

**The Mechanism of Ta'wīl and its Accuracy Criteria from Mullā Ṣadrā's Point of View, with an Emphasis on Mutashābih Verses of the Qur'an**  
Hossein Rahnamaei<sup>1\*</sup>, Yahya Kabir<sup>2</sup>

1. Assistant Professor, Department of Theoretical Foundations of Islam, Faculty of Education and Islamic Thought, University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran.

2. Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy, Farabi Campus, University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran.

Received: 2022/02/17, Accepted: 2022/02/21

**سازگار تاویل تراز و معیار های صحت آن از دید ملاصدرا با تاکید بر آیات متشابه قران**

حسین رهنمایی<sup>۱</sup>، یحیی کبیر<sup>۲</sup>

۱. استادیار، گروه مبانی نظری اسلام، دانشکده معارف و اندیشه اسلامی، دانشگاه تهران، تهران، ایران.

۲. دانشیار، گروه فلسفه، پردیس فارابی، دانشگاه تهران، تهران، ایران.

دریافت: ۱۴۰۰/۱۱/۲۸؛ پذیرش: ۱۴۰۰/۱۲/۰۲

**چکیده**

**Abstract**

Some of the very important topics in the field of Qur'anic sciences are Muḥkam and Mutashābih verses, how to understand and interpret them, who has the knowledge of Ta'wīl and what are the criteria for its Ta'wīl. Regarding why there are such verses in the Qur'an, different reasons and also different methods have been presented by the commentators of the Qur'an to understand such verses. This research, with the method of library search, along with the concept of Ta'wīl and related words, has counted Mullā Ṣadrā's criticisms on the inappropriate Ta'wīl of some commentators and mentioned the criteria he enumerated for the correct Ta'wīl. Therefore, as a high-ranking commentator who considers the Qur'an as the foundation of his philosophy, in addition to categorizing and criticizing the approach of the Qur'anic scholars in this regard, Mullā Ṣadrā presents a special method in dealing with these verses, which is not dissimilar to the method of the mystics. He believes that God has not created anything in the world of matter unless He has created an equivalent of it in the world of meaning, and nothing has been created in the world of meaning unless it has an equivalent in the higher world. The Mutashābih verses of the Qur'an are related to things that are rooted in the world of meaning, and its interpretation will be formed by creating a connection between the words of the verse and the examples of the world of meaning. Mullā Ṣadrā believes that penetration into the inner meanings and Ta'wīl of the verses requires special scientific and spiritual preparations, which can be achieved in the shadow of scientific conduct and inner purification.

Keywords: Abdullah Ibn Abbas, Tanwīr Al-Miqbās, Al-Tafsīr Al-Wādhī, Firūzabadī, Kalbī, Diniwarī.

از جمله مباحث بسیار مهم در حوزه علوم قرآنی آیات محکم و متشابه، چگونگی فهم و تاویل آنها و اینکه علم تاویل در اختیار چه کسی است و ضوابط تاویل آن چگونه است. در مورد این که اصولاً چرا در قران این گونه آیات وجود دارد دلایل متفاوتی ارائه شده است همچنین روشهای متفاوتی از سوی مفسران قران برای فهم این گونه آیات ارائه شده است. این تحقیق با روش جستار کتابخانه ای ضمن مفهوم شناسی تاویل و واژه های مرتبط، نقدهای ملاصدرا بر تاویلات ناروای برخی مفسران و ضوابطی که وی برای تاویل صحیح بر شمرده است را احصا نموده است. بر این اساس، ملاصدرا به عنوان یک حکیم و مفسر عالی مقام که زیر بنای رفیع فلسفه خود را قران می داند علاوه بر دسته بندی و نقد رویکرد قران پژوهان در این خصوص، روشی ویژه در برخورد با این آیات ارائه می کند که بی شبهات به راه روش عرفا نیست. وی معتقد است خداوند هیچ شیء در عالم ماده خلق نکرده است مگر آنکه قبل از آن در عالم معنی نظیری از آن را آفریده است و هیچ چیزی در عالم معنا آفریده نشده است مگر اینکه درعالم بالاتر نظیری دارد. آیات متشابه قران مربوط به اموری است که ریشه درعالم معنا دارد و تاویل آن با ایجاد ارتباط بین الفاظ آیه و مثال های عالم معنا شکل خواهد یافت. ملاصدرا رسوخ به معانی باطنی و تاویل آیات را محتاج مقدمات علمی و روحی خاصی می داند که در سایه سلوک علمی و تزکیه باطن حاصل می گردد.

کلمات کلیدی: ملاصدرا، تاویل، آیات متشابه، تفسیر قران قران.

## Introduction

One of the most important topics in the field of Qur'anic knowledge is the issue of Mutashābih verses and how to understand them. And the idioms of Muḥkam and Mutashābih have been taken from the verse 7 of Surah Al-Imrān: "He it is Who has sent down to thee the Book: In it are verses basic or fundamental (of established meaning); they are the foundation of the Book: others are allegorical. But those in whose hearts is perversity follow the part thereof that is allegorical, seeking discord, and searching for its hidden meanings, but no one knows its hidden meanings except Allah. And those who are firmly grounded in knowledge say: "We believe in the Book; the whole of it is from our Lord:" and none will grasp the Message except men of understanding." (Al-Imrān, 7)

The discussion about the meaning of this verse, Muḥkam and Mutashābih concept, the examples of Mutashābih verses in the Qur'an and how to interpret them has been among the wide-ranging discussions throughout the history of Islam. The research about the meaning of these two words and the meaning of the Qur'an by contrasting them has been the topic of discussion of the Qur'an among Muslim thinkers for a long time. The first independent work in this field is the book "Mutashābih al-Qur'an" authored by Muqātil ibn Sulaymān (died in 150 AH) and another book with the same name authored by Ḥamza bin Ziyāt (died in 158 AH), until now more than fifty works have been written by scholars of the Qur'an. (Faker Meibudī, 2013, 12)

In this article, while providing a brief explanation about the words: "Muḥkam", "Mutashābih" and "Ta'wīl", the way that Mullā Ṣadrā

chose to understand the meaning of the Mutashābih verses is examined and we will identify his criteria and standards to pass this way.

