

Ramaḍān 1437: Scholars and Islamic institutions around the world in Masjids, over the airwaves, and even through social media sought to enlighten the ummah regarding the numerous historical events associated with this month. On the 17<sup>th</sup> of Ramaḍān they shed light on the incidents of Badr expounding at great length the virtues of the Noble Companions ﷺ who participated in this decisive battle. The 17<sup>th</sup> of Ramaḍān also saw the demise of the honourable Mother of the Believers Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah ؓ; and the dutiful sons of *Umm al-Mu’minīn* recounted her virtues, nobility and status in the eyes of Allah, His Nabī ﷺ, and ummah at large. It came as no surprise when a faction took particular offense to the virtues of Umm al-Mu’minīn being broadcasted on such a large scale, more so when this effort sat in stark contrast with their own activities for the day. The Shi’ah have always harboured rancour and hatred for Sayyidah Umm al-Mu’minīn ‘Ā’ishah ؓ and in recent years they have taken to joyous celebration on the 17<sup>th</sup> Ramadan, which is the date of our beloved mothers demise; hurling shameless heart-shattering abuses, curses, and profanities at her. Yes, so it came as no surprise that they would be offended by the proclamation of her merit and virtues.

Surprising though was the counteraction of certain Shī’ah laymen who took it upon themselves – despite their constant portrayal of being advocates for unity – to begin circulating long refuted Shī’ah propagandist literature sourced directly from the internet. The article was a poor attempt to rob Umm al-Mu’minīn Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah ؓ of the virtue she shares with her co-wives in the verse:

النَّبِيُّ أَوْلَىٰ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ مِنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ ۖ وَأَزْوَاجُهُ أُمَّهَاتُهُمْ

The Prophet is more worthy of the believers than themselves, and his wives are [in the position of] their mothers. (Ahzab: 6)

Sadly, he did not only trample upon the honour of Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah ؓ contained in this verse but brazenly trampled upon the honour of all the Ummahāt al-Mu’minīn, even if they may be from those whom the Shī’ah are pleased with, such as Sayyidah Khadījah ؓ, Ummī Salamah ؓ and so on.

The Shī’ah claim that reference to the spouses of Nabī ﷺ as “Mothers of the Believers” served no purpose other than to indicate that it is unlawful for the ummah to marry the wives of the Nabī ﷺ after him, and carries no other merit or significance whatsoever. The Shī’ah propagandist presented a number of half quotes from a range of Sunnī Tafsirs which served his agenda and deliberately omitted that which was against it. He haughtily mocks the Sunnī deduction from this verse, namely that the pure spouses are deserving of the same love, honour, and veneration that is due to one’s biological mother. He then states:

The reality is that there exists no evidence from the blessed tongue of the Prophet ﷺ nor do we have an authentic tradition that would suggest the verse relates to venerating the wives of the Prophet ﷺ on account of their being the Mothers of the Believers... if it were true then men and women would have to venerate them but in *Ṭabaqāt Ibn Sa’d*, ‘Ā’ishah denied being the mother of women...

Had he said that he did not find any tradition or come across it as yet, then perhaps one could have said that this was a misconception that arose on his part because of insufficient research but when he said, “there exists no evidence... nor do we have an authentic tradition,” asserting the inexistence of such narrations, it made him guilty of deceit and outright falsehood.

He also forwarded the narration of Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah ﷺ found in *Ṭabaqāt Ibn Sa’d*, wherein it is reported that she herself negated being the Mother of the Believing women and was only a mother to the Believing men, thus drawing support from this narration for their twisted hypothesis.

## Response

The verse in question:

النَّبِيُّ أَوْلَىٰ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ مِنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ ۖ وَأَزْوَاجُهُ أُمَّهَاتُهُمْ

The Prophet is more worthy of the believers than themselves, and his wives are [in the position of] their mothers. (Ahzab: 6)

This verse is *Muhkam* (clear in its purport and not ambiguous in any way), yet the Shi’i propagandist claims that all it seeks to convey is that marriage to the noble consorts of the Nabī ﷺ is prohibited on account of their relationship being akin to the relationship of a mother, and that it contains no indication or even inference that one ought to venerate them or respect them as such.

The Master ﷺ has said in a tradition as reported by Sayyidunā ‘Alī ﷺ:

كما روى أبو داود (2278) عَنْ عَلِيٍّ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَنَّهُ قَالَ: (الْحَالَةُ بِمَنْزِلَةِ الْأُمِّ)

The maternal aunt holds the same status as the mother.

