

The Word "Ababil"-An Etymological and Lexical Study

Abu Zar Mateen

There is difference of opinion about the origin and usage of the word "Ababil" occurred in the verse 3 of *Surah Al-Fil*. The writer has thoroughly examined the origin and meaning of this word with reference to classical Arabic poetry, famous lexicons, commentaries of the Holy Quran and glossaries of difficult words and terms of the Quran. With reference to a number of verses from the Arabic poetry he pointed out that the word *Ababil* was used by the Arab poets of pre-Islamic period in the meaning of group, swarm, flock, row, line. The writer has attempted to prove that "Ababil" is not the name of any particular bird and that it simply mean group, swarm or flock. He supported his finding by quoting different Arabic lexicons and dictionaries including *Mujam Maqaees al-Lughat*, *Lisan al-Arab*, *Al-Sihah Taj al-Lughat*, *Aqrab al-Mawarid fi Fash al-Arabiah wa al-Shawarid* and *Al-Qamus al-Muhit*.

In view of the writer, the lexicographers differed with regard to the nature of the word *Ababil* (singular or plural). According to some it is plural which has no singular like the words '*Ababeed* and *Shaalil*'. Secondly, its singular has been variously stated as *Ibalah*, *Ibil*, *Abil*, *Abul*, *Ibbil*. The article also takes into account the explanation of the word *Ababil* given in various *Tafasir* particularly *Tafsir-i-Tabari*, *Tafsir-i-Qurtubi*, *Tafsir-i-Razi*, *Tafhim al-Quran*, *Tadabbur-i-Quran* and *Maarif al-Quran*. Examining the statement of these commentators he came to the conclusion that they had used this word in the meaning of groups, swarms and flocks or group after group and row after row. However, traditions quoted by some *mufasssin* differ with regard to the size, shape and colour of the birds which carried pebbles in their beaks.

The writer also examined the origin and meaning of this word in the light of Urdu lexicons and dictionaries and pointed out that their compilers agreed on considering the word *Ababil* plural and of Arabic origin which means group, swarm and flock. But they defined this as a special kind of bird which is called 'Hirundo' in English. But the writer of the article did not agree with this point of view and he supported the stand point of the Arabic lexicographers. He thought that many Arabic words came to be used in Urdu, but in a meaning that was different from the original one. In the same context, the writer critically examined and refuted the opinion of some Urdu scholars who considered the *Ababil* as migrant birds of some peculiar features or treated this word as the Arabicised one which has its origin in Hebrew word '*Bil*' meaning small stone or gram.

Quran in European countries particularly in Germany. According to him in the first phase most of the writings were based on criticism or reviling the Holy Book. But gradually the situation changed. He traced the origin of German writing on the Quran to the first part of 19th century. The contributors mostly included teachers of the University and modern scholars. The addressees of these works were mainly European people. The writer has also given a few example of cooperation between Muslim and German researchers in the field of the Quranic studies. For example, Dr. Gerd-Ruidiger and Dr. Albrecht Noth were associated with the work of correction and preservation of Quranic manuscripts in Sanaa (Yemen).

Referring to Noldeke's book *Tarikh al-Nass al-Qurani* the articles gives main focus to the Quranic works of Gustav Leberecht Flugel (1802-1870) who has prepared the copy of text of the Quran and published it in 1834. It was widely used by the Europeans as the publication of its several editions shows. Its last edition came out in 1924 with the corrected version of Gustav Maurice Redslub. The Flugel Edition also contains a preface in Latin which was the most popular academic language of Europe in those days. According to the writer Flugel had prepared the edition of the text of the Quran in accordance with the popular methods of recitation and for this purpose he relied on the text of *Tafsir-i-Baizawi* and the manuscript of the *tasfir* of the Turkish scholar Abu al-Saud Muhammad Ibn Mahmud. The writer has also pinpointed the mistakes of the edition of Flugel with regard to the print of alphabets, script and numbering of the verses. In this connection he also mentioned the German scholar Gotthelf Bergstrasser who had thoroughly examined the edition of Flugel and brought out its all mistakes in detail and also opposed its use. He had also prepared an index of the Quranic words entitled *Nujum al-Furqan fi Atraf al-Quran* which was published in 1842. But it was also not free from numerous mistakes and it became outdated like his edition of the text of the Quran. The other works produced by Bergstrasser about the Quran are: *Mashru Hawash ala al-Quran*, *Qiraat Hasan Basri li al-Quran* and *Tarikh al-Quran*.

At the end, the writer refers to the significant work done by Dr. Albrecht Noth (d. 1999) in Yemen with regard to deciphering, correcting and preserving Islamic manuscripts including *Masahif-i-Quran* written on parchments (skins) discovered in the basement of the national museum of Sanaa in about 1927. He was associated with this work in 1981 under the supervision of Qazi Ismail al-Akwa, Chairman of General Commission for Antiquities and Libraries.

The writer has discussed the Quran-gifted fundamental human rights under 19 points. These rights are related to life, protection of life, property, honour, privacy, expression of opinion, profession of religious belief, education, protection from hitting religious sentiments, assembly, raising voice against atrocity and cruelty, economic security, justice, equality, residence, relief from consequences of others' action, protection from imprisonment merely on the basis of suspicion and shelter / refuge in case of oppression and insecurity in any country or region.

The article contains details about all these aspects of human rights, with extensive references from the Holy Quran. For example, with regard to right to honour he elaborated that every one has fundamental right that his honour be protected. None is allowed to say or do anything which may cause dishonour to a person. Referring the verses (11-12) of *Surah Hujurat*, he pointed out that these verses prohibit different forms of dishonour or insult which go against the dignity of mankind. In these verses Allah Almighty has commanded the believers to keep away themselves from scoffing at any one, calling others by bad name or title, saying anything (against others) merely on the basis of conjecture or watching secretly any one's private life and backbiting. At the end of the verse, Allah instructed them to be fearful of Him and sincerely follow His prohibitory orders. What is important in this order is that it is general in nature. It means that in view of the Quran every person is respectable irrespective of his social, economic or political status or any other position. The writer stressed the point that the Quran has given special importance to the protection of the honour of women. The Quran has prescribed very severe punishment for those who indulged in false allegation against them as it is evident from the verses 4 & 23 of *Surah al-Nur*. Further, the people disgracing or defaming the women are cursed in this world and in the life Hereafter also.

In this way, the writer has discussed each and every aspect of human rights in the light of the Quran and stressed the point that the Holy Book does not only describe these rights, but enjoins upon the Muslims to take care of them sincerely and not to give any consideration to colour, race and creed in observing these rights.

Contribution of Orientalists to the Quranic Studies – A Survey

Schatefann Field

Urdu Tr. Abu Sad Islahi

The writer takes into account only works of some orientalists who contributed to the Quranic studies in the German language. In the introduction he gives a brief survey of the beginning of the studies on the

socio-religious condition of the Arab people would be also helpful for understanding the Holy Quran. It is also necessary to go through the well-known commentaries (*Tafasir*) of early and later periods.

In view of the writer, the second aspect is related to *talim* and *tazkir*. It means that fundamental beliefs and concepts of Islam must be clearly explained before the students while interpreting the relevant verses of the Quran. It is also required for the teachers to explicitly point out that what the Quran demands from its believers in their social, moral, economic and political life? Highlighting the nature and importance of divine commands (*Ahkam-i-Ilahi*) is also must for making the teaching more useful and effective.

The third aspect of the desired methodology concerns personal life and character of the teacher. If these do not conform to the Quranic ideals his teaching of the Quran could not leave impact on the students. The writer stressed the point that it may be right to say that "Do not see who is saying, but see what he is saying". But in the practical world this philosophy has no importance, because a hearer or addressee always puts saying of a person or discourses of a teacher on the touchstone of his practice and accordingly he accepts them or overlooks them. He further observed that the Prophet (SAW) and his companions left great impact on the Society as they put into action what they said. So it is desirable for a teacher to be of high morals and good character and a faithful follower of the Quranic teachings. At the end, the writer pointed out that all the three aspects of the methodology of teaching should be given equal importance, otherwise the teaching of the Quran would not be fruitful.

Fundamental Rights of Human Being in the Light of the Holy Quran

Saifullah Asghar

The article, first of all, highlights the distinctive features of human rights given by the Quran. These included ensuring dignity of human being, enumerating human rights in a comprehensive way, emphasis on taking care of them without any discrimination and giving more importance to one's duties than demanding his rights. The writer has also compared the Quranic human rights with that of accorded by U.N.O. and pointed out that the basic difference between the both is that the latter has no binding force. It is just a collection of shining document which even does not clarify that what action is to be taken against the country which violates the rights of other country. On the other hand, the Quranic human rights have a powerful binding force behind them. Adherence to them is not voluntary. This is obligatory on every one and their violation entails severe action.

He further stressed the point that the 21st century has many new challenges which are required to be addressed in the light of the Quran. In the present scenario and in the ongoing process of interfaith dialogue it is required that the Quranic sciences (*Ulum al-Quran*) be given new dimensions which would help to develop mutual cooperation and understanding each other in a world which has become global village.

In his address the learned scholar also called upon the scholars to produce the academic works and literature on the Quranic studies in Urdu, Arabic and English as well as in Sanskrit, Hindi, Tamil, Malayalam etc. It would give more and more readers access to the Quranic studies. Moreover, the rising needs of adopting the modern means of communication for the promotion of the Quranic sciences (*Ulum al-Quran*) can not be overlooked. In the same way, he also stressed the point that apart from Muslims many non-Muslims and their institutions are working on the *Ulum al-Quran* for different objectives. It would be also useful for the Muslims to make themselves aware of their works.

The Desirable Methodology of the Teaching of the Quran

Muhammad Umar Aslam Islahi

The writer has, first of all, given an account of the methodology of the teaching of the Quran adopted in the early period of Islamic history, particularly in the days of the Prophet (SAW) and *Sahabah* (R.A.). The Prophet (SAW) used to explain the meaning of the revealed verses through his sayings and actions. He regularly gave discourses before his companions mainly with reference to the verses of the Quran. In their own period the *Sahabah* (R.A.) used to think over the meaning of the Holy Quran in light of the teachings of the Prophet (SAW). They also turned to the Arabic poetry to understand the usage of the Quranic words or terms. In this way they attempted to develop their own as well as others' understanding of the Quran.

The article contains detailed discussion about the desirable methodology of the teaching of the Holy Quran. In this reference the writer has focused on three main aspects. The first is related to the academic and research work. This requires deep insight in and understanding the terms of the Quran, taking care of special styles (*asailib*) of the Quran, keeping in view all principles of the *tafsir* including *Nazim-i-Quran* (coherence in the Quran). It is also necessary to take recourse to the *Ahadiith* and classical Arabic literature to develop students' understanding of the Quran. Attempt may be also made to find out details about the people of past Prophets (referred to in the Quran) in the light of the earlier Holy Scriptures. The knowledge of

that they conduct their affairs by mutual consultation and the second directs the head of the state through the Prophet (SAW) to have consultation with the Muslims and when after consultation a decision has been taken it must be enforced with the determination having full faith in Allah Almighty. It indicates that Islam supports the democratic system of government as the people have right to participate in consultation and to express their opinion freely about state affairs.

The establishment of the atmosphere of common brotherhood and to restore peace in case of conflict between two persons or two groups is also the responsibility of the Muslim ruler as stated in the Holy Quran (*Al-Hujurat* /9-10). In view of the Quran the most durable unity of Muslim is that which is based on Islam. So the Islamic state should work for bringing and strengthening unity among the Muslims in the light of the Quranic directives.

At the end, the editorial emphasises with reference to Quranic verses that the state administration is required to take care of the maintenance of the record of the administrative matters, particularly financial dealings which often become source of dispute and conflict. In this connection the famous verse of *dain* of *Surah Baqarah* (No. 282) has great importance as it requires the preparation and preservation of the written documents regarding loan which may help in resolving the dispute in case it emerged in future.

In this way the Quran gives very comprehensive code of conduct for statesmen and rulers. If it is implemented it would be beneficial for the whole mankind in general as it is quite evident from the role model of the Prophet (SAW) and that of the first four caliphs.

The Reach of the Ulum al-Quran and the Style of Addressing

Muhammad Nejatullah Siddiqi

This is the address which was presented by Prof. Muhammad Nejatullah Siddiqi as chief guest in the inaugural session of the seminar organised by the Idarah Ulum al-Quran on "*Khandani Nizam aur Qurani Talimat*" on 20-21 November 2009. Appreciating the contribution of the Idarah Ulum al-Quran to the development of the Quranic studies through organizing annual seminar, publication of the journal and other works on the Quran, he pointed out that Idarah is research-oriented. He further stated that whatever was done till now was mainly intended for the Muslims and subjects of discussion were selected keeping in view of their interest. He emphasised that the present situations, our responsibilities and the Quran itself demand that we should go beyond that. We should select such topics for discussion which concern the entire human beings. We should adopt those languages and dialect which may be understood, in addition to Muslims, by others also.

By the Name of Allah Taala

Abstract

Directive Principles of the Holy Quran for Politics and State
(Editorial)

Zafarul Islam Islahi

Undoubtedly, the Quran is Book of guidance for all aspects of human life including religious, social, economic and political and the principles of this book are explained by the *Sunnah* of the Prophet (SAW) in a best way. The editorial seeks to emphasise that according to the Quran the real sovereignty exists with Allah Taala and none is to be considered partner in His sovereignty in any case (*Surah Yusuf* / 40, *Bani Israil* / 111). His command must be considered as supreme law. The human beings including rulers are only required to follow His commands and to enforce the Quranic principles in every walk of life. It was further stated that the selection of caliph or ruler is a trust in view of the Quran and only those persons should be selected who are capable and known for their devotion to faith, trustworthiness and piety. While interpreting the verse (No. 58) of *Surah al-Nisa*, the commentators have treated *amanah* as responsibility, position of trust or post also. It means that the post of ruler or administrative officers both are *amanah* and these should be entrusted to only those persons who fulfill the qualifications laid down by the Quran.

Highlighting the basic objectives of the State in view of the Quran, the editorial refers to the verse 41 of *Surah al-Hajj* which says that Muslims are "those who if we give them power in the land establish the system of *Salat and Zakat*, enjoin goodness and virtue and forbid evil and sin". Thus the rulers are required to make arrangement for the *Dawah* work or propagation of Islamic teachings and values. They may also use power for achieving these objectives of the Islamic state. In the same way establishment of justice and working for the welfare of mankind is also part of duty of the Muslim rulers. The Quran (*Al-Nisa* / 58, 135) enjoins upon the believers in general and rulers in particular to be upholder of justice in every case and with regard to every person as it is essential for promotion of virtue and goodness as well as for ensuring peace and order in the society. Moreover, protection of human rights which are guaranteed by the Quran also depended on the enforcement of the principle of justice.

This is also one of the directive principles of the Holy Quran to have mutual consultation for the conduct of the state affairs. The Editorial brings forth this point with reference the verse 38 of *Surah al-Shura* and verse 159 of *Aal-i-Imran*. The first considers it a noble practice of the believers