## Lexicology

The word "Muḥkamāt" is the plural of "Muḥkam" from the root "ḤKM". Ibn Manzūr has interpreted it to mean something in which there is no conflict or anxiety. (Ibn Manzūr, 1414, 141/12) The author of Majma' al-Baḥrayn also understood the meaning of that which is clear and obvious to anyone familiar with the language. He also defined the term "Muḥkamāt" as meaning things that are safe from abrogation or appropriation, or things whose order is unbreakable and stable, or things that cannot be interpreted except for one meaning. (Ṭurayhī, 1996, 43/6) Persian scholars have also considered this word as: firm; Hard ('Amīd, 2010, 922) stable (Moein, 2002, 1653/2). The word Mutashābihāt is rooted from "SH B H". Khalīl ibn Aḥmad, the great Arabic lexicographer, considers Mutashābihāt to be things in which some people are similar to others (Farāhīdī, 1982, 3/404), the author of Lisān al-Arab and the author of Majma' al-Baḥrayn also confirmed the same meaning (Ibn Manzūr, 1414, 13/503; Ṭurayhī, 1996, 349/6) Persian dictionaries also have equivalents such as: similar to something, similar, a word whose meaning is not clear (Moein, 2002, 1612/2) like each other, similar ('Amīd, 2010, 910) and also means verses from the Qur'an which its meaning is not obvious to the people (Mo'in, 2002, 1612/2). In most dictionaries, including Persian and Arabic, the word "Mutashābih" has been considered as the opposite of the word "Muḥkam". Due to the fact that "Mutashābihāt" is the plural of "Mutashābih" and both words are used in the Qur'an in similar

meanings, this issue has made it more difficult to distinguish the idiomatic meaning of Mutashābihāt. To the extent that Ṭabarī quoted more than ten opinions in his commentary on the definition of these two words (Ṭabarī, 1412, 113-120/3).

According to this verse (Al-Imrān, 7), the divine verses of the Qur'an are divided into two parts in a general division:

- 1- Muḥkam verses; and those are the verses in which there are enough proofs in the word to understand them, and its meaning is so clear that there is no room for discussion and debate in it (Makarem Shirazi, 2:433) and the meaning of the verse is understood from the appearance of the word without needing any proof, like the verse: "Verily Allah will not deal unjustly with man in aught: It is man that wrongs his own soul." (Yūnus/44) And like "Allah is never unjust in the least degree." (Nisā'-40) These verses, which are referred to as "Umm al-Kitāb", are the basis of the understanding of the second category.
- 2- Mutashābih verses: In short, the Mutashābihāt are verses whose appearance does not clearly and unambiguously convey a single meaning to the reader's mind and makes him suspect the matter among different meanings (some of which may be false meanings) and the meaning cannot be understood without analogy. (Ṭabrisī, 3: 23) Like the verse: "The Hand of Allah is over their hands" (Fath/10) or "(Allah) Most Gracious is firmly established on the throne (of

authority)." (Ṭā Hā/5) And the like in them about divine attributes and actions, such as wrath, face, coming of God, His speech and etc. have been mentioned. There is no uniform definition of this word in the works of commentators. However, Mullā Ṣadrā does not provide a specific and independent definition of Mutashābihāt in his interpretive works, and apparently considers the common understanding of the audience to be sufficient. (Falahpour, 76)

However, this point is evident from the appearance of verse 7 of Al-Imrān, that the lack of accurate understanding of the meaning of the verse is one of the main characteristics of these verses. So that Rāghib Isfihānī also says: "Muḥkam has no doubt in its wording and meaning, and Mutashābih does not convey the intended meaning based on its appearance." (Rāghib Isfihānī, 1412, 1:443)

There are more than ten opinions about the meaning of this word in the Qur'an (Ṭabarī, 1412, 3/20-213), which, as a result, makes it possible to recognize examples of Mutashābih and also, a difference in the meaning of them as a proof of this perception. However, a group of commentators such as Allameh Tabataba'i have considered the similarities of the verses not in terms of the apparent meaning but in terms of the ambiguity of the meaning of the verse. According to Allameh, we do not have any conceptual limitations and closures in the Qur'an (Tabataba'i, 1995, 1/13). Some have considered the reason for this to be the implementation of thoughts and ideas and the creation of an intellectual movement in the people. (Makarem Shirazi, 437:2)

Another group, according to the hadiths, has considered the purpose of such verses to clarify the people's dire need for divine leaders and the Prophet (PBUH) and his guardians, so that people go to them based on their scientific need and to practically recognize their leadership (Huwayzī 'Arūsī, 1:313). A group is also of the opinion that the verbal statements of the Qur'an are examples of the teachings of divine wisdom, which God Almighty has lowered to the level of the common people's thoughts in order to express those teachings. And since the common people do not understand anything but sensory matters, it is inevitable all the meanings should be given to them in the form of senses and physicality. And this is where the verses that have brought up intellectual matters, especially divine attributes and transcendental matters, using empirical and sensory terms, and that is why we witness the presence of Mutashābih verses. (Allameh Tabataba'i, 1995, 3/95)

Another important debate that has been discussed in this field since ancient times is that in what way should the exact meaning of Mutashābih verses be discovered? Mullā Ṣadrā, as a scholar of the Qur'an, who considers the lofty foundation of his philosophy - transcendental wisdom - to be based on it, while quoting and criticizing the approach of Qur'an scholars, including commentators, theologians and philosophers, presents a special method for understanding these verses. In this article, an attempt will be made to analyze and explain his analysis compared to other methods, as well as the characteristics of his proposed method for understanding Mutashābih verses. Mullā Ṣadrā has presented almost the same explanations about

