

Exegetical Method of *Bint al-Shāṭi*'s *al-Tafsīr al-bayānī* – *lil-Qur'ān al-Karīm* - An Analytical Assessment

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Abstract

A progressive Muslim thinker, Egyptian scholar, and a woman representing a minority until her time in *Qur'ānic* studies, *Ā'isha 'Abd al-Rahmān*, widely known by her penname *Bint al-Shāṭi* (1912-1998), had contributed to introduce a modern outlook in the realm of the interpretation of the *Qur'ān*. *Bint al-Shāṭi* had devoted herself to the interpretation of the *Qur'ān* through the use of a literary approach. In fact, the beginnings of modern literary *tafsīr* have been traced back to *Muḥammad 'Abduh*'s (1849–1905) critical edition of *Asrār al-balāgha* and *Dalā'il al-i'jāz*, the two major works of the classical philologist and rhetorician *'Abd al-Qāhiral-Jurjānī* (d. 471/1078). The direct influence of *Muḥammad 'Abduh*'s ideas has traces in the work of both *al-Khūlī* and *Bint al-Shāṭi*. *Bint al-Shāṭi* had advocated and applied an approach developed by her teacher and husband *Amīn al-Khūlī* (1895–1966), who had a fundamental influence on her academic and intellectual journey. Although she had written on only 14 surahs in the last part of the *Qur'ān* but *al-Tafsīr al-bayānī lil-Qur'ān al-Karīm* (The Rhetorical Interpretation of the *Qur'ān*) is the most important of her works on *Qur'ān* to date. The purpose of this study is to focus on *Bint al-Shāṭi*'s stylistic beauty and literary approach in her exegesis of *Qur'ān* and specifically her interpretation about rhetorical inimitability which is further assessed in the light of three particular domains ie; the openings of *Qur'ānic* chapters and the secret of the letters, the case of synonyms and Oaths of *Qur'ān*, which are extracted from her *al-Tafsīr al-bayānī - lil-Qur'ān al-Karīm*.

Keywords: *Bint al-Shāṭi*, *al-Tafsīr al-bayānī - Qur'ān al-Karīm*, literary approach, inimitability of *Qur'ān*, synonyms, Oaths, secret letters

Introduction:

The texts of the *Qur'ān* and Sunnah constantly focused on the significance of women and safeguarding their rights against pre-Islamic traditions, the Muslims had no reservations in entrusting them with issues of the best religious significance since as sisters, Muslim women were of equivalent worth in Allah's sight. This clearly shows that there are numerous Muslims female researchers who have contributed in building the positive image of Islam with their hard work and sound judgment. *Bint al-Shāṭi* is one of a number of twentieth-century Muslim intellectuals who left their indelible mark on modern literary exegesis of the *Qur'ān*.¹ It is 'the first ever to be written by a woman', and that it also has gained a wide readership, *Bint al-Shāṭi* was unique as a woman of the first generation of an emerging tradition of Arab women academics and intellectuals. Thus, it rendered *Bint al-Shāṭi* uniquely positioned to become the first Arab Muslim woman writer to venture into contemporary *Qur'ānic* and religious studies.

Exegesis of the *Qur'ān* is one of the most important religious sciences for Muslims and throughout Islamic history many Muslim scholars from different schools of thought have attempted to interpret the *Qur'ān*, and have shown a keen interest in studying the *Qur'ān* and writing commentaries on it. Since Muslim commentators have

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¹Issā J. Boullata, "Modern *Qur'ān* Exegesis: A Study of *Bint al-Shāṭi*'s Method", The Muslim World, 64 (1974), This is an excellent study of *Bint al-Shāṭi*'s methods in interpreting the *Qur'ān*.

tended to represent the dominant intellectual and socio-cultural trends of their times, the history of the exegesis of the *Qur'ān* has truly become a mirror of the intellectual history of Muslims. In the history of exegesis, the philological approach is one of the methods applied in interpreting the *Qur'ān*. *Ibn Jarīr al-Tabarī* (d. 310/923), are colored to a great extent by the reports from previous generations. The reports-oriented approach, however, was not the only way of interpreting the *Qur'an* in the classical period. Lexical, rhetorical, philosophical, and mystical approaches to the *Qur'ān*, such as those of *al-Zamakhsharī* (d. 538/1144), *al-Razī* (d. 606/1210), and *Ibn al-Arabī* (d. 638/1240) also represented other methods of interpretations in that period. Modern exegetes, such as *Muḥammad 'Abduh's* (1849-1905), have employed other hermeneutical methods, most of which emphasize the *Qur'ān* as a guidance for human lives (*hudan li al-nās*). Some, such as *Tantawī Jawharī* (d. 1941) have tried to impose modern science on the *Qur'ānic* message in their exegetical works. Looking at the history of the discipline, one can say that the interpretations of the *Qur'ān* that satisfied one generation did not always satisfy the next.

