

The Categorical and the Allegorical Verses in the Qur'ān and Inferences of Imām Qurṭubī (A Specialized Study of Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān)

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Abstract:

One of the most important discussions of the Qur'ānic Sciences is the Categorical and the Allegorical in the Qur'ān. The foundations for implementation of this science on the verses of the Qur'ān are found in the Qur'ān itself. That is why the polymaths of the Qur'ānic Sciences made them and their relatives the topic of discussion in their writings. The exegetes, while interpreting those verses which specify the Categorical and the Allegorical in the Qur'ān, also elaborated the differences between both the terms. Moreover, they explicated the term "Mutashābih" according to their specific area of interest due to wide ranging interpretation of this term. Imām Qurṭubī is also one of those interpreters who discuss even the minute aspects of the verses with respect to the Qur'ānic Sciences. In this article, the inferences of Imām Qurṭubī in the Categorical and the Allegorical verses have been elaborated.

Key Words: Qur'ānic Sciences, Tafsir, Imām Qurṭubī, Categorical, Allegorical.

Meaning of the Categorical (Muḥkam)

The word "Muḥkam" is the Passive Participle Noun (اسم مفعول) of (أَحْكَم) having root letters (ح ك م). It is described by various lexicologists. The Scholars of Al-Mu'jam al-Wasīṭ described the following meanings:

1. "الْمُتَّقِنُ" which means Accurate;
2. "من القرآن : الظاهر الذي لا شبهة فيه ولا يحتاج إلى تأويل المُحْكَمُ"
3. "وفي التنزيل العزيز: آل عمران آية 7 مِنْهُ آيَاتٌ مُحْكَمَاتٌ هُنَّ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ وَأُخَرُ مُتَشَابِهَاتٌ"

The Muḥkam in the Qur'ān: The manifest of which has neither any doubt in it nor requires any interpretation as explained in verse:

﴿ مِنْهُ آيَاتٌ مُحْكَمَاتٌ هُنَّ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ وَأُخَرُ مُتَشَابِهَاتٌ ﴾²

‘Allāmah Jubrān Mas‘ūd mentioned the following meanings:

1. "الْمُتَّقِنُ (الكلام محكم)" which means Accurate (Accurate Text);
2. "من القرآن الكريم الظاهر الواضح : الذي لا يحتاج إلى تأويل"

(The Categorical in the Qur'ān is the manifest, the clear and which does not require any interpretation).

3. "متين ، لا خلل فيه"³ (Firmly established having no fault in it)

Meaning of the Allegorical (Mutashābih):

The word "Mutashābih" is the Passive Participle Noun (اسم مفعول) of (شبه) having root letters (ش ب ه) and its various meanings have been comprehensively described by Imām Rāghib in the following words:

1. ⁴ "الشَّيْءُ وَالشَّيْءُ وَالشَّيْءُ: حَقِيقَتُهَا فِي الْمِثَالَةِ مِنْ جِهَةِ الْكَيْفِيَّةِ" (The real meaning is the resemblance according to the nature of condition)
2. ⁵ "الشُّبُهَةُ: هِيَ لَا يَتَمَيَّزُ أَحَدُ الشَّيْئَيْنِ مِنَ الْآخَرِ لَمَّا بَيْنَهُمَا مِنَ التَّشَابُهِ" (The resemblance of two things to an extent that they cannot be distinguished from one another). For instance, the following verse denotes the above stated meaning: ⁶ (وَأَتَوْا بِهِ مُتَشَابِهًا ط) "They will be given things in resemblance (in the same form but different in taste)"
3. ⁷ "المتشابه من القرآن: ما اشكل تفسيره لمتشابهة لغيره؛ اما من حيث اللفظ، او من حيث المعاني" (The Allegorical in the Qur'ān are those verses the interpretation of which is quite difficult due to great resemblance in wording or meaning). Imām Rāghib states that according to Jurists: ⁸ " قال الفقهاء: ما لا يبيىء ظاهره عن " Jurists said: Those verses the apparent meaning of which does not connote their real meaning are Allegorical.

Moreover, Imām Rāghib declares three types of the Allegorical in the Qur'ān:

"المتشابهة في الجملة ثلاثة اضرب: متشابه من جهة اللفظ فقط، والمتشابه من جهة المعاني فقط ومتشابه من جهتهما" ⁹

There are three types of the Allegorical:

- 1) Due to Wording 2) Due to Meaning 3) Due to both Wording and Meaning

Muḥkam and Mutashābih According To Imām Qurṭubī:

The elucidation of these terminologies by Imām Qurṭubī¹⁰ has been undergone while interpreting the following verse:

هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْهُ آيَاتٌ مُحْكَمَاتٌ هُنَّ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ وَأُخَرُ مُتَشَابِهَاتٌ فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ زَيْغٌ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ مَا تَشَابَهَ مِنْهُ ابْتِغَاءَ الْفِتْنَةِ وَابْتِغَاءَ تَأْوِيلِهِ وَمَا يَعْلَمُ تَأْوِيلَهُ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَالرَّاسِخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ يَقُولُونَ آمَنَّا بِهِ كُلٌّ مِنْ عِنْدِ رَبِّنَا وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ إِلَّا أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ ¹¹

"It is He Who has sent down to you (Muhammad ﷺ) the Book (This Qur'ān). In it are verses that are entirely clear, they are the foundations of the Book and others not entirely clear. So as for those in whose hearts there is a deviation (from the truth) they follow that which is not entirely clear thereof, seeking al-Fitnah (polytheism and trials), and seeking for its hidden meanings, but none knows its hidden meanings save Allah. And those who are firmly grounded on knowledge say: We believe in it; the whole of it (clear and unclear verses) are from our Lord. And none receive admonition except men of understanding"

Explication through Stances of Scholars:

Imām Qurṭubī states that there are conflicting opinions of the scholars in interpreting the above mentioned verse. Hence, he presents the stances of several Companions (رضى الله تعالى عنهم), Successors and Scholars to make these terms clearer in the minds of the readers. He also provides remarks over them; wherever he wants to add on or show disagreement. The detail of the opinions quoted by him is mentioned as under:

1) The assertion of Ḥaḍrat Jābir b. 'Abdullah (رضى الله تعالى عنه), which has been followed by Sha'abī, Sufyān Thaurī and some other scholars, is stated below:

- Muḥkam: ¹² "المحكمات من أي القرآن ما عرف تأويله، و فهم معناه و تفسير" (The Categorical in the Qur'ān is that for which connotation, meaning and interpretation is known).
- Mutashābih:

"والمتشابه ما لم يكن لاحد الى علمه سبيل، مما استأثر الله بعلمه دون خلقه- قال بعضهم: وذلك مثل

وقت قيام الساعة، و خروج ياجوج ماجوج والدجال و عيسى، و تحو الحروف المقطعة في اوائل السور" ¹³

The Allegorical is that for which there is no way to find it out. It is among those which have been restricted by Allāh to His knowledge only and not the mankind. Some scholars said: The example of this is the time of the Day of Resurrection, the emergence of Gog and Magog, Dajjāl and 'Īsa (عليه السلام), and likewise the Disjoint letters (Ḥurūf al-Maqṭa'āt) in the start of several Chapters of the Qur'ān.

Imām Qurṭubī comments that the aforementioned statement about the Allegorical is optimum and supports it by the following tradition of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم):

"إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَعَالَى أَنْزَلَ هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ فَاسْتَأْثَرَ مِنْهُ بِعِلْمٍ مَا شَاءَ" ¹⁴

Indeed the Exalted Allāh has revealed the Qur'ān; hence He took the knowledge of what He wanted.

2) Abū 'Uthmān said that Muḥkam is Sūrah al-Fātiḥah without which the prayer (Ṣalāt) is not valid. ¹⁵

3) Muḥammad b. Faḍl opined that Muḥkam means Sūrah al-Ikhlās as it contains nothing but the Unity of Allāh. ¹⁶

4) Imām Qurṭubī does not mention the names of some scholars who have the following opinion:

- Muḥkam: All the Qur'ān is Muḥkam ¹⁷ and they evidence it by the verse:

¹⁸ ﴿كَتَبْنَا أُخْرِكْتِ الْيُتَةُ﴾ " (This is) a Book, the verses whereof are perfected (in every sphere of knowledge)"

- Mutashābih: Some of the scholars believe that all of the Qur'ān is Mutashābih and they evidence it by the verse: ¹⁹

- ﴿اللَّهُ نَزَّلَ أَحْسَنَ الْحَدِيثِ كِتَابًا مُتَشَابِهًا مَثَانِي﴾ "Allah has sent down the Best Statement, a Book (Qur'ān), its parts resembling each other (in goodness and truth (and) oft-repeated"

Criticism of Imām Qurṭubī: He negates the above stated view of some scholars and explains the veracity behind these verses.

The verse ﴿كَتَبْنَا أُخْرِكْتِ الْيُتَةُ﴾ denotes that the verses of the Qur'ān are categorical and truthful in their composition and depiction; they are perfect in their certitude from Allāh Almighty. Whereas; ﴿كَتَبْنَا مُتَشَابِهًا﴾ denotes that some verses of the Qur'ān are similar to the others and serve to be witness on one another.

5) Ḥaḍrat Ibn ‘Abbās (رضى الله تعالى عنه) said: The Categorical in the Qur’ān is the three verses of Sūrah al-An‘ām. He recited from verse 151-3 and further mentioned 23rd verse of Sūrah Banī Isrā’īl.²⁰

About the verses indicated by Ibn ‘Abbās (رضى الله تعالى عنه), Imām Qurṭubī quotes the view of Ibn Aṭīyah that they are the examples of Categorical in the Qur’ān.²¹

6) Another View of Ḥaḍrat Ibn ‘Abbās (رضى الله تعالى عنه) about the Categorical and the Allegorical in the Qur’ān is as follows:

- Muḥkam: The Categorical Verses are the Abrogator verses; the verses describing the injunctions about the Permissions and Prohibitions; their Requisites; those which are believed and are acted upon.
- Mutashābih: The Allegorical Verses are the Abrogated verses, the Advanced and the Retarded in the Qur’ān, the Similitudes and Oaths of the Qur’ān, those which are to be believed only and not to be acted upon.²²

7) Ḥaḍrat Ibn Mas‘ūd (رضى الله تعالى عنه) said:

- Muḥkam: The Categorical Verses are the Abrogator verses.
- Mutashābih: The Allegorical Verses are the Abrogated verses. This view has also been buoyed by Ḥaḍrat Qatādah, Ḍaḥḥāk and Rabī’.²³

8) Muḥammad b. Ja‘far b. Zubayr asserted:

- Muḥkam: The Categorical Verses are those in which Allāh the Almighty’s will is declared, the affirmation of the protection of mankind, ways to get rid of the quarrels and the abortive; the verses would be considered in the very meaning as were revealed and they cannot be altered.
- Mutashābih: The Allegorical Verses are those of which various meanings can be interpreted and can be deflected. These are the verses by which Allāh tests the mankind. This view has been supported by Ḥaḍrat Mujāhid and Ibn Ishāq.

Imām Qurṭubī alludes the remarks of Ibn Aṭīyah about the view of Ibn Ja‘far that his view is the best about this verse.²⁴

9) Abū Ja‘far Naḥḥās said: The finest saying about the Categorical and the Allegorical is that;

- Muḥkam: The Categorical Verses are independent and do not rely upon anything for their interpretation. e.g. ²⁵ ﴿وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ﴾ “He begets not, nor was He begotten”
- Mutashābih: The Allegorical Verses are those which are dependent on other verses for their interpretation. e.g. For commentary of ²⁶
- ﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا﴾, an exegete has to consider the other verses too like: ²⁷ ﴿وَإِنِّي لَغَفَّارٌ لِّمَن تَابَ وَآمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا ثُمَّ اهْتَدَى﴾ “And verily, I am indeed forgiving to him who repents, believes (in my Oneness and associates none in worship with Me) and does righteous good deeds, and then remains constant in doing them, (till his death).” And ²⁸

- ﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغْفِرُ أَنْ يُشْرَكَ بِهِ وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُونَ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ﴾ “Verily, Allah forgives not that partners should be set up with Him (in worship), but He forgives except that (anything else) to whom He wills”

Imām Qurṭubī asserts that the view of Abū Ja‘far Naḥḥās elaborates the stance adopted by Ibn Aṭīyah that the Muḥkam is the Passive Participle Noun (اسم مفعول) from Aḥkam. Al-Aḥkam means al-Itqān i.e. Precise. Undoubtedly, the word which has evident meaning has no vagueness in it; it is obvious in clarifying the meaning and composition of its individual letters. He further mentions that when there is ambiguity between one of the two matters, it becomes vague and distorted.²⁹

10) Ibn Khuwayz Mindād opined that there are many reasons of Allegory, one of which is associated with the injunction. The scholars dissent in the verse which abrogates and the one which is abrogated. He exemplifies: Ḥaḍrat ‘Alī and Ḥaḍrat Ibn ‘Abbās (رضى الله تعالى عنهم) had a conflicting opinion about the waiting period of that pregnant woman whose husband dies. They assert that the injunction of four months and ten days waiting period has not been abrogated. On the other hand, Ḥaḍrat ‘Umar, Zayd b. Thābit and Ibn Mas‘ūd (رضى الله تعالى عنهم) proclaim that her waiting period is till the declaration of her pregnancy and that Sūrah al-Ṭalāq has abrogated the injunction of four months and ten days waiting period.³⁰

The same type contradiction is found in the traditions of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم); but the incongruity found in Analogy is Allegorical. To recite a verse by variant readings is not Allegorical. Sometimes a noun is concise and contingent and requires its interpretation; as the incumbent is only that portion which is already included in the verse. The two readings are like the two verses and it is mandatory to act upon the obligation which has been made compulsory. e.g.³¹ ﴿وَأَمْسَحُوا بِرُءُوسِكُمْ وَأَرْجُلُكُمْ﴾. The word ﴿أَرْجُلُكُمْ﴾ has been read with both Fath and Kasrah on the letter Lām which changes the injunction of the verse with the change in reading.³²

The People chasing After the Allegorical in the Qur'an: Imām Qurṭubī mentions the corollary of those people who run after the Allegorical in the Book of Allāh; as it has been clearly mentioned by the Almighty Allāh that they seek commotion and spread turmoil. He mentions a narration of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim which has also been quoted by Imām Bukhārī in these words:

حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ مَسْلَمَةَ ، حَدَّثَنَا يَزِيدُ بْنُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ التُّسْتَرِيُّ ، عَنْ ابْنِ أَبِي "مُليكة" ، عَنْ الْقَاسِمِ بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ تَلَا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ هَذِهِ الْآيَةَ هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ عَنْ غَائِشَةٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا ، قَالَتْ : فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ زَيْغٌ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ مَا تَشَابَهَ مِنْهُ ابْتِغَاءَ الْفِتْنَةِ وَابْتِغَاءَ تَأْوِيلِهِ وَمَا يَعْلَمُ تَأْوِيلَهُ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَالرَّاسِخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ يَقُولُونَ آمَنَّا بِهِ كُلٌّ مِنْ عِنْدِ رَبِّنَا وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ إِلَّا أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ فَإِذَا رَأَيْتَ الَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ مَا تَشَابَهَ الْأَلْبَابِ سورة آل عمران آية 7 ، قَالَتْ : قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مِنْهُ فَأُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ سَعَى اللَّهُ فَاحْذَرُوهُمْ³³ “Narrated 'Ā'ishah (رضى الله تعالى عنها) Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) recited the Verse: 3:7 and then said, "If you see those who follow thereof that is not entirely clear, then they are those whom Allah has named [as having deviation (from the truth)], so beware of them”

He mentioned another narration from Abū Ghālib describing the severe punishment for those who favoured chaos and following what is not clear in the Qur'ān. This narration has been reported by Imām Tirmidhī in these words:

حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو كُرَيْبٍ، حَدَّثَنَا وَكِيعٌ عَنْ رَبِيعِ بْنِ صُبَيْحٍ وَحَمَّادُ بْنُ سَلَمَةَ، عَنْ أَبِي غَالِبٍ، قَالَ: رَأَى أَبُو أَمَامَةَ رُؤُوسًا «2» مَنْصُوبَةً عَلَى دَرَجٍ مَسْجِدِ دِمَشْقَ، فَقَالَ أَبُو أَمَامَةَ، كِلَابُ النَّارِ شَرُّ قَتْلَى تَحْتَ أَيْدِيمِ السَّمَاءِ خَيْرُ قَتْلَى مَنْ قَتَلُوهُ، ثُمَّ قَرَأَ يَوْمَ تَبْيِضُ وُجُوهٌ وَتَسْوَدُ وُجُوهٌ إِلَى آخِرِ الْآيَةِ، قُلْتُ لِأَبِي أَمَامَةَ: أَنْتَ سَمِعْتَهُ مِنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ؟ قَالَ: لَوْ لَمْ أَسْمَعْهُ إِلَّا مَرَّةً أَوْ مَرَّتَيْنِ أَوْ ثَلَاثًا أَوْ أَرْبَعًا - حَتَّى عَدَّ سَبْعًا - مَا حَدَّثْتُكُمْ بِهِ، ثُمَّ قَالَ: هَذَا حَدِيثٌ حَسَنٌ وَأَبُو غَالِبٍ يُقَالُ اسْمُهُ حَزَّوْرٌ، وَأَبُو أَمَامَةَ الْبَاهِلِيُّ اسْمُهُ صُدْيُّ بْنُ عَجَلَانَ وَهُوَ سَيِّدُ بَاهِلَةَ ³⁵ - ³⁴

“Abū Ghālib said: "Abū ‘Ummāmāh saw heads of the Khawārijī hanging on the streets of Damascus. He said: 'The dogs of the Fire and the worst dead people under the canopy of the heavens. The best dead men are those whom these have killed.' He then recited: On the Day when some faces will become white and some faces will become black until the end of the Ayah. I said to Abū ‘Ummāmāh: 'Did you hear it from the Messenger of Allah?' He said: 'If I had not heard it but one time, or two times, or three times, or four times - until he reached seven - I would not have narrated it to you.' (Hasan) [Abū 'Esa said:] This Hadith is Ḥassan. Abū Ghālib's name is said to be Ḥazawwar. Abū ‘Ummāmāh Al-Bahl-i's name is Ṣudāl b. 'Ajlān, and he was a chief of Bāhilah.”

Imām Qurṭubī mentions another narration quoted by Imām Bukhārī in which a person enquired about the contradictions he found in the Qur'ān.

“Sa‘īd said: A man said to Ibn ‘Abbas, "I find in the Qur'an certain things which seem to me contradictory, for example Allah says: '...There will be no kinship among them that Day, nor will they ask of one another.' (23:101) (yet He says :) 'And they will turn to one another and question one another.' (37:27) '...But they will never be able to hide a single fact from Allah.' (4:42) [Yet He reports what Al-Mushrikūn (polytheists, pagans, idolaters, and disbelievers in the Oneness of Allah and in His Messenger Muhammad j will say:] '...By Allah, our Lord, we were not those who joined others in worship with Allah.' (6:23) According to this Verse, they will hide some facts. Allah says: 'Or is the heaven that He constructed?... (up to) ... He spread the earth.' (79:27-30) In this Verse He mentions the creation of the heavens before the creation of the earth. Then He says: 'Say (O Muhammad: 'Do you verily, disbelieve in Him Who created the earth in two Days... (up to) . . .willingly.' (41:9-11) So He mentions in this Verse the creation of the earth before the heavens. And He says: '...Verily, Allah is Oft Forgiving, Most Merciful.' (4:23) '...Allāh is Ever Most Powerful, All-Wise.' (4:56) '...Allah is Ever All-Hearer, All Seer.' (4:58) This seems to be something that was and has passed." Then Ibn 'Abbas answered, "There will be no relationship between them.' That is on the first blowing of the Trumpet. 'And so the Trumpet will be blown, and all who are in the heavens and all who are on the earth will swoon, away except him whom Allah wills.....(39:68) Then 'there will be no relationship between them, and at that time one will not ask another. Then, when the Trumpet will be

blown for the second time, they will turn to one another and question one another.' As for His Statement: '...We were not who joined others in worship with Allāh.' 'But they will not be able to hide a single fact from Allāh.' Allāh will forgive the sins of those who were sincere in their worship, whereupon Al-Mushrikūn will say (to each other), 'Come, let's say we never worshipped others besides Allāh.' But their mouths will be sealed and their hands will speak (the truth). At that time it will be evident that no speech can be concealed from Allāh, and those who disbelieved and disobeyed the Messenger will wish that they were burned in the earth, but they will never be able to hide a single fact from Allāh. (4:42). Allāh created the earth in two days and then created the heavens, then He turned towards the heavens and gave it perfection in two (other) days. Then he spread the earth, and its spreading means the bringing of water and pasture out of it. He then created the mountains, the camels and the hillocks and whatever is in between them (the earth and the heaven) in two (other) days. That is the meaning of Allāh's saying: 'He spread it.' And His Saying: 'And He created the earth in two days.' So the earth and whatever is on it, was created in four days; and the heavens were created in two days. (Concerning His Saying:) 'And Allāh is Oft-Forgiving.' He named Himself like that (so the naming has passed) but the contents of His Saying are still valid, for if Allāh ever wants to do something, He surely fulfils what He wants. So you should not see contradiction in the Qur'an, for all of it is from Allāh.”^{36 37}

Reason to Chase the Allegorical:

The following saying of the Exalted Allāh indicates the reason behind chasing the Allegorical in the Qur'an: ³⁸ (فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ زَيْغٌ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ مَا تَشَابَهَ) (مَثَلُ ابْتِغَاءِ الْفِتْنَةِ).

Imām Qurṭubī illuminates the meaning of (زَيْغٌ)³⁹ which means Deflection or Inclination. For clarification, he quotes general examples: زَاغَتِ الشَّمْسُ (The setting of the Sun); زَاغَتِ الْإِبْصَارُ (The tiring of the eyes) and زَاغَ، يَزِغُ، زَيْغًا (When someone abandons his intention). All the examples predict disparity, so is the case with interpretation of the subject verse.⁴⁰ He further mentions a verse from the Qur'an: ⁴¹ (فَلَمَّا زَاغُوا أَزَاغَ اللَّهُ قُلُوبَهُمْ) “So when they turned away (from the path of Allāh), Allāh turned their hearts away (from the right path)”

This verse is general for the pagans, heretics, apostates and infidels; although it was revealed for the Christians of Najrān. Imām Qurṭubī comments that the interpretation of Abū ‘Ummāmah is good enough for the comprehension. Imām Qurṭubī interprets that (ابْتِغَاءُ الْفِتْنَةِ) means that the people who follow the allegory in the Qur'an, they do so to seek misconception and doubts for the believers, so that they may create turmoil between them and bring them towards distorted faith.⁴²

Assertion of the Deviant Sects about Allegorical In the Qur'an:

While explaining the curiosity of various sects who keep on finding those aspects in the Qur'an which are not clear, Imām Qurṭubī brings a maxim of his mentor Shaykh Abū al-‘Abbās who said the people who follow the ambiguous facts in the Qur'an, keep on seeking them and collecting them

with the sole purpose of being sceptical about the verses of the Qur'ān and to mislead the people about them as done by Zinādiqah and an abusive sect Qirāmiṭah. They had belief according to the apparent meaning of the verse as understood by the Mujassimah.⁴³ They gathered those verses and narrations from the Qur'ān and the Prophetic Traditions respectively, the apparent of which denote the physical body of Allāh the Omnipotent. Even they strongly believed that Allāh Subḥāna wa-t'ālā is embodied having facial features, eyes, hands, fingers, feet and all other body parts. Indeed; He is superior to all these disparities.⁴⁴ Injunctions about the Deviant Sects: Imām Qurṭubī states the injunctions about the above mentioned deviant sects, who by no means, can be considered to be Muslims. These are:

- There is no doubt in their infidelity; Allāh the Exalted has ordered to murder them without accepting their repentance.
- The optimal saying is about their atonement as there is no difference between them and idol worshipers. If they repent upon their sins, their regret would be accepted; otherwise they would be killed as renegades are killed.⁴⁵

Views about Interpreting the Allegorical Verses:

Imām Qurṭubī states that there is a conflict between the scholars about the rightfulness of the interpreting the Allegorical in the Qur'ān, therefore its legality is also dissented. The Salf believed in harmonizing the contradictions between them; although they were sure that their apparent meaning was not correct. Some opined that they should be interpreted and others disagree with it; whereas some assert better to show only profound civility in this regard.⁴⁶

Imām Qurṭubī quotes a dictum of Abū Bakr Anbārī who said that the Salf used to punish that person who asked about the Allegorical in the Qur'ān; it was because if that person intended to immortalise heresy or stimulate turmoil, he is worthy of censure. Even if his intention was not to promote evil, he is entitled to retribution because he had invented a way for the hypocrites and atheists to distort the Muslims with weaker faith to think about the alteration in the Qur'ān.⁴⁷

Imām Qurṭubī narrates that Ṣabīgh b. 'Isl came to Madīnah and started to enquire about the Allegorical verses in the Qur'ān. Ḥaḍrat 'Umar (رضى الله عنه) got to know about him, so called upon him and prepared a bunch of roots of dates for beating him. When he came, Ḥaḍrat 'Umar (رضى الله تعالى عنه) stood up and beat him that hard that his head bled and the blood flew on his face. Ṣabīgh begged him to stop that as whatever evil he had in his mind has aborted then. There are various reports about his graciousness that Allāh the Most Merciful guided him towards repentance; hence he atoned and his atonement was very humble and modest.⁴⁸

Seeking the Hidden Meanings of the Allegorical:

For the interpretation of (وَأَنبِئَآءَ نَارِئِلِهٖ), Imām Qurṭubī mentions the saying of Abū Ishāq Zajjāj who said that it means that the people tried to find out the clarification of the process of resurrection and Allāh informed them that nobody but Him knows the time of Doomsday. It is evidenced by the following verse:

هَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا تَأْوِيلَهُ يَوْمَ يَأْتِي تَأْوِيلَهُ يَقُولُ الَّذِينَ كَسَبُوا مِنْ قَبْلُ قَدْ جَاءَتْ رُسُلُ رَبِّنَا بِالْحَقِّ^{49c}

“Await they just for the final fulfilment of the event? On the day event is finally fulfilled (i.e. Day of Resurrection), those who neglected it before will say: Verily the messengers of our Lord did come with the Truth!” He further explains that the ending note to this verse is وَمَا يَعْلَمُ تَأْوِيلَهُ i.e nobody else but Allāh knows the time of resurrection.

INTERPRETATION OF ﴿وَمَا يَعْلَمُ تَأْوِيلَهُ﴾: Imām Qurṭubī explains that one of the group of Jews in which Ḥaṭīb b. Akhtab was also there, came to the Prophet (ﷺ) and said that they were informed that (الْم) had been revealed on him. He added that according to the calculation of letters and their numeric values (حِسَابُ الْجُمْلِ), the reign of the nation of the Prophet (ﷺ) was seventy one years, if he (ﷺ) was truthful in his claim of prophet hood. Imām Qurṭubī affirms that the subject verse was revealed on that occasion.⁵⁰ Along with an important Qur’ānic Science “Cause of Revelation”, Imām Qurṭubī also elucidates another significant science which is the knowledge Tāwīl and Tafsīr. He states that the word Tāwīl is somewhat similar to Tafsīr e.g. it is said: ﴿تَاوِيلُ هَذَا الْكَلِمَةِ عَلَى كَذَا﴾ which means that the interpretation of this word is this. He further mentions that some Jurists defined Tāwīl as:⁵¹ “هو ابداء احتمال في اللفظ مقصود بدليل خارج عنه” (To express intended possibility of meaning through external evidence).

Imām Qurṭubī defines Tafsīr as:⁵² ﴿التفسير: بيان اللفظ﴾ i.e. the explanation to some word. For example: لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ means there is no doubt in it. The root word of ﴿تفسير﴾ is فَسَّرَ which means to elucidate.

Imām Qurṭubī also explains the difference between the two terms Tafsīr and Tāwīl. He says that Tafsīr is the meaning of a word; whereas Tāwīl is the elaboration to the meaning of that word and quotes an example:

﴿لَا شَكَّ فِيهِ عِنْدَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ﴾

- Tafsīr: The Muslims do not have doubt in it.
- Tāwīl: Since the Muslims are righteous, hence do not accept doubts as the suspicion is the attribute of a suspicious person but the believers are not like this.

RELATION OF ﴿وَمَا يَعْلَمُ تَأْوِيلَهُ إِلَّا اللَّهُ﴾ AND ﴿الرَّاسِخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ﴾: In context of an important portion of the subject verse, Imām Qurṭubī presents the conflicting opinions of the Companions (رضى الله تعالى عنهم) and Successors about its commentary. He asserts that the scholars dissent in the view pertaining the relation of ﴿وَمَا يَعْلَمُ تَأْوِيلَهُ إِلَّا اللَّهُ﴾ to ﴿الرَّاسِخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ﴾; whether it is associated to the former portion of the verse or there is a disconnection from the prior part and there is a pause at اللَّهُ.⁵³ The maxims quoted are as under:

a) Most of the Companions and Scholars believe that there is a disconnection between the portion ﴿الرَّاسِخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ﴾ and the previous part of the verse which means that nobody but Allāh only knows the meaning of the Allegorical in the Qur’ān and those who are firmly grounded on knowledge have resolute belief in their truthfulness even without knowing their

meaning. They believe that there is an absolute pause at ﴿وَمَا يَعْلَمُ تَأْوِيلَهُ إِلَّا اللَّهُ﴾ and the portion after it ﴿وَالرَّسُخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ يَقُولُونَ آمَنَّا بِهِ﴾ is the next word of Allāh. This assertion is supported by Ḥaḍrat Ibn 'Umar (رضى الله تعالى عنه), Ḥaḍrat Ibn 'Abbās (رضى الله تعالى عنه), Ḥaḍrat 'Ā'īshah (رضى الله تعالى عنها), Ḥaḍrat 'Urwah b. Zubair (رضى الله تعالى عنه), Ḥaḍrat 'Abdullāh b. Mas'ūd (رضى الله تعالى عنه), Ḥaḍrat Ubayy b. Ka'b (رضى الله تعالى عنه), Ḥaḍrat 'Umar b. 'Abdul 'Azīz, Imām Kisā'ī, Akhfash, Farrā', Abū 'Ubaid etc.

b) Nahīk al-Asadī is in agreement with the view of the majority and asserts that some people consider it a united part to the prior one but factually it is not. The ingrained in knowledge have stupendous apprehension to the Book of Allāh but they have their restriction till ﴿آمَنَّا بِهِ كُلٌّ مِنْ عِنْدِ رَبِّنَا﴾. Same is the opinion of Ḥaḍrat 'Umar b. 'Abdul 'Azīz and Imām Ṭabarī.⁵⁴

c) 'Allāmah Khaṭṭābī adduces that the Book for which Allāh the Exalted has commanded us to believe on and adopt it has two forms of verses: The Categorical and the Allegorical which has been declared in the verse. Hence it has been affirmed by Allāh that the Allegorical in the Qur'an is pertinent to Him only and nobody else knows its interpretation. Afterwards, Allāh has delineated the people firmly grounded on knowledge that they, even without knowing their meaning, affirms their faith in them. Had they known to their meaning, there had been no distinctive praise for them.⁵⁵

d) Ḥaḍrat Mujaḥid has a contrasting opinion to the previous one. He posits that the word الرُّسُخُونَ is coherently arrayed to the previous portion of the verse and he himself was among those who knew the meanings of the Allegorical verses of the Qur'an.

e) Some Lexicologists consider its meaning as: والراسخون في العلم يعلمونه قائلين ﴿آمَنَّا﴾ i.e. the firmly grounded on knowledge know the meaning but in actual they say that they believe in them. It is assumed that syntax of يَقُولُونَ is Nasab due to its Present Form. Whereas, the Common Lexicologists negate the aforementioned stance due to the prevailing grammar rules in the Arabs.⁵⁶

Analysis of dictums by Imām Qurṭubī: Imām Qurṭubī comments that on the basis of coherence of the opinion of Common Lexicologists with that of Grammarians, the unique standpoint of Ḥaḍrat Mujaḥid is neglected. He added that it is not legitimate for somebody to prove for himself authentic what has been forbidden by Allāh to mankind. He quotes a few following examples in this regard:

⁵⁷ ﴿قُلْ لَا يَعْلَمُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ الْغَيْبَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ﴾ "Say: None in the heavens and the earth knows the Unseen except Allāh".

Further; ⁵⁸ ﴿يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ السَّاعَةِ أَيَّانَ مُرْسَاهَا قُلْ إِنَّمَا عِلْمُهَا عِنْدَ رَبِّي لَا يُجِيبُهَا لَوْفَتَهَا إِلَّا هُوَ﴾ "They ask you about the Hour (Day of resurrection): When will be its appointed time? Say: The knowledge thereof is with my Lord (Alone). None can reveal its time but He."

