

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

# Islamic Awareness

## Grammatical Shift For The Rhetorical Purposes: Iltifāt And Related Features In The Qur'ān

M A S Abdel Haleem

*Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, 1992, Volume LV, Part 3.*

© Islamic Awareness, All Rights Reserved.

In a study which has been described as pioneering, *Neue Beiträge zur semitischen Sprachwissenschaft*,<sup>[1]</sup> Theodor Nöldeke 'discussed in detail the "Stylistische und syntaktische Eigentümlichkeiten der Sprache des Korans" (pp. 5-23) thereby collecting together everything that had occurred to him in this respect during his protracted and intensive study of the Holy Book of the Muslims.<sup>[2]</sup> Among the examples Nöldeke discusses (pp. 13-14) are Q. 7 (not 77 which is clearly a misprint in his text): 55,<sup>[3]</sup> 27:61; 35:27, 6:99, 20:55, 10:23, etc. where there is a sudden shift in the pronoun of the speaker or the person spoken about, known as **iltifāt** in **balāgha** (Arabic rhetoric), though Nöldeke does not refer to the term here. Introducing his discussion of this feature, Nöldeke remarks that 'the grammatical persons change from time to time in the Qur'ān in an unusual and not beautiful way (nicht schöner Weise)' (p. 13). This is a personal value judgement. Arab writers, in contrast see the matter differently. Ibn al-Athīr, for instance, after studying this stylistic feature, as we shall see below, classed it among the 'remarkable things and exquisite subtleties we have found in the Glorious Qur'ān.'<sup>[4]</sup> It will be seen that the examples Nöldeke cites immediately following the statement quoted above do not occur haphazardly in the Qur'ān but follow a pattern. Examination of where exactly the shift occurs and why, will show how effective the technique is in these examples and why Muslim literary critics and exegetes greatly admire **iltifāt** and its related features. Nöldeke further remarks (p. 14) that in a few places the second and third person plural are exchanged abruptly: 30:38, 49:7, 10:23. Here again it will be seen that the changes are made according to an effective pattern and that the frequency of occurrences of this type is much greater than is indicated by Nöldeke.

The impression that the incidence of **iltifāt** in the Qur'ān is low can also be gained from books on **balāgha** in Arabic.<sup>[5]</sup> These tend to confine themselves to specific examples, including, for instance Q. 1:4, 36:22, 10:22, 35:9, 108:2, repeated with little variation,<sup>[6]</sup> to represent the various types of **iltifāt** between 1st, 2nd and 3rd persons. That these only represented a small sample is made clear by reference to the books<sup>[7]</sup> of Ibn al-Athīr (637/1239)<sup>[8]</sup> who discusses some 20 examples, Suyūṭī (911/1505), who deals with about 35 examples<sup>[9]</sup> of **iltifāt** and related features, and Badr al-Dīn al-Zarkashī (794/1391) who provides the most extensive treatment of this phenomenon and includes about 50 examples.<sup>[10]</sup> Still, it will be seen from our treatment below that the feature occurs much more extensively in the Qur'ān than even these figures suggest. Accordingly, the way it is treated in these works does not give an accurate picture. We are told there are six types of change in person, but for one of these (1st to 2nd person) they all give just one example - Q. 36:22 and indeed, as we shall see, even that is doubtful. The change from 2nd to 1st person does not occur in the Qur'ān. However, it will be seen that other types are used far more frequently; for instance the change from 3rd to 1st person is represented by well over a hundred examples. Identifying the precise extent to each type will help us to

understand the nature and function of the feature under discussion.

It has, moreover, been argued that almost all examples of **iltifāt** in the Qur'an are to be found in the Makkan surās.<sup>[11]</sup> This conclusion was perhaps based on surveying examples used in **balāgha** books. It will be seen that a survey of the Qur'ānic text itself gives a different picture.

**Ittifāt** has been called by rhetoricians **shajā'at al-'arabiyya**<sup>[12]</sup> as it shows, in their opinion, the daring nature of the Arabic language. If any 'daring' is to be attached to it, it should above all be the daring of the language of the Qur'an since, for reasons that will be shown below, it employs this feature far more extensively and in more variations than does Arabic poetry. It is, therefore, natural to find that **al-Mathal al-Sā'ir** of Ibn al-Athīr which deals with **adab al-katib wa'l-shā'ir**, uses mainly Qur'ānic references in discussing **iltifāt**. No one seems to quote references in prose other than from the Qur'an: and indeed a sampling of hadīth material found not a single instance.<sup>[13]</sup> It is hoped that our discussion will explain why this should be so.

Nöldeke treated the verses referred to above as peculiarities in the language of the Qur'an. As will be seen below, it would not be correct to assume that this stylistic feature is exclusively Qur'ānic in Arabic, though it is an important feature of the style of the Qur'an. As has been noted, Nöldeke in his discussion did not mention the term **iltifāt**. Nor did Wansbrough, who dedicated a section to 'Rhetoric and allegory'<sup>[14]</sup> under the 'Principles of exegesis', list **iltifāt** in his 'Index of technical terms'.<sup>[15]</sup> Likewise, Bell-Watt dedicates a section to 'Features of Qur'ānic style';<sup>[16]</sup> the author of the article on 'Kor'an' in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* has a section on 'language and style'<sup>[17]</sup>, and the author of the article on the 'Qur'an I' in *The Cambridge history of Arabic literature* includes a section on 'language and style'.<sup>[18]</sup> but none of these writers mentions the word **iltifāt**. It therefore seems necessary to deal with this important feature of Arabic literary and Qur'ānic style.

In this article I shall discuss the meaning of **iltifāt**, other terms used to describe the phenomenon, the development of **iltifāt** in **balāgha** books, the conditions set for certain types of **iltifāt** and the types of **iltifāt** in general (giving the extent of each), and its place in **balāgha**. Along with **iltifāt** I shall discuss analogous features of this nature, involving grammatical shift for rhetorical purposes; though some of these were not generally labelled as **iltifāt**, they were none the less considered as related to it. In the discussion of specific examples I shall point out where these shifts occur and attempt to explain their effects. Finally I shall deal with the function of **iltifāt** and its related features in general. It is hoped that all this will help to clarify the nature of this stylistic feature and explain its use in the Qur'an.

## The Meaning Of Ittifāt

Lexically **iltifāt** means 'to turn/turn one's face to'. There is the famous line:

وَتَلَفَّتْ عَيْنِي فَمَا دُخِفْتُ عَنْيَ الطَّلُوتُ تَلَفَّتْ الْقَلْبُ

'my eye turned to the remains of (my beloved's) encampment; when they passed out of sight, my heart turned to them'.

The word came to be used for turning aside in speech to talk about something before continuing with the original subject. Al-Aṣma'ī (216/831) is said to have used it in this sense. Referring to the line by Jarīr.<sup>[19]</sup>

أَتَنَسَى إِذْ تَوَدَّعْنَا سُلَيْمَى بَعُودَ بَشَامَةِ سُقَى الْبَشَامِ

'Do you forget (how it was) when Sulaima bid us farewell at the **bashām** (balsam). May the **bashām** be watered abundantly!'

Aṣma'ī commented: 'Instead of continuing to compose his verses the poet turned to (**iltafat ilā**) the **bashām** to wish it well.' From the above examples and others similar,<sup>[20]</sup> one may assume that the name **iltifāt** may have owed its origin to the context of departure and turning back towards the encampment and memory of the beloved, thus attaching an additional emotive aspect to the word.

The word **iltifāt**, here still almost literal, was given a technical meaning as early as the time of Aṣma'ī. But already by the time of Ibn al-Mu'tazz (296/909) we find that the use of the term to denote, broadly, parenthesis, has become secondary; it now refers more frequently to what is defined as departure by the speaker from address to narration or from narration to address and the like (**wa-mā yushbih dhālik**). The phenomenon had been recognized and described by such earlier authors as al-Farrā' (207/822); Abū 'Ubayda (210/825); Ibn Qutayba (276/889) and al-Mubarrad (285/898). who discussed examples of transition in persons; but it was not until Ibn al-Mu'tazz. that it was given the name **iltifāt**.<sup>[21]</sup>

The two meanings (parenthetical and transitional) co-existed (being sometimes juxtaposed as we see in Baqillanī's **i'jāz**) apparently for about two centuries. Qudama b. Ja'far (337/948) defines **iltifāt** thus:

while a poet expresses a meaning he may doubt or suspect that someone might reject what he is saying or ask him to explain the reason for it, so the poet returns to what he has said to emphasize it, give the reason, or resolve any doubt about it.<sup>[22]</sup>

For Al-'Askarī (d. after 395/1005) this is the second type of **iltifāt**, while the first is that explained earlier by Aṣma'ī.<sup>[23]</sup> By the time we come to Zamakhsharī (538/1143) we find him right from the beginning of his **tafsīr**.<sup>[24]</sup> using **iltifāt** only in the sense of transition in persons; he is, moreover credited with a lucid explanation of the rhetorical effects of this stylistic feature so that what he said sometimes repeated verbatim by many subsequent authors. Finally, when **balāgha** assumed its canonical form in the **Miftāḥ al-'ulūm** of Sakkākī (626/1228), the meaning of transition had clearly become the only one used and that of parenthesis relegated to the past. It may also be noted that Sakkākī added to transition in persons the further dimension of transition from perfect to imperfect verbs.<sup>[25]</sup> However, for fuller definitions of **iltifāt** in this final sense, it is to Ibn al-Athīr (637/1239) and Zarkashī (794/1391) that we must turn. The former considered **iltifāt** part of the essence of **'ilm al-bayān** and the basis of **balāgha**. 'Its meaning (of turning) is taken from the turning of a person from his right to left as he turns his face once this way and once the other; such is this type of speech since one turns in it from one form to another. One would for instance turn from addressing a person to talking (about him) in the 3rd person; or - from 3rd to 2nd person; or turn from perfect to imperfect verb or vice versa; or turn in such other ways as will be detailed below.' '**Iltifāt**', he continues, 'is also called **shajā'at al-'arabiyya**' (the daring of the Arabic language). 'A daring person', he explains, 'undertakes what others do not dare, and such is **iltifāt** in speech, which', he thinks, 'is peculiar to Arabic.'<sup>[26]</sup> Al-Zarkashī for his part, defined **iltifāt** as:

the change of speech from one mode to another, For the sake of freshness and variety for the listener, to renew his interest, and to keep his mind from boredom and frustration, through having the one mode continuously at his ear.

He goes on in the following paragraph to say:

Each of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd persons has its appropriate context in which it is used. The general opinion is that **iltifāt** is 'transition' from one of them to another after using the first. Sakkākī said it is either this or it is using one in a place where another ought to have been used.<sup>[27]</sup>

After dealing with all types of transition in persons Zarkashī concludes with a section on transition to other than persons under the heading **yaqrub min al-iltifāt naql al-kalām ilā ghayrih**, making these related to **iltifāt**. Of the two it is Ibn al-Athīr's definition that is the more precise and his explanation more lucid. Other accounts include those of Sharaf al-Dīn al-Ṭibī (743/1342)<sup>[28]</sup> and al-Khaṭīb al-Qazwīnī (793/1395), both concise, and the rather more extensive but unoriginal one by Suyūṭī (911/1505). The treatment by Ibn al-Athīr as a writer on the rhetoric of prose and poetry and by Zarkashī as a writer on **'ulūm al-Qur'ān** have thus remained the best examples on the subject.

