetical meanings of God’s names and attributes constitute a theological insult to God and are not compatible with His divinity and lordship. The school of mainstream exegesis, however, argues that the names and attributes of God should be accepted as ḥaqīqī, that is, as they are orthographically presented in the Qur’anic text without any connotative significations that reflect allegorical or esoteric meanings. Thus, since both non-literal (esoteric, allegorical, metaphorical) and literal (exoteric, non-allegorical, non-metaphorical) exegeses have evolved, the exegete is expected to be aware of these theological cleavages (for more details on political and theological cleavages in Qur’anic exegesis, see [Chapter 3](#) of the present work).

- 4. Circumstances of revelation:** Informative details about the context of revelation related to a given āyah(s) is of value and interest to the reader, as in

‘wahum yanhawna ‘anhu wayan’awna ‘anhu [They prevent others from him but they themselves keep away from him]’ (Q6:26) where the circumstance of revelation is related to the Prophet’s uncle Abu Ṭālib, who likes his nephew Muḥammad and asks Quraish not to harm him but continues to disbelieve Muḥammad and keep away from him.

‘qad na‘lamu innahū layaḥzunuka alladhī yaqūlūn [We know that you (Muḥammad) are saddened by what they say]’ (Q6:33) where the reason for revelation is related to al-Ḥārith b. ‘Āmir b. Nawfal who used to disbelieve the Prophet during daytime in front of people so that Quraish will not kill him, that is, al-Ḥārith, but when al-Ḥārith is with his family and close relatives, he openly and whole-heartedly recognizes Muḥammad as a genuine Prophet. He used to tell them, ‘anna muḥammadan ṣādiqun wahuwa nabiyyu allāh [Indeed, Muḥammad is truthful and he is the messenger of God].’ al-Ḥārith also used to visit Muḥammad secretly at night in recognition of his prophethood and to convey his sincere apology for not being able to declare his faith openly for fear of Quraish’s reprisal against him and his family.

Also in

‘laisa al-birru bi’an ta’tū al-buyūta min zuhūrihā walākinna al-birra man ittaqā wa’tu al-buyūta min abwābihā [It is not righteousness to enter houses from the back door, but righteousness is the fear of God. Enter houses from their main doors]’ (Q2:189). This is about pessimism. It is to do with the pre-Islamic custom of entering the house from the back door for a year when

things go wrong with someone or when problems are persistent. This āyah admonishes people to abandon this superstitious habit since the best way to achieve righteousness is not through entering the houses through the back door but the truly good person is the one who is mindful of God. In other words, righteousness is the solution to pessimism and that one has to put his or her full trust in his or her Lord in order to overcome a problem.

As there is no unanimous agreement among Muslim scholars as to what the exact context of revelation for a given āyah, it is, therefore, imperative that the exegete lists all the possible circumstances of revelation for the same āyah, as in ‘am turidūna an tas’alū rasūlakum kamā su’ila mūsā min qablu [Do you intend to ask your messenger as Moses was asked before?]' (Q2:108) where this āyah has different circumstances of revelation:

- (i) It may be related to Rāfi<sup>c</sup> b. Khuzaimah and Wahab b. Zaid who challenged Muḥammad to bring down a scripture from the heaven to read and to create rivers so that they believe him as a Prophet.
- (ii) It may be related to ‘Abd Allāh b. Abī Ka<sup>c</sup>b and a group of people from Quraish who asked Muḥammad to turn al-Ṣafā into gold, to enlarge the space of the area of Makkah and to create rivers in Makkah.
- (iii) It may be related to a group of Jews who challenged Muḥammad to bring down a whole scripture in one scoop from the heavens in a similar fashion to that of Moses when he brought the Old Testament.
- (iv) It may be related to ‘Abd Allāh b. Abī Umayyah al-Makhzūmī who challenged Muḥammad to bring a letter from the heavens addressed to him, that is, to ‘Abd Allāh b. Abī Umayyah, and that it should read, ‘This is from the Lord of the worlds to ‘Abd Allāh b. Abī Umayyah al-Makhzūmī. This is to let you know that I, God, have sent Muḥammad to all mankind.’
- (v) It may be related to other people who disbelieved Muḥammad and used to tell him, ‘We shall not believe you as a messenger of God unless you bring down God and the angels in front us.’

**5. Abrogating and abrogated āyahs:** The notion of abrogation is a theologically controversial issue in Qur’anic exegesis and has led to theological cleavages among mainstream and non-mainstream schools of exegesis. The Qur’ān exegete is also expected to be aware of the fact that there are theologians who hold the view that the Qur’ān can only be abrogated by the Qur’ān itself. In other words, an āyah can only be abrogated by another āyah and not by a tradition. Thus, the sunnah cannot abrogate the Qur’ān (an āyah). This exegetical position is held by Ḥanbali, Shāfi‘i, Shī‘i, Ibāḍi and Mu‘tazili exegetes who have substantiated their stance by the Qur’anic text, ‘qul mā yakūnu lī an ubaddilāhū min tilqā’i nafsi [Say, “(O Muḥammad), It is not for me to change it on my own accord”]’ (Q10:15). However, for Ḥanafī and Māliki exegetes, an āyah can be abrogated by a ḥadīth, as in

‘kutiba ‘alaikum idhā ḥaḍara aḥadakum al-mawtu in taraka khairan al-waṣiyyatu lil-wālidaini wal-aqrabina bil-ma‘rūfi ḥaqqan ‘alā al-muttaqīn [Prescribed for you when death approaches any one of you if he leaves wealth is that he should make a bequest for the parents and near relatives according to what is acceptable, a duty upon the righteous]’ (Q2:180). This is the bequest āyah (āyat al-waṣiyyah) over which theologians are undecided whether it is abrogated or not. In other words, whether it is compulsory for a person with wealth to write a will or not before his or her death. The majority of scholars claim that one does not have to leave a will if he or she does not have debts. A will, however, is compulsory for any one who has debts, rich or poor. However, if a person has a family, his or her wealth and possession will be automatically inherited by them without a will. Thus, Q2:180 is abrogated by the ḥadīth narrated by Ibn ‘Abbās, ‘innaka in tadhara warathataka aghniyā’ khairun min an tadharahum ‘ālatan yatakaffafūna al-nāsa [If you leave your inheritors wealthy it is better than leaving them poor asking people for help]’ (al-Qurṭubi 1997, 1, p. 257; Ibn al-‘Arabi 2004, p. 96). This āyah also highlights the injunction on the bequest for the parents (al-waṣiyyatu lil-wālidaini). However, Ḥanafi and Māliki theologians argue that the injunction expressed by this āyah has been abrogated by the tradition: ‘inna allāha qad a‘tā kulla dhī ḥaqqin ḥaqqahū falā waṣiyyata liwārith [God has given everyone his or her own rightful possession. Thus, there is no bequest for the inheritor].’ Thus, for them, parents can inherit the wealth of their children. Relatives of the deceased can also inherit him or her.

Companion and successor exegetes have also expressed different exegetical views on whether an āyah is an abrogated one or not, as in Q2:115, ‘walillāhi al-mashriqu wal-maghribu fa‘ainamā tuwallū fathamma wajhu allāhi [To God belongs the east and the west. So wherever you might turn, there is the face of God].’ For Jābir b. ‘Abd Allāh, Ibn ‘Umar, Sa‘īd b. al-Musaiyab, ‘Aṭā’, al-Sha‘bi and al-Nakh‘i, this āyah has not been abrogated and its legal ruling remains intact. However, for Ibn ‘Abbās it has been abrogated by Q2:144, ‘fawalli wajhaka shaṭra al-masjidi al-ḥarāmi waḥaithu mā kuntum fawallū wujūhakum shaṭrah [So turn your face (i.e. yourself) towards the sacred mosque. And wherever you are, turn your faces towards it in prayer.]’

Similarly, exegetes have had divergent views with regard to whether Q2:240 is an abrogated āyah or a clear one (muḥkamah): ‘walladhīna yutawaffawna minkum wayadharūna azwājan waṣiyyatan li-azwājihim matā‘an ila al-ḥawli ghaira ikhrāj [Those who are taken in death among you and leave wives behind, for their wives is a bequest: maintenance for one year without turning them out].’ The majority of exegetes believe that Q2:240 is abrogated by Q2:234 which stipulates the ‘waiting period of the widow for four months and ten days’ and not for one year, ‘walladhīna yutawaffawna minkum wayadharūna azwājan yatarabbaṣna bi‘anfusihinna arba‘ata ashhurin wa‘ashran [Those who are taken in death among you and leave wives behind, they (i.e. their wives) will have to wait for four months and ten days]’ (Ibn al-‘Arabi 2004, 1, p. 1239; Ibn Kathīr 1993, 1, p. 280; al-Ṭabarsi 1997, 2, p. 102; al-Shawkāni 1996, 1, p. 325). This jurisprudential difference among exegetes also applies to Q2:190 and Q2:256 (Ibn al-‘Arabi 2004, 1, pp. 134, 263; al-Shawkāni 1996, 1, p. 238).

6. **Prophetic Ḥadīth:** An exegete is required to be well-acquainted with prophetic traditions since they are a vital source for the elucidation of the Qur’ān and one of the two major sources after the Qur’anic text. In other words, the traditions illuminate a large number of āyahs and are intertextually linked to them, as in

‘wahuwa aladdu al-khiṣām [He is the bitterest of opponents]’ (Q2:204) which is explained by and intertextually related to the tradition, ‘inna abghaḍa al-rijāli ilā allāhi al-liddu al-khaṣīmu [The most hated person to God is the one who is the fiercest of opponents].’

‘inna alladhīna yashtarūna bi‘ahdi allāhi wa‘imānihim thamanan qalīlan ulā’ika lā khalāqa lahum fī al-ākhirati walā yukallimuhum allāhu walā yanẓuru ilaihim yawma al-qiyyāmati walā yuzakkīhim walahum ‘adhābun alimun [Indeed, those who sell out the covenant of God and their own oaths for a small price will have no share in the life to come. God will neither speak to them nor look at them on the day of resurrection. He will not cleanse them of their sins, and agonizing torment is awaiting them]’ (Q3:77) which is explained by the tradition, ‘inna lillāhi ta‘ālā ‘ibādan lā yukallimuhum yawma al-qiyyāmati walā yuzakkīhim walā yanẓuru ilaihim. qīla: ‘waman ulā’ika yā rasūl allāh?’ qāla: ‘mutabarri’un min wālidaihi rāghibun ‘anhumā, wamutabarri’un min waladihī, warajulun an‘ama ‘alaihi qawmun fakafara ni‘matahum watabarra’a minhum’ [There are for God, the Exalted, some people, to whom He will neither speak to, nor will He look at them, nor will He purify them of their sins. The Prophet is asked, “Who are they, O Messenger of God?” He replies, “The person who disavows his parents and does not want them, the parent who disavows his or her son or daughter and the person who expresses ingratitude towards people who have done great favours to him or her but disavows those people”].’

‘wamā kāna allāhu mu‘adhdhibahum wahum yastaghfirūn [God would not punish them while they seek forgiveness]’ (Q8:33) which is elucidated by the tradition, ‘al-‘abdu āminun min ‘adhāb allāhi mā istaghfara allāha ‘azza wajall [The person is safe from the punishment of God as long as he or she has sought the forgiveness of God, Most Exalted, Most Powerful].’

‘wa’adbāra al-sujūd [and after prostration (i.e. prayer)]’ (Q50:40) which is illuminated by the tradition, ‘yā ibn ‘abbās ruk‘atān ba‘da al-maghrib adbāra al-sujūd [O Ibn ‘Abbas! After the sun set prayer, do two rak‘as (two units of prayer)].’

7. **Qur’anic parables and similitudes:** In Qur’anic studies, this is referred to as al-qaṣaṣ wal-amthāl (stories and similitudes). We are informed by the Qur’ān that both the stories and the similitudes are for admonition, morale-boosting and deriving moral lessons from them, as we are told by a number of āyahs, as in the following examples:

‘walaqad anzalnā ilaikum āyātin mubaiyinātin wamathalan min alladhina khalaw min qablikum wamaw‘īzatan lil-muttaqīn [We have certainly sent down to you distinct āyahs and examples from those who passed on before you and an admonition for those who fear God].’ (Q24:34)

‘laqad kāna fī qaṣaṣihim ‘ibratun li’uli al-albāb [In their stories, there was certainly a lesson for those of understanding].’ (Q12:111)

‘wayaḍribu allāhu al-amthāla lil-nāsi la‘allahum yatadhkarūn [God presents examples for people that perhaps they will be reminded].’ (Q14:25)

‘watilka al-amthālu naḍribuhā lil-nāsi la‘allahum yatafakkarūn [We present to people these examples that perhaps they will give thought].’ (Q59:21)

The exegete is expected to explain the historical background of the stories such as that of Ādam, Iblīs, Mūsā, ‘Īsā, Banū Isrā’īl, as well as other Prophets such as Lūṭ, Hūd, Ṣāliḥ. The Qur’ān refers to seven major categories of parables which are mentioned in the Qur’ān in different places and with variant lengths and styles. These are as follows:

- (i) Parables which depict the life and experience of previous Prophets before Muḥammad, as in the parables of Noah (Q7:59-64, Q10:71-73, Q11:25-49), Hūd (Q11:58-58, Q26:124-140), Shu‘aib (Q7:85-93, Q11:84-95, Q26:176-190), Abraham (Q11:69-76, Q21:51-73), Joseph (Q12), David (Q38:21-25, Q21:78-82), Moses (Q14:5-6, Q20:9-47, Q20:83-97) and Jesus (Q3:42-55, Q4:171-172);
- (ii) Parables which explain the life and experience of virtuous people who aimed to establish the truth and guide people to the right path and the excellent social etiquettes, as in the parable of Luqmān (Q31:12-19);
- (iii) Parables which inform the reader about the life of evildoers who disbelieved their respective Prophets and as a result were inflicted with God’s wrath, such as the people of ‘Ād (Q7:65-72, Q11:59, Q41:13-15, Q51:41-45, Q89:6-9), the people of Thamūd (Q7:73-79, Q17:59, Q29:38, Q54:23, Q89:9), the people of Lot (Q7:88-84) and the people of Shu‘aib (Q7:85-93);
- (iv) Parables that refer to previous historical events which depict the suffering of righteous people and their persecution by a tyrannical ruler, such as the parable of the companions of the ditch (aṣḥāb al-ukhdūd) in Q85:4-8, and the parable of the companions of the cave (aṣḥāb al-kaḥf) in Q18:9-26;
- (v) Parables that refer to previous historical events which depict the evil acts of aggression by evildoers, such as the story of Pharaoh (Q20:49-72, Q20:77-78, Q26:), the story of Gog and Magog (Q18:83-98) and the anecdote of the elephant in Q105 which is about the invasion of Makkah by the Abyssinians under their General Abraha in 4/626;
- (vi) Parables that depict historical events related to Muḥammad and his companions, such as Q17, and Q33:9-27 and

- (vii) Parables that depict the struggle between Satan and mankind represented by the story of Ādam and Iblis, as in Q2:38–38, Q3:59, Q7:25–11, Q15:26–44 and Q20:115–123.

We also encounter in the Qur’ān some similitudes which the exegete is required to account for, as in the following examples:

‘yā ayyuha alladhīna āmanū lā tubṭilū ṣadaqātikum . . . [O you who believe, do not invalidate your charity . . . ].’ (Q2:264)

‘anzala min al-samā’i mā’an fasālat awḍiyatun biqadarihā faḥtamala al-sailu zabadan rābiyan wamimmā yūqidūna ‘alaihi fi al-nāri ibtighā’a ḥilyatin aw mat-ā’in zabadun mithlul kadhālika yaḍribu allāhu al-ḥaḥqa wal-bāṭila fa’ammā al-zabadu fayadhabu jufā’an wa’ammā mā yanfa’u al-nāsa fayamkuthu fi al-arḍi kadhālika yaḍribu allāhu al-amthāla [He sends down from the sky, rain and valleys flow according to their capacity, and the torrent carries a rising foam. From that ore which they heat in the fire, desiring adornments and utensils, is a foam like it. As for the foam, it vanishes, being cast off. But as for that which benefits people, it remains on the earth. Thus, God presents examples].’ (Q13:17)

‘mathalu alladhīna kafarū birabbihim a’ḥmāluhum karamādin . . . [The example of those who disbelieve in their Lord is that their deeds are like ashes . . . ].’ (Q14 :18)

‘walladhīna kafarū a’ḥmāluhum kasarābin baqī’atin yaḥsabuhu al-ḥam’ānu mā’an ḥattā idhā jā’ahū lam yajidhu shai’an [Those who disbelieve, their deeds are like a mirage in a lowland which a thirsty one thinks is water until, when he comes to it, he finds it is nothing].’ (Q24:39)

‘mathalu alladhīna ittakhadhū min dūni allāhi awliyā’ . . . [The example of those who take allies other than God . . . ].’ (Q29:41)

‘muḥammadun rasūl allāh . . . [Muḥammad is the messenger of God].’ (Q48:29)

- 8. Makkān and Madīnan revelations:** Although the sūrahs are well-defined into two categories, Makkān and Madīnan, there are some āyahs which the exegete is required to know whether they are Makkān but occur in a Madīnan sūrah or Madīnan but inserted into a Makkān sūrah, as in Q6:151–153 which are Madīnan āyahs but are placed in Q6 which is a Makkān sūrah, and Q24:58 which is a Makkān āyah but is inserted in Q24 which is a Madīnan sūrah. Other examples are Q14 which is a Makkān sūrah but has two Madīnan āyahs: Q14:28–29, and Q20 which is a Makkān sūrah but has a Madīnan āyah: Q20:130. Similarly, Q47 is a Madīnan sūrah but has Q47:13 which is a Makkān āyah.