He says that the above mentioned verses clearly indicate those aspects which are pertinent to only Allāh and nobody else.⁵⁹

f) Ḥaḍrat Ibn 'Abbās (رضى الله تعالى عنه) proclaimed that the word "الرُّسُخُونَ" is associated to Allāh Subḥāna wa-t-ʿālā but he himself is also included

among those having knowledge about the Allegorical; being known to it, he says **أَمَّا بِهِ**. This view has been supported by Rabī', Muḥammad b. Ja'far b. Zubair, Qāsim b. Muḥammad etc. They all said that Allāh the Glorious has praised them due to their firmly grounded on knowledge; had they been ignorant, He never had been admired them.⁶⁰

Imām Qurṭubī asseverates that most of the Scholars have considered that there is a pause at (عند الله) which means that the knowledge of the Allegorical is restrained to Allāh only and the people firmly grounded on knowledge have acquaintance with a few in them and not the whole; but they affirm their veracity wholly that whatever is not known to them is known to Allāh. He elaborates that if someone argues that even the people firmly grounded on knowledge did not know the interpretation of some portion; even Ḥaḍrat Ibn 'Abbās (رضى الله تعالى عنه) said that he was unknown to (الأواه) and (غسلين); Imām Qurṭubī advocates that nobody can condemn this because Ḥaḍrat Ibn 'Abbās (رضى الله تعالى عنه) explicated these words after having known to them. Moreover, Allāh has not mentioned in the verse (و كل الراسخون) which clearly indicates that every fact cannot be perceived by all those who are firmly grounded on knowledge.

Imām Qurṭubī mentions that Ibn Fūrak has preferred the view that Rāsikhīn know the interpretation of the Allegorical and he expounded it substantially in his writings.⁶¹

He further mentions a supplication of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) for Ḥaḍrat Ibn 'Abbās (رضى الله تعالى عنه) to bless him with the comprehension of the interpretation of the Book of Allāh. The Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) supplicated: ⁶² .⁶³

اللَّهُمَّ فَقِّهْهُ فِي الدِّينِ، وَعَلِّمَهُ التَّأْوِيلَ

According to the aforementioned narration, the pause would be at **و الراسخون** and Imām Qurṭubī mentions that his Shaykh Abū al-'Abbās Aḥmad b. 'Umar supported it and Imām Qurṭubī considers it to be the most authentic one. He further explains that to entitle them "Rāsikhīn" requires that they should have greater knowledge of the Book of Allāh than the others have about the Categorical verses. If they had equal knowledge to that of others, there would have been no reason to distinguish them from others.⁶⁴

Categories of the Allegorical In the Qur'ān by Imām Qurṭubī:

Imām Qurṭubī categorises the Allegorical in the Qur'ān in two types:

1) One is that which is not known to anyone but Allāh alone. No one on the face of the earth can even get known to it. For instance, the knowledge of the Day of Resurrection, the reality of Spirit etc. Hazzāq and other polymaths who proclaim that Rāsikhīn do not know the Allegorical in the Qur'ān have considered this form.

2) The other form of Allegorical is that which can be interpreted through lexicons and grammatical rules of Arabic and can be acquainted by Rāsikhīn. For example, the saying of Allāh Almighty for Ḥaḍrat 'Īsā (عليه السلام) : ⁶⁵ (روح منه)⁶⁶

THE CONDITIONS TO BE DECLARED AS RĀSIKH BY IMĀM QURṬUBĪ: Imām Qurṭubī states that a person cannot be declared as "Rāsikh" unless he knows the maximum (with the grace of Allāh Almighty)

out of the second type of the Allegorical. Moreover, those who propound that the Allegorical is the abrogated ruling; on the basis of this notion, it is judicious to consider Rāsikhīn among the acute interpreters but it is really not prudent to specify the Allegorical with the theory of the abrogated ruling only.⁶⁷ Imām Qurṭubī comes up with the definition of the title “Rāsikh”. He states:⁶⁸

“الرسوخ: الثبوت في الشيء، وكلُّ ثابتٍ راسخ. واصله في الاجرام ان يرسخ الجبل والشجر في الارض”
Something that is affirmed and truthful. e.g.⁶⁹

“رسخ الايمان في قلب فلان يرسخ رسوخا”

Imām Qurṭubī mentions a narration of the Prophet (ﷺ) when he was asked about the Rāsikhīn. He replied:

“سئل رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم من الراسخون في العلم؟ قال: «هو من برت يمينه، وصدق لسانه، وعف بطنه وفرجه، فذاك الراسخ»^{70 71}

A person whose oath is veracious, who is truthful and his heart follows the straight path.

Prudence of Allāh the Almighty To Create The Allegorical In The Qur'an: Imām Qurṭubī elucidates the prudence of Allāh the Almighty behind creating the Allegorical in the Qur'an, although He is the Omnipotent enough to create everything Categorical in the Qur'an as He Himself revealed the following verse:⁷²

﴿وَأَنزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ﴾

“And We have also sent down unto you (O Muhammad SAW) the reminder and the advice (the Quran), that you may explain clearly to men what is sent down to them, and that they may give thought.”

He, then replies to the self-raised query that the actual prudence is known to nobody but Allāh the Merciful; apparently it seems that keeping the Allegorical in the Qur'an tends to elaborate the precedence of the scholars over another on the basis of knowledge. It is very similar to an author who creates an oeuvre and keeps some parts of it very clear and elucidative while the others vague and non-elaborative to sharpen the wisdom of the scholars; the thing easily accessible sometimes loses its distinction.⁷³

Conclusion:

- One of the most important Qur'ānic Sciences is the Categorical and the Allegorical in the Qur'an.
- The Categorical (Muḥkam) is that which is clear, accurate and does not require any interpretation.
- The Allegorical (Mutashābih) are those verses, the interpretation of which is quite difficult due to great resemblance in wording or meaning.
- Many Scholars have interpreted both the terms differently and there are multiple assemblies of opinions.
- The people who chase unnecessarily in the Allegorical with evil intentions should be severely punished. They have deflection in their hearts and want to weaken the faith of Muslims.
- There are conflicting stances of the Scholars about the interpretation of the Allegorical and their knowledge being restricted to the Allāh only or

to mankind also. Majority opines that nobody but the Exalted Allāh knows it.