## Other Terms Used To Describe Iltifāt

The phenomenon of transition has not surprisingly, also been designated by other technical terms. Ibn Wahb (312?/9247) called it **al-sarf**; Ibn Munqidh (584/ 1188) called it **al-insirāf**<sup>[29]</sup> (both of these meaning lexically 'to depart'); Al-San'ānī (1114/1702) called it **iltifāt** and referred also to its older name, **al-i'tirāf**<sup>[30]</sup> (parenthesis), while 'Izz al-Dīn b. 'Abd al-Salām (660/1262) and Zamlakānī (727/1327) reported that it was called **al-talwīn** and **talwīn al-khitāb**<sup>[31]</sup> (varying the address). Although **insirāf** did not gain popularity it is actually just as apt. We shall, however, retain here the more recognized term **iltifāt**, the others having now become obsolete.

## Conditions Of Iltifāt

In discussing **iltifāt** as it has become well established in **balāgha**, all authors begin with types involving transition in persons and, indeed, some of them stop there. It is with this kind only that authors mentioned conditions of **iltifāt**. The first condition is that the pronoun in the person/thing one turns to should refer to the same person/thing from which one turned. Thus there is no **iltifāt** in: 'You are my friend' but there is **iltifāt** in Q. 108:2.

إِنَّا أَعْطَيْنَاكَ الْكَوْثَرَ. فَصَلِّ لِرَبِّكَ

'We have given you abundance, therefore pray to *your Lord*', since the reference here is to one and the same, i.e. God. Another suggested condition stipulates that the transition should be between two independent sentences. This perhaps resulted from the observation of a limited number of examples, and was thus rightly refuted by reference to many other examples that do not involve two independent sentences, for example Q. 25:17.<sup>[32]</sup>

## Types Of Iltifāt And Related Features

These can be of the following types:

- I. Change in person, between 1st, 2nd and 3rd person, which is the most common and is usually divided into six kinds.
- II. Change in number, between singular, dual and plural.
- III. Change in addressee.
- IV. Change in the tense of the verb.

V. Change in case marker.

VI. Using noun in place of pronoun.

No. I is the most commonly known and was called **iltifāt** before other types were labelled as such or as related to **iltifāt**.

Nos. I-IV were dealt with by Zarkashī and Suyūṭī, for instance, in a chapter entitled **al-iltifāt**, though some of the types were considered only as related to **iltifāt**. No. V was considered as **iltifāt** by some, according to Zarkashī. No. VI was dealt with along with **iltifāt**, by Qazwīnī, Subkī and Hāshimī for instance, under a general heading combining them both: **khurūj al-kalām 'alā muqtada'l- zāhir** (departure from what is normally expected). In fact, in all these types we have a departure from the normally expected usage of language in a particular context for a particular rhetorical purpose.

## I.

(1) Transition from 3rd to 1st person. This is the most common type - I have come across over 140 instances in the Qur'ān.

(2) From 1st to 3rd person is second with nearly 100 instances.

(3) From 3rd to 2nd person - nearly 60 instances.

(4) From 2nd to 3rd person - under 30 instances.

(5) From 1st to 2nd person - of which there is only one example which is quoted by every author, but which one could argue is not **iltifāt**.

(6) From 2nd to 3rd person, of which there is no example in the Qur'ān as Suyūṭī himself pointed out (Itqan, III, 254).

Types 5 and 6 need only a brief mention here so that we may return to deal with the other more important cases. For no. 6 Imru' al-Qays's lines about his long sleepless night were quoted by Zamakhsharī:

تَطَاوَلَ لَيْلُكَ بِالْإِنْمِدِّ      وَنَامَ الْخَلِيُّ وَلَمْ تَرْقُدِ  
وَبَاتَ وَبَاتَتْ لَهُ لَيْلَةٌ      كَلِيلَةَ ذِي الْعَائِثِ الْأَرْمَدِ  
وَذَلِكَ مِنْ نَبَأِ جَاءَنِي      وَخَبَّرْتُهُ عَنْ أَبِي الْأَسْوَدِ

The poet here talks *to* himself in the 2nd person, then *about* himself, then he returns to speak in the first person. It is noteworthy that these lines are always quoted to illustrate this type.

For no. 5 it is Q. 36:22 that is always quoted:

وَمَا لِي لَا أَعْبُدُ الَّذِي فَطَرَنِي وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ

'why should *I* not worship Him who created me? and to Him *you* shall return'.

It was suggested that 'you' is in place of '*I* shall return'. This, however, does not have to be so, as Suyūṭī indeed said (p. 253). The speaker could simply be warning his addressees that they shall return to God, in which case

the condition of **iltifat** does not obtain here. Suyūṭī also quotes Q. 6:73 but this will be discussed under change in tense.

It will be observed for examples of other kinds of **iltifat** that a great many of them involve God talking in the 1st person or about Himself in the 3rd person; but He does not talk *to* himself in the 2nd person. Examples from poetry suggest that a poet talks to himself when he reproaches, pities or encourages himself, which clearly does not befit God as seen in the Qur'ān, where 'He has power over all things' (2:20); 'has knowledge of everything' (4: 176); He is 'Performer of what He desires' (85:16) and is 'the Creator of all things' (39:62). This may explain the lack of examples in the Qur'ān of types 5 and 6.

I shall now list occurrences of the four remaining sub-types of **iltifat** in person. These lists are not meant to be final but to give what is hoped will be a fair picture of the use of **iltifat** in the Qur'ān. It should be pointed out that the word containing the pronoun from which the transition takes place does not necessarily immediately precede that to which the transition occurs; but in any case, nobody makes proximity a condition of **iltifat**.

### 1. 3rd - 1st person

2:23, 47, 73, 83, 118, 160, 172; 3:25, 58, 168; 4:30, 33, 37, 41, 64, 74, 114, 174; 5:14, 15, 19, 32, 70, 86; 6:22, 92, 97, 98, 99, 107, 110, 114, 126; 7:37, 57; 8:9, 41; 10:7, 11, 21, 22, 23, 28; 11:8; 13:4; 14:13; 16:2, 40, 66, 75, 84; 17:1, 21, 33, 97; 18:7; 19:9, 21, 58; 20:53, 113; 21:29, 37; 22:57, 67; 24:55; 25:17, 32, 45, 48, 56; 26:198; 27:60, 81; 28:57, 61, 75; 29:4, 7, 23; 30:16, 28, 34, 47, 51, 58; 31:7, 10, 23; 32:12, 16, 27; 33:9, 31; 34:5, 9; 35:9, 27; 36:8, 37; 37:6; 39:2, 3, 16, 27, 49; 40:5, 70, 84; 41:12, 28, 39; 42:7, 13, 20, 23, 35, 38, 48; 45:31; 46:7, 15; 47:13; 48:25, 49:13; 52:21, 48; 53:29; 54:11; 55:31, 58:5; 59:21; 61:14; 65:8; 66:10; 67:5, 17; 68:15, 35; 69:11; 70:7; 72:16; 76:9; 80:25; 86:15; 87:6; 88:25; 89:29; 92:7; 96:15.

### 2. 1st - 3rd person

2:5, 23, 37, 161, 172; 3:57, 151; 4:30, 33, 69, 122; 6:90, 95, 111, 112, 127; 7:12, 58, 101, 142; 8:4; 10:22, 25; 14:46; 15:28, 96; 16:52; 17:1; 20:4; 21:19; 22:6; 23:14, 57, 78, 91, 116; 24:35, 46; 25:31, 47, 58; 26:5, 9, 213; 27:6; 28:13, 59, 62; 29:3, 40, 67, 69; 30:54, 59; 31:11, 23; 32:25; 33:9, 46, 50; 34:21; 35:31, 32, 38; 36:36, 74; 37:33; 38:26; 40:61, 85; 41:19, 28, 40, 45, 53; 44:6; 45:22, 30; 48:2; 51:58, 53:30; 54:55; 57:27; 60:3; 65:10; 66:12; 67:19; 68:48; 76:6, 24, 29; 87:6; 94:8; 95:8; 97:4; 108:2.

### 3. 3rd - 2nd person

1:5; 2:21, 25, 28, 60, 83, 214, 229, 233; 3:180; 4:11; 6:6; 8:7, 14; 9:19, 69; 10:3, 68; 11:14; 16:55, 68, 74; 19:89; 21:37; 23:15, 65; 27:90; 30:34; 31:33; 33:55; 34:37; 35:3; 36:59; 37:25; 38:59; 43:16, 47:22, 30; 50:24; 52:14, 19, 39; 55:13, 56:51, 91; 57:17, 20; 67:13; 75:34; 76:22, 30; 77:38, 43; 78:30, 36; 80:3; 87:16.

### 4. 2nd - 3rd person

2:54, 57, 85, 88, 187, 200, 216, 226, 229, 286; 4:9; 10:22; 16:69, 72; 24:63; 28:16; 30:38; 31:32; 32:10; 45:35; 47:23; 67:18; 75:31.

In the first kind (3rd - 1st) we notice that in the great majority of verses, God is involved in the speech. The transition in this type introduces two powerful elements that accord with the dramatic nature of the language of



the Qur'ān, that is: the 1st person itself (which is more powerful than the 3rd as it brings God Himself to speak), and secondly, the element of plurality which expresses more power than does the singular. We may begin by considering the first example Nöldeke introduced after his remark that 'the grammatical persons change from time to time in the Qur'ān in an unusual and not beautiful way', Q. 27:61.

أَمْ مَنْ خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَأَنْزَلَ لَكُمْ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَنْبَتْنَا بِهِ حَدائقَ ذَاتِ بَهْجَةٍ مَا كَانَ لَكُمْ أَنْ تُنبِتُوا شَجَرَهَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ

'Who created the heavens and the earth and sent down for you water from the sky wherewith *We* caused to grow joyous gardens?'

The point of emphasis here is the great power which caused joyous gardens to grow, a contrast between the abstraction of creative power and the personal involvement of aesthetic creativity. This is not a matter of personal taste or opinion; it is clear from the rest of the verse which goes on to emphasize the point and describe the garden: 'whose trees you could never cause to grow'. Here God reserves for Himself the power to cause them to grow and hence the shift at this point from 3rd person singular to 1st person plural. As it comes suddenly, the shift makes the listener feel afresh the true meaning of the concepts of both 1st person and of plurality, so that the grammatical forms are here given much more weight than they normally carry.<sup>[33]</sup> A longer statement in place of this concise, powerful one would have been required if 'normal' grammatical rules had been used without the change in person commented on by Nöldeke. The effect in this example is, moreover, achieved with no loss of clarity since it is obvious that the verse speaks about God before and after the transition. Interestingly, such a technique is also often used with other verses dealing with water, with the shift always occurring at a semantically important point as in Q: 6:99, 7:57, 13:4, 15:66, 20:53, 25:48, 31:10, 35:9, 41:39. In 13:4, for instance, the shift does not occur at making the plants grow but at making their produce different in taste, which is the point in context:

وَهُوَ الَّذِي... وَفِي الْأَرْضِ قِطْعٌ مَتَجَاوِرَاتٍ وَجَنَاتٍ مِنْ أَعْنَابٍ وَزَرْعٌ وَنَخِيلٌ صِنْوَانٌ وَغَيْرُ صِنْوَانٍ يُسْقَى بِمَاءٍ وَاحِدٍ وَنُفِّضُهَا عَلَى بَعْضٍ فِي الْأَكْلِ إِنْ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ.

'It is *He* that... In the land there are adjoining plots: vineyards and cornfields and groves of palms, the single and the clustered. Their fruits are nourished by the same water: yet *We* make the taste of some more favoured than the taste of others. Surely in this there are signs for men of understanding.'

