# Between Political Legitimacy And Social Fabric of Society: Imamite-Shiite Interpretation of Qur'anic Verse 16: 90

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## ABSTRACT

*This paper investigates the dialectics between "political legitimacy" and "social fabric of society", as it develops in the Imamite-Shiite Qur'anic commentaries on Qur'anic verse 16: 90. It reveals the transformation and development of Imamite-Shiite exegesis pertaining to Q. 16: 90, ranging from classical to modern. It takes into a closer look into seven Qur'anic commentaries which may serve as examples of different typologies within Imamite-Shiite exegetical tradition. It argues that the Imamite-Shiite interpretation on this verse moves between these two poles (political legitimacy and social fabric of society) most notably due to the religious and political circumstances of the exegetes. From these Quranic commentaries, one may also notice the division and ecumenism between Sunnism and Shiism. This paper underlines a colourful nuance of Shiite exegesis and denies the simplified belief that Shiite exegesis is sectarian.*
Keywords: *political legitimacy, social fabric, Imamite-Shiite exegesis, division, Islamic ecumenism.*

## INTRODUCTION

Qur'anic exegesis (*tafsîr*) is regarded by some specialists as an integral part of the "discursive tradition" of Islam. This conception stays in contrast to the viewpoints of some other scholars who consider *tafsîr* as an "an extension of the foundational text of Islam".[1] Early *tafsîr*s are worth specific remarking, since their authorities (such as 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abbas (d. 688) and 'Ali ibn Abi

Talib (d. 661)) embody an integration of comprehending, interpreting and applying the Qur'an, or, in other words, "an imagined hermeneutical unity that sees accomplishment in application".[2] Publication of tafsîr in print has often been motivated by ideological or dogmatic deliberations, not essentially linked to their actual significance in the tradition of tafsîr. The notions of tafsîr bi al-ma'thûr (interpretation based on sound tradition) and tafsîr bi al-ra'y (interpretation based on arbitrary opinion) are actually a dogmatic categorisation. This classification is aimed to differentiate between acceptable and unacceptable exegesis, from a certain dogmatic standpoint.[3]

The issue of the extent to which a Qur'anic exegesis is influenced by the exegete's theological stance is an interesting to be investigated. It is stressed that a Sufi may present a Qur'anic commentary in an entirely non-mystical way. A Mu'tazilite scholar does not automatically promote Mu'tazilite dogma through his tafsîr. In this vein, we may see that tafsîr constitutes "a genealogical tradition", in the sense that the Qur'anic commentators are engaged in the duty of "creatively appropriating the tradition of tafsîr than with pursuing a specific dogmatic or sectarian agenda".[4] This does not necessarily deny that there are tafsîrs that are influenced by the theological and or philosophic bent of their commentators, or in other words, their "pre-texts".[5] Abu 'Ali al-Jubba'i can be highlighted as an instance of this kind of tafsîr. Al-Juba'i (d. 915-916), for instance, employs and adapts the verses of the Qur'an in a way that lets him to maintain his theological standpoints and to support his claims.[6]

Some historians reported that during the Umayyad dynasty, the preachers were ordered to curse 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (599-661), in pulpits and in the rest of public space. This practice continued until the time of Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz (682-720). Umar ibn Abd al-Azis broke this tradition and replaced the curse on 'Ali with the reading of Q. 16: 90. He insisted that such a reading was sunna (tradition), which substituted the older sunna, namely the curse on 'Ali, which has been practiced by the preachers during the Umayyad dynasty.[7]

This paper investigates the dialectics between "political legitimacy" and "social fabric of society", as it develops in the Imamite-Shiite Qur'anic commentaries on Q. 16 (16): 90. This study focuses on seven tafsîrs which were written by Imamite-Shiite scholars: first, Tafsîr al-Qummî; second, Tafsîr al-'Ayyâshî; third, al-Tibyân fî tafsîr al-Qur'an; fourth, Majma' al-bayân; fifth, Tafsîr al-sâfi; sixth, Nafakhât al-rahmân fi tafsîr al-Qur'an; and seventh, al-Mîzân fî tafsîr al-Qur'an. The investigation of these seven tafsîrs is of signifi-

cance in revealing the transformation and development of Imamite-Shiite Qur'anic *tafsîr*s pertaining to Q. 16: 90. These seven works represent the exegesis from different periods, from the medieval to the modern. The interpretation of Q. 16: 90 in these eight Shiite *tafsîr*s demonstrate that there are varied standpoints pertaining to Q. 16: 90.

The examination of these *tafsîr*s is of significance in unravelling the complexity of Imamite-Shiite *tafsîr*s, which has been more or less affected by the theological and political circumstances of the exegetes. The study of these *tafsîr*s will also reveal the dynamic of Sunnite-Shiite ecumenism throughout the history. At a certain historical phase, Shiism demonstrated their rapprochement with Sunnism, and this can be observed from Qur'anic exegesis which were written by the Shiite scholars and from their consultation with Sunni sources. At another historical phase, Shiism showed their division and distance from Sunnism, as can be discerned from the existence of Shiite *tafsîr*s which criticise the Companions of the Prophet. These Shiite exegetes are convinced of the incompleteness of the Qur'an which circulates among Sunnites.

## GENERAL MAPPING OF IMAMITE-SHIITE QUR'ANIC EXEGESIS

The Imamite-Shiite Qur'anic exegesis under the discussion can be clustered into three main categories, namely (a) political legitimacy, (b) social fabric of society, and (c) bridge between political legitimacy and social fabric of society. There are three tafsîrs which belong to the category of political legitimacy, namely *Tafsîr al-Qummî* (by al-Qummî, d. 919) and *Tafsîr al-'Ayyâshî* (by al-'Ayyâshî (d. 932), and *Tafsîr al-sâfi* (by al-Kashani, 1598-1680). As for the category of social fabric of society, we come across with three tafsîrs, namely *al-Tibyân fi tafsîr al-Qur'an* (by al-Tusi, d. 1067), *Majma' al-bayân* (by al-Tabrisi, d. 1154), and *al-Mizân fi tafsîr al-Qur'an* (by al-Tabataba'i, d. 1981). *Nafakhât al-rahmân fi tafsîr al-Qur'an* (by al-Nahawandi, 1874-1952) epitomises a Shiite *tafsîr* which pays attentions to both political legitimacy and social fabric of society.

Early Imamite-Shiite tafsîrs such as *Tafsîr al-Qummî* and *Tafsîr al-'Ayyâshî* much more rely on the transmitted narrations from the imams, which stress the legitimacy of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib on the one hand, and delegitimise the first three caliphs. These two Qur'anic commentaries were in conformity with the general tendency of the Imamism at that time, which rejected the first three caliphs and labelling them as usurpers. *Tafsîr al-sâfi* represents the medieval

Imamite-Shiite tafsîrs which seek to underline the legitimacy of 'Ali and his descendants. It seems that the Akhbari background and the religious-political circumstances of the Safavid which shaped al-Kashani's radical interpretation of the Qur'an.

