

THE ROLE OF MAHMUD AL-ZAMAKHSHARI'S WORK “NUKATU AL-I'RAB” IN ENHANCING THE MORAL EDUCATION OF YOUTH IN THE MODERN ERA

Abstract. *This article is devoted to the analysis of the interpretation of morally significant Qur'anic verses in the work “Nukatu al-I'rab” by Mahmud al-Zamakhshari. The study demonstrates that, through his exegesis of the verses, the author elucidates fundamental human virtues such as honesty, respect for others' rights, truthfulness, politeness and kindness in social interaction, filial piety, and devotion to one's homeland.*

Keywords: *al-Zamakhshari, Nukat al-i'rab, Jarullah, batini, zahiri.*

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the world, the Uzbek people have long earned international recognition for their high culture, their values, and their rich scholarly heritage, accumulated over many centuries. Great thinkers such as Muhammad al-Khwarizmi, Ahmad al-Farghani, Abu Nasr al-Farabi, Abu Rayhan al-Biruni, Abu Ali ibn Sina, and Mahmud al-Zamakhshari, together with the invaluable works they created, have not only astonished scholars in the past and the present but have also become the occasion for a series of researches devoted to them. One of these scholars is Mahmud al-Zamakhshari. Expressing his respect for the scholar's heritage, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Sh. Mirziyoyev, spoke of Mahmud al-Zamakhshari at the 46th annual meeting of the Board of Governors of the Islamic Development Bank, held in Tashkent, as follows: “As you well know, the Khwarazmian scholar Mahmud al-Zamakhshari, honoured with the noble title Jarullah ('the neighbour of Allah'), made an enormous contribution to the development of the grammar of the Arabic language” (Mirziyoyev, 2021).

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Al-Zamakhshari rendered invaluable service not only in the field of Qur'anic exegesis (al-Kashshaf), literature, and linguistics, but also in elevating religious and moral perfection. His ethical worldview and his thoughts on morality are set out chiefly in such works as *Atwaq al-dhahab fi al-mawa'iz wa-l-khutab* ("Golden Necklaces on Admonitions and Sermons"), *Rabi' al-abrar wa nusub al-akhyar* ("The Spring of the Pious and the Accounts of the Virtuous"), *Maqamat al-Zamakhshari*, *Nawabigh al-kalim* ("Subtle Expressions"), *Nasa'ih al-kibar* ("Counsel to the Great"), and *Nasa'ih al-sighar* ("Counsel to the Young"). The scholar regards inner (batini) beauty as the principal, defining, and divine quality, whereas outer (zahiri) beauty is secondary and disappears with the passage of time, while inner beauty never leaves a person. For this reason he stresses that a person must enrich and beautify his inner world by acquiring moral virtues. In his works the scholar also praises the merit of knowledge and the ranks of scholars, and urges the pursuit of knowledge.

Al-Zamakhshari defines knowledge as "the liberation of the heart from ignorance, the lamp of the intellect, light in darkness, and strength in a weak body; through knowledge a person attains his highest station" (al-Zamakhshari, 1982:74), and he describes the people of knowledge thus: "Just as the adornment of the heavens is the stars, so the beauty of the earth is its scholars" (al-Zamakhshari, 1992:75). In his work *Nawabigh al-kalim*, too, many thoughts are presented concerning knowledge and its acquisition: "Be learned, or one who acts on the basis of knowledge, or at the least one who listens to knowledge; but do not be the fourth, for then you will perish in ruin" (Sulaymonova, 2022:41).

Although the work *Nukatu al-I'rab* that we are studying appears at first sight to be a philological commentary, the ideas and views advanced in it aim at the formation of moral character. An analysis of the verses selected by the scholar in this work shows that the emphasis falls precisely on elevating moral virtues. Through a profound analysis of the text on the basis of grammatical rules, the scholar places upon the reader the responsibility of acquiring the rules of moral conduct by means of reflection. Likewise, attention to the word on the basis of grammatical rules engenders the moral virtues of carefulness and sincerity in communication. Grammatical debates (disputations) develop in students the ability to adduce evidence and to defend their ideas in an orderly manner and, by forming logical thinking and argumentation, help the virtues of responsibility and justice to take root. Below we examine examples that illustrate how the verses – selected and analysed by al-Zamakhshari on the grounds that their content is relevant and that

their full meaning and essence require grammatical analysis – are of great importance in elevating the moral education of youth.

