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Thematic Quranic Translation Series Installment 16
(IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE)

The Quranic Theme of Mohkamaat (محکّمات) &
Mutashabihaat (متشابهات)

Rationally re-translated in the True Light of Quran

PRELUDE:

There aren't any two kinds of Verses in Quran.

In this Series of Thematic Translations from Quran we would investigate on solid academic criterion a very crucial topic which has been a center of controversy from the early period of Islam. We would launch a research effort on a conviction under which a general consensus is found among Muslims to the effect that Quran's text contains two different categories of Verses. This fact implies that ---- some Verses are narrated in a particular style which is named as "Mohkamaat", meaning "clearly decisive", whose meanings or messages are easily discerned; and ---- there are other Verses whose style falls under a second category of "mutashabihaat", meaning "allegorical", wherein a metaphoric and symbolic language is used thereby making their understanding uncertain or ambiguous. It is implied under this old concept that one need not insist on trying to comprehend the essence of latter category of Verses, and whatever the earlier period scholars have derived from them must be taken as the truth as a token of reverence to them, just because so is ordained in the Quranic text too.

Looking at this theme rationally it comes to light that the hitherto accepted dogma is based on a blatant misunderstanding of the related text. As soon as the misunderstanding is removed, this dogma and its respective controversy dies its own death. And thus the real message of Quran hidden behind it can easily re-appear in its own true light. This misunderstanding was spread through the fictitious Islam invented by the despotic Umayyad Rulers when the real Islam was

viciously moved far away from its origins through fake interpretations (tafaseer), as against what was presented by our beloved Prophet Mohammad pbuh. It goes without saying that had Islam maintained its true and original form, there would be no protracted era of despotic and dynastic rule in the history of Islam. True Islamic ideology is based on social equality based on justice and fair play for every segment of society and has no scope for tyrannical kingdoms.

With due respect for every old and contemporary Quranic scholar, allow me to declare that the earlier interpretation of this theme, which is strictly followed to this day, is absolutely unfounded, meaningless and un-Quranic. It is necessary in the present age of advanced knowledge and sciences to discard it altogether. According to this humble writer's latest research, the entire Quranic text enjoys a high academic and literary status. Every literary masterpiece is invariably laced and ornamented with metaphors, allegories, symbols, idioms, similes and other identical ways of expression. That's why it is classified as a classic. Quran in itself is such a literary masterpiece. Let us then analyze to see how authentic is the old concept of Mohkamaat and Mutashabihaat, and as to whether Quran corroborates this mischievous interpretation of its text, or tells us something to the contrary.

We undertake this research by attempting a most realistic rational re-translation of the relevant text where you will find both the crucial terms placed within parenthesis and then fully defined at the end of the thesis taking help from the most authentic of Arabic lexicons. This will prove that the fresh translation does not contain a single word or concept from the writer's end. Human knowledge, intelligence and conscious values are regarded as the basic criterion for this undertaking. It is free from prejudice, impurities and interpolations. It is recommended to reject and discard the inherited and hitherto prevalent interpretations as those have been the main source of gross distortions of Quranic essence.

Quran is NOT a book of "ambiguities" (Mutashabihaat) as we find inferred and implied in conformist translations; it is a Book of doubtless integrity (Laa Rayiba fi-ha – لا ريب فيها) and a perfect guidance that leads the entire creationary process to its logical and determined destination. Hence it leaves no scope for uncertainty, doubts & speculation. However, its true guidance would surface only when we are willing to divert the direction of our thinking away from blind pursuit of the so-called Imams (scholars) of old Tafasir (interpretations); and only when we are ready to declare with firm conviction that the ever growing knowledge, human evolution and rationalism are our real teachers. Nothing in the field of Quranic

research can be regarded as the final word as yet. But the process of exploration and discovery is under way and it is hoped the time is round the corner when our coming generations would finally wrap up the process by reaching a matured and plausible stage where all the existing riddles are solved to the satisfaction of a decisive majority of truth seekers.

The relative Verse of Quran on this Theme is Verse 3:7 (Aal-e-Imran: 7) and it reads like this :-

آيت 3/7: هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْهُ آيَاتٌ مُحْكَمَاتٌ هُنَّ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ وَأُخَرُ مُتَشَابِهَاتٌ

And it is traditionally translated like this :

“He is the One Who has bestowed upon thee from on high this divine writ, containing messages that are clear in and by themselves - and these are the essence of the divine writ - as well as others that are allegorical.”

And that the above stands as a blatantly erroneous translation, doesn't need any research or proof as the Almighty Author Himself contradicts this folly by another of His Verse. Here is it (Chapter 11: Verse 1):

الر ١ كِتَابٌ أُحْكِمَتْ آيَاتُهُ ثُمَّ فُصِّلَتْ مِنْ لَدُنْ حَكِيمٍ خَبِيرٍ

“Alif Lam Ra. This is a Book, with (all) its verses made decisively clear and then expounded in detail by One who is all wise and all aware.”