*Al-Tibyân fi tafsîr al-Qur'an* and *Majma' al-bayân fi tafsîr al-Qur'an* represent a moderate Medieval Shiite exegesis which pay attention to social fabric of society. These two *tafsîr*s underline moral features which were contained in Q. 16: 90, without employing the verse to justify the legitimacy of 'Ali and deligitimise his opponents. This moderate exegesis is due to their appreciation of Sunnite sources. His exegesis was in line with the tendency of Imamite-Shiite scholars during the Buyid era. Al-Tusi's theological tendency exerted an influence on al-Tabrisi's *tafsîr*. Al-Tabrisi's moderate inclination can be also located within the broader religious-political context of his lifetime. He lived under the Seljuq dynasty which demonstrated their tolerance towards Twelver Shiites.

*Al-Mizân fi tafsîr al-Qur'an* epitomises the fullest account of social fabric of Islamic society in the light of Q. 16: 90. Al-Tabataba'i brings forward the notions of "personal justice" and "social justice". His elaboration of personal and social justice shows that he is distinct to that of classical Muslim scholars (including the Shiite) which perceive justice most particularly in its theological sense. The tafsîr of al-Tabata'i is in conformity with the general inclination of Imamite-Shiism which demonstrates their convergence with Sunnism. This can be observed for instance from the ecumenical dialogue between Sunnism and Shiism which was ventured for instance by Muhammad al-Husayn Al Kasif al-Gita (1877-1953) during the World Islamic Congress in 1931. In 1948, the ventures of Sunnite-Shiite ecumenism was further promoted by the formation of *Jama'at al-taqrib bayna al-madhahib al-Islamiyya* (Community for Rapprochements of Islamic Sects).[8] *Nafakhât al-rahmân fi tafsîr al-Qur'an* represents a bridge between the Shiite *tafsîr*s which accentuate the political legitimacy of 'Ali and his descendants and those emphasise social fabric of Islamic society. Al-Nahawandi brings together these two tendencies in his tafsîr, with the accentuation on social fabric of society. One might think that the idea of deligitimising the first three caliphs have become decreased during al-Nahawandi's lifetime, as can be observed from his interpretation of Q. 16:90 and from his consultation with Sunni sources.

### TAFSÎR AL-QUMMÎ: EARLY SHIITE TRANSMITTED EXEGESIS

Abu al-Husayn 'Ali ibn Ibrahim al-Qummî (d. 919) was Shiite exegete, jurist and historian. The life of al-Qummî is unfortunately not fully known. There is a supposition that Muhammad ibn Ya'qub al-Kulini (d. 939) was one of al-Qummî's teachers, but this supposition is doubted by some scholars. Al-Qummî wrote works on Islamic law, Shiite doctrines and historiography, unfortunately the extant work of him is only *Tafsîr al-Qummî*.[9] It is worth mentioning that during al-Qummî's lifetime, Kufa and Qumm constituted the main centres of imami Shiism.[10] Al-Qummî belongs to the Shiite scholars who maintain that the Uthmani codex of the Qur'an is incomplete. The Shiites until the end of tenth century claim that the Qur'an was falsified by their enemies. Early Shiites maintained it was not only the Qur'an which was fabricated but also the hadith.[11] The claim that the Quran and the hadith of the Prophet have been fabricated, distorted, or misunderstood constitutes a common pattern in Shiite argumentation, and represents the foundation of the Shiite standpoint regarding the misguided direction taken by the early Muslim community.[12]

Al-Qummî was contemporaneous with the eleventh Imam al-Hasan al-Askari (d. 874). His *tafsîr* exemplifies "transmitted exegesis" of the Twelver Imami Shiism during its earlier phase. Tafsîr al-Qummî is highly venerated within the circle of Shiites most specifically due to the closeness in time of its author to the imams.[13] Al-Qummî's hesitance to exercise independent reasoning (*ijtihad*) and to express his own opinion pertaining to the meanings of the Qur'an is mostly due to the fact that the imams were at that time available for consultation pertaining to Qur'an.[14] The Imamis underlines that the imams represent a hereditary succession. They hailed from the descendants of the Prophet via Husayn's line. Hasan was considered an exception; it was only at his time that the imamate could be transferred from one brother to another brother. After Husayn, imamate could be only passed from father to son. Imam is believed to be created of distinct element, endued with celestial light, "divinely inspired (*mufahham*), protected against error (*ma'sum*), possessed of knowledge over and above that possessed by ordinary human believers", and ultimately not a member of the normal human world at all.[15]

Al-Qummî witnessed the historical transformation from Imamism (*imamiyya*) to Twelver Shiism (*ithna ash'ariyya*). The Imamism developed during the eighth and ninth century, and it obtained its classical form of Twelver Shiism in the tenth and early eleventh centuries. Some scholars suggest that one may speak

of the Imamism as distinct only after the death of Ja'far al-Sadiq, namely in 765. The Imamism was transformed into Twelver Shiism a few moments after death of the eleventh imam Hasan al-'Askari in 874. His infant son who had gone into occultation (*ghayba*) was regarded as the twelfth imam. The occultation of imam relieved relations between the Imamis and power. The Imamis before *ghayba* in principle were concerned with defeating the supplanters, and "hopes for a political redeemer sometimes ran high, as has been seen. But in practice the Imamis can be defined as those Shiites who renounced political action".[16]

Al-Qummî, in his *Tafsîr al-Qummî*, explains that the term *al-'adl* means "bearing witness that there is no god but Allah, and that Muhammad p.b.u.h. is the messenger of Allah". It is also interesting to see his interpretation for the word *al-ihsân*. For him, *al-ihsân* means the Commander of the Faithful 'Ali ibn Abi Talib.[17] Al-Qummî goes on to explain that the phrase "wa al-fakhshâ' wa al-munkar wa al-baghy" means "this man, this man, and this man". In the footnote of Tafsîr al-Qummî we encounter an explanation that these figures are Habtar, Zariq and Na'thal. These three figures are however not clear, but when we consult to al-Kashani's tafsîr, it becomes obvious that these refer to the "the first caliph" (Abu Bakr), the "second caliph" ('Umar ibn al-Khattab) and the "third caliph" (Uthman ibn 'Affan).