Muḥkam and Mutashābih topic and the analysis of commentators' guilds and their methods in understanding these verses, in the book Tafsir al-Qur'an (see: Mullā Ṣadrā, 1987, 150-175/4), Mafātīh al-Ghayb (see: Mullā Ṣadrā, 1984, 73-98) and the explanation of Uṣūl-e-Kāfī (see: Kulaynī, 3:341-352) and a few in Asfār. (See: Mullā Ṣadrā, 1981, 2:343-344)

### **The methods of the commentators in understanding Mutashābih verses**

Mullā Ṣadrā divides different approaches to Mutashābih verses into four types:

- 1- The opinion of people of appearance, jurists, Companions of Hadith, and Ḥanābilah, who tried to translate the verse with the same apparent meaning as its literal meaning, even though it is not compatible with intellectual rules. According to Mullā Ṣadrā, his belief that existence is confined to the senses was one of the reasons for the tendency to this type of interpretation of the verses. According to Mullā Ṣadrā, this group considers attributes such as being non-tangible and invisible, out of place, and the like to be attributes of non-existence, and believing in them leads to denying God (Mullā Ṣadrā, 1984, pp. 74-76). The Qur'anic understanding of these commentators is reminiscent of the opinions of Mujassamah or Mushabbahah. They were a group that considered God to be a real body, so much so that they attributed to Him blood and flesh, height, hair, and other physical characteristics (Tahanawī, 1473:2).

2- The method of some philosophers and people of thought and opinion went to extremes in the interpretation of texts. They carry every meaning contrary to the appearance and provide inner justifications for it, and due to adherence to their intellectual principles, they try to interpret the verses that are like this and translate them in a way that is in harmony with their intellectual and philosophical principles even if it is against the appearance of the verse. According to them, they were paving the way for the modification of the nature of the creatures. Some of the people of this group fueled esotericism to such an extent that they denied resurrection, physical ascension and some other Qur'anic truths (Mullā Ṣadrā, *ibid*, 86).

There was a third group that tried to solve this problem by combining the two former methods. In the verses related to divine attributes, they used the method of Ta'wīl, but in the verses related to resurrection, they remained loyal to the same appearance of the words, and like the first group, they were satisfied with the apparent meaning of the words of the verses. Mullā Ṣadrā documents this method - which is used unevenly by different groups of Qur'an scholars - to Asha'irah and some Mu'tazilite elders such as "Zamakhsharī", "Bayḍāwī", "Nayshaburi" and "Qafāl" and as an example he mentions Qafāl's statements under the honorable verse "(Allah) Most Gracious is firmly established on the throne (of authority)". The result of Qafāl's statements is that God, in order to make

His attributes known to His servants, compares His attributes to the states of great men and kings, such as having a court, sitting on a throne, the presence of ministers and soldiers around kings, and similar things. In his opinion, whenever there is talk about the throne and the like, it should be known that such things are only for the understanding of the servants; otherwise, the nature of the Almighty is pure from having a place to sit, a house to live in, or a hand to kiss and pledge allegiance to. (Mullā Ṣadrā, 2008, 264) According to Mullā Ṣadrā, defining the verses of the Qur'an based on imagination and not attaching any external truth to them is not the will of God and His Prophet, and it will lead to the opening of the door of sophistry and disobedience regarding divine attributes and Qur'anic verses. And it will ultimately make the researcher doubt in accepting matters such as physical resurrection and the state of the grave, the path, the level, heaven, hell, and such issues. (Mullā Ṣadrā, 2008, 265)

3- Mullā Ṣadrā also mentions another group that refused to speak in such matters and expressed their inability to understand it. One of the prominent figures of this group is Fakhr Razi, who writes in his book "Categories of pleasures": After examining the works of theologians and philosophers, I concluded that these methods do not solve any problems and the best way to reach the Qur'an is that to read proof verses such as "(Allah) Most Gracious is firmly established on the throne (of authority)" in the position of proving divine attributes. And in the position of negation of defects,

we should read only negative verses such as "There is nothing whatever like unto Him" (Ayman Shahadeh, 263) or Jalaluddin Khunji, who writes in "Kashf al-Asrār": "My life has ended, but I have not learned anything except that existence needs a preference to exist" and further adds: "Being in need is also a negative thing, so I have to say that my life has ended and I have not understood anything" (Mullā Ṣadrā, 2008, 263). Mullā Ṣadrā believes that the reason behind the perplexity of the fourth category of thinkers and their inability to penetrate the inner meanings of the verses is the excessive reliance of these people on the argumentative method and the contamination of their hearts with the love of the world, the desire for status and position, their efforts to be close to the kings, and other physical defects. (Mullā Ṣadrā, 2008, 264) Now that the word "Ta'wīl" has been mentioned, it is appropriate to give more explanation to our dear readers in order to get a clearer picture of Mullā Ṣadrā's method in this regard.

### Ta'wīl

The word "Ta'wīl" is used in different meanings. The first meaning is to return the word to a reference. (Farāhīdī, 1982, 358-9:8) Ibn Fāris in his "Encyclopedia of Maqāyis al-Lughah" considers the article "Awl" to have two principles: the beginning of the matter, and the end of the matter. He considered the "Ta'wīl of the word" to mean the end of the word. (Ibn Fāris, 1979, 1:162) Jawharī believes that

Ta'wīl is the interpretation of the end and of things (Jawharī, 1990, 1:1627). Some linguists such as Ibn Manzūr, Zubaydī and Ṭabarī have considered the words Ta'wīl and Tafsīr to mean the same thing. (Ibn Manzūr, 1414, 13:34; Zubaydī, 1965, 28:32; Ṭabarī, 1420, 182:3) In the works of the middle centuries of Islam, the term "Ahl Ta'wīl" refers to commentators and the word "Ta'wīl" was used to refer to books of interpretation. (Group of writers, No. 5732:14) The title of commentaries such as: Tafsir Khāzan (Bāb al-Ta'wīl fi Ma'ānī al-Tanzīl), Zamakhsharī (Al-Kashshāf), Baydāwī (Al-Kashshāf) is a witness to this claim. It can be concluded that the main meaning in "Ta'wīl" is the reference, which three meanings can be taken from it depending on whether it is the beginning of the reference or the end of it, or in terms of its truth and concept of the author.

