"Coherence" Methodology of Qur'anic Interpretation
An Introduction

Prof. Dr. Israr Ahmad Khan[1]

Abstract:

Quite a big number of *tafsir* works have been produced by Muslim scholars with a view to making the message of the *Qur'an* accessible to the mankind. These works represent various trends, diverse methodologies, multifarious objectives, and numerous schools of thought. Consequently, different and, at times, mutually conflicting interpretations of the words of Allah has caused Muslims to feel confused and dejected. Interestingly, scholars who have applied one and the same methodology to unfold the truth of the divine speech have also miserably failed to maintain the unity of the message of the *Qur'an*, and come up with uncompromisingly contradictory interpretations. This situation serves as an obvious indicator that there may be something missing in the methodology of interpretation of the Qur'an. In the twentieth century some Muslim scholars such as al-Farahi (d. 1930 CE) and Islahi (d. 1997 CE) proposed and also practically demonstrated a new methodology of *tafsir* known as *coherence*. To them, it is not merely an excellent miraculous feature of the Qur'an but also a methodology. Application of this methodology in the *Qur'anic tafsir* leads to the unity of message in the Qur'an. This methodology may enable the commentators of the *Qur'Én* to develop various meanings of verses but there is no possibility of conflict among scholars while interpreting the *Qur'an* in terms of ideas. This paper introduces *coherence* as a methodology of *tafsÊr* and apply it to *surah al-Jumu'ah* for practical purpose.

Keywords: Coherence, Interpretation, Unity of Thought, Tafsir Methodology, Surah al-Jumu'ah.

* * *

---

(1) Professor of Tafsir Retired from IIUM, Malaysia.
   e-mail: israr53@yahoo.com
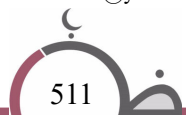
منهج «النظم» لتفسير القرآن: دراسة تعريفية

د. إسرار أحمد خان

المستخلص: يستهدف العدد الكبير من كتب التفسير التي ألفها علماء المسلمين، تفهيم الخطابات القرآنية للناس أجمعين. ولكن هذه التفاسير تمثل اتجاهات عديدة، ومناهج مختلفة، وأهدافا متنوعة، ومذاهب فكر متفاوتة. فظهر الخلاف في تفسير الآيات القرآنية الذي أوقع المسلمين في فخ الارتباك والالتباس، مع أنّ الكثير من المفسرين قد استخدموا –كما يتراءئ لنا– منهجا متقاربا في تفاسيرهم. فتوحي هذه الحالة بأنّ هناك شيئًا ما مفقود في مناهج التفسير المتداولة، الأمر الذي سبب اختلاف الفكر عند تفهيم القرآن. وقد اقترح في القرن العشرين الفراهي (ت 1930م)، وتلميذه الإصلاحي (ت 1997م) منهجًا جديداً لتفسير القرآن، وهذا المنهج ليس نظرية، بل هي تطبيقية فحسب، وهو ما يسمىٰ «نظم القرآن» الذي يؤدي المفسرين إلىٰ توحيد الفكر عند تفسير الآيات القرآنية. وهذا المقال يعرّف ذلك المنهج الجديد لتفسير القرآن بشرح مبادئه التي يجب علىٰ المفسر أن يتبعها في تفسير القرآن واحداً تلو الآخر؛ وثانيا يطبق هذه المباديء في تفسير سورة الجمعة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: نظم القرآن، تفسير، توحيد الفكر، منهج التفسير، سورة الجمعة.

* * *

Introduction

The *Qur'an* is composed of various elements, *surahs*, *aayaat*, and words. The significance of the *Qur'an* lies in the cohesion of these elements, though apparently incoherent. Every *surah* of the *Qur'an* is connected to all the other *surahs*; every *aayah* is linked to all the other *aayaat* of a *surah*, on the one hand, and to all the *aayaat* of other *surahs*, on the other; every word is coherently related to the other words in an *aayah* and also to the words in the other *aayaat* in a particular *surah*. This situation calls for the treatment of the *Qur'an* as an integral whole. Piecemeal treatment of the *Qur'an* amounts to isolating its various components from one other. Most of the well-known methods of interpretation of the *Qur'an* may not be referred to but as piecemeal treatments of the *Qur'an*. This is injustice to the *Qur'an*. The justice demands that the *Qur'an* should be treated as it is. *Nazm al-Qur'an* (coherence) is such a treatment of the *Qur'Én*. It lays emphasis on the fact that all the verses of a *surah* are so well-connected to one another that the *surah* appears a wonderfully organized and coherent hence cogent speech. This is a revolutionary methodology of *tafsir* of the *Qur'an*. The present paper seeks to introduce this Islamic legacy not merely in theoretical manner but also in a practical way so as to make *Nazm al-Qur'an* (coherence in the Qur'an) crystal clear.

Coherence and Rhetoricians

Experts of the Qur'anic rhetoric developed the view that the rhetoric of the *Qur'an* which made it essentially different from that of the classical Arab poets and orators is inherent in *Nazm al-Qur'an*. Al-Jahiz (d.255 A.H.), al-Rummani (d.384 A.H.), al-Khattabi (d.388 A.H.), al-Baqillani (d.403 A.H.), and al-Jurjani (d.471 A.H.) paid special attention to the inimitability of the *Qur'an* (*A'jaz al-Qur'an*). For that matter they identified *Nazm al-Qur'an* as an inimitable feature. According to them, all the words of a Qur'anic sentence represent a particular sequence as to their desirable imports; if the existing order of the words of *Qur'anic aayah* is altered or any of the original words is replaced with its synonym, the sentence will certainly lose its inimitability as to its rhetoric[1].

---

(1) This is the gist of the ideas scattered in sources. See, Al-Jahiz, 'Amr ibn Bahr, *Al-*

Coherence and Exegetes

The oldest extant *tafsir* work representing the interpretation of the whole *Qur'an* is *Jami' al-Bayan fi Ta'wil al-Qur-Qur'an* by Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari (d.310 A.H.). It is based on the views of *sahabah*, *tabi'un*, and later generations of scholars. Al-Tabari has also, at times, given his own understanding of Qur'anic words and statements. At no place he has referred to *Nazm al-Qur'an* in his voluminous work. He may be considered trend setter in *tafsir*. Others after him either followed into his footprints or made, in addition, some new trends. Al-Zamakhshari (d.538 A.H.) appears to be the first such *mufassir* who added in his *tafsir* work semantic and *ijtihadi* dimensions. His impact may easily be spotted in later *tafsir* works representing rational trend in *tafsir*. A-Razi (d.606 A.H.) seems to have followed both al-Tabari and al-Zamakhshari in his *tafsir* work, *Mafatih al-Ghayb*, widening the scope of traditional and rational methodology of *tafsir*. It is Qazi 'Abd al-Jabbar (d.415 A.H.) who may be considered the first mufassir who tried to show in his work "*Tanzih al-Qur'an 'an al-Mata'in*" coherence among *verses* of a *surah*. It seems al-Razi borrowed the concept of *Nazm al-Qur'an* in *tafsÊr* from him and tried in his own way to trace link between one *verse* of a *surah* and another. Although he practically implemented *Nazm al-Qur'an* theory in his endeavor to unfold the message of Allah, he did not take *Nazm al-Qur'an* more than a mere academic witticism (*latifah 'ilmiyyah*). One may hardly identify any principle or set of principles in his treatment of *Nazm al-Qur'an*. Next to him comes 'Ali ibn Ahmad al-Haralliyy (d.637 A.H.) who interpreted the *Qur'an* on the basis of the theory that all the verses of a *surah* are mutually coherent. His *tafsir* work "*Miftah al-Bab al-Muqaffal li Fahm al-Qur'an al-Munazzal*" is not available in published form. Ibrahim ibn 'Umar al-

---

Hayawan (ed. Abd al-SalÉm, Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, Beirut, n.d.), part 4, p. 89; Al-Khattabi, Hamd ibn Muhammad, *Bayan I'jaz al-Qur'an* (eds. Muhammad Khalf Allah and Muhammad Zaghlawl, part of the edited work entitled "*Thalathu Rasa'il fi I'jaz al-Qur'an*", Dar al-Ma'arif, Egypt, n.d.), 4th edition, p. 27; Al-Jurjani, 'Abd al-Qahir, *Dala'il al-I'Jaz* (ed. Mahmud Muhammad Shakir, Maktaba al-Khanji, Cairo, 1983), pp. 49-50; Al-Baqillani, Muhammad ibn al-Tayyib, *I'jaz al-Qur'an* (ed. Ahmad Saqr, Dar al-Ma'arif, Egypt, n.d.), 5th edition, pp. 276-277; Mustansir Mir, *Coherence in the Qur'an* (American Trust Publications, USA, 1986), PP. 10-16.