Al-Qummî's commentary corresponds to the general inclination of Shiite tafsîrs, most particularly early transmitted tafsîrs. Gätje observes that, "all statements of the Qur'an, insofar they are unclear (*mubham*) or sufficiently generic ('*amm*), will be refer to 'Ali, the imam, and their community.[18] On the other way around, if these are negative these will be addressed to their opponents including the first three caliphs". This is in line with Bar-Asher's observation on the tendency of early Shiite transmitted tafsîrs.[19] Al-Qummî's exegesis is in harmony with the general tendency of the Imamism. The Imamis are unvaryingly Rafidis, in the sense of rejecting the first three caliphs and labelling them as usurpers, as these three caliphs illegally seized 'Ali's right as successor to the Prophet.[20]

### TAFSÎR AL-'AYYÂSHÎ: ACCENTUATING THE AUTHORITATIVE EXEGESIS OF THE IMAM

Muhammad ibn Mas'ud ibn 'Ayyash al-Sulami al-Samarkandi (d. 932), (from here on al-'Ayyâshî), was a Shiite scholar and exegete. It is worth remarking that al-'Ayyâshî lived in Samarkand. This indicates that during al-

'Ayyâshî's lifetime, the Imami Shiism has reached Transoxania.[21] Al-'Ayyâshî followed Sunnism, but after that converted to Shiism. He was contemporary with another well-known Shiite exegete al-Qummî. He wrote a number of works, ranging from exegesis, Prophetic tradition (*hadith*), jurisprudence, history, to astronomy and medicine.[22] His work on Qur'anic exegesis is known as *Tafsîr al-'Ayyâshî*. He studied under the instruction of al-Hasan ibn 'Ali ibn Faddal (d. 839-839) and Abu 'Abd Allah ibn Muhammad ibn Khalid al-Tayalisi al-Tamimi, who were both known as traditionists who transmitted reports from the eight Imam 'Ali al-Rida (d. 808).[23] The Twelver Imamism was in opposition to the *ghulat* who assigned prophetic or divine status to the imams.[24] In response to that, Al-'Ayyâshî produced narrations which emphasised the knowledge of the imam, without being trapped to cult the imam.

In the introduction of *Tafsîr al-'Ayyâshî* we encounter an account of "knowledge of the imam concerning *Ta'wil*", which serves to uphold the authority of the imam in interpreting the esoteric meanings of the Qur'an. To support this notion, al-'Ayyâshî brings forward a couple of narrations. Some of these narrations read as follows:[25]

> From Sulayman al-A'mash, from his father, he said: 'Ali said: Whenever a Qur'anic verse was revealed, I know to whom it was addressed and when it was revealed. My lord granted me a smart brain and a fluent tongue.

From Abu al-Sabah said: Abu 'Abd Allah said: God taught the descent of revelation (*tanzil*) and the spiritual exegesis (*Ta'wil*) to the Prophet; and correspondingly the Prophet taught these to 'Ali.

*Ta'wîl* is concerned with unearthing the inner meanings of the Qur'an, which, according to Shiites, cannot be accomplished by ordinary persons. *Ta'wil* is conceived by modern scholars such as Corbin as "the hermeneutics of symbols" and consequently it "presupposes the superimposition of worlds and inter-worlds, as the correlative basis for the plurality of meanings in the same text".[26] Due to al-'Ayyâshî's adherence to *Ta'wil* of the imam, he is against *tafsîr bi al-ra'y* (exegesis based own arbitrary opinions). For this purpose, he cites some narrations. One of these narrations read as follows, "From Hisham ibn Salim ibn 'Abd Allah, he said: Those who interpret the Qur'an with his ratio and achieve the truth, they do not obtain a reward. If they make mistakes (in interpreting the Qur'an), they will bear sin".[27] The Shiites develop their own "exegetical tradition" which is distinct to that of Sunnites. The reference to contemporary historical imams is an indication that Shiite ex-

egetes give a much stronger direct reference to post-Qur'anic events, which is distinct to that of Sunnite exegetes.[28] This is due to Shiite conception that the imams exemplify a "speaking Qur'an".

Al-'Ayyâshî renders a narration from Sa'd from Imam Abu Ja'far: "O Sa'd, God commands to uphold *al-'adl*, namely Muhammad p.b.u.h., and to uphold *al-ihsân*, namely 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, and to give wealth to *dhî al-qurbâ*, namely our relatives who are entitled for our love and charity.[29] And God forbids us from *al-fakhshâ', al-munkar* and *al-baghy*, namely those oppress the family of the Prophet".

In addition, al-'Ayyâshî brings a forward a narration from Ismail al-Hariri: *I read Q. 16: 90 in front of al-Sadiq. Al-Sadiq said, 'Read as I said to you: 'Inna –Llâha ya'muru bi l-'adli wa l-ihsân wa-itâ'i dhî l-qurbâ haqqahu'* (Indeed, Allah orders justice and good conduct and giving rights to dhî l-qurbâ). *We do not read this way according to the* qirâ'a *of Zayd, but we read this way according to the* qirâ'a *of 'Ali. Muhammad al-Baqir (d. 735) was asked, 'what is the meaning of* itâ' dhî al-qurbâ haqqahu?' *Al-Baqir replied, 'It means acknowledging imams. Whilst the phrase '*yanhâ 'an l-fakhshâ' wa l-munkar' *means the reign of this man'.*

Al-'Ayyâshî renders another narration pertaining to *al-'adl* and *al-ihsân*: *'Amr ibn Husayn reported: 'Ali came to his companions and they were mentioning about manliness (*al-muruwwa). *'Ali said to them, 'who were you, you forgot the Qur'an, and it mentions about that'. They asked, 'O the Commander of the Faithful, which place of the Qur'an? 'Ali replied, 'inna Llâh ya'muru bi al-'adl wa al-ihsân. Al-'adl* is doing things rightly and in equilibrium, *whilst* al-ihsân *is doing better than it is supposed to be.*

The latter narration underlines 'Ali's preference for *al-'adl* and *al-ihsân* rather than *al-muruwwa*. It is worth remarking that, as Khadduri points out, *al-muruwwa* constitutes one of pre-Islamic Arab virtues.[30] In tribal societies in Arabia, where survival was possibly the main concern of tribal members, virtues such as courage, honor, and freedom were more highly valued than other virtues. These were symbolized in the word *muruwwa*, which comprised of everything that was considered praiseworthy and which may be designated as the highest good of the Arabs. Al-'Ayyâshî's *fourth* cited narration is from Ata' al-Hamadani from Abu Ja'far who said that "*Al-'adl* is bearing witness that there is no god but Allah. *Al-ihsân* means the reign of the

Commander of the Faithful ('Ali ibn Abi Talib). *Al-faksha'* is the first, *al-munkar* is the second, whilst *al-baghy* is the third". Al-'Ayyâshî's *last* narration is from Sa'd al-Iskaf, which reads as follows:

> Al-'adl (*justice*) *is Muhammad p.b.u.h., accordingly those who obey him are considered just.* Al-ihsân *is 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, accordingly those acknowledge His leadership are considered* muhsin. *The* muhsin *will enter the paradise.* Itâ' dhî al-qurbâ *means our relatives which are entitled for our love and charity.* Al-fakhshâ', al-munkar *and* al-baghy *refer to those oppress the family of the Prophet".*

One may see that al-'Ayyâshî's commentary on Q. 16: 90 is comprised of narrations, most particularly from the imams. His narrations from the imams are believed to be able to explicate the inner meanings of the Qur'an. Such a method of interpretation is known as *Ta'wil*.