MAIN PART

In his analysis of the subtle points (nukat) in Surah al-Ghashiya, al-Zamakhshari conveys, through his masterly analysis, the divine instruction that people must be attentive to everything they do, must wrong no one, and must occupy themselves, as far as possible, only with good deeds. Allah Most High says in verses 25–26 of Surah al-Ghashiya:

إِنَّ إِلَيْنَا إِيَابَهُمْ

Indeed, to Us is their return! (Surah al-Ghashiya 88:25) (Qur'an, 2024:593)

ثُمَّ إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا حِسَابَهُمْ

Then, indeed, their reckoning (on the Day of Resurrection) is also upon Us alone. (Surah al-Ghashiya 88:26) (Qur'an, 2024:592)

If it is asked what is the meaning of bringing the adverbial phrase (the word denoting state or place) forward, the answer is given: “Its meaning is to intensify the warning still further. That is, it indicates that their return is to none but the Powerful and Mighty One, and likewise that their reckoning, too, is His alone; for it is precisely He who calls to account for even the smallest thing” (al-Zamakhshari, 1985:368).

In the commentary on this verse, al-Zamakhshari, through the use of the words al-naqir (النقير – the small spot on a date stone) and al-qitmir (القطمير – the thin membrane covering a date stone), that is, exceedingly small and trivial things, reminds the reader that he will be answerable for every deed he has done. This serves to form in people, and especially in the young, the virtue of doing good to others, of not betraying the rights of others, and of being truthful in word and deed.

On the basis of his commentary on verse 124 of Surah al-Nisa, while emphasizing the necessity of performing good deeds, al-Zamakhshari reminds the reader that the reward for good deeds is Paradise.

وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِنَ الصَّالِحَاتِ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَأُولَٰئِكَ يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ وَلَا يُظْلَمُونَ نَقِيرًا

Whoever does righteous deeds, whether male or female, while being a believer – those will enter Paradise, and they will not be wronged even as much as the speck on a date stone. (Surah al-Nisa 4:124) (Qur'an, 2024:98)

If it is asked, “What is the difference between the first min (من) and the second min (من)?”, the answer is: “The first min denotes tab'id, that is, partitivity – 'whoever

performs some of the righteous deeds'; for, owing to the difference of circumstances, a person is not always able to perform all righteous deeds in full. The second min is for bayan (clarification, tabyin) and specifies the general and indefinite meaning present in the verb ya'mal (يعمل); that is, it clarifies that the deed being performed consists of righteous deeds" (al-Zamakhshari, 1985:360).

The thinker speaks of the fact that, regardless of who or what a person is, he must first of all possess the adornment of good character and humaneness, and says: "No fine garments can make beautiful a person who is not adorned with the traits of beautiful qualities and good character, and the heart of one who does not guard against sins and errors is never free of fault" (Uvatov, 2006:90). Thus a person attains the estate of humaneness not by his outward appearance but only by his beautiful character, and by his righteous deeds he attains Paradise.

Through his commentary on verses 10 and 11 of Surah al-Ma'arij, al-Zamakhshari emphasizes that the station of true friendship can be attained through sincerity in mutual dealings. For friendship is a precious feeling that is not granted to everyone. If there is a true friendly relationship among people, mutual affection is strengthened, and peace and tranquillity prevail in the land. The religion of Islam, too, calls for such sincere friendship and even grants true friends the right to intercede for one another.

وَلَا يَسْأَلُ حَمِيمٌ حَمِيمًا • يُبْصِرُونَهُمْ

A close friend will not ask (about his) friend, though they will be made to see one another. (Surah al-Ma'arij 70:10–11) (Qur'an, 2024:568–569).

If it is asked, "Why, in the verb yubassarunahum (يُبْصِرُونَهُمْ), are the two pronouns given in the plural form, although they refer to two close friends (two hamim)?", the answer is: "This is in order to express generality. That is, the matter here pertains not only to two persons but, in a general sense, to any two close friends. Likewise, the word yubassarunahum may also be an adjective (a circumstantial or qualifying clause), in which case the meaning is that they are close friends shown to one another, recognizing one another" (al-Zamakhshari, 1985:360).

Thus, on the Day of Resurrection a friend will seek his friend and will rejoice to see that he has entered Paradise together with him. By conveying this truth through the grammatical analysis of the verses, the scholar urges the spreading of mutual love and affection among people. The scholar also expounds friendship in detail in his book Nawabigh al-kalim. In al-Zamakhshari's ethical views, the lofty human virtues

– friendship and the appreciation of its worth – deserve special attention. He has these words on the subject: “Remember your brother and praise him with fragrant words sweeter than crushed musk, even if he be in a distant city.” In al-Zamakhshari’s view, one of the most beautiful virtues of a noble and generous person is that he conceals the faults of his brother and conducts himself by regarding all his brother’s affairs as his own (Sulaymonova, 2022:40).

Al-Zamakhshari analyses yet another verse concerning Allah Most High rewarding with gardens those who guard against evils and perform good deeds, and protecting them from the torment of Hell, and thereby calls people to walk the straight path.

إِنَّ الْمُتَّقِينَ فِي جَنَّاتٍ وَنَعِيمٍ

The God-fearing, indeed, are amid gardens and bliss. (Surah al-Tur 52:17).

فَاكْبَهُينَ بِمَا آتَاهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ وَوَقَاهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ عَذَابَ الْجَحِيمِ

Enjoying what their Lord has given them; and their Lord protected them from the torment of Hellfire. (Surah al-Tur 52:18) (Qur'an, 2024:524).

(ووقاهم) If it is asked, “To what is Allah Most High’s saying wa waqahum rabbuhum and their Lord protected them’) conjoined?”, the answer is given that it may be ’رَبُّهُمْ (in gardens’), or it may also be ’(في جنات, conjoined to the phrase governed by fi jannat (their Lord gave them’). Likewise, ’(آتاهم رَبُّهُمْ, conjoined to the verb atahum rabbuhum may be taken as masdariyya, in which case the meaning is: “They are joyful (ما) ma because of their Lord’s giving to them and His protecting them from the torment of Hell.” According to yet another possibility, these conjunctions may also be in the sense is taken to be elided (قد) of hal (a circumstantial expression), in which case the word qad (mahdhuf) before it (al-Zamakhshari, 1985:349). It is evident that, in his analysis of the verse, al-Zamakhshari does not confine himself to a single view but, by expressing several opinions, emphasizes that people can attain Paradise by being honest and pure.

In the analysis of yet another verse, al-Zamakhshari interprets the meaning that people must not fight one another and that, if a misunderstanding arises, it must be set right; and through the analysis of the verse he warns that mutual enmity may lead to great calamities.

وَإِنْ طَائِفَتَانِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ اقْتَتَلُوا فَأَصْلَحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا

And if two factions among the believers should fight, then at once make peace between them! (Surah al-Hujurat 49:9) (Qur'an, 2024:516).

If the question is posed, “Why does the verse mention precisely two factions, and not all groups?”, the answer is given that the smallest number of parties for a dispute or

conflict to arise is two, and that if reconciliation is obligatory even between the smallest number of parties, then reconciliation among a greater number of parties is all the more necessary; for the conflict and discord among all parties brings about even greater corruption and harm than the conflict between two parties (al-Zamakhshari, 1985:343). In the continuation of this verse, mocking one another and inventing nicknames for one another are condemned. It is surely not without reason that, of the many verses of Surah al-Hujurat, the scholar selected precisely these, for they are devoted to the reform of the ugliest vices in society.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا يَسْخَرُ قَوْمٌ مِنْ قَوْمٍ وَلَا تَلْمِزُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَلَا تَنَابَزُوا بِالْأَلْقَابِ

O you who believe, let not one people mock (another) people; perhaps they are better than them. Nor let women (mock other) women; perhaps they are better than them. Do not mock one another, and do not call one another by (offensive) nicknames! How evil is the name of disobedience after faith! And whoever does not repent – it is precisely they who are the wrongdoers. (Surah al-Hujurat 49:11) (Qur'an, 2024:516).

Here the word qawm is used mainly with reference to men, since they are regarded as those who manage and are responsible for the affairs of women. However, in expressions such as “the people of Pharaoh” or “the people of 'Ad,” women are also intended along with men; but in that case qawm is not a strict term denoting both sexes equally. In fact, men are mentioned, while women, being subordinate to and following them, are not mentioned separately (al-Zamakhshari, 1985:343).