Biqa'i (d.885 A.H.) is another prominent *mufassir* who furthered the cause of *Nazm al-Qur'an* in his *tafsir* work, "*Nazm al-Durar fi Tanasub al-AAyaat wa al-Suwar*". After him one may not trace any *mufassir* who took the theory of *Nazm al-Qur'an* seriously for around six centuries. The trends dominating the *tafsir* field during this period have been the ones set by al-Tabari, al-Zamakhshari, and al-Razi. In the beginning of the twentieth century C.E. a scholar from India, 'Abd al-Hamid al-Farahi (d.1930 C.E.) emerged as the proponent of the *Nazm al-Qur'an* theory. He is the first who came to define this theory and also develop complete set of principles and rules of *tafsir* conforming *Nazm al-Qur'an* as methodology of *tafsir*. His notes and deliberations have been published under the title "*Rasa'il al-Imam al-Farahi*". In these treatises he has outlined and elaborated all the steps of *Nazm al-Qur'an* as methodology. He had an ambitious plan to write the *tafsir* of the whole *Qur'an* based on his principles. Unfortunately he could not go beyond interpreting *Surah al-Baqarah* and some short *sËrahs* from the last part of the *Qur'an*. But his disciple, Amin Ahsan Islahi (d.1997 C.E.) took up the challenge and completed the *tafsir* of the *Qur'an*, "*Tadabbur-e-Qur'an*" in Urdu based on *Nazm al-Qur'an*. Syed Qutb (d. 1966 C.E.), Syed Mawdudi (d.1979 C.E.), and Muhammad Asad (d.1992 C.E.) seem to have been greatly influenced by the *Nazm al-Qur'an* (coherence) theory as expounded by al-Farahi.

Coherence: Definition
An eloquent speech contains several components: (1) the central theme, (2) the preface, (3) the context, and (4) the conclusion. The *Qur'an* is undoubtedly the most eloquent speech. All of its *surahs* contain the above-mentioned four components. Application of *Nazm al-Qur'an* (coherence) in the interpretation of a *surah* requires the *mufassir* to identify these four elements through deliberation over each and every single statement of the *sËrah*, on the one hand, and establish link among them, on the other. This deliberation (*tadabbur*) needs to be done over and over again. Merely once or twice it may not do. As it appears from the term, *Nazm al-Qur'an* is a theory advocating the fact that all the verses of a *surah* as well as all the *surahs* of the *Qur'an* are closely connected to one another. The statements

of the *Qur'an*, which, at times, appears to be incoherent are as a matter of fact fully coherent. Thus, coherence, looking at what al-Farahi has suggested and Islahi has implemented in his commentary of the *Qur'an*, may be defined as "a *tafsir* methodology whereby thematic unity of each and every single *surah*, and that of the *Qur'an* in its entirety are identified, leading ultimately to the unity of message and ideas therein".

Muslim Scholars' Observation on Coherence

Theoretically, a number of Muslim scholars appreciate the *Nazm al-Qur'an* (coherence) theory. Abu Bakr 'Abd Allah ibn Muhammad al-Nisapuri (d.324 A.H.), one of the teachers of great *hadith* scholar al-Darqutni in Baghdad used to shed light in his lectures on the *Qur'an* on how the *verses* of a *surah* were correlated to each other[1]. AbË Bakr ibn al-'Arabi (d.543 A.H.) says that identifying co-relationship among *verses* of a *surah* with a view to making them appear one coherent statement is indeed a great knowledge[2]. Fakhr al-Din al-Razi (d.606 A.H.) observes about *Surah Fussilat* that it appears to be a well-organized statement right from its beginning until its end[3]. Great *fiqh* scholar, 'Izu al-Din 'Abd al-Salam (d.660 A.H.) is reported to have declared the knowledge of *Nazm al-Qur'an* (coherence) as an excellent knowledge[4]. Al-Suyuti (d.911 A.H.) wrote a treatise "*Tanasuq al-Durar fi Tanasub al-Suwar*", highlighting the co-relationship between the *surahs* of the *Qur'an*. He was of the view that *Nazm al-Qur'an* was a highly commendable discipline but due to it being very difficult only few mufassirËn dared venture into it[5]. Ibn al-Naqib al-Maqdisi (d.697 A.H.) tried to show coherence between many verses of the *Qur'an*. But he could not maintain this trend throughout his *tafsr* work[6].

---

(1) Al-Zarkashi, Badr al-Din, Al-Burhan fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an (Dar al-Fikr, Beirut, 1994), vol. 1, p. 132.

(2) Ibid.

(3) Al-Razi, Fakhr al-Din, Mafatih al-Ghayb (Dar Ihya' al-Turtth al-'Arabi, Beirut, 1997), vol. 9, p. 569.

(4) Al-Zarkashi, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 132.

(5) Al-Suyuti, Jalal al-Din, Al-Itqan fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an (Dar al-Fikr, Beirut, n.d.), vol. 1, p. 132.

(6) Al-Biqa 'i, Ibrahimm ibn 'Umar, *Nazm al-Durar* (Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, Beirut, 1995), vol. 1, Muqaddimah, p. 7.

Shaykh Wali al-Din al-Malawi (d.774 A.H.) believed that the re-arrangement of the *Qur'an* in the non-chronological order by the Last Prophet (s.a.w.) in the light of the divine instruction signified coherence in the *Qur'Én*[1]. Al-Farahi (d.1930 C.E.) writes that an effective statement cannot afford to be disorderly; those who believe in the inimitability of the *Qur'an* have the responsibility to identify coherence in its verses and organization in its rulings[2]. To Syed Mawdudi (d.1979 C.E.), the *Qur'an* does appear to the first time reader incondite, disorganized, and incohesive but as a matter of fact each and every component of the *Qur'Én* is well-organized and cohesive[3]. Amin Ahsan Islahi (d.1997 C.E.) opines that without tracing link between a verse of the *Qur'an* and another in the same *surah* one may not reach the truth[4].