Pertaining to outer and inner meanings of the Qur'an in the Shiite tradition, it is worth remarking that in Shiism "the literal text (*zâhir*) of the Qur'an, while indispensable, is only symbolic of a deeper inner truth (*bâtin*), which can only be assessed and disseminated by the imam, for whom is claimed the status of an enunciating word of God, or 'the speaking Qur'an (*Qur'an natiq*) as opposed to the silent (*samit*) scriptural text between the covers".[31] Shiite's perspective on the varied layers of the Qur'an is based most notably from the narrations of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib. One of these narrations is read as follows: Every verse in the Qur'an contains four layers of meaning: outer meaning (*zâhir*), inner meaning (*bâtin*), a boundary (*hadd*), and a outlook point (*muttala'*). The outer meaning refers to the recitation (*tilawa*), the inner meaning refers to the understanding (*fahm*), the boundary is the rule concerning what is allowed and forbidden, and the lookout point refers to what God intended for the servant by that verse.[32] Al-'Ayyâshî cites many narrations from Muhammad al-Baqir and (d. 714) and Ja'far al-Sadiq (d. 765). It was during his lifetime that these two imams that the esoteric theories of the Qur'an became apparent. It was also during this period that the Shiites challenged the Uthmanic Qur'an by stressing that this copy was incomplete.[33] However al-Baqir and al-Sadiq did not hold a sectarian view of their own position. This can be observed for instance that they both had students from circle of *jama'i* (Sunni, in later terminology), such as Abu Hanifa (699-767), Malik ibn Anas (711-795) and 'Abd al-Rahman al-Awza'i (707-774).[34]

### AL-TIBYÂN FÎ TAFSÎR AL-QUR'AN: APPRECIATING SUNNITE SOURCES

Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Tusi (995- 1067) was a Twelver Shiite scholar and exegete. He completed his Qur'anic exegesis entitled *al-Tibyân fi tafsîr al-Qur'an* in Baghdad during the Buyid era. Although the socio-political conditions in Baghdad at that time were difficult, he could devote his time to compose a tafsîr, which was regarded as a synthesis of the most important theological and exegetical works pertaining to the Qur'an during his lifetime.[35] Pertaining to the issue of authenticity of the Qur'an, he belongs to the Shiite scholars who believed on its authenticity.[36] This is in line with the standpoints of other Imami Shiite scholars under the Buyid regime, most notably Shaykh al-Mufid and Sharif al-Murtada.[37] Shiite scholars who lived in Baghdad under the Buyid regime also showed their appreciation to Sunnite exegesis. This was distinct to their contemporaneous Shiite scholars who lived in Qum, who showed a low-level appreciation and dialogue with Sunnite exegesis.[38]

Al-Tusi showed his disagreement with the Twelver Akhbaris. He labeled the Akhbaris as "ashab al-jumal", namely "literalists who stopped short of reasoning by basing the fundamentals of religion on the text of reported hadith".[39] It is worth mentioning that there has been division within the Twelver Shiism, which split them into the Akhbaris and the Usulis. The Akhbaris were convinced that "the knowledge on Islam and its stipulations is to be derived solely from the Traditions of the Prophet and the Imams". Hence, the Akhbaris did not acknowledge other tools typically used in Islamic jurisprudence and advocated by their furious rivals, the Usulis.[40] The tension between the Akhbaris and Usulis is not a phenomenon which owes its origin in Safavid times. This divide is rather rooted in the earlier broader tension between the advocates of "speculative theology" and "traditionalist opponents of reasoning in religion".[41]

Al-Tusi lived under the reign of the Buyids (945-1055). The Buyids were Zaydis but then converted to Imamism. They took Imami scholars as patrons. As repayment for that the Imamis acknowledge "the concept of a just ruler who was not the imam" by grounding on "ambivalent formulations" employed by al-Tusi. The Buyid rulers themselves did not consider themselves as imams.[42] It was during the Buyid era that the Imami Shiites experienced a golden era, since they enjoy political freedom. It should be noted, however that non-Muslim minorities also enjoyed conducive situation so that they

could develop their culture and thoughts.[43] During the reign of Buyids. "phrases like *sultan 'adil* (just ruler) were introduced in juridical decisions dealing with political functions reserved for the theologically acknowledged Just Ruler (the Imam), despite his occultation. [44]

Al-Tusi, in his *al-Tibyân fi tafsîr al-Qur'an*, explains that the word *al-'adl* means "being moderate among people and carrying out the obligations as *mukallaf* (religiously responsible person)". *Al-ihsân* means "doing good to other". He points out, "The command on upholding *al-'adl* is an obligatory, whereas the command on implementing *al-ihsân* is recommended. This is a clear message that the command sometimes indicates recommendation not necessarily obligation".[45] Al-Tusi is aware that the phrase *Itâ' dhî al-qurbâ* contains two meanings: First, maintaining bonds of kinship, in generic sense. Second, maintaining ties with the family of the Prophet. This is what is meant by the Qur'an: "And know that anything you obtain of war booty – then indeed, for Allah is one fifth of it and for the Messenger and for (his) near relatives" (Q. 8:41).

Al-Tusi explains *al-fakhshâ', al-munkar and al-baghy* in the following words, "*Al-fakhshâ'* designates the bad thing that is committed by a person but he does not show it to the public. *Al-munkar* is the bad thing that is committed by a person and showed it to the people, and these people are ought to deny it". He goes on to explain the relation among *al-'adl, al-ihsân, al-fakhshâ' and al-munkar*. He says, "*al-'adl* refers to the balance between exterior and interior; *al-ihsân* designates a state in which one's interior is better than his/her exterior; whilst *al-fakhshâ' and al-munkar* is a state in which one's exterior is better than his/her interior".

## MAJMA' AL-BAYÂN: ACCENTUATING THE RAPPROCHEMENT WITH SUNNISM

Abu 'Ali al-Fadl al-Hasan al-Tabrisi (d. 1154) was a Twelver Imamite scholar who wrote an important Shiite Qur'anic exegesis entitled *Majma' al-bayân fi tafsîr al-Qur'an*. In contrast to previous Imami tafsîrs, al-Tabrisi's tafsîr has much more similarities with the Sunni tafsîr, most particularly in terms of method, content and sources. Al-Tabrisi's tafsîr also brings forward varied opinions, ranging from Imamism, Sunnism to Mu'tazilism. This is in line with the fact that the Imami Shiism at that time took up some tenets from the Mu'tazilism.[46]. Al-Tabrisi's theology embodies the Twelver Shiite adjustment of Mu'tazilite theology initiated by al-Shaykh al-Mufid (d. 1020) and al-Sharif

al-Murtada (d. 1044).[47] It is worth remarking that the interplays between Shiite and Mu'tazilite theology are not the only preoccupation of the Twelver Imamis. The Zaidites are also concerned with this enterprise. Abu al-Qasim 'Abd Allah ibn Ahmad al-Kalbi al-Balkhi (d. 931) adhered to Mu'tazilism in theology and Zaydism in politics, and strived to find congruity between these two schools.[48]

Al-Tabrisi belongs to the Shiite scholars who believe on the authenticity of the Qur'an.[49] He is not the only Twelver Shiite scholars who maintain that the Qur'an is authentic. We observe a general tendency within the 11th and 12th century Twelver Shiite scholars which refuse the claims of earlier Shiite scholars on the incompleteness of the Uthmanic Qur'an.[50] Al-Tabrisi drew his scholarly lineage to the leader of Twelver Shiite community in Baghdad Abu Ja'far al-Tusi (d. 1067) via 'Abd al-Jabbar ibn 'Abd Allah al-Muqri al-Razi. Al-Tusi's tafsîr to some extent influenced al-Tabrisi's tafsîr, most specifically in terms of structure and theological tendency. It is also worth mentioning that al-Tabrisi once learned under the instruction of two well-known Sunnite commentators, namely Mahmud ibn al-Husayn al-Kirmani (d. 1106-7) and Abu al-Fath 'Ubayd Allah al-Qushayri (d. 1127).[51] This allows us to comprehend why al-Tabrisi's exegesis has something in common with Sunnite Qur'anic commentaries.