The purpose of this narration is obviously not to indicate mere prohibition of marriage but to highlight the right of the maternal aunt, that she is deserving of the same respect and reverence as one’s own biological mother. However it is quite possible that the Shī’ah will deny the virtue of the maternal aunt as well, and say that this narration only seeks to announce the law of marriage and no such veneration is due to her.

Prohibition of marrying the wives of the Nabī ﷺ had already been emphatically proven and were these verses meant to emphasise the previous decree then it would have done so categorically and insistently as is the case with zakāt. Zakāt was made incumbent in the Qur’ān but when its importance needed to be emphasised then Allah stressed upon its observance to such an extent that severe punishment was also mentioned for failing to discharge it.

Nonetheless the impression created by the Shī’ah is that all Sunnī Tafsīr literature attest to the same and thus their view is supported by our own commentaries — a farce which we will expose shortly. Had the author of this piece, and the forwarder too at that, carried out a more comprehensive analysis of either the Sunnī or Shī’ī ḥadīth and tafsīr compilations, he would have been ashamed at traipsing his pride in disrespecting **ALL** the Mothers of the Believers. His rancour and hatred for Umm al-Mu’minīn ‘Ā’ishah ﷺ would be expected but does he, as a Shī’ī, know the status of Umm al-Mu’minīn Ummī Salamah ﷺ — not only according to the Ahl al-Sunnah but in the eyes of the Ahl al-Bayt and Shī’ah? Immediately after the narration from Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah in Suyuti’s *Durr al-Manthūr* the following narration is mentioned:

واخرج ابن سعد عن ام سلمة قالت انا ام الرجال منكم و النساء

Ummi Salamah said: "I am the Mother of the men amongst you and the women." (*Ṭabaqāt al-Kabīr* 8/65)

A virtue they would deny on account of their own warped understanding.

We would ask at this juncture: Why would a devotee of the Ahl al-Bayt ignore the narration of Umm al-Mu'minīn Ummī Salamah ؓ, who was trusted by Sayyidunā 'Alī ؓ to the extent that he left his writing in her care when he departed for Kūfah, as did Imam Ḥusayn ؓ when he left for Karbalā' (as recorded in the books of the Shī'ah) and instead insist on quoting only the narration of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah ؓ, whom they regard as an enemy of the Ahl al-Bayt (Allah forbid).

We will now examine the commentaries of the Ahl al-Sunnah regarding this verse, which will reveal the deceptive half-quoting tactics of the Shī'ah.

### Sunnī Tafsīrs

#### 1. Tafsīr Qurṭubī:

وأزواجه أمهاتهم شرف الله تعالى أزواج نبيه صلى الله عليه وسلم بأن جعلهن أمهات المؤمنين ; أي في وجوب التعظيم والمبرة والإجلال وحرمة النكاح على الرجال

And his wives (i.e. wives of the Prophet) are their mothers (i.e. mothers of believers). Allah venerated the wives of His Prophet ؓ by giving them the status of Mothers of Believers, i.e. to be respected and venerated and the prohibition of re-marrying. (vol.14, p.123)

#### 2. Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr:

وقوله : ( وأزواجه أمهاتهم ) أي : في الحرمة والاحترام ، والإكرام والتوقير والإعظام ، ولكن لا تجوز الخلوة بهن ، ولا ينتشر التحريم إلى بناتهن وأخواتهن بالإجماع

(and his wives are their mothers.) i.e. in terms of prohibition (of marriage), and in terms of honour, respect and veneration, it is not permissible for them to be alone with them, and the prohibition of marriage to them does not extend to their daughters and sisters, according to scholarly consensus. (vol. 6, p. 380)

#### 3. Tafsīr Faḥ al-Qadīr:

وأزواجه أمهاتهم أي : مثل أمهاتهم في الحكم بالتحريم ومنزلات منزلتهن في استحقاق التعظيم فلا يحل لأحد أن يتزوج بواحدة منهن كما لا يحل له أن يتزوج بأمه ، فهذه الأمومة مختصة بتحريم النكاح لهن وبالتعظيم لجنابهن

(And his wives are their mothers) means: they are like their mothers in the ruling of prohibition of marriage, and they share the station of deserving treatment of grandeur, so it is not permissible for anyone to marry anyone of them, just like it is impermissible for them to

marry their mothers. Thus this motherhood is about forbidding marriage with them and about respecting/venerating them.