Ibn Athīr considered the meaning of Ta'wīl to change the appearance of the word from its original meaning to another meaning. A meaning that cannot be changed if there is no reason (Ibn Athīr, 1988, 1:80)

Theologians, mystics and fundamentalists are more concerned with this meaning. Allameh Tabataba'i considers this usage to be related to the period after the revelation of the Qur'an and believes that we do not have any evidence that the Holy Qur'an means "Ta'wīl" (Allameh Tabataba'i, 1995, 41/3). Another group believes that Ta'wīl is not related to the meanings of words, but it is an objective thing that the speaker's words rely on. Now, if the word is a compositional ruling, the Ta'wīl is the expediency that caused the creation of the ruling and its legislation, and if the word is news, the Ta'wīl is the event itself. The

difference between the last type and the others is that no one knows the truth of their interpretation, except those who are firm in knowledge, who can become aware of it by God's permission and will. (Allameh Tabataba'i, 1995, 69: 3) Half of the 17 uses of the word Ta'wīl in the Qur'an are in Surah Yūsuf. In all the Ta'wīl used in this surah, the realization of a dream in the waking world is included. Therefore, it seems that what the dreamer sees in his dream is the ideal form of external events, and the relationship between those events and dreams is the same as the relationship between form and meaning (Mullā Ṣadrā, 1975, 470). In the same way, if someone understands the true inner meaning of the verse from its appearance, it is said that he has achieved the Ta'wīl of the verse. In the story of Musa and Khidr (AS), Khidr (AS) realized other facts from the appearance of the events that were not obvious to Musa (AS) and others, and he mentions these facts as the Ta'wīl of the events: "Such is the interpretation of (those things) over which thou wast unable to hold patience." (Kahf/82) This is the Ta'wīl of what you could not endure. This meaning of Ta'wīl is more important in mystical works. From the perspective of mystics, the world of existence is made up of levels and classes that are along each other. What we perceive with the five senses is its lowest order. The Qur'an also has two meanings, each of which is related to one of the levels of existence, and Ta'wīl means penetrating from the surface of the words of the Qur'an to its inner truths that correspond to the inner worlds. (Gonābadī, 1408, 13/1) "The words and letters of the Qur'an are on the book of existence" (Āmilī, 1/240, 1422)

### Who has the knowledge of Ta'wīl?

The topic of Ta'wīl of the Qur'an is not necessarily limited to Mutashābih verses, but the discussion of Ta'wīl, its nature and conditions in Mullā Ṣadrā's works is the same as the discussion about the verse 7 of surah Al-Imrān or with an explicit reference to it. Also, the titles and expressions that he uses when dividing the commentators seem to show his focus on the Ta'wīl of Mutashābih verses of the Qur'an. (As an example, see: Mullā Ṣadrā, 1987, 150-172:4) but the accuracy in the examples that he gave to explain his method shows that his view considers Mutashābih verses. This point is not without influence from his point of view about the relationship between Qur'anic truths and the deep layers of existence. In any case, who has the knowledge of Ta'wīl like the previous cases is of great disagreement between commentators. A group of Qur'anic commentators, especially Shi'a commentators, citing this holy verse and referring to "al-Rāskihūn" as "Allah", believe that in addition to God, Rāskihūn also know the Ta'wīl of Mutashābihāt. The Imami commentators, relying on the traditions quoted from the infallible imams, consider those scholars as examples of Rāskihūn in science. (Qami, 1404, 1/97, Furāt Kūfī, 1410, 629, Ayāshī, 2001, 1/163, Safī, 1415, 1/318) In one of these hadiths, Imam Ṣādiq (AS) said: "We are the Rāskihūn and we are those who know its Ta'wīl." (Kulaynī, 1986, 213/1) and in another narration under the same verse, it is said from Imam Bāqir (AS): "The Messenger of God is the best of Rāskihūn in knowledge, and God taught all knowledge of Tanzīl and Ta'wīl of the book to him and it is not possible for God to send something to him without informing him of its

interpretation. After the Prophet, his guardians are knowledgeable about everything." (Safar Qomi, 1404, 204) Another theory is that only God knows the Ta'wīl of Mutashābihāt, and those who are firm in knowledge believe in all the Qur'an even though they do not know it. It is mostly mentioned in the works of Sunni commentators. When reciting the verse in question, this group considers the endowment necessary after the word "Allah". (Ibn Wahab, 2003, 1/64; Tustari, 1423, 1/46) The Ta'wīl of the Qur'anic Mutashābihāt is not exclusive to God, and the knowledge of Mutashābihāt is also possible for other than God, and they are the ones who are referred to in the language of the Qur'an as "Rāskihūn in knowledge". Secondly; although in the first place, the imams are the examples of Rāskihūn in knowledge, but penetration into the inner meanings of the Qur'an is also possible for mystics and seekers who are the people of God and who have gone through the stages of conduct and spirituality. And as a result of austerities and spiritual retreats and appealing to the imams, they have reached the position of discovery and intuition. (Mullā Ṣadrā, 2008, 271) and for this reason, they can also be considered as Rāskihūn. (Mullā Ṣadrā, 1981, 374/6) These people can achieve a level of Ta'wīl of Qur'anic verses. (Mullā Ṣadrā, *ibid*, 2/344)

#### **Mullā Ṣadrā's method in Ta'wīl**

Mullā Ṣadrā explains his method of understanding such Mutashābih verses by proposing cosmological issues and describing the nature of the classes of the world and the relationship between them and the quality of the relationship between objects and their causes of existence. (Mullā Ṣadrā, 1987, 4/150-172) He also uses this method in

understanding the verses related to the Resurrection which are not mentioned as similar examples in most of the commentary works. This work shows that in his opinion, the scope of Ta'wīl is not limited to similar verses and this method can be used in the meaning of other verses as well. His complaint about the inattention of some commentators to the use of Ta'wīl in the verses related to resurrection and also his use of this method in understanding non-Qur'anic texts (hadiths of innocent Imams) and taking examples from them (Mullā Ṣadrā, 2008, 265) confirm this view. According to Mullā Ṣadrā's cosmology, the world of existence has a kind of longitudinal and lateral multiplicity at the same time as its inner unity. Lateral multiplicity is the multiplicity of essences in the world of existence, especially the world of matter. But the meaning of longitudinal multiplicity is to believe in multiple layers and levels of the universe that their difference is in the strength and weakness of existence. In longitudinal multiplicity, the relationship between each level of existence with higher and lower levels is causality. In this way, all beings of lower levels are affected by beings of higher levels. According to the concept of causality presented by Mullā Ṣadrā, what is in the upper world (cause) is the truth and the spirit of the lower object (effect) and this relationship continues to the highest levels of existence. Therefore, there is nothing in this world unless there is a higher order of it in the higher world. In the same way, whatever is higher in the world has examples in the world of names, and it is also in the world of absolute truth and pure unseen. (Mullā Ṣadrā, 1987, 167/4) So all that is in this world is an example and a template for



the world of carnal spirits and they are also a template for the world of abstract intellectual spirits and that is also a template for the fixed nobles in the world of divine knowledge. (Mullā Ṣadrā, 2008, 282) In this way, Mullā Ṣadrā's interpretive view of the Qur'anic verses paves the way from the conceptualization of the verses to their ontology, and the concepts used in the verses are considered references to other layers of the world of existence. The result of this theory is that when interpreting the Qur'anic verses absolutely and Mutashābih verses in particular, this longitude system should be considered by the interpreter and the discussed verses should be interpreted according to it.

### Examples of Mullā Ṣadrā's Ta'wīl

#### A) Ta'wīl of words

According to Mullā Ṣadrā, the relationship mentioned in the previous lines exists between different dimensions of human existence such as body, animal soul, human soul, heart and so on. The heart is a physical example and a template for an animal soul and an animal soul is a template for the presence of a human soul, and it, in turn, is the place of stability of the soul and the essence of the divine light, which is the Caliph of God in the world. And therefore it can be said that the heart is an example and the place of manifestation and revelation of the divine throne because 'Arsh is also the place of divine names. In the same way, the example of a seat in the world of matter is the human chest, which has a natural soul inside that rules the sky of natural forces and the material earth of the body. Again, in the same way, the interior of the natural soul is the animal soul, which is the seat of various powers of the speaking soul, such as the powers of evidence and

motivation. Mullā Ṣadrā's conclusion from the word "House of Allah" is that the house of Ka'ba that was created to be a place of worship for the servants, and therefore it is a place for the intuition of God's special servants. From this point of view, calling it as God's house is not allowed, but it is a truth, but not in terms of sensory truth, but reasonable truth, and basically, no place can be a real temple and a real place for God's worship in terms of what is tangible and material. (Mullā Ṣadrā, 1984, 79) Mullā Ṣadrā interprets the word "Trust" mentioned in verse 72 of Surah Aḥzāb to the special and different existence of man (Mullā Ṣadrā, 1996, 361) and in another place, he considers "Shams" and "Qamar" mentioned in Surah Yā Sīn as examples of intellect and soul. Just as the sun is a sign of day and the moon is a sign of night, he also considers reason as a sign of the day of the world of power and the soul as a sign of the night of the realm of the kingdom. (Mullā Ṣadrā, ibid, 5/110) The creatures of this world are mirrors through which one can perceive the conditions of the creatures of the upper worlds.

#### B) Ta'wīl of Muqatta'āt

Mullā Ṣadrā believes that Muqatta'āt i.e. the disconnected letters are not devoid of meaning and in this regard he cites the famous hadith of Imam Ali (AS) that: "Each book has special and selected sections, and the special section of the Qur'an is Muqatta'āt." (Majlisī, 1403, 88/11)

According to this theory, "Abjad" letters are in front of the levels of beings. Letter "A" in Abjad, refers to the first source because it is the beginning of primes and the beginning of individuality and the beginning of numbers. Therefore, B in Abjad refers to the world of reason, and it is said

that creatures appear because of "B" in Bismillāh. In this regard, the word "J" in Abjad means the general breath and the word "D" means the world of nature. (Mullā Ṣadrā, 1981, 56) He also believes about the disconnected letters and their meanings: the meaning of "Alif Lām Mīm<sup>1</sup>" is: an oath by the first essence of the Almighty and the owner of affairs and creation, and the meaning of "Alif Lām Mīm Rā<sup>2</sup>" is an oath by the first Almighty, who is the owner of affairs and creation, the one who is both the first and the last, the one who is both the origin and the end of things. (Mullā Ṣadrā, 1987, pp. 119-120/1)

In Mullā Ṣadrā's intellectual system, the interpreter understands with the help of his inner insight, which is the result of purifying the inner self and fighting with carnal desires and reaching the position of abstraction. That is why he considers the understanding of the meaning of disconnected letters not as a result of scientific discussion, but as a result of self-cultivation and detachment from the world, and as one of the first signs of inner cultivation from worldly attachments. He writes about this: "Those who reached the position of separation from the world and the veils were removed from their faces and the dust of ignorance and darkness of blindness was removed from their eyes, they will see the truth of these letters with their inner insight." Then he continues: "The first sign of those who rose from this low place (the world) and got rid of the veils that those who are busy with the world are trapped in is that they will understand the meaning

of the disconnected letters and how they are revealed in the Qur'an." (Mullā Ṣadrā, 1984, p. 16)

### C) Ta'wīl of narrations

In addition to Qur'anic verses and words, Mullā Ṣadrā also uses his method in making sense of hadiths. He believes that the words of the innocent Imams (AS) have the same appearance and inner meaning as the Qur'anic verses and interpretation. Because an innocent human being is a perfect human being who has experienced all levels and degrees of existence and is a copy of the world of existence, and just as his holy existence has an exterior and an interior. His appearance on the earth and among people and his interior is in the throne of God. For this reason, his speech also has an appearance and an interior, and each interior has another interior (Mullā Ṣadrā, 1991, 170/1). For example, we see in interpreting the following prophetic narration: "The punishment of the unbeliever in his grave is such that 99 demons dominate him. Do you know what demon is? 99 dragons, each of which has 9 heads, will bite the unbeliever and the sinner until the Day of Judgment, lick him with their tongue, and inject poison into his body." (Majlisī, 1403, 6/218)

Mullā Ṣadrā says that it is not out of two situations, either believes in the appearance of the narration or interpret it according to the mentioned principles and in such a way that you don't deny the appearance of the narration. And be careful not to be one of the third groups who consider these matters to be imaginations and speculations to deceive the common people or those who define these matters with a biased view on general philosophical concepts that cannot be summed up with appearances. (Mullā Ṣadrā, 1984, 89)

<sup>1</sup> الم

<sup>2</sup> المر

He considers the mentioned snakes to be the manifestation of the infidel's sensual desires that were with him even before his death, and these snakes, which are not separate from the infidel's essence, is not visible in this world except to the inner vision, but it will be visible to everyone after death and the veils are drawn back. He considers the origin of this snake to be the love of the world, and the secret of its multiplicity is due to the number of negative moral qualities that stem from the love of the world, such as greed, envy, malice, and hypocrisy. He also considers the bites of snakes to be the appearance of the effects of these desires in the world, and in the world of meaning, every time a sinful person commits a sin due to the presence of these desires, he will be bitten by a snake. (Mullā Ṣadrā, 1984, 91) He interpreted the physical torments of resurrection and purgatory appropriately. An interpretation in which there is no need to deny the appearance. As an example, he considers measure to mean a tool and a means of measurement, but he does not consider its form to be necessarily material, rather he believes that everything has its own means of measurement. For example, the science of syntax is the measure of speech and the science of logic is the measure of thinking and reasoning. The first shows the rules of correct speaking and the second shows the criteria of correct thinking. The amount of actions should also be the correct form, and since the actions of a perfect human being are the correct form of actions, the actions of humans will be measured by the actions of perfect humans, i.e. the prophets. (Mullā Ṣadrā, 1981, 9/300) The measure of the hereafter is something by which the facts of things

are revealed as they are, so it can be said that the divine teachings contained in the divine verses and statements of the prophets are a good tool for distinguishing right and wrong actions and beliefs (ibid). And this is why Imam Ṣādiq (AS) said: "The actions of prophets and saints are the criterion to measure people." (Ṣadūq, 74) and we read in the prayer of Amir al-Mu'minin: "Peace be upon the scale of deeds." (Majlisī, 1403, 330/97)

#### **A necessary condition for Ta'wīl**

Mullā Ṣadrā's interpretive approach, especially when it comes to Mutashābih verses and references in the Qur'an to the names and attributes, is a solid understanding of his philosophical-mystical foundations. Unlike many commentators who limit themselves to referring to glossaries or hadiths in their interpretations, Mullā Ṣadrā considers a deep understanding of the world and its levels as the basis of his interpretation. As mentioned earlier, the belief in the unity of existence, the levels of existence and the longitudinal relationship between those levels opens the way to the understanding of Mullā Ṣadrā from the mentioned verses. The belief in the internality of the higher levels of existence compared to the lower levels and the appearance of the lower levels compared to the higher levels, which was mentioned before Mullā Ṣadrā in Ibn Arabī's works (Ibn Arabī, 2001, 1/233) also play an important role in Mullā Ṣadrā's approach to understanding the interpretation of verses. Examining interpretations such as Rūh al-Bayān Brosavi, who considers the hand of God in verse 7 of Surah Faṭḥ to be the hand of the Prophet, in this respect that the prophet is a mirror of the perfect manifestation

of God in the world (Haqqī Bursawī, 9/20) and I'jāz al-Bayān Qunawī, in which according to the famous hadith says: "Each verse has zahr, batn, had and matla'" interprets each word and verse first with the external language, then the inner language, and then beyond the internal language, which is the language of the Ḥadd. (Qūnawī, 2002, 128) And there are other Qur'anic mystical works, confirming the closeness of Mullā Ṣadrā's exegetical methods with more mystical interpretations.

In addition to the principles of confirmation which are based on Ṣadrā's philosophical and mystical system, inner purity is also one of the necessary conditions for interpreting the Qur'an in his opinion. He does not consider it possible for everyone to penetrate the interpretation of the Qur'an, but the way to do it is deep intellectual reflection along with purifying the inner self and referring to the Ahl al-Bayt of Wilāyat and receiving the light of their teachings (Mullā Ṣadrā, 1984, 81). Mullā Ṣadrā considers the outward and inward of the Qur'an in the same line and he believes that entering the field of Mutashābih verses of the Qur'an should not be in such a way that it leads to the removal of the appearance of the verses. And as a rule, he considers the compatibility between the interpretation and the apparent meaning to be a condition for the authenticity of the revelation and the interpretation resulting from it. (Mullā Ṣadrā, 1984, 87) His view is that Ta'wīl is not only the opposite of Tafsīr, but it is a deeper order and along with it. But the point is that according to the Qur'anic verses and definite principles of belief; God's intention for the revelation of such verses is not only the literal appearance

and the understanding of this matter is such that we do not fall into the extremes of rationality and do not remain bound by appearances.

According to Mullā Ṣadrā, understanding the Ta'wīl of the verses, in addition to being surrounded by rational sciences, beliefs and proofs, requires a pure spirit that is free from carnal desires and attachments. So a person, including Rāskihūn, becomes knowledgeable and worthy of understanding the inner meaning of the Qur'an. (Mullā Ṣadrā, 2008, 274) He mentions the Ash'arites method, which in the interpretation of the verses say for "God's hand" (Fath, 10) and "God's eye" (Hūd, 37) and says that God has really a hand, but without a form, and that God has an eye, but without a form (Ash'arites, 2009, 67). He considers their method to be superior to the extreme interpretation method of the philosophers, and basically considers the people of appearances to be more people of salvation than the extreme philosophers because at least they did not negate the appearance of the Qur'an to prove their desired inner meaning. He not only does not consider Ta'wīl of the Qur'an as opposed to Tafsīr, but considers it to be the completion of Tafsīr and advises those who cannot understand its true inner meaning to translate the verse according to its true meaning and leave its knowledge to his people. (Mullā Ṣadrā, ibid, 83) Examining interpretations such as Ruḥ al-Bayān Brosavi, I'jāz al-Bayān Qunawī, Qur'anic works of Ibn Arabī, etc. tells about the closeness of Mullā Ṣadrā's interpretative method with commentators who had mystical tendencies.

### Conclusion

The conclusion of the discussion is that, from the point of view of Mullā

Ṣadrā, firstly, although the science of Ta'wīl is in God's possession, but due to divine grace, some servants have the ability to achieve it. In the first stage, these people are innocent Imams, and in the next stages, they are people who, in addition to having scientific conditions, have inner purity and have passed the stages of heart cultivation and are freed from worldly attachments. According to Mullā Ṣadrā, the mechanism of Ta'wīl of Mutashābih verses of the Qur'an is based on his worldview. In his intellectual system, the world is made up of many layers of existence in the unity it has. The relationship between these layers is the relationship of existential causality and in other words the relationship of form and meaning. Therefore, the higher layer is the meaning and the inner layer of the lower layer and the lower layer is the face and appearance of the higher layer because the verses of the Qur'an have been revealed for guidance of all human beings in all times. Naturally, it should be in such a way that at any time the meditative people can understand the secrets of the world through it. The requirement for this is that the verses are secret and multi-layered. Only those who have the above-mentioned conditions can penetrate into the interior of the verses to find out the secrets of existence. Therefore, the interpreter of the Qur'an must have a high level of respect for the truths of existence and pay attention to the external meaning of the verses in order to penetrate into their inner meanings. This is not from the category of understanding, it is a matter of the soul and spirit, and it will be provided through inner conduct. According to Mullā Ṣadrā, since the infallible imams (AS) were the most

successful people during the stages of spiritual conduct, the science of Ta'wīl is in their hands in the first place, and in the next stage, it is in the hands of people who have reached the stages of spiritual perfection. Examining the method of Ta'wīl of verses in the works of mystics indicates that Mullā Ṣadrā was influenced by them. In Ṣadrā's system of thought, Ta'wīl is not in conflict with Tafsīr, but is in harmony with it because these two explain two aspects of a single truth.

### References

- The Holy Qur'an.
- Amilī, Sayed Haider (1422 AH), *Tafsīr al-Muhīt al-Azam wa Bahr al-Khadm*, Research by Mousavi Tabrizi, Tehran; Ministry of Islamic Guidance Printing and Publishing Organization, third edition.
- Ibn Athīr Jazarī, Mubārak Ibn Muhammad (1988), *Al-Nihāya fī Gharīb al-Hadīth wal-Athar*, Qom: Ismailian Press Institute, 1367
- Ibn Arabī, Mohy al-Din (2001), *Tafsir of Ibn Arabi*, Research: Abd al-Wareth Muhammad Ali, Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiya.
- Ibn Fāris, Abul Hasan Ahmad (1979), *Mu'jam Maqāyīs al-Lughah*, Research by Mahmoud Abdulsalam Haroun, Beirut: Dar al-Fikr.
- Ibn Manzūr, Muhammad Bin Mukrim (1414 AH), *Lisān al-Arab*, Beirut: Dar Sadir, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition.
- Ibn Wahab Abdullah (2003), *Tafsīr al-Qur'an Min al-Jāmi'*, Research: Morānī, Germany: Dar al-Gharb al-Islami, first edition.
- Abu Ubaidah, Mu'ammār bin Muthanā (1988), *Majāz al-Qur'an*, with the efforts of Mohammad Fouad Sezgin, Cairo: Al-Khanji Library.