Al-Tabrisi's parallels with Sunni exegetes can be located within the broader religious-political context of his life time. He lived under the Seljuq dynasty (1040-1194). The sultans and *wazir*s (high-ranking officials) of the Seljuq dynasty demonstrated their tolerance towards Twelver Shiites, on the one hand, but they considered the Ismaili Shiites as the factionist of their rival namely Fatimid dynasty (909-1171).[52] Nizam al-Mulk (1018-1092) was appointed as a *wazir* throughout the reign Alp Arslan (r. 1063-1072) and Malik Shah I (r. 1072-1092). Al-Mulk, who happened to be Shafiite, was vaunted in the circle of the Twelver Shiites due to his promotion of *sayyid*s and Twelver-Imami scholars. The reign of Ahmad Sanjar (1118-1157) exhibited the political recognition of the Shiites, it was recorded that two of his six *wazir*s were Shiites.[53]

Al-Tabrisi, in his tafsîr, explains that the term *al-'adl* means treating others in moderation. The term *al-ihsân* contains all kinds of good deeds, and it is mostly used to designate charity by giving money and rendering good service to others. He also cites different standpoints among the scholars pertaining to *al-'adl* and *al-ihsân*. Some scholars said that *al-'adl* is in terms of deeds,

whilst *al-ihsân* is in term of sayings. Hence, somebody does not do something except what is just, and does not say something except what is good. Al-Tabrisi is aware that there are two meanings of *dhî al-qurbâ*. The first is in its generic sense, comprises of all family relatives. The second is in it specific sense, namely the family of the Prophet Muhammad (*ahl al-bayt*), as what indicated by the verse on *khumus* (one fifth). The second meaning owes its origin from the transmitted narration (*riwaya*) from Abu Ja'far.[54] Due to the institution of *khumus*, the Shiite clergy enjoy financial standing which is independent from the state.

Al-Tabrisi explains the Qur'anic phrase "He forbids immorality (*al-fakhshâ'*) and bad conduct (*al-munkar*) and oppression (*al-baghy*)" in the following words: "*Al-fakhshâ'* designates the bad thing that is committed by a person but he does not show it to the public. Al-*munkar* is the bad thing that is committed by a person and showed it to the people, and these people are ought to deny it. *Al-baghy* is the continuous oppression to others". He also cites the opinion of another scholar, that *al-fakhshâ'* is fornication and adultery, *al-munkar* is what denies by the Islamic law, whilst *al-baghy* is oppression and arrogance. Al-Tabrisi refers to the transmitted narration from Sufyan ibn 'Uyayna pertaining to the difference between *al-'adl, al-ihsân, al-fakhsha, and al-munkar*: "*al-'adl* designates the equilibrium between interior and exterior; *al-ihsân* is a state in which one's interior is better than his exterior; whilst *al-fakhshâ'* and *al-munkar* is a state in which one's exterior is better than his interior".

### TAFSÎR AL-SÂFI: UPHOLDING THE LEGITIMACY OF AHL AL-BAYT

Muhsin Fayd al-Kashani (1598-1680) was a Persian philosopher, theologian and poet. He wrote a Qur'anic commentary entitled *Tafsîr al-sâfi*. Among his teachers was the Traditionist (*muhaddith*) Abu 'Ali Majid ibn Hashim ibn 'Ali ibn 'Ali Majid al-Sadiqi (d. 1618). He was the student and son in law of the Philosopher Sadraddin Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Ibrahim (known as Mulla Sadra, d. 1640). Al-Kashani lived under the reign of Safavid (1501-1736). Safavid is known most specifically for establishing the Twelver Shiism as the official religion of the empire (Bar-Asher 1999: 23). It seems that al-Kashani's radical interpretation was rooted in the religious-political context of the Safavid. The 'Shiitisation' is rooted most specifically in Safavid dynasty (1501-1736), in which the Shiite preachers actively promoted their teachings to the eastern lands of the Muslim world, most notably Indian Subconti-

nent.[55]

Al-Kashani belongs to Twelver Akhbari scholars.[56] The Akhbari Qur'anic exegetes normally use a great number of oral reports, which explain directly or indirectly the meaning of the Qur'anic verses. These oral reports are labelled as *khabar*, which owe their origin from one of the members of the *ahl al-bayt*, namely the so-called "Fourteen Most Pure Ones" which comprise of the Twelve Imams, Fatima and the Prophet Muhammad. A great number of these cited *khabar*s unequivocally show their disagreement with Sunnism. Such *khabar*s exhibits a degree of radicalism, since "the message contained in these traditions is that certain phrases of the Qur'an which referred to 'Ali's rights had been deliberately omitted by 'Uthman and his accomplices".[57] Such an interpretation was most specifically needed by the Shiite community, in the time in which the Safavid dynasty was undergoing a gradual deterioration. In response to this political crisis, the authority of the Qur'an and the authority of the Imams were upheld. The Qur'an, at this juncture, is observed as a "charismatic text", or in other words, "it's already considerable charisma is greatly enhanced".[58] There are intricacies in attributing "literalists" to the exegesis of the Akhbari scholars. One may say that "their so-called literalism must be seen to pertain to a veneration for the statements of the imams on a given verse of the Qur'an. Many of these statements are concerned precisely with the 'inner meaning' of the text, and for that are not usually not what one would describe as straightforward interpretations of the literal text".[59]

Pertaining to Q. 16: 90, al-Kashani explains that God commanding us to give the relatives what they need. He goes on to elucidate that *al-fakhshâ'* is what violates God's rules, *al-munkar* is what is denied by the ratio, whilst *al-baghy* designates the oppression to others. Al-Kashani also cites another Twelver Shiite exegete al-'Ayyâshî, which renders a transmitted narration from 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, namely, "*al-'adl* is doing things rightly and in moderation, whilst *al-ihsân* is doing better than it is supposed to be".[60] It is also of interest to note that al-Kashani also quotes al-Qummî's commentary pertaining to Q. 16: 90. For al-Qummî, the term *al-'adl* means "bearing witness that there is no god but Allah, and that Muhammad p.b.u.h. is the messenger of Allah". *Al-ihsân* means the Commander of the Faithful 'Ali ibn Abi Talib. The phrase "*wa al-fakhshâ' wa al-munkar wa al-baghy*" has been interpreted as "this person, this person and this person".