## 9 Concluding remarks

The odyssey of Qur'anic exegesis was launched by Muḥammad in the first/seventh century and continued down to our present time. However, the scholarship of Qur'anic exegesis flourished and gained momentum only by the end of the formative phase during the end of the first/seventh and early second/eighth century onwards. The role of Muḥammad in Qur'anic exegesis is announced by Q16:44, 'anzalnā ilaika al-dhikra litubaiyina lil-nāsi mā nuzzila ilaihim [We have revealed to you the Qur'ān so that you can explain to people what was sent down for them].' Commentary on the Qur'ān is claimed to be hinged upon sources of divine knowledge passed on to Muḥammad who is divinely instructed to teach it to his companions. This knowledge is of two categories: one is based on sound transmission of prophetic traditions which include occasions for revelation, abrogating and abrogated āyahs; foreign words in the Qur'ān; variant modes of reading and Qur'anic parables. The other is based upon the discovery (al-istinbāt) of and reflection (al-tadabbur) upon the significations of Qur'anic expressions. The latter category of knowledge is subcategorized into

- (i) knowledge about which Muslim scholars hold different opinions with regard to whether it is permissible (jā'iz) knowledge. This kind of knowledge attempts to unravel the significations of ambiguous Qur'anic notions and expressions such as the unseen matters (al-ghuyūb), the specific time of the Hour (qiyām al-sā'ah) and the names and attributes of God. These notions, for orthodox Muslim scholars, should be believed in without any discussion and whose significations should be taken denotatively, literally and non-allegorically. In other words, a Muslim is expected to believe in these theological notions without subjecting them to one's finite human cognitive resources or compare them to similar notions or expressions such as 'God's hearing,' 'God's seeing.' Orthodox Muslim scholars also argue that one is not encouraged to take these expressions and compare them to human ears and hearing or human eyes and seeing. This view is based on the notion of de-anthropomorphism (al-tanzīh, that is, tanzīh al-rabb) according to which God should not be compared in terms of His names and attributes with people's names and attributes. Their view is backed up by

Q42:11, 'laisa kamithlihi shai'un [There is nothing like unto Him].' This kind of knowledge is related to the notion of objectionable ta'wil.

- (ii) knowledge about which Muslim scholars hold similar opinions with regard to the discovery of minor and major Islamic legal rulings, grammatical analysis of āyahs, the rhetorical features of āyahs and spiritual guidance that includes admonition and moral lessons of the Qur'ān. This kind of knowledge is related to the notion of commendable ta'wil.

\* Through his words and deeds, Muḥammad has become the first and best commentator after the Qur'ān, as the Qur'ān is claimed to have explained itself via intertextual reference within it (al-qur'ānu yufassiru nafsahu). The Qur'ān describes itself as 'kitābun fuṣṣilat āyātuhū qur'ānan 'arabiyyan [A Book whose statements have been detailed; it is an Arabic Qur'ān]' (Q41:3). Thus, the words fuṣṣilat (have been detailed) and 'arabiyyan (in Arabic) indicate Qur'anic intertextuality. Nevertheless, there is little known how much in fact Muḥammad, as an exegete, has explained to his companions. Nevertheless, Muḥammad's sunnah (standard practice, that is, his words and actions) and the Scripture of Islam have soon established exegetical inter-relationship. In terms of Qur'anic exegesis, this relationship between the Qur'ān and the sunnah has become a matter of interdependence. In the view of mainstream and non-mainstream Muslim scholars, it is the Qur'ān which is in need of the sunnah and not vice versa. Although the sunnah elucidates the Qur'ān, it is the Qur'ān, and not the sunnah, which can abrogate some Qur'anic āyahs. In other words, no matter how important a given prophetic tradition is, it cannot abrogate an āyah.

\* After the death of Muḥammad, two important matters took place and were related to Qur'anic exegesis:

- (i) During the rule of 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (d.23/644), the theological mutashābihāt was once discussed by a companion, but 'Umar opposed it and punished the person who talked about it. The opposition to talking in public about the mutashābihāt is a view held by Goldziher (1920; cf. Rippin 1987, p. 237), Abbot (1967, pp. 111–113) and Wansbrough (1977, p. 158). However, Birkeland (1955, p. 19), Gätje (1971, p. 32), Leemhuis (1988, p. 16) and Gilliot (1999, p. 7) are of the opinion that the companions were free to debate the mutashābihāt, that is, the theologically ambiguous āyahs and notions. The discussion of theological mutashābihāt was something unusual for the Muslim community. We are of the opinion that if there was such an opposition to the discussion of theological mutashābihāt, it must have been justified in the light of two factors:
  - (a) Undue concern over the likelihood of confusing the prophetic tradition with exegetical views especially those that are hinged upon personal opinion, and
  - (b) Over zealous concern by companions about the analysis of theological mutashābihāt as an orthodox defence against the spread of independent reasoning and hypothetical opinion. In the companions' view, their

action was a safety valve against the proliferation of what they considered as ‘heretical exegetical views’.

- (ii) The Muslim community witnessed a period of intense theological and political ferment. The *fitnah* (civil war) in 41/661 was sparked off by the assassination of the third caliph ‘Uthmān b. ‘Affān in 35/656. This is a major juncture in Islamic history, which, together with the evolution of hypothetical opinion based on speculative thought, had led to political and theological wrangling, the emergence of non-mainstream exegetical views, *ḥadīth* fabrication and forged exegetical views falsely ascribed to iconic companions such as Ibn ‘Abbās. Qur’anic exegesis had, therefore, become the vehicle through which dogmatic and political views were funneled. With the proliferation of personal reasoning exegesis, exegetical polemics had flourished, too. The date of ‘Uthmān’s assassination also marks the beginning of the study of tradition as an independent discipline by Muslim scholars.

However, Abbot (1967) is also of the opinion that, in general, there was opposition to Qur’anic exegesis by the companions. To this, we can argue that

- (i) the companions’ priority, after Muḥammad’s death, was to collect and record his *ḥadīth*;
- (ii) both the *ḥadīth* and exegesis were parallel to each other in terms of recording. Interest in recording the tradition and Qur’anic exegesis as independent disciplines began during the early decades of the second/eighth century;
- (iii) the recording of Qur’anic exegesis was not as paramount as that of the tradition. After the assassination of ‘Uthmān in 35/656, the companions were concerned about the proliferation of fabricated *ḥadīth* and weak chain of authorities;
- (iv) Qur’anic exegesis was entirely backed up by *ḥadīth*;
- (v) Qur’anic exegesis was part of tradition studies. In other words, *tafsīr* was overshadowed by the widespread interest in the study of the tradition and
- (vi) it is true that the Madīnah and the Kūfah schools of Qur’anic exegesis were lukewarm towards the teaching and recording of exegetical views for fear of either making an error in the analysis of a Qur’anic passage, or being misquoted by own students and later generations. For instance, ‘Urwah b. al-Zubair (d.93/711) of the Madīnah school burnt his exegesis, and ‘Abīdah b. ‘Amru al-Salmāni (d.72/691) of the Kūfah school asked his students to burn their exegetical works in his presence.

\* As Qur’anic exegesis gained an independent status from tradition in the second/eighth century, the majority of Muslim exegetes, during the recording phase, had let their imagination run wild and had the opportunity of using their personal opinion to provide a specific sense to a given Qur’anic expression. We often encounter numerous semantic details for a single lexical item, at times exceeding a dozen. One is left wondering which meaning is true and which one is

purely hypothetical. This fact has led Rippin (1983, p. 320) to conclude that many generations of Muslim scholars studied the Qur'ān with a freedom and a resultant unleashing of creativity which has been obscured by the unhistorical nature of the Arabic lexicons. An examination of Qur'anic exegetical sources reveals the story behind some of the more preposterous meanings recorded in those works. According to Rippin (1983, p. 316), 'the exegetes had the opportunity of using their imaginations to provide an appropriate meaning.' Rippin (1983, p. 320) concludes that the definition of certain Qur'anic words is arbitrary and results from a desire to solve intra-Qur'anic and Qur'ān versus dogma conflict.

\* The exegete is expected to be an encyclopaedic Qur'ān scholar who is well-acquainted with Arabic linguistics, stylistics, and most importantly, the semantically oriented pragmatic functions of Arabic rhetoric. These three pre-requisites have contributed to the evolution of non-mainstream Qur'anic exegesis. For mainstream exegetes, the partisans of non-mainstream exegetes have gone far astray in their hermeneutical analysis. Unlike the mainstream school of Qur'anic exegesis which takes into account the exoteric (non-allegorical, literal) meaning (al-ma'nā al-zāhir) of the Qur'ān, Shī'i, Ismā'īli, Ibāḍi and Sufi tafsīrs have been influenced by Mu'tazili views. Thus, a non-mainstream school of exegesis has been established where Qur'anic exegetes resort to the esoteric (allegorical, underlying) meaning (al-ma'nā al-bāṭin) of the multi-faceted meanings of Qur'anic expressions. Therefore, each exegete espouses different theological and political views for some Qur'anic passages. This in fact depends on whether an exegete advocates or rejects independent reasoning (al-ijtihād) and discovery of meaning (al-istinbāt).

\* The politico-religious impact has been felt right from the early years of Islam and the evolution of exegesis. In the view of Watt (1973, p. 216), politico-religious movements have developed during the first/seventh century. Different religious attitudes have political implications and both developed under the Umayyad rule (ibid.:230). Thus, tafsīr activity has suffered during the new politico-religious milieu. Moreover, a large number of early and classical works of exegesis of the recording phase from the first quarter of the second/eighth century onwards underwent redactional processes and intrusive exegetical views of the compilers of early tafsīr manuscripts. Thus, the authenticity of early Muslim works of Qur'anic exegesis has raised scepticism among Western scholars. Their scepticism is not without a good reason and, therefore, can be attributed to a number of factors, such as

- (i) there are weak and fabricated chain of authorities in classical tafsīr works;
- (ii) classical tafsīr works abound with fabricated ḥadīth and intrusive poetic loci falsely ascribed to pre-Islamic poets;
- (iii) contradictory exegetical reports which are ascribed to iconic companions pervaded a large number of early tafsīr works. For instance, we encounter different exegetical reports transmitted by different transmitters on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās;

- (iv) some classical tafsīr works are ascribed to different authors. For instance, the *Tafsīr Ibn ʿAbbās* or *Tanwīr al-Miqbās min Tafsīr Ibn ʿAbbās* exists in twenty manuscripts and has been ascribed to Ibn ʿAbbās (d.68/687), al-Kalbi (d.146/763), al-Dīnawari (d.308/920) and al-Fairūzābādī (d.817/1414) and
- (v) classical tafsīr works suffer from redactional processes and interpolation by compilers of early manuscripts that are passed on from one generation to another.

\*It is worthwhile to point out that the activity of Qurʿanic exegesis gathered more momentum in both its oral and written transmission after the death of Muḥammad. Two major factors had an impact upon Qurʿanic exegetical scholarship:

- (i) Muḥammadʼs exegesis was orally transmitted but was not holistic. This is attributed to the infrequent nature of enquiries made by the companions.
- (ii) Prophetic tradition was not recorded as it was not sanctioned by Muḥammad himself.

Therefore, classical tafsīr works were influenced by the following factors:

- (i) Heavy reliance on the views of companions and their successor students,
- (ii) The penetration of forged ḥadīths into exegetical works for politico-religious interests and
- (iii) Redactional processes and extrapolation techniques.

It can be claimed, therefore, that Qurʿanic exegesis started as early as the first/seventh century with the emergence of the four schools: the school of Makkah, the school of Madīnah, the school of Kūfah which were established by companion exegetes, and the school of Baṣrah which was founded by a successor exegete. In a similar vein, we can safely claim that the recording of tafsīr works in a musalsal (āyah-by-āyah) or a non-musalsal form began during the first quarter of the second/eighth century. Our view, however, is contrary to Wansbroughʼs claim (1970, p. 247) that Qurʿanic exegesis could not have been started before the third/ninth century. One of the arguments of Wansbrough for rejecting the authenticity of the old exegetical works is the intrusion of poetic citations (shawāhid) because poetry, in his view, as an exegetical device is not present in the exegesis of Muqātil (d.150/767), al-Kalbi (d.146/763) and Sufyān al-Thawri (d.161/777) who represent the early Muslim exegetes of the formative phase. However, it has been claimed that pre-Islamic and early Islamic citations from profane literature as a means of explaining little-used or rare Qurʿanic expressions, that is, gharīb expressions, have been employed during the second/eighth century in *Majāz al-Qurʿān* by Abu ʿUbaidah (d.210/825) and in *Maʿānī al-Qurʿān* by al-Farrāʾī (d.207/822; Gilliot 2002, p. 104). Gätje (1971, p. 33) is also of the opinion ‘that reference to such poetic loci in order to explain word meanings actually does go back to Ibn ʿAbbās or his pupils, for the introduction of

extensive grammatical investigations into Qur'anic exegesis is of early origin'. Wansbrough's assumption regarding the role of poetry in classical tafsīr tradition of the formative phase has also been contested by Boullata (1990). In his attempt to verify the role of poetry in early tafsīr texts, Boullata investigates a manuscript copy of *Masā'il Nāfi' Ibn al-Azraq* which dates from the fifth/eleventh century. It has become clear to Boullata that what is generally referred to as the masā'il of Ibn al-Azraq and the answers of Ibn 'Abbās with poetic citations is a composite text whose historical fluidity permitted continual growth by variant additions and that the circumstances of the presentation of the material are differently described by various compilers. Boullata also raises the possibility that some of the poetic citations attributed to early poets, named and not named, are themselves composed by later persons to authenticate a particular Qur'anic hermeneutics. For instance, Boullata is doubtful that Ibn 'Abbās would have quoted the poet Ibn al-Akḥṭal (d.92/710), a younger contemporary of Ibn 'Abbās, for Ibn al-Akḥṭal, born in about 20/640, would only be a young poet to Ibn 'Abbās and too little-known to be cited as an authority, though, later, he was quoted favourably by grammarians and philologists of Baṣrah and Kūfah.

While Wansbrough claims that the reference of rare or unknown Qur'anic words to the great corpus of early Arabic poetry is an exegetical method which is considerably posterior to the activity of Ibn 'Abbās, Boullata (1990) asserts that

- (1) the content, that is, the number of the masā'il (questions), is not only one that has continued to grow over the years as the need to explain more of the Qur'anic words but also one whose transmission has not been uniformly preserved;
- (2) illustrative pre-Islamic poetic loci have been employed as a tafsīr tool which has been preserved in a tradition of oral transmission for several generations before it was put down in writing with enlargements;
- (3) it was natural for the Arabs to employ the shawāhid in early Qur'anic exegesis;
- (4) there is an Arab proclivity to cite proverbs or shawāhid orally to corroborate ideas in certain circumstances and
- (5) one cannot determine what of these materials is authentic and what is not, but everything points to the possibility that there existed a smaller core of materials which were most likely preserved in a tradition of oral transmission for several generations before they were put down in writing with enlargements.

Thus, for Boullata, this is a very old Arab trait which Ibn 'Abbās could possibly have practised in his oral tafsīr tradition. Thus, Boullata (1990) argues that the tradition which aligns Ibn 'Abbās with lexicographical matters related to the Qur'ān is early, although it was clearly subject to elaboration as the years passed where there have been additions and the number of lexical items grows. While Wansbrough believes that the 'earliest exegetical composition in which poetic shawāhid were regularly employed is the *Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān* of al-Farrā' (d.207/822)', Boullata (1990) argues that this may be so but does not exclude the possibility of oral traditions a long time before al-Farrā', despite the fact that we

may have no written proof of it to corroborate oral reports. It is interesting to note that, in his work on Q78:24 and Arabic lexicography, Rippin (1983) refers to poetic citations employed by some Muslim exegetes. He is, however, sceptical of this technique and is of the opinion that some of these poetic loci to Qur'anic vocabulary usages have been invented by the authors of the tafsir works, given the overwhelming pressure to produce such evidence, once the study of the Qur'ān had reached the stage of being compared to profane poetry. Even the exegetes, Rippin (1983) adds, must have felt the ridiculousness of the situation, for a number of them seem to feel constrained to add an explanation of how the Qur'anic word (bard) of Q78:24 could ever have evolved from its normal meaning of 'cold' into 'sleep'.

\* Soon after the death of Muḥammad in 11/632, four major classical schools of Qur'anic exegesis evolved. These were

- (1) the Makkah school led by Ibn ʿAbbās (d.68/687) and the Madīnah school led by Ubai b. Kaʿb (d.20/640) which were known as the Ḥijāz school of Qur'anic exegesis, and
- (2) the Kūfah school led by Ibn Masʿūd (d.32/653) and the Baṣrah school led by al-Ḥasan al-Baṣri (d.110/728) which were known as the Iraḳi school.

Although these schools of the formative phase were led by different companion and successor scholars, they represented the mainstream orientation of Qur'anic exegesis based on

- (i) the two canons, the Qur'ān and tradition. This applies to the four schools;
- (ii) the exoteric meaning of Qur'anic expressions. This also applies to the four schools;
- (iii) divergent interest in the employment of ḥadīth as an exegetical tool. There was not enough interest among the Makkah school exegetes to employ prophetic tradition, who resorted instead to Qur'anic intertextuality and the views of Ibn ʿAbbās. Similarly, the Kūfah school was lukewarm towards the use of ḥadīth for fear of giving an inaccurate exegetical analysis and were in doubt of forged ḥadīths that were in circulation. The Madīnah school were enthusiastic in the employment and the study of ḥadīth. The Baṣrah school, however, had shown a tremendous interest in ḥadīth as an exegetical technique as reference to ḥadīth served their admonition methodology. In Baṣrah, it was felt that there was a moral vacuum that had to be filled in. The Baṣrah school of exegesis, therefore, called for abandoning the pursuit of material gains;
- (iv) non-employment of rational exegesis, that is, personal opinion (al-ra'i), counter to commended exegetical views;
- (v) lack of interest in the discussion of theological mutashābihāt, including the names and attributes of God. If the mutashābihāt were ever discussed, exegetes of the formative phase were attempting to substantiate rather than discredit them and
- (vi) invoking personal opinion in jurisprudential problems only.