In the first set of examples cited above as discussed by Nöldeke (7:55; 35:27; 6:99; 20:55; 10:23), all but the last deal with water (Nöldeke does not seem to have noticed this), and exhibit the same feature for the same effect. 10:23 also involves water but in a different context that will be explained later.

The shift to 1st person of majestic plural is also suitable for expressing might, e.g. 14:13:

فَأَوْحَى إِلَيْهِمْ رَبُّهُمْ لَنُهْلِكَنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ

'Then their Lord revealed to them: We will surely destroy the evildoers.'

The effect of the particle of oath '**la**' and that of emphasis, **nūn al-tawkid**, is made much more powerful by the presence of God to announce (in direct speech) the punishment Himself in the plural; see also 32:16, 33:9. Abundant giving is also expressed in 1st person plural as if to emphasize a multiplicity of giving, e.g. 4:114:

لاخير في كثير من نَجَواتهم إلا من أمر بصدقة أو معروف أو إصلاح بين الناس ومن يفعل ذلك ابتغاء مرضاة الله فسوف نؤتيه أجراً عظيماً .

'There is no good in much of their conferences except in his who enjoins charity, kindness, and peace-making among the people. He that does this to please *God, We* shall bestow on him a vast reward.'

See also 2:172: 32:1G; 42:38. Similarly, reassuring the Prophet who was anxious that he might forget the Qur'ān was suitably expressed by a shift to the first person divine plural

سَبِّحْ اسْمَ رَبِّكَ . . . سَنُقَرِّئك فَلَا تُنْسَى

'... *your Lord* who... *We* shall make you recite so that you shall not forget.'

Also 75:16 19.

It should be pointed out that in pre-Islamic literature, and during the time of the revelation of the Qur'ān, pronouns do not appear to have been used as indicative of status; they did not change with social status, and the plural of majesty, in particular, does not appear to have been used by, or for addressing or referring to, kings or chiefs. The Prophet and his early successors did not use it for themselves not - in their letters to address kings or governors.<sup>[34]</sup> It was clearly in the Qur'ān that such usage was introduced, as has been shown, on the basis of a highly sophisticated application of the concept of plurality.

## 2. 1st - 3rd person

This category is second in number but it is still large compared to those remaining. It is noteworthy that, with the exception of a small number of cases, the person involved in *iltifāt* in categories 1 and 2 is God, while in 3 and 4 this is less commonly the case. Again with the exception of four cases, we find when God speaks in categories 1 and 2, He speaks in the first person plural; in the other part of the transition, He is in the 3rd person singular, referred to either as '*Allāh*', 'He', 'He it is who' or '*rabb*' in the form of 'Your/their/his Lord, Lord of. Two related questions should be discussed here:

1. Who speaks in the Qur'ān?
2. How is it that God, who is believed in Islam to be the author of the Qur'ān, speaks about Himself in the 3rd person?

While admitting that it is allowable for a speaker to refer to himself in the third person occasionally, Bell-Watt find that the extent to which the Prophet is being told about God as a third person is unusual.<sup>[35]</sup> Although 'it will be found that much of the Qur'ān is thus placed in the mouth of God speaking in the plural of majesty' (p. 65) they consider that:

difficulties in many passages are removed by interpreting the 'We' of angels rather than of God Himself speaking in the plural of majesty. It is not easy to distinguish between the two and nice questions sometimes arise in places where there is a sudden change from God being spoken of in the third person to 'We' claiming to do things usually ascribed to God, e.g. 6:99b. 25, 45;7. (p. 67)

It is difficult to agree that the 'We', in the two examples Bell-Watt give, refers to the angels since the acts referred to (bringing forth the planets and bringing water down from the sky) are definitely ascribed to God in



other parts of the Qur'ān (cf. 50:67, 16:65). Examination of the examples of **iltifāt** shows that it is difficult from the grammatical point of view to conclude - as Bell-Watt seem to do that a part of the statement is spoken by one person (God) and the rest by another (the angels). Bell-Watt concluded: 'In the later portions of the Qur'ān, it seems to be an almost invariable rule that the words are addressed by the angels or by Gabriel using the plural "We" to the Prophet.' No examples are given to substantiate this statement. Does it include a passage like 'O Messenger, We have sent you' (33:46)? But we have to understand this in conjunction with Q. 61:9, 'It is He Who sent His Messenger' - both verses are taken from 'the later portions of the Qur'ān'. Such a procedure should be applied to any passage that may be cited as spoken by the angels.

Commenting on Horovitz's observation that all of the Qur'ān must be regarded as the utterance of God,<sup>[36]</sup> J. Wansbrough states:

Less dogmatic than Horovitz, Suyūṭī adduced five passages in Muslim scripture whose attribution to God was at least disputed: Q. 6:104, 114 were the words of the Arabian Prophet; 19:64 (but curiously, not 19:9, 21 and 51:30) were the words of Gabriel; 37:164-66 were ascribed to the angels; finally verse 4 of the **Fātiḥa** may have been uttered by the faithful (**'ibād**) or could by insertion (**taqdīr**) of the imperative **qulū** be attributed to God.<sup>[37]</sup>

Suyūṭī, however, did not consider 6:104, 114 as 'the words of the Arabian Prophet'. He discussed the five passages at the end of a chapter entitled **fīmā unzil min al-Qur'ān 'alā lisān ba'd al-sahāba** ('on Qur'ānic passages that have been sent down (revealed), put in the mouth of some of the companions'). The examples include, for instance, passages introducing institutions such as the hijab for the Prophet's wives, which 'Umar had wished the Prophet would adopt. Suyūṭī introduced the five passages referred to above by saying: **yaqrub min hādhā mā warad fi'l-qur'ān 'alā lisān ghayr'illah**, which again means they were revealed placed on the tongue of other than Allāh. Suyūṭī introduces 6:114 thus: '**kaqawlihi**' (i.e. 'as His [God's] saying'), then comments '**fa-innahu awaradahā aydan 'alā lisānihi**' (i.e. 'He presented this verse also placed on his [the Prophet's] tongue'). The Verse of the Fātiḥa is an important example of **iltifāt** (3rd - 2nd), being the first in the Qur'ān and much quoted.

Before discussing this verse, we must deal with the question of why God is referred to, and so frequently, in the Qur'ān, in the 3rd person.

The first and most important reason for God's speaking about Himself in the 3rd person relates to the fundamental message of the Qur'ān, which is calling men to the religion of **tawḥīd** according to which 'there is no god but Allāh'. The testimony begins with the negation of any other god, then moves on to except only one, who is named Allāh. No pronoun, even of the first person, will do here in place of the name.

فَلَا تَدْعُ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ فَتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُعَذِّبِينَ

'Call not upon another god with Allāh, lest you incur punishment' - 26:213.

This is clear in verses that show the contrast between Allāh - in this particular name - and any other assumed deity. In successive verses, for instance (27:60-4) we have a structure such as:

أَمْ مَنْ خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَأَنْزَلَ لَكُمْ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَنْبَتْنَا بِهِ حَدَائِقَ ذَاتَ بَهْجَةٍ... إِنْ إِلَهُ مَعَ اللَّهِ بَلْ هُمْ قَوْمٌ يَعْدِلُونَ.

' . . . Who created the heavens and the earth and brought down for you water from the sky. . . another god besides Allāh? Yet they make others equal (to Him).'

The sequence ends with 'Say: " No one in the heavens or on earth has knowledge of the unseen except Allāh".' The Qur'ānic message is meant to be communicated to men naming Allāh as the lord they should serve. Knowledge of the unseen, creation and Judgement are the prerogative of Allāh in the religion of **tawhīd** and as such frequently accompany His name which is considered in Arabic grammar **a'raf al-ma'āirif** (the most definite of all definite pro/nouns). Similarly, in the Qur'ān **ḥamd** truly belongs to Allāh and it occurs in the text forty odd times together with the name of Allāh or, if it is with His pronoun, comes very soon after the name: in a few cases it combines with **rabb** (cf. also **ḥudā**). The Qur'ān describes Allāh, in His particular name, to believers and non-believers: He does such and such, e.g. 16:65-81; it is He Who.... 16:10-20. Adjectival structures, ordinary or relative, require a noun before them - in this case, Allāh. Such combinations occur frequently in the Qur'ān (e.g. 1:1 4, 59:22 4). The name of Allāh is also used in verses (frequently at the end, commonly introduced by **kān**) indicating that such is His way, e.g.

سُنَّةَ اللَّهِ فِي الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَكَانَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ قَدَرًا مَقْدُورًا

'That was Allāh's way with those who passed away of old - and the commandment of Allāh is certain destiny.' (33:38)

وَأَنْفَقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ أَحَدَكُمُ الْمَوْتُ فَيَقُولَ رَبِّ لَوْلَا أَخَّرْتَنِي إِلَى أَجَلٍ قَرِيبٍ . . . وَلَنْ يُؤَخِّرَ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِذَا جَاءَ أَجَلُهَا وَاللَّهُ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ .

' Give . . . before death comes to one of you and he says "Reprieve me, Lord a while". .. But Allāh reprieves no soul when its term comes: Allāh has knowledge of all your actions.' (63:10-1)

The Qur'ān, it should be remembered, is not an autobiography of Allāh which thus has to be cast wholly in the form of 'I' and 'me'; it is revealed for men who will speak in their prayers and to each other about Allāh. It urges the believers: 'Call, then unto Allāh, making your religion His sincerely, though the unbelievers be averse' (Q. 40:14). It teaches them how to call upon Him in this way:

فَادْعُوا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ **Al-ḥamdu li'llāh rabbi'l-'ālamīn** (40:65). It is not surprising, then, that this comes at the beginning of the **Fātiḥa** to be repeated in the obligatory prayers at least 17 times a day.

It should also be noted that in some verses God is mentioned more than once, and is depicted from different perspectives so that we have a multiplicity of viewpoints:

إِنَّا كُفَيْنَاكَ الْمُسْتَهْزِئِينَ . الَّذِينَ يَجْعَلُونَ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُونَ . . . فَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ وَكُنْ مِنَ السَّاجِدِينَ . وَاعْبُدْ رَبَّكَ حَتَّى يَأْتِيَكَ الْيَقِينُ .

'We suffice you against the mockers who serve another god with Allāh. Certainly they will soon know. We know you are distressed by what they say. Proclaim your Lord: praise and prostrate yourself and worship your Lord until the certain end comes to you.' (15:95-99)

Here God Himself speaks in the 1st person plural of majesty to assure the Prophet: from the point of view of the mockers, they serve another God beside Allāh; and from the point of view of the Prophet, he should serve his caring, reassuring Lord. 'All that is in the heavens and the earth magnifies Allāh' (57:1, 59: 1, 61: 1, 62:1,

64: 1). From God's point of view, He proclaims to all that this is the prerogative of Allāh, shared by no other deity, and believers read this from their point of view, which is that of glorifying Allāh. It is important, then, when discussing reference to God in the 3rd person in the Qur'ān to bear in mind two things: the principle of **tawhīd** and the multiplicity of viewpoints observed in the language of the Muslim scripture.