Al-Kashani also cites al-'Ayyâshî's commentary on this kind of interpretation. Al-'Ayyâshî transmits a narration from al-Baqir, who said, "*al-faksha'* is

the first, *al-munkar* is the second, whilst *al-baghy* is the third. It is unclear, however, who are meant by the first, the second and the third. When one reads al-Kashani's whole explanation of Q. 16: 90, one may suppose that these refer to 'the first caliph' (Abu Bakr), 'the second caliph' ('Umar ibn al-Khattab) and 'the third caliph' (Uthman ibn 'Affan). Al-Kashani also transmits Sa'd narration from 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, "*al-'adl* is Muhammad p.b.u.h., accordingly those who obey him are considered just. *Al-ihsân* is 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, accordingly those acknowledge His leadership are considered *muhsin*. The *muhsin* will enter the paradise. *Itâ' dhî al-qurbâ* means our relatives which are entitled for our love and charity. *Al-fakhshâ', al-munkar* and *al-baghy* refer to those oppress the family of the Prophet".[61]

Al-Kashani's commentary on the variant reading (*qirâ'a*) of Q. 16: 90 is worth noticing. He renders a transmitted a narration from Ja'far al-Sadiq (d. 765), as follows:

> *Al-Sadiq said, 'Read as I said to you:* Inna –Llâha ya'muru bi l-'adli wa l-ihsân wa-itâ'i dhî l-qurbâ haqqahu' *(Indeed, Allah orders justice and good conduct and giving rights to* dhî al-qurbâ*). We do not read this way according to the* qirâ'a *of Zayd, but we read this way according to the* qirâ'a *of Imam 'Ali. Imam al-Baqir was asked, 'what is the meaning of* Itâ' dhî al-qurbâ haqqahu?'. *Imam al-Baqir replied, 'It means acknowledging imams. Whilst the phrase* yanha 'an l-fakhshâ' wa l-munkar *means the reign of this man.*

This is a clear message that there is conviction within the earlier Shiite Qur'anic commentators, that there are slight differences between the Shiite and the Sunni recitation modes of the Qur'an. This can be observed from Q. 16: 90 in which some Shiite exegetes stick to the *qirâ'a* (variant readings and additions) of 'Ali, namely '*inna –Llaha ya'muru bi l-'adli wa l-ihsân wa-Itâ'i dhî l-qurbâ haqqahu*'. The Sunnite commentators mostly refer to the *qirâ'a* of Zayd, namely '*inna –Llaha ya'muru bi l-'adli wa l-ihsân wa-Itâ'i dhî l-qurbâ*', without mentioning the word '*haqqahu*'. Such a reading has an implication in interpreting the verse. For some Shiite commentators, this implies a command to assign the political legitimacy (the interpretation of the word '*haqqahu*' (his right) to the family of the Prophet (*ahl al-bayt*), most notably 'Ali ibn Abi Talib and his descendants). For Sunnite commentators, the meaning of the verse is generic, comprises all kind of kindness to the family relatives.

We are aware that there are varied ways of reading the texts of the Qur'an.

In response to these variants al-Kashani asserts that "the best tradition is the easiest to pronounce and the clearest meaning based on the *akhbar* of the imams". The issue on the best way of reading the Qur'an leads us to another issue of dispute between the Sunnites and Shiites. Al-Kashani belongs to those Shiite scholars who maintain that the Qur'an that is circulated in the Muslim society has been altered.[62] The issue of "variant readings" and "originality" of the Qur'an in the circle of Shiites owes its origin most specifically from some early transmitted reports on the Qur'anic compilation of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib. It was reported that 'Ali presented his own compilation of the Qur'an to the Companions, but they refuse it. These reports also asserted that there were differences between the varied compilations of the Qur'an. 'Ali kept up his own copy and taught it to his successors.[63] Al-Kashani's Qur'anic commentary is an interesting piece of work, if we look to the fact that he was a philosopher, and even became the student of son in law of the well-known Philosopher Mulla Sadra. This clearly demonstrates that a philosopher may interpret the Qur'an in a different way, namely by sticking solely to the tradition without providing his own further interpretation and rational consideration.

## NAFAKHÂT AL-RAHMÂN FI TAFSÎR AL-QUR'AN: POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CONCERN

Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Rahman al-Nahawandi (1874-1952) was born as the son of the Shiite scholar, exegete and mathematician Mirza 'Abd al-Rahim al-Nahawandi (d. 1849) who taught at the *hawza* (traditional Shiite learning institution) in Teheran.[64] Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Rahman al-Nahawandi learned under the instruction of the Twelver Shiite scholar Ismail al-Sadr al-Isfahani (d. 1919-1920). He wrote a Qur'anic exegesis entitled *Nafakhât al-rahmân fi tafsîr al-Qur'an*, which he completed in 1950. He also composed poetries. In addition, he wrote a book on Islamic law, namely *Siraj al-nahj fi masa'il al-'umra*.[65] Al-Nahawandi[66] is aware of the correlation between the verses of the Qur'an, accordingly he is convinced that Q. 16: 90 correlates to what is mentioned before, namely in Q. 16: 89. He points out that after God mentions in Q. 16: 89 that the Qur'an is "clarification for all things", He alludes to the important features of morality and laws contained in this Qur'an by mentioning Q. 16: 90. Besides, he cites the interpretation of Ibn 'Abbas who said, "This is the most concise and comprehensive verse of the Qur'an pertaining to good and bad. If there is no other verses in the Qur'an which explain this,

this verse is sufficient to explain that, and it proves that Qur'an is 'clarification to all things'".

Al-Nahawandi explains that the term *al-'adl* means "moderation and balance in terms of morality and other matters, and treating people equally in terms of rights and leadership". *Al-ihsân* means "performing good for your selves, by avoiding from doing evil, and by attempting to develop them into the higher state of humanity; doing good for others by teaching them religious sciences, leading them to the happiness hereafter and thereafter, and helping them in meeting their worldly and religious needs". The phrase *Itâ' dhî al-qurbâ* means "giving to the family relatives what they need either pertaining to wealth or knowledge. The mentioning of family relatives in the context of *ihsân* is to underline the importance of maintaining the ties of kinship (*silat al-rahim*)". As for the word *al-fakhshâ'*, al-Nahawandi explains that it means "things that are extremely bad, like *zina* and *shirk* (polytheism)". *Al-munkar* means "things that are considered bad by the ratio, but do not reach the level of *fakhshâ'*". *Al-baghy* means "oppression to people, by taking their rights, wealth, life and dignity".

In addition, al-Nahawandi brings forwards other transmitted narrations pertaining to the meaning of *al-'adl* and *al-ihsân*. The *first* is Ibn 'Abbas' interpretation that *al-'adl* is "bearing witness that there is no god but Allah", whilst *al-ihsân* is "carrying out the obligations". The *second* is the interpretation that *al-'adl* is "believing in oneness of Allah", whilst *al-ihsân* is "worshiping Allah as if you see Him and loving people as you love yourself. If you love a Muslim, it is hoped that his faith will increase. If you love non-Muslim, it is hope that he will become your brother in Islam". The *third* is the exegesis which mentions that the meaning of *al-'adl* is "believing in oneness of Allah", whilst *al-ihsân* means "sincerity in worshiping Allah". The *fourth* is the interpretation that *al-'adl* is in terms of deeds, whilst *al-ihsân* is in terms of sayings. The *fifth* is the transmitted narration from 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, who said that "*al-'adl* is giving suitable reaction, whilst *al-ihsân* is responding the goodness by the better degree of goodness".