\* There are, however, striking methodological differences among the early four schools of Qur'anic exegesis with regard to their educational orientation and methodological approaches towards Qur'anic exegesis, such as the following:

- (i) The Madīnah and Kūfah schools were more conservative and ḥadīth-oriented than the other schools. For the Madīnah school, ḥadīth was the key to unveil the Qur'ān. However, the Kūfah school did not employ ḥadīth for exegetical purposes for fear of error.
- (ii) The Madīnah and Kūfah schools of exegesis did not adopt Judeo-Christian anecdotes as an exegetical technique or a source of exegesis.
- (iii) Although the companion exegetes of the Makkah school were reluctant to rely heavily on the views of Jewish and Christian converts, the successor exegetes of the Baṣrah school relied heavily on the views of their convert informants. However, neither the companion nor successor exegetes from the Makkah or Baṣrah schools adopted the views derived from the Jewish anecdotes and other converts in jurisprudential matters. Jewish anecdotes can only be found in the context of Qur'anic parables, stories of previous unbelieving nations and the āyahs related to the creation of the universe.
- (iv) The Madīnah and Kūfah schools were interested in the modes of reading. The Makkah and Baṣrah schools were not interested in the modes of reading.
- (v) The Kūfah school was more liberal towards the employment of irregular modes of reading, especially Ibn Mas'ūd's reliance on exegetical modes of reading (qirā'ah 'alā al-tafsīr). The companions of the Kūfah school read some Qur'anic expressions differently from the canonical 'Uthmānic master codex. Variant modes of reading involve vocalic or diacritic differences. The Kūfah school's mode of reading was semantically based and involved grammatical functions, doubling of letters, addition of words or prepositions, for clarification purposes.
- (vi) The Madīnah school's mode of reading was phonetically oriented. In other words, their mode of reading was based on articulatory phonetics and was concerned with variant forms of pronunciation of a given word.
- (vii) The Baṣrah school was influenced by the Madīnah school with regard to the phonetically based mode of reading.
- (viii) The Makkah school was enthusiastic towards the linguistic approach to Qur'anic exegesis such as the semantically ambiguous expressions, etymological analysis of words and the less commonly used words.
- (ix) The Baṣrah school was influenced by the Makkah school with regard to linguistic exegesis and the employment of grammar in exegesis.
- (x) Although the Baṣrah school was influenced by the Makkah school with regard to the use of personal opinion, exegetes of the Baṣrah school demonstrated less enthusiasm than the school of Makkah exegetes in the employment of personal opinion and independent judgement (ijtihād).
- (xi) The Baṣrah school was influenced by the Madīnah school with regard to ḥadīth. However, the Madīnah and Kūfah schools were more stringent than the Baṣrah school with regard to ḥadīth's sound chain of authorities and ḥadīth text.

- (xii) The Makkah and Baṣrah schools were more liberal than the Madīnah and Kūfah schools towards the teaching and documentation of tafsīr in the form of lecture notes, the employment of tafsīr for admonition purposes and willingness to adopt Judeo-Christian anecdotes in tafsīr works.

\* It is interesting to note that Ibn ʿAbbās employed his personal opinion (raʿi) in tafsīr. He exercised independent judgement and discovery of meaning (istinbāt) and so did the exegetes of the Baṣrah school. However, Ibn ʿAbbās used his personal opinion in the analysis of mutashābihāt to prove rather than to disprove them, employed his personal opinion in jurisprudential matters related to pilgrimage and was not enthusiastic towards the esoteric meaning of Qurʿanic expressions. In a similar vein, Ibn Masʿūd of the Kūfah school employed hypothetical opinion as a third source in Qurʿanic exegesis but only in the absence of a tradition and only with regard to an answer to a jurisprudential problem. The early and late successors' exegetical views, however, became more divergent and employed different exegetical sources. These included the Qurʿān, the tradition, companions' views, Jewish anecdotes and hypothetical opinion. However, the expression 'hypothetical opinion' (raʿi), as an exegetical technique employed by Ibn Masʿūd of the Kūfah school was not equivalent to the same expression 'hypothetical opinion' which was employed during both the recording and modern phases of exegesis, especially by the late successors onwards. After the departure of Ibn ʿAbbās and Ibn Masʿūd, hypothetical opinion assumed a different connotative meaning that was synonymous with both

- (i) objectionable exegesis (tafsīr madhmūm) because it is based on allegorical and esoteric meaning, and
- (ii) non-mainstream exegesis (taʿwīl) because it relies heavily on Jewish anecdotes and is not enthusiastic enough towards the employment of ḥadīth.

The reason for this shift in meaning is due to the fact that both Ibn ʿAbbās and Ibn Masʿūd reined their employment of 'hypothetical opinion' and made use of it for jurisprudential problems but did not employ it for the analysis of theological mutashābihāt matters. This is not true of exegetes from later generations after Ibn ʿAbbās and Ibn Masʿūd. Exegetes of the recording phase let their imagination and hypothetical opinion run wild.

Therefore, we can conclude that in early tafsīr literature, the binary opposition tafsīr and taʿwīl has been employed interchangeably by Qurʿān commentators. The companion Ibn Masʿūd, the founder of the Kūfah school of Qurʿanic exegesis, has always been referred to as a scholar who employs taʿwīl as an approach to the Qurʿanic text. Similarly, all the literature in Arabic on Qurʿanic exegesis employs the word taʿwīl when it refers to Ibn Masʿūd. However, what is meant is that Ibn Masʿūd employs the commendable form of taʿwīl, and most importantly, he has only dealt with Islamic legal rulings. Thus, he used to employ his own personal opinion on jurisprudential matters. It is, therefore, of value to highlight the fact that Ibn Masʿūd has not got involved in the analysis of Qurʿanic expressions

that are related to the names and attributes of God, and he has not expressed his personal opinion on sensitive theological matters like the garden, the fire, the day of judgement, the seeing of God on the day of judgement and the notion of creation. For this very reason, Ibn Mas'ūd has been wrongly dubbed as a mu'awwil (using his personal hypothetical opinion) and that his school is the source of the evolution of ta'wil approach to the Qur'anic text. This, I believe, is a mistaken view since the word ta'wil, during Ibn Mas'ūd's time, has not yet assumed the objectionable signification. Thus, the word (ta'wil) has assumed today a double-edged meaning: al-ta'wil al-maḥmūd (commendable interpretation) and al-ta'wil al-madhmūm (objectionable interpretation).

al-Suyūṭī (1996a, 2, p. 491) has established a dichotomy of exegetical modes in which tafsīr is defined as the transmission of authoritative witness, *scil.* to the occasions of revelation (riwāyah/samā'/shahādah), and ta'wil as the product of research and expertise, *scil.* in the analysis of scripture (dirāyah/istinbāṭ). The polarity has found diagrammatic expression in the work of Māturīdī. For him, tafsīr belongs to the companions of the Prophet, ta'wil to the jurists (al-tafsīr lil-ṣaḥābah wal-ta'wil lil-fuqahā'; Wansbrough 1977, p. 154). The tafsīr and ta'wil polarity is explained further by al-Suyūṭī (*ibid.*). The antithesis tafsīr and ta'wil is also represented by the purely formal criteria of riwāyah (sound transmission through a chain of authorities) and dirāyah (personal opinion), respectively, where riwāyah alludes to al-tafsīr bil-ma'thūr (mainstream exegesis) and dirāyah refers to al-tafsīr bil-ra'i (non-mainstream exegesis).

\*Although the companions and the early successors are considered as sacrosanct by mainstream and most non-mainstream exegetes, their intellectual capacity and level of comprehending the Qur'ān vary from one to another. Hermeneutical works, in theory, are hinged upon the views of the companions and successors. However, the reliability status of their views can be classified into three categories:

- (i) marfū', that is, attributed to Muḥammad: This means that a companion's opinion on a given hermeneutical matter goes back to the tradition but without the narration of a specific tradition. The exegetical opinions of the companions enjoy the status of marfū' since they are believed to have witnessed the revelation, are aware of the circumstances of revelation, are not influenced by Judaic and Christian anecdotes and have witnessed or taken part in historical events such as battles. A companion's opinion that is of marfū' status is also classified as conclusive evidence in Qur'anic exegesis.
- (ii) mawqūf, that is, attributed to the companion him or herself and does not go back to Muḥammad: This means that a companion's opinion on a given exegetical matter is entirely based on his or her personal opinion without any supporting tradition. The exegetical views of a companion enjoy the status of mawqūf if he or she is known for being influenced by Judaic and Christian anecdotes and also known for being not stringent or critical enough in the assessment and acceptance of a tradition. A companion's opinion that is of mawqūf status is classified as non-conclusive evidence (ghair ḥujjah) in Qur'anic exegesis.

(iii) maqtū<sup>c</sup>, that is, disconnected from the lifetime of Muḥammad: The hermeneutical views of both early and late successors are of a maqtū<sup>c</sup> status due to the following reasons:

- (a) The successors did not witness the revelation;
- (b) They did not witness historical events like battles or some incidents that took place during the lifetime of Muḥammad;
- (c) They were influenced by Judeo-Christian anecdotes;
- (d) They were lenient towards forged ḥadīth and were not stringent in their assessment of the chain of authorities;
- (e) They adopted personal opinion and discovery of meaning and
- (f) They were influenced by non-mainstream theological views that were considered as objectionable interpretation (ta'wīl madhmūm). Thus, successors' exegetical views which are of a maqtū<sup>c</sup> status are classified as non-conclusive evidence in Qur'anic exegesis.

\*During the end of the first/seventh century, foreign philosophical views found their way to the Muslim community and Mu<sup>c</sup>tazili views began to take roots such as the createdness of the Qur'ān which emerged during the early years of the first/seventh century. This led to the evolution of the Mu<sup>c</sup>tazili school of Qur'anic exegesis based on esoteric and allegorical analysis. The esoteric Mu<sup>c</sup>tazili approach to Qur'anic exegesis was enthusiastically adopted by Shī'i and Ibāḍī exegetes who were heavily influenced by Abu Hāsim al-Jibā'i (d.321/933). Recorded Mu<sup>c</sup>tazili exegetical works began to emerge during the third/ninth century such as those by Abu Bakr 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Kaisān al-Aṣamm (d.240/854), Abu al-Qāsim 'Abd Allāh al-Ka'bi (d.319/931), Abu Muslim Muḥammad b. Bahr al-Aṣfahāni (d.322/933), Abu 'Ali Muḥammad al-Jibā'i (d.303/915) and was culminated by *al-Kashshāf* of the iconic Mu<sup>c</sup>tazili exegete al-Zamakhshari (d.538) who was a Sunni Ḥanafī theologian.

\*Under the Muslim rule, Spain and Portugal, known as al-Andalus, witnessed a robust tafsīr activity which evolved during the third/ninth century, that is, within the recording phase, and culminated in the eighth/fourteenth century. Thus, a new school of Qur'anic exegesis evolved whose exegetical tradition lasted until the eighth/fourteenth century. This was called the Andalus school of Qur'anic exegesis whose exegetical approach was grammar and jurisprudence-oriented, ḥadīth-based and enthusiastic about the modes of reading. Generally, however, the Andalus school was in line with the exegetical orientation of both the Madīnah and Kūfah schools.

\*During the second half of the second/eighth century, concern about the moral vacuum and interest in discarding material and worldly gains had led to the evolution of mysticism. As a result, this had led to the emergence of a new school of Qur'anic exegesis during the third/ninth century which was entirely based upon the esoteric analysis of the Qur'anic text and was markedly influenced by foreign philosophical thought and mystical practices. Recorded Sufi tafsīr works began to emerge during the fifth/eleventh century marking the launch of the Sufi school of

Qur'anic exegesis. This, however, was culminated by the emergence of the unique Sufi tafsīr work by the iconic Sufi exegete Muḥyi al-Dīn b. ʿArabi (d.638/1240). Although b. ʿArabi lived in Spain, he was not influenced by the Andalus school of Qur'anic exegesis. The Sufi milieu of Seville (ishbilyā) where he lived made its impact on his lifestyle, while the Sufi saints of North Africa, Iraq and Syria appealed to his passionate mystical curiosity. Sufi tafsīr tradition has continued up to the twenty-first century.

\* Historically, therefore, Qur'anic exegesis has been through three major phases:

- (i) The formative phase which subsumes the two Ḥijāz schools and the two Iraqī schools,
- (ii) The recording phase and
- (iii) The modern phase.

Rippin (2000, p. 85) claims that a debate has raged for a century now in scholarly literature concerning the origins of tafsīr as a procedure and as written works. In tracing the historical development of the different phases of exegesis, Rippin (2000) argues that it is possible to separate out four periods of exegesis. However, the separation, for Rippin, is artificial, particularly fuzzy at the edges and certainly in need of refinement. Rippin's four periods of Qur'anic exegesis are as follows:

- (i) The formative period of exegesis: This is characterized by a series of books the character of which is more cohesive and thus more likely to be authentic, although certainly not free of later interpolation, reformulation and editorial intrusion. The tafsīr works that may fit into this period are those by Muqātil (d.150/767), al-Farrā' (d.207/822) and ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Ṣanʿāni (d.211/827).
- (ii) The classical period of exegesis: This is often considered to come into existence with al-Ṭabari's *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān ʿan Ta'wīl āiy al-Qur'ān* (d.311/923).
- (iii) The mature period of exegesis: Within this period, there is an abundant number of works, such as al-Naḥḥās's *ʿIrāb al-Qur'ān* (d.338/949), al-Thaʿlabi's *al-Kashf wal-Bayān ʿan Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* (d.427/1035), al-Zamakhshari's *al-Kashshāf* (d.538/1143), al-Ṭabarsi's *Majmaʿ al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* (d.552/1157), al-Rāzi's *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, or *Maḥāṭib al-Ghaib* (d.604/1207), Ibn Kathīr's *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-ʿAzīm* (d.774/1372) and al-Suyūṭī's work *al-Durr al-Manthūr* (d.911/1505).
- (iv) The contemporary period of exegesis: Modern exegetes attempt to simplify the content of the texts to make them accessible to the reader. The twentieth century has also witnessed the spread of synoptic and thematic exegesis as contemporary approaches to the analysis of the Qur'anic text.

\* Each phase of exegesis is distinguished by its ad hoc sources and exegetical techniques that are identifiable in Qur'anic exegetical works of a given phase. Although exegetical techniques vary from one phase to another, they tend to

either overlap in some phases or increase in number at a given phase. Among the exegetical techniques that have featured in the Prophet's exegesis are Qur'anic intertextuality (*tafsīr al-qur'ān bil-qur'ān*) and the tradition. However, the exegetical techniques that characterize the companion exegetes include Qur'anic intertextuality, the tradition, circumstances of revelation, brief Judaic and Christian anecdotes, mainstream discovery of meaning and personal opinion employed to clarify a jurisprudential problem in the absence of a ḥadīth and modes of reading. During the recording phase of both early and late successors, we encounter more exegetical devices such as Qur'anic intertextuality, the tradition, companion exegetical views, detailed Judaic and Christian anecdotes, personal opinion, poetic citations from pre-Islamic poetry, circumstances of revelation, abrogating and abrogated, linguistic and stylistic analysis, and modes of reading. Most of the exegetical techniques of the recording phase have been duplicated by modern exegesis. However, new tafsīr tools have featured in modern tafsīr works, such as scientific and socio-political details, and sūrah structure.

Some of our exegetical techniques above are referred to as exegetical devices by Wansbrough (1977, p. 121). His exegetical devices include

- (i) *variae lectiones* which deal with variant modes of reading that are identifiable in many commentaries of various phases of exegesis;
- (ii) poetic *loci probantes* which refer to the quotations by commentators from Arabic poetry;
- (iii) lexical details through reference to different modes of reading, poetic citation or reference to the origin of the word if it is foreign;
- (iv) grammatical elaboration through reference to the grammatical functions that can be assumed by a word and the subsequent change of meaning;
- (v) rhetorical details that aim to uncover the inimitability of Qur'anic discourse and its prototypical stylistic characteristics;
- (vi) periphrasis which provides a glossary form of tafsīr based on brevity;
- (vii) analogy which aims to compare the meaning of two expressions that occur in different passages;
- (viii) abrogating and abrogated āyah details that aim to discuss what is abrogated and by which āyah;
- (ix) circumstances of revelation employed to discuss the context of āyahs;
- (x) identification of specific names related to specific āyahs;
- (xi) ḥadīth used for exegetical purposes and
- (xii) anecdotes employed to explain the meaning of an āyah.

\*Although some companion and successor exegetes relied upon Judaic and Christian anecdotes, the views of the Jewish and Christian converts did not influence jurisprudential matters. The new converts' views were restricted to stories of previous unbelieving nations, genesis and metaphysical matters.

\* The objection to the recording of ḥadīth came not only from Muḥammad but also from some of his companions, after his death, like ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (d.23/644) and Abu Mūsā al-Ashʿari (d.44/664) who also opposed the writing

down of ḥadīth. However, there were companions who wrote down, for their own personal use, some ḥadīths in the form of *ṣaḥīfah* (booklet). During the closing years of the first/seventh century and the early years of the second/eighth century, ḥadīth began to be recorded on the official instruction of ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Marwān (d.65–85/684/704) and his son ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (d.97–101/715–719). The task was delegated to the Madīnah scholar Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhri (d.124/742) and Ibn Ḥazm (d.120/737), the ruler of Madīnah. As apologetic and polemic ḥadīths were in circulation, scepticism shrouded the chain of authorities and the text of ḥadīth. Thus, ḥadīth scholars began to record the ḥadīth in a more systematic order and classified its form during the mid of second/eighth century. Ḥadīth studies were established as a discipline, and impugment and vindication (*al-jarḥ wal-taʿdīl*) procedure was introduced. Then, ḥadīth collection in the form of *ṣaḥīḥ* began during the third/ninth century.