In the following examples of the second category of **iltifāt** we see that there is a shift from the 1st person to the 3rd, in which God is referred to as Allāh or rabb, emphasizing **tawhīd**, and showing the multiplicity of viewpoints: 'Eat of the good things wherewith *We* have provided you, and render thanks to Allāh if it is *He* whom you worship' (2:172). 'We shall cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve, because they ascribe partners to Allāh' (3:151). 'David, *We* have appointed you a viceroy in the land; therefore judge between men justly and follow not caprice lest it leads you astray from the way of Allāh' (38:26). '*We* have given you a manifest victory, that Allāh may forgive you,... that Allāh may help you.' (48:1-3). (In this connexion we should remember that the Prophet used to repeat **astaghfir Allāh**.) (Cf. also Q. 4:106, 8:10). Finally: '*We* have given you abundance: Pray then to *your Lord* and sacrifice to Him - it is he that hates you who is cut off.' (Q. 108).

### 3. 3rd-2nd person

The shift in most examples of this kind appears to be for the purpose of honouring, reproach, threat and sometimes request. The first example of **iltifāt** in the Qur'ān, much quoted in **balāgha** books, is of this kind: verse 4 of the **Fātiha**, coming after praise in the 3rd person:

الحمد لله رب العالمين . الرحمن الرحيم . مالك يوم الدين . إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ

*'Praise belongs to Allāh, the Lord of all Being, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate, the Master of the Day of Judgement. You only we serve, You alone we ask for help.'*

Zamakhsharī explains (and he is repeatedly quoted) that when the servant talks about Allāh Who is worthy of praise, and the great qualities mentioned, his mind thinks of this great God who is worthy of praise, of full submission to Him, and whose help should be sought in important matters. The servant then addresses this distinguished Lord, '*You alone do we worship*': after the introduction which demonstrates that He is truly worthy of being worshipped, direct address is more indicative of the fact that He is being worshipped for that distinction.<sup>[38]</sup>

One may add that the shift to 2nd person is also important here because the servant is about to ask Him to: 'Guide us . . .'. The 3rd person was suitable at the beginning to name the Lord Who should be praised and served at the beginning of the book of **tawhīd**. No pronoun of any kind would have served here, and as was said, in Islam praise most truly belongs to that particular name - Allāh. Honouring by addressing is observed in such examples as those speaking of the blessed in Paradise: 'Happy in what their Lord has given them . . . " Eat and drink in health as a reward for what you need to do "' (Q. 52:18 - 19). The address here is announced without an introduction such as 'it will be said to them' - a feature of Qur'ānic style known as **haddhf al-qawl** which gives a statement immediate and dramatic effect.<sup>[39]</sup> Examples of this are found, particularly in the kind of **iltifāt** under discussion, to be used for various effects. Thus in '*Their Lord shall give them to drink a pure draught: this is a reward for you and your striving is thanked*' (Q. 72:22), the address is honorific while 'They say: "The All-Merciful has taken unto Himself a son"; *you* have indeed advanced something hideous! . . . '(Q. 19:88 ff.), the address is a threat, as also in Q. 16:55, 36:59. In Q. 2:28, 10:3, 37:25 it is rebuke and scorn. The effect of **iltifāt** in such examples is that it makes God Himself appear in the midst of a situation to address a

particular group at a crucial point.

Shift to 2nd person can be for request as in:

وَأَوْحَىٰ رَبُّكَ إِلَى النَّحْلِ أَنِ اتَّخِذِي مِنَ الْجِبَالِ بُيُوتًا وَمِنَ الشَّجَرِ وَمِمَّا يَعْرِشُونَ . ثُمَّ كُلِّي مِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ  
فَأَسْلِكِي سُبُلَ رَبِّكِ ذُلُلًا يَخْرُجُ مِنْ بَطُونِهَا شَرَابٌ مُخْتَلِفٌ أَلْوَانُهُ فِيهِ شِفَاءٌ لِلنَّاسِ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ  
يَتَفَكَّرُونَ .

'And your Lord inspired *the bees*: "Make *your* homes in the mountains, trees, and what men thatch. Feed on every kind of fruit and follow the ways of your Lord, easy to go upon." From *their* bellies comes forth a syrup of different hues wherein is healing for men. Surely in this is a sign for those who would give thought.' (Q. 16:68-69)

The switch back to 3rd person in 'from their bellies comes forth . . .' emphasizes to men the wondrous act. In Q. 80:1-3, we have an example of how the Qur'ān revitalizes grammatical forms by drawing attention to them afresh. The passage is clearly addressed to the Prophet as a reproach but it begins by talking about him.

عَبَسَ وَتَوَلَّى . أَن جَاءَهُ الْأَعْمَى . وَمَا يُدْرِيكَ لَعَلَّهُ يَزَكَّى . . . أَمِ اتَّخَذَ لِنَفْسِهِ إِسْتَفْهَى . فَأَنْتَ لَهُ تَصَدَّى .

'He frowned and turned away that the blind man came to him. How could *you* tell? He might have sought to purify himself. . . but to the one who reckons he is self-sufficient you pay attention?'

By merely using the 3rd person at the beginning, God is already expressing displeasure at what the Prophet did and upbraiding him before all listeners; turning to the 2nd person after that is in itself a reprimand; the shift is sudden and powerful. The grammatical concept of 2nd person is here given an added effect which is maintained in a number of the following verses.

#### 4. 2nd-3rd Person

This is less frequent than the previous three kinds. We have had in 16:69 an example of how the use of 3rd person expresses wonder and in 80:1 displeasure, making listeners a witness to this. 16:72 shows a similar effect:

وَاللَّهُ جَعَلَ لَكُم مِّنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا وَجَعَلَ لَكُم مِّنْ أَزْوَاجِكُمْ بَنِينَ وَحَفَدَةً وَرَزَقَكُمْ مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ أَفَبِالْبَاطِلِ  
يُؤْمِنُونَ وَبِنِعْمَةِ اللَّهِ هُمْ يَكْفُرُونَ .

'Allāh has given *you* spouses from among *yourselves* and through them has given you sons and grandsons. He has provided *you* with good things: will *they* then believe in falsehood and deny Allāh's favours?'

In 47:23 we have:

'If you turned away, would *you* than haply work corruption in the land and break your bonds of kin? Those are *they* whom Allāh has cursed . . . '.

The indicative pronoun '**ulā'ika** (those) expresses **ib'ād li'l-tahqīr** (distancing for humiliation). But distancing can also be for honouring, as is recognized in virtually all **balāgha** books<sup>[40]</sup> as a feature of Arabic rhetoric. Thus in 30:38 which was cited by Nöldeke, we have an example of honouring:

وما آتيتكم من ربّا ليربوا في أموال الناس فلا يربوا عند الله وما آتيتكم من زكاة تريدون وجه الله فأولئك هم المضيعون.

'That which *you* give in usury, that it may increase upon the people's wealth, increases not with Allāh; but what *you* give in alms desiring Allāh's face, those [who do it for the face of God] - *they* receive recompense manifold!'

Nöldeke also cited 10:22. This reads:

هو الذي يسيركم في البر والبحر حتى إذا كنتم في الفلك وجرّين بهم بريح طيبة وفرحوا بها جاءتها ريح عاصف وجاءهم الموج من كل مكان وظنوا أنهم أحيط بهم دعوا الله مخلصين له الدين لئن أبجيتنا من هذه ل نكونن من الشاكرين. فلما أنجاهم إذا هم يبغون في الأرض بغير الحق يا أيها الناس إنما بغيكم على أنفسكم.

'It is Allāh that conveys *you* by land and sea, and when *you* are in the ships - and the ships run with *them* rejoicing in a favouring wind, a raging tempest overtakes them. Billows surge upon them from every side and they fear they are encompassed by death. They pray to Allāh with all fervour: "Deliver us from this peril and we will be truly thankful." Yet when He does deliver *them*, they rebel in the earth wrongfully. O Men, *your* insolence is only against yourselves.'

Here, the shift to 3rd person adds another dimension, making the sea travellers seem truly helpless, far away, cut off from anyone to aid them except the Lord they feel they have to turn to. This would have been lost if the verse continued in the initial second person. Moreover, had the verse continued to address them in the 2nd person, then listeners to the Qur'ān who sit in the security of their homes, some never going to sea, would have been less convinced and less affected. He shifted to addressing them again only when the travellers had landed and began, in safety, 'to rebel wrongfully'. Moreover, as Arab writers of **tafsīr** and **balāgha** have observed, when He spoke of the travellers in the 3rd person, He made others witness how they behaved in their helplessness compared to their subsequent behaviour in safety.

In **tafsīr** and **balāgha** hooks writers are moved to high praise of iltifāt in this verse, which Nöldeke, clearly viewing it from a purely formal standpoint, failed to appreciate. Nor is this verse an exception in the Qur'ān: the same idea of seafarers is expressed in 31:31- 2 with **iltifāt** to 3rd person producing the same effect, and the theme of helplessness at sea is particularly emphasized in such verses as 17:69, 36:43, 42:32 - 4.

## II. Change In Number

The shift here is between singular, dual and plural of which over fifty examples can be found: 2:34, 38, 40, 106, 123, 217: 7:24, 127, 14:31, 37; 15:49; 16:65; 17:36; 20:37, 40, 41, 81, 124; 22:45; 23:51, 66; 27:84; 29:8, 57; 31:15; 32:13; 34:12, 45; 35:40; 43:32, 69; 46:5; 50:30; 54:17, 22, 32, 40; 55:31; 65:11; 68:44; 69:44; 70:40; 73:12; 74:16, 31; 75:3; 77:39; 90:4; 98:8; 100:11.

In many of these examples it is God that is involved in **iltifāt**; the shift to the plural of majesty expresses power with remarkable effect, e.g.:

ولا أقسم بالنفس اللوامة. أيعجب الإنسان أن لن نجتمع عظامه. بلى قادرين على أن نسوي بنانه.

'No! *I* swear by the reproachful soul! What, does man reckon *We* shall not gather his bones? Yes indeed; We are able to shape again his fingers.'(Q. 75:1 - 4)

It is the singular that is fitting for 'I swear'; the sudden shift to the plural expresses, as it were, multiplicity of power in answer to the pre-Islamic Arabs' incredulity at the idea of putting scattered bones together again at the resurrection. The sudden shift recharges the concept of plural as a grammatical form with its full sense of majesty (see also 55:31, 73:22, 2:40, 13:31, 43:32). The Qur'ān uses the singular pronoun for God particularly in such contexts as those expressing worship (**yā ib'ādī**), prohibition of shirk and wrath; the use of the singular is clearly important in such contexts, and when there is a sudden shift to the plural of majesty it sharpens the listener's sense of the contrast between the two grammatical forms, investing 'we' when it comes after 'I' with enhanced meaning. The Qur'ān thus revitalizes grammatical forms (2:32, 14:31, 20:71, 29:8, 31:15).

This type was regarded as **yaqrub min al-iltifāt** (related to **iltifāt**) by such writers as Zarkashī,<sup>[41]</sup> and Suyūṭī.<sup>[42]</sup>

### III. Change Of Addressee

Various addressees within the same or adjacent verses are sometimes spoken to in the Qur'ān. **Iltifāt** in such verses has the original lexical meaning of actually turning from one direction/person to another. In these examples we normally find the first addressee addressed again with others when there is a request that applies to them all. Thus in 2:144:

قُولُ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَحَيْثُمَا كُنْتُمْ فَوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ شَطْرَهُ

'Turn your face towards the Holy Mosque; and wherever you (Muslims) are, turn your faces towards it.'

The Prophet, in answer to his personal prayer to be directed to a new **qibla**, is requested to turn his face to the mosque in Makka. Then he and all the Muslims are requested to do so wherever they may be. In 10:87 there is more than one shift:

وَأَرْحِبْنَا إِلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ وَأَخِيهِ أَنْ تَبْرِأَ لِقَوْمِكَ بِمِصْرَ يُونَا وَاجْعَلُوا لِيَوْمِكُمْ قِبْلَةً وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

'We revealed to Moses and his brother: " Take *you* (dual) for your people in Egypt certain houses; and make *your* (pl.) houses a direction for prayer and perform the prayers; and do *thou* give good tidings to the believers."

The second addressee may not have been there at the moment the first was originally spoken to, but a shift is made as when, in the Qur'ān, God addresses Moses and his people. Thus Satan is addressed, when he requests a respite in order to tempt the children of Adam (who were not yet born). He is told:

إِذْهَبْ فَمَنْ تَبِعَكَ مِنْهُمْ فَإِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ جَزَاؤُكُمْ جَزَاءً مَوْفُورًا

'Depart (sing.)! Those of *them* that follow thee - surely Hell will be your (pl.) recompense.'

The shift has a powerful effect: anyone that follows Satan at any time or place is thus addressed directly by God with this strong warning, rather than merely being informed that any one of 'them' will meet with such a



reward. Although **iltifāt** of this kind has its real lexical meaning, it has, in addition, a rhetorical effect, since a person in the second group of addressees can see that he is connected with what has been requested of the first addressee, be it favourable or otherwise. Since the person who is the first addressee is normally included in the second address, this type meets the condition of **iltifāt** mentioned earlier. God as seen in the Qur'ān has access to everybody and may address them whenever He wishes, as is seen in some examples of this type of **iltifāt** in the Qur'ān. Since no distinction is shown in contemporary English between singular, dual and plural second person pronouns, in translations of such Qur'ānic passages the shift may go unobserved and its effect be lost.

Here is a list of over twenty examples of this type: 2:144, 148, 150; 4:109; 5:48; 6:133; 7:3; 10:87; 12:29; 16:2; 17:63; 27:93; 28:35; 29:46; 31:31; 33:4, 19, 51; 39:31; 42:13; 48:9; 58:2; 65:1; 69:18; 73:20.

This category was considered **yaqrub min al-iltifāt** by such writers as Suyūṭī,<sup>[43]</sup> Zarkashī,<sup>[44]</sup> Subkī.<sup>[45]</sup> In fact the name **iltifāt** fits this category well, as it is a turning from one person to another.

#### IV. Change In Verb Tense/Mood

A shift to the imperfect tense serves a number of purposes. It may conjure up an important action to the mind as if it were happening in the present.

اذكروا نعمة الله عليكم إذ جاءتكم جنود فارسنا عليهم ريحا و جنودا لم تروها . . . إذ جاوزكم من فوقكم  
ومن أسفل منكم . . . وتظنون بالله الظنونا

'Remember Allāh's favour when there came against you hosts... from above you and below you, when eyes grew wild and hearts reached the throats and you *think* (**wa tazunnūn**) vain thoughts about Allāh. There *were* the believers sorely tried.' (33:10-11)

هو الذي خلقكم من تراب ثم من نطفة ثم من علقه ثم يخرجكم طفلا

'He it is Who *created* you from dust, then from a drop (of seed) then from a clot, then He *brings* you forth as a child.' (Q. 40:67)

The shift may take place because the second remarkable action continues to happen now:

أنزل من السماء ماء فتصبح الأرض مخضرة

'He *sent* down water from the sky . . . and then the earth *becomes* green upon the morrow.' (Q. 22:63)

سخر لكم ما في الأرض والفلك تجري في البحر بأمره

'Allāh *has made* all that is in the earth subservient to you and the ships *run* upon sea by His command.' (Q. 22:65)

A shift to the perfect tense has the effect of making the act appear already completed, hence its frequent use in talking about the hereafter:

ويوم تُسِيرُ الجبال . . . وحشرناهم

'On the day when We *shall set* the mountains in motion... and We *mustered* them (**hasharnāhum**)  
...'. (Q. 18:47)

وَيَوْمَ يُنْفَخُ فِي الصُّورِ فَفَزِعَ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ

'When the trumpet *is blown* and all in heavens and earth *became* terrified (**fuzi'a**).' (Q. 27:87)

A shift from the indicative to the imperative mood highlights a requested act:

وَإِذْ جَعَلْنَا الْبَيْتَ مَثَابَةً لِّلنَّاسِ وَأَمَّا وَاتَّخِذُوا مِن مَّقَامِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ مُصَلًّى

'We *appointed* the House to be a place of visitation for the people, and a sanctuary and: *Take* to yourselves Abraham's station for a place of prayer!' (Q. 2:125)

قُلْ أَمَرَ رَبِّي بِالْقِسْطِ وَأَقِيمُوا وُجُوهَكُمْ عِندَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ

'Say: "My Lord *has enjoined* justice, and *set* your faces upright (toward Him) at every place of worship!"' (Q. 7:29)

Prayer being a pillar of Islam, the imperative here is more effective than the indicative which gives a piece of information. Similarly, highlighting a good thing is sometimes effectively achieved by a shift from the indicative to the imperative mood:

فَاتَّقُوا النَّارَ الَّتِي وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْكَافِرِينَ . وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا

'... the fire which *has been prepared* for the disbelievers, whose fuel *is* men and stones; and give glad tidings to those who believe and do good works! ' (Q. 2:23-4)

The shift to the imperative **bashshir** is employed in such other instances as 36:11, 39:17, 61: 13. In addition to these, there are more examples of category IV at: 2:25, 125; 7:29; 11:54; 16:11; 18:47; 22:25, 31, 63, 65; 27:87; 33:10; 35:9; 36:33; 39:68; 40:67.

The shift in the tense of the verb was considered **iltifāt** by Sakkākī, as mentioned earlier, and also by Ibn al-Athīr.<sup>[46]</sup> It was considered related to **iltifāt** - (**yaqrub min al-iltifāt**) by other writers such as Qazwīnī,<sup>[47]</sup> Zarkashī,<sup>[48]</sup> Suyūfī,<sup>[49]</sup> and al-Hashimī.<sup>[50]</sup> What is involved in this and in the earlier types of **iltifāt** is the same phenomenon, a grammatical shift for a rhetorical purpose.

## V. Change In Case Marker

This category differs from other categories discussed here in three respects:

1. It involves only a very limited number of examples, two of which have been called **iltifāt** by some (2:177; 4:162). What is said of these two applies also to 5:69;
2. It was said to be **iltifāt** only according to one reading which involves a shift in the words concerned, but in each case there is another (if less common) reading that does not involve a shift;
3. According to the reading involving a shift, explanations of the shift have been advanced on other grammatical grounds; but explanation on the ground of **iltifāt** remains at least as strong as, if not stronger than other explanations.

In spite of these restrictions, examples of this type have been called **iltifāt** and, at the very least, we may legitimately recognize that such a construction has by its very nature the right to be considered in terms of **iltifāt**.

Zarkashī reports that 2:177 and 4:162 have been considered **iltifāt** according to some,<sup>[51]</sup> and the claim appears to have justification as a shift is involved, and it appears to be employed for rhetorical effect. Q. 2:177 counts those who are truly pious, who believe, observe the prayers, give of their substance, however cherished:

ولكنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ . . . وَأَتَى الْمَالَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ . . . وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَى الزَّكَاةَ وَالْمُوفُونَ بِعَهْدِهِمْ إِذَا عَاهَدُوا وَالصَّابِرِينَ فِي الْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَحِينَ الْبَأْسِ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُونَ

'but the righteous. . . and those who fulfill their covenant (**al-mūfūn**) when they have one and endure with fortitude (**al-sābirīn**) misfortune hardship and peril (of conflict), those are they who are true in faith.'

**Al-sābirīn** is in parallel with **al-mūfūn**, which is a nominative, and should therefore be nominative (**al-sābirūn**), but there is a shift to the accusative case. How is this to be explained? According to the reports of Zarkashī, it is **iltifāt**. As will be seen below, departure from what is normally expected is done only for a special purpose. Here it can be seen to emphasize the importance of **al-sābirīn**. The need to emphasize the importance of this particular class of people is borne out by the fact that **al-sābirīn** is mentioned four times in the same **sūra**, being associated particularly with misfortune, hardship, and the battlefield (2:153, 155, 177, 249). The verse following our example of **iltifāt** here speaks of retaliation in homicide, and fighting comes in the **sūra** soon after.

While emphasizing the importance of **al-sābirīn**, the shift in the case marker does not cause any confusion about the role of the word involved and its relationship to other parts of the sentence. The case marker is only one of many (stronger) indications of that relationship, including the order within a series of conjunctions, the adjectival form in the masculine plural.<sup>[52]</sup>

Before we go any further, we would consider other opinions about the explanation of this type of shift. In this connexion, J. Burton<sup>[53]</sup> quotes a **ḥadīth** that involves examples discussed here (4:162).<sup>[54]</sup>

'Urwah questions: 'A'ishah about a number of verses:

4:162 lākin al-rāsikhūna fī'l'ilm minhum  
wa'l-mu'minūna yu'minūna bi-mā unzila ilaika  
wa mā unzila min qablīka wa'l-muqīmīna  
al-Ṣālat wa'l-mu'tuūna al-zākat wa'l-mu'minūna  
bi'llahi wa'l-yawm'l-ākhir ula'ika sanu'tihim  
ajran 'aziman.

5:69 inna 'lladhīna āmanū wa 'lladhīna hādū  
wa'l sabī'una

20:63 qālū: inna hādhāni la-sāḥirāni

'A'ishah replied: 'That was the doing of the scribes. They wrote it out wrongly.'

Burton does not appear to question the refutation by Muslims of another report of `Uthmān that speaks of wrong writing, and concentrates on that of `A'isha, commenting, 'as the **isnāds** of `A'isha's reports are sound, the reports themselves could not just be spirited away'<sup>[55]</sup> (p. 182). He does not give a source for the soundness of the **isnād**, nor for **isnāds** in general. He gives an account of what Suyūṭī said about the difficulties seen in such reports.<sup>[56]</sup> But Suyūṭī speaks only of an **isnād** of 'A'isha's **ḥadīth** which he regards as sound.<sup>[57]</sup> This, however is questionable. Suyūṭī gives the **isnād** as: <sup>[58]</sup>

حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو مُعَاوِيَةَ عَنْ هِشَامِ بْنِ عُرْوَةَ عَنْ أَبِيهِ أَنَّهُ سَأَلَ عَائِشَةَ

Here we have Abū Mu'āwiya as a link in the **isnād**, and he has been weakened by such **ḥadīth** scholars as Tirmidhī, Ibn Ḥanbal and al-Ḥākim in a way that makes it difficult to consider the **ḥadīth** sound,<sup>[59]</sup> it is moreover not included in any of the authoritative **al-kuttab al-sitta**.<sup>[60]</sup>

In his article, Burton discusses three verses: 2:177; 4:162; 5:69. In the case of 2:177, he gives a lengthy report on the various opinions of Muslim authors on **wa'l-sābirīn** (which, incidentally, does not occur in 'A'isha's **ḥadīth**, which he quotes). These opinions can be divided into the following categories.<sup>[61]</sup>

1. There is another reading, **wa'l-sābirūn**, which does not involve a shift;
2. **Sābirīn** may be the direct object of 'give money to';
3. **Sābirīn** is made accusative in order to indicate praise;
4. Varying the inflection of one or more conjoined epithets for the specific purpose of drawing attention to their isolation intending to express praise or blame (in our case the former).

No. 4 amounts to the same thing as **iltifāt**: a grammatical shift for a rhetorical purpose. No. 3 has the same intention but 4 is preferable since it does not require implying such things as an omitted verb like **amdaḥ**.

The second example given by Zarkashī as **iltifāt** in case marker is Q. 4 162.

لَكِنَّ الرَّاٰسِخُوْنَ فِي الْعِلْمِ مِنْهُمْ وَالْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ . . . وَالْمُقِيْمِيْنَ الصَّلَاةِ وَالْمُؤْتُوْنَ الزَّكَاةَ .

'But those of them that are firmly rooted in knowledge, and the believers . . . that perform the prayer and pay the alms. . . '

The shift (from nominative to accusative again) occurs here with those 'that perform the prayer' (**wa'l-muqīmīn**). Highlighting prayer here is understandable in the light of the fact that prayer is mentioned nine times in sūra 4, including a long passage about its importance in war, peculiar to this sūra, and how the hypocrites perform it languidly (43:77, 101-3, 142, 167). Here again Burton has detailed the views of Muslim scholars in connexion with the verse,<sup>[62]</sup> which can be summarized as follows:

1. Some read **al-muqīmūn**, without a shift;
2. **Al-muqīmīn** describes **al-rāsikhūn**, but is an accusative of praise;
3. Abān b. `Uthmān describes the copying of the text: 'Having written the first part, the scribe asked: "What shall I write?" They replied: "Write **wa'l-muqīmīn** and he wrote down what he heard' - i.e. **wa'l-muqīmīn** which is the direct object of write'. This is rejected on the ground that it appears in the

accusative in Ubayy's *muṣḥaf* and in other copies of that of `Uthmān. The **isnād**, has, moreover, been considered weak.<sup>[63]</sup>

4. **Al-muqīmīn** is a genitive governed either by: 'they believe in what has been revealed... and [in] those who maintain worship', i.e. the angels; or governed by **min** or **ila**, etc.

No. 4 is less likely to be the case as it requires **taqdīr** or separation of the noun from the preposition that governs it. No. 2 is the more plausible explanation and it has the same function as that suggested for **iltifat**.

Zamakhsharī, whose views on this verse are not included in the account Burton gives of the views of Muslim authors, recognized the rhetorical effect, rejecting any claim that it was a case of grammatical error in the written text of the Qur'ān, a claim which, in his opinion, could be advanced only by someone who did not read through **al-kitāb**, and did not know the ways of the Arabs in their speech, particularly in their use of the accusative case for singling something out.<sup>[64]</sup>

Similar to Q. 2:177 and 4:162, which Zarkashī reported were considered **iltifat** by some, is Q. 5:69, which is the last of the three verses discussed by Burton.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالصَّابِقُونَ وَالنَّصَارَى مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ  
وَلَهُمْ يُحْزَنُونَ

'Those who believe and those who are Jews, and Sabaeans and Christians - whosoever believes in God and the Last Day and does good work - there shall no fear come upon them, neither shall they grieve'

**Sābi'ūn** appears to be a coordinate with the accusative nouns before it and should accordingly have been accusative, but it is nominative. Here again there is another (if less common) reading **wa'l-sābi'īn** making it accusative with no shift. Muslim scholars have expressed various views to explain the nominative **sābi'ūn**. Burton has given an extensive report of these grammatical views. Some, for instance, see the nominative as justifiable because when **inna** is followed by an invariable noun (here **al-ladhina**), a following noun in conjunction could either be accusative governed by **inna**, or nominative, canceling the government of **inna**.<sup>[65]</sup> Rāzī prefers this view. Others see the nominative as marking a fresh sentence, with an unexpressed predicate, i.e.: **wa'l-sābi'ūn kadhālik** in the sense that those who believe, the Jews, the Christians, those who believe in God and the Last Day and do good work shall not fear nor shall they grieve, and this also applies to the **sābi'ūn**. As Khalīl and Sibawaih put it (Burton p. 193).

The **sābi'ūn** have not been co-ordinated with the foregoing groups to bring out that, of all the groups mentioned, they are the most forward. The intended effect of the verse is something like: 'God will accept repentance from these groups, should they believe and do good works and He will wash away their sins, so that even the **sābi'ūn** will be treated in this manner if they too believe'.

Burton remarks that men who knew the Qur'ān by heart could make the mental comparison between this verse and Q. 2:62, and we may also add Q 22: 17 - in both of these, **sābi'īn** is in the accusative in a sequence of accusatives, thus giving rise to no question such as we have in Q. 5:69.

Burton continues (p. 189):

There does not appear to be anything in the grammatical structure of the two contexts that would adequately explain the differing inflections assumed by the same word: **sābi'in/ūn**

Rāzī has, in fact, made the comparison between the three verses: Burton ends his article by remarking (p. 196) that:

placing Q. 5:69 alongside Q. 2:62 and Q. 22:17: . . . Rāzī argues that God Most High must have had His reasons for the distinctions between the inflections of the verses. Were we capable of fathoming those reasons, we should indeed have achieved perfection. When we admit that we are incapable of divining those reasons, we recognize the weakness of our human intellects, not any weakness in the Divine Word.

Rāzī's Arabic version is:

لما كان المتكلم أحكم الحاكمين فلا بد لهذه التغيرات من حكم وفوائد، فإن أدركنا تلك الحكم فقد فرنا بالكمال وإن عجزنا أحلنا القصور على عقولنا لا على كلام الحكيم والله اعلم.

It appears from Burton's translation that Rāzī is of the view that we are incapable of perceiving the reasons for these divine variations. In fact, Rāzī preferred the view of Farra' for justifying the nominative. This preference, however, is not specifically attributed to Rāzī in Burton's article (which would have made Rāzī's view clear), but is merely given as 'now seen to be preferable' (p. 194).<sup>[66]</sup>

It was also Rāzī who refuted Zamakhsharī's view that a noun coordinated with **inna** and its **ism** could be made nominative only after the predicate had been expressed, but again this refutation was not clearly attributed to Rāzī in Burton's article. Rāzī, moreover, included the views of other Muslim authors which Burton also included. Thus Rāzī and other Muslims have produced explanations for the shift. In fact, closer reading of Rāzī's statement quoted above gives a different view from that presented by Burton:

Since the speaker has the most perfect judgement, these variations must have their sound reasons and benefits; if we are able to understand those reasons we will attain (the desired) perfection (in understanding these matters) but if we fail, we should attribute any failure to the shortcomings of our perception rather than blame them on the speech of the Most Wise.

Thus, it is not '*His* [God's] reasons' but '*their* sound reasons', the word **fawa'id** 'benefits' was left out in Burton's version and obviously these benefits are for men, not God, and it is not the hypothetical '*were we* capable of fathoming those reasons', but the open conditional '*if we are* able to understand' - the conditional particle Rāzī used is **in**, not **law**. He used **in** again, in '*if we fail*', not '*when*', implying that scholars try and some succeed in attaining the desired perfection of understanding. He himself has preferred one opinion Rāzī is simply being modest in not asserting categorically that his opinion is right - which is traditional in Islamic religious scholarship.

As regards Burton's statement that 'there does not appear to be anything in the grammatical structure of the . . . contexts that would adequately explain the differing inflections', if we look beyond the grammatical structure to the semantic context of the situation in 5:69, it is, in fact, different from those of 2:62 and 20:17. Before this verse we read:

O People of the Book: you do not stand on anything, until you perform the Torah and the Gospel and what was sent down to you from your Lord. (Q. 5:68)



In 5:65 after reporting grave misdeeds of the People of the Book, it goes on:

If the People of the Book would believe and be Godfearing, surely We should remit their sins and admit them to Gardens of Bliss.

Likewise Q. 5:73-3 reads:

They are unbelievers who say 'God is one of three in a trinity': for there is no god except one God. If they desist not from their word, verily a grievous penalty will befall the unbelievers. Will they not turn to God and seek his forgiveness, for God is all-forgiving, all-compassionate.

Thus, before and after 5:69 the importance of true belief and good deeds are stressed: in spite of any straying, even by the **sābi'ūn**, those who return to true belief and good work shall not fear or grieve. The context of 2:62 and 22:17 is quite different from this. Judging from the context of the situation, then, **sābi'ūn** in 5:69 could be said to require highlighting in the way suggested by Zamakhsharī, Khalīl and Sībawaih:<sup>[67]</sup> even the **Sābi'ūn** will be forgiven if they believe. . . others will the more readily be forgiven, the **Sābi'ūn** being of all the categories listed the most clearly astray. According to this opinion, **sābi'ūn** has been singled out by a shift in the case marker for special effect. In this case it would not differ from 2:177 and 4:162, both of which had been understood as **iltifāt**.

## VI. Using A Noun In Place Of A Pronoun

This is a substantial category of which I have recorded well over a hundred examples from the Qur'ān; in fact there are many more. Writers on **balāgha** place it along with **iltifāt** under the broader heading of **al-khurūj 'alā muqtadat'l-zāhir** (departure from what is normally expected).<sup>[68]</sup> In both there is actually a departure of one kind or another, be it in person, number, addressee, case, reference (noun/pronoun), or tense/mood of a verb. There is no difference between replacing a pronoun by a noun for special effect and replacing 1st person by the 2nd, or singular by plural, for a similar effect. The condition of **iltifāt** obtains in the present category since the person is the same in the noun used and the pronoun it has replaced. To that extent, there is no reason to treat examples of this category in the Qur'ān differently from those treated under **iltifāt** and related features. In fact, when Zarkashī was discussing the reasons for **iltifāt** and giving examples to illustrate his point he included an example<sup>[69]</sup> involving the use of a noun in place of a pronoun (Q. 44:4-6). This category comprises the following: 2:59, 60, 64, 105, 107, 109, 112, 115, 153, 157, 207; 3:5; 4:26, 27, 28, 32, 80, 81, 84, 87, 88, 92, 94, 95, 99, 100, 103, 104, 106, 110, 113, 176; 5:39, 40, 54, 83, 97, 98; 6:1, 21; 8:13; 12:87, 90; 13:2, 3; 14:1, 6, 11, 20, 21, 25, 27, 34, 47, 51; 16:18, 19, 84; 17:22; 19:19, 56, 69, 91, 92, 93; 20:130; 21:39; 22:31 58, 60, 61, 62, 72, 78, 23:27, 58, 59; 24:38. 62, 64; 25:17; 28:64, 56, 68, 70, 75, 87, 29:5, 10, 20, 45, 63; 32:3; 33:2, 13, 17, 25, 50; 35:3, 28; 38:4, 26, 27; 39:2, 3, 22; 40:6, 21, 44; 41:27; 42:5, 47, 49, 53; 46:11; 47:4; 57:9, 21, 29; 59:18; 60:1; 61:13; 63:1, 9; 67:11; 74:31; 110:3.

A large number of the examples involve substituting the name of Allāh (sometimes **rabb**) for His pronoun. Thus: 'To Allāh belongs the East and the West; whithersoever you turn there is the face of *Allāh*; *Allāh* is all-embracing, all-knowing' (1:115). Instead of 'His face' and 'He is' we have the name, which is more important than the pronoun; it makes the matter explicitly exclusive to Allāh. Stating the name of Allāh, moreover, in the three successive statements makes each of them absolute, independent and quotable. This is a common feature in the language of the Qur'ān appropriate to a book which asserts that it is the word of God for all times and places. A great many verses end with such absolute, independent, quotable statements as: 'Allāh has power over all things', 'Allāh is all-hearing, all-knowing'. 'Allāh is with the steadfast', 'Allāh is merciful,

compassionate', and the like. Such endings give the statements force and conclusiveness. There are moreover, certain words in the Qur'ān that tend to collocate specifically with the noun Allāh (and less frequently with **rabb**) rather than with the pronoun. We have already mentioned **al-hamd** (praise); other such words are: **fadl** (bounty), **rizq** (provision), **sabīl** (the way), **ajal** (the term set by Allāh), **ba'th** (resurrection) and, to a certain extent, **huda** (guidance). This collocation highlights exclusivity, and contrast with other than Allāh is normally implied.