The *fourth* cited interpretation is also worth noticing. Al-Nahawandi brings forward the narration from al-Baqir who said, "*al-'adl* is Muhammad p.b.u.h., accordingly those who obey him are considered just. *Al-ihsân* is 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, accordingly those acknowledge His leadership are considered *muhsin*. The *muhsin* will enter the paradise". Al-Nahawandi goes on to present an explanation to the phrase "*Itâ' dhî al-qurbâ*". The *first* is Ibn Abbas' interpre-

tation that this phrase means maintaining the bonds of kinship either with wealth or supplication. The *second* is the Prophetic saying, "the quickest devotion attracting rewards is maintaining the ties of kinship. Some family relatives are poor, they need our help. Their wealth will be increased if we maintain the kinship ties".  The *third* is the narration from Imam al-Baqir, which points out that the phrase means "our relatives which are entitled for our love and charity".  The *fourth* is the narration from Imam al-Sadiq, namely:

One upon at time somebody read Q. 16: 90 in front of Imam al-Sadiq. Imam al-Sadiq said, 'Read as I said to you: *inna –Llaha ya'muru bi l-'adli wa l-ihsân wa-Itâ'i dhî l-qurbâ haqqahu*' (Indeed, Allah orders justice and good conduct and giving rights to *dhî l-qurbâ*). Imam al-Baqir was asked, 'what is the meaning of *Itâ' dhî al-qurbâ haqqahu*?'. Imam al-Baqir replied, 'It means acknowledging imams'.

When we compare between al-Nahawandi's and al-Kashani's account of Imam al-Sadiq's narration, we realise the difference between the two accounts.[67] In al-Kashani's account of the narration, which is in line with that of al-'Ayyâshî, we encounter this sentence, "We do not read this way according to the *qirâ'a* of Zayd, but we read this way according to the *qirâ'a* of Imam 'Ali".[68] These two accounts have different implications of the status of the word *haqqahu* (his right). Al-Kashani's account indicates that the word *haqqahu* is part of Q. 16: 90 according to the *qirâ'a* of 'Ali. Al-Nahwandi's account implies that the word *haqqahu* is Imam al-Baqir explanation to make clear the phrase "Itâ' dhî al-qurbâ", so it is not necessarily part of the Qur'an.  It is worth mentioning that al-Nahawandi belongs to Shiite scholars who are against the idea that the Qur'an is altered (*tahrif al-Qur'an*). When we read the introduction of his tafsîr, we struck to al-Nahawandi's statement that he "prefers not to talk about the varied modes of reading the Qur'an which run in counter to the well-known reading".

Al-Nahawandi renders varied interpretation to the word *al-fakhshâ'*. *First*, those interpret *al-fakhshâ'* as fornication and adultery. *Second*, those interpret al-*faksha'* as stinginess. *Third*,  those consider *al-fakhshâ'* as including all kinds of sins, either in terms of deeds or sayings, either in big or small. In the last part of his tafsîr, al-Nahawandi brings forward some transmitted narrations which justify the legitimacy of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, on the one hand, and delegitimise the first three caliphs. These narrations are as follows:

*First, the narration of al-Qummî who makes a* Ta'wil *that the phrase "al-fakhshâ' wa l-munkar wa l-baghy" means "this man, this man, and this*

*man".*

*Second, the narration of Imam al-Baqir which states that* al-fakhshâ' *is the first,* al-munkar *is the second, whilst* al-baghy *is the third.*

*Third, the narration of Imam al-Sadiq which interprets this phrase as "the reign of this man, this man, and this man".*

One may suppose that the idea of delegitimising the first three caliphs still exerted an influence in the minds of some Shiites during the lifetime of al-Nahawandi. One may also suppose that this constituted their consciousness and interpretation to early Islamic history. When one read al-Nahawandi's whole interpretation of Q. 16: 90 one realises that the idea of delegitimising the first three caliphs had become gradually marginalised during his lifetime. It is seen from the fact that al-Nahawandi also refers to the Sunni sources. It is also observable from his own interpretation of Q. 16: 90 in the first part of the section, which underlines the social and religious implications of God's command of good and His forbid of evil.

### AL-MIZÂN FI TAFSÎR AL-QUR'AN: EXPLORATION OF SOCIAL FABRIC OF SOCIETY

Muhammad Husayn al-Tabataba'i (1903-1981) was one of the well-known modern Shiite scholars. He has played an important role in introducing the Shiism to the world, most particularly through his book *Shia dar Islam* (Shiite Islam). He is known for his magnum opus, which is entitled *al-Mizân fi tafsîr al-Qur'an.* This tafsîr, which is written in twenty volumes, brings together some approaches in understanding the Qur'an. This can be observed for instance from some sections in his tafsîr such as "scientific discussion" (*bahth 'ilmi*), "philosophical discussion" (*bahth falsafi*), "literary discussion" (*bahth adabi*), "social discussion" (*bahth ijtima'i*). His exegetical style can be considered as *tafsîr al-adab al-ijtima'i* (literary and social interpretation). Tabataba'is tafsîr shares some similarities with modern Sunni tafsîrs. Some scholars even consider his tafsîr as closely resembling Rashid Rida's (1865-1935) *Tafsîr al-Manar*, and accordingly label him as "Rashid Rida's counterpart". He has written a number of books, including *Usule Falsafe wa Raveshe Realism* (The Principles of Philosophy and the Method of Realism) and *The Qur'an in Islam*.[69] He is regarded by his student the Iranian-American Philosopher Seyyed Hossein Nasr (b. 1933) as a master in philosophy and exegesis which exhibit a millenial intellectual tradition of Shiism.[70]

Al-Tabataba'i points out that "these verses mention a number of norms that are pertinent to the state of Islam before the Prophet's migration to Medina (*hijra*), which improve the society in general".[71]  He goes on to explain Q. 16: 90 by saying:

*God begins these three norms (immorality, bad conduct and oppression) which constitute the threats to social fabric of human society, due to the consideration that the well being of society in general is the important targets of Islamic teachings. For human being, individuals are the most important; but the happiness of individuals is grounded on the well beings of the society in which they live. Individuals hardly attain the happiness in a sick society, in which misery are found everywhere.*

For al-Tabataba'i, *al-'adl* means providing the suitable reaction, namely responding goodness by the similar goodness and replying badness by the similar badness. This is distinct to the notion of *al-ihsân*. *Al-ihsân* designates the act of responding the goodness by the better degree of goodness and replying the badness by the lesser degree of badness. Al-Tabataba'i explains the relation between justice (*al-'adl*) and goodness (*al-husn*). For him, the justice necessitates goodness. Goodness is none other than what the human soul tends to it, and confirming something for those entitled. This goodness is known by the people. Al-Tabataba'i mentions that there are two kinds of *al-'adl*. The *first* is that is absolutely considered by the reason as good. This is not removed in any times and will not be described as injustice in any circumstances. An example of this is doing goodness to those doing goodness to you. The *second* is what is known as just by the law, and this may be removed in any times. This is observable in the case of retaliation (*qisas*). Retaliation is seen as an example of "retributive justice" if we employ a terminology from contemporary justice theories.