Prophetic ḥadīth became the key to Qurʾānic exegesis. In the view of Ḥassān b. ʿAṭīyyah (d.120/737), the Qurʾān is in need of the tradition and not vice versa (al-Qurṭubi 1997, 1, p. 74). The tradition, however, remained in an oral transmission since Muḥammad’s lifetime and until the early Umayyad dynasty (d.41–132/661–749). Although the ḥadīths are paramount to Qurʾānic hermeneutics and Qurʾānic intertextuality is at times hinged upon them, during the recording phase of Qurʾānic exegesis, the recording of ḥadīth is influenced by political and dynastic agendas of the Umayyads and the Abbasids (d.132–655/749–1257). Thus, for political or religious reasons, theologians invoke the name of the Prophet or the name of Ibn ʿAbbās in order to back up their views. Rival and dissident groups and schools of thought have contributed to ḥadīth fabrication. The authenticity of ḥadīth material has become shrouded in scepticism. This has a knock on effect on the school of mainstream exegesis (*al-tafsīr bil-maʿthūr*) whose premise is hinged upon the intertextuality within the Qurʾān and prophetic tradition. For traditionists, there are four major sources of Qurʾānic exegesis: the Qurʾān, the tradition, the views of the companions, and to some extent, the views of early successors. However, for non-mainstream scholars, the scholastics and the Sufīs, rational analysis based on hypothetical opinion is the major source of Qurʾānic exegesis in addition to a limited sample of passages or views derived from the above four sources whenever they are in harmony with a given problem in question.

\* Our account has focused on the degree of authority in exegesis, whether Muḥammad authorized the Qurʾān to be explicated, how much exegesis the Prophet has actually provided to his companions, whether his companions’ exegetical views can be taken for granted and whether or not the companions like ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb expressed reluctance towards the exegesis of the theological *mutashābihāt āyahs*. It is interesting to note that the earliest mode of the transmission of a recorded book of Qurʾānic exegesis were the notes taken by successor students from their companion teachers. The phase of recording Qurʾānic exegesis in a consistent, comprehensive and methodological fashion started during the first quarter of the second/eighth century onwards. During this phase of transition from orality to literacy, we observe a number of major developments:

- (i) During the recording phase, augmentation of the chain of authorities was evident. Exegetes do not refer to the full chain of authorities, but rather mention only the last name in the chain of authorities of a given ḥadīth.
- (ii) Ḥadīths which were told on the authority of Muḥammad's companions were fabricated and falsely ascribed to iconic companions.
- (iii) Interpolations, different transmissions, and original manuscripts underwent some form of redactional work.
- (iv) Intrusive exegetical reports were falsely ascribed to iconic figures of the formative phase.
- (v) Intrusive poetic citations were falsely ascribed to pre-Islamic poets.
- (vi) Theological views prevailed reflecting an exegete's own dogmatic stance and political dimensions espoused by the exegete.
- (vii) Exegetes have provided a holistic exegetical account of all the āyahs and sūrah's of the Qur'ān; thus, the āyah-by-āyah (musalsal) tafsīr has emerged.
- (viii) And most importantly, exegetes have divorced tafsīr from ḥadīth; thus, Qur'anic exegesis has been granted an autonomous scholarship identity.

According to Abu Ṭālib al-Makki (d.386/986), complete books and works (majmū'āt) did not appear until after the year 120/737 or later. In his view, some writings were issued after the death of Sa'īd Ibn al-Musaiyab (d.94/713) and after the death of the early successors. This brings us to around the year 140/757. Among the early successors are 'Amr Ibn Dīnār (d.126/743) and Abu Ḥāzīm al-A'raj (Salamah Ibn Dīnār (d.135/752). The remarks of Abu Ṭālib al-Makki have been taken up again by Abu Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d.505/1111) and al-Saiyid Muḥammad Murtaḍā al-Zubaidi (d.1205/1709; cf. Gilliot 1999, p. 3). Ahmad (1967, p. 78) is also of the opinion that it is in the first quarter of the second/eighth century, about 120/737, that the practice of recording exegesis came into being. Our view of comprehensive exegetical works is counter to that of Gilliot (2002, p. 104) who is of the opinion that such works are not complete commentaries, that they may have amounted to a kind of notebook (ṣaḥīfah) and that they do not always follow the order of the Qur'anic text. Gilliot (1999, p. 1) is also of the opinion that the phase of recording began in the second half of the second/eighth century. Versteegh (1993, p. 51), however, is of the opinion that during the first centuries of the hijrah, almost no scholar recorded his teachings as an independent book. In some cases, authors wrote down their lectures for use within a restricted group of people. Our claim of the initial start of recording Qur'anic exegesis is also counter to Rippin (1987, p. 238) who claims that manuscript evidence for tafsīr barely reaches back to the third/ninth century. Our view that Qur'anic exegesis has begun to be recorded during the first quarter of the second/eighth century is also counter to Wansbrough's (1970, p. 247) that Qur'anic exegeses is not likely to have been articulated before the third/ninth century.

\* Although exegetical works began to roll out during the recording phase in the second/eighth century, Qur'anic exegesis remained part of the ḥadīth collection. Thus, Qur'anic exegesis was not autonomous of tradition since the first/seventh century until the first half of the second/eighth century. By the early decades of

the second/eighth century, Qur'anic exegesis became independent from tradition studies and *musalsal*, holistic and well-structured exegesis gained momentum. However, some early exegetical works were subjected to editorial intrusive comments, as an extrapolation technique, which were ascribed to the original author. In other words, early exegetical works underwent redactional processes and some of them included poetic citations (*shawāhid*) which were falsely attributed to pre-Islamic poets in an attempt to substantiate own exegetical views. Since companions' views were authentic and held in high esteem, some early exegetical works which had dogmatic or sectarian leanings falsely ascribed views to iconic companions such as Ibn ʿAbbās.

Early successors played a significant role in the development of the nascent Qur'anic exegesis and its recording. The exegesis of the successors was hinged upon oral dictation by the companions to their students and was based upon the direct contact between the teacher exegete and his students. Thus, the exegesis of the successors was primarily based upon narration and oral dictation from the companions. However, during the recording phase, we have observed variant recensions in circulation which include different *isnāds* and transmitters of the same commentary by the same early second/eighth century exegetes such as Muqātil (d.150/767). For this reason, the authenticity of a given recension cannot be guaranteed and we are not absolutely sure whether the views of a given exegete are in fact his or those of the recensionist(s).

The recording phase, however, witnessed yet another major problem, namely, augmentation of *isnād*, interpolations, different transmissions, and the same manuscript underwent some form of redactional work. For instance, the exegetical views of some companions such as those of Ibn ʿAbbās (d.68/687), the Prophet's paternal cousin, were recorded and transmitted with different versions by later transmitters. As a result, the *tafsīr* of Ibn ʿAbbās has been rejected by the advocates of scepticism (cf. Goldfeld 1981, Versteegh 1990). At times, it is difficult to discern the genuine from the spurious views of the original exegete. Among the Western scholars who have taken a sceptical stance towards 'the mythical' Ibn ʿAbbās are Sprenger, Nöldeke and Schwally who see inconsistency in his *tafsīr*. They claim that the contradictions are numerous and this can be attributed to the fact that either

- (i) his students erred or
- (ii) his students intentionally misquoted him on a very large scale or that
- (iii) he himself continually altered his teachings.

One would not spend a long time with the classical Qur'anic commentaries, Gilliot (1999, p. 10) asserts, before one realizes that the interpretations which they transmit from Ibn ʿAbbās are often contradictory. Although there are seven versions in the transmission of Ibn ʿAbbās' *tafsīr*, for Goldfeld (1981), all the seven versions include authentic exegetical views of Ibn ʿAbbās. Nevertheless, these seven versions are marked by augmentations and interpolations. Each version, for Versteegh (1990, p. 237), is authentic in the sense that it depends on the original teaching of

Ibn ʿAbbās, but there seems to be no way to determine which of the surviving versions is more closely connected to the original teaching than the others. Abbott (1967) also lends her support to the reliability of isnād and the authorship of early Muslim traditions. Like the ascription to Ibn ʿAbbās, scepticism over the historicity and authenticity of the early Islamic texts also applies to the canonical sayings of the Ithnā ʿAshariyyah Shīʿī Imāms (twelver Shīʿī religious leaders). In connection with the canonical sayings of the Imāms, Henry Corbin mentions the scepticism of many scholars that the Imāms ever actually said many of the things attributed to them (see Adams 1985, p. 150). In the view of Adams (1985), there is no attempt to deal with the issue in terms of the normal criteria for establishing the authenticity of a text or its attribution.

\* The impact of the interest in linguistic exegesis by the Makkah and Baṣrah schools was felt during and after the formative phase. By the early years of the second/eighth century, that is, the beginning of the recording phase, the lexicographical tradition remained the dominant tafsīr approach (uslūb) which took one of the following forms:

- (i) Intra-lingual tafsīr work such as the tafsīr work attributed to Ibn ʿAbbās,
- (ii) gharīb tafsīr works such as the work attributed to Ibn Qutaibah,
- (iii) wujūh tafsīr works such as the works by Muqātil and Abu ʿUбайдah and
- (iv) mutashābih works such as the tafsīr work attributed to al-Kisāʿī.

During the early decades of the marathon journey of the recording of tafsīr works which began during the first quarter of the second/eighth century, various tafsīr genres evolved as a result of the ramification of the schools of Qurʿanic exegesis. These include

- (i) glossary exegesis which is concise and based on paraphrastic details of Qurʿanic expressions;
- (ii) narrative exegesis where reference is made to anecdotes that were either based on Judeo-Christian milieu, or on mythical anecdotes glorifying the household of ʿAli (ahl al-bait), as in the tafsīr work by al-Ḥasan b. ʿAli b. Mūsā al-Riḍā (d.148/765);
- (iii) jurisprudential exegesis which is concerned with injunctions and
- (iv) linguistic exegesis which deals with modes of reading, grammatical functions and linguistic analysis of expressions.

However, more genres of Qurʿanic exegesis evolved after the second/eighth century and up to the present time such as

- (i) analytical exegesis which is musalsal and āyah-based;
- (ii) synoptic exegesis, though based on gist, is musalsal and āyah-based;
- (iii) comparative exegesis which is musalsal and āyah-based;
- (iv) thematic exegesis which is neither a musalsal nor āyah-based tafsīr; it is only concerned with the overall meaning of the sūrah or passage;

- (v) literary exegesis which is musalsal and āyah-based;
- (vi) scientific exegesis which is concerned with scientific expressions that are analysed in the light of modern scientific advancements;
- (vii) paraphrastic exegesis that provides brief details or a glossary of words with concise elaboration and
- (viii) radio exegesis which is synoptic, simplified and at times musalsal and āyah-based depending on the type and time of the radio program.

We can conclude that the lexicographical approach of the formative and early recording phases which evolved during the second half of the second/eighth century such as the tafsīr work by al-Kisā'i (d.187/802) has not been adopted by exegetes of the modern phase. Although tafsīr works based on other classical techniques or forms have continued into the twentieth century, the main concern of the modern exegete has been to get the Qur'anic message across in a tafsīr-made-easy fashion to the literate but linguistically inefficient and not necessarily formally religiously trained readers. Thus, the function of tafsīr has changed in our modern time. The main concern of the modern exegete is that Qur'anic exegesis should be reader-friendly, that is, to be made more accessible to a wide range of readership. Consequently, the twentieth century has witnessed the spread of synoptic musalsal (āyah-by-āyah) exegesis (al-tafsīr al-wajīz, al-mukhtaṣar or al-ijmāli) as a contemporary approach to the analysis of the Qur'anic text.

\*The study of the evolution of Qur'anic exegesis entails the examination of the binary opposition tafsīr (exegesis) and ta'wīl (interpretation). The major objective of exegesis is to unravel and explicate Qur'anic discourse in order to discover its accurate significations, Islamic legal rulings and spiritual values. An exegete, however, is not entirely free in his commentary. This is mainly attributed to the antithesis between the two notions of tafsīr and ta'wīl that has taken a political and theological twist. A Qur'anic commentary is categorized as 'objectionable' and 'unsound', that is, madhmūm. This work is also characterized as tafsīr mu'awwal (an interpreted exegesis), that is, a subjective account, because the exegetical approach adopted by the exegete is based on his hypothetical personal opinion through which he attempts to justify his theological and/or political points of view with regard to some Islamic matters in Islamic history or theology. The notion of tafsīr is hinged upon narration (al-riwāyah or al-naql) which is based on upholding the predecessors' opinion (al-ittibā' ) and what they have actually heard (al-samā' ). This narration usually refers to that taken directly from the Prophet, his companions and the early generation of the successors. In other words, tafsīr should not be exercised through hypothetical opinion and one's own judgement without a sound source of narration and sound chain of authorities. However, ta'wīl is based on hypothetical personal opinion (al-dirāyah). Thus, ta'wīl has been 'viewed with grave suspicion on account of its potentially protean nature, rendering it susceptible to ideological manipulation, while tafsīr has come to be promoted as authoritative' (Afsaruddin 2001, p. 316).

Tafsīr, as a discipline, is much wider than the discipline of ta'wīl. While tafsīr is employed for āyahs, ta'wīl is used for significations such as those of the word

(al-hudā) which is a polysemous lexical item with seventeen different meanings. Most importantly, the dichotomy between tafsīr and ta'wīl leads to the theological and political contradistinction between mainstream and non-mainstream Islam. Sunni mainstream tafsīr is tradition-bound and most importantly is hinged upon exoteric (zāhir) meaning, Qur'anic intertextuality, prophetic tradition, companions and early successors' views. Non-mainstream tafsīr comprises

- (i) Sunnis such as the Mu<sup>c</sup>tazilah, the Ash<sup>c</sup>aris, the philosophers, and the Sufis, and
- (ii) non-Sunnis, such as the Shī<sup>c</sup>ah, the Ismā<sup>c</sup>īlis, the Zaidis, the Khawārij and the Ibāḍis.

The non-mainstream tafsīr, however, is hinged upon the esoteric (bāṭin), that is, underlying or allegorical, meaning of a Qur'anic expression. Technically, the expression tafsīr is employed in the exegesis of any kind of text; that is, text exegesis is the discipline of 'text analysis'. Ta'wīl, however, is employed in divine scriptures only. Probability of meaning applies to expressions whose denotative, that is, literal or surface, meaning is not evident. In tafsīr, probability of meaning is given less weight than in ta'wīl. A probable signification for non-scholastic scholars is acceptable only if it is backed up by sound tradition as substantiating evidence. It is for this reason that non-scholastic theologians employ ta'wīl from a linguistic perspective. In other words, for them, ta'wīl refers to explicating the meaning of a given expression, or adopting one of the various significations which a given word may entail. Therefore, ta'wīl overlaps with tafsīr. For Afsaruddin (2001, p. 317), exoteric (literal) tafsīr approach sees the text as the *object* of human understanding, while the esoteric (allegorical) tafsīr approach allows the text to be regarded as more a *component* of understanding itself.

As a mechanism of textual analysis, Rippin (1987, pp. 236–237) notes that exegesis or interpretation is not an exclusive scholarship to the early Muslim students of the Qur'ān. Jewish and Christian students of the Bible have employed the two terms of tafsīr and ta'wīl in their commentaries on the Bible in Arabic. The Jewish theologian Sa<sup>c</sup>diyah Gaon (d.330/942) has written *Tafsīr Basīṭ Naṣṣ al-Tūrā* (The Simple Exegesis of the Old Testament Text), which is a translation of the Pentateuch, and the Copt Buṭrus al-Sadamantī has written *al-Muqaddimah fi al-Tafsīr* (Introduction to Exegesis), in around the year 1260, which is concerned with the exegesis of the New Testament passion narratives (cf. Wansbrough 1977, p. 200).

The exegete is allowed to exercise sound personal opinion that does not violate the Qur'ān or the tradition in order to discover the meaning of a polysemous word such as the various meanings of the antonyms (khifāfan wathiqālan) in anfirū khifāfan wathiqālan (Q9:41) whose meanings can be

- (i) the young and the elderly,
- (ii) the active and the non-active,
- (iii) the healthy and the sick,

- (iv) the rich and the poor or
- (v) the bachelor and the married.

All of these alternative meanings are possible and can provide the sound required meaning of the āyah. However, the unsound (objectionable) discovery (al-istinbāṭ al-madhmūm) of a signification leads to ta'wīl that is not established upon a sound chain of authorities and is considered by mainstream theologians as counter to the Qur'ān and the tradition. This is particularly true in sectarian commentary which is hinged upon allegorical and symbolic interpretation, as in 'maraja al-baḥraini yal-taqiyān [He (God) released the two seas meeting side by side]' (Q55:19). In this āyah, some exegetes have provided an unsound interpretation that has violated the Qur'ān and the tradition. The meaning of al-baḥrain (the two seas) is interpreted as ('Ali b. Abī Ṭālib, the fourth rightly guided caliph, and his wife Fāṭimah) which is regarded by orthodox Muslim scholars as an objectionable ta'wīl. Exegetical views like this have led Rippin (1987, p. 236) to suggest that the dispute over exegesis and interpretation is to be traced back to the earliest sectarian disputes in Islam between the general community and the followers of the Prophet's son-in-law and cousin, 'Ali b. Abī Ṭālib (d.40/661), known as the Shī'ah, who wished to appropriate the word ta'wīl for reference to interpretation of 'hidden', that is, esoteric, parts of the Qur'ān as demanded by Shī'ī doctrine.