The beginnings of modern literary *tafsīr* have been traced back to *Muḥammad 'Abduh's* (1849–1905) critical edition of *Asrār al-balāgha* and *Dalā'il al-i'jāz*, the two major works of the classical philologist and rhetorician *'Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī* (d. 471/1078).¹⁰ The direct influence of *Muḥammad 'Abduh's* ideas can also be traced in the work of both *al-Khūlī* and *Bint al-Shāṭi*. The fact that her *tafsīr* came out after two decades of writing literature, practicing literary criticism, and teaching the Arabic language, thereby realizing the type of exegete *'Abduh* had envisioned, is crucial to *Bint al-Shāṭi*'s perception of her own credentials as a literary exegete of the *Qur'ān*.² But the main intellectual stimulus to her work comes from *al-Khūlī's* elaboration of *'Abduh's* rudimentary ideas on the relation between *tafsīr* and literature into an exegetical approach to the *Qur'ān*, for which he coined the term *al-tafsīr al-adabī*.³ *Bint al-Shāṭi's* place on this trajectory has been harder to determine, and her approach has been deemed anything from modern to anti-modernist. Her *tafsīr* work is the most extensive produced by any member of this literary school and has come to represent the realization of *al-Khūlī's* *tafsīr* methodology. In looking at her life and *tafsīr*, her contribution and place as a twentieth-century literary exegete will be reconsidered.

***Bint al-Shāṭi's* Background:**

A thorough examination of *Bint al-Shāṭi's* background in Arabic language and literature will enable us to analyze the method of her *tafsīr* within the context of modern literary exegesis. *Bint al-Shāṭi* was born in Dumyat, Egypt in 1912, the daughter of a conservative *Shaykh* of *al-Azhar* who tried to hinder her efforts to study outside the home.⁴ *Bint al-Shāṭi's* father, *'Abd al-Rahmān*, who was additionally an individual from the *Sufī* fellowships, was an instructor at a philosophical school in Damietta and had a fairly preservationist attitude toward religious issues. Likewise, for him, a young lady who has achieved the period of youthfulness should remain at home and proceed with her religious investigations there. In 1920, because of her father's inquiry in the matter of why she didn't look glad, *Bint al-Shāṭi* first communicated her honest want to go to

² 'A'isha 'Abd al-Rahmān, *al-Tafsīr al-bayānī Lil- Qur'ān al-Karīm*, 7th ed. (Cairo: Dār al-M'ārīf, 1990), V. I, p. 15 where she speaks of how she acquired an appreciation of the *Qur'ān's* eloquence after specializing in the study of literary texts and her contact with the greatest Arabic literature.

³ Shuruq Naguib, *Bint al-Shāṭi's* Approach to *tafsīr*: An Egyptian Exegete's Journey from Hermeneutics to Humanity, *Journal of Qur'ānic Studies*, 17(1), pp.45–84

⁴ C. Kooij, " *Bint al-Shāṭi*: A Suitable Case for Biography?", *The Challenge of the Middle East*, ed. Al-El-Shaikh et al (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam, 1982), p.67

Exegetical Method of *Bint al-Shāṭi*'s *al-Taḥsīn al-bayānī* – li'l- *Qur'ān al-Karīm* - An Analytical Assessment formal school. In any case, she got a firm dismissal from her father, who stated, "There is no chance to get for the little girls of *Shaykhs* to go to a horrendous and character-ruining [secular] school; rather they should learn at their homes." Her father requested her to read verses 32-34 of *Sura al-Ahzāb*.⁵ Because her father was not convinced to educate her daughter in non-Islamic educational institution. Out of sensitivity for her little girl's sentiments after her better half had rejected her demand, *Bint al-Shāṭi*'s mother whined to her grandfather, *Shaykh Ibrāhīm Damhūjī* about the issue. After a substantial discourse with *Bint al-Shāṭi*'s incredible grandfather, her father inevitably endorsed his little girl's choice to go to class, with specific conditions. She got a B.A. degree in Arabic dialect and writing from King *Fu'ād I* University (currently University of Cairo), in 1939, M.A. in 1941. At college, her first experience with *Amīn al-Khūlī* left her with a feeling of the 'genuine' import of the advanced idea of 'technique' which, until at that point, she had comprehended as *madhhab* ('school of thought'), a term that had progressed toward becoming related with belief system and partiality in reformist Muslim talk. From that point on *Bint al-Shāṭi* turned into the most gave promoter of *al-Khūlī*'s utilization of a cutting edge philosophy in artistic investigations. She thought of her Ph.D thesis in 1950 on the artist *Abū'l- 'Alā' al-Ma'arrī* (d. 449/1058).⁶ In 1952, she was awarded a doctorate with distinction, following which she resumed the university career she had given up due to family reasons in 1944, and in 1960 she was a visiting professor at *Umm Durmān* Islamic University in the Sudan, and the Universities of Khartoum and Algiers, eventually holding two prestigious chairs, first as Professor of Arabic at 'Ayn Shams University between 1962 and 1970, and then as Professor of *Tafsīr* and Advanced Studies at *Qarawyyīn* University in Morocco until the early 1990s. Then a prominent Islamic scholar and Muffasirah of Arab world died of a heart attack on December 1, 1998.⁷