- There are two types of Allegorical in the Qur'ān according to Imām Qurṭubī:
 - 1) Which is not known to anyone but Allāh alone
 - 2) Which can be known to the people firmly grounded on knowledge
- As the name of the exegesis indicates that it is the interpretation of the Qur'ānic verses with respect to the injunctions (Aḥkām) which can be extracted from them. Imām Qurṭubī provides an extensive detail of the subject by diving it into nine major issues while interpreting the verse number seven of the third chapter of the Qur'ān.
- In describing those issues, he provides a comprehensive knowledge about the subject by quoting the Prophetic traditions, adages of many Companions (رضى الله تعالى عنهم) and Scholars.
- After mentioning the maxims, he also provides the criticism of other scholars over them and his own backed up by strong supporting evidence to his stance.
- He greatly infers from the Prophetic traditions and where he finds it, he always prefers the saying of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم).

References

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- ² Āle 'Imrān, 3: 7
- ³ Jubrān Mas'ūd, Al-Rā'id Mu'jam Lughwī 'Aṣarī, 7th ed., Beirūt, Dār al-'Ilm lil-Malāyīn, 1992, p. 719
- ⁴ Rāghib Iṣfahānī, Abū al-Qāsim al-Hussain b. Mufaddal, Mufarradāt fī Gharīb al-Qur'ān, Ed: Ṣafwān Adnān, Dār al-Qalm, Damascus, 2009, p. 443
- ⁵ Ibid
- ⁶ Al-Baqarah, 2: 25
- ⁷ Rāghib Iṣfahānī, Mufarradāt fī Gharīb al-Qur'ān, p. 443
- ⁸ Ibid
- ⁹ Ibid, p. 444
- ¹⁰ His full name is Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Abū Bakr b. Farḥ al-Anṣārī al-Khazrajī al-Andalusī al-Qurṭubī. He was one of the most eminent scholars of Córdoba, Spain. He was an adept exegete and a proficient scholar of the Science of the Prophetic Traditions ('Ilm al-Ḥadīth). The full name of his exegesis is Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān wa'l Mubayyinu limā Taḍammanahu min al-Sunnati wa Āy al-Furqān which holds an incredibly distinguished position among not only the classical exegetical literature but also among the commentaries of the Modern era. There are many stupendous oeuvres on his panel regarding numerous Islamic disciplines. He died in 671 A.D in Egypt.

(For details, See: Zarkalī, Khair al-Dīn, Al-A'lām, 15th ed., Beirut, Dār al-'Ilm lil-Malāyīn, 2002, 5: 322; Ibn 'Imād Ḥanblī, Shadahrāt al-Dhahab, Ed: Abdul Qādir Arnāūt, 1st ed., Beirut, Dār Ibn Kathīr, 7: 584; Ḥājī Khalīfah, Kashaf al-Zunūn, Beirut, Dār Ahyā' al-Torāth al-'Arabī, n.d. 1:390; Ibn Farḥūn, Mālikī, Al-Dībāj al-Mudhab, Ed: Abū Nūr, Dār al-Torāth li'l Ṭaba' wa al-Nashr, 2011, 2: 308)

¹¹ Āle' Imrān, 3: 7

¹² Qurṭubī, Abū 'Abdullāh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad, Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān, 1st ed., Beirut, Al-Risālah Publishers, 2006, 5: 17

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ Al-Hūd, 11: 1

¹⁹ Al-Zumar, 39: 23

²⁰ Qurṭubī, Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān, 5: 18

²¹ Ibid

²² Ibid

²³ Ibid

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Al-Ikhlāṣ, 112: 4

²⁶ Al-Zumūr, 39: 53

²⁷ Ṭāhā, 20: 82

²⁸ Al-Nisā', 4: 48

²⁹ Qurṭubī, Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān, 5: 19

³⁰ Ibid

³¹ Al-Mā'idah, 5: 6

³² Qurṭubī, Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān, 5: 19-20

³³ Qurṭubī, Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān, 5: 16

³⁴ Tirmidhī, Al-Jāmi' al-Kabīr, Chapters on the Tafsīr of the Qur'ān regarding Sūrah Āle' Imrān, No. 3000

³⁵ Qurṭubī, Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān, 5: 16

³⁶ Bukhārī, Al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ, K. The Book on Commentary, b. Sūrah Fuṣṣilāt, No. 4815

³⁷ Qurṭubī, Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān, 5: 17

³⁸ Āle' Imrān, 3: 7

³⁹ Qurṭubī, Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān, 5: 22

⁴⁰ Ibid

⁴¹ Al-Ṣaff, 61: 5

⁴² Qurṭubī, Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān, 5: 24

⁴³ Ibid, p. 22

⁴⁴ Ibid

⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 23

- 46 Ibid
- 47 Qurṭubī, Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān, 5: 23
- 48 Ibid, p. 23-4
- 49 Al-A'rāf, 7: 53
- 50 Qurṭubī, Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān, 5: 24
- 51 Ibid
- 52 Ibid
- 53 Ibid, p. 24
- 54 Ibid, p. 26
- 55 Ibid, p. 26-7
- 56 Ibid, p. 27
- 57 Al-Naml, 27: 65
- 58 Al-A'rāf, 7: 187
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- 60 Ibid
- 61 Ibid, p. 27-28
- 62 Aḥmad b. Hanbal, Faḍā'il al-Ṣaḥābah, Ed: Waṣī Allāh, Jāmi'ah Umm al-Qurā, 2009, 2: 846; Ṭabarānī, Sulaymān b. Aḥmad, Al-Mu'jam al-Aust, Ed: Ṭāriq Ibn 'Auḍ, Dār al-Ḥaramain, 2008, With the name of Aḥmad, 2: 112, No. 1422
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- 64 Ibid
- 65 Al-Nisā', 4: 171
- 66 Qurṭubī, Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān, 5: 28-9
- 67 Ibid, p. 29
- 68 Ibid
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- 72 Al-Naḥl, 16: 44
- 73 Qurṭubī, Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān, 5: 29-30