

The Diffusion of Islam in the Eastern Frontier of South Asia: A Fresh Approach *

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Abstract: A hinterland in the old world of Islam, the early history of diffusion of Islamic civilization in Bengal is shrouded with mystery. Though the maritime and trade contacts between Arab world and Bengal can be traced during the early period of Islam, the religious and cultural interaction between these two far-fetched lands started growing only after the Muslim conquest of the region in the early 13th century. After the establishment of Muslim rule in the region, the mass conversion to Islam took place over centuries in different forms and phases. In my present research work, I have been able to make a major breakthrough in constructing history of early religious and cultural contact between the Arab world and Bengal using the substantively rich and hitherto untapped archaeological materials, namely epigraphic sources (i.e., Arabic inscriptions), scattered abundantly all over the region. A well-known French colonial administrator in North Africa once compared the world of Islam to a resonant box: the faintest sound in one corner reverberates through the whole. As elsewhere in the Arab-Islamic world, this apt metaphor finds expression also in the Bengal frontier. In spite of their many distinctive local cultural features, one soon discovers the most vibrant message among the Muslims of Bengal - the unity within the diversity - that is prevalent everywhere in the Arab-Islamic civilization.

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- 39 . Al-Khauḷi Amin, *Al-Balāghah wa Ilm al-Nafs*, Majallah Kulliyah al-Ādāb, Fuad P'University, vol. 4, Part 2, December, 1939. The discussion was later on included in *Manāhij Tajdid*, op.cit., p. 315.
- 40 . Amin al-Khauḷi quotes these varying dimensions of *i'ijaz* from Al-Qurtubi, *Al-Jāmi li Akhām al-Quran*, Cairo, Dar al-Kutub, vol. I, pp. 72-75.
- 41 . Al-Khauḷi, *Manāhij Tajdid*, op.cit., p. 201.
- 42 . Ibid., p. 203.
- 43 . Al-Jabiz, Abu Uthman, *al-Bayān wa al-Tabayin*, al-Sindubi, 1345 A.H., vol. 1, p. 85. In his *Kitab al-Hayawān* too the author deals with this style differently. He says: "We have seen in the Quran how does it talk of the Arabs and the Bedonin with the implicities, concise words and by the style of short-cuts and when it addresses the Jews and the Christians or narrates of them it becomes elaborative and expresses extravagantly. Al-Sasi edition, vol. 1, p. 46.
- 44 . Al-Baqillāni, Abu Bakr, *I'ijaz al-Quran*, edited by al-sayyid Ahmad al-Saqr, Egypt, Dar al-Ma'arif, 1954, p. 51.
- 45 . Ibid., p. 88.
- 46 . Al-Sakkaki, Abu Yaqub, *Miftāh al-Uloom*, Egypt, al-Halbi, 13`18 A.H., p. 247.
- 47 . Al-Alawi, *Kitab al-Tirāz*, op.cit., vol. 3, p. 444.
- 48 . Al-Rafi'I, op.cit., pp. 256-257.
- 49 . Al-Khauḷi, *Manāhij Tajdid*, op.cit., pp. 205-210.
- 50 . Al-Razi, Fakhruddin, *Al Tafsir al-Kabir*, Dar Ihya al-Turath al-Arabi, Beirut, New edition, 1417 A.H./1997 A.D., vol. 8, pp. 530-532.
- 51 . Al-Zamakhshari, Abul Qasim Mahmood bin Umar, *Al-Kashshāf*, ed. Ab dur Razzaq al-Mahdi, Dar Ihya al-Turath al-Arabi, Beirut, 1417/1997 Ist edition, Part III, pp. 339-340.
- 52 . Al-Khauḷi, *Manāhij Tajdid*, op.cit., pp. 211-213.
- 53 . Al-Himsi, Nu'aym, op.cit., p. 134.

“No after-ache will they receive therefrom, nor will they suffer intoxication” (56: 19).

The two words combined altogether the defects of the wine used in this world, such as satiety, aches, excess, a sense of exhaustion, or loss of senses etc. Narrating the fruits available in the Paradise, another example of being concise as well as elaborative in the meaning, the Quran says :

“Whose season is not limited, nor supply forbidden” (56: 33).

The fruits provided therein will be free, unlimited and inexhaustible. There will be no prohibition by law or custom or circumstance as to when or how it is to be consumed. The two phrases combined together all these concepts (*I'ijaz al-Quran*, p. 170).

- 19 . Ibid., p. 171.
- 20 . Ibid., p. 173.
- 21 . Ibid., p. 192.
- 22 . Ibid., p. 207.
- 23 . Ibid., p. 212.
- 24 . Ibid., p. 232.
- 25 . Ibid., p. 241.
- 26 . Ibid., p. 242.
- 27 . Ibid., pp. 249-250.
- 28 . Ibid., pp. 299-300.
- 29 . Al-Khauḍi, Amin, *Manāḥij Tajdid fi al-Nahw wa al-Balaghah wa Al-Tafsir wa al-Adab*, Dar al-Marifah, Egypt, September, 1961, Preface by Dr. Shukri Muhammad Abbad, pp. 8-9.
- 30 . Al-Askari, Abu Hilal, *Kitab al-Sanā'utayn: Al-Nazm wa al-Nathr, Taba'h al-Astanah*, p. 2.
- 31 . Al-Alwi, Yahya bin Hamzah, *Kitab al-Tirāz al-Mutadhammin li Asrār al-Balāghah wa Uloom Haqāiq al-I'ijaz*, Cairo, Al-Muqtataf Publications, p. 13.
- 32 . Al-Khauḍi, Amin, *Manāḥij Tajdid*, pp. 168-169.
- 33 . Ibid.
- 34 . Al-Sakkāki, Yusuf bin Abu Bakr al-Khawarizmi, *Miftāh al-Uloom*, Taba'h al-Halbi, Cairo, 1318 A.H., pp. 176, 216-217.
- 35 . Ibid., p. 174.
- 36 . Al-Ghazali Abu Hamid, *Ihya Uloom al-Din*, Al-Halbi edition, the fourth chapter on the Understanding of the Quran and its Interpretation by the Individual Opinion, vol. 1, pp. 259-2164.
- 37 . Al Ghazali, Abu Hamid, *Jawāhir al-Quran*, Egypt, *Matb'ah, Kurdistan al-Ilmiyah*, 1229 A.H, pp. 28-29.
- 38 . Ibid., pp. 31-34.

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1. Al-Khauḥi, Amin, *Al Tafsir M'aālim Hayatihi wa Manhajuhu al-Yaum*, Cairo, 1315 AH, p. 20.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 112.
4. This sciencism by the novel interpretation of the Quran and the hadith was exhibited by Shaykh Muhammad Tawfiq Sidqui through his lectures on the laws of God executed in the universe.
5. Jawhari, Tantawi (al-Hakim al-shaykh), *Al-Jawāhir fi Tafsir al-Quran al-Karim*, Mustafa al-Babi al-Halbi, Egypt, IInd ed. Shawwal 1350 AH No. 171, vol. I, pp. 1-2.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
7. *Ibid.*, Vol. 3, p. 19.
8. *Ibid.*, Vol. 25, p. 53.
9. Abduh, Muhammad, *Risālah al-Tawhid*, Beirut, p. 96.
10. Rida, Sayyid Muhammad Rashid in his Preface to, Mustafa Sadiq al-Rafii, *I'ijaz al-Quran wa al-Balāghat al-Nabawiyah*, Egypt, al-Maktabah al-Tijariyah al-Kubra, 8th ed. 1389/1696, p. 17.
11. Al-'Aryān, Muhammad Saeed, Hayāt al-Rafii, Cairo, Math'ah al-Istiqamah, IIIrd ed. 1375/1955, p. 163.
12. Al-Himsi, Nu'aym, *Tarikh Fikrah I'ijaz al-Quran*, Damascus, 1374/1955, p. 123. For the severe criticism in the derogatory style by al-Rafii, see his interaction to Mutazilites especially to Abu Ishaq Ibrahim al-Nazzam whom he titles *shaytan al-Mutakallimin*, the satan amongst the scholastic scholars. Al-Rafii, Mustafa Sadiq, *I'ijaz al-Quran wa al-Balāghat al-Nabawiyah*, op.cit., p. 162. On the same page the author repeats: "But al-Nazzam, who excessively supported the *Sarfah* theory of *I'ijaz* was amongst the satans of the scholasticism".
13. Al-Rafii, Mustafa Sadiq, *I'ijāz al-Quran wa al-Balāghat al-Nabawiyah*, p. 156.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 162-165.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 165-167.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 166.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 169.
18. Al-Rafii, for instance, has quoted al-Jahiz from his *Kitab al-Hayawān* saying: "I have written a book in which I have collected altogether the verses from the Quran so that you may identify the literary beauties of *i'ijaz* (abridgement) and *hadhf* (deletion from), and of *zāid* (addition to), *fuzul* (extra letters), and *isti'arah* (the metaphor). If you read them you will find their merit in being concise in the structure and expressive abundantly in the meanings and connotations by the lesser words. For example describing the wine to be used by the peoples of Paradise the Quran says :

Amin al-Khauuli asserts repeatedly his stand of not rationalizing the theory of *i'ijaz*, necessitating no justification at all and having confined its' rationalization within the literary taste and the professional sense of art. Surprisingly he finds no contradiction in his refutation of rationalizing the *i'ijaz* and in his justification of the psychological dimension of the theory of *i'ijaz* and his emphasis on a psychological interpretation of the Quran, as criticized by Nu'aym al-Himsi in his *Tarikh Fikrah I'ijaz al-Quran*.⁵³

In the modern times another trend in the theory of inimitability of the Quran was introduced with the title of *nizam al-Quran* e.g. the coherence maintained in the concepts and thoughts as well as in the literary constructions and structures. This was theorized more systematically by Hamiduddin (Abdul Hamid) al-Farahi (1280-1349/1863-1930) and was further elaborated and applied in his urdu commentary of the Quran titled *Tadabbur-i Quran* by Amin Ahsan Islahi (1904-1997) one of the most accomplished students of Farahi.

cannot be the same. Then why is Amin al-Khauuli surprised to see the rationale of the revelation with the words as provided by Fakhruddin al-Razi.