Feasibility of Coherence Methodology
The figure of the Qur'anic exegetes is very high. Very few of them applied *Nazm al-Qur'an* (coherence) as a methodology of *tafsir*. What does this situation refer to? Does it not signify the impracticability of the theory, rendering it as mere hypothesis? Certainly, it is not a hypothesis; it is a proven theory. Scholars, even though few, have applied the principle of *Nazm al-Qur'an* in their *tafsir* works. The existence of *tafsir* works based on *Nazm al-Qur'an* serves as sufficient evidence for its efficacy. Yet, the Question remains in place as to why majority of scholars could not uphold this idea of coherence. Amin Ahsan Islahi suggests that the distance between the time of the *Qur'an*'s revelation and the time thereafter has made the task of identifying coherence in the *Qur'an* somewhat difficult. He explains that the two features of the classical Arabic hence of the *Qur'an*, *hadhf* (ellipsis) and *ijaz* (brevity) have also complicated the matter. To him, the commentator who is unaware of the classical Arabic

---

(1) Al-Suyuti, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 108.
(2) Al-Farahi, 'Abd al-×amid, *Rasa'il al-Imam al-Farahi fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an* (Al-Da'irah al-×amidiyyah, Sarai Mir, India, 1991), p. 51.
(3) Syed Mawdudi, *Tafhim al-Qur'an* (Idara Tarjuman al-Qur'an, Lahore, 1997), vol. 1, Muqaddimah, pp. 14-15.
(4) Islahi, Amin Ahsan, *Tadabbur-e-Qur'an* (Taj Company, Delhi, 1997), vol. 1, Muqaddimah, p. 20.

poetry and oration or who ignores these two dimensions of the *Qur'Énic* statements finds it difficult to trace co-relationship among the verses of a *surah*[1]. One may hardly contest the idea proposed by Islahi.

Objective of a task determines its method. One may find various objectives behind the commentary of the *Qur'an*. Traditionalists such as al-Tabari (d.310 A.H.), al-Samarqandi (d.373 A.H.), al-Tha'labi (d.427 A.H.), al-Baghawi (d.510 A.H.), Ibn Kathir (d.774 A.H.), and al-Suyuti (d.911 A.H.) wrote their *tafsir* works in order to mere collect the *tafsiri* views of the previous generation scholars. Rationalists such as al-Zamakhshari (d.538 A.H.), al-Razi (d.606 A.H.), al-Baydawi (d.685 A.H.), Ibn Hayyan (d.745 A.H.), and al-Alusi (d.1270 A.H.) paid attention to the message of the *Qur'an* from philosophical, philological, and rational angles so as to rebut others' views and substantiate their own stands. Jurists like al-Jassas (d.370 A.H.), al-Kiya al-Harrasi (d.504 A.H.), Ibn al-'Arabi (d.543 A.H.), and al-Qurtubi (d.671 A.H.) supported in their works *HanafI*, *ShAfi'i*, and *Maliki* schools of jurisprudence respectively. These objectives did not allow commentators of the *Qur'an* to spend their time on identifying the coherence among various components of a *surah*.

Coherence: Methodological Components
Al-Farahi and Islahi have both articulated various steps towards actualization of *Nazm al-Qur'an* as a methodology: (1) recognizing the link between a *surah* concerned and its preceding and succeeding *surahs*, (2) discovering preface in the the *surah*, (3) identifying the central theme of a *surah*, (4) condensing various sub-themes spread over the *surah*, (5) deliberating over semantic dimension of the words and phrases in each and every single *verse* of the *surah*, (6) perceiving ellipsis (*hadhf*) and brevity (*ijaz*) of the different statements in the *surah*, (7) confirming direct as well as indirect addressees of the *surah*, and (8) estimating styles of speech in the *surah*, (9) pondering over background of the *surah*, and (10) tracing conclusion of the *surah*.

---

(1) Ibid.

1-Recognizing the Link between A Surah and Its Preceding and Succeeding Surahs: It is a well-known fact that the order of the Qur'anic chapters is not chronological. This rearrangement of the *surahs* justifies the idea of contextual flow and coherence in the present sequence of the surahs. It, then, becomes almost imperative to establish thematic link between the *surahs*. This is the first step of mufassir while proceeding to interpret the *Qur'an*. The discovery of connection between the issues discussed in *surahs* may further facilitate the task of the *mufassir* to understand the message of a particular *surah*.

2-Discovering preface in the the *surah*: The opening *verse or verses* of a *surah* serve as a preface to the message therein. At times, mere by reflecting on the introductory part of a *surah o*ne may easily realize the contextual flow in the the *surah*. This understanding of the preface of the *surah* may help one see the link between the beginning and the end of the *surah*. Mere focusing on the words of the first *verses* of *surah* may enable the mufssir to visit the wonders of the *surah*.

3-Identifying Central Theme of the Surah Concerned: All the statements of a meaningful speech rotate around a particular theme. It is this central theme of a speech which makes it coherent. A discourse devoid of central theme is mere jumble of incoherent conceptions. Every *surah* of the *Qur'an* forms a complete speech of God; its each and every single idea is closely or remotely linked to a particular theme. One has to first of all develop an understanding of the central theme of the *surah*. Al-Biqa'i, al-Farahi, Syed Qutb, Syed Mawdudi, and Islahi have all suggested certain particular theme of every *surah*. One may argue that the central theme of a *surah* may vary from scholar to scholar. Yes, variation in wording of the central theme is natural but the idea proposed through the wording may not be mutually contradictory. According to al-Farahi[1] and Islahi[2], for instance, the central theme of *Surah al-Baqarah* is the confirmation of the position of the Last Prophet (s.a.w.). Syed Qu Ïb stresses that the chief

---

(1) Al-Farahi, op. cit., p. 105.
(2) Islahi, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 75.

subject matter of this *surah* is preparation of Muslims for the leadership which was until then in the hands of Jews[1]. Syed Mawdudi identifies the focal point of this *surah* as formation of a society based on Islamic principles and condemnation of Jews and hypocrites[2]. One can see the differences in the wording of these central themes of *Surah al-Baqarah*, but one will fail to see the conflict among the ideas expressed by various scholars. All these suggestions concerning the central theme of *Surah al-Baqarah* may be rephrased as "transfer of the leadership from Jews to the followers of the Last Prophet (s.a.w.)". Al-Biqa'i is of the view that the purpose of *Surah al-Baqarah* is to highlight the fact that the *Qur'an* is the source of guidance to the right path[3]. This proposal is quite general. The entire *Qur'an* seeks to provide guidance to the humanity. He seems to have erred here. The proposed central theme of a *surah* may easily be authenticated through checking whether the sub-themes of the *surah* are closely linked in a specific manner.

4-Condensing Sub-Themes of Surah: *Surahs* of the *Qur'an* particularly the long ones contain many subject-matters, which, at times, may appear mutually unrelated. The exercise of classifying various statements of a *surah* into thematic categories may help mufassir see the link among them in the light of the central theme of the *surah*. Syed Qutb, Syed Mawdudi, Muhammad Asad, and Islahi begin the interpretation of each *surah* by highlighting its sub-themes.

5-Deliberating over Semantic Dimensions of Words and Phrase in Verses: It is to be born in mind that the language of the *Qur'an* is not the one being used in the Arab world today. It is also not the Arabic in the literature produced by Mutanabbi (d.354 A.H.) and ×ariri (d.516 A.H.). The *Qur'an* came down in the Arabic of highly acclaimed Arab poets of *jahili* period such as Labid (d.25 A.H.), and Imr'u al-Qays (d.41 A.H.) and that of extraordinarily admired Arab orators such as Quss ibn Sa'idah (d.23

---

(1) Syed Qutb, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* (DÉr al-ShurËq, Cairo, 1996), vol. 1, p. 28.
(2) Syed Mawdudi, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 46-48.
(3) Al-Biqa'i, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 24.

before *hijrah*). It is not, then, justice to interpret the words of the *Qur'an* in the light of non-classical Arabic lexicons. Only that meaning of the Qur'anic usages which is in conformation with the Arabic usage before or during the *Qur'an*'s revelation can be accepted as proper. One may raise a valid question as to how semantic dimension of words can help establish link among various apparently unrelated subject matters in a *surah*. An example may suffice to shed light on the significance of deliberation over semantic dimension of words and phrases in the Qur'Én. In *Surah al-Baqarah*: 54 Moses advised his followers to make repentence from their sin of worshiping calf, referring to the manner of repentence: "*kill yourselves (faqtulu anfusakum)*". Many commentators have taken it in literal sense, claiming that Moses asked his people to commit suicide or hack one another to death. As al-Razi has suggested, this is in metaphoric sense i.e. "*mortify yourselves*".[1] With the literal meaning of the phrase one may not at all find any way to link it with *repentence*.