Intellectual work and literary efforts of "*Bint al-Shāṭi*":

Bint al-Shāṭi's professional writing career began in women's magazines in the early 1930s, as the editor of *al-Nahḍa al-nisā'iyya* ('Women's Renaissance'), then as a contributor to the feminist magazine *al-Miṣriyya* ('The Egyptian Woman'), following which she was a columnist for *al-Ahrām* newspaper for the rest of her life. Her early writings in *al-Ahrām* were marked by an engagement with social issues. *Bint al-Shāṭi* produced a widely acclaimed series of biographies of early Muslim women, especially women of the Prophet's household (*tarājim sayyidāt bayt al-nubuwwa*).⁸ She also worked on the biographies and literary trajectories of *Sukayna bint al-Ḥusayn* (n.d.), a poet and literary critic from the Prophet's family, and *al-Khansā'*, a poet and companion of the Prophet *Muḥammad*. These three later biographies shed a contemporary light on the history of early Muslim women's contribution to the formation of the Arabic language.

⁵ O wives of the Prophet! You are not like any of the [other] women, provided that you remain [truly] conscious of God. ^[35] Hence, be not over-soft in your speech, lest any whose heart is diseased should be moved to desire [you]: but, withal, speak in a kindly way-And abide quietly in your homes, and do not flaunt your charms as they used to flaunt them in the old days of pagan ignorance; ^[36] and be constant in prayer, and render the purifying dues, and pay heed unto God and His Apostle: for God only wants to remove from you all that might be loathsome, O you members of the [Prophet's] household, and to purify you to utmost purity.-And bear in mind all that is recited in your homes of God's messages and [His] wisdom: for God is unfathomable [in His wisdom], all-aware. (33:32-34)

⁶ C. Kooij, " *Bint al-Shāṭi*': a Suitable Case for Biography?" Amsterdam: Institute for Modern Near Eastern Studies, University of Amsterdam, pp.67-72

⁷ Joseph T. Zaidan, Arab Women Novelists, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), p.79

⁸ *Bint al-Shāṭi*', *Baṭalat Karbalā'* ('The Heroine of Karbalā'', 1952), *Nisā' al-nabiyy* ('Wives of the Prophet', 1954), *Banāt al-nabiyy* ('Daughters of the Prophet', 1956), *Umm al-nabiyy* ('Mother of the Prophet', 1958).

This biographical series became remarkably popular⁹ and firmly established *Bint al-Shāṭi* as a prominent Islamic scholar and writer in the Arab world, before she proceeded in the 1960s to publish her famous studies of the *Qur'ān: al-Tafsīr al-bayānī li'l-Qur'ān al-karīm* ('The Literary Interpretation of the *Qur'ān*'), in two volumes (published in 1962 and 1968 respectively), and *al-I'jāz al-bayānī li'l-Qur'ān wa-masā'il Naṭṭī b. al-Azraq : Dirāsah Qur'dniyah Lughawiyah wa Bayaniyah*¹⁰ in which she exposes her theory concerning the aspects of *Qur'ānic* artistic inimitability. The last part of the book is her review of the questions of *Ibn al-Azraq* to *Ibn 'Abbās* concerning many words in the *Qur'ān* which seem to be non-Arabic. Additional analysis of her theory can also be obtained from her other work, *Min Asrar al-'Arabiyah fī al-Bayan al-Qur'ānī*.¹¹

In these works that *Bint al-Shāṭi* presented an application of *al-Khulī's* *tafsīr* methodology to a wider audience; this earned her an unprecedented place in Islamic studies in general and as the first *mufasssirah* in the *tafsīr* genre.¹² *Bint al-Shāṭi* discusses few traditional authors, but these include *Khattābī*, *Rummanī*, *Bāqillānī*, and *Jurjānī*. Her criticisms are mainly of *Bāqillānī* and *Jurjānī*. Though *Bint al-Shāṭi* does not agree with some of *Jurjānī's* theories pertaining to the attainment of the secret of the eloquence of the Arabic language through the study of Arabic poetry and prose but she admits that *Jurjānī* provided delicate observations of what he noticed about the mystery of Arabic rhetoric.¹³

Her two-volume *Qur'ānic* commentary, *al-Tafsīr al-bayānī li'l-Qur'ān*,¹⁴ is a good source of her exegetical method which she developed from the method first promulgated by her teacher and husband, *Amīn al-Khulī*.¹⁵ *Bint al-Shāṭi's* writings covered a broad range of literary, social, and linguistic studies across more than 60 publications.

Significant Aspects of *Bint al-Shāṭi's* *al-Tafsīr al-bayānī li'l-Qur'ān*:

The profession of *Bint al-Shāṭi* drove her to be intrigued in Arabic dialect and history, as well as in *Qur'ānic* examines. The evidence of her true enthusiasm for the *Qur'ān* was the production of her *tafsīr*, and that recognized her as the principal Muslim lady ever to compose such a work.¹⁶ Although only two volumes of this *tafsīr* were published, yet it has achieved a special position among *tafsīr* literