

An Evaluation of Claims by Non-Muslim Scholars about the Incoherence and Inconsistency of the Holy Quran

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Abstract

The coherence of Quranic verses and chapters is an essential characteristic that indicates the eloquent structure of the holy Quran. The coherence can be seen in its verses and various chapters. A systematic consideration of the coherence and cohesion of the Quran has far-reaching implications for an accurate understanding of the Quran. Scholars of Quranic studies have examined more than twenty aspects of the coherence of the Holy Quran; however, some non-Muslims have cast doubts on the harmony of the Quran and have raised various objections to show the inconsistency of Quranic verses. We highlight the divinity of the Quran and defend its sacredness, and by adopting an analytic-descriptive method and deploying a critical approach, we aim to refute the claims by non-Muslims by providing evidence that the holy Quran enjoys verbal and semantic cohesion. Hence, the objections by non-Muslims are a result of a failure to differentiate between thematic and artistic versatility of the holy Quran, and to take account of its existing cohesion and hidden connections.

Keywords: Orientalism, coherence of Quranic verses, cohesion of the holy Quran.

Introduction

The relevance and consistency of the divine verses are important features of the Holy Quran, which has a fundamental impact on the correct understanding of the book. Yet, some non-Muslims have, for various reasons and motives, claimed that there are disagreements, dissonance, and disputes within the Quran. Its rhetoric is contrary to the natural normal human rhetoric found in the works of literature scholars. They argue that, if the Quran was presented in the form of thematic categories of topics and

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content, then like any other literary work, it would be easier, more effective, and more comprehensible for the audience.

Literature Review

Such dubious claims about Quranic inconsistency have been discussed by the early and contemporary Muslim scholars. The very first literature available in this regard is *al-Burhān fī 'ulūm al-Qur'ān* written by Badr al-Dīn al-Zarkashī wherein he discusses the “coherence in Quran” in a chapter titled “Knowledge of cohesion in the [Quranic] verses and chapters.” Afterwards, Burhān al-Dīn Ibrāhīm ibn 'Umar al-Biqā'ī explicitly supported the coherence of the Quran by authoring a commentary titled *Naẓm al-durar fī tanāsub al-āyāt wa-l-suwar*. The issue of “coherence in the Quran” has reserved a boost from then onwards, and many scholars wrote works to discuss and support Quranic coherence. Al-Suyūfī is a scholar who authored many works such as *Al-Itqān fī 'ulūm al-Qur'ān*, *Tanāsuq al-durar fī tanāsub al-suwar*, and *Marāṣid al-matāli' fī tanāsub al-maqāṭi'* on the subject.

In the contemporary world, due to objections by non-Muslims to the coherence of the Quran, the topic gained exceptional significance and therefore became a subject of research and analysis in numerous works, including:

- A Critique of the orientalist doubt about the coherence of the Quranic verses by Mohammad Hassan Zamani and Ali Ghaneie (2007) in the Persian Journal of *Marifat*, no. 122, 77-98.
- The relevance of verses in a single Quranic chapter by Kazem Qazizadeh and Alireza Mohammadpour Gorgi (2017) in the Persian journal of *Husna*, no. 29 and 30 (Summer and Autumn), 19-48.
- The Coherence of Quranic verses and Quranic chapters by Morteza Irvani (1997) in the journal of *Islamic Studies*, no. 37 and 38 (Autumn and Winter).
- A look at the relevance of the verses (of the Quran) by Adel Ebrahimi Fakhari (2005) in the English journal of *Quran Education Growth*, no. 8 (spring).
- *Coherence in the Quran (A study of Islahi's concept of nazm in his Tadabbur al-Qur'ān)* by Mustansir Mir, published by American Trust Publication, Washington DC, 1986.

What distinguishes this article from the ones listed above is its specific and comprehensive approach to criticize the doubts cast by non-Muslims

about Quranic coherence. These works do not specifically address non-Muslim claims, except for the article on criticizing Orientalist doubts about the relevance of the Quran by Mohammad Hassan Zamani and Ali Ghaneie. The pivotal answer provided in their article is the continuity of oral and written conventions. In this article, however, apart from explaining the above refutation, we add some arguments via a critical-analytic method.

The Concept of proportionality and coherence

The term “coherence” or “proportionality” refers to a relationship between two related things. It indicates affinity and closeness, coordination and unity in relation, coherence and similarity, and the bonding of two things together. If it is said, “x” is not related to or not coherent with “y,” it means that “x” has no similarity, connection, affinity, or unity with “y” (Ibn Fāris ibn Zakariyya 1404 AH, 423).

The term “proportionality” in its technical usage is a relation between two things. In the Quran, this refers to the relation of each verse with its preceding or following verses (Amush 2005), or the relation of a sura (a Quranic chapter) to its preceding or following suras (Qatan 2000, 97). As pointed out by al-Suyūṭī, the purpose of such a science is to find the link between various parts of the Quran and its verses. This relationship is sometimes realized in a general as well as specific way, sometimes through a bond of reason, physical perception and imagination, or through a type of attachment and rational coherence, such as causation, cause and effect, or even two opposites, representing a continuum of the subject matter (Suyūṭī 1421 AH, 218).

The Objections Raised by Non-Muslims

The skepticism concerning eloquence and rhetoric of Quranic verses is one of the most basic and most serious doubts raised by some non-Muslims. What follows are their opinions and remarks on the matter, along with reviews and analyses.

Thomas Carlyle, a Scottish historian and a writer who praised the Prophet (s) in his book *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History*, has dedicated a chapter to the introduction of the Prophet. He describes the Quran as difficult to read, ambiguous, and a book that lacks a proper format and structure (McAuliffe 1392 Sh, 310).

Reynolds Nicholson says: “The Quran, in the eyes of European readers, is ambiguous, tedious, and unappealing” (McAuliffe 1392 Sh, 310).

Gustave Lebon considers the main reason for the existing “imperfections” between the verses and the Surah of the Quranic text to be the Prophet's illiteracy (Gustave Lebon 1318 Sh, 20).

Ignaz Goldziher, a Hungarian researcher and the author of the book *Schools of Muslim Commentaries*, describes the structure of the Quranic text as follows: “Among religious books, as recognized by various religious groups, there is no book more unstable and inconsistent than the Quran in terms of its text and literature” (Goldziher 2004, 29).

Régis Blachère, a French researcher in his book *Le Coran* believes that the style and the manner of expression of the Quran are problematic, holding that this type of approach is difficult for the non-Muslims (Blachère 1374 Sh, 301).

Noldeke counts the drawbacks of the Quran with reference to its stories, believing that they lack any comprehensible structure. He says that, in terms of style and structure, the stories narrated in the Quran lack uniformity in the way of their occurrence and their evolution. This discontinuity and incoherence make it difficult and hard to understand (Robinson 1999, 69).

Muller, another Researcher who, on Richard Bell's account, has a similar view based on linkage of the Quran, talks about the structure of the Quran and claims, “It's only rarely found in the Quran to have a comparatively long coherent combination. The major part of these pieces can be seen in some of the epistles of the last chapters of the Quran” (Bell 1953, 71).

Richard Bell considers the dispersion and discrepancy as a characteristic of the Quran and expresses it in different ways. He explains that discrete grafting is a real attribute of the style of the Quran. We can rarely find a coherent combination in its structure (Bell 1953, 72).

Frithjof Schuon believes that “For Moslem orthodoxy the Quran is not only the uncreated Word of God but also the model par excellence of the perfection of language. Seen from outside, however, this book appears to be a collection of sayings and stories that is more or less incoherent and sometimes incomprehensible at first approach. The reader who is not forewarned, whether he reads the text in translation or in Arabic, runs up against obscurities, repetitions, tautologies and, in most of the long suras...” (Schuon 1998, 40-41).

Refutation of the Objections

The First Argument: The Fittingness of the Current Model to the Guidance System of the Quran

The Quran was revealed to guide the mankind towards salvation. In this regard, the thematic multiplicity of the Quran, i.e., the fact that it addresses various mora, theological, jurisprudential, and other issues, is not only well-matched with this goal, but also fits its guidance model.

There is no doubt that the extant form of the Quran is more effective and can better serve its purpose of guidance. The reader, in a very short period and without any difficulty, will be able to comprehend its overall great purpose and glimpse of history and contexts. Indeed, one can obtain all these diverse materials from a single chapter without the structure of the text being undermined. Now, if the Quran was written or compiled in a systematic manner, mankind would have remained void of these benefits. The Quran would not be able to fulfill its purpose to the optimum. The reader would be able to acquaint himself with the ultimate goals and intentions of the Quran only after reading the entire Quran (Khoei 1430 AH, 92, 93)

Review and Analysis

Why is the focal point of the Quran based upon the axis of guidance? This is because the Quran itself emphasizes upon its mainly guiding nature in its initial verses. In the chapter al-Baqara, it says, “This Book, there is no doubt in it, is a guide to those who guard (against evil)” (Q 2:2). But what is meant by “the guiding axis of the Quran”?

This refers to the main aim of the Quran, which is to encourage human beings towards the straight path of spiritual development. Therefore, the goals and the components of this formulation are a set of tools and methods that play a role in guiding the mankind towards God. These elements include teaching, purification, reminding, and repeating.

A guiding model is more general than an educational model. In the latter, the only focus is upon the transmission of the (new) teachings to the students. The methods and tools used in this model are to improve the productivity of the students to gain more knowledge efficiently like speech, books, and pen. It excludes the methods and tools of the guiding model like purification of the soul, repetition, reminders, recitation, and purposeful historiography.

To illustrate, the Quran says: “And when His communications are recited to them, they increase them in faith” (Q 8:2). A function of the Quran is to increase people’s faith and belief. When discussing education, the sole purpose is to transfer knowledge without its limitations or progressive levels. However, belief is hierarchical and a matter of degrees; that is, it comes in weak and strong forms: certainty by knowledge (*‘ilm al-yaqīn*), and certainty by observation (*‘ayn al-yaqīn*) and certainty by truth (*ḥaqq al-yaqīn*). On the guiding model, the Quran sometimes uses alternative methods to instill and strengthen the belief, like the element of worship, as in the following verse: “Is there doubt about Allah, the Maker of the heavens and the earth?” (Q 14:10), or in the verse: “that is Allah! How are you then turned away?” (Q 6:95). In the books of physics, we do not have a model for worship, then why does the Quran suggest this? The answer is: it does so in order to strengthen our beliefs.

Another function of the Holy Quran is the element of reminder and repetition, which are not necessary in educational methods like physics. In those cases, if the student has a good memory, it suffices for him to be taught only once. On the guidance model, however, humans tend to neglect or forget values due to the day-to-day worldly activities: “So, he made them forsake their own souls: these it is that are the transgressors” (Q 59:19). This is while the forsakenness is not in their belief rather it is while they encompass it, “in heedlessness are they turning aside” (Q 29:1).

Therefore, a guidance model uses all the elements that can be used to encourage the audience towards the ultimate goal. For example, God commands piety, then He counts the blessings of piety, and then mentions stories and role models of piety in history; thereafter, He brings the elements of impiety and concludes by referring to their abode in the hereafter. Although, at first glance, some of these teachings may seem to explain the nature of the concept, or legislate a law, or impart a fragment of history, but all of these seemingly different and discrete disciplines in the fields of knowledge follow a systematic and coherent path of training and guiding towards a specific goal.

Second Argument: Lack of Awareness of the Hidden Connections between the Topics of a Quranic Chapter

It cannot be denied that, on the face of it, the Quran and its chapters seem fragmented, but on the whole, it seems obvious that there is harmony

among its topics, and thus, it is a coherent text. Indeed, the Quran is characterized by the bridges it makes between various fragmented topics to yield an interconnected transcript and a thematic cohesion. The connections (that we refer to as bridges between topics) are considered eloquent punctuations and are classified into apparent and hidden connections. The former is where the connection is clear, as in a case in which one verse explains another; for example, verses 17-19 of Sura al-Dāriyāt; verses 7-8 of Sura al-‘Ankabūt; verses 5-6 of Sura al-Inshirāḥ. On the other hand, there are some Hidden and subtle connections. The subtle connection is where the sentences appear to be independent and irrelevant towards each other. Finding a relationship between them requires careful investigation and profound exploration. These hidden connections sometimes appear with a conjunction and sometimes without it.

Drawing on the method of comparison, al-Suyūfī continues to explain the two kinds of relationships by saying that, in the first instance, a comprehensive concept encircling the two conjuncts should be taken into consideration. For example, in the verse, “*God knows what fall down on the earth and what comes out of it and what descends from the sky and what goes up there*” (Q 34:2), the words “falling down” and “coming up” or “ascending” and “descending” are contradictory concepts, which can be comprehensively categorized as contradictory concepts whereas sky and earth can be categorized as pseudo-contradictions. In the second instance, however, where there is no apparent relation at all or the relation between the two is hidden and not easily recognizable, one should refer to conceptual relations, such as theory, contrast, extrapolation, good disposition, transference, summarization, and righteousness (Suyūfī 1421 AH, 218). Apparently, the non-Muslims did not consider or did not know these connecting bridges in the Quran.

Review and analyses

How do literary and rhetorical arrays play a role in the coherence and relevance of the verses? The answer to this question should be sought in their functions. In general, the coherence of a statement lies in the connection between its words on the basis of syntagmatic axis and paradigmatic axis. Among the experts of rhetoric, what helps in terms of semantics and coherence is the use of a range of expressions like assertions, synonyms, antonyms, contrasts, contradictions, and delusions. This is

because the application of these speech acts on the syntagmatic axis, and hence, the semantic coherence is achieved through a combination of various components of a sentence. If the Quran used a particular figure of speech extensively and then switched to another, scholars such as Noldeke would not confront the book and consider this abnormal and lacking in beauty because, firstly, this element acts on the basis of the syntagmatic axis, and in this process, it conjugates with the other elements. Secondly, this style is more compatible with the addressing language of the Quran, because one of the most prominent elements in a dialogue is the style of address. A speaker who addresses an audience at various places, times, and circumstances makes use of diverse types of speech, which are in keeping with the situation. Accordingly, the Quran also uses an array of speech taking into consideration the time, place, and various circumstances.

Proportionality patterns or similar considerations are important rhetorical elements used in different verses of the Quran. These play an important role in the coherence and connectivity of the text, because it uses words that coordinate and correlate with each other to bring together a particular meaning. The coordination and proportionality are created because they are part of a general meaning formed with the help of the rhetorical elements. Examples of such an address can be seen in Q 78:6-16. Another element of rhetoric is contradiction and antonym which, by creating a network of invisible relationships in the sentence, strengthens the linguistic connotation and coherence of the text. Yet, another rhetorical element is “*ṭhām*” (literary equivocation). The function of this literary device is when one of the two meanings of the word is present in the sentence, but the absent meaning has a connection or relevance to the present word or arrangement of words. According to linguists, this is possible though the syntagmatic axis.

These are just a few examples of communication bridges in the Holy Quran, whose coherence and proportionality have been briefly explained. Understanding these elements requires a deep awareness and study of the literary and artistic language of the Holy Quran. Hence, due to the presence of such artistic implementation of literal and rhetorical elements, non-Muslim scholars cannot consider them to be incompatible or incoherent with the overall structure of the Holy Quran, because these devices connect the components of a text, thereby completing its meaning by making use of the syntagmatic axis.