6-Perceiving Hadhf and Ijaz in the Qur'Énic Statements: Arabic of pre-Islamic period had two main features, ellipsis and conciseness. Arabs while expressing their ideas preferred brevity. For that matter they omitted from their speech what seemed to them unnecessary. Such approach enabled them to enclose the river into a tiny cup. To them, detailed statement replete with all major and minor elements was defective as to its eloquence. The *Qur'an* has applied the same features in its statements. Due to the existence of ellipsis the Qur'anic discourses appear, at times, to the general readers incoherent. A *mufassir* is advised to make utmost intellectual endeavor to fill in the gap in the Qur'anic statements caused by *hadhf* and *ijaz*.

7-Confirming Direct and Indirect Addressees of Surah: The Qur'an's addressees are (1) the Prophet (s.a.w.), (2) his followers, (3) his enemies, (4) Bedouins, (5) hypocrites, (6) non-believers in general, and (7) Jews and Christians, either respectively or collectively. At places the addresses are

---

(1) Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an* (Dar al-Andalus, Gibraltar, 1980), p. 12, footnote no. 39.

obvious as the *Qur'Én* addresses them using their identity: "*O Prophet*!"; "*O believers*!"; "*O hypocrites*!"; "*O Bedouins*!"; "*O Jews* or *O Christians*!"; "*O the people of Scripture*!"; "*O non-believers*!"; "*O polytheists*!*" But there are many places in the *Qur'Én* where the addressees have not been mentioned. At such places the *mufassir* will have to identify the addressees. Misperception of the addressees may mislead the reader of the *Qur'Én* to a wrong conclusion.

8-Estimating Styles of Speech in the SËrah: Various statements of the *Qur'Én* in a *sËrah* may appear mutually disconnected due to the readers being unaware of the classical styles of oration as used in the *jahili* period. The *Qur'Én* has used the same Arab styles of speech in its discourses. Qur'anic statements may not be fully grasped as to their original imports if they are looked at from different perspectives of the readers, disregarding the original styles of the *Qur'an*. Some of the most significant styles of the *Qur'an* are: "return in the conclusion to the same theme as in the beginning", "mention of the effect of the hidden", "parenthetical clauses", interrogatory remarks for confirmation of facts", "comparison and collation between analogous or contradictory things", "proceeding from implicitness to explicitness", "statement cum argumentation", "generalization", "elaboration of the concise statement", "priority and deferment", "reference to the future through past tense", "proximity", "multiplicity", "oath", "simile", and "metaphor". It is incumbent on the *mufassir* to take into consideration these various styles to do justice with his understanding of the *Qur'an*.

9-Pondering over Background of the Surah: As mentioned above, identifying ellipsis and brevity in Qur'anic statements is very significant for establishing coherence among apparently incoherent statements. Since the *Qur'Én* came down in a human setting, addressing certain people and certain particular problems, the original background of revelations will certainly help one trace the ellipsis and omitted statements from the revealed verses. Background of a *surah* may be obtained from two sources, authentic reports concerning the situation of revelation, and the issues discussed in the *surah*.

10-Tracing Conclusion of the Surah: Like preface, conclusion also constitutes a component of meaningful, coherent, eloquent, and rhetoric speech. The last statement either comprising only one *verse* or more than one is certainly the conclusion of the *surah*.

Coherence Methodology and Interpretation of Surah al-Jumu'ah

Surah al-Jumu'ah is the 62nd chapter of the *Qur'an*. It comprises only eleven *verses*. Historically, the *verses* 1-8 were revealed in the 7th year after *hijrah* when the last fortress of the Jews at Khaybar was conquered by the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.)[1]. And the remaining *verses* (9-11) came down several years earlier, a few days after the Prophet (s.a.w.) entered Madinah[2]. Conventionally, these two different revelations revealed on two different occasions do not have close connection with each other. But the sound reason does not consider this view as tenable. Arabs were the people of eloquence; they never got impressed by a speech which comprised unrelated statements. There is no denying the fact that the Arabs were stunned to hear the *Qur'an* as it was an excellent representative of rhetoric and eloquence. Labid, one of the seven acclaimed poets of Arabian Peninsula had abandoned composing poems simply because he found the *Qur'an* at the zenith of eloquence. Logically, had the *Qur'an* been deplete with eloquence, the Arabs would never have appreciated it wholeheartedly. The eloquence demands that all the components of a speech should be closely connected, giving a coherent message. Apart from that, a question arises as to why Allah (swt) enclosed different revelations in one particular chapter. Is there any answer to this question other than this that Allah willed to maintain the eloquence and rhetoric in His grand speech so as make it effective and cogent? *Surah al-Jumu'ah* does consist of two different revelations, but putting them together under one chapter carries some meaning. If the *verses* of this chapter are considered disconnected with one another, the method applied to interpret them will be one; if they are looked at as coherent, the way to explain them will be another. The following represents a humble attempt to interpret *Surah al-Jumu'ah* with

(1) Syed Mawdudi, op. cit., vol. 5, p. 482.
(2) Ibid.
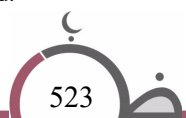
the application of *coherence methodology*. The basic task cum objective of this methodology is to identify the link between one part of the chapter and another.

Conventional Treatment of Surah al-Jumu'ah
From the following two methods of interpretation of *Surah al-Jumu'ah*, it will become crystal clear that the *mufassirun* in general do not feel concerned about the coherence among the eleven *verses* of the *surah*. Their main focus is on the words and phrases (*mufradat*). In this treatment of the *surah*, there seems to be no place for pondering over the wisdom behind the particular arrangement of the *verses* therein. Does it not mean that these commentators do not care for the rhetoric and eloquence inherent in the whole speech of *Surah al-Jumu'ah*? If it is the case, the interpretation of this chapter may not be as effective and impressive as the original Arabic statements. Mere deriving some isolated *fiqhi* rulings from such interpretation may not be considered desirable. Almost all the *mufassirun* have interpreted the *surahs* of the *Qur'an* word by word, sentence by sentence, and phrase by phrase, deriving legal rulings and supporting one view on a given matter or another. They do not bother to think about the link between one component of a *surah* and another. Conventional methodology of *tafsir* is not uniform. It varies from commentator to commentator. What is common among them is that they all concentrate on words and phrases (*mufradat*) as to their imports. Two samples from conventional system of *tafsir* are given below to elucidate the point.

Ibn 'Atiyyah's Interpretation of Surah al-Jumu'ah
Ibn 'Atiyyah (d.546 A.H.) is a well recognized commentator of the *Qur'an*. His work "*Al-Muharrar al-Wajiz fi Tafsir al-Kitab al-'Aziz*" is considered one of the most authentic *tafsir* books. He has his own style of interpreting the *Qur'an*. His explanation of *Surah al-Jumu'ah* is briefly introduced here.