When a derived (**mushtaq**) noun is used instead of a pronoun, it indicates causality. Thus in Q. 38:27:

وما خلقنا السموات والأرض وما بينهما باطلاً ذلك ظنُّ الذين كفروا فويل للذين كفروا من النار.

'We have not created the heaven and earth and all that is between them in vain. That is the opinion of *those who disbelieve*, and woe to *those who disbelieve* from Hell-fire.'

Repeating the noun (**lilladhīna kafaru**), instead of using a pronoun (**lahum**) indicates that their disbelief is the cause of their opinion and their doom. Indication of causality in such cases is expressed in Islamic jurisprudence in the formula:

تعليق الحكم بمشتق يؤذن بعلة ما منه الاشتقاق

'Linking the judgement/proposition to a derived noun (rather than to a pronoun) indicates the causality of the derivational origin.'

A frequently quoted example of the technique of using a noun in place of a pronoun is Q. 33:50:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ إِنَّا أَحْلَلْنَا لَكَ أَزْوَاجَكَ . . . وَامْرَأَةً مُؤْمِنَةً إِنْ وَهَبَتْ نَفْسَهَا لِلنَّبِيِّ إِنْ أَرَادَ النَّبِيُّ أَنْ يَسْتَكْحِقَهَا خَالِصَةً لَكَ مِنْ دُونِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ .

'O Prophet, We have made lawful for you . . . and a believing woman, if she gives herself to *the Prophet*, if *the Prophet* desires to take her in marriage, this is for you only, not for the rest of the believers.'

'- if she gives herself "to the Prophet" rather than "to you".' This restricts the ordinance to the person of the Prophet, emphasized by the repetition of the Prophet'. Q. 110:2-3 gives us two examples of this technique.

إِذَا جَاءَ نَصْرُ اللَّهِ وَالْفَتْحُ . وَرَأَيْتَ النَّاسَ يَدْخُلُونَ فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ أَفْوَاجًا فَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ

'When Allāh's help and victory come, and you see men entering the religion of *Allāh* in throngs, then proclaim the praise of *your Lord*. . .'

In 'the religion of Allāh' in place of 'His' there is emphasis and contrast with the religion of others, 'the praise of your Lord' instead of 'His' reminds the Prophet at the time of victory of the care of his Lord and echoes the request made repeatedly early in his career: 'Be thou patient under the judgement of your Lord' and 'proclaim the praise of your Lord'. (Q. 15:98, 52:48; 68:48).

## Iltilaf And Related Features: A Characteristic Of The Style Of The Qur'an

There are examples of **iltifāt** in pre-Islamic Arabic. Indeed nearly all authors on **iltifāt** as well as early writers

on the Qur'ān, and Zamakhsharī in his **tafsīr** who was frequently quoted by subsequent authors, state that it is a well-known feature in Arabic, well established in pre-Islamic poetry. Yet even what these authors themselves say makes it clear that the extent and variety of **iltifāt** in the Qur'ān goes far beyond what they have cited in poetry. Even Ibn al-Athīr, whose book was not on the Qur'ān but on **adab al-kātib wa'l-sha'ir**, recognized this:

If you examine the text of the Qur'ān you will find much **iltifāt** (**ashya' kathīra**); something of this (**shay' min dhālik**) is also found in poetry.<sup>[70]</sup>

The overwhelming majority of his examples are from the Qur'ān. The lists included above give a clear picture of the extent of the feature in the Qur'ān. As was said earlier, it has been suggested that almost all examples of **iltifāt** in the Qur'ān are to be found in the Makkan **sūras**. This is not so. As is clear from the lists provided, **sūra 2** (which was revealed over a long period in Madina) contains many instances of **iltifāt** (see also **sūras 6** and **8**). Even in a very late, very short, Madinan **sūra** (110) we find **iltifāt**.

As God speaks in the Qur'ān, He is seen to have access to everybody present or absent, in time (past or future) and place. We have seen in examples of type I (**iltifāt** in person) how God addressed generations not yet born (to warn them against following Satan, for instance). Only limited kinds of **iltifāt** can be expected in poetry, as is observed in examples quoted in **balāgha** books: Imru' al-Qays's lines, for instance, are a form of monologue. This may be partly explained by the fact that, with a few exceptions, such as the poetry of 'Umbar b. Abī Rabī'a, there is very little dialogue in Arabic poetry. God also speaks about Himself in various ways:

كَتَابَ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ لِتُخْرِجَ النَّاسَ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَمِيدِ . اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ .

'A book We have sent down to thee that thou mayst bring forth mankind from darkness to light by the leave of *their Lord* to the path of the *All-Might, the All-laudable, Allāh*, to Whom belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth.' (Q. 14:2)

Here we have various aspects, shown in italics each with a shift - either in number person or reference (noun in place of pronoun). In the Qur'ān Allāh speaks *to* the Prophet, the believers, the unbelievers, and sometimes to things; and He speaks *about* them, sometimes commenting on or addressing them at an important point with approval or disapproval. He informs, orders, prohibits, urges, reprimands, promises or warns, all with reference to this world and the next. The limits of a Qur'ānic verse are different from those of an ordinary sentence and many encompass a number of sentences, with different persons, with Allāh at the centre of the situation with access to all, speaking from the viewpoint of various aspects of His Godhead about the various persons/things or talking to them from their multiple viewpoints - this can hardly be expected in poetry. Qur'ānic material is complex and dense: in addition to **al-jumla'l-khabariyya** (declarative statements) there is an unusually high frequency of **al-jumla'l-inshā'iyya** (affective statements). All this facilitates the frequent use of **iltifāt** and its related features.

The use of direct speech is, moreover, an obvious feature of the style of the Qur'ān: so is the omission of the introductory 'he says'. Thus God addresses bees (16:68-9) and mountains (34:10) for instance. The use of the direct speech of the unbelievers in the Qur'ān is important as it records exactly what they utter so that they may be judged by what they themselves have professed rather than by what anybody has reported (see for instance 22:51-69, 26:16-31). Such techniques frequently give rise to the employment of **iltifāt**.

We have also seen how for various theological and rhetorical reasons, certain words collocate with others in the Qur'ān; and how the principle of **tawhīd** and the technique of contrast, the multiplicity of viewpoints, the use of independent, quotable statements, together all affect grammatical forms and give rise to shifts in these which could not be expected in other Arabic poetry or prose, not even the **ḥadīth** of the Prophet or **ḥadīth** Qudsi.<sup>[71]</sup>

As can be attested by examining the Arabic text of the Qur'ān and books on **balāgha** and **tafsīr** such as those by 'Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī and Zamakhsharī, for instance, there are two general features that mark the use of language in the Qur'ān conciseness of statement, and the loading of economical statement with maximum effect. These, together with the other factors mentioned, account for the high frequency of the employment of **iltifāt**, and its related features.

## The Place Of Itifat And Related Features In Balāgha Books

In **balāgha** books, this phenomenon is normally discussed under '**ilm al-mā'anī**', for instance, by Sakkākī and Qazwīnī and modern writers. Some classical authors, however, treated it under '**ilm al-badī**', as did al-Ṭibī, placing it under **taḥsīn ma'nawī** (semantic refinement/enhancement), as opposed to **taḥsīn lafzī** (verbal embellishment). Sakkākī mentioned it briefly under **badī**' and referred to his earlier discussion under **mā'anī**. Suyūṭī treats **iltifāt** as a type of **badī**' in the Qur'ān. The former (**mā'anī** school) saw it as a departure from what is normally expected, a type of **khurūj al-kalām 'alā muqtaḍa'l-zāhir**. This represents a formal viewpoint. The latter (**badī**' school), on the other hand, looked at it as the effect of rhetorical shift - that is, semantic enhancement - as observed in Ṭibī's analysis. This represents a functional viewpoint. The discussion of **iltifāt** is, however, the same in both schools, and the difference is merely one of a heading. Authors of **balāgha** books recognize that a speaker departs from what is normally expected only 'for considerations required by the situation in certain contexts', as Al-Hāshimī puts it:<sup>[72]</sup>

ولكن قد يُعَدَّل عما يقتضيه الظاهر إلى خلافه مما تقتضيه الحال في بعض مقامات الكلام لاعتبارات يراها المتكلم.

Meeting this requirement of the context is the central issue in '**ilm al-mā'anī**'. The 'semantic enhancement' as viewed in **badī**' is rather general; departure from what is normally expected for considerations seen by the speaker, as viewed in **mā'anī**, is more specific and to the point. In the final analysis, what various authors discuss under **fawā'id al-iltifāt**<sup>[73]</sup> are detailed examples of semantic enhancement and the considerations seen by the speaker.

## The Functions Of Itifat And Its Related Features

As we have seen, **iltifāt** and the related features discussed above involve a grammatical shift. They are discussed in **mā'anī**, under the general heading of **khurūj al-kalām 'alā muqtaḍa'l-zāhir**. Departure from what is expected is done **li'qtida' al-hal lidhalik li-'urūd i'tibār ākhar alṭaf min dhālik al-zāhir**<sup>[74]</sup> (because the situation requires such departure, to meet a consideration more subtle than is normally expected). Departure from the normal without benefit is forbidden in **balāgha mumtani' fi bāb al-balāgha**.<sup>[75]</sup> Ibn al-Athīr explains that the shift from one form to another is done only when it is required for some special reason: **al-'udūl 'an ṣiḡha min al-alfāz ilā ukhrā lā yakūn illā li-naw' khuṣūsiyya iqtadat dhālik**.<sup>[76]</sup> With every shift, then, it is natural to ask the reason for such a departure from the norm. Thus Muslim writers on **iltifāt** normally include a section on **asbāb/fawā'id al-iltifāt** (the reasons for/beneficial effects of **iltifāt**).

Zamakhsharī<sup>[77]</sup> who presents the material in his **tafsīr** mainly in a question and answer format introduced by 'If you said why? how? etc....', 'I would say ...', gives a threefold answer to explain **iltifāt**:

1. This is a technique of **balāgha** well known to scholars in the field, has a technical name, and is of many types.
2. It is a habit of speech of the Arabs, as in the three lines of Imru' al-Qays cited earlier where the shift occurs three times in accordance with the Arabs' way of varying their speech, and because when speech is changed from one style to another this is more likely to raise the interest of the listener than it would if it were all in a uniform style.
3. In specific contexts iltifat has its own particular benefits.

This explanation was copied, nearly always verbatim, by subsequent authors. The general observation about the Arabs' habit of seeking to raise the interest of the listener made by Zamakhsharī in connexion with Imru' al-Qays's lines was taken unfairly by some authors as representing the reason given by writers of **balāgha** for **iltifāt**. Such authors then retorted that this could not be the reason, since there are long stretches of material without **iltifāt**.<sup>[78]</sup> Zamakhsharī, was not of course, setting out to write a chapter on **iltifāt**, but dealing with examples as he met them in his **tafsīr**, and offering eloquent elucidation of the powerful effect of **iltifāt** in such examples.