Mahmud bin Umar al-Zamakhshari (d. 538/1144), the prominent scholar of rhetoric and eloquence as well as of Quranic literary styles but the Mutazilite one in the belief and thought, has comprehended a refined psychological idea while explaining the debatable conceptions and trends derived from the verses of *al-Shu'ara* under discussion, al-Khauuli appreciates him. This idea clarifies all the doubts and confusions about the nature of the revelation. Al-Zamakhshari while interpreting the verses (192-195 from the chapter *al-Shu'ara*) changes their order slightly and explains the verse No. 195 as a subsequent to the verse No. 193. The verses are thus arranged as “with it came down the spirit of Faith and Truth, in the perspicuous Arabic tongue, to your heart and mind that you may admonish”.

Al-Zamakhshari, then, explains how the revelation in the eloquent Arabic language was made on the heart of the Prophet (SAW). He says interpreting the verses in the divine tone: “In case the Quran was revealed in non-Arabic language, it was to be sent down to your ears and not to your heart because you would have heard the sounds of letters without understanding their meanings”. The author then provides the rationale. Sometimes a person knows a number of languages. When he speaks the language he had first learnt nourished and habituated with, his heart automatically accesses the meanings which he has received by his heart and does not take into account how the words were set. In case he speaks besides his mother language, his attention is attracted first by the words then the meanings though he knows that language masterly. This approves the revelation was sent down alongwith the perspicuous Arabic language (*lisān Arabi mubin*).⁵¹

By applying the psychological method in understanding the situation of a person who speaks his mother tongue as well as that of who speaks other than his mother tongue, al-Zamakhshari exposed the uncertainty over the interpretation and made the issue easier and elaborate even to those who do not think he has provided the ultimate solution. By this argument, the learned commentator exposed the weakness and infirmity of those who quote the above verse to prove their thesis of the revelation with the meaning and not with the words, comments approvingly Amin al-Khauuli.⁵² According to al-Khauuli, the verses of the controversial meanings like this are not only required to be interpreted with the full cognizance of psychology but the entire Quran should be understood and explained in the given paradigm.

Over these verses arose the heavy dispute and the distant principles and far-fetched foundations from the Quran were traced out. One group argued in favour of the abstract revelation of the Quran without the words and that the words of the Quran were uttered by the Prophet (SAW) himself from his own because the heart may not have received but the meaning only. This approach leads to deny the words of the Quran as inimitable.

Those who deny the verbal revelation were pressed to claim that the revelation was made on the heart, in order to prove that the mine of reason and intellect was the heart or the mind. This was advocated by Fakhruddin al-Razi in his tafsir. He cites the classical scholars as well as the modern one alongwith their arguments. "These issues are intricate and obscure too; no academic discussion may finalise it and no aspect of various interpretations may be preferred over others satisfyingly", criticizes Amin al-Khauili. But the majority of the scholars of *ahl al-sunnah* support the view elaborated well by Imam al-Razi who prefers the opinion that the revelation was made alongwith the words as well as the meanings⁵⁰, and not a single word was incorporated from his own by the Prophet (SAW).

This position was already clarified in the Quran itself when it declared explicitly in the chapter *al-Najm* :

"By the star when it goes down, your companion is neither astray nor being misled, nor does he say (aught) of (his own) desire. It is no less than inspiration sent down to him" (53: 1-4).

"Your companion" as referred to, is the holy Prophet Muhammad (SAW), who had lived among the Quraysh all his life. The Prophet (SAW) is defended against three kinds of charges that the Unbelievers had brought: (1) that he was going astray, either through defect of intelligence or through carelessness; (2) that he was being misled or deceived by evil spirits; and (3) that he spoke out of a whim or impulse, or from a selfish desire to impress his own personality. None of these charges was true. On the contrary he had direct inspiration from God.

The word *yantiqū* is significant and dissolves ultimately the controversy over the condition of revelation. It clearly expresses the revelation was sent down to the Prphet alongwith each and every word and not with the meaning only. Moreover it also elaborates the revelatory position of hadith though not recited. The scholars have, therefore, classified the revelation into *matlu* (being recited e.g. the Quran) and *ghayr matlu* (not being recited, e.g. the hadith) and have frequently used the two terms of *wahy al-Quran* and *wahy al-hadith* to

The statement provided here by al-Rafii is inefficient to explain the justification of *takrār*, says Amin al-Khauḷi. How this secret of repetition was accessed by the Jews only? In case the claim was correct it must be thought as the stange by the then Arabs and the challenging position of the Quran in an arca that was not familiar to the Arabs could not be established.

Criticising all these justifications of the Quranic repetition, Amin al-Khauḷi finally provides a psychological paradigm for the rationale of the repetition style used in the Quran, which is based on a global human psychological consideration to be verified by the witnesses and evidences of the conditions of human mind and its various trends. In the given situation the style of repetiion, as the psycholgosits view, constitutes the most effective method to satisfy; and the best medium to concentrate the thought and the belief in the human mind slowly and gently without provoking the opponents by any argumentation or demonstrating any extremism, by maintaining the order of proof and the seemingly inference, as well as by the evidences and practical examples as discussed by the scholars of psychology. These may substitute the invention of the dimensions in rationalizing and justifying the Quranic repetition and turning it to a point of disputes and conflicts, al-Khauḷi concludes.⁴⁹

Psychological Interpretation

Amin al-Khauḷi, then necessitates to interpret the Quran psychologically though the scholars could not arrive at the psychological method to understand the *i'ijaz*. This Quranic technique of psychological paradigm and this dogmatic theory constitute the two aspects of the life dependent on the inner-passions.

Al-Khauḷi, elaborating the role of psychological principles in the understanding and explanation of the holy Quran, cites few verses from the chapter *al-Shu'ara* and finds the classical commentators arguing by the theoretical evidences and logical deductions as well as the technical grammatical expositions; and applying the dry rhetorical methods and the sophistic ideologies as well. These are the outcome of the dead thinking and the narrow horizon. The Quran narrates some special characteristics of the Quran saying :

“Verily this is a Revelation from the Lord of the worlds: with it came down the Spirit of Faith and truth to your heart and mind that you may admonish in the perspicuous Arabic tongue” (26: 192-195)

every stanza. According to another school this stands a *tarji'* in a poem in which it is repeated alongwith a number of stanzas. This repetition may be taken into account also as a reminder to the lessons".⁴⁶

Yahya bin Hamza al-Alawi in his *Kitab al-Tirāz* interacts this style of *takrār* elaborately. That may be summarized as below :

- i) The *takrār* in the Quran was used to purify, expand and elevate the human nature of the Prophet (SAW) as well as to provide a solace and consolation to him. This was not a mere repetition.
- ii) The Quran repeated the stories and the historical events for the sake of extra benefits gained in the verses differently.
- iii) When Allah challenged the Arab pagans to produce a book like the Quran, some might mistakenly think that producing a book like the Quran was impossible for Allah too. The stories were, therefore, repeated to affirm that it was not impossible on His behalf and that the inimitability is established for the human being and not for Allah Himself.
- iv) The *takrār* occurred in the Quran to confirm and strengthen the warning and the admonition to the adversaries of the religion as the verse in the chapter *al-Takāthur* reads: "But nay, you soon shall know!" (102: 3).
- v) In case the style of *takrār* being a beauty in the Arabic language was not used in the Quran contradicting the Arabs' styles, it was to be treated a great defect and a strong motive to defame the noble Quran.⁴⁷

The rationale provided by al-Alawi interacts mainly the repetition in the Quranic stories and neglects other usages in the Quran.

Al-Khauili cites Mustafa Sadiq al-Rafii too. Al-Rafii after having criticized al-Jahiz in this regard says: "*Takrār* constitutes in fact a secret from the secrets of Hebrew literature, which was used by the Quran in most of its statements so that the Jews should know that this was a non-human composition, and should realize one of the meanings of *i'ijaz* since they were familiar with that as the Arab realized its *i'ijaz* in the matters of their own. The most eloquent piece in the classical Hebrew poetry was the one that combined the following: the nimble interpretation; the refined presentation; the clarity of the words; the expressive compounds; the elaborate meanings; the repetition of the statements alongwith all its benefits as the attestation, exaggeration, clarification, realization and so on; the use of the synonym words; the comparison between the contrasts and other varieties of wordly beauties which come under another kind of repetition".⁴⁸

not worship that which you have been wont to worship, nor will you worship that which I worship. To you be your way and to be mine" (109: 1-6).