He first of all stresses that this chapter is a *Madani* revelation and not a *Makki* revelation. He, then, refers to the controversy over the pronunciation of certain words such as *al-Malik* (the Sovereign) and *al-Quddus* (the Holy

One) in the first *verse*. Thereafter he proceeds to give the meaning of some words occurred in *verses* 2-4. He ends his interpretation of *verses* 1-4 with the quotation of some scholars from *sahabah* and *tabi'un* generations with a view to proving the universal nature of the position of the last Prophet (s.a.w.). Then he intends the interpretation of the *verses* 5-8 in which he maintains the same method as in the first four *verses*. When he proceeds to the *tafsir* of the remaining *verses* (9-11), he focuses on *fiqhi* dimension of Friday prayer related matters as well as the engagement in the business activities. In the end, he describes the controversy over how many people remained in the mosque, listening to the Prophet's (s.a.w.) sermon. In the end once again he discusses the *fiqhi* issue of physical posture of *khatib* (deliverer of Friday sermon), that is, whether delivering sermon in the sitting state is better or in the standing position.[1]

Ibn Kathir's Interpretation of Surah al-Jumu'ah

Ibn Kathir (d.774 A.H.) stands very tall among the *mufassirun*. His work "*Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim*" is widely acclaimed *tafsir*. He starts his interpretation of *Surah al-Jumu'ah* with a tradition informing the significance of this chapter. Then he selects *verses* 1-4 for interpretation. He advances his understanding of these *verses* semantically and traditionally. The second set of *verses* he chooses for the task comprises *verses* 5-8. Here he does the same. He quotes *verses* from other chapters of the *Qur'an* and traditions of the Prophet (s.a.w.) and also brings in the views of the scholars from *sahabah, tabi'un,* and *atba' al-tabi'in* generations to elaborate the message further. After this, he takes only two *verses* (9-10) for the task. Here he talks about the position of Friday in Muslim's religious life, various issues related to this particular day prayer such as brushing tooth and taking bath, and the position of worldly engagements after the call to Friday prayer. While touching the last *verse*, he refers to the historical event in response to which the *verse* came down[2].

---

(1) Ibn 'Atiyyah, al-Qadi Abu Muhammad, *Al-Muharrar al-Wajiz* (Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, Beirut, 2001), vol. 5, pp. 306-310.

(2) Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim* (Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, Beirut, 2000), vol. 5, pp. 354-359.

Application of Coherence Methodology to Surah al-Jumu'ah

As mentioned above in detail, all the proposed steps should be taken to interpret the *verses* of *Surah al-Jumu'ah*.

Link between Surah al-Jumu'ah and Its Preceding and Succeeding Surahs

The *surah* before *Surah al-Jumu'ah* is *Surah al-Saff* (61) and that after it is *Surah al-Munafiqun* (63). *Surah al-Saff* warns the followers of the Qur'an against developing the characteristics of the followers of Moses and Jesus, suggesting them to be sincere to the cause of Islam just as some sincere followers of Jesus Christ were sincere to Allah and His prophet. The *surah* ends with the historical news that those who rejected the call of Jesus Christ were defeated. *Surah al-Jumu'ah* renews the condemnation of the followers of Moses who had refused to accept the position of Muhammad (s.a.w.) as the Last Prophet. The *surah* next to it, *al-Munafiqun* condemns another most dangerous enemies of the Last Prophet (s.a.w.), the hypocrites who in collusion with others were bent upon sabotaging the mission of the Prophet (s.a.w.). These three *surahs* together send an obvious message to both the Muslims and their enemies that the truth will prevail and the falsehood will stand vanguished. These three *surahs* are devoted to training Muslims, telling them what to do and what not to do, and advising them not to follow into the footprints of those who rejected the message of the Last Prophet (s.a.w.), Jews, Christians, and hypocrites.

The Preface of Surah al-Jumu'ah

The first *verse* of this *surah ("Whatever is in the heavens and on earth does declare the glory of Allah, the Sovereign, the Holy One, the Exalted in might, the Wise")* forms the preface of the *surah*. When read in the light of the already identified central theme, each and every single word of this opening statement will appear meaningful and precisely relevant. Conventional methodology does not allow the mufassir to look at this *verse* but only as a beautiful beginning of the *surah*.

The *Qur'Én* mentions over and over again one or another attributes of Allah. These are not mere decoration pieces; they are everywhere

contextually meaningful. Here in this *surah*, the attributive names of Allah have been used as the preface to the message revealed in the *surah*. The relevance of this preface may be explained in this way.

Prophethood is the symbol of leadership. When the last Prophet (s.a.w.) was raised in a non-Jewish family, the Jews got incensed and protested, time and again, against this preference of the people other than the Jews who enjoyed for a long time the grace of the apostleship. They had made it the part of their faith that the Apostles of God were destined to be raised from among them alone. *Surah al-Jumu'ah* came down to rebut their claim. This rebuttal begins with the mention of some attributes of Allah. The first attribute is the Sovereignty of Allah (*al-Malik*). It refers to the fact that the right to choose the prophet from this or that race is a prerogative of Allah; none else shares in this power. When Allah raised previous prophets in the Jewish families, it was not because the Jews were the most favored people, but because Allah decided to do so. Now when He decided to raise the last apostle from among the Arabs, none has right to complaint against it. The second attribute is that He is the Holy One (*al-Quddus*). This attribute makes it very clear that there is no defect in the decision of Allah. The Jews seemed to have blamed Allah for being biased against the Jews. The mention of His Holiness serves as another rebuttal of the Jewish claim. The third attribute is that He is the Exalted in might (*al-'Aziz*). It reminds the Jews that there is none who ever changed the decision of Allah; that there is no power on the earth or in the heavens, who holds such power as to force Allah to modify His decision; and that all the powers available on earth and in the heavens are the reflection of the ultimate power of Allah. The last attribute as mentioned in the first *verse* is that He is Wise (*al-Hakim*). It stresses that the raising the last Prophet (s.a.w.) from among the Arabs, and not from among the Jews, was a wise judgment. The last Prophet (s.a.w.) required a people who could support his cause sincerely. The Jews had proved from their long history that they were insincere people; they did not possess the required qualities of the people for the last Prophet (s.a.w.).

In this preface, two things have been highlighted. First, it is Allah alone who assigns a people this or that position. Second, raising an apostle
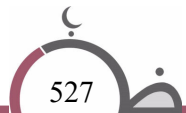
among a people is based on certain factors. From this preface it may also be derived that the Arabs who were passed on the reign of leadership may also be replaced someday if they did not remain sincere to their leadership position.

Thematic Analysis of Surah al-Jumu'ah

Although, this *surah* comprises only two different revelations, one may hardly see any apparent connection between one *verse* and another. The first *verse* (*"Whatever is in the heavens and on earth, does declare the glory of Allah, the Sovereign, the Holy One, the Exalted in might, the Wise"*) declares certain attributes of Allah. It is by itself a separate theme apparently having nothing to do with the succeeding statements. The second *verse* (*"It is He who has sent among the unlettered a messenger from among themselves, to rehearse to them His signs, to purify them, and to instruct them in the Book and Wisdom, although they had been before in manifest error"*) refers in no uncertain terms to the racial background of the last Prophet (s.a.w.) and the duties assigned to him. The third *verse* (*"And others of them who have not yet joined them: and He is Exalted in might, Wise"*) speaks about Prophet Muhammad's (s.a.w.) position as universal prophet, with an emphasis, once again, on the almightiness and wisdom of Allah. The fourth *verse* (*"Such is the bounty of Allah, which He bestows on whom He wills: and Allah is the Lord of the highest bounty"*) clarifies that the apostleship is a privilege from Allah and not a right of a certain people. *Verses* 2-4 appear to be connected with one another as the three statements are about raising the last Prophet (s.a.w.). Thus the *verses* 2-4 constitute a particular theme, different from the first theme in the first *verse*. The fifth *verse* ("The *similitude of those, who were entrusted with Torah, but who subsequently failed to bear it, is that of a donkey which carries huge tomes. Evil is the similitude of people who falsify messages of Allah: and Allah guides not people who do wrong"*) describes Jewish indifference to the revelation of Allah revealed to Moses. This *verse* forms another separate theme as it does not appear connected with the previous themes or the theme mentioned in the succeeding statements. *Verses* 6-8 (*"O you of Jewry! If you think that you are friends to Allah, to the exclusion of others, then express your desire for death, if you are truthful.