#### 4. *Tafsīr al-Baydhāwī*:

منزلات منزلتهن في التحريم واستحقاق التعظيم وأزواجه أمهاتهم

“And his wives are their mothers” means they share the station of prohibition in marriage and deserving treatment of grandeur. (vol. 1, p. 364)

#### 5. *Tafsīr Rūḥ al-Ma’ānī*:

وأزواجه أمهاتهم أي منزلات منزلة أمهاتهم في تحريم النكاح وإستحقاق التعظيم

“And his wives are their mothers” means they share the station of mothers in the prohibition of marriage and the deservedness of respect. (vol. 21, p. 151)

#### 6. *Tafsīr al-Lubāb*:

وأزواجه أمهاتهم أي مثل أمهاتهم وهو أب لهم وهن أمهات المؤمنين في تعظيم حقهن وتحريم نكاحهن

“And his wives are their mothers” means they are like mothers to them (i.e. the believers) and he (i.e. the Prophet ﷺ) is their father and they are the mothers of the believers in deserving respect and honour and prohibition of marriage with them. (vol. 13, p. 52)

Yet even after having read the commentaries of the Sunnī scholars and having become acquainted with the true meaning of “Mothers of the Believers”, it is possible that a Shī’ah may claim that Sunnī Tafsīrs have no credibility in their eyes and thus has no bearing on their belief. Therefore we now present to you the commentaries of both classical and contemporary Shī’ī scholars. We can then once and for all conclude that this verse does indeed contain special virtue for the blessed wives of the Nabī ﷺ and the reality is not as present day Shī’ī propagandists would have us believe.

## Shī’ī Tafsīrs

### 1. *Tafsīr al-Mizān* of Ayatollah al-Ṭabaṭabā’ī:

وقوله: (وأزواجه أمهاتهم) جعل تشريعي أي انهن منهم بمنزلة أمهاتهم في وجوب تعظيمهن وحرمة نكاحهن بعد النبي صلى

الله عليه وآله وسلم

(and his wives are their mothers). This is the Sharia ruling i.e. his wives are to them like their mothers, and by necessity they (i.e. the wives of the Prophet) have to be honoured and are not allowed to be taken as wives after the Prophet ﷺ. (vol. 16, p. 288)

2. *Tafsīr al-Ṣāfi* of the renowned Muḥsin al-Fayd al-Kāshānī, who is also the author of *al-Wāfi* — one of the eight canonical works of Shī‘ī law:

وَأزوجه أمهاتهم منزلات منزلتهن في التحريم مطلقا وفي استحقاق التعظيم

(And his wives are their mothers) means they share the station of prohibition in marriage and deserving treatment of grandeur. (vol. 4, p. 168)

3. *Tafsīr Namunah/al-Amthal Fī Tafsīr al-Qur’ān* (written by Ayatollah Naṣer Makarem Shirāzī and other researchers):

در اینجا سؤال مطرح است و آن اینکه آیا تعبیر ((ازواجه امهاتهم)) ((همسران پیامبر مادران مؤمنین محسوب می شوند)) با چیزی که در چند آیه قبل گذشت تضاد ندارد؟ زیرا در آنجا می فرماید: ((کسانی که گاهی همسرانشان را بمنزله مادر خود قرار می دهند، سخن باطلی می گویند، مادر آنها فقط کسی است که از او متولد شده اند)) با این حال چگونه همسران پیامبر که مسلمانان از آنان متولد نشده اند مادر محسوب می شوند؟ در پاسخ این سؤال باید به این نکته توجه کرد که خطاب مادر به يك زن یا باید از نظر جسمانی باشد یا روحانی، اما از نظر جسمانی تنها در صورتی این معنی واقعیت دارد که انسان از او متولد شده باشد، و این همان است که در آیات پیشین آمده که مادر جسمانی انسان تنها کسی است که از او متولد شده است، و اما پدر یا مادر روحانی کسی است که بکنوع حق معنوی بر او داشته باشد، همچون پیامبر (صلی الله علیه و آله و سلم) که پدر روحانی امت محسوب می شود، و هم به خاطر او همسرانش احترام مادر را دارند.