Therefore, having established the hypocrisy of fictitious interpretations through the authority of Quran itself, let us now embark on a most righteous strict translation of Quranic text of Verse 3/7 to see exactly what kind of havoc has been played with its content:-

هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْهُ آيَاتٌ مُحْكَمَاتٌ هُنَّ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ وَأُخَرُ مُتَشَابِهَاتٌ ۚ فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ تَشَابَهَ مِنْهُ ابْتِغَاءَ الْفِتْنَةِ وَابْتِغَاءَ تَأْوِيلِهِ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ زَيْغٌ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ مَا ۚ وَمَا يَعْلَمُ تَأْوِيلَهُ إِلَّا اللَّهُ ۚ وَالرَّاسِخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ يَقُولُونَ آمَنَّا بِهِ كُلٌّ مِّنْ عِنْدِ رَبِّنَا ۚ وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ إِلَّا أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ ﴿٧﴾

“He is the One Who has bestowed upon thee this divine writ, which (min-hu منه here is “min bayaniah”, meaning all of it, not some of it) contains messages

that are decisively wise & clear (مُحْكَمَاتٌ) - and these are the foundations upon which this divine writ stands (أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ); and all the secondary sources (وَأُخْرُ) are the *material of dubious nature resembling it* (مُتَشَابِهَاتٌ). Now those whose hearts are given to swerving from the truth would incline to go after that stuff which is dubious and made to look like it (مَا تَشَابَهَ مِنْهُ), seeking out what is bound to create confusion, and seeking to make its meaning defective or deficient (وَابْتِغَاءَ تَأْوِيلِهِ); but none save God knows the truth of their conjectures. Hence, those who are deeply rooted in knowledge say: "We believe in everything that is from our Sustainer" - albeit none takes due cognizance of it save those who are endowed with insight."

It is manifestly clear by this most up to date and rational translation that Allah swt here is not talking about two kinds of Verses within the content of Quran. He, on the contrary, ordains that Quran contains only that material which is clear, decisive and full of wisdom (Mohkamaat) (Verse 11/1 above). The other sources which might be declared of equal status with Quran, called Mutashabihaat, are those which are dubious, ambiguous and are known to be other than Quran (أُخْرُ).

In the end, let us have a deeper look at the authentic meanings of important words in this thesis:

ش ب ه = **Shiin-Ba-ha** = to be like, to resemble/assimilate/likewise/imitate, to compare one thing with another due to an attribute connecting them or is common to them: can be real or ideal - real: "this dollar is like this dollar" ideal: "John is like the lion/ass (i.e. strength/stupidity)", appear like another thing, ambiguous/dubious/obscure, comparison/similitude/parable/simile, co similar, resemble (in quality or attributes), conformable.

With reference to the *Quran* is that of which the meaning is not be learned from its words and this is of two sorts: one is that of which the meaning is known by referring to what is termed "*muhkam*" and the other is that of which the knowledge of its real meaning is not attainable in any way or it means what is not understood without repeated consideration. (e.g. 3:7)

شبه له lie rendered it confused to him [by making it to appear like some other thing]; (JS,' TA;)he rendered it ambiguous, dubious, or obscure, to him.

ح ك م : **HKM**:Mohkam; Mohkamaat:

To restrain from, exercise authority, command, give judgment, judge, be wise. To restrain/prevent/withhold a person from acting in an evil or corrupt manner, to judge or give judgement, pass sentence, decide judicially, exercise judicial authority/jurisdiction/rule/dominion/government, order or ordain or decree a

thing, to be wise, to be sound in judgement, possess knowledge or science and wisdom, render a thing firm/stable/sound/free from defect or imperfection by the exercise of skill.

Alif-Waw-Lam – Ta'weel: To return, be before, come back to. To interpret [by consideration], explain. To contract, withdraw, become. To preside over, hold command or authority. To come to be. To put in a proper state/condition, or to compose [an affair]. To resort to; namely [a thing of any kind; the thing or place whence he or it originated, or came. His or its origin or source; his or its original state, condition, quantity, weight; any place. A former action, saying, or the like]. To return or restore to [a thing, place, or disposition]. To explain, expound, interpret [collecting the meanings of dubious expressions by such expression as is clear, or plain, without dubiousness]. To explain the meaning of that which is equivocal or ambiguous. To be seen from a distance.

(Lane's Lexicon) : But **تاويل** seems to me to signify the collecting the meanings of dubious expressions by such expression as is clear, or plain, without dubiousness, or, accord. To Lth, it is the interpreting of language that has different meanings; and this cannot be rightly done but by an explanation which changes the expression; as also **تاول**: or the turning a verse of the Kuran from its apparent meaning to a meaning which it bears, or admits, when the latter is agreeable with the Scripture and the Sunnah: **مآل**: The thing decreased; diminished; or became defective, or deficient: it more properly signifies the rendering in a manner not according to the letter, or overt sense, explaining the covert, or virtual meaning; interpreting in a manner not according to the obvious meaning; or the reducing a thing to its ultimate intent, whether it be a saying or an action (Er-Raghib, TA ☺ or **تفسير** signifies the “discovering, detecting, revealing, or disclosing, what is meant by a dubious expression....