But never will they express their desire, because of the deeds their hands have sent on before them! And Allah knows well those who do wrong! Say: The death from which you flee will truly overtake you: then will you be sent back to the Knower of things, secret and open: and He will tell you the things that you did") appear to be connected with one another hence they form one theme i.e. the Jews love the worldly life much more than the life in the hereafter. The ninth and the tenth *verses ("O you who believe! When the call to prayer on Friday is proclaimed, hasten earnestly to the remembrance of Allah, and leave off business: that is best for you if you but knew. And when the prayer is finished, then may you disperse through the land, and seek of the bounty of Allah: and remember Allah frequently so that you may prosper")* form a different theme as these statements address Muslims, exhorting them to be mindful of the time of prayer as well as that of the business. The last *verse ("But when they saw some bargain or some pastime, they dispersed headlong to it, and left you standing. Say: That which Allah has is better than any pastime or bargain! And Allah is the Best Provider")* states an event related to a Friday prayer and sermon.

In total we find six sub-themes in this chapter. (1) Mention of some of Allah's attributes, (2) Raising the Last Prophet (s.a.w.) from among Arabs but making his message relevant for all, Arabs and non-Arabs, (3) Condemnation of Jews due to their negligence of Torah, (4) Challenge to the Jews to prove that they were friends to Allah, (5) Significance of Friday prayer on time, and involvement in business on time, and (6) Historical event according to which some Muslims left the mosque while the Prophet (s.a.w.) was still delivering Fiday sermon. Apparently, one may hardly find interrelationship among these different theses. Is it appropriate to consider these matters disconnected and interpret them as incoherent? Or through deliberation (*tadabbur*)[1], one has to identify

---

(1) Deliberation or *tadabbur* does not denote thinking in the vacuum. Man actually may not think over something no-existent. It may be argued here that many non-existent things came into being due to man's power of thinking. It is true but to reach a certain conclusion man has to make what apparently exists as the basis of his deliberation. Deliberation over *sËrah* in the *Qur'Ën* signifies deliberation over the words, phrases,

relationship among them and interpret them accordingly. *Nazm al-Qur'an* (coherence) is a methodology based on the Qur'anic advice of *tadabbur* by applying which a coherent interpretation of the chapter concerned may be developed.

Central Theme of Surah al-Jumu'ah

Surah al-Jumu'ah is composed of six sub-themes: (1) attributes of Allah, the Sovereign, the Holy One, the Exalted in might, the Wise, (2) raising of the last and the universal Prophet (s.a.w.) from among the Arabs, (3) condemnation the Jews due to their negligence of the revelation, (4) challenge to Jews to prove their position as the chosen people, (5) significance of Friday prayer, and (6) Muslims ignoring the Prophet's sermon and rushing headlong towards the business and the pastime outside the mosque. By pondering over these various themes one may find the central theme, which explain all the six themes. It is this central theme that may facilitate the task of the *mufassir*.

By looking at al-Razi's attempt to establish link between one *verse* of this *surah* and another, it may be gathered that the underlying messages of *Surah al-Jumu'ah* are faith in the almightiness of Allah, faith in the Messenger of Allah, and faith in the life hereafter.[1]

Al-Biqa'i (d. 885 A.H.) finds the central theme of *Surah al-Jumu'ah* as the obligation of Friday assembly on time.[2] One may not agree with al-Biqa'i to his identification of the central theme (*maqsud*) of this surah. Obligation of Friday is one of the many themes of this chapter, but not the central theme. If obligation of Friday prayer is taken as the central them of this *surah*, it will be very difficult to explain its link to all the components of the *surah*.

---

structure, background of the *sÏrah*. Great scientists came up with their visions on certain theories on the basis of their deliberation. Man's power of thinking is reliable hence the *Qur'Én* has made appeal to human reason again and again to apply it in understanding the message of the *Qur'Én*.

(1) Al-RÉzÊ, op. cit., vol. 10, part 30, pp. 537-544.
(2) Al-BiqÉ'Ê, op. cit., vol. 7, p. 590.

'Abd al-Hamid al-Farahi (d.1349 A.H.) outlines all the steps that need to be taken to apply the system in the interpretation of the Qur'an. According to him, ten chapters, *al-×adid* (57), *al-Mujadilah* (58), *al-Hashr* (59), *al-Mumtahanah* (60), *al-Saff* (61), *al-Jumu'ah* (62), *al-Munafiqun* (63), *al-Taghabun* (64), *al-Talaq* (65), and *al-Tahrim* (66) have one and the same central theme, that is, warning to believers to keep away from the approaches of Jews and their comrades, and the promise of victory and dominance over others. He calls these chapters as those of freedom and purification (*al-bara'ah* and *al-tathir*).[1] Undoubtedly, these chapters including *Surah al-Jumu'ah* serve as the sources of liberation of Muslims from the non-Islamic traditions and habits and their purification from Islamic perspective. But this is also the purpose of the entire *Qur'an*. It means what al-Farahi suggests is a general theme of the *Qur'an* itself. There should be some more specific theme of *Surah al-Jumu'ah*.

To Syed Qutb (d.1966 C.E.), *Surah al-Jumu'ah* deals with the theme that the Muslims in Madinah were the new bearers of the trust of the faith, as the Jews were deprived of this grace due to their negligence of the trust entrusted to them previously.[2] We shall see later that this theme as referred to by Syed Qutb seems to be really the central theme of *Surah al-Jumu'ah*.

According to Syed Mawdudi (d.1979 C.E.), the underlying idea of *Surah al-Jumu'ah* is the warning to the Jews, and by implication, to the Muslims of the evil consequences of their evil-deeds.[3] Here Syed Mawdudi seems to be in agreement with al-Farahi whose view has already been given earlier. Is it mere a warning or something else which has been conveyed through warning. It may be suggested here that warning may not form a central theme, but it serves as one of the several methods to highlight the main message.

---

(1) Al-Farahi, op. cit., p. 109.
(2) Syed Qutb, op. cit., vol. 6, pp. 3562-3563.
(3) Syed Mawdudi, op. cit., vol. 5, p. 484.

To Amin Ahsan Islahi (d.1997 C.E.), the central theme of *sЁrah al-Jumu'ah* is the warning to the children of Isma'il to beware of the conspiracies of the children of Israel.[1] This identification of the central theme is similar to the central theme identified by al-Farahi and Syed Mawdudi.

As has been said earlier, the central theme of a *surah* can be identified only after the analysis of all of its sub-themes. It seems the central themes of *Surah al-Jumu'ah* is the confirmation of the change of leadership from the hands of the children of Israel to the children of Isma'il. Syed Qutb has referred to the same theme by using the term "trust" (*amanah*). Islahi mentions the change of leadership but only as a sub-theme. After more and more deliberation (*tadabbur*) over the sub-themes of *Surah al-Jumu'ah*, it may be agreed that the central theme of this chapter is the confirmation that the Jews have been deposed from their leadership position and the followers of the last Prophet (s.a.w.) have been seated on the vacant throne to lead the humanity. This theme may easily explain all the components of the *surah*.