A question arises here that isn't the explanation of the verse (and his wives are their mothers) against the verses mentioned before. Because there it is mentioned, "Those who declare their wives as their mothers, and in fact they use false words, their mothers are only the ones who bore them." In this situation, how can the wives of the Prophet (peace be upon him) be considered the mothers of the believers. This point should be noted in answering the question at hand that addressing a woman as mother is either due to biological relation, or spiritual relation. This meaning could be only in the case of biological relation, and this is the same thing which is mentioned in the earlier verses, that a person's biological mother is only the one who bore him. But the spiritual mother and father are those who have a kind of special right over them, as the Prophet (peace be upon him) is considered the spiritual father of the nation, and due to him, his wives hold the respect which a mother holds. (vol. 17, p. 180)

It is abundantly clear that this verse contains a great merit for the beloved consorts of Nabī ﷺ, a fact which cannot be denied. The virtue of the Ummahāt al-Mu'minīn being so glaringly evident in this verse greatly disturbed Shī‘ī scholar Sa'd ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Qummī, who sought to exclude Umm al-Mu'minīn 'Ā'ishah from the merit that this verse expounds by concocting a whimsical tale of having sought guidance from the Absent Imām himself. It is recorded in *Tafsir Nur al-Thaqalayn*:

عن القائم (عليه السلام) انه سئل عن معنى الطلاق الذي فوض رسول الله (صلى الله عليه وآله) حكمه إلى أمير المؤمنين (عليه السلام)؟ قال: إن الله تقدس اسمه عظم شأن نساء النبي (صلى الله عليه وآله) فخصهن بشرف الأمهات، فقال رسول الله (صلى الله عليه وآله): يا أبا الحسن إن هذا الشرف باق ما دمن على الطاعة فأيتها عصت الله بعدي بالخروج عليك فأطلقها في الأزواج، وأسقطها من تشرف الأمهات ومن شرف أمومة المؤمنين

It is narrated from Imā al-Qā'im that he was asked about the right of divorce, That the Messenger of Allah ﷺ left it at the discretion of Amīr al-Mu'minīn (i.e. 'Alī)?" He replied: "The Almighty Allah, hallowed be His name, gave an exalted status to the wives of the Prophet and **gave them the honour of being the mothers of the faithful**. Thus the Messenger of Allah ﷺ told Amīr al-Mu'minīn: 'O Abū al-Ḥasan, this status is valid for them till they remain in the obedience of the Almighty Allah. So whoever of them disobeys Allah and after that me, comes out in armed confrontation against you, remove her from my wife-hood and **take away her status of Mother of the faithful.**" (vol. 5, p. 372)

The fairy tale of the right to divorce having been handed to Sayyidunā 'Alī ﷺ aside, the Final Imām too acknowledged that this verse contains merit and virtue for the blessed wives of Nabī ﷺ, "The Almighty Allah, hallowed be His name, gave an exalted status to the wives of the Prophet and gave them the honour of being the mothers of the faithful."

A Shī'ah might resign and admit that the verse does contain merit and immense virtue for the wives in general but he will not be willing to accept that Umm al-Mu'minīn 'Ā'ishah ﷺ is included in it, and rather believe that Sayyidunā 'Alī ﷺ has excluded her from this virtue on account of her misdeeds, since he had the right to divorce her as the narration of *Nur al-Thaqalayn* alleges. Shifting the goal posts when backed into a corner is a special Shī'ī trait but nevertheless in response we would say: While this narration might seemingly be against Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah ﷺ, her inclusion in this virtue is proven by the word of the greatest of the twelve Imāms, and the father of the A'imma, Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib. *Nahj al-Balāghah* mentions the statement of Sayyidunā 'Alī ﷺ after the Battle of Jamal regarding Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah ﷺ:

ولها بعد حرمتها الاولى والحساب على الله

She has the same respect afterwards as she had earlier, and the accountability is on Allah to take. *Nahj al-Balāghah*, p. 335

After the Battle of Jamal, 'Alī ﷺ came up to her and asked, "how are you, O my beloved mother?" She replied, "(I am) well." He said to her, "may Allah forgive you". She responded, "And you." (*Tārikh Ṭabarī*)

'Ā'ishah ﷺ said: "By Allah, there was nothing (negative) between me and 'Alī prior to this (the Battle of the Camel), except those (minor differences) that any woman has with her in-laws. I take an oath by Allah, even though he fought against me, I regard him as one of the best (men)." 'Alī ﷺ responded to this by saying: "By Allah, she has spoken the truth. There was nothing (negative) between us besides that. She is most definitely the wife of your Nabī in this world as well as the hereafter." Ibid

When Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah ﷺ was on her deathbed; Sayyidunā ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Abbās visited her and reminded her of some of her merits. Among that which he said to her was: “You were the most beloved wife of Rasūlullāh ﷺ, and he would not love anything that was not pure.” (*Al-Hakim*)

A person once spoke ill of ‘Ā’ishah ﷺ in the presence of Sayyidunā ‘Ammār ﷺ. He angrily responded: “Get away O scum! Are you insulting the beloved of Rasūlullāh ﷺ?” (*Tirmidhī*)

There is no doubt that the verse in question seeks to convey more than the impermissibility of wedding the wives of the Nabī ﷺ — as is apparent from the tone, meaning, and context of the verse and more so because another verse has quite adequately conveyed that message:

وَلَا أَنْ تَنْكِحُوا أَزْوَاجَهُ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ أَبَدًا ۚ إِنَّ ذَٰلِكُمْ كَانَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَظِيمًا (53)

And it is not [conceivable or lawful] for you to harm the Messenger of Allah or to marry his wives after him, ever. Indeed, that would be in the sight of Allah an enormity. (Ahzab: 53)

And when the verse carries merit for the spouses of Nabī ﷺ, as is apparent from the narration of Ummī Salamah ﷺ, then without a doubt the same virtue applies to Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah ﷺ. Any attempts to discredit her therefrom have been thoroughly debunked by Sayyidunā ‘Alī, Sayyidunā ‘Abbās, and Sayyidunā ‘Ammār ibn Yāsir ﷺ.

### The Narration Of Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah

All that remains is the narration of Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah ﷺ wherein it is reported that she said she is not the Mother of the believing women; this narration despite being sound as far as its chain of narration is concerned is contradicted by numerous other narrations making it *shadh* (incongruous). Firstly the verse itself is clear in its purport — including both males and females — and secondly the ḥadīth of Sayyidah Ummī Salamah ﷺ as mentioned before also contradicts it. Furthermore there are numerous other narrations wherein Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah ﷺ was addressed as Umm al-Mu’minīn by other females and she did not correct, rebuke or deny them. The Shī’ah are deceptively selective in how they quote narrations whereas it is necessary to examine all the reported material before one can come to a conclusion, which is the dictate of intellectual and academic honesty. Hereunder we mention a few of such narrations:

1. Shaykh Abu Ishāq al-Huwaynī writes:

فأخرج ابن سعد - كما في " الدر المنثور " ( 5 / 183 ) - عنها أنها قالت : " أنا أم الرجال منكم والنساء

Ibn Sa'd has reported, as is mentioned in *Durr al-Manthūr* (5/183) that Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah said, "I am the mother of the Believing men among you and the women."

Al-Huwayni then says: "... know that it was the Madhab of 'Ā'ishah (that the verse includes all male and female believers). This is Ṣaḥīḥ and in line with the verse: "The Prophet is closer to the believers than their selves, and his wives are their mothers." The word "Al-Mu'minīn/the believers" includes all men and women, for His (swt) saying "his wives" is plural and applies to all (believers). Ḥafīẓ Ibn Ḥajar also said in *Al-Fath* (18/1): "And this is the most sound opinion." And this was also the opinion of al-Qurṭubī and the vast majority of Mufasssirs. [*Tanbih al-Ḥajib*, vol. .2 p. 425]

2. Here is an authentic and but lengthy narration, we will only make mention of the relevant portion wherein a woman approaches Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah and addresses her with "O MOTHER OF THE BELIEVERS" and Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah ﷺ accepts the address without rebuking her:

-دخلت امرأة على عائشة قد شلت يدها فقالت : يا أم المؤمنين ، بت البارحة صحيحة اليد فأصبحت شلاء ! قالت عائشة الراوي: - المحدث: ابن رجب - المصدر: يتبع الميت ثلاث - الصفحة أو الرقم: 429 / 2 خلاصة حكم المحدث: إسناده حسن

A woman entered upon 'Ā'ishah whose hand had become paralysed and she said, "O Umm al-Mu'minīn, when I went to bed my hand was fine and when I awoke it was paralysed..."