One may also encounter extremely odd interpretations given to some Qur'anic expressions (al-Suyūṭī 1996a, 2, pp. 527–528), such as 'walakum fi al-qiṣāṣi ḥay-ātun yā uli al-albābi [There is for you in legal retribution the saving of life]' (Q2:179) where the expression al-qiṣāṣi (legal retribution) is claimed to have the meaning 'Qur'anic stories'; the expression 'walākin liyaṭma'inna qalbī [Only that my heart may be satisfied]' (Q2:260) where the word qalbī (my heart) is claimed to be a friend of Abraham called Qalbī; the āyah, 'alladhī ja'ala lakum min al-shajari al-akhḍari nāran fa'idhā antum minhu tūqidūn [It is He who made for you from the green trees fire and then from it you ignite]' (Q36:80) is claimed to have the expression al-akhḍari (green) meaning Abraham; the expression nāran (fire) meaning nūr muḥammad (the light of Muḥammad) and the expression tūqidūn (to ignite) meaning taqtabisūn al-dīn (to adopt or acquire the religion); the āyah 'rabbanā walā tuḥammilnā mā lā ṭāqata lanā bihī [Our Lord, do not burden us with that which we have no ability to bear]' (Q2:286) is claimed to refer to al-ḥubb (love) and about 'wamin sharri ghāsiqin idhā waqab [I seek refuge in the Lord from the evil of darkness when it settles]' (Q113:3) it is also oddly claimed that the expression ghāsiq means the penis and the verb waqab means to get erected!

Although each interpretation is a form of exegesis, one cannot claim that each exegesis is necessarily an interpretation. Thus, exegesis is much wider than interpretation because exegesis provides an account of both allegorical (connotative) and non-allegorical (denotative) significations of a given expression based on sound narration which involves views of reliable sources such as the Prophet, his companions or the early successors. Also, any textual analysis whose evidence is conclusive is exegesis (tafsīr) while any analysis whose evidence is hypothetical is interpretation (ta'wīl).

\*Modern research in Qur'anic exegesis, both theoretical and practical, is a vital discipline for the understanding of the Scripture of Islam in the twenty-first century. Andrew Rippin (1982 and 1999) has highlighted the lack of research in exegesis and the need for it as well as the need to study other early tafsīr manuscripts in order to appreciate the development of early Qur'anic hermeneutics and the periodization of the exegetical enterprise based upon a sequential emergence of exegetical tools (1999, p. xv). While Rippin (1999, p. xix) asserts that 'the study of tafsīr is still very much in its infancy,' Wild (1996, p. vii) observes that 'the genesis of the Qur'anic text continues to absorb the interest of scholars.' Moreover, Charles Adams (1976, cf. Rippin 1982, p. 224) brings to our attention an important research fact: 'Qur'anic study is also badly neglected in another of its aspects, that which deals with the traditional interpretation of the Scripture of the Islamic community itself.'

We hope that the present work on the schools of Qur'anic exegesis has provided an informative contribution to the scholarship of this vital discipline of Qur'anic studies.

# Glossary

Ablution الوضوء	Atonement for an oath كفارة يمين
Abrogating and abrogated الناسخ والمنسوخ	Attributed to (the Prophet) عن (النبي)
Absolute single ḥadīth حديث فرد مطلق	Attributes of Allāh صفات الله
Action attributes الصفات الفعلية لله	Augmentations إضافات على المخطوطة
Acts of worship العبادات	Authentic mode of reading قراءة متواترة
Additional punishment العذاب الزائد	Authentic tradition حديث صحيح
Allegorical significations المعاني المجازية	Āyah-by-āyah exegesis التفسير المُسلسل
Allusion الإشارة (التلميح)	Babylonians البابليون
Almighty God has spoken the truth صدق الله العظيم	Backgrounded inchoative مبتدأ مؤخر
Ambiguous مُشكّل ، غريب	Bad deeds المعاصي
Ambiguous āyahs المُتشابهات	Beginning anew البداء
Amputation of hands and legs from opposite sides قطعُ الأيدي والأرجل من خلاف	Belief العقيدة
Analogy القياس	Bequest الوصية
Analytical exegesis التفسير التحليلي	Biography of the Prophet السيرة النبوية
Anthropomorphism التشبيه ، التجسيم	Biography of transmitters علم الرجال
Anthropomorphist المُشبه ، المُجسّم	Blood money الدية
Anti-Semitism معاداة (كراهية) اليهود	Blood revenge الثأر
Apostasy الردّة	Brief meaning المعنى المُجمل
Apostate المُرتد	By divine order توقيفي
Arabic genealogy أنساب العرب	Canonical revelation القرآن
Arabicized expressions مفردات مُعرّبة	Capital punishment عقوبة القتل
Arbitration التحكيم	Categories of exegesis أقسام التفسير
Asceticism الزُهْد	Censure التعزير
Ascetics الزُهّاد	Chain of authorities إسناد الحديث
Assonance السجع	Charity صدقة
Assyrians الآشوريون	Children of Israel بنو إسرائيل
Atonement كفارة	Choice إختيار
	Christianity المسيحية / النصرانية

- Circumstances of revelation أسباب النزول  
Civil war الفتنة (بعد مقتل عثمان رضي الله عنه)  
Classified compilation of ḥadīth المصنف  
Clear āyahs المحكمات  
Close interpretation التأويل القريب  
Codex نسخة شخصية  
Cognitive allegory المجاز العقلي  
Cohesion الإتصال (في إسناد الحديث)  
Commanding the right الأمر بالمعروف  
Commands الأوامر  
Commendable interpretation التأويل المحمود  
Commentary تفسير  
Commentator مُفسّر  
Common people العوام  
Communal obligation فرض كفاية  
Companions الصحابة  
Companion's opinion that goes back to the tradition but without any narration المرفوع  
Companion's opinion that does not go back to the tradition الموقوف  
Compulsion إضطرار  
Compulsory prostration سجدة واجبة  
Comparative exegesis التفسير المقارن  
Concealment (1) التذليس (في علم الحديث) ، (2) الإخفاء (في علم التجويد والقراءات)  
Concealment in identification of teachers تذليس الشيوخ  
Concealment of belief التقية  
Conclusive evidence حجة ، دليل قطعي  
Confederates of Quraish حلف قريش  
Confession إقرار  
Connotative meaning المعنى المجازي  
Conquest غزوة  
Consensus الإجماع  
Consonance المناسبة  
Content المتن  
Context and implicit meaning السياق والمعنى الضمني (المطلوب)  
Continuity of negation الدوام في النفي  
Contracted temporary marriage زواج المتعة  
Coordinated to معطوف على  
Copt أحد الأقباط  
Coptic القبطي  
Copyist (كاتب المخطوطة)  
Corporal world عالم جسماني  
Corporealism التجسيم  
Corporealists المجسمون  
Correct mode of reading قراءة مقبولة  
Create يخلق  
Createdness of the Qur'ān خلق القرآن  
Creator خالق  
Critical reflection الدراية  
Cut off مقطوع  
Day of judgement يوم القيامة  
Days of ignorance أيام الجاهلية  
De-anthropomorphism التنزيه (تنزيه الرب)  
Defect علة (في الحديث)  
Defective ḥadīth حديث معلول  
Denial of human attributes to Allāh التعتيل  
Denotative meaning المعنى المُعجمي  
Desires الشهوات  
Detailed meaning المعنى المُفسّر  
Determinism القدر  
Discovery الإستنباط  
Disobedience المعصية  
Distant interpretation التأويل البعيد  
Divine decree القضاء  
Divine determinism القدر  
Divine inspiration الوحي الإلهي  
Divine illumination إلهام  
Divine justice العدالة الإلهية  
Divine light النور الإلهي  
Divine predestination القدر  
Divine victory نصر من الله  
Divine wisdom حكمة إلهية  
Divinity الإلوهية  
Early successors رؤوس التابعين  
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- Evidence حُجَّة
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- Exegete مُفسِّر
- Exegetical mode of reading قراءة على التفسير
- Exile تغريب
- Exoteric meaning (غير الحقيقي) المعنى المجازي
- Expiation الكفارة
- Extrapolation الاستقراء
- Fabrication وضع الحديث
- Fabricator وضاع حديث
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- Familial connections النسب
- Family of the Prophet أهل البيت
- Fertile crescent الهلال الخصيب
- Figures of speech علم البيان
- Follow personal desire إتباع الهوى
- Forbidding the wrong النهي عن المنكر
- Foregrounded predicate خبر مقدم
- Forged tradition حديث موضوع
- Forgive يعفو عن (يعفو)
- Forgiveness المغفرة
- Formal exegesis التفسير اللفظي
- Formal legal (jurisprudential) judgement فتوى
- Formative phase (مرحلة الأولى) المرحلة التكوينية
- Fornication الزنا
- Freed slave مولى
- Friends of God الأولياء (عند الصوفية)
- Funeral prayer صلاة الجنازة
- Garden الجنة
- Genealogy of the pagan Arabs أيام العرب (أيام الجاهلية)
- Ghassanids الغساسنة
- Generic and specific meaning تخصيص العام (حمل العام على الخاص)
- General meaning معنى مُجمل
- Generic meaning معنى عام
- Give oath of allegiance يبايع
- Giving formal legal (jurisprudential) judgement إفتاء
- Glans الغسيلة (حشفة القضيب)
- God's essence كنه (ذات) الله
- God's friends (allies) أولياء الله
- God's omnipotence قدرة الله
- God's will مشيئة (إرادة) الله
- God's word كلام الله
- Good tradition حديث حسن
- Grave sinner مُرتكب الكبيرة
- Guessing تخمين
- Hadīth studies علم الحديث
- Heir الوارث، الموصى إليه
- Hell fire النار، الجحيم
- Heresy زندقة (الحاد)
- Heretical زنديق (ملحد)
- Hermeneutics تفسير
- Hidden meanings of Qur'anic expressions غريب القرآن
- Highway robbery الخرابية
- Historical exegesis التفسير التاريخي
- Historically continued practice of the Prophet السنة المتواترة
- Holy war الجهاد
- Hypocrisy النفاق
- Hypocrite منافق
- Hypothetical opinion الإجتهد
- Hypothetical opinion and discovery of significations الإجتهد والاستنباط
- Hypothetical evidence دليل ظني
- Hypothetical judgement الدراية
- Hypothetical opinion exegesis التفسير بالرأي (بالدراية)
- Imāmate الإمامة (عند الشيعة)
- Imitation التقليد
- Impose poll tax يفرض الجزية

Imprecation اللعان  
 Improbability الاحتمية  
 Impugment and vindication الجرح والتعديل  
 Inchoative مبتدأ  
 Inclinations أهواء  
 Incomplete belief ناقص الأيمان  
 Inconclusive evidence غير حجة  
 Independent thinking الاجتهاد  
 Individual obligation فرض عين  
 Inevitable (لا محالة منه) محتوم  
 Inevitability الحتمية  
 Infallibility (عند الشيعة) العصمة  
 Infallible معصوم  
 Inferior world عالم سفلي  
 Infirm tradition حديث سقيم  
 Inimitability الإعجاز  
 Injunctions الأحكام  
 Injustice الظلم  
 Inserted mode of reading (قراءة المُدرَج (مُدرَجة)  
 Intellect العقل  
 Intellectual world عالم عقلي  
 Intercession شفاعة  
 Interpolation تحريفات في المخطوطة  
 Interpolation of the Qur'an تحريف القرآن  
 Interpretation تأويل  
 Intoxicants المُسكرات  
 Introspective examination of self محاسبة النفس  
 Irregular ḥadīth حديث شاذ  
 Irregular mode of reading قراءة شاذة  
 Islamic legal rulings الأحكام  
 Jewish anecdotes الاسرائيليات  
 Jihād الجهاد  
 Jihadist جهادي  
 Judaism اليهودية  
 Jurisprudence الفقه  
 Jurisprudential exegesis التفسير الفقهي  
 Jurist الفقيه  
 Justice عدالة  
 Kharijites الخوارج  
 Know the unseen يعلم الغيب  
 Knowledge of the unseen علم الغيب

Lash جلدة  
 Lashing الجلد  
 Late successors تابعو التابعين  
 Lawful حلال  
 Lawful subsistence الرزق الحلال  
 Leather socks الخفين  
 Legal exegesis التفسير الفقهي  
 Legal injunctions الأحكام  
 Legatee (عند الشيعة) الوصي  
 Legitimate successor الخليفة  
 Lesser pilgrimage العمرة  
 Licentious فاسق  
 Licentiousness الفسوق  
 Life of the Prophet السيرة النبوية  
 Light of certainty نور اليقين  
 Linguistic exegesis تفسير لغوي  
 Literary exegesis التفسير الأدبي  
 Lordship الربوبية  
 Loyalty الولاية  
 Lying under oath الحنث  
 Mainstream exegesis التفسير بالمأثور  
 Mainstream school of law مذهب يستند على المأثور  
 Main text المتن  
 Main text of ḥadīth متن الحديث  
 Major signs of the Hour الآيات الكبرى للساعة  
 Married person مُحصن ، مُحصنة  
 Master codex (العثماني) المصحف الإمام  
 Memorizer of the Qur'an حافظ  
 Menstruation المحيض  
 Mesopotamia بلاد الرافدين  
 Miracle كرامة (عند الصوفية)  
 Modern exegesis التفسير الحديث  
 Modes of reading القراءات  
 Monotheism التوحيد  
 Monotheist الموحّد  
 Morally upright عدل  
 Multiple ḥadīth حديث متواتر  
 Multiple source mode of reading (قراءة مُتواترة)  
 Mystical صوفي  
 Narrated opinion المروي  
 Narration 1. الحديث النبوي 2. الرواية (الإسناد / النقل)  
 Narration of exegesis روايات التفسير

- Narratives أقوال ، قصص  
 Narrator الراوي  
 Negation particle أداة نافية  
 Nestorian نسطوري  
 Nestorianism الديانة النسطورية  
 Nomadic life البداوة  
 Nominal Muslim مسلم بالأسم فقط  
 Non-allegorical signification المعنى غير المجازي (المعنى الحقيقي / الحرفي)  
 Non-canonical revelation السنة  
 Non-eternal غير أزلي  
 Non-mainstream exegesis التفسير بالرأي  
 Non-mainstream school of law مذهب يستند على الرأي  
 Non-virgin تيب  
 Objectionable interpretation تأويل مذموم  
 Obligation فريضة  
 Obligatory duty الفرض  
 Obscure خفي  
 Old Testament التوراة  
 Oral transmission النقل الشفوي (نقلٌ غير مُدون)  
 Own viewpoint موقوف  
 Pagan وثني  
 Paganism الوثنية  
 Paradise الفردوس  
 Paraphrastic exegesis التفسير المعجمي  
 Penal law الحدود  
 People of the Book أهل الكتاب  
 Period of waiting عِدّة  
 Perjury الحنث  
 Permissible جائز  
 Perpetual punishment in hell fire التخليد في النار  
 Personal affairs الأحوال الشخصية  
 Personal desire الأهواء  
 Personal opinion الرأي / الدراية  
 Piety الورع ، التقوى  
 Pilgrimage الحج  
 Pilgrim الحاج  
 Poetry is the register of the Arabs الشعر ديوان العرب  
 Poetic loci شواهد من الشعر  
 Polemic كلام عدواني (تهجّم)  
 Polemical āyahs آيات تتهم على الكفار  
 Poll tax الجزية  
 Polysemy (الوجوه / ألفاظ مشتركة)  
 Polytheism الشرك  
 Polytheist مُشرك  
 Portents of the final Hour أسرار الساعة  
 Post-successors تابعو التابعين  
 Prayer الصلاة  
 Preacher القصاص  
 Precautionary dissimulation التقية  
 Predestination القدر (الجبر)  
 Predeterminism القضاء والقدر  
 Predicate خبر  
 Pre-Islamic affairs أيام العرب  
 Principles of Islamic law أصول الفقه  
 Probability الإحتمال ، الحتمية  
 Profession of faith الشهادة  
 Profligate فاسق  
 Prohibited حرام  
 Prohibitions النواهي  
 Prophethood النبوة  
 Prophetic tradition الأحاديث النبوية  
 Punishment الحد (العقوبة)  
 Quotations شواهد  
 Poetic quotations شواهد من الشعر  
 Qur'ān and tradition المأثور (القرآن والسنة)  
 Qur'anic intertextuality تفسير القرآن بالقرآن  
 Qur'anic parables قصص القرآن  
 Qur'anic quotations شواهد من القرآن  
 Qur'anic studies علوم القرآن  
 Radio exegesis التفسير الإذاعي  
 Rational exegesis التفسير بالرأي  
 Reason العقل  
 Reason-based الدراية  
 Reasons for revelation أسباب النزول  
 Record of deeds صحيفة الأعمال  
 Recording التدوين  
 Recording phase مرحلة التدوين  
 Redaction تنقيح المخطوطة  
 Reflection التدبّر  
 Register of deeds صحيفة الأعمال  
 Rejecters الرافضة  
 Relative single حديث فرد نسبي  
 Reliable transmitter الثقة (محدث موثوق)  
 Religious authority المرجعية (عند الشيعة)  
 Religious community ملة