The Context of Surah al-Jumu'ah
The context of a *surah* may be determined with the identification of the addressees therein. In the *verses* 1-8 the Jews have been addressed directly and the Arabs indirectly. And the followers of the last Prophet (s.a.w.) have been addressed in the remaining *verses* (9-11). The message given to both the audiences is the position of the Prophet of Allah. Their insincerity to the Prophet (s.a.w.) is a factor for their deprivation of their superior position.

Semantic Explanation of Important Words in Surah al-Jumu'ah
Apart from the four attributive names of Allah as mentioned in the preface of sЁrah the other important words occurred in the sЁrah which need further deeper understanding are *ummiyyin*, *hikmah*, *fadl Allah*, *zalimin*, and *dhikr*.

---

(1) Islahi, op. cit., vol. 8, p. 373.

The word *ummi* denotes the person in his/her crude and primary form of personality representing his/her childhood when the person remains very much attached with his/her mother. According to the Jewish doctrine, the entire humanity is divided into two main categories, Jews and non-Jews (the guided and the unguided/the privileged and the underprivileged/ the enlightened and the unlettered/ the people of Scripture and the people without Scripture). Historically, the Jews looked upon non-Jews with contempt calling them Gentiles (Greek) or Joim (Hebrew). Arabs were also among the Gentiles (unlettered and unguided). The Arabic term they used for that purpose was *ummi*. Thus this term was not a praiseworthy word for the Arabs. It was rather a blameworthy term for the Arabs. It is not imaginable that Arab who called themselves *'Arab* (the most eloquent) and others *'Ajam* (the deaf and dumb) coined the above derogatory term *ummi*. The unlettered cannot be the eloquent. Allah has said through this term coined by the Jews for the Arabs that those whom the Jews considered underprivileged deserved the privilege of the Last Prophet being raised among them. With this understanding of the word *ummi* the mind goes to the nature of link between the first *verse* and the succeeding *verses* until *verse* 8.

The word *hikmah* literally stands for perfection of knowledge. This is achieved through application of knowledge in a particular methodological and practical manner. When it was said that the Prophet (s.a.w.), among other things, teaches *Íikmah*, it referred to the Prophet (s.a.w.) teaching his followers the methodological and practical dimensions of the knowledge given in the revealed Scripture, the *Qur'an*. The Jews in Madinah doubted the ability of Arabs to grasp the message of Allah in concrete form. The word *hikmah* suggested that the Arabs would get the message at both conceptual and practical levels.

The word *fadl Allah* has occurred in the *surah* twice (*verses* 4 & 10). It basically signifies the grace and privilege of Allah. In the first use it refers to the raising of the Last Prophet (s.a.w.) among certain people as a privilege of Allah. In the second usage it means the sustenance provided by Allah. The livelihood is entirely in the hands of Allah; if He gives it to His

creation, it is a grace. Religious as well as material favors constitute Allah's grace to the mankind.

The word *zalimin* has occurred in the *surah* twice (*verses* 5 & 7). *zulm* is the opposite of *'adl* (justice). The two *verses* (5 & 7) indict the followers of Moses as unjust (*zalimin*) because they failed to do justice with their position of leadership and that of the bearer of the Scripture, getting involved more and more in the worldy affairs at the cost of their religious duties[1].

The word *dhikr* has also occurred twice (*verses* 9 & 10), one in noun form and the other in verb form. *Dhikr* literally means conscious remembrance. Since in both the instances the word *dhikr* is associated with Allah, the Muslims have been exhorted to always maintain remembrance of Allah in all its prescribed forms. Prayer is *dhikr* because Muslim comes in contact with Allah through that. The *dhikr* in earning the livelihood is to take care of the concept of *halal* and *haram*. Thus *dhikr* of Allah is mainly the remembrance of Allah's commands. This understanding of the word *dhikr* establishes link between *verses* 1-8 and *those* 9-11. Allah advised believers to remember Allah in all situations, religious worship and worldly business. It is because the Jews were deprived of their leadership position due to, among other things, their negligence of Allah's commands to them.

Identification of the Ellipsis and the Brevity
Ellipsis (*hadhf*) and brevity (*ijaz*) are intrinsic features of human speech. Every human language invariably possesses this quality. In Arabic language, particularly the Arabic of the revelation period, these two

---

(1) Here one may be inclined to blame the *Qur'an* for being anti-Semitic. This blame might be justified only when it is proved that what the *Qur'an* depicts against the Jews is historically untrue. Making statements against individuals and groups on the basis of historical truths should not be called as hostile approach. The *Qur'an* has described a number of errors made by Jews—they killed their own Prophets, they infringed upon the *Sabbath* rule, they changed the words and meaning of the revealed verses of Torah etc. Highlighting these doings of the Jews cannot be referred to as anti-Semitic. The Bible itself has mentioned several episodes linking Jews to doing something wrong.

features are available more than other languages. Like Arabs, the *Qur'an* has maintained the omission of those elements of the speech which the audience could themselves understand. Had the *Qur'an* ignored the ellipsis and brevity in its sentences, Arabs, its first addressees would surely have ignored it.

With the help of sub-themes of *Surah al-Jumu'ah* as well as its central theme, the ellipsis may easily be read between the lines; and what has been omitted from one statement and another may also be comfortably identified.

The Ellipsis in Surah al-Jumu'ah

The omitted statement between the preface (mention of divine attributes) and the second sub-theme (raising the last Prophet (s.a.w.) from among the Arabs) is "These attributes of Allah inclusive of His wisdom necessitated that the Arabs be chosen as the people for the last Prophet". With this statement, the link between the first Éyah and the second sub-theme (2-4) is clear. Another ellipsis is between the second sub-theme (2-4) and the third sub-theme—"The bearers of Torah could not do justice with their obligation of orienting their life in accordance with the divine instruction"—is "The Jews were deprived of their leadership position because…….". Likewise, the statement omitted between *verse* 5 and the next sub-theme (6-8)—"The Jews might claim that they are the loved ones of Allah hence they still deserved the continuation of the leadership". If the *verses* 6-8 are read with this elliptic statement, the link between these verses and the preceding one will be obvious. What has been left on the discretion of the audience before the beginning of the *verses* 9-10 and their preceding *verses* is "O believers! You should not turn like Jews who were insincere to their Prophets (peace be upon them all)". After this, Muslims have been given a relevant example from their life, which is Friday assembly, to caution them against following into the footprints of their predecessors i.e. the Jews. The left out statement between the *verses* 9-10 and the last *verse* (11) is "O believers! You are advised to observe this concerning Friday prayer and your worldly affairs in view of your wrong approach to one of the previous Friday assemblies". Thus this
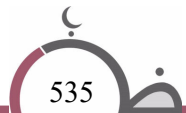
understanding of the ellipsis between one sub-theme and another one leads to understanding of the link between apparently disconnected statements of *Surah al-Jumu'ah*.

The Brevity in Surah al-Jumu'ah

Deep deliberation over the *verses* of *Surah al-Jumu'ah* will show that there are two major points where the long statements seem to have been shortened. First, in the preface where the statement should have been like this: "The Jews complain against Allah's decision to raise the last Prophet (s.a.w.) from among the non-Jewish race. They should know that it is Allah's discretionary power to do so. Perhaps they think that if they are not retained in the leadership position, there will be no other people to take His message. It is their misunderstanding of their position in the eyes of Allah. If the Jews do not submit to Allah, the entire universe is submitting to Him who is the Sovereign, the Holy One, the Exalted in might, the Wise".

Second, in the concluding remark where the detail about the Muslims' indifference towards the significance of the Friday prayer has been omitted: "O believers! You were all sitting in the mosque, listening to Prophet's sermon of Friday prayer. In the meantime, the sound of a foreign trade caravan reached the ears and the people who were since long time impatiently awaiting the arrival of the trade caravan rushed headlong towards the direction of the sound, leaving the Prophet (s.a.w.) and some other companions in the mosque". This particular brevity can be elaborated in the light of the historical event.

Unique Style of Speech in Surah al-Jumu'ah

Verses 2-4 mention that raising the Last Prophet (s.a.w.) among the Arabs and not among the Jews was a divine privilege granted to the Arabs. And the following *verses* 5-8 articulate as to why the Jews did not deserve that special privilege. One of the styles of the *Qur'an* is "statement cum argument". Here in this *surah* this style seems to have been applied. Apparently, the *verses* (5 & 8) do not represent the argument substantiating the statement made in the *verses* (2-4) but these statements do form argument for the deprivation of the Jews of the privilege. Identification of

this style of speech helps one to find the link among all the *verses* of the *surah*.

Background of Surah al-Jumu'ah

As mentioned earlier under preface in the *surah*, Jews in Madinah were angry with the raising of the Last Prophet in a non-Jewish family. They believed that even the Last Prophet would be raised among them, forgetting that it was not their ight but only the priviledge granted to any people by Allah.

Conclusion in SËrah al-Jumu'ah

The last *verse* forms conclusion of the *surah*. In the preface four attributes of Allah were mentioned and here in the conclusion only one attribute has been described i.e. Allah is the best of the providers. The message in the conclusion is that Allah who arranged for the guidance of humanity by raising the Last Prophet (s.a.w.) among Arabs is not merely the Soveriegn, the Holy, the Al-Mighty, and the All-Wise but also the source of sustenance. Hence believers should not get engaged in worldly matters at the cost of their religious duties.

Re-Phrasing the Meaning of Surah al-Jumu'ah

Now the meaning of *Surah al-Jumu'ah* may be put like this:
"The Jews were complaintive against Allah's decision of raising the last Prophet (s.a.w.) from non-Hebrew people. Allah raised the last Prophet (s.a.w.) from among the Arabs because it was entirely His discretion to do that. There is none who could change His decision as He is the Sovereign and all-Powerful; there is no defect in this decision as He is the Holy One, free from all flaw; behind the selection of Arabs for this privilege there are certain reasons as He is the Wise. Although the Arabs among whom the Prophet (s.a.w.) was raised were ignorant, the Prophet recites to them the revealed words, purifies them of all that are against the divine commands, teaches them the meaning of the *Qur'an*, and explains to them the methodological and practical dimensions of the divine message. It is equally relevant for others, whether Arabs or non-Arabs, who embrace the message of Allah. The apostleship is the symbol of leadership, which when

given to certain people is a privilege from Allah and not any people's innate right. The Jews were deprived of this privilege because they had shown through their negligence of the trust from Allah that they were unable to bear the burden of the last edition of Allah's message, the basis of the universal leadership. The Jews might claim that their negligence of the revelation would not effect their position of being the most privileged people on the earth. Are they really true in their claim of being close to God? If it is true, they should not hesitate to long for going back to their Lord. They are not true in their claim. That is why they may not give up their love for the material life and worldly gains. In their pursuit for the worldly profits they forget every thing, including their religious duties assigned to them. On the Day of Judgment they will come to know what went wrong to them and they will be recompensed accordingly. Now the followers of the last Prophet (s.a.w.) have been cautioned to remain away from the tactics the Jews applied in their life. What happened on a certain Friday when some of the Muslims left the mosque only to join others in the business and pastime activities, ignoring the fact this was the time for that religious duty was not right. Muslims should change their approach. They should be balanced in their life. This is possible through time-management. Religious duty should be performed at its allocated time; material life does count but it should be paid attention to only before or after the accomplishment of the religious duty. It was the total indifference towards the significance of time on the part of the Jews that they were deprived of their age-old position. Muslims are advised not to follow into the footprints of their predecessors. If they do so, they will suffer from the same fate. If they fear that by devoting some time to the religious duty they will be losing the material gains, they have made wrong calculation. They should know that everything is in the hands of Allah, the ultimate source of providence".

Conclusion

Coherene (*Nazm al-Qur'an*) does not seem to be a new term related to the Qur'an but it appears to be a new proposal as methodology to interpret the *Qur'an*. With its application the *verses* of a *surah* appear coherent and cohesive. If the conventional system of *tafsir* is applied in understanding

the divine words, *verses* of a *surah* may not necessarily look closely connected with one another. Coherence (*Nazm al-Qur'an*) is meant to maintain the rhetoric and eloquence of the message of the *Qur'an* as original as in the revealed words. According to this theory, every chapter of the *Qur'an* consists of four parts: (1) the central theme, (2) the preface, (3) the context, and (4) the conclusion. At times, the application of this methodology may lead the *mufassir* to a meaning of the *verses* of a *surah*, which is entirely different from the meaning derived through conventional system of *tafsir*. It may be said here that the controversies over the meaning of the Qur'anic statements may be overcome through coherence (*Nazm al-Qur'an*) methodology. This is not mere a theory but a practical methodology of *tafsir*, which maintains the beauty and inimitability of the *Qur'an* even in a language other than Arabic. Al-Farahi and Islahi have come up with some practical principles of coherence methodology of *tafsir*. Muslim scholars have the sacred duty to look into this theory of *tafsir* methodology and improve it further so as to do justice with the message of the *Qur'an*.

<div align="center">* * *</div>

List of Sources and References

(1)   Al-Baqillani, Muhammad ibn al-Tayyib, *I'jaz al-Qur'an* (ed. Ahmad Saqr, Dar al-Ma'arif, Egypt, n.d.), 5th edition.

(2)   Al-Biqa 'i, Ibrahimm ibn 'Umar, *Nazm al-Durar* (Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, Beirut, 1995).

(3)   Al-Farahi, 'Abd al-×amid, *Rasa'il al-Imam al-Farahi fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an* (Al-Da'irah al-×amidiyyah, Sarai Mir, India, 1991).

(4)   Al-Jahiz, 'Amr ibn Bahr, *Al-Hayawan* (ed. Abd al-SalÉm, Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, Beirut, n.d.).

(5)   Al-Jurjani, 'Abd al-Qahir, *Dala'il al-I'Jaz* (ed. Mahmud Muhammad Shakir, Maktaba al-Khanji, Cairo, 1983).

(6)   Al-Khattabi, Hamd ibn Muhammad, *Bayan I'jaz al-Qur'an* (eds. Muhammad Khalf Allah and Muhammad Zaghlawl, part of the edited work entitled "*Thalathu Rasa'il fi I'jaz al-Qur'an*", Dar al-Ma'arif, Egypt, n.d.), 4th edition.

(7)   Al-Razi, Fakhr al-Din, Mafatih al-Ghayb (Dar Ihya' al-Turtth al-'Arabi, Beirut, 1997).

(8)   Al-Suyuti, Jalal al-Din, Al-Itqan fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an (Dar al-Fikr, Beirut, n.d.).

(9)   Al-Zarkashi, Badr al-Din, Al-Burhan fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an (Dar al-Fikr, Beirut, 1994).

(10)   Ibn 'Atiyyah, al-Qadi Abu Muhammad, *Al-Muharrar al-Wajiz* (Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, Beirut, 2001).

(11)   Islahi, Amin Ahsan, *Tadabbur-e-Qur'an* (Taj Company, Delhi, 1997).

(12)   Mustansir Mir, *Coherence in the Qur'an* (American Trust Publications, USA, 1986).

(13)   Syed Mawdudi, *Tafhim al-Qur'an* (Idara Tarjuman al-Qur'an, Lahore, 1997).

(14)   Syed Qutb, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* (DÉr al-ShurËq, Cairo, 1996).

* * *