3. Al-Bukhārī too has recorded such a narration wherein she is addressed as Umm al-Mu'minīn by another female and she had no problem with being addressed by it:

دَخَلَتْ عَلَيَّ بَرِيرَةٌ وَهِيَ مُكَاتِبَةٌ، فَقَالَتْ يَا أُمَّ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ اشْتَرَيْتَنِي فَإِنَّ أَهْلِي يَبِيعُونِي فَأَعْتَقْنِي قَالَتْ نَعَمْ. قَالَتْ إِنَّ أَهْلِي لَا يَبِيعُونِي حَتَّى يَشْتَرُوا وَلَا يَبِيعُونِي. قَالَتْ لَا حَاجَةَ لِي فِيكَ. فَسَمِعَ ذَلِكَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَوْ بَلَغَهُ، فَقَالَ " مَا شَأْنُ بَرِيرَةَ فَقَالَ اشْتَرَيْتَهَا فَأَعْتَقْتَهَا وَلَيْشْتَرُوا مَا شَاءُوا ". قَالَتْ فَاشْتَرَيْتُهَا فَأَعْتَقْتُهَا، وَاشْتَرَطَ أَهْلُهَا وَلَاءَهَا، فَقَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ " الْوَلَاءُ لِمَنْ أَعْتَقَ، وَإِنْ اشْتَرَطُوا مِائَةَ شَرْطٍ ". الراوي: عائشة المحدث: البخاري - المصدر: صحيح البخاري - الصفحة أو الرقم: 2726 خلاصة حكم المحدث: صحيح

Barīrah who had a written contract for her emancipation for a certain amount came to me and said, "O mother of the believers! Buy me and manumit me, as my masters will sell me." 'Ā'ishah agreed to it. Barīrah said, "My masters will sell me on the condition that my Walā will go to them." 'Ā'ishah said to her, "Then I am not in need of you." The Prophet ﷺ heard of that or was told about it and so he asked 'Ā'ishah, "what is the problem of Barīrah?" He said, "Buy her and manumit her, no matter what they stipulate." 'Ā'ishah added, "I bought and manumitted her, though her masters had stipulated that her Walā would be for them." The Prophet ﷺ said, "The Walā is for the liberator, even if the other stipulated a hundred conditions."

Interesting to note is that this incident took place in the presence of Nabī ﷺ and he too did not reprimand her for addressing Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah as Umm al-Mu’minīn. And with this we conclude our discussion.

The abysmal level of scholarship and deceitful tactics of the Shī’ī propagandist has become apparent to you, respected reader. The statements made by ‘Abbās al-Khu’ī, son of renowned Shī’ī scholar Abū al-Qāsim al-Khū’ī, come to mind at this juncture, which he made in an interview regarding the state of the *Howzat ‘Ilmiyyah* (Islamic universities) in Iran. Enumerating the qualities one requires to become a *Marja’* (scholar whose opinions are valid for the Shī’ī masses) in the present day, he says:

Firstly he should have a turban and a beard. Secondly he should have a huge entourage who are knowledgeable with banter, how to defame, praise, drop and raise ranks... like media. They must have links with foreigners, with local and foreign rulers. Third important point is that they should have money to distribute to all people. These are the main conditions, practical conditions. Whoever he may be, even if he is English, has blue eyes and yellow hair, tall and commits evil deeds, and has despicable traits known to all. He too can be a *Marja’*... even after 30 or 40 years of education, I asked one is it “*Ashadu ana Muhammadan Abduhu or Abdahu?*” He said, “I don’t know, both are the same.” You see! And many of them do not even know how to recite Surah al-Fatihah correctly...

This is a practical lesson of “*all that glitters is not gold.*” When this is the state of senior graduates qualifying from the *Howzat ‘Ilmiyyah* what reliance should the Shī’ah — and ordinary Sunnīs for that matter as well — have upon fraudulent articles such as this; whose authors and their credibility are a tale of wonder and mystery? The lesson we all might have learnt from our elders is worthy of adherence in today’s time, “*don't believe everything you read,*” they would say with regards to the propagandist articles against Islam and the Muslims that would appear in the daily papers from time to time, being well aware that there exist those whose sole purpose is to turn you away from Islam. A simple advice but a valuable one at that, a summary of a priceless divine decree:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَأٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوا أَن تُصِيبُوا قَوْمًا بِجَهَالَةٍ فَتُصِحُّوا عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلْتُمْ نَادِمِينَ (6)

O you who have believed, if there comes to you a disobedient one with information, investigate, lest you harm a people out of ignorance and become, over what you have done, regretful. (Hujurat: 6)