Third Argument: Failure to Consider the Harmony in the Holy Quran

Many scholars and researchers explicitly talk about the harmony in the Holy Quran that has been neglected by the non-Muslims. Below are some of the statements that confirm and elaborate on the matter.

1. Cohesion of a Sentence with Another in the Same Verse

Consider the following Quranic verses: “Who is it that will offer of Allah a goodly gift, so He will multiply it to him manifold,” “and Allah straitens and amplifies, and you shall be returned to him” (Q 2:245). These two phrases seem separated and disconnected, but there is a connection between the two sentences: “who is it...” and “Allah straitens...” (Suyūṭī 1421 AH, 218).

Furthermore, there is a cohesion between the different parts of the verse: the part in which the Almighty says “who is it...” in which Allah asks for a goodly gift and the other phrase wherein He mentions three characteristics: namely “diminution,” “amplification,” and “resurrection.” The fragmentation lies in the fact that these three features are interconnected. When a person gives something for the sake of Allah the Almighty, this deed has a potential of being multiplied into manifold because the recipient of the gift is Allah who has the ability for diminution and increase, and at the end of the day, all will return to Him and receive their share of the bounty (Suyūṭī 1421 AH, 218).

2. Cohesion of a Verse with Its Preceding and Following Verses

This type of compatibility is commonly discussed in the literature.

The general method of the Quran and its peculiar eloquence cause difficulties for non-Muslims to understand the Quranic content, and this difficulty leads them to raise doubts such as the following: Why Allah the Almighty, after mentioning the topic of believers, continues with the history of the prophets? Why He jumps from the story of Adam to the story of the children of Israel (Jacob)? From *mi'rāj* (Ascendance) to Prophet Moses? From one historical anecdote of a prophet to the day of resurrection? Is it not the case that Quranic verses were organized by Prophet Muhammad himself? So why are these verses fragmented? Is the Quranic system inconsistent? (Ayazi 2002, 25).

Reynolds Nicholson, a non-Muslim scholar, believes that the “preposterous arrangement of the Koran, to which I have already adverted, is mainly responsible for the opinion almost unanimously held by European readers that it is obscure, tiresome, uninteresting; a farrago of long-winded narratives and prosaic exhortations, quite unworthy to be named in the same breath with the Prophetical Books of the Old Testament” (McAuliffe 1392 Sh, 224).

In response to the query raised, scholars of Quranic studies, with reference to certain historical documents, unanimously believe that the classification and order of the Quranic verses are *tawqīfī*¹ (that is, based on the divine revelation). These historical narrations quote Prophet Muhammad’s instructions to arrange the order of the Quranic verses and its chapters. A case in point is Zayd b. Thābit’s narration in which he states: “We used to collect and compile the Quran (verses) from (various) papers” (Suyūṭī 1421 AH, 157).

3. Coherence of the Verses of a Quranic Chapter

This is the so-called “thematic unity between Quranic chapters.” On this view, each chapter of the Quran is viewed as an article that consists of a preface, a main text, and a conclusion.

Among the contemporary authors and scholars, Muhammad ‘Abdullah Darraz is committed to this view. Furthermore, he believes that the structure of Quranic chapters is *tawqīfī*, i.e., based on divine revelation. He assumes that this type of structure is rooted and embedded in the nature of the Quran and its chapters. He also points out to the proper prefaces, texts, themes, and conclusions of Quranic chapters. His book, *al-Naba‘ al-‘azīm*, argues for the thematic coherence and relevance of the second chapter of the Quran, i.e., sura al-Baqara (Darraz 2011).

