

Overview of the Book “Critique of Doubts about the Holy Quran” by Ayatullah Muḥammad Hādī Maʿrifat

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ABSTRACT

Ayatullah Muḥammad Hādī Maʿrifat's *Naqd-i Shubuhāt pīrāmūn-i Qurʾān-i Karīm* (Critique of Doubts about the Holy Quran) provides a comprehensive defense of the Quran's divine authenticity and addresses various scholarly doubts regarding its content, cultural context, and apparent contradictions. The book is structured across five chapters, systematically tackling theological, cultural, textual, scientific, historical, and literary objections. The first chapter contrasts the Quran's reverential portrayal of prophets (a) with their often derogatory depictions in the Torah, while refuting doubts surrounding specific Quranic narratives, such as Noah's flood and Jesus's crucifixion. The second chapter argues that the Quran transcends the cultural influences of its time, emphasizing its universal applicability and realistic teachings, particularly in addressing gender-related issues and slavery. The third chapter resolves perceived contradictions in Quranic verses by analyzing linguistic and contextual nuances. The fourth chapter defends the Quran's consistency with scientific, historical, and literary realities, while the fifth underscores the realism and moral purpose of Quranic stories, countering claims of their allegorical or folkloric nature. Ayatullah Maʿrifat's rigorous analysis, grounded in Quranic exegesis and comparative theology, offers valuable insights for scholars of Islamic studies and comparative religion, affirming the Quran's divine integrity and universal significance.

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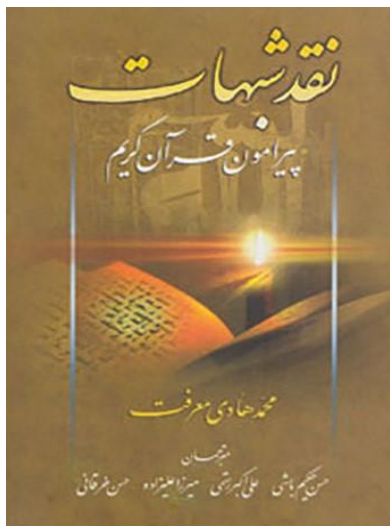
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Introduction

Ayatullah Muḥammad Hādī Maʿrifat (1309-1385 Sh) is one of the renowned scholars of Quranic exegesis (*tafsīr*) and Quranic sciences in the Qum Seminary in the recent century. He received his primary education in the seminaries of Karbala and Najaf and completed the



latter part of his higher education in the Qum Seminary after migrating to Qum. Most of his scholarly activities and works have been focused on Quranic sciences within the Qum Seminary. Alongside numerous Quranic studies, he is the author of the encyclopedia “*Al-Tamhīd fī ‘Ulūm al-Qur’ān*,” which is well recognized in the Islamic world. His influential perspectives and opinions have contributed significantly to various Quranic topics such as compilation and arrangement of the Quran, Quranic readings, abrogation in the Quran, interpretation of the Quran, and safeguarding the Quran from

distortion, attracting the attention and reference of researchers in Islamic and Quranic studies. His book “*Naqd-i Shubuhāt pīrāmūn-i Qur’ān-i Karīm*” (Critique of Doubts about the Holy Quran, 2006) exemplifies rigorous Shi’a scholarship in defending the Quran’s divine integrity. (see Maʿrifat 2024, pp. 63-78)

Chapter One

The first chapter discusses the divine nature of the Quran and emphasizes that revelation is the sole source of the Quran. The author points out doubts about the character of the prophets in the Torah, where they are depicted disrespectfully as sinners in various instances. For example, Noah is shown as becoming intoxicated, Lot is depicted as having sexual relations with his daughters while intoxicated, Jacob is shown as deceiving his father for the position of prophethood, and

Aeron is depicted as building an idol for his people in the absence of Moses. The author compares this depiction to the Quran's respectful and glorified portrayal of the character of the prophets. Additionally, the chapter addresses doubts about the typhoon in the time of Noah, the story of the calf of Sāmirī, Korah, and the differing accounts of Jesus's death, which the Quran refutes while the gospels depict differently. These discrepancies have led to doubts among some Christian sects regarding Jesus's crucifixion.

Chapter Two

In the second chapter, the author explores whether the Quran bears the influence of the cultural context in which it originated. The author's stance is that the Quran remains uninfluenced by the culture of its time. He argues that the use of language does not necessarily imply an acceptance of the accompanying culture. Several key points are highlighted in support of this perspective: 1. Figurative meaning in usage: refers to the alignment in the usage of common vocabulary in the conventions of each language. For example, the term "*khuluq*" refers to the qualities and traits of the soul. Desirable traits are known as "*akhlāq-i karīmah*" and undesirable ones as "*akhlāq-i dhamīmah*." The Arabs derive this term from the root "*khalq*" meaning "creation." They believe that psychological traits are rooted in creation, suggesting that virtuous or vile individuals are a product of their creation, and their behavior is beyond their control. Since the Quran uses this term to praise commendable traits and condemn undesirable ones, it cannot be argued that the Quran is influenced by the erroneous Arab culture, which perceives ethics as beyond human agency. 2. The universality of the Quran's addresses: Although the Quran specifically addresses Arabs, its audience encompasses all people across all eras and generations. 3. It is a reality, not an imagination: What is presented in the Quran, in terms of proverbs and teachings, all reflect reality, serving as a lesson for the listeners.

The Quran also addressed the problematic cultural attitudes of the Arabs, including their mistreatment of women. It emphasized the importance of God wariness (*taqwā*) as the measure of a person's worth,

regardless of gender. The apparent preference given to men was explained in terms of their natural disposition and heavier responsibilities within the family. The author also addresses concerns about issues such as inheritance, blood money (*diyyah*), and divorce. Regarding the verse about beating women in the Quran (*Sūrat al-Nisā*/34), the author explained that it was related to gradual abrogation (*naskh-i tadrījī*), intended to eliminate this practice. The hadiths associated with this verse set strict conditions, permitting only gentle tapping with a toothbrush or similar object. Numerous hadiths also emphasize good behavior and respect towards women. The Quranic requirement for women to observe hijab is intended to preserve their dignity and honor. Islam promotes a balanced and healthy society by discouraging excessive indulgence in desires and encouraging the natural instincts of both genders to follow a proper and respectful path. As for polygamy, the Quran's directive was considered necessary during times of emergency and severe crisis, particularly in the aftermath of devastating wars that left many women widowed.

In response to the doubts raised about the prophet's wives, the author addresses the following points: 1. The prophet's marriages were not driven by lust, but rather to provide protection and support to widows who had lost their husbands in wars; 2. The Quranic verses limiting marriage to four wives were revealed after the Prophet (s) had already married all of his wives; 3. The claim that the Prophet (s) permitted for himself what he prohibited for others is unfounded; 4. The allowance of up to four wives is contingent upon the strict observance of justice, even in exceptional circumstances.

The author discusses the gradual abolition of slavery, noting that while slavery was seemingly accepted in Islam, measures were implemented to weaken its foundations and bring it close to collapse. For instance, the Prophet (s) not only granted his slave, Zayd, the right to equality, but also recognized his right to leadership and command over free individuals in the army. The author also emphasizes that according to the Quran, the existence of the jinn predates that of humans and cannot be attributed solely to Arab culture. In addition, the author examines the concept of magic, asserting that it is a play on people's

imagination rather than a transformation of reality. Furthermore, the author delves into the topic of the evil eye, explaining that God may diminish the awe and majesty of something affected by the evil eye to prevent the observer from exceeding their bounds, and then compensates for any damage inflicted. Sometimes, this event serves as atonement for the excesses and imbalances. The author also addresses the linguistic features of the Quran, clarifying that some features, initially regarded as crude, are metaphorical and take into account the language of the people. Lastly, the author discusses the suspicion of infidelity of the wives of Noah and Lot, asserting that in this context, the term "infidelity" solely signifies opposition to their husbands and the denial of their prophethood, rather than acts contrary to chastity.

Chapter Three

The third chapter focuses on the supposition of discrepancy and contradiction in the Quran. The author refers to some causes of seeming contradiction in the Quran:

1. Expressions of different states of a subject and its various stages of development, such as the various interpretations of the Quran regarding the creation of Adam. The difference in verses about Moses' staff which changes to a snake in one verse and to a python in another is due to the differing contexts, as the staff transformed into a python when confronting the magicians, whereas it appeared as a small snake at the beginning of the prophethood.

2. The difference between two or more verses on a subject, such as when the content of two verses pertains to the occurrence of questioning and accountability on the Day of Resurrection; however, one verse indicates that there will be no accountability for sins on that day. Some exegetes have attributed the differences in the mentioned verses to the varying ways of addressing humans in different scenes of the Day of Resurrection.

3. Sometimes the difference between two verses is due to the aspect of action such as when God attributes an action done by man to Himself: The attribution of action to them is due to the direct involvement in the act, while its negation stems from the impact of the action, which is

contingent upon the permission and will of the Lord. For this reason, it is said that human actions are the creation of God, even though they are attributed to human choice.

4. The difference can be in reality and metaphor, as in the verse “*And you will see the people drunk, yet they will not drunk be drunken*” (Quran 22:2). The intended meaning is the state of bewilderment and loss of self due to the difficulties of the conditions of the Day of Resurrection, rather than intoxication caused by drinking alcohol.

5. The difference is based on two considerations, and this serves as a comprehensive reason for all causes of ambiguous differences: In the verses “*those who have faith, and whose hearts find rest in the remembrance of Allah*” (Quran 13:28) and “*The faithful are only those whose hearts tremble [with awe] when Allah is mentioned*” (Quran 8:2), it may be imagined that the meaning of “*wajal*” (fear) contradicts the meaning of “*ṭuma’nīnah*” (tranquility); the response to this is that “*ṭuma’nīnah*” results from the expansion of the heart, which itself arises from the understanding of monotheism. “*Wajal*” is a state that occurs due to the fear of deviation and misguidance from the path of guidance, and this serves as a precursor to the understanding of monotheism, the expansion of the heart, and the emergence of tranquility.

The author examines certain Quranic verses that imply contradiction explains their meanings, and resolves their apparent contradictions. Then, he discusses other doubts and responds to them. Finally, he refers to questions and answers by Ibn Qutaybah, which include his responses to certain doubts, and the responses of Qutb al-Din Rāwandī to certain doubts. This includes responses in his book “*Al-Kharā’ij wa al-Jarā’ih*,” where he addresses some of the doubts raised by the opponents of the Qur’ān.

Chapter Four

Chapter four is titled “The Quran and Scientific, Historical, and Literary Realities.” In this chapter, the author argues that there is no inconsistency between the Quran and science, history, and literature. The Quran is a clear and consistent discourse, free from any deviation or inconsistency. The author addresses various doubts in the following

areas: 1. Scientific doubts, such as the coupling in all creatures, the speech of ants in the story of Solomon, the creation of bone from flesh, missiles against the devils (*rujūman li-shshayātīn*), the creation of seven heavens in layers (*sab 'a samāwātīn ṭibāqā*), the movement of the sun and moon in their orbits, the creation of seven tiers (*sab 'a ṭarā'iqā*) above, the sky full of adornment [with stars] (*dhāt al-ḥubuk*), the sky with its towers (*dhāt al-burūj*), the seven earths, and the sun setting in a muddy spring (*'aynin ḥami'atin*). 2. Historical doubts, including the identity of Hāmān, Christ and Ezra as the son of Allah, the delivery of Pharaoh's body, the identity of the Pharaoh of Moses, and the heritage of the Children of Israel. 3. Literary doubts, such as applying the plural to the dual and more, using the relative pronoun "mā" for rational beings, and the disagreement of the pronoun with its antecedent.

Chapter Five

In chapter five, the author delves into Quranic stories and outlines their distinct characteristics, including realism, truthfulness, cultivation of noble human traits, and wisdom teaching. The objectives of these stories range from proving prophethood and demonstrating the unity of Divine religions to depicting the historical roots of Islam and instilling hope in the hearts of the Prophet (s) and the believers. Additionally, the author discusses other aspects of Quranic stories such as the neglect of historical elements, selection of events, freedom in scene arrangement, and the presentation of various reports and images of a scene.

In the upcoming section of this chapter, the author discusses the perspectives of contemporary thinkers who suggest that the stories in the Quran share similarities with folklore and draw upon well-known popular tales. They propose that these stories serve as a means of offering guidance and instruction, or that they may be allegorical, aiming to convey truths to people. However, the author contends that upon closer examination, the events in question are rooted in reality rather than imagination or allegory. The author points out that modern discoveries have provided additional evidence and confirmation of the incidents recounted in the Quran. Furthermore, the author goes on to substantiate the authenticity of certain Quranic stories and dispel doubts

surrounding their veracity, citing examples such as the story of Adam's two sons, and the accounts of 'Ād, Thamūd, the People of Hūd, the Companions of the Cave (*Aṣḥāb al-Kahf*), and Dhul Qarnayn.

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