Zarkashī presents a representative section on the **asbāb** of **iltifāt** (pp. 325- 33). After referring to the general benefit of raising interest and the objections levelled at this by some authors, he gives examples of specific benefits. There is, for instance, the intention to honour the addressee, as in Q. 1:4; adding a useful piece of information contained in a noun used in place of a pronoun (44:6); showing others by a change from 2nd to 3rd person how badly the original addressees have behaved, so that they are turned away from (10:22); the explicit indication by the speaker, through change from 1st singular to 1st plural, that the action is exclusively his (35:9); showing a particular interest in something at which the shift takes place (41: 12) and reproving by suddenly turning to address someone you have been talking about (19:99).

Muslim writers on **balāgha** and **tafsīr** and Arab literary critics who discussed examples of **iltifāt** in the Qur'ān (including those cited by Nöldeke and mentioned at the beginning of this article) showed the beneficial points and powerful effect of **iltifāt**. It should be pointed out that the finer points of certain types of **iltifāt** may not appear in the translation of the Qur'ān into a European language (like English or German) which naturally differs from Arabic in certain aspects of style. This, however, is a problem of translation for which solution should be sought. We are here concerned with Qur'ānic material in Arabic and a feature of style of the Arabic language in general. It was suggested earlier that Nöldeke viewed the examples he cited from a purely formal, grammatical standpoint. As has been observed, he did not mention the term **iltifāt** in discussing the examples he cited. Recognizing that the feature under discussion is very old in Arabic (and is still used in modern Arabic),<sup>[79]</sup> has a technical name and countless examples, and recognizing further that a shift or departure from what is normally expected for no reason is inadmissible (**mumtani'**) in **balāgha**, Arab critics, rhetoricians and exegetes have, on the other hand, considered the rhetorical purpose and explained the powerful effect of the grammatical shift.

---

## References

[1] Strassburg, Verlag von Karl J Trübner, 1910.

[2] R. Paret, *The Cambridge History Of Arabic Literature*, I (1983), 205.

[3] According to the numbering system used in the Egyptian edition of the Qur'an which I follow, this is 7:57; similarly there is a slight difference in some other numbers; but as I include the Arabic version of citations there is no risk of confusion.

[4] *al-Jāmi' al-Kabīr fī Ṣinā'at al-Manzūm min al-Kalām wa'l Manthūr*, (ed.) M. Jawād and J. Sa'īd (Iraq, 1956), 98.

[5] See for instance *al-Tibyān fī 'ilm al-Ma'ānī wa'l-badī' wa'l-bayān*, Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad al-Ṭībī (743/1342), (Baghdad, 1987), 284-8; *al-Idāh fī ulūm al-Balāgha*, by M. M. A. al-Qazwīnī (793/1338) (Cairo, 1971), 43-5.

[6] This was a general practice for centuries, in writing textbooks on various subjects in Arabic, and not just **balāgha** where some striking examples were simply copied by successive writers who found these age-old examples adequate and saw no need to depart from them.

[7] *al-Mathal al-Sā'ir fī adab al-Kātib wa'l shā'ir*, II (ed.) M. M. 'Abd al-Hamid (Cairo, 1933), 4-19: *al-Jāmi' al-Kabīr fī Ṣinā'at al-Manzūm min al-Kalām wa'l Manthūr* (Baghdad. 1956), 98-105.

[8] A. Maṭlūb, *Muj'am al-Mustalahat al-Balāghiyya wa-tatawwurha*, I (Baghdad, 1983), 302.

[9] *al-Itqān fī ulūm al-Qur'ān*, III (Cairo, 1967), 253-9.

[10] *al-Burhān fī ulūm al-Qur'ān*, III (Cairo, 1958), 314-37.

[11] Abū 'Alī, M: *Dirāsāt fī'l-Balāgha*, (Amman 1984), 127.

[12] See Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Mathal al-sā'ir*, II, 4.

[13] The famous *al-Arba'īn* of Nawawī, for instance (Beirut 1976).

[14] *Qur'ānic Studies: Sources & Methods Of Scriptural Interpretation* (Oxford 1977), 227-46.

[15] op cit., 249-51.

[16] *Bell's Introduction To The Qur'ān: Completely Revised & Enlarged By W. Montgomery Watt*, Islamic Surveys, Edinburgh University Press, 1970, 79-85.

[17] *EI* (2nd ed.) V, 419-21.

[18] op cit., 196-20.

[19] Abū Hilāl al-'Askarī, *Kitab al-Ṣinā'atayn* (Cairo, 1952), 392.

[20] See Al-Bāqillānī, M. b. T: *I'jāz al-Qur'ān*, (ed.) S. A. Ṣaqr (Cairo, n.d.), 149-51.

[21] See *Ma'ānī'l-Qur'ān*, I (Cairo, 1955) 60; *Majāz al-Qur'ān*, II (Cairo, 1954), 139; *Ta'wīl mushkil al-Qur'ān*, (Cairo, 1954), 223; *al-Kāmil*, II (Cairo, 1936), 729.

[22] *Naqd al-shi'r* (Cairo, 1963), 167.



- [23] *al-Sinā'atayn* (Cairo, 1952), 392.
- [24] *Kashshāf*, I (Beirut, 1967), 62-5 *et passim*.
- [25] *Miftāh al-'ulūm* (Cairo, 1937), 95, 118.
- [26] *al-Mathal al-sā'ir*, II (Cairo, 1939), 4.
- [27] *al-Burhān*, III, 314-15.
- [28] *al-Burhān fī wujūh al-Bayān* (Baghdad, 1967), 152.
- [29] *al-Badī' fī al-sā'ir* (Cairo, 1960), 200.
- [30] *al-Risāla al-'asjadiyya* (Tunis, 1976), 146.
- [31] *al-Fawā'id fī mushkil al-Qur'ān* (Kuwait, 1967), 16: *al-Kāshif 'an Ijāz al-Qur'ān* (Baghdad, 1974) 100; see also Tibī, op. cit., 287. In *A Tenth Century Document Of Arabic Literary Theory & Criticism* (1950, 140) C. V. Grünebaum observes: 'Goldziher registers **talawwun** as a synonym of **iltifat**. **Talawwun** in later usage is however a form of verse which allows the verse to be read in accordance with various meters.' The treatment given above shows that Goldziher was correct.
- [32] See Zarkashī's *Burhān*, III, 31-2; al-Suyūfī, *Itqān*, III, 257.
- [33] If we compare the use of pronoun here to that in other types, we can observe the contrast between the use of the 3rd person - abstract power, the 1st person plural - aesthetic power, and the 1st person singular - personal feeling, the shift emphasizing the quality of each.
- [34] M. Sa'rān, *al-Lugha wa'l-mujtama'* (Cairo, 1963), 139-58.
- [35] *Bell's Introduction To The Qur'ān*, 66.
- [36] *Koranische Untersuchungen* (Leipzig, 1926), 5.
- [37] *Qur'ānic Studies*, 14.
- [38] Zamakhsharī, *Kashshāf*, I (Beirut, Dar al-ma'rifa, n.d. ), 64-5.
- [39] Zarkashī, *Burhān*, III, 196; M. Abdel Haleem, 'Al-Sayyāb: a study of his poetry', in R C Ostle (ed.) *Studies In Modern Arabic Literature* (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1975), 78-9.
- [40] See for instance Qazwīnī, op cit., 26-7; A. al-Hāshimī, *Jawāhir al-balāgha* (Beirut, 1986), 129.
- [41] op cit., 234.
- [42] op cit., 258.
- [43] op cit., 258.
- [44] op cit., 334-5.

[45] *Shurūh al-talkhīs* (Cairo: Al-Halabi & Co., 1937), 492.

[46] *al-Mathal al-sā'ir*, II, 13-19.

[47] op cit., 46-7.

[48] op cit., 336.

[49] op cit., 258-9.

[50] op cit., 241-2.

[51] *al-Burhān*, III, 325.

[52] See Hassān, T., *al-Lughah 'l- 'arabiyya mabanāhā wa-ma'nāhā* (Cairo, 1976), 233-40.

[53] 'Linguistic errors in the Qur'ān', *Journal of Semitic Studies*, XXX, 2, 1988, 181-96.

[54] *ibid.*, 181. Burton quotes another ḥadīth: 'When the copies of the revelations which he had ordered to be made were submitted to him, 'Uthmān noted several irregularities. "Do not change them", he ordered, the Arabs will change (or will correct them) as they recite".'

This, however does not involve any of our examples of **iltifāt** at all and Burton gives an account (p. 182) of what Suyūṭī said [Suyūṭī, op. cit., II, 270] about the difficulties seen in that reports. Suyūṭī then goes on to deal with the reports.

[55] The way Suyūṭī, Ṭabarī and other Muslim scholars dealt with such material testifies to their moral and academic integrity. There was no attempt to ignore, 'spirit away', suppress or restrict the circulation of any reports, however sound or fabricated, even when they were considered absurd and even when they questioned fundamental matters of the Qur'ān.

[56] We should add to that Ṭabarī's comment that 'Ubayy's muṣḥaf, written by a different hand, in coinciding with the reading of our text shows what is in our muṣḥaf to be correct.' *Tafsīr*, xi (ed.) M. M. Shākir (Cairo, n.d.), 394.

[57] op cit., 269, 272.

[58] op. cit, 395. See also Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*, 9, 395.

[59] See Dhahabī: *Mīzān al-i'tidāl*, VI, (ed.) A. M. and F. A. Al-Bijāwī (Cairo, 1963), 249, Ibn Rajah, *Sharḥ 'ilal al-Tirmidhī* (Baghdad, 1369/1949), 347-9.

[60] See also criticism of the reports by M. A. Zarqānī: *Manāhīl al'irfān fī 'ulūm al-Qur'ān* (3rd ed. Cairo n.d.), 386-96.

[61] art. cit., 183-6.

[62] art cit. 186-8.

[63] It includes Hammad b. Salama and Aban b. `Uthmān: see *Sharḥ 'ilal al-Tirmidhī*, (ed.) S. J Al-Ḥamīd (Baghdad, 1396/1976), 347-9; for a general discussion, see also Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr*, (ed.) M. M. Shāker (Cairo, n.d.) IX, 395-9.

[64] *Kashshāf*, I, 631-2.

[65] Or by reason of original grammatical structure before **inna** was introduced.

[66] *Tafsīr*, VI, part 12, 55.

[67] See Burton, 192-3.

[68] Qazwīnī, 42 6: Al-Hāshimī, 239-42.

[69] op. cit. 392.

[70] *al-Mathal al-sā'ir*, II, 9.

[71] I have checked *Forty Ḥadith Qudsī*, selected and translated by E. Ibrahim and D. Johnson Davies (Damascus, 1980). Interestingly, God speaks throughout in the first person singular pronoun.

[72] op. cit., 239.

[73] See Zarkashī, 355 ff.

[74] Al-Maghribī's commentary on *Talkhīṣ al-Miftāḥ*, see *Shurūḥ al-talkhīṣ*, I (Cairo Al-Halabi, 1937), 448.

[75] *ibid.*, II, 57.

[76] *al-Mathal al-sā'ir*, II, 14.

[77] *Kashshāf*, I (Beirut Dār al-ma'rifa, n.d.), 62-4.

[78] See an example referred to in Zarkashī's *Burhān*, III, 326-8.

[79] Najib Mahfouz, the distinguished Arab novelist and winner of the Nobel prize for literature in 1988 does so frequently in his novels written after his naturalistic phase, where he uses the 'stream of consciousness' technique. See H. El-Sakkout, *The Egyptian Novel & Its Main Trends 1913-1952*, (Cairo: American University of Cairo Press, 1970), 115, 141.

### [The Text Of The Qur'an](#)