- Ash'arī, Abul Hasan Ali (2009), *Al-Ibānqh fi al-Usul al-Diānah*, Cairo: School of Religious Culture.
- Tustarī, Sahl bin Abdullah (1423 AH), *Tafsīr al-Tustarī*, Research by 'Uyoun al-Soud, Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah.
- Tahānawī, Mohammad Ali (1996), *Kashāf Istilāhāt 'Ulūm wal-Funūn*, Lebanon Publishing House, Nasherūn, first edition.
- Jawharī, Ismail bin Hammād (1990), *Al-Sihāh*, Research: Ahmed Abd al-Ghafoor, Beirut: Dar al-Ilm lil-Malā'īn.
- Haqī Bursawī, Ismail (nd), *Tafsīr Rūh al-Bayān*, Beirut: Dar al-Fakr.
- Rāghib Esfahānī, Hossein bin Muhammad (1412 HA), *Al-Mufardāt fī Gharīb al-Qur'an*, Research: Safwan al-Davoudī, Damascus: Dar al-Qalam, first edition.
- Zubaidī, Mortadā (1965), *Tāj al-'Arūs fī Sharh al-Qāmūs*, Beirut: Dar al-Hidāya.
- Shirazi (Mulāsadrā), Sadr al-Din (1981), *Al-Hikmat al-Muta'ālīyah fī al-Asfār al-Aqlīya al-Arba'*, Beirut: Dar 'Ihyā al-Turāth al-'Arabi, third edition.
- Shirazi (Mulāsadrā), Sadr al-Din (1981), *Asrār al-Āyāt*, edited by Khajawī, Tehran: Iranian Wisdom and Philosophy Association, first edition.
- Shirazi (Mulāsadrā), Sadr al-Din (1975), *Al-Mabda' wal-Ma'ād*, Tehran: Iranian Society of Wisdom and Philosophy, first edition.
- Shirazi (Mulāsadrā), Sadr al-Din (1987), *Tafsīr al-Qur'an al-Karīm*, Researched by Mohammad Khajawī, Qom: Bidar, second edition.
- Shirazi (Mulāsadrā), Sadr al-Din (2017), *Three Philosophical Treatises*, edited by Ashtiani, Qom: Islamic Propagation Office, third edition.
- Shirazi (Mulāsadrā), Sadr al-Din (1991), *Commentary on Usul al-Kafi*, Edited by Khajawī, Tehran: Institute of Cultural Studies and Research, first edition.
- Shirazi (Mulāsadrā), Sadr al-Din (1996), *Collection of Philosophical Treatises of Sadr al-Mutalihīn*, Research: Najī Esfahani, Tehran: Hekmat, first edition.
- Shirazi (Mulāsadrā), Sadr al-Din (1984), *Mafātīh al-Ghaib*, Qom: Cultural Research Institute, first edition.
- Sadūq, Muhammad Ibn Ali Ibn Bābiwayh (1414 AH), *Beliefs of the Imamiyyah*, Qom: Congress of Sheikh Mofid, second edition.
- Saffār Qomī, Muhammad bin Hassan (1404 AH), *Basā'ir al-Darajāt*, Qom: Ayatollah Mar'ashi's Library, second edition.
- Tabātabā'ī (Allameh), Mohammad Hossein (1995), *Al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'an* [Persian translation: Mousavi Hamdani, Qom: Islamic Publications Office, fifth edition.
- Tabrisī, Fadl bin Hassan (2010), *Majma' al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'an*, Tehran: Farahani Publications, first edition.
- Tabarī, Muhammad bin Jarīr (1420 AH), *Jāmi' al-Bayān fī Ta'wīl al-Qur'an*, Research: Muhammad Shaker, Al-Risāla Institute, first edition.
- Turayhī, Fakhreddin (1996), *Majma' Al-Bahrain*, Research: Hosseini Ashkouri, Tehran: Mortazavi.
- Arsī Huwayzī, 'Abd Ali (1415 AH), *Tafsīr Noor al-Thaqalain*, Qom: Ismailian, 4th edition.
- Amid, Hassan (2009), *Persian Dictionary*, Qom: Rah Roshd.
- Ayāshī, Muhammad bin Masoud (1380 AH), *Tafsīr al-'Ayāshī*, Research: Rasouli Mahalati, Tehran: Al-Matba'at al-'Ilmiyah, first edition.
- Faker Meybodi, Mohammad (2013), "What is Muhkam and Mutashābih from the perspective of Allameh

- Tabatabai,” *Ma’rifat* No. 203, November.
- Farāhīdī, Khalil bin Ahmad (1982), *Al-’Ayn*, Research: Mehdi Makhzoumi and Ebrahim Sameraei, Baghdad.
- Fayd Kāshānī, Mohammad Bin Shah Mortadā (1415 AH), *Tafsir al-Safi*, Research: Hossein Alami, Tehran: Sadr Library.
- Qomī, Ali Ibn Ibrahim (1404 AH), *Tafsir al-Qomī*, Research: Musawi Al-Jaza’irī, Tayyeb, Qom: Dar al-Kitab, 3rd edition.
- Qūnawī, Sadr al-Din Muhammad (2002), *’Ijāz al-Bayan fī Tafsir Umm al-Qur’an*, Research: Ashtiani, Qom: Boostan-e Ketab, first edition.
- Kulaynī, Muhammad bin Ya’qūb (1986), *Al-Kāfī*, Tehran: Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyah, 4th edition.
- Kūfī, Furāt Ibn Ibrahim (1410 AH), *Tafsīr Furāt al-Kūfī*, Tehran: Ministry of Islamic Guidance, first edition.
- Gonabadi, Sultan Muhammad (1408 AH), *Bayān Al-Sa’āda fī Maqāmāt Al-’Ibāda*, Beirut: Al-’A’lamī Publishing House, second edition.
- A Group of Authors (2015), *Islamic Encyclopaedia*, under the supervision of Sayed Mohammad Kazem Mousavi Bojnordi, Tehran: Center of Islamic Encyclopaedia.
- Majlisī, Mohammad Bāqir (1403 AH), *Bihār al-Anwār*, Beirut: Dar ‘Ihyā’ al-Turāth Al-Arabi, second edition.
- Moein, Mohammad (2011), *Persian Dictionary*, Tehran: New Way Book.
- Makarem Shirazi, Nasser and a group of authors (1995), *The Commentary of Nemooneh*, Tehran: Dar al-Kutb al-Islamiya, first edition.
- Najarzadegan, Fathullah (2008), *Comparative Study of the Foundations of Qur’an Interpretation in the Perspective of Fariqain (Shi’a and Sunni)*, Tehran: Samt, 1st Edition.
- Ayman Shihadeh (2006), *The Teleological Ethics of Fakhr al-Din al-Razi*, Boston: Brill.

## COPYRIGHTS



© 2022 by the authors. Licensee PNU, Tehran, Iran. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY4.0) (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>)



پژوهشگاه علوم انسانی و مطالعات فرهنگی  
پرتال جامع علوم انسانی