However, some researchers reject the thematic harmony of the Quran, believing that the harmony or coherence of verses of a Quranic chapter is only in accordance with the aim and purpose of that chapter (Marefat and Mowlæinia 2007, 35).

The notion of thematic harmony between Quranic chapters is a novel theory that has proponents and opponents. Despite all efforts to argue for this view, it is still subject to doubts. Our goal, however, which is to prove

1. *Tawqīfī* is an Arabic term that literally means to cease or to pause, and technically in Islamic or Quranic studies, it means a form or status that has been given to something (e.g., a book) by the Almighty Allah, which mankind cannot change.

the harmony of the teachings of the Quran, can be substantiated without accepting the thematic harmony view. We can thus take a neutral position on the view. It is noteworthy that Mustansir Mir has made remarkable research into the coherence and harmony of the Holy Quran. In his article, "The Surah as Unity, in the Koran," he points to the past research done by major scholars like al-Zarkashī, Abū Ja‘far al-Zubayr, Abū Bakr ibn al-‘Arabī, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, and to six Quranic exegetes: Ashraf Ali Thanwi, Hamiduddin Farahi, Amin Ahsan Islahi, Izzat Darwazeh, Seyyed Qutb, and ‘Allāma Ṭabāṭabā’ī. Taking all these scholars under consideration, he acknowledges that Quranic chapters constitute one coherent text. In his view, all scholars have consensus on the coherence of the Quran with some minor dissimilarities in the interpretation and presentation (Mir 2009, 14-35).

4. Coherence between the Beginning and End of a Quranic Chapter

Another type of harmony is that between the beginning and end of a Quranic chapter. A case in point is Q 39 (Sura Ṣād), which begins by "Ṣād, I swear by the Quran, full of admonition" and ends with "it is nothing but a reminder to the nations." In both verses, you can see the similar notions of reminding and cautioning (Suyūṭī 1421 AH, 224). This is an unblemished instance for this type of Quranic harmony.

5. Cohesion in the Sequence and Designation of Each Chapter in Its Proper Place

This sort of coherence relates to the appropriate order or position of the 114 chapters of the Holy Quran with respect to their length and other characteristics, which are discussed in the science of harmony and coherence.

In his book *Tanāsūq al-durar fī tanāsūb al-suwar*, al-Suyūṭī elaborates this type of coherence in the Quranic chapters. In this book, he clarifies the purpose and philosophy behind the current order of the Quranic chapters. For instance, he specifies that the reason behind the position of Sura al-Fāṭiḥa as the beginning of the Quran is its comprehensiveness and containment of all of the vital goals and messages of the Quran. This inclusiveness is the reason why it is described as "the Mother of the Quran" and "Mother of the Book" (Suyūṭī, n.d., 61).

6. Harmony between all Quranic Verses and Chapters Collectively

According to this kind of coherence, Quranic facts are arranged based on a tree classification, which “has the highest harmony, coherence, and unity that, similar to a tree, can be seen in the form of a root, branches, and the leaves. It makes the book to look like a geographical map” (Ayazi 2002, 37).

Nevertheless, other aspects of Quranic coherence and harmony are discussed in many well-known books, such as *Tanāsuq al-durar fī tanāsub al-suwar*, *al-Itqān fī ‘ulūm al-Qur’ān*, *al-Burhān fī ‘ulūm al-Qur’ān*, *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, *Coherent Picture of Quran*, and *The Notion of Coherence in Quran*.

These books discuss numerous features and dimensions in various spheres of coherence in the Quran. We do not engage in all those ideas in this article, but we have discussed a few in order to provide evidence for the existing harmony and coherence of the Quran and to prove that this coherence requires a deeper consideration.

However, with regard to the coherence between Quranic chapters, given that the classification of Quranic chapters is not *tawqīfī* (that is, revealed from the Almighty), we do not endorse it unless it is substantiated through valid evidence from the textual sources. For instance, one can compare two Quranic chapters to come up with the similarities of those chapters that could be the reason behind their proximity.