According to al-Bāqillāni, there emerged an additional meaning to the *takrār*, since it benefits the meaning of reporting about the (*ghayb*) unseen.⁴⁴

Al-Bāqillāni deals with the Quranic repetition also amid his discussion on the novel composition and beautiful arrangement of the Quran. He referring to the Quranic order, says: "For this reason only the Quran repeated the story of the Prophet Musa in the different chapters following the various methods and the numerous rhyming words with the unified meaning. You should turn to your intellect in case you do mistake, or become confused or you are trapped in any misperception".⁴⁵ Thus, he finds the rationale of repetition in the order and arrangement maintained in the Quran.

Al-Sakkāki, entitled by al-Khauḍi as 'the chief of the rhetoricists' (*Shaykh al-balāghiyin*), discusses the issue of the repetition in the Quran (*takrār*) while disapproving the allegations charged against the Quran in his book *Miftāh al-Uloom*. He says : "One of the allegations they charge against the Quran is that the repetition is a fault, defective and useless and the Quran consists of this repetition. They give in this regard the examples of the story of Pharaoh and the like, and the verses oft-repeated like the one that reads: "Then which of the favours of your Lord will you deny?" in the 55th chapter *al-Rahmān*; and the verse that reads: "And woe, that Day to the Rejectors of Truth!" in the 77th chapter *al-Mursalāt*, and other verses that come under this category".

Al-Sakkāki responds to this objection saying "Refreshing a meaning in various forms and voices, you have taken it as a mere repetition and a defect in the statement because of your ignorance". He quotes a couplet in this contest that reads :

"If my merits, of which I have been so proud, are considered as my demerits, tell me how do I excuse!"

Al-Sakkāki then questions: "In case there was no extra benefit besides the enemies being rebuked, they should have claimed at the time of being challenged repeatedly to produce any thing like unto the Quran, that the first challenge was enough and that should not be repeated again and gain. And the oft-repeated verse in the chapter *al-Rahmān* as well as in that of *al-Mursalāt* was treated as *radif* that is repeated in the *qasidah* (a poem) in tandem with

its explanatory one; its repetitives as well as its prolongations; its division and elaboration and its order and arrangement. All should be dealt with in the light of the criteria mentioned above systematically and organisedly.⁴²

The Quranic Repetition

Elaborating the psychological dimension of *i'ijaz*, Al-Khauḍi deals in detail with the *takrār* (repetition) a literary style in the Quran and provides its psychological paradigm. He first explains how the classical scholars of the Quranic rhetoric and eloquence have narrated its various aspects and literary beauties avoiding the psychological perspectives. The author cites in this regard al-Jāhiz, al-Bāqillāni, al-Sakkākī, al-'Alawī and amongst the modern scholars al-Rafīī as well.

Al-Jahiz has quoted a narrative of Ib al-Sammāk, a statement from Torah and a saying of al-Dhuhri to the effect that repetition is regarded as boring and tiring always, and constitutes a defect in any statement or writing. Then he says : "In brief the repetition has no demarcation nor any concise definition. This style is to be evaluated as per the value and status of the listeners and those who attend it amongst the common men as well as the elites. We have found Allah has narrated repeatedly the stories of Musa, Hood, Harun, Sho'aib, Ibrahim, Lut, 'Aad and Thamud, as well as has oft-described the Paradise and the Hell and other things, because it has addressed all the nations from Arabs and non-Arabs, and most of them usually are stupid and ignorant, or mentally pre-occupied contestant. The stories and narratives are not overlooked generally by any group".⁴³

Al-Bāqillāni in his book *i'ijaz al-Quran* dealing with a varieties of *bad'i* (rhetoric) in the Quran, has discussed *takrār* as a beautiful style which was frequently used in the pre-Islamic poetry. He has quoted two couplets from *Jahiliyah* literature in this regard. He then claims there are so many examples in the Quran. In the chapter *Inshirah* the holy Quran repeatedly pronounces that whatever difficulties or troubles are encountered by men, God always provides a solution, a way out, a relief, a way to lead to ease and happiness, if we only follow His path and show our faith by patience and well-doing. The Quran declares :

"So verily, with every difficulty, there is relief. Verily, with every difficulty there is relief" (94: 5-6)

In the following chapter *al-Kāfirūn*, this style of repetition is again used :

"Say : O ye that reject Faith! I worship not that which you worship, nor will you worship that which I worship. And I will

Al-Khauuli describes all the dimensions of *i'ijaz* as propounded by the classical scholars in detail⁴⁰ and does not satisfy with them in his psychological perspective because these do not maintain a sufficing relations with the literary technique. After realizing the connection between the rhetoric and the psychology, the scholar accessed a 'novel saying' and an 'strange opinion' in understanding the theory of *i'ijaz*, though this does not constitute a rationalization of it in its complete meaning'.⁴¹

The psychological inimitability of the Quran (*al- i'ijaz al-nafsi*), a new trend developed by the scholar, may not be confused with the classical interpretations of the Quranic scholars. Various dimensions of the Quranic impact on the human soul like the effectiveness of the verses on the minds and souls; the sweetness and the deliciousness a man feels while reciting the Quran; the rhythmical music and refined tuning produced out of well balanced construction of the letters, words and sentences of the Quran; the psychological eagerness and extempore urge to read it and feeling no more bored inspite of the repetition; the reporting that the pious Muslims used to recite the whole Quran in one night or they used to read the longest chapters of it in their individual prayers; the quality that the school children may easily memorise it and others, are not meant by this term *al- i'ijaz al-nafsi*, though the scholar does not negate these dimensions. He, rather, does not rely on them to elaborate the theory of psychological inimitability of the Quran.

The scholar also does not mean by this term to derive the issues and ideologies of psychology from the Quran in support of the view that the Quran elaborates every thing (*tibyān li kulli shayin, the Quran, 16: 84*). This method, inspite of not being so useful, if applied, commits an injustice to the magnificent status and value of the Quran, al-Khauuli analyses.

This term *al- i'ijaz al-nafsi* implies an interpretation that is entirely based on the realization of what the Quran has applied amongst the psychological phenomena, and the spiritual laws around which it has revolved its explanation argumentatively, satisfyingly, contestingly, provocatively and frighteningly. It is not advisable, says Amin al-Khauuli, to rationalize any sentence of the Quran, or to quote any word from any verse or any literary style of the Quran to prove any point concerning the psychology. The entire context, in contrast, in the perspective of the whole situation being interactive to the soul and to what is discovered by the science in this regard should be studied alongwith the comprehension of all its depths. In the psychological paradigm only may be elaborated rationally the concise words of the Quran and its extravagant statements; its explicit as well as its implicit; its brief statements as well as

renaissance not emerge with the revelation of the Quran? And in case they did not understand them how these could be considered as the divinely intended and designed meanings?

3. The religious dimension as the most valuable point because the Quran is the book of religion and not a book of science. How the sciences are derived from the Quran while the books on science are changed with the passage of time and generation due to advancement of the sciences ?

Amin al-Khauuli evaluates this trend and finds its harms and defects more in abundance than its benefits and merits. He argues that it suffices to prove the absence of any conflict between the religion of Islam and the science that no explicit text contradicts the scientific truths discovered so far. This approach, criticizes al-Khauuli, however, constitutes a sort of leniency and indulgence towards the Quran. Understanding the realities of the universe and its unique phenomena depends on the exercise of the human instincts and intense emotions and interacts with the apparent visibles in respect of their exciting the soul and inspiring to the senses their splendours and magnificence and the people's being thrilled to them, and not in respect of being the accurate and exact laws relating to them. And defending the scientific realities complies in no way the necessary realization of the magnificence of the Power that manages the universe. Al-Khauuli points out that the Quran may possibly contain the meanings that are seemingly contradictory to the scientific realities and this does not affect its revelatory position since it is not a book of science and it is not unavoidable, therefore, to link the Quran ingenuinely to the science.

Psychological Inimitability

Shaykh Amin al-Khauuli advocates the psychological dimension of the inimitability of the Quran. It was a direct connection of the science of rhetoric to the discipline of psychology that channelised the theory of the psychological inimitability of the Quran as well as it stressed the need to interpret the Quran psychologically keeping in view all the secrets of the motions of human soul in the fields covered by the religious beliefs and actions of the Quran, its dogmatic argumentations, its exercise and training to the instincts and hearts and its transmission of the ancestors and the ancient nations. How marvelously the Quran dealt with these issues! What psychological realities did the Quran apply in these passion-oriented meanings and the objectives of inner consciousness? And how much the considerations of these points were effective in hightening the words of God and making the propagation of the religion successful?³⁹

Imam al-Shātibi has also quoted the arguments of those scholars who advocated a scientific and reason-based interpretation of the Quran as in the following :

1. The Quran explicitly announces :
“And we have sent down to you the Book explaining all things”.
(16: 89)
“Nothing have We omitted from the Book”. (6; 38)
2. *Fawātih* (the beginnings) of the Quranic chapters e.g. the unjoined letters which are unfamiliar to Arabs, and the various explanatory sayings in this regard, and
3. whatever was cited from Ali bin Abi Talib in this regard.

The first argument was responded by al-Shātibi saying that the first verse cited by these scholars basically signified the religious obligations and prayers (*‘ibādāt*), while the second verse had meant the Divine Slate (*Lawh Mahfooz*) and not the Quran. The second point was refuted by him arguing that the Arabs were aware of the uses of such letters as they were informed of such uses like that of *jummal* by the Jews and the Christians. These *fawātih* are also understood in terms of *mutashābih* (allegorical) verses whose meanings are not disclosed except to God. Their interpretation in the terms not familiar is unjustifiable and our ancestors did not allow it.

The third argument was responded by al-Shātibi saying that it was not permissible to ascribe a concept or meaning to the Quran that is not required by it. The understanding of the Quran may not depend in any way on the acquisition of a knowledge not entrusted with by the ordinances of Shariah. In case any one tries to understand the Quran without the prescribed means would be misled necessarily.

Appreciating the stand of al-Shatibi, Shaykh Amin al-Khauuli adds the following points :

1. The linguistic dimension in the realms of the words and their gradual implications. We can not ascribe to the words the meanings and concepts that were strange at the time of the revelation, and were coined later on.
2. The literary or expressive dimension so as to words are in conformity with the context and the requirement of the situation. Whether this scientific interpretation is conformed to the situation of Arabs when the Quran was revealed during the Prophet period? Was it justified that the Arabs addressed by the Quran were familiar with these scientific connotations? Suppose these meanings were available in the Quran but the words did not carry the meanings at that time, the question arises whether the Arabs grasped these meanings from the Quran at that time? And if they understood these meanings why did their scientific

may not be evacuated of the people who might have known them. There may be other sciences possibly and potentially existing which are not yet explored. Some sciences were discovered by the human beings previously and were disappeared later on, and there remains no person in the world who might have claimed to know them. Some sciences are inaccessible to human being and are attainable to the angels beloved to God only. Al-Ghazali, then, claims that the preliminaries of all these sciences, whether enumerated by us or not, are not out of the Quranic jurisdiction and scope; all of them are dipped into a single ocean from the oceans of the knowledge of God, and that is the ocean of the Divine Dynamism that has no coast".³⁷

Al-Ghazali has, then, detailed the Divine doings and the various branches of knowledge necessary to understand them. The divine acts of rendering a man sick and restoring his health may not be understood without the knowledge of medical sciences. The divine acts in the universe may not be grasped without astronomy. Enumerating thus various divine actions and the knowledge relating to them, al-Ghazali finally says that "if the divine actions explicit in the Quranic verses are counted in detail it will be too descriptive. All of them may not be pointed out except in their entirety."³⁸

Shaykh Amin al-Khauili, then, elaborates this inclusive approach to the interpretation of the Quran and the trend of rationalizing the theory of *i'ijaz* as propounded by other scholars like Fakhruddin al-Razi, Muhammad al-Iskandarani, Fikri Pasha, Abdur Rahman al-Kawakibi, Mustafa Sadiq al-Rafii, Tantawi Jawhari and Muhammad Tawfiq Sidqui.

Al-Shātibi's Approach

Al-Khauili, then, cites Abu Ishaq al-Shātibi (d. 790/1388), the Malikid jurist and the author of *al-Muafaqāt*, who nullifies any attempt to interpret the Quran by the rational or scientific method, and disapproves all the falsifications of sciencism in the tafsir as well as in the theory of *i'ijaz*. The arguments of al-Shātibi are based on the following points :

1. Islamic Shariah is *unmi*-based one and has incorporated all the interests and beneficial considerations.
2. The Arabs possessed a varieties of knowledge, some of which were testified by the Shariah while others were nullified. How it was advisable for the Quran to consist all the sciences of the ancestors as well as of the future generations.
3. The holy companions and their immediate followers were more knowledgeable of the Quran than us but they did never claim of such things.

disciplines when Allah bestows his grace and grants his wisdom to whom He wishes".³⁴

Basing his interpretation of the theory of *i'ijaz* on the arguments offered by al-Sakkaki, Al-Khauili elaborates the way to access the *i'ijaz* in his emphasis on "the construction of the literary taste technically and on the consecutive practice of and experience with the rhetoric according to the requirements and principles of true technical training". This *i'ijaz* comprehensible by the taste, however, can not be explored by the definitions, deliberations and notes over the metaphors and the like, raised by Saduddin Masud bin Umar al-Taftazani (1312-1389 AD). "This method can not create any literary taste, and can not establish the rhetorical purpose, neither this can fulfil the religious need of realizing the inimitability of the Quran, and thus being confined to this method would be treated a technical mistake and moreover a religious negligence – if we are allowed to say this", says al-Khauili.³⁵

Al-Khauili's discussions on "The Tafsir : The Milestones in its Life and its Methodology Today" criticizes the trend of sciencism in the interpretation of the Quran. This trend explores the scientific discoveries, the technological advancements as well as the philosophical theories in the interpretation of the Quran. The trend was intensified later on to cover all the sciences of the world alongwith the religious dogmas and beliefs.

Al-Ghazali's Stand

The inclusive trend in the field of tafsir was originated by Amin al-Khauili into the writings of Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (d. 505/1111) especially in his *Ihya Uloom al-Din*.³⁶ Al-Ghazali says: "Whatever was found by the scholastics hard to understand and in which the people differed in the theories and the ideologies, was available in the Quran explicitly or implicitly". The Quran implies the fundamentals of all the sciences. Al-Ghazali elaborates this approach in his other writings.

Al-Ghazali, for example, in his book *Jawāhir al-Quran*, seemingly written after *Ihya Uloom al-Din*, establishes the fifth chapter of the book to explain how all the sciences were derived from the Quran. He has discusses in the fourth chapter of the book the religious sciences and their divisions and classifications and the relevant details. He mentions the sciences of the language as well as the linguistics as necessary to understand the religion. After describing the medicine, the astrology, the astronomy, the zoology, the anatomy, the physiology, the palmistry, the study of magic and talismans, al-Ghazali points out that there are other sciences unknown to us, but the world

knowledge by which we possibly may know the issues of *i'ijaz* because there is a consensus on behalf of the researchers that there is no way to be informed of the realities of *i'ijaz* and to draw its rules out of eloquence and expression except by identifying this science of rhetoric and strengthening its foundation".³¹

Al-Khauḥlī also explains that due to keeping in mind the noble purpose of studying the science of Arabic rhetoric, most of the scholars in the varying stages named their books with the title of *i'ijaz* like *Dalā'il al- I'ijaz* by al-Jurjānī, *Nihāyah al-Iijaz fī Dirāyah al- I'ijaz* by Fakhrūddīn al-Rāzī and *Kitāb al-Tirāz* by al-'Alawī. To the learned author, the theory of *i'ijaz* left its tremendous impact on the shaping and orientating the compositions in the discipline of the rhetoric which can not be grasped without turning to the various schools of scholasticism dealing with the theory of *i'ijaz*.³²

Critic of Rationalisation

Al-Khauḥlī mentions the theory of rationalizing the *i'ijaz al-Quran* that prevailed the books composed by the scholastic theologians as well as by the rhetoricists like al-Alawī and others. To al-Khauḥlī, this very exclusive approach to the theory of *i'ijaz* "faded the literary spirit and turned the Arabic rhetoric to the dry measures with no soul, no technique and no taste".³³ The author declared this rationalizing approach as an optimistic opinion (*rai fā'il*) and a fictitious stand (*mudhhab dhaif*), and that this school was nullified by Imam Yusuf bin Abu Bakr al-Khawarizmi popularly known as al-Sakkāki (1160-1228 AD), who was entitled by al-Khauḥlī as a "champion of the classical rhetoric and a rider in the forefront". Al-Sakkāki says :

"You must know the issue of *i'ijaz* is surprisingly interesting. It may be realized but can not be described as the case is with the measurement in the poetry or the salt in the food. The tool of identifying the *i'ijaz* in the Quran, to me, is only the literary taste; and the method to acquire this taste is implied in the long service of both these disciplines (e.g. the rhetoric and the eloquence)".

Al-Sakkāki, then evaluates all the four rationalizing stands of the scholars disapproving them one by one, and finally says :

"These were the four sayings; the fifth one is the stand taken by those who possess the literary taste, and that signifies that the dimension of inimitability of the Quran concerns the nature of rhetoric and eloquence. You will find no access to this fifth stand except after a long service and experience with these two

by the Egyptian government. Being a creative writer he was criticized from some corners.

Amin al-Khauuli revived the issue of *i'ijaz* in the modern time by his thorough discussions on the subject. He touched the issue and its whereabouts methodologically in his three discussions: (i) the "Arabic Rhetoric and the Impact of Philosophy on it", (ii) "Tafsir: Milestones in its life and its Methodology Today" and (iii) "The Arabic Rhetoric and the Psychology" published first in the *Majallah kulliyah al-Aadāb*, vol. IV, part 2, December, 1936. All these articles were included later on in the book titled *Manāhij Tajdid*, edited and published by one of his distinguished students Dr. Shukri Muhammad Abbad.

According to the preface written by Dr. Abbad, Shaykh Amin al-Khauuli was the champion of both the traditionalism and the modernism in the language, rhetoric and literary issues, as well as in the thoughts and the methodology he applied. Both the modernization and the traditionalism had penetrated his nature and thought interactively as the realism and idealism interacted. He was, therefore, titled a (*manhaji*) methodological teacher and scholar.²⁹

In his discussion on the "Arabic Rhetoric and the Impact of Philosophy on it", a lecture he delivered in the evening of March 19, 1931 in the premises of the Royal Geographical Society, Amin al-Khauuli elaborates how the Arabic rhetoric was a medium to access the inimitable position of the Quran according to the classical scholars like al-Baqillani, al Jurjani, al-Razi, al-Alawi, al-Sakkaki and others. This noble purpose of Arabic rhetoric was explored in the very beginning by Amr bin Ubaid Abu Uthman al-Basari (d. 144/761) the chief of Mutazilites in his age, for instance, who regarded the rhetoric" an instrument to establish the arguments of God in the minds of the scholastic scholars so that they welcome them without any delay". Abu Hilal al-Askari (d. after 1005 AD), the author of *Kitab al-Sanā'atayn* likely elaborated the significance of teaching the rhetoric in the same perspective, since the negligence of this discipline would have culminated in the absence of the knowledge of the theory of *i'ijaz al-Quran* argumentatively and scientifically. Recognising the inimitable position of the Quran blindly, to al-Askari, was not desirable nor does it suit to a man of knowledge and understanding.³⁰ The learned scholar also quotes Amir Yahya bin Hamzah al-Alawi (d. 745/1344), the author of *Al-Tirāz al-Mutadhammin li Asrār al-Balāghah wa Uloom Haqāiq al- I'ijaz*, who has specified the motive of studying the rhetoric as the recognition of *i'ijaz* only. Al-Alawi defines the *balaghah* as 'a discipline of

“O ye assembly of Jinns and men! If it be you can pass beyond the zones of the heavens and the earth, pass you! Not without authority shall you be able to pass!” (55: 33)

See the chapter *al-An'aam* verses 130-134, where the jinns and men are addressed collectively. That whole passage should be read as a commentary on this verse. 'If you think that because you do things in secret, or because some of your sins do not seem to meet their inevitable punishment, or some of your good deeds seem to go unnoticed, do not be deceived. Judgement will soon come. You can not possibly escape out of the zones in which your lives have been cast, without authority from God. Be grateful to God for the chances He has given you. All that has been promised unto you will come to pass: nor can you frustrate it in the least bit' (6: 134).

According to al-Rafii, the verse quoted above implies in its design the discovery of flying in the air and that it would be explored by the *ins* (the human being). This interpretation could be realized only after the passage of thirteen centuries. This novel rationale was provided by the inimitable rhetoric of the Quran.²⁸ This was interpreted by al-Rafii as strengthening (*al-siyāṣah al-mantiqiyah*) the logical argumentation by the method of the rhetoric (*tariqah al-balāghah*). Apart from the spiritual and synthetic inimitability advocated by al-Rafii, another trend emerged in the theories of *i'ijaz al-Quran* and that was the trend of psychological inimitability of the Quran (*al-i'ijaz al-naḥṣi*) founded in the modern times by Shaykh Amin al-Khauḥi.

Amin al-Khauḥi

Amin al-Khauḥi (1313-1385/1895-1966), a member of al-Majma' al-Lughawi in Egypt, got his education in Azhar and was graduated therefrom in Islamic judiciary. He was appointed after sometime the teacher in the Old Egyptian University and held some other offices therein. In 1953 he was attached with the Ministry of Education and worked there till 1955. He represented his country in a number of seminars and academic delegations abroad. He died in Cairo. Among his contributions are *al-Balāghah al-Arabiyyah*, *Fann al-Qawl*, *Malik bin Anas* (three volumes), *Al-Mujaddidun fī al-Islam*, *Al-Azhar fī al-Qarn al-Ishrin*, *al-Adab al-Misri*, *al-Jundiyah fī al-Islam*, *Min Huda al-Rasul*, *Mushkilat Hayatina al-Lughawiyah* and *Kunnash fī al-Falsafah*. In the initial stage of his career when he was appointed to look after the religious affairs in the Egyptian embassy at Rome, he created controversy over some sensitive issues and was then transferred to Berlin. There too he provoked a number of elements and was therefore called back

The Makkan pagans thought in case they did not listen to the Quran they might be upper-handed. The favourite trick of those who wish to dishonour Revelation is, not only not to listen to it themselves, but to talk loudly and insolently when it is being read, so that even the true listeners may not be able to perform their devotions. They think that they are drowning the voice of God: in fact they are piling up misery for themselves in the future. For God's voice can never be silenced. Al-Rafii says the word *taghlibūn* (you may gain the upper hand) attracts our attention. This should be reflected in again and again.²⁶

On this topic the individual opinion of al-Rafii regarding the inimitable features of the Quran may be summarized as under :

1. The music and the rhyme the holy Quran implied.
2. The spirit reflecting transparently in the order and arrangement maintained in the Quran. This while addressing the soul does not constitute the words with the meanings only; it rather forms an enlightened life, a spiritual creation. In it lies the sound of natural soul in the construction of the Arabic language, and the sound of thought or the intellect and this was abundantly available to the Arabs. The distinction of the Quran lies in a third sound e.g. the sound of sensitivity in the words and the illustrated meanings.²⁷
3. The Quran is free from the words supportive; these are used in the books of the most eloquent literary men. To al-Rafii, the Quran has used the words unavoidable to communicate the meaning it intends. No additional or supportive words are found in the Quran.
4. The Quran comprises of the inimitability both in the inner and outer dimensions. It consists in its design the fundamental principles of the sciences and discoveries explored by the human being only in the modern time. Responding to Ibn Rushd (d. 595) who discussed briefly how the Quran covered all the logical methods of education both in imagination (*tasawwur*) as well as in testification (*tasdiq*), al-Rafii says that it is not strange in the logic that the words are expressive and elaborating to all the levels of understanding as well as they lead the elites to explore the specialized justification and otherwise interpretation (*tawil*) and simultaneously the argumentative nature of these words does not result in specifying one interpretation and rooting the others out. It is quite possible the true interpretation would have emerged after a long period in which the human intellect would have matured. This was demonstrated in the modern times. A distinguished verse from the Quran reads :

Al-Rafii, in his argument to favour the Quranic literary style, turns the reason into reasonable, and the cause into effect. He, therefore, instead of arguing that the Quran is a revealed book because it is miraculous and inimitable, claims it is miraculous because it is revealed by Allah. He provides the rationale in the favour of the Quran being unique and unmatched with the styles of Arabs, that the Quran did not offer a human format entirely.²⁴

14. Apart from its style the Quran is inimitable also because of its rhyme and pure music, says al-Rafii. The Arabs were confronted by a novel variety of linguistic merit and the music being in the fluency and the complete harmony of the Quran; in its symmetric consecutive arrangement; and in its well-balanced structure by each and every accent and syllable as it is tuned accordingly and is not recited verbally only.²⁵ He cites in this regard the case of Umar bin al-Khattab who did embrace Islam only when the Quran turned all of sudden his severe and harsh personality in a tender-hearted one. But the more interesting example was, says al-Raf'ii, that of the three most eloquent Qurayshite leaders, as cited in the books of history. According to the narrations, Al-Waleed bin al-Mughirah, Al-Akhnas bin Qays and Abu Jahl bin Hisham assembled a night to listen secretly the Quran being recited by the Prophet of God (SAW) in his house while praying. They continuously listened until the dawn appeared. When they met each other in their way to return they blamed each other and said in case the common people had seen them listening the Quran secretly they would have followed them and embraced Islam. In the second night, however, they repeated the same and while returning in the early morning when they again visited each other in their way they took a pledge not to repeat it. In the light of the day al-Waleed bin al-Mughirah, however, came to al-Akhnas and asked his opinion about the verses he heard from Muhammad (SAW). Al-Akhnas said: what do I say? Banu 'Abd al-Muttalib claimed the post of *hijābah* (keeping the door of holy Ka'bah) and we accepted it. They asked for the *sidānah* (serving the holy Kabah) and we did not raise any objection. They insisted on the *siqāyah* (provide water to the pilgrims) being rotated within them, and we agreed with them. Now they say: "Amongst us emerged a prophet on whom the revelation is made". By God! I can never believe in him". Al-Rafii says that nothing prevented them from the faith except the tribal prejudice. He also cites the following Quranic verse in this regard :
"The Unbelievers say: "Listen not to this Quran, but talk at random in the midst of (its reading), that you may gain the upper hand" (41: 16).

Hell, and finally called them the *kafir*, the unbeliever. In case they possessed any power that was to burst out inevitably. But there remained the ashes only without any fire”.²¹

11. The author also describes in detail the wrongly claimants of prophethood and those who tried their worst in vain to resist the Quranic challenge, as Musaylimah bin Habib (d. 12 AH), Abhalah bin Kab popularly known as al-Aswad al-'Ansi (d. 11 AH), Tulayhah bin Khuwaylid al-Asadi (d. 21 AH), Sajāh bint al-Harith (d. 55 AH), and al-Nadhr bin al-Harith (d. 2AH). He also narrates those who were accused of resisting the Quranic challenge like Ibn al-Muqaffa (d. 759), Shams al-Ma'āli Qabus bin Washamgir (d. 403), Abul Husain Ahmad bin Yahya known as Ibn al-Rawandi (d. 293 or 301 or 350 differently described), Abu al-Tayyib al-Mutanabbi (d. 354), Ibn Sina (d. 1037 AD) and Abul 'Ala al-Ma'arri (d. 449), defending some of them as well. The author, however, attacks Ibn al-Rawandi and nullifies all his claims against the inimitability of the Quran one by one. The author quotes from various books of his like *Kitab al-Farid* which he had written for the refutation of the Prophet (SAW); *Al-Taj*; *N'at al-Hikmah*; *Kitab al-Zamurradah*; *Qadhib al-Dhahab*, *al-Marjān* and *Risalah al-Ghufran*, and declares him as a man of corrupt mind and corrupt thinking (*fāsid al-aql* and *fāsid al-takhayyul*).²²
12. To al-Rafii, Arabs failed to resist the Quranic challenge because they felt from the core of their hearts the inimitable position of the Quran since they were by their strong nature as well as due to their dominant taste, acclaimingly, over the techniques of the words and the schools of the eloquence, influenced by the superiority of the Quranic language over their literature. And as their knowledge advanced their feeling and belief in the inimitability of the Quran also increased simultaneously. The whole world in this regard constitute an individual soul, the author firmly writes.²³ The Quran declares :

“And if all the trees on earth were pens and the Ocean (were ink), with seven oceans behind it to add to its (supply), yet would not the words of God be exhausted (in the writing): for God is Exalted in power, Full of Wisdom” (31: 27).
13. Al-Rafii then elaborates his own opinion of the *i'ijaz*. He says that the literary style of an erudite writer is the outcome of the specific nature he inherits. The style of the Quran being inimitable and inaccessible turns to the fact that it was not to be ascribed to a human nature. In case it was incorrect it had necessarily to be familiarized with the Arab literary styles. Because of this unique feature the Quran was free from all sorts of contradictions.

initiated writing in this discipline and the science of rhetoric was not constructed so far.¹⁸ Al-Rafii also mentions *I'ijaz al-Quran* by al-Wasiti, the same title by al-Rummani (d. 382) as well as the same by Abu Bakr al-Baqillani also. The author applies on al-Baqillani the criticism he himself had already applied on al-Jahiz. The *i'ijaz* of the Quran, to al-Baqillani as well as to al-Jahiz also, revolves around the word, the elaborating difference between one variety of words and the other, and other technical issues. He has provided a number of examples from each variety of prose and poetry to prove his stand. To al-Rafii, these examples proved by al-Baqillani represented the demerits and not the merits.¹⁹ Al-Baqillani is, however, successful in elaborating the fundamental issues to which he has written the book, so much as the scholars have duly considered the book as being unmatched in the status, the power of argument, the sound arrangement and compilation as well as in the eloquence of the interpretation the book possessed. His book *I'ijaz al-Quran* satisfied his contemporaries meeting accordingly their understanding and literary taste. The book, however, can not fully convince on the issue of inimitability of the Quran each and every generation.²⁰ Al-Rafii, then, mentions other writers of the *i'ijaz* like al-Khattabi (d. 388), Fakhruddin al-Rāzi (d. 606), Ibn Abi al-Isb'a (d. 654), al-Zamlakani (d. 727), Abu Zayd al-Balkhi (d. 934), Ibn Suraqa and others.

10. The learned author narrates systematically how the challenging verses were revealed in the descending order initiating from producing a book similar to the Quran, and that finally reduced to the challenge of bringing out a chapter like unto it. The holy Quran finally declared :

“And if you are in doubt as to what we have revealed from time to time to our servant, then produce a *Sura* like there-unto; and call your witnesses or helpers (if there are any) besides God, if your doubts are true. But if you can't – and of a surety you can not – then fear the Fire whose fuel is Men and Stones, which is prepared for those who reject Faith” (2: 23-24).

While elaborating this verse al-Rafii says: “Reflect in the order and coherence maintained in the verses you will be surprised. The Quran excessively expresses the recklessness and excitement of Arabs in order to prove that their capability to resist the divine challenge was similar to the capability of a dead body to be active like one who was alive. This was impossible in the past and would be so in the future also. The Quran, therefore, challenged: *Lan taf'alu* that is, “of a surety you can not”. The Quran pronounced, this was above their power, their strategy, their assistance and also above the whole world to respond. Then the Quran declared these Arabs as the fuel; then mixed them with the stones of the

3. The author elaborated the view of *sarfah* and the arguments offered by its supporters. He responded in this context to al-Nazzam, al-Murtuda, Ibn Hazm, al-Jahiz and others.¹⁴
4. Al-Rafii discusses in detail the various stands of *i'ijaz* and nullifies all of them, like the theory of order and arrangement maintained in the Quran unfamiliar to all the varieties of order incorporated by the Arabs in their prose and poetry in the beginnings, the crossing points and the punctuation marks; or the theory of the words being safe from all the faults that might disgrace the words; or the theory that the Quran is miraculously evacuated of the contradictions and consists of the noble and refined meanings; or the justification of the *i'ijaz* being implied in the combination of all these things. The author disapproves them as any satisfying rationale of the *i'ijaz*.¹⁵
5. He describes the theory of *i'ijaz* as propounded by Abdul Qahir al-Jurjani in his *Dalā'il al- I'ijaz*, and refutes the claim that he was the first writer on the subject. According to al-Rafii, al-Jurjani was preceded in this regard by Abu Abdullah Muhammad bin Yazid al-Wasiti (d. 306 A.H.) and Abu 'Isa al-Rummani (d. 382 A.H.).
6. The author also provides an account of the late coming scholars like Yahya bin Hamzah al-Yamani (d. 749), the writer of *al-Tirāz fi al-Balāghah* and the like. They believe in the eloquence of the words, the nobility of the meaning and the beauty of the order as the factors to the inimitability of the Quran, Al-Rafii disapproves all these factors.
7. Al-Rafii says that some slanderous elements against the Quran cite the sophistries affected by some ulama in response to allegations charged by the enemies, while the holy Quran is far beyond to these sophistries and affectations. He says no man of letters in the later period has ever denied the *i'ijaz*.¹⁶
8. He also mentions Isa bin Sabih al-Muzdār and the followers of the Muzdarid school; as well as Al-Husayn bin al-Qasim al-Anani and his followers known as Husayniyah who denied the inimitable position of the Quran. Al-Rafii declares the claims of these as 'the madness (*junūn*) undoubtedly'.¹⁷
9. Enumerating the books composed so far in the discipline of *i'ijaz*, al-Rafii mentions al-Jahiz (d. 255 AH) and his book *Nazm al-Quran* and criticizes Abu Bakr al-Baqillani for devaluating al-Jahiz. It was slipped from al-Baqillani that the situation that called al-Jahiz to write a book in the *i'ijaz* in the beginning of the third century was different from the one that persuaded him to compose his book in the end of the fourth century. Al-Jahiz, therefore, could not exceed the saying of the elaboration and eloquence as was conceived in the earliest period because he himself

prevailing conflict between the traditionalism and modernism in the Arab world during the period from 1908 to 1926 were edited and published under the title of *Tahta Rayah al-Quran*. Rafii held the firm view that the modernization led by Taha Hussain and his supporters planned to divide the Arabic literature in to classical and modern and thus to target victimize the Arabic language by the refined sugar-coated methods and to criticize the Quran and its inimitability. He considered, therefore, all the efforts to defend the language and its purity and authenticity as a jihad to be performed for the sake of God under the banner of the Quran.¹¹

Among the other books al-Rafii composed are *Tarikh Ādāb al-Arab*, *Hadith al-Qamar*, *Kitab al-Masākin*, and as the poet his national songs like *Aslimi Ya Misr*, *Nashid al-Istiqlāl* and *al-Bahr al-Munfajir*; his treatises on the issues of love and affection like *Rasail al-Ahzān*, *Hiya wa Hua*, *al-Sahāb al-Ahmar*, and *Awraq al-Ward*; and in criticism apart from *Tahta Rayah al-Quran* his writings like *'Ala al-Safud*. His magnum opus, however, is the book titled *I'ijaz al-Quran wa al-Balāghah al-Nabawiyah*.

Al-Rafii, deals in detail with the various schools of the theory of *i'ijaz* and evaluates them addressing with the spirit and enthusiasm of a devout Muslim who seems antagonist against those who opposed him, and reacts sharply sometimes applying the method below the standard he maintained in other writings.¹² He in this book supports wholeheartedly everyone who strengthens the cause of Islam and the inimitability of the Quran. In the concluding pages of the book he offers his peculiar opinion about the theory of *i'ijaz al-Quran*. Since the book was considered by the Quranic scholars as the pioneering one in the field it is advisable to summarise the discussions of the book in the following :

1. Al-Rafii defines the theory of *i'ijaz* as an accumulation of the two things: (a) inaccessibility of human being to resist the Quranic challenge, and (b) the continuity of this inaccessibility through the ages.¹³
2. The author narrates the first person who opposed the Quran was a Jew namely Labeed bin al-A'asam who was followed by Talut, then propagated by Banan bin Sanan, al-Ja'd bin Dirham and others in their periods. He has discussed the mischievous issue of the Quran being the created entity and how it was strengthened by the Mutazilites who were greatly influenced by the alien philosophies and ideologies, and how the theory of *i'ijaz* was amalgamated with this non-Islamic theory of *khalq al-Quran*.

teach the Quran in the schools of the Jamiah. *Tafsir Surah al-'Asr*, another work of the Shaykh, is the collection of the lectures delivered by him to the scholars of Algeria in 1903. He also delivered the tafsir lectures in Jamia al-Azhar initiating from the chapter *al-Fatiha* in Muharram 1317 A.H. and this continued recurrently till the verse No. 126, chapter *al-Nisa* in the month of Muharram 1323 A.H. He died on 8th Jumada al-Ula in the same year. These lectures were used to be noted, edited, and serially published in the monthly *al-Manār* by his notable disciple Sayyid Muhammad Rashid Rida (1865-1935) after being revised by the learned teacher. In spite of being negligible in quantity, this work created a revolution in the tafsir literature and provided a broader canvas for the coming commentators of the Quran who were inspired by him in one way or the other.

Muhammad Abduh believes in the inimitable position of the Quran because the Book was offered by the unschooled Prophet; it predicted the unseen; and all the human attempts to resist the Quranic challenge were defeated. He says, in case a person raises the objection that inimitability is established against one who personally failed to respond and not against the others who might access the nearest method to refute it, he will be answered that the inimitability here in this case differed from the inimitability to produce any proof. The *i'ijaz* is established on the ground reality that the human capabilities are actually below the status and position of the Quran. This inimitability stands, to Abduh, because of the rhetoric of the Quran⁹, a stand already taken by al-Baqillani in this regard.

The books on the theory of *i'ijaz al-Quran* composed by the ancestors fulfilled the need of the time in which these were written excellently, but do not satisfy the requirements of the modern age, says Sayyid Muhammad Rashid Rida in his preface to the second edition of *I'ijaz al-Quran wa al-Balāghah al-Nabawiyah* by Mustafa Sadiq al-Rafii. The theory of *i'ijaz* now needed a saying more comprehensive, an elaboration more extensive, an argument more exhaustive in the style that might appeal the heart, attract the mind, satisfy the ears and encourage the taste. This emergent demand of the time was responded enthusiastically by a distinguished scholar who was none but Mustafa Sadiq al-Rafii, appreciates and welcomes him Shaykh Rida.¹⁰

Al-Rāfi'i

Mustafa Sadiq al-Rāfi'i (1880-1937), the Egyptian scholar and essayist who criticized in the letter and spirit the movement of renovation and modernization launched by Dr. Taha Hussain in the field of thought as well as in the literature. The articles written by him on the controversy over the

usual to other commentators of the Quran. Then he elaborates in detail the scientific and rational advancements made by the west in the field of technology as well as the social sciences that relate in one way or the other to the verses under discussion and calls this portion as *Latāif* or *jawāhir*, a method opposed to all the exegetes. These *latāif* constitutes the *i'ijāz al-Quran* and declares the divine book as inimitable. The author convincingly gives the impression to the readers that the scientific discoveries made, the philosophical and social thoughts developed so far by the European intellectuals were inimitably discussed or implied in the Quran fourteen centuries ago.

This scientism in the interpretation of the Quran as well as in redefining the theory of *i'ijāz al-Quran* was vehemently criticized and disapproved by the contemporary scholars, ulama and commentators of the Quran like Shaykh Mahmud Shaltut, Professor Amin al-Khawi, Shaykh Muhammad Mustafa al-Maraghi, as well as Sayyid Muhammad Rashid Rida, Sayyid Qutb, Muhammad Husain Dhahabi and others.

Another dimension of *i'ijāz* was discovered by Shaykh Muhammad Abduh (1848-1905), in which the literary taste alongwith the socio-political dimensions of the Quranic teachings dominates other methods and schools, overlooking sectarian approach as well as the excessive technical discussions of grammar, rhetoric and jurisprudential microscopic issues. This literary taste represented the miraculous refined beauties of the Quranic style; elaborated the principles and secrets of nature the Quran implied; and accommodated the modern knowledge since these were in conformity with the Quranic ideology of *tawhid*.

Abduh

Shaykh Muhammad Abduh, the Egyptian politician and Islamic reformist, one of the graduates of Azhar who was later on appointed *mufti al-diyār al-Misriyah* in 1899, was among the prominent leaders of the Muslim world. He initiated the national movement through his writings against the British occupation in the magazine *al-Waqā'i al-Misriyah* as the editor, and was expatriated. He consequently released the worldwide famous magazine *al-'Urwah al-Uthqa* alongwith Shaykh Jamaluddin al-Afghani (1838-1897) from Paris. Among his contributions are the books like *Risālah al-Tawhid*, *Sharh Muqāmāt al-Badi' al-Hamadani*, *Sharh Nihaj al-Balaghah*. The field in which he gained the name and fame was of tafsir.

Shaykh Abduh composed the commentary of the 30th part of the Quran in 1321 AH. after the due advice given by some members of the al-Jam'iah al-Khayriyah al-Islamiyah for the individual benefit of those ulama who used to

creation in order to encourage the Muslims to discover the truths of the meanings of the signs implied in the animals, the plants, the earth and the skies. Addressing the young generation he says: "You must know that this tafsir constitutes a Godly fragrance, a sanctified counsel, a symbolical tidings, instructed by the divine inspiration, and I believe this tafsir will gain a standing to receive the popular recognition, and it will be proved an strong factor for the advancement of those who were subjugated in the land and God will surely help those who will assist Him, verily Allah is Powerful, Mighty".⁶

Science-based Approach

Shaykh Jawhari persuades Muslims to seriously think over the Quranic verses concerning the sciences of the universe and that they should not demonstrate lethargy in reflecting in the Quran rationally. He says: "O Muslim community! Quite surprising is the reality that only few verses were revealed about the law of inheritance but the Muslims being inspired from that developed their taste to mathematics. More than seven hundred verses relating to the wonders of the nature are recited from the Quran but these are not operated genuinely in the life! This is the age of learning and science. This age signifies the emergence and advancement of the light of Islam. Why do we not dynamically deal with the verses concerning the universe as our ancestors used to interact enthusiastically the verses of inheritance? By the grace of Allah this tafsir of mine will offer the gist of all the sciences and technological progress; the study of which precedes the study of the religious obligations. Studying the science of religious obligations forms the supererogatory position in law. The thinking over the wonders of the universe, conversely, supports the acquisition of the knowledge of God, and it constitutes the individual obligation".⁷

Again he, emphasizing on the learning of modern knowledge and technology, expresses his feeling of mild astonishment: "Amazingly in the field of legal ordinances the scholars blacked thousands of pages while the Quranic verses dealing with them are no more than 150 in number? They very rarely touched the verses that interacted the sciences of the universe while no Quranic chapter is evacuated of them? The verses dealing with these sciences and their accessories, instead, are enumerated as more than seven hundred and fifty in number. How justified in Shariah as well as in reason is the attitude of neglecting the science of which the verses revealed are abundant in number? If our ancestors were upperhanded in the jurisprudence, we must compete others in the natural sciences".⁸

The author while explaining the Quranic verses, first provides a literal meaning in brief as well as the socio-political issues involved therein, a method

Shaykh Jawhari, acclaimingly, states that he was, by very nature, fond of the wonders of the universe and the beauties and splendours of the nature. He realized, after a deep understanding and full comprehension of the Muslim Ummah and its deteriorating condition as well as its rich legacy of thought, that most of the intellectuals and modern educated enlightened men overlooked the religious truths and humiliated them. To him, there were very rare people who had ever reflected in the creation of the universe and in the secrets and the marvelous living miracles of the nature. Facing this critical situation he composed a number of treatises arguing the scientific discoveries with the help of the Quranic verses and tried his best to reconcile between the two. His book covering this conciliatory approach included *Nizām al-‘Ālam wa al-Umam*, *Jawāhir al-Uloom*, *al-Taj al-Murassa*’, *Jamal al-‘Aalam*, *al-Nizām wa al-Islam* and *al-Ummah wa Hayatuha*.

These books were publicized and even translated into various languages because of their conciliatory approach between the religion and the science but could not satisfy the author himself. He therefore planned to provide a full-fledged commentary of the Quran following the same methodology. He prayed to God bestow on him to write a tafsir that might be proved an exhaustive to all the sciences and fully satisfying to all the groups of people. The author initiated to dictate the tafsir to his students in the Dar ul-Uloom and publish them first serially in the magazines and then in the form of the book entitled as *Al-Jawāhir fi Tafsir al-Quran al-Karim al-Mushtamāl ‘ala ‘Ajaib al-Mukawwanāt wa Gharāib al-Ayāt al-Bāhirah*, with the notes on the title cover that reads “God willing after being the tafsir completely published a supplementary volume would be followed to elaborate what was concisely described in the book, of the sciences of the universe, the legal ordinances implied therein and the varying schools in it.

Shaykh Jawhari composed the tafsir in order to provide “an strong force to study the temporal and metaphysical worlds, and that such youths might emerge from amongst this ummah who compete the Europeans in the agricultural science, medicine, mineralogy, mathematics, engineering and other sciences and technologies. Why is it not possible while the Quran contained the verses dealing with the knowledge and its whereabouts that exceeded seven hundred and fifty in number and the verses concerning the jurisprudence are, in contrast, reduced to one hundred and fifty only?”⁵

The learned author discussed in the tafsir what was required to a Muslim: the legal ordinances, the moral ethics, and the wonders of the universe; he identified in it the marvels of the learnings and unusuals of the

Ma'ādīn wa al-Khawāss al-Hayawāniyah by the same writer. The first was published from Cairo in 1297 AH while the second from Syria in 1300 AH. The treatise comparing some issues of astronomy with the Shariah texts, composed by Fikri Pasha, formerly Education Minister in Egypt, published from Cairo in 1315 AH, also comes under this category”.

Rationalising the *i'ijāz* Sayyid Abdur Rahman al-Kawakibi (1849-1902) the famous reformist thinker of Syria who commenced therein *al-Shahba* the famous magazine and faced the persecutions managed by the Ottomans due to his liberating ideas and movement of renaissance in the Arab world, derived from the Quran, the scientific discoveries made by the modern world. He claimed in his writings that the elaborations or implications of these scientific developments were revealed in the Quran thirteen centuries ago. But these were not disclosed so that these might be proved a miracle of the Quran at the time of their emergence.

Mustafa Sadiq al-Rafii (1880-1937), the famous writer and essayist in Egypt too tilting toward the claim that the Quran consists of the principles of all the disciplines of learning, has counted it the main constituent of the *m'ujizah* of the Quran. Dr. Abdul Aziz Ismail also expressed the similar views serially in the magazine *al-Azhar* and got it published later on in the form of a book titled *al-Islam wa al-Tibb al-Hadith* in 1357 AH by Matba' al-I'timād in Egypt. The author claimed a number of Quranic verses were to be comprehended extensively only by those who were aware of the modern knowledge.² He also expressed that with the increased knowledge and advanced science the connotations and implications of the holy verses would be more exposed and there would come a time surely when the men of temporal knowledge will turn into the vanguard of Islam.³ This rationalizing trend, was, however, theorized and more elaborated by Shaykh Tantawi Jawhari (1870-1940) of Egypt.⁴

Tantawi Jawhari

Shaykh Jawhari, the Egyptian scholar and exegete, acquired, besides Arabic Islamic learning, a number of sciences and became famous because of his keen interest in interpreting the religious texts in the light of modern scientific advancements. After being graduated from Dar al-Uloom, Cairo he was appointed lecturer therein. He delivered lectures in the Egyptian University and supported enthusiastically the freedom movement. He died in Cairo.

Now most of the commentators, exegetes, and scholars of the Quran portrayed the issues of *i'ijāz al-Quran* in the canvas of Islamic reform and revival.

The classical theory of *i'ijāz* was now tried to be rationalized with the due influence and inspiration from the western intellectual renaissance. This jump from the rhetoricism of the Quran to the rationalism and sciencism explored in it was originally a sharp reaction created by the Muslim interaction with the rising Europe and by the inactive Muslim culture with the developed and awakened western civilization. The modern educated scholars or those who followed modernism or westernizing process thought in case they did not cope with the modernity and did not try to trace the origin of these scientific developments and flourishing natural and social sciences in the Quran the newer generation would see the Islamic legacy as fading and meager and their faith in the Islamic teaching and in their eternity would be tottering and disappearing against the amazing advancement of the modern civilization. They, consequently, tried to prove that the holy Quran had already implied all these sciences and discoveries in its very design and construction prior to the modern scholars and scientists who could disclose them only after the fourteen centuries, this constituted the newer dimension of *i'ijāz al-Quran*.

In the process of rationalizing the theory of *i'ijāz* some writers on the Quranic studies as well as commentators and exegetes challenged the fundamental issues as well as the methodology applied therein. They provided a novel dimension to the inimitability of the Quran that provoked the ulama and the traditional writers. Says in this regard Amin al-Khauḍī, a modern Egyptian writer of repute in his book *al-Tafsir Ma'ālim Hayatih wa Munhajuh al-Yaum*¹ as follows :

“This trend (of rationalization) prevailed the tafsir literature and the theory of *i'ijāz al-Quran* in the rationalized form became the dominating ideology and thus compatibility of Islam with the modern life was proved. If Fakhrud-dīn al-Rāzī had tried to initiate it in his tafsir, independent books were composed separately in deriving various sciences from the holy Quran; pursuing the verses specifying different branches of learning. This trend became popular in the later period. We, therefore, find the specialized books in the field like *Kashf al-Asrār al-Nurāniyah al-Qurāniyah fima yataallaqu bi al-Ajrām al-Samāwiyah wa al-Ardiyah wa al-Hayawanāt wa al-Nabatāt wa al-Jawāhir al-Madīniyah* by Muḥammad bin Ahmad al-Iskandarānī in the 13th century hijra, and the book *Tibyān al-Asrar al-Rabbāniyah fi al-Nabatāt wa al-*

Re-defining *I'ijāz* al-Quran: A Study of the Modern Scholars of Islam on the Inimitability of the Quran

Obaidullah Fahad Fallahi *

Abstract: This aims at an evaluation of the modern Arabic scholars of the Quran who have tried their best to redefine the classical theory of the *i'ijāz* (the inimitability of the Quran) in the perspective of the challenges and problems faced by the Muslim society emphasizing a need to cope with the rational thinking, modernity, scientific progress, psychological advancement and civilizational development, though there has been a comparatively lesser description of the rhetoricism of the Quran too. From Tantāwi Jawhari, Muhammad Abduh, Rashid Rida, Mustafa Sadiq al-Rafi'i to Amin al-Khauili, Abdul Hamid al-Farāhi, Sayyid Qutb, Bint al-Shati, Abdul Azim al-Zurqāni, Nu'aym al-Himsi, Bahjah al-Baytār all of them have explored in their writings some novel dimensions of the matchlessness of the Quran in the contemporaneous context. They have justified rationally and psychologically the Quranic historic challenge of producing a book or its some *surahs* or few verses similar to the Quran that has offered the irresistible call to the whole mankind: "Say: "If the whole of mankind and Jinns were to gather together to produce the like of this Quran, they could not produce the like thereof, even if they backed up each other with help and support". (The Quran, 17: 88) The same challenge occurs in the Quran on three previous occasions (*al-Baqarah*, 2: 23-24; *Yunus* 10: 38, and *Hūd* 11:13) and later also in *al-Tūr* (52: 33-34). The content of all the verses referred to above is in response to the allegation of the unbelievers that the Quran had been composed by the Prophet (SAW) and then falsely ascribed to God. All this was refuted. This refutation of the Quran was logically established by the modern Arabic scholars through their sound arguments.

The theory of *i'ijāz al-Quran* (the inimitability or matchlessness of the Quran) was redefined and reformulated in the modern times, seeking to address a much wider audience – not only the scholars but the common people as well – by using an idiom comprehensible to all. A change in points of emphasis was notable in the modern discussions on the Quranic challenge to produce a book or its some chapters, or few verses similar to the Quran. There was in some cases flying emphasis and in others an almost total neglect with regard to such aspects of classical deliberations as grammar, rhetoric and scholastic theology. By contrast, there was an increased emphasis on the discussions faced by the society at large; the scholars concentrated on the socio-political dimensions as well as a need to cope with the modernity, scientific awareness and rational thinking.

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TRANSLITERATION TABLE

ا	a	د	<u>d</u>	غ	gh	بھ	<u>bh</u>	Long Vowels	
ب	b	ذ	<u>dh</u>	ف	f	پھ	<u>ph</u>	آ	ā
پ	p	ر	r	ق	q	تھ	<u>th</u>	اے	ā
ت	t	ز	<u>r</u>	ک	k	ٹھ	<u>ṭh</u>	ی	ī
ث	<u>ṭ</u>	س	z	گ	g	ڈھ	<u>ḍh</u>	و	<u>ū</u>
ج	th	ش	<u>z</u>	ل	l	چھ	<u>ch</u>	و (URDU)	ō
ح	j	ص	s	م	m	دھ	<u>dh</u>	و (URDU)	ē
خ	ch	ض	sh	ن	n	دھ	<u>dh</u>	Short Vowels	
د	h	ط	ṣ	و	w	رھ	<u>rh</u>	ا	a
	kh	ظ	<u>ṭ</u>	ہ	h	کھ	<u>kh</u>	ی	i
	d	ظ	z	ی	y	گھ	<u>gh</u>	و	u

Diphthongs

و —
 (ARABIC)
 (PERSIAN/URDU)
 (TURKISH)

aw
au
ev

ی —
 (ARABIC)
 (PERSIAN/URDU)
 (TURKISH)

ay
ai
ey

Doubled

و — uww/uvv

ی — iyy

Letter ف is transliterated as elevated comma (') and is not expressed when at the beginning.

Letter ع is transliterated as elevated inverted comma (').

د as Arabic letter is transliterated as *d*, and as Persian/Turkish/Urdu letter as *z*.

و as Arabic letter is transliterated as *w*, and as Persian/Turkish/Urdu letter is transliterated as *v*.

تھ is transliterated as *ah* in pause form and as *at* in construct form.

Article ل is transliterated as *al-* (*'l-* in construct form) whether followed by a moon or a sun letter.

و as a Persian/Urdu conjunction is transliterated as *-o*.

Short vowel و in Persian/Urdu possessive or adjectival form is transliterated as *-i*.

(Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1995), pp.54-64.

- c) **Journal Article:** Asma Afsaruddin, "Medieval Islamic Discourse on Legitimate Leadership and Its Modern Implications," *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, 20:2(2003): 80-94.
- d) **Unpublished work/ Dissertation:** Effendy Bahtiar, "Islam and the State: The Transformation fo Political Ideas and Practices in Indonesia", (Ph.D., The Ohio State University, 1994), pp.100-102.
- e) Cite all bibliographical information in endnotes. When the book or journal article is cited for the first time, provide full information: full name(s) of the author(s), title of the source, place of publication, publishing company, date of publication and the specific page you are citing. For subsequent citations of the same source, list the author's last name, as abbreviated form of the title, and the relevant page number(s). *Do not use footnotes or a biography.*

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 - b) **Chapter:** Antonie Wessels, "Some Biblical Considerations Relevant to the Encounter Between Traditions," in *Christian-Muslim Encounters*, eds. Y.Y. Haddad and W.Z. Haddad

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