Al-Zamakhshari selected from Surah Luqman the verse concerning doing good to one's parents; it would not be wrong to say that, through its analysis, he once again emphasized that respect for one's parents is exceedingly important.

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ وَهْنًا عَلَى وَهْنٍ وَفَصَّالَهُ فِي عَامَيْنِ أَنِ اشْكُرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيْكَ

And We enjoined upon man (to honour) his parents. His mother carried him (in her womb) in weakness upon weakness, and his weaning is in two years. (We enjoined upon man:) “Be grateful to Me and to your parents! To Me is the return!” (Surah Luqman 31:14) (Qur'an, 2024:412).

If it is asked how the sentence “His mother carried him in weakness upon weakness, and his weaning is within two years” is introduced as a parenthetical explanatory sentence between the ruling at the beginning of the verse and the meaning that follows, the answer is: “After the injunction concerning parents, the hardships, toil, and suffering that the mother experiences from the period of carrying her child during pregnancy until the period of weaning are mentioned. This is set out in order to emphasize a special injunction

particular to the mother and to call to mind her immense right. For this reason these clauses are introduced within the verse as an explanation that singles out the great right belonging to the mother” (al-Zamakhshari, 1985:318).

Thus, through the analysis of the verse, it is emphasized that the rights of mothers over their children are exceedingly great. If all children fully discharged the rights of their parents, society today would be reformed, and there would be no need for such forlorn places as old people’s homes. It is precisely for this reason that, of the thirty-four verses of Surah Luqman, the scholar selected the verse concerning doing good to one’s parents. In the analysis of verse 23 of Surah al-Isra, it is emphasized that one must do good to one’s parents and show them special care when they reach old age.

وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا

Your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him, and that you do good to your parents. (O man!) If one or both of them reach old age in your presence, do not say “uff!” to them and do not rebuke them; speak to them (always) a gracious word! (Surah al-Isra 17:23) (Qur’an, 2024:284).

If it is asked why the word kilahuma (كلاهما, ‘both of them’) is not taken as an emphatic (ta’kid) – since it is a conjoined word (ma’tuf), and the word before it could be a substitute (badal), and an emphatic could also be conjoined to a substitute – the answer is that, if the aim had been to emphasize the dual, it would have sufficed to say only kilahuma. But the verse says ahaduhuma aw kilahuma (أحدهما أو كلاهما, ‘one or both of them’). Therefore the sense of emphasis is not intended here; consequently kilahuma, like ahaduhuma, is understood to have come as a substitute (badal) (al-Zamakhshari, 1985:247). Thus these verses repeat again and again the necessity of fully discharging the rights of one’s parents.

فَأَوْفُوا الْكَيْلَ وَالْمِيزَانَ وَلَا تَبْخَسُوا النَّاسَ أَشْيَاءَهُمْ وَلَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا

So give full measure and weight, and do not deprive people of their things, and do not work corruption upon the earth after it has been set right! If you are (true) believers, that is better for you. (Surah al-A’raf 7:85) (Qur’an, 2024:161).

If it is asked why the verse says al-kayl wa-l-mizan (الكيل والميزان, ‘measure and balance’), whereas elsewhere (in Surah Hud) it comes in the form al-mikyal wa-l-mizan (المكيال والميزان, ‘measuring vessel and balance’), the answer is that here the word al-kayl may denote the measuring instrument, that is, al-mikyal (the measuring vessel); thus al-kayl is used in the sense of the means of measuring. According to another interpretation, the thing measured is called by the name of the measure, just as the word al-’aysh (‘life,

livelihood') is sometimes used in the sense of the sustenance necessary for a person's life. The meaning of the verse is: "Give full measure and observe justice in weighing with the balance." Thus al-kayl sometimes denotes the process of measuring, and sometimes the means of measuring (al-mikyal). In the analysis of this verse, al-Zamakhshari advances the Qur'anic instruction that one must not cheat in weighing in trade and betray the rights of others.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it may be said that in his work *Nukatu al-I'rab al-Zamakhshari*, in selecting the verses, paid attention to those that are relevant in content and subtle from the standpoint of *i'rab* (grammatical inflection). By analysing verses that morally elevate people and urge them to walk the straight path, al-Zamakhshari calls upon people to embody in themselves such human virtues as honesty, refraining from betraying the rights of others, truthfulness, courtesy in mutual dealings, doing good to one's parents, and serving one's homeland.

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