This reasoning can be seen in the sequence of the Quranic chapters 40-46,¹ known as *Ḥawāmīm* (that is, Chapters that begin with the disjoined letters, *ḥā-mīm*), where all the seven Chapters have similar characteristics, such as being revealed in Mecca, their opening with the disjoined letters, *ḥā-mīm*, explaining attributes of the Quran in the beginning, and explaining its revelation.

Review and analysis

In terms of the structural adequacy of the Holy Quran, i.e., the coherence and the relevance of its verses and chapters, the element of order and arrangement of the verses and chapters plays an important role. The widely held view by experts of this field is that the organization of the Qur'an into chapters and arrangement of its verses were done by the

1. These seven chapters are as follows: al-Ghafir, Fussilat, Shura, al-Zukhruf, al-Dukhan, Jathiya, and al-Ahqaf.

Prophet himself at the command of Allah, the all-wise. In addition, according to the Quran itself, every chapter is a separate unit which has an independent and distinguished effect: “And whenever a chapter is revealed, there are some of them who say: Which of you has it strengthened in faith? Then as for those who believe, it strengthens them in faith and they rejoice” (Q 9:124). Accordingly, the main premise of the principle of coherence and proportionality within a chapter is in place and all the verses have a comprehensible relationship with each other. But does this mean that there is a straightforward consistent sequential relationship? Or does this coherence appear with regards to the various propositions found within the chapter?

There is no compelling reason to say that all the verses in a chapter represent the same subject-matter. However, we do believe that the topics and themes discussed in various verses of a Quranic chapter represent the main goal of the chapter, and so there is an inevitable link between all the verses. The reason for their relevance and coherence is that the order of the whole chapter, from its beginning to its end, was structured by the Prophet himself. This view of Quranic proportionality and coherence can be derived from Quranic verses as well as hadiths. Imam al-Bāqir, the fifth Shiite Imam, talks precisely about the topic at hand, saying that diverse themes of a chapter or a verse should not mislead one to think that the Quran is a collection of miscellaneous, unrelated sentences, which have been combined randomly. Instead, it should be noted that whenever the contents are varied and different, there must be a connection between them, and certain circumstances have led them to be as they are. This is because the mere placement of the words, the sequel of the sentences, and the verses necessitate the presence of a type of connection between the seemingly dispersed themes with each other. This is precisely the point that the hadith refers to and warns against the belief in the incoherence and distortion of Quranic verses (Barqī and Barqī, n.d., 300).

Conclusion and the Preferred View

The problem of harmony and coherence in the Quran is of a vital importance and has significant implications for the comprehension of the Quran. Therefore, we see that experts of the field address the issue in a separate set of studies, where they present more than twenty dimensions of coherence and harmony within the Quran. In this article, we have presented

only the most important dimensions of harmony in the Quran. We can classify these dimensions of Quranic coherence into three types:

1. Coherence and Harmony between the words and sentences of one verse in the Holy Quran;
2. Harmony between the verses of a chapter of the Holy Quran;
3. Cohesion between various chapters of the Holy Quran.

This classification covers all the views adopted by researchers and scholars of the Quran. Though some scholars such as Hadi Marefat do not endorse the third type of coherence (Marefat 1410 AH, 324), it was held by scholars like al-Zarkashī in his book *al-Burhān* (Zarkashī 1410 AH, 334), Khoei in his book *al-Bayān* (Khoei 1430 AH, 59), Marāghī in his exegesis of the Quran (Maraghi, n.d., 58) and Rashid Ridha in his *al-Minār*.

Accordingly, the objections by non-Muslims against the harmony and coherence of the Quranic text are baseless and should be rejected. The root causes of these doubts lie in the fact that they failed to consider the following:

- A. The fact that the primary objective of the Quran is guidance of the mankind;
- B. The connections in Quranic verses;
- C. The existing coherence in Quranic verses.

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