Al-Tabataba'i also brings forward another categorization of justice, namely "personal justice" and "social justice". His elaboration of these two notions is observable from the following quotation:

*Justice (al-'adl) designates the moderation between excessiveness (ifrat) and laxity (tafrit). The essence of justice is this moderation by giving the things to the persons who are entitled to these. Justice is believing on these rights. At the personal level, al-'adl means doing something for one's happiness and becoming alert to the things that lead him to the sadness. The justice pertaining the people is putting something to those entitled to it, whether in terms of*

*Islamic law or customary law. Hence, those doing goodness are rewarded due to their goodness, and those committing evil are punished in accordance with their evil. There should be equality before law, without exception.*

The word *al-'adl* is generic, but al-Tabataba'i is convinced that the explicit context of Q. 16: 90 indicates that the meaning of *al-'adl* in this verse is "social justice". He said, "social justice in this vein designates a condition in which all members of the society interact in good order, and put everything in its place. This is a command on social characters to all the mmadeliembers of the society. This is a command to the *society* to sustain these norms, and this is also a command to the *state* since it governs the matters of the society". In Shiism, *'adl* constitutes one of the five principles of religion (*usul al-din*). These five principles comprise of belief in Divine Unity (*tawhid*), prophecy (*nubuwwa*), resurrection (*ma'ad*), Imamate (*imama*) and Divine Justice (*'adl*). As for the nature of *'adl* in Shiism, Nasr explains that the character of justice is regarded essential to the Divine Nature.[72] God cannot do in an unfair way since it is His nature to be fair. For Him, being unjust would contravene His own nature. Al-Tabataba'i's elaboration of the personal and social justice is distinct to that of classical Muslim scholars (including classical Shiite scholars) which perceive justice most particularly in its theological sense.

According to al-Tabataba'i, *al-ihsân* literally means doing something perfectly. It designates rendering goodness or benefit to others, not on the basis of giving a similar response, but rather reacting to the goodness by the better degree of goodness and replying to the badness by the lesser degree of badness, as well as initiating goodness to others. The notion of *al-ihsân* also includes improving the people in misery, spreading mercy and love. This has an impact on the prosperity and safety of the people. Al-Tabataba'i explains the phrase *Itâ' dhî al-qurbâ* by saying:

*It means giving the wealth to the family relatives, and this constitutes the kind of* al-ihsân *which is specifically mentioned, to underline the importance of improving this "micro-society" (*al-mujtama' al-saghir) *which essentially constitute a significant factor in establishing the big civil society (*al-mujtama' al-madani al-kabir). *The "nuclear family" (*mujtama' al-izdiwaj) *is smaller than the "extended family" (*mujtama' al-qaraba), *but the former becomes a significant factor in establishing the latter. Accordingly the big civil society is begun with the nuclear family, then becomes extended family and clan, until it transforms to be a big society.*

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In this vein, one may see al-Tabataba'i's concern for social fabric of society by underlining to the providing needs to the nuclear family and extended family, which both become the pillars of the prosperity of the society in general. In this juncture, one may also observe that "giving wealth to relatives" constitutes an element of "social justice", a notion that has been explained by al-Tabata'i. His notion of social justice in this sense seems to be distributive. The distributive justice in classical Islamic tradition refers to a condition in which "individual ownership (freedom) may be said to have become the overriding principle, qualified by collectivist restrictions (equality)". These constraints embrace most notably "the legal alms (*zaka*), the usury (*riba*), the pious foundation (*waqf*), the pre-emption (*shuf'a*), restriction on inheritance right by wills, and confiscation of private ownership by the state".  Besides, al-Tabataba'i points out that according to transmitted exegetical tradition from the imams of the *ahl al-bayt*, the term *dhî al-qurbâ* refers to the family of the Prophet.  It means that the Muslims should give one fifth of their income to the family of the Prophet, as indicated by Q. 8: 41.

For al-Tabataba'I, the word *al-fakhshâ'* means a saying and a deed which are extremely bad. The original meaning of the word *al-fakhshâ'* is "exceeding the necessary limit". As for the meaning of the word "al-munkar", he says, "It refers to the deed that is unrecognized by the people in the society, so the people leave this kind of deed. This includes for instance kissing and showing the intimate parts (*'awra*) in public in the Islamic societies". Pertaining to *al-baghy*, he says, "The original meaning of the word *al-baghy* is asking. It is frequently used to designate the demanding of the rights of others with the oppression. Some says that the word *al-baghy* means *zina*. Al-Tabataba'i goes on to explain the impact of *al-fakhshâ'*, *al-baghy*, and *al-munkar* to the society. He points out these tree characters will destroy the order of society, and consequently the happiness of the individuals within the given society. It will also create enmity and tension within the society.

### CONCLUSION

The investigation of seven exegetical works within the Imami Shiism is of significance in revealing the transformation and development of Imamite-Shiite Qur'anic exegesis pertaining to Q. 16: 90.  This study shows that the Imamite-Shiite interpretation on Q. 16: 90 moves between these two continuums, because of the religious and political circumstances of the ex-

egetes. This study also shows that the division and rapprochement between Sunnism and Shiism are observable through these seven Imamite-Shiite tafsîrs. This study rejects a simplified supposition that Shiite tafsîrs are sectarian, in the sense of being excessively coloured by Shiite dogmas, on the one hand; and offers a distinct and vibrant nuance to Theodor Nöldeke's supposition (as quoted Gätje) that Shiite tafsîrs constitute "miserable fabric of lies and stupidities".[73]

The investigation of seven tafsîrs within Shiite-Imamite tafsîrs demonstrates that Shiite-Imamite tafsîrs are colourful, not monolithic. Classical Imamite-Shiite tafsîrs often underline their disagreement with Sunnism. In the medieval age, we encounter some Shiite-Imamite tafsîrs which demonstrate their rapprochement with Sunnism, due to religious-political circumstances of the authors. This tendency becomes more prevalent in the modern age. In this sense, we notice that tafsîr is not a theological product *per se*, but also has any relation with religious-political milieu in which the exegetes live. Essentialist approach to the exegetical tradition within the Shiism is accordingly irrelevant. One cannot only read one Shiite tafsîr, then come to the conclusion that all Shiite tafsîrs are sectarian or moderate. One has to look for other tafsîrs from different periods, to have a broader picture of Shiite tafsîrs. Likewise, one has to enquire why one Shiite tafsîr tends to be sectarian, whist the other demonstrates their moderation and rapprochement with Sunnism.

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