

Introduction: Definition, History and Main Topics

In the Name of the Almighty

The Holy Quran is the verbatim Words of God, the most authentic source in Islam and the one and only Book in the history of man that is divinely preserved against any distortion or perversion. It is the living miracle of the Prophet Muhammad (S) and the only literature that no man or jinn is ever able to produce something like unto it.

Definition

By 'science' here we don't mean natural sciences such as physics and chemistry. The 'science' here is an expression for methodological study and certain techniques for the understanding of the Quran. The Sciences of the Quran therefore are preliminary studies that are necessary to enable the correct understanding of the Quran. The sciences of the abrogating and abrogated Ayaat, the clear and the unclear Ayaat and the occasions of the revelation, etc. are some examples of the sciences of the Quran.

For instance, the Almighty Allah in Surah 4 states: ***"Marry women that are pure for you, two or three, or four; but if you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly (with them), then only one."***(4:3)

And in the same Surah, He states: ***"You will never be able to do justice between wives even if it is your ardent desire."***(4: 129)

Are these two Ayaat contrary to each other? Or does the latter Ayah abrogate the former one? The correct understanding of these Ayaat requires acquaintance with the sciences of the Quran.

History

Although the Holy Quran is revealed in plain Arabic language (26: 195), due to certain internal and external factors that will be discussed in this course, its best understanding requires certain prerequisite studies. At the time of the revelation of the Quran when Muslims faced any difficulty understanding the

Quran they would simply ask the Holy Prophet (S) to whom the Quran was revealed. With the demise of the Prophet (S) the need for classification of the techniques of understanding the Quran became more imperative.

According to Al-Soyouti, amongst the first Four Caliphs, Imam Ali (a.s) has narrated the most narrations about the techniques of understanding the Quran¹. However, the expression of the 'sciences of the Quran' was not used until the 5th century. Al-Zaraqani in his book *Manahelul-'Irfan* states: *"It is known among the writers of the sciences of the Quran that the advent of this expression was the seventh century. However, I found a book in the Egyptian Public Library, named 'Al-Borhan in the sciences of the Quran'. The book is compiled by Ali Ibn Ibrahim Ibn Sa'eed known as 'al-Houfi' died in 430 (A.H) in thirty volumes, which today only fifteen volumes of it are available."*²

Types of literature in the sciences of the Quran

Muslim scholars have usually discussed the sciences of the Quran in one of three following styles:

1. Introduction to their exegesis of the Quran

As mentioned earlier, the sciences of the Quran are general techniques of understanding the Quran. Thus, many exegetists of the Quran have briefly discussed the main topics of the sciences of the Quran in the beginning of their exegesis such as al-Faydh al-Kashani, died in 1091 (A.H) in the beginning of his Tafsir 'al-Safi', Seyyed Hashem al-Bahrani, died in 1109 (A.H) in the beginning of his Tafsir 'al-Borhan', etc.

2. Separate books on the sciences of the Quran

Due to the significance of the sciences of the Quran many scholars have compiled separate books on the topic for more detailed discussions. The following are some of the most important references compiled on the sciences of the Quran.

a) al-Borhan Fi 'Uloomel-Quran compiled by BadrudDin al-Zarkashi, died in 794 (A.H). al-Zarkashi was an Egyptian scholar following the Shaafei' school. His book is published in Arabic in four volumes and covers 47 sciences of the Quran.

b) al-Etqaan Fi 'Uloomel-Quran compiled by JalaludDin al-Soyouti died in 911 (A.H). He was also from Egypt and followed the school of Shaafei'. His book is published in Arabic, two volumes and covers 80 sciences of the Quran.

c) Al-Tamheed Fi 'Uloomel-Quran compiled by Ayatollah Muhammad Hadi Ma'refat one of the contemporary Shi'a scholars. His book is published in Arabic in three volumes.

3. A particular science of the Quran

The third category of the compilation on the sciences of the Quran is books that are dealing only with one particular branch of the sciences of the Quran. Obviously these works are more detailed and are only studied in the advanced level of Islamic education. An example of such works is 'E'jazul-Quran' (The miracles of the Quran) by al-Baaqellani, died in 403 (A.H). This book is published in two volumes and only deals with the linguistic miracles of the Quran.

The present course will be a concise version of the second category of the sciences of the Quran. The present course though briefly fits into the second category of the study of the sciences of the Quran. The main topics that will be discussed in this course include: a controversial discussion on the method of the revelation of the Quran, the history of the Quran, the myth of the distortion of the Quran, the science of the context of the Quran, clear and unclear Ayaat and many other useful issues about the Quran.

[1.](#) Al-Etqaan Fi 'Uloomel-Quran, vol.2, p.87

[2.](#) Manahelul-Irfan Fi Uloomel-Quran, vol.1 p.35

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