- Religious leader إمام  
 Religious extremism الغلو/ التطرف  
 Religious judge قاضي شرعي  
 Religious legal judgement فتوى ، إفتاء  
 Repent يتوب  
 Repentance التوبة  
 Report-based الرواية  
 Restricted meaning المعنى المُقيّد  
 Restricting the unrestricted تقييد المُطلق (حملُ المُطلق على المُقيّد)  
 Retaliation الإقصاص  
 Return الرجعة (عند الشيعة)  
 Revelatory text نص وحيي  
 Reward and punishment الثواب والعقاب  
 Rightly-guided caliphs الخلفاء الراشدون  
 Rites طقوس  
 Rituals of pilgrimage مناسك الحج  
 Ritual prayer دعاء
- Sacred mosque المسجد الحرام  
 Sarcasm التهكم ، السخرية  
 Sarcastic allegory الإستعارة التهكمية  
 Sasanians الساسانيون  
 Scholastic theology علم الكلام  
 Scholastic theologian المتكلم  
 School of law (thought) مذهب  
 Scientific exegesis التفسير العلمي  
 Seceders الخوارج  
 Sect طائفة  
 Sectarian طائفي  
 Sectarian exegesis التفسير الطائفي  
 Sectarian fanaticism التعصّب المذهبي  
 Seeing God رؤية الله  
 Self purification تزكية النفس  
 Semantic ambiguity مُشكل  
 Semantically ambiguous Qur'anic words غريب القرآن  
 Semantic ambiguity and paraphrase تبين العام (حملُ المُجمل على المُبين)  
 Semantically ambiguous Qur'anic expressions مُشكل القرآن  
 Semantic exegesis التفسير الدلالي  
 Semantic similarities (التراصف) الأشباه  
 Sensual world عالم جسي  
 Sermon خطبة دينية  
 Shi'i divine مجتهد  
 Shrine ضريح  
 Shroud الكفن ، يُكفن
- Single ḥadīth حديث فرد  
 Single source mode of reading قراءة من طريق الأحاد  
 Slander القذف  
 Smoothed path الموطأ  
 Solitary ḥadīth حديث آحاد  
 Sound chain of narration إسناد صحيح  
 Sound evidence دليل صحيح  
 Sound narration إسناد صحيح  
 Sound tradition حديث صحيح  
 Sound (commendable) personal الرأي المحمود  
 Sound views آراء صحيحة  
 Sound hypothetical opinion الرأي المحمود  
 Sources of doctrine أصولُ الفقه  
 Sources of jurisprudence أصولُ الفقه  
 Sources of Islamic law أصولُ الفقه  
 Sources of religion أصول الدين  
 Specific meaning المعنى الخاص  
 Specifying the generic تخصيص العام  
 Speech of God كلام الله  
 Spiritual leadership الإمامة  
 Spiritual world عالم روحياتي  
 Standard practice of the Prophet السنة النبوية  
 Stoning الرجم  
 Straight path الصراط المستقيم  
 Strange ḥadīth حديث غريب  
 Strong ḥadīth حديث عزيز  
 Subject to God's will (تحت المشيئة) تحت مشيئة الله (تحت المشيئة)  
 Successors التابعون  
 Sufi order طريقة صوفية  
 Sufi saint قطب صوفي ، ولي  
 Summary execution الإعدام فوراً (دون محاكمة)  
 Superior world عالم غلوي  
 Supposition إفتراض  
 Suspended judgement إرجاء الحكم  
 Synagogue معبد اليهود (الكينيس)  
 Synonymous expressions الأشباه (المتراصفات)  
 Synonymous meaning معنى مُترادف  
 Synonymy الأشباه (التراصف)  
 Synopsis exegesis التفسير الإجمالي / المختصر

Temporary marriage	زواج المتعة	Unit of prayer	ركعة واحدة
Tendencies	ميل	Unknown upright character	مجهول العدالة
Terminated	مقطوع	Unlawful	حرام
Testament	الوصية	Unlawful subsistence	الرزق الحرام
Thematic exegesis	التفسير الموضوعي	Unlawful sexual intercourse	الزنا
Thematic unit	الوحدة الموضوعية	Unrestricted meaning	المعنى المطلق
Time	الدهر (الزمان)	Unseen matters	الغيوب (الغيبات)
Time of the Hour	قيام الساعة	Unsound (objectionable) discovery	إستنباط مذموم
Time of ignorance	الجاهلية	Unsound interpretation	تأويل فاسد
Topical exegesis	تفسير لموضوع خاص (واحد)	Unsound views	آراء سقيمة (فاسدة)
Tradition	الحديث	Upholding predecessors' opinion	الإلتباع
Traditional exegesis	التفسير بالمأثور	Upright	عدل
Traditionalist	مُحدث (عالم بالحديث)	Waiting period	العدة
Transmission of ḥadīth	رواية الحديث	Weak tradition	حديث ضعيف
Transmission of ḥadīth through personal contact	رواية الحديث على الوجه	Weight of the evidence	المُرَجِّح
Transmitter	الراوي	Well-known ḥadīth	حديث مشهور
Transmitters of ḥadīth	رواة الحديث	Well-known mode of reading	قراءة مشهورة
Trial	فتنة	What is heard	السماع
Tribal solidarity	العصبيية القبليية	Wicked	فاسق ، فاجر
Tribulation	الفتنة	Will	الإرادة
Trustworthiness and discrediting	التوثيق والتضعيف	Wipe	يمسح على
Unanimous agreement	إجماع	Without asking how	بلا كيف
Unauthentic mode of reading	قراءة شاذة	Word order	علم المعاني
Uncreatedness of the Qur'ān	عدم خلق القرآن	World of sovereignty	عالم الملكوت
Union of existence	وحدة الوجود	Wrong-doer	فاسق (فاجر)
		Wrong-doing	الفجور ، الفسق
		Zoroastrian	زرادشتي
		Zoroastrianism	الزرادشتية

# Notes

## 1 Preamble to Qur'anic exegesis

- 1 The Khawārij, literally meaning rebels or dissidents are those who broke away, for theological and political reasons, from ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib (d.40/661) during the war with the governor of Syria, Muʿāwiyah (d.60/680), in what is known as the battle of Ṣiffīn in 37/657 (Gätje 1971, p. 18; al-Shahrastāni 1986, 1, pp. 114–122). The word Khawārij is derived from the Arabic verb *kharaja* (to go out, to secede). The first notable secession was that of a group of ʿAlī's soldiers at the battle of Ṣiffīn who objected to any form of arbitration at the battle and protested that the judgement should be left to God alone. Later on they have got more supporters in Kūfah. The Khawārij are divided into a number of sub-sects and believe that the grave sinner (*murtakib al-kabāʿir*) would go to hell, that non-Kharijites were disbelievers (*kāfir*) and could thus be killed, and that any upright believer, even a black slave, could become Imām, whether or not he descended from the Quraish tribe. The modern descendants of the Khawārij today are the Ibāḍīs. The Ibāḍiyyah, therefore, represents a moderate wing of the Khawārij. The founder of Ibāḍiyyah is ʿAbd Allāh b. Ibāḍ who was a first/seventh century Kharijite leader. The Ibāḍiyyah's theology is influenced by the Muʿtazilah, such as the doctrine of the creation of the Qurʾān, that the individual's deeds are created by God and that although the grave sinner is a monotheist, he or she is no longer a believer (*muwaḥḥid lā muʾmin*). There are Ibāḍīs today in Oman, East Africa and North Africa (Netton 1992, pp. 109, 145; al-Shahrastāni 1986, 1, pp. 134–135).
- 2 The word 'ḥadīth' is a nominalized noun (*maṣḍar*) and is thus morphologically derived from the verb *ḥaddatha* (to say something, speak) and has been exclusively employed for the 'sayings of the Prophet' which later on have been also known as the *sunnah* (the customary practice of Muḥammad that indicates his actions and sayings). Although both the Qurʾān and ḥadīth address similar exhortation lessons, their discourses are stylistically dissimilar (for details on stylistic and linguistic features of Qurʾanic discourse, see ch. 1 in Abdul-Raof 2004). There are 35 linguistic and 19 textual prototypical features of Qurʾanic Arabic (*ibid.*). For details on rhetorical features of Qurʾanic discourse, see ch. 12 in Abdul-Raof 2003. For more details on ḥadīth, see [Chapter 2, Sections 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5 and 2.6](#) of the present book.
- 3 The *isnād* (chain of authorities) provides the name of the eyewitness of the actual event, the person to whom he or she related the event, the person to whom this transmitter (*muḥaddith*) related the *matn* (actual text of the ḥadīth) and so forth until the ḥadīth was recorded (Berg 2000, p. 7).
- 4 Traditional Qurʾanic exegesis is referred to as *al-tafsīr bil-maʿthūr* which is the first school of exegesis that started during the lifetime of Muḥammad. The major sources are Qurʾanic intertextuality, prophetic ḥadīths and companions' views. This school of Qurʾanic exegesis represents mainstream, that is, orthodox, Islam and does not allow

rational, that is, personal hypothetical, opinions to be expressed with regards to the elucidation of the Qur'ān.

- 5 Jewish anecdotes are referred to in Arabic as al-isrā'iliyyāt which is the plural of isrā'iliyyah and is related to the Children of Israel (banū isrā'īl). Jewish anecdotes are folklore details influenced by the Judeo-Christian milieu. According to muslim exegetical sources, the word Israel (which in Arabic is isrā'īl) was the name for the Prophet Ya'qūb (Jacob) who is the father of the Prophet Yūsuf (Joseph). Jewish anecdotes represent the exegetical views of both the Jews and the Christians on specific Qur'anic subject matters. These views, however, are often of the converts from these two faiths. Jewish anecdotes are one of the exegetical techniques in Qur'anic exegesis. As a tool, Jewish anecdotes are employed by both schools of exegesis: traditional, that is, al-tafsīr bil-ma'thūr, and hypothetical opinion, that is, al-tafsīr bil-ra'i. Muḥammad gave permission to his companions to ask the People of the Book (ahl al-kitāb), especially the Jews, about clarifications regarding certain Qur'anic expressions and parables (qaṣaṣ al-anbiyā'), but he also warned them not to take their views completely for granted. However, Muḥammad left this matter to the companion's common sense. It is worthwhile to note that Jewish anecdotes have acquired a negative connotation in Qur'anic exegesis. Thus, a work of tafsīr which is heavily dependant on these anecdotes is not taken as a reliable tafsīr source. Jewish anecdotes are classified into
  - (i) those that are true,
  - (ii) those that are untrue and
  - (iii) those that are in between maskūtun 'anhu (literally meaning 'to be quiet about them'), that is, neither true nor untrue, but the exegete is allowed to quote the 'in-between' Jewish anecdotes.
- 6 al-tafsīr bil-ra'i (hypothetical opinion or rational exegesis) is the second major school of Qur'anic exegesis which subsumes mainstream and some non-mainstream exegetes. The exegetical views of this school are primarily hinged on the exegete's personal hypothetical opinion. Therefore, it is referred to as rational or hypothetical, that is, personal opinion, school of exegesis. This school of Qur'anic exegesis involves many ramifications (see Figure 2 in Section 1.2 for more details on the dichotomy between the two major schools of Qur'anic exegesis).
- 7 For more details on different political and theological exegetical matters, see Chapter 3, Sections 3.2 and 3.3.
- 8 There are two kinds of mode of reading: multiple source and irregular modes of reading. For all schools of Qur'anic exegesis, the Qur'anic text is that which is entirely hinged upon the multiple source mode of reading (qirā'ah mutawātirah) which is regarded as most authentic and common among the Qur'ān recitors, and most importantly, the mode of reading that has been passed on from one recitor to another. However, the irregular mode of reading (qirā'ah shāhdhah) is a form of reading which is adopted by one companion only; thus, it is ad hoc and may be rejected by other schools of exegesis. The irregular mode of reading is a form of within-the-text exegetical information (qirā'ah 'ala al-tafsīr) that has been adopted by some companions but failed to acquire recognition and has not been passed on from one generation of recitors to another. For this reason, the irregular mode of reading does not constitute a Qur'anic form; that is, it is rejected and is considered as a non-Qur'ān because it accepts lexical addition (i.e. the use of an exegetical word or periphrastic details, that is, the use of an expression to explain something in a given āyah). It is also important to note that all the irregular modes of reading are abrogated by the 'Uthmānic master codex, they are not allowed to be used in any prayer and they cannot be accepted as evidence to substantiate any jurisprudential matter.
- 9 There have been divergent exegetical views on muḥkam and mutashābih and some of them are as follows:

- (i) That all the Qur'ān is mutashābih. This is based on Q39:23, 'allāhu nazzala aḥsana al-ḥadīthi kitāban mutashābihan mathāni [God has sent down the best statement: a consistent Book wherein is reiteration],' which signifies that all the āyahs, throughout the Qur'ān, are identical to each other in terms of (a) theological significance, (b) eloquence, (c) rhetorical value, (d) linguistic and stylistic elevation, (e) inimitability and (f) spiritual therapy.
- (ii) That all the Qur'ān is muḥkam and is based on Q11:1, 'kitābun uḥkimat āyātuhū thumma fuṣṣilat [This is a Book whose āyahs are perfected and then presented in detail],' which signifies that all the āyahs are (a) inimitable; (b) intertextually related, that is, explain each other and (c) do not contradict each other.
- (iii) That the Qur'ān is a blend of both muḥkam and mutashābih āyahs. This is supported by Q3:7, 'minhu āyātun muḥkamātun hunna ummu al-kitābi wa'ukharu mutashābihāt [There are āyahs in the Qur'ān that are precise which are the foundation of the Book, and other āyahs are unspecific].' This is the āyah from which the controversy over the muḥkam and mutashābih has stemmed.
- (iv) The mutashābih represents theological matters whose meanings are exclusive to God only, such as (a) the day of judgement (qiyām al-sā'ah); (b) the coming out of the Cheat, that is, the Charlatan (khurūj al-dajjāl); (c) names and attributes of God (asmā' waṣifāt allāh); (d) theologically sensitive āyahs that involve expressions such as the seeing of God, the rivers in paradise and the size, taste, and form of fruits in paradise and (e) cryptic letters at the beginning of some sūrah (al-aḥruf al-muqaṭṭa'ah or al-muqaṭṭa'āt). This exegetical view is based on Q3:7, 'wamā ya'lamu ta'wilahū illa allāh [No one knows its true interpretation except God].' The muḥkam, however, is what is known to exegetes either through their surface meaning or through personal hypothetical opinion.
- (v) That the mutashābih is what is ambiguous to the exegete, while the muḥkam is what is clear and self-explanatory.
- (vi) That the mutashābih is whatever that requires more than one meaning, while the muḥkam is whatever that requires one meaning only.
- (vii) That the meaning of the mutashābih can be justified by the exegete such as why the number of units in daily prayers is different, and why do we fast in Ramaḍān rather than in other months of the year. However, the meaning of the muḥkam is known and the exegete can provide a reason for a given meaning.
- (viii) That the mutashābih is semantically non-autonomous, that is, whose meaning is dependant upon other āyahs. The muḥkam, however, enjoys semantic autonomy and does not require reference to other āyahs.
- (ix) That the meaning of the mutashābih can only be derived through hypothetical opinion, while the meaning of the muḥkam is directly derived from a given circumstance of revelation.
- (x) That the mutashābih āyahs occur elsewhere in the Qur'ān with some minor linguistic or stylistic variation, while the muḥkam āyah occurs only once and is not repeated again.
- (xi) That the mutashābih includes (a) the repeated stories of the Prophets, (b) stories of past nations and (c) similitudes (al-amthāl). What constitutes the mutashābih features in these stories are (a) the words that have different shades of meaning when they occur in different stories, (b) when the same story is narrated elsewhere in the Qur'ān with a different style and word order and (c) the words that have similar shades of meaning when they occur in different places of the same story. However, the muḥkam includes (a) obligatory duties (al-fara'id), (b) reward and (c) punishment.
- (xii) That the mutashābih includes the abrogated āyahs (al-mansūkh), while the muḥkam includes what is legal or illegal (al-ḥalāl wal-ḥarām).
- (xiii) That the mutashābih includes the āyahs that are linguistically and stylistically similar but are semantically dissimilar, while the muḥkam āyahs are those which do not enjoy these linguistic and stylistic phenomena.

- (xiv) That God's attribute expressions (ṣifāt allāh) are muḥkam because they can be provided with exegetical details. In other words, an attribute can be given a semantic analysis. However, at the same time, God's attributes are considered as mutashābih because exegetes do not know about 'the how' (al-kaifiyyah) of each expression. For instance, exegetes know the semantic details of God's attributes such as the attribute of al-majī' (coming) in 'wajā'a rabbuka wal-malaku ṣaffan ṣaffā [Your Lord has come and the angels, rank upon rank]' (Q89:22); the attribute of al-istiwā' (God establishing Himself above the throne), as in 'thumma istawā 'alā al-ʿarsh [Then God established Himself above the Throne]' (Q7:54, Q10:3, Q13:2); 'al-raḥmānu 'alā al-ʿarshi istawā [The Most Merciful who is above the throne established]' (Q20:5) and the attribute of yadd (hand), as in 'yadu allāhi fawqa aidihim [The hand of God is over their hands]' (Q48:10). Thus, these attributes are muḥkam. However, exegetes are unable to unravel how the coming of God will be like (i.e. how God will walk), how did the istiwā' (i.e. the establishment on the throne) take place and how does the hand of God look like. Thus, although the Arabic lexicon can provide a semantic definition of an attribute of God, it can be of no assistance to the exegete as to 'how' an attribute actually functions or looks like.

For more details on theological mutashābihāt, see n. 4 of [Chapter 4](#). For more details on linguistic mutashābihāt, see the manuscript *Tafsīr Mutashābihāt al-Qurʿān* (author unknown; d.1161/1748), Istanbul, Veliyyüddin Ef.

- 10 The Shīʿah have developed their own legal system based on ḥadīths transmitted and authenticated by Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (d.148/765) and other Shīʿi Imāms (cf. Watt 1990, p. 116). The Ismāʿīlis (al-ismāʿīliyyah) are also adherents of Shīʿism. However, they believe in the imāmate of Ismāʿīl b. Jaʿfar, the eldest son of the Shīʿi Imām Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq; that is, they acknowledge seven principal Imāms after the death of Muḥammad. The Ismāʿīlis are also known by other names such as al-bāṭiniyyah, al-qarāmiṭah and al-mazdakiyyah (al-Shahrastāni 1986, 1, p. 192). The term al-bāṭiniyyah, however, is related to Qurʿanic exegesis since it refers to hypothetical opinion which the Ismāʿīliyyah believe in. Also, al-bāṭiniyyah is derived from al-bāṭin, that is, the esoteric (underlying, hidden or allegorical) meaning as opposed to exoteric (surface, literal or non-allegorical) meaning. In terms of intertextuality between ḥadīth and the Qurʿān in Qurʿanic exegesis, the Shīʿah employ only the ḥadīths which are narrated on the authority of their own Imāms and are deeply sceptical about the majority of the ḥadīth literature adduced by other mainstream and non-mainstream exegetes.
- 11 After Iran embraced Islam, the dominant schools of thought were the Sunni Ḥanafī and Shāfiʿi. Shīʿism began to emerge after the tenth/sixteenth century and Shīʿite theology began to enjoy political weight at the expense of dramatic Sunni ebb. Shīʿism in Iran had become a Safavid political mechanism encouraged by the Safavid rulers to counter the Ottoman Empire. Imber (1979), for instance, brings to our attention the Ottoman Shīʿi sects who were persecuted during the second half of the tenth/sixteenth century. This marks the theological and political cleavage between the Ottoman state and the Safavid state. The Shīʿis were executed by the Sunni Ottoman authorities on charges of heretics and cursing the rightly guided caliphs Abu Bakr al-Ṣiddīq, ʿUmar and ʿUthmān. For Imber (1979, p. 272), the death penalty was not invariable, particularly in cases which involved large groups of heretics. During the early years of the first decade of the twenty-first century, sectarian differences surfaced afresh in Iraq after the end of Saddam Hussein's rule in March 2003. In Iraq, 2006 marks the beginning of a new sectarian twist. After the blowing up of the 1200-year-old Shīʿi shrine in the Iraqi city of Sāmarrā' on Wednesday, 22 February 2006, sectarian violence between the Shīʿis and Sunnis claimed more than 130 lives in the first two days, among them 47 Shīʿis; across Iraq, 180 Sunni mosques burnt out, 10 Sunni mosque imāms killed and 15 abducted.
- 12 The commentary *Tanwīr al-Miqbās min Tafsīr Ibn ʿAbbās* ascribed to Ibn ʿAbbās is essentially a lexicographical work which consists of simple glosses to the Qurʿanic text.

It is basically an intra-lingual Arabic translation of the Qurʾān which aims to make difficult Qurʾanic expressions accessible to the reader and is devoid of textual and grammatical analysis (cf. Rippin 1988, p. 164).

- 13 During the third century after al-Shāfiʿi (d.204/820), two scholars, building on the work of predecessors, produced what became standard collections of ‘sound’ or authentic ḥadīths. The books, both entitled al-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaḥīḥ (the sound collection), and usually known as ‘the two Ṣaḥīḥs’, were by al-Bukhārī (d.194/810–256/870) and Muslim (d.202/817–261/875) respectively. Along with these two collections, four other collections came to be regarded by scholars as specially reliable and are called Sunan. They are those by Ibn Mājah (d.272/886), Abu Dawūd (d.274/888), al-Nasāʿi (d.303/915) and al-Tirmidhi (d.292/904). The four Sunans, as they are often called, and the two Ṣaḥīḥs are known to Muslim scholars as ‘the six books’ and are arranged in chapters according to the questions of law involved (Watt 1973, p. 259). It is worthwhile to note that the Shīʿi exegetes do not recognize these ‘six books’ as sources of authentic ḥadīths.
- 14 Kamali (2005, 66ff) provides an interesting account of ḥadīth forgery and gives some political reasons for this phenomenon such as the political differences between ʿAli and Abu Bakr, ʿAli and Muʿāwiyah, ʿAli and ʿĀʾishah, as well as the political cleavages between ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Zubair and ʿAbd al-Malik b. Marwān, and between the Umayyads and the Abbasids. Kamali (2005, p. 67) claims that numerous fabricated ḥadīths have been recorded in condemnation of Muʿāwiyah such as ‘When you see Muʿāwiyah on my pulpit, kill him. On their part, the Umayyad supporters have forged their own ḥadīths such as ‘The trusted ones are three: I (i.e. Muḥammad), Gabriel, and Muʿāwiyah.’ As for the Abbasids, they also have fabricated political ḥadīths like ‘When the caliphate reaches banu al-ʿAbbās, it will not leave them until they surrender it to Jesus the son of Mary.’ Racial, tribal and linguistic fanaticism is another context in which ḥadīth has been fabricated (Kamali 2005, p. 68). Thus, we encounter forged ḥadīths on the superiority of the Arabs over non-Arabs. The forgers of ḥadīth are mainly the story-tellers and preachers who make up stories and attribute them to the Prophet. People who want to please or flatter their overlords also forged ḥadīths on the virtues of certain varieties of food such rice, lentils, aubergines (Kamali 2005, p. 69).
- 15 For more details on the requirements of ḥadīth authenticity, see [Chapter 2, Section 2.7](#).
- 16 It is worthwhile to note that the notion of naskh (abrogation) has been linked to the compilation of the Qurʾān. Different Western scholars have advanced distinct views on how the Qurʾān has come to assume its present shape. For Burton, for instance, the final text of the Qurʾān has been produced by Muḥammad himself. Wansbrough, however, argues that the final text of the Qurʾān emerged a century or more after the death of Muḥammad. Both Burton and Wansbrough have linked the emergence of the final text of the Qurʾān with the notion of naskh (Powers 1988, p. 117).
- 17 Wansbrough (1970, p. 247) has rejected the authenticity of the old tafsīr works. His premise is based on the use of poetic quotations (shawāhid) from profane literature as an exegetical tool to explain difficult Qurʾanic expressions. In his view, poetry, as an exegetical device has not been employed by early exegetes of the formative phase such as Muqātil (d.150/767), al-Kalbi (d.146/763) and Sufyān al-Thawri (d.161/777). However, Gilliot (2002, p. 104), Gätje (1971, p. 33) and Boullata (1990) oppose Wansbrough’s argument and claim that employment of shawāhid by exegetes go back to Ibn ʿAbbās and his students.
- 18 It should be noted that wujūh works (al-wujūh wal-naẓāʾir) are not restricted to Qurʾanic exegesis. There are wujūh works that deal with poetry and the multiple senses of poetic expressions, wujūh works that deal with Arabic language in general, wujūh works that deal with Arabic grammar, as well as wujūh works that deal with jurisprudential matters.

## 2 Exegesis and Ḥadīth

- 1 Although Muḥammad discouraged the companions to write down his ḥadīths to avoid confusing them with the Qurʾān, there are reports that some of his companions wrote

down some ḥadīths for their personal use without a systematic order or thematic classification. The documentation of ḥadīth has become a preoccupation of Muslim scholars as concerns have increased over memory, error and inaccuracy in ḥadīth. As time passed, the chain of authorities has become longer and details of names, places and dates therein become burdensome for anyone's memory. However, during the successors' phase, ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (d.101/719) assigns officially the task of writing down the ḥadīth to Abu Bakr Muḥammad b. Ḥazm (d.120/737), the governor of Madīnah. The same task has also been designated to Muḥammad b. Muslim b. Shihāb al-Zuhri (d.124/742) of Madīnah who is the teacher of Imām Mālik (d.179/795). Imām Mālik has also shown interest in the collection of ḥadīth and his *Muwattaʿa* has become a well-known ḥadīth collection work. The extensive ḥadīth collections have been later accomplished during the second/eighth and third/ninth centuries (al-Khaṭīb 1963; al-Sibāʿī 1978; Kamali 2005, 22ff).

### 3 The politics of exegesis

- 1 According to Schmidtke (2006, p. 108), Muʿtazili intellectual thought was enthusiastically adopted by Shīʿi and Ibāḍī theologians, Karaite Jews and Christians. The impact of Muʿtazili doctrines on the twelver Shīʿis began to be felt during the second half of the third/ninth century. For instance, the Shīʿi scholar al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā (d.436/1044) adopted the Muʿtazili doctrines of Abu Hāshim al-Jibāʿī (d.321/933). Thus, the fusion of Shīʿism and Muʿtazilism reached its final shape (ibid., p. 109).
- 2 The doctrine of qadar is called al-qadariyyah (Qadarism) and the person who believes in qadar is called qadari. The qadari (Qadarite) is the one who believes that both good and bad qadar come from God and submits totally to it (al-Shahrastani 1986, 1, p. 43). For Thomson (1950, p. 208), the cradle of the Qadarite movement was Christian country, Iraq and Syria. The first to profess free will in Islam was a man of Baṣrah, Maʿbad al-Juhaini and his immediate successor is said to have been a man of Damascus, Abu Marwān Jailān, crucified by the caliph Hishām (d.105–125/724–743) at the gate of his capital.
- 3 Annabelle Böttcher (2003) provides an interesting discussion of the Sunni and Shīʿi clerical networks, their pyramidal shape and the social, religious and political role of the Islamic network leaders in the Middle East. The main duty of the network leader is to elucidate the shariʿah, educate his network followers and guide them how to apply the shariʿah in their daily life. Böttcher (ibid., p. 43) also argues that the differences between Sunni and Shīʿi conceptions of political and religious authority seem to have influenced network structures inasmuch as the charismatic authority of Shīʿi network leaders is linked to their position in the official Shīʿi religious hierarchy. In recent Shīʿi history, religious power merged with political power. The same applies to Sunni non-Sufi network leaders. Confrontation has also emerged in the Middle East such as Lebanon where in Ṣaidā, a coastal town in the south of Lebanon, the Naqshabandi network leader Shaikh Saʿad regularly clashes with the orthodox Sunni network leaders. These confrontations are mere power struggle over zones of influence where two expansionist conceptions of Islamic mission, the daʿwah, collide. The Sufi, that is, Naqshabandi, practices such as the birthday celebrations for the Prophet have also created many problems with mainstream Sunni currents in the United States. The Naqshabandiyyah is a Sufi order named after Bahāʾ al-Dīn Naqshaband (d.791/1389) and his Sufi order is widely active throughout the world today, including the United Kingdom (Bradford and Leeds), where they also practise annually the birthday celebrations for the Prophet. In recent years, they have started organizing marches through the Yorkshire cities of Leeds and Bradford in the United Kingdom.
- 4 It is probably impossible now to determine when the doctrine that the Qurʾān was created first held *explicitly*. Statements that it was held by theologians of the first/seventh and the second/eighth century must be accepted with great reserve. This doctrine is

linked to Jahm b. Ṣafwān (d.128/746) and later on the Jahmiyyah non-mainstream sect. The earliest person who is reported to have held that the Qurʾān was created was al-Jaʿd b. Dirham (d.124/741), who was put to death by the caliph Hishām (d.105–125/723–742). al-Jaʿd b. Dirham was the teacher of Jahm. al-Jaʿd b. Dirham was said to have been a Manichaean and to have been the first both to take views from the Sabaeans and philosophers and to hold the doctrine of taʿṭīl (the denial of human or mundane attributes to God; al-Shahrastāni 1986, 1, p. 86). The notion of taʿṭīl literally means the stripping from God of everything anthropomorphic. The notion of taʿṭīl signifies that God is unique and that nothing resembles Him. No attribute might belong to God which belonged to man. While the Jahmiyyah denied the human attribute to God (taʿṭīl), Muqāṭil b. Sulaimān (d.150/767), in an attempt to refute the Jahmiyyah’s argument, exaggerated God’s attributes and became an anthropomorphist; thus, Muqāṭil had laid down the foundation of anthropomorphism (tajsīm and tashbīh).

The assertion that al-Jaʿd b. Dirham derived the doctrine of the Qurʾān’s creation from a Jew called Labīd may be merely slander. For the Jahmiyyah, God is characterized above all by Divinity (al-ulūhiyyah). Thus, the method of taʿṭīl leads to an abstract, bare and featureless conception of God, which robs the religious consciousness of much that is precious to it (Watt 1950, p. 31). Like the Muʿtazilah, the Jahmiyyah hold the view that God’s knowledge, like the Qurʾān, is created. The other belief of both the Muʿtazilah and the Jahmiyyah is that God is not seated on the throne which seemed to them to involve spatial restriction and a limitation of God’s being. In accordance with this, they asserted that when Moses heard a voice, he did not hear the speech of God or God speaking – the infinite God could not be restricted to the compass of finite words – what Moses heard was merely a speech created by God (Watt 1950, pp. 29, 31–32; Wensinck 1932, pp. 77–79). This, of course, has a significant implication on the exegesis of Q7:143. This āyah involves two theological beliefs: the speech of God and whether God will be seen in the hereafter. For non-mainstream exegetes such as the Shīʿah, the Ismāʿīliyyah, the Ibādiyyah, the Muʿtazilah and the Jahmiyyah, God will not be seen in the hereafter even by the believers.

5 Among the basic points of the Rāfiḍi doctrine are

- (i) the identity of the rightful Imām;
- (ii) the accusation of unbelief against most of the companions;
- (iii) the rejection of Abu Bakr, ʿUmar and ʿUthmān as legitimate successors to Muḥammad and
- (iv) the rejection of ijtihād (the independent judgement of the jurist in legal matters; cf. Watt 1973, pp. 160–161).

Some supporters of ʿAli, however, have gone to the extreme. For instance, Bayān b. Samʿān al-Nahdi (lived in Iraq after 100/718) was an extreme supporter of ʿAli b. Abi Ṭālib and claimed the divinity (ulūhiyyah) of ʿAli. ʿAbd Allāh al-Qasri murdered Bayān due to his extreme Shīʿism and burned his body (Shākir 1988, p. 76). Exaggerated Shīʿi views can also be traced to the Fāṭimids (al-Fāṭimiyyūn) (d.297–567/909–1171) who ruled in North Africa and in Egypt. The Fāṭimids issued an order that prohibited the sale of al-malākhyā (a vegetarian meal from a vegetable called Jew’s mallow [corchorus olitorius]) because Muʿāwiyah used to like it. The same order also prohibited people to eat al-jarjīr (watercress) because ʿĀʾishah used to eat it (Farahāt 1997, p. 28).

- 6 The manipulation of religion by politicians has also found its way in modern American and British politics. To justify his invasion of Iraq in March 2003, the American President George W. Bush claimed in 2005 that God had ordered him to do so. Reading from the same song sheet, the British Prime Minister Tony Blair announced on Friday, 3 March 2006, that he went to war on Iraq with the USA because his decision ‘is guided by his Christian faith . . . and that the judgement is made by God’.

- 7 In Islamic law, the expression *taʿzīr* is a nominalized noun derived from the verb *ʿazzara* (to smack hard). In Qurʾanic exegesis, however, the verb (*ʿazzara*) means ‘to support’, as in Q5:12, Q7:157 and Q48:9. Censure (*al-taʿzīr*) in Islamic law is a form of punishment given by the judge rebuking the person who commits an illegal act that does not require any category of *ḥadd* (punishment). However, *taʿzīr* is issued not only through verbal rebuke but also through smacking or imprisonment (al-Jazīri 1972, 5, pp. 320–321).
- 8 According to Muslim scholars, the notion of *farḍ kifāyah* (communal obligation) refers to any obligatory duty which should be undertaken by a representative number of mature Muslim individuals. When it is performed by a given number of individuals, the rest of the Muslim community are not considered as sinful and are excused for not performing it, such as raising the call for prayers (*adhān*), the *ʿid* prayers, washing the deceased, praying for him or her and burying him or her. The antonym of communal obligation is an individual obligation (*farḍ ʿain*). An individual obligation is defined as an obligatory duty incumbent upon every individual mature Muslim, such as the five daily prayers, *zakāt*, *hajj*, respect of parents and truthfulness (al-Ashqar 1997, pp. 36–37; Netton 1997, p. 80).

#### 4 Dichotomy between *tafsīr* and *taʿwīl*

- 1 For more details on *ḥadīth*, its collection, transmission and classification under one of many categories of trustworthiness, see [Chapter 2, Section 2.2](#).
- 2 Denotative meaning (*al-maʿnā al-qāmūsi*) is a term used in semantics as part of classification of types of meaning. It involves the relationship between a word as a linguistic unit and the non-linguistic entities to which it refers. It is also called referential meaning. It is the dictionary definition of a given word, for instance, the denotation of lion by its dictionary definition (*asad*). The antonym of ‘denotative meaning’ is ‘connotative meaning’ (*al-maʿnā al-ishāri*). Thus, the connotation, that is, connotative meaning, of lion might include bravery (*shajāʿah*) and strength (*quwwah*; cf. Crystal 1983, p. 104). Denotative meaning is also related to non-allegorical, that is, exoteric, signification, while connotative meaning refers to allegorical, that is, esoteric, signification.
- 3 In Islamic law, the notion of *farḍ kifāyah* (communal obligation) refers to any obligatory duty which can be performed by a representative number of mature Muslim individuals. For more details, see n. 8 in [Chapter 3](#).
- 4 Although the Qurʾān is described as entirely *mutashābih* by Q39:23, ‘*allāhu nazzala aḥsana al-ḥadīthi kitāban mutashābihan* [God has sent down the best statement: a consistent Book wherein is reiteration],’ this meaning does not, however, mean ‘ambiguous’ in this *āyah*. It signifies here that the Qurʾān consists of ‘*āyahs* that are identical in value to each other, intertextually referring to each other, logically arranged, consistent with and do not contradict each other’ (Ibn Kathīr 1993, 4, p. 52; al-Qurṭubi 1997, 15, p. 218). The other meaning of the expression *mutashābih* refers to ‘ambiguous *āyahs*.’ In this sense, the notion of *mutashābihāt* can be divided into two categories:
- (i) Theological *mutashābihāt* which are concerned with Qurʾanic notions like the names and attributes of Allāh, the time of the Hour, the conditions of paradise, the conditions of hell fire and the significations of cryptic letters.
  - (ii) Stylistic *mutashābihāt* which are any two or more *āyahs* that display stylistic and linguistic similarities. As the exegete is expected to be armed with the expertise of Arabic linguistics, the interpretation of such *āyahs* is permissible. For instance, Q23:83, ‘*laqad wuʿidnā naḥnu waʿābāʾunā hādihā* [We have been promised this, we and our forefathers],’ and Q27:68, ‘*laqad wuʿidnā hādihā naḥnu waʿābāʾunā* [We have been promised this, we and our forefathers],’ are stylistically similar and, therefore, represent stylistic *mutashābihāt*. The only linguistic distinction between them is the occurrence of the demonstrative pronoun *hādihā* (this) at the

end of Q23:83 and in the middle of Q27:68. It is worthwhile to note that English fails to mirror the linguistic distinction between stylistically similar āyahs. For further details and examples on stylistic mutashābihāt, see Abdul-Raof 2004. For more details on the divergent exegetical views with regards to muḥkam and mutashābih, see n. 9 of [Chapter 1](#).

- 5 The antonym of the expression al-ra'yu al-maḥmūd (sound [commendable] personal opinion) is al-ra'yu al-madhīm (unsound [objectionable] personal opinion) which is entirely based upon the personal judgement of a given exegete without relying on any chain of narration from the Prophet, his companions or the early successors. It features in many schools of exegesis and is adopted to back up an exegete's theological or political position. For a detailed discussion and examples, see [Section 4.3.1](#) of the present chapter.
- 6 For more details on Jewish anecdotes, see n. 5 of [Chapter 1](#).
- 7 The Arabic expression al-Khandaq means 'the ditch or the trench'. After the battles of Badr in 2/624 and Uhud in 3/625, al-Khandaq was the third major confrontation between the Prophet in Madinah and his enemies from Makkah. To protect Madinah from the encroaching Makkans in 5/627 with 10,000 men, Muḥammad, on the advice of Salmān al-Fārisi, had a trench dug to the North of the oasis. The siege lasted about two weeks and, despite several assaults, the trench successfully guarded the oasis of Madinah and the besiegers retired (Ali 1983, p. 1100; Netton 1997, p. 145).
- 8 Conceptual or thematic chaining refers to the exegetical approach referred to as 'ilm al-munāsbah which is concerned with leitmotifs that are conceptually linked. In other words, it accounts for the intertextual relationships between different āyahs whose leitmotifs are similar and which occur in the same or in different sūrah. Thus, it is an exegetical approach that falls within the school of linguistic exegesis. The first exegete who introduced conceptual chaining in Qur'anic exegesis was Qatādah of the Baṣrah school. Although Qatādah referred to the notion of consonance in exegesis, this valuable methodical approach in linguistic exegesis remained in a rudimentary shape until Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzi (d.604/1207), al-Ḥarālī (d.638/1240) and Burhān al-Dīn al-Biqā'ī (d.885/1480) managed to produce their tafsīr works which feature conceptual chaining. However, in terms of tafsīr genre, their tafsīr works are analytical.
- 9 For some exegetes, an āyah which involves majāz is like 'inna alladhīna yu'dhūna allāha warasūlahu [Those who hurt God and His Messenger]' (Q33:57). This view is represented by the Mu'tazili school of exegesis represented by al-Zamakhshari (d.538/1143; 1995, 3, pp. 541–542) which has also been echoed earlier by the theologian al-Jaṣṣāṣ (d.370/980; 1994, 3, p. 485). For al-Jaṣṣāṣ, the first object of the verb yu'dhi (to hurt) is ellipted which is implicitly understood as 'friends' (awliyā'); that is, the āyah should read 'inna alladhīna yu'dhūna (awliyā'a) allāhi warasūlahu [Those who hurt God's (friends) and His Messenger].' Thus, an esoteric meaning (allegorical) has been advanced (cf. Heinrichs 1992, pp. 258–270).
- 10 For al-Juwaini (d.419/1028–478/1085), commendable ta'wīl is referred to as ta'wīl maqbūl (acceptable ta'wīl; cf. al-<sup>c</sup>Akk 1986, p. 59).
- 11 The expression al-tafsīr bil-ma'thūr (traditional, mainstream exegesis) is one of the major schools of exegesis that is primarily based on Qur'anic intertextuality, and the views that are derived from prophetic tradition, the companions and the early successors.
- 12 For al-Juwaini, objectionable ta'wīl is referred to as ta'wīl ghair sā'igh (not permissible ta'wīl, that is, unacceptable; cf. al-<sup>c</sup>Akk 1986, p. 59).

## 5 Evolution of exegesis

- 1 The day of immolation (yawm al-naḥr) is on the 10th of dhu al-ḥijjah which is the last month of the Muslim lunar calendar and during which pilgrimage takes place.
- 2 This is referred to in Arabic as al-isrā'īliyyāt which is the plural of isrā'īliyyah and is related to the Children of Israel (banū isrā'īl). According to the Qur'ān, isrā'īl (Israel) is

- the Prophet Ya<sup>c</sup>qūb (Jacob) who is the father of the Prophet Yūsuf (Joseph). For more details, see n. 5 of [Chapter 1](#).
- 3 It should be pointed out that Qur'anic intertextuality, 'tafsir al-qur'ān bil-qur'ān' (the exegesis of the Qur'ān by the Qur'ān) is directly related to the notion of abrogating and abrogated (al-nāsikh wal-mansūkh). The cases of Qur'anic intertextuality that are related to this notion are (a), (b) and (c).
  - 4 The process of recording Qur'anic exegesis has started in the first quarter of the second/eighth century, that is, during the successors' phase. The recording of hadith, however, was limited to writing down of hadiths which were in oral circulation during the early years of the second/eighth century.
  - 5 Although most of the companions have experienced and witnessed the revelation, they have expressed distinct opinions with regard to some of the reasons for revelation, as in *laisu sawa'* (they are not the same, Q3:113) to which different circumstances of revelation are given by Ibn 'Abbās and Ibn Mas'ūd. For Ibn 'Abbās, the revelation of this āyah is related to a group of unbelievers who accepted Islam and their tribe got very annoyed. Ibn Mas'ūd, however, attributes the revelation of this āyah to the late arrival of the Prophet to the mosque for the evening prayer while the companions were waiting for him (al-Wāḥidi 2000, p. 66). For more examples, see al-Wāḥidi (2000).
  - 6 For Muslim scholars, the authentic version of the Qur'ān is that which is entirely hinged upon the multiple-source mode of reading. In other words, a mode of reading of a given Qur'anic expression that is most common and is adopted by the majority of the companions is regarded as a well-known mode of reading. Since it is passed on from one reciter to another, it is referred to as a multiple source mode of reading. Any other mode of reading that is adopted by one companion only is labelled as an irregular mode of reading. The irregular mode is a form of within-the-text exegetical information (qirā'ah 'ala al-tafsīr) that has been adopted by some companions. For Muslim scholars, this mode of reading does not constitute a Qur'anic form; that is, it is rejected and is considered as a non-Qur'an. The irregular mode of reading takes the form of lexical addition, that is, the use of an exegetical word, or periphrastic details, that is, the use of an expression to explain something in a given āyah. It is also important to note that
    - (i) all the irregular modes of reading were abrogated by the 'Uthmānic master codex,
    - (ii) they were not allowed to be used in any prayer and
    - (iii) they could not be accepted as evidence to substantiate any jurisprudential matter.
  - 7 For more details about the dichotomy between marfū<sup>c</sup>, mawqūf and maqṭū<sup>c</sup> exegetical views, see [Figure 1](#) in [Chapter 1, Section 1.2](#).
  - 8 It is worthwhile to note that the expression 'schools of Qur'anic exegesis' we have employed in this particular section should not be confused with the technical expression that is also referred to as 'schools of Qur'anic exegesis'. The subtle distinction between the two expressions is that, in this section, the expression 'schools of Qur'anic exegesis' refers to the formative teaching institutions, so to speak, where the companion exegetes used to teach their students in various places and countries. Most importantly, one needs to realize that the sources of exegesis for these schools established by the companions are mainly the same which are Qur'anic intertextuality and the tradition, and that the approach adopted by the companions' schools of exegesis is identical in many respects. However, when the latter expression 'schools of Qur'anic exegesis' is employed as the title of this book or in subsequent chapters, it refers to the various approaches adopted by the mainstream and non-mainstream exegetes, the different sources relied on, the different exegetical linguistic and jurisprudential tools adopted by various exegetes throughout the birth and development of Qur'anic exegesis. Therefore, the latter expression 'schools of Qur'anic exegesis' also signifies the variegated orientations that have coloured Qur'anic exegetical works, classical and modern.

- 9 The word *masrūq* is morphologically derived from the verb *saraqa* (to steal, to rob). Thus, *masrūq* is the passive participle (*ism al-maf'ūl*) of the verb *saraqa* which means stolen. When the exegete *Masruq* was a child, he was stolen and then found and returned to his parents. Thus, he was nicknamed as *Masrūq*.
- 10 It is worthwhile to note that the recording of the prophetic tradition (*al-sunnah* or *al-ḥadīth*) has begun at the end of the first/seventh century. Therefore, the recording of Qur'anic exegesis which is part of the *ḥadīth* has in fact flourished during the reign of the Umayyad caliph 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz (d.101/720; known as 'Umar II). The recording and collection of *ḥadīth* material in an official manner have also flourished during his reign. Abu Bakr Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Ḥazm (d.120/737) and Muḥammad Ibn Muslim Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhri (d.124/742) are among those who compiled *ḥadīths* at 'Umar's behest (cf. Berg 2000, p. 7). Other examples of recorded Qur'anic exegesis include that of Ibn 'Abbās (d.68/687), who dictated his exegetical views to his student Mujāhid b. Jabr (d.104/722); Sa'īd b. Jubair, who wrote a booklet (*ṣaḥīfah*) of exegesis to the caliph 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān (d.86/705); Abu al-'Āliyah al-Riyāhī (d.90/708), who wrote an extended booklet of exegesis based on the views of his teacher Ubai b. Ka'b (d.20/640); the leader of Mu'tazilites, 'Amru b. 'Ubaid al-Baṣri (d.143/760), who wrote his exegesis based on his teacher al-Ḥasan al-Baṣri (d.110/728); 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Suddi (d.127/744) who is said to have written a Qur'anic exegesis and Zaid b. Aslam (d.136/753).
- 11 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz, who is also known as the fifth caliph, has assumed his caliphate in 99/717. During his reign, he ordered the collection and recording of *ḥadīth* without exegesis. Thus, Qur'anic exegesis studies have become an independent discipline of *ḥadīth*.
- 12 It is worthwhile to note that al-Ḍaḥḥāk was not tutored by any of the companions of the schools of exegesis. Although he might have met Ibn 'Abbās and narrated frequently from him, al-Ḍaḥḥāk was not one of his students; that is, he did not learn Qur'anic exegesis directly from him. However, he relied on Sa'īd b. Jubair, Ibn 'Abbās's student, in his narration from Ibn 'Abbās.
- 13 Other recorded, linguistically based and glossary-form Qur'anic exegetical works that are independent of *ḥadīth* are those by Wāsil b. 'Aṭā' (d.131/748), Abān b. Taghlab b. Rābāh (d.141/758), Yūnus Ibn Ḥabīb (d.182/798), Abu Ja'far al-Ru'āsi (d.187/802), al-Farrā' (d.207/822), Abu 'Ubaidah (d.212/827), al-Akhfash (d.215/830), Abu 'Ubaid al-Qāsim b. Salām (d.224/838), Ibn Qutaibah (d.276/889), al-Mubarrad (d.285/898), Tha'lab (d.291/903), Ibn Kaisān (d.299/911), al-Faḍl b. Salamah (d.300/912) and al-Zajjāj (d.311/923).
- 14 Mujāhid b. Jabr al-Makki was born during the caliphate of 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb.
- 15 al-Kisā'i is a prominent Kūfi Qur'an scholar and a well-known reciter. He is one of the seven major reciters of the Qur'an. He is the counterpart of Sibawaihi, the head of the Baṣrah school of grammar. al-Kisā'i has also met, in Baṣrah, with al-Khalil b. Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī (d.776/1374), the founder of Arabic grammar.

## 6 The formative schools of exegesis

- 1 Although Ibn 'Abbās, unlike other companion exegetes of the Madīnah and Kūfah schools, encouraged his students to take lecture notes, there was no Qur'anic exegesis in a volume form that is holistic and well-structured until the first quarter of the second/eighth century. Thus, the phase of recording exegesis had begun during the late successors' period which extended from the end of the Umayyads (d.41–132/661–749) to the beginning of the Abbasids (d.132/749). Ibn 'Abbās, for instance, had never penned his *Tafsīr*, which we have today in a book form. Similarly, *Tafsīr Mujāhid* which we have today was in the form of lecture notes but was later recorded in a book form by Ibn Abī Najīḥ as transmitted by ('an) Mujāhid.

- 2 Tadlis in ḥadīth studies means that the transmitter narrates a ḥadīth from people whom he has not actually heard them directly making the reader feel that he has met them and learned the ḥadīth from them. Thus, al-Ḥasan, as a transmitter, narrates ḥadīths from companions or early successors whom he has not heard from directly.
- 3 Saʿīd b. al-Musaiyab (d.93/711) of Madīnah was taught by Zaid b. Thābit (d.45/665). Saʿīd was less than ten years old when Ubai b. Kaʿb passed away (d.20/640) and did not have the opportunity to study with Ubai, the founder of the Madīnah school of exegesis. Saʿīd was Abu Hurairah's son-in-law and was known for his piety and knowledge in jurisprudence and religious legal judgement. As a student of the Madīnah school, Saʿīd opposed the teaching and recording of tafsīr and used to turn his head away when asked about an exegetical matter and say, 'anā lā aqūlu fī al-qurʿāni shaiʿan [I do not say anything about the Qurʿān].'
- 4 For an informative account of theological mutashābihat, see n. 9 of [Chapter 1](#) and n. 4 of [Chapter 4](#).

## 7 Linguistic and stylistic tools of exegesis

- 1 For more details on Qadariyyah, see n. 2 of [Chapter 3](#).
- 2 Since Arabic and English are linguistically incongruous languages, translation equivalence is not possible to achieve in applied semantics. Although the two expressions, mubashshiran and bashīran, are active participles in Arabic, their equivalent meaning in English is almost the same, 'bearer of good news'. English does not have the linguistic mechanism of morphological shift which Arabic enjoys and which is a prototypical characteristic of Qurʿanic genre.
- 3 In both Qurʿanic studies and exegesis, the mutashābihāt āyahs have been tackled from a theological perspective only. We believe that this controversial subject matter is also required to be approached both linguistically and stylistically. Therefore, we have made a distinction between theological mutashābihāt and linguistic mutashābihāt. For more details on the notions of muḥkam and mutashābih, see n. 9 of [Chapter 1](#) in the present work. For theological mutashābihāt, see [Chapter 8, Section 8.2](#), point 3 of this work, and also Abdul-Raof 2003 ([ch. 6, section 6.3](#)). For a detailed investigation of the various kinds of linguistic mutashābihāt in Qurʿanic discourse, the reader is referred to Abdul-Raof 2004.
- 4 Qurʿanic exegetes and linguists claim that the ayah Q9:3 was the main reason for the writing down of Arabic grammar. A man came to ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb and read this āyah with the noun His Prophet in the genitive case, that is, rasūlihi, and claimed that he learned this mode of reading in Madīnah. ʿUmar objected to this reading and urged him to read the noun with a nominative case, that is, rasuluhu. He told the man, 'inna allāha lā yabraʿu min rasūlihi [Indeed, God does not dissociate Himself from His messenger!].' The minute difference is between the letter /lam/ (/l/ letter) with either the short vowel /u/ or the short vowel /i/. ʿUmar ordered that no one was allowed to read the Qurʿān unless he was a linguist. He also called the well-known grammarian Abu al-Aswad al-Duʿali (d.69/688) and asked him to lay down the foundation of Arabic grammar and write a book about it (al-Darwish 1992, [ch. 4](#), p. 54; al-Zamakhshari 1995, 2, p. 237; Abu Ḥaiyān 2001, [ch. 5](#), p. 8).
- 5 Due to the fact that Arabic and English are linguistically incongruous languages, equivalence in meaning between the two languages cannot be maintained. Thus, the translations of Arabic particles like 'in' and 'idhā' cannot be conveyed to the English reader through the meaning of the English condition particle (if) for both Arabic particles.
- 6 Synonymy is a universal linguistic feature that occurs in both oral and written discourses. Mainstream and non-mainstream exegetes have expressed diverse opinions with regard to synonymy in Qurʿanic discourse. Mainstream exegetes such as al-Ṭabari, Ibn Taimiyyah, Ibn ʿAṭiyyah, Ibn Kathīr, al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahāni, al-Qurtūbi are proponents

of the view that Qur'anic discourse does not have any synonymy. Non-mainstream exegetes such as al-Zamakhshari, and scholastic rhetoricians of Mu'tazili leanings such as al-Khaṭṭābī, have also advocated the opinion that Qur'anic discourse does not involve complete synonymy. al-Suyūṭī, a mainstream exegete, has remained undecided. Mainstream Qur'ān scholars like al-Zarkashi also holds the view that the language of the Qur'ān does not have any synonymy.

- 7 This is closely related to applied semantics and the notion of equivalence in translation theory. The verb *yaqtarif* represents a limit of translatability in Qur'ān translation of Q6:113, 120, Q9:24 and Q42:23 (for more details on the semantic problems in Qur'ān translation and their impact on Qur'anic exegesis, see Abdul-Raof 2001).
- 8 For more details on selectional restrictions and entailment in Qur'anic Arabic, see Abdul-Raof 2004, [ch. 5](#), section 5.5, and for semantic componential features in Qur'anic Arabic, see Abdul-Raof 2004, [ch. 3](#), section 3.2.1.

## 8 Jurisprudential tools of exegesis

- 1 The exegetical account of the tenets of faith in the Qur'ān is an exegetical tool of exegesis which we adopt in the surah structure (for more details on our surah structure in the light of the tenets of faith, see Abdul-Raof 2005a [ch. 4](#), section 4.7, and Abdul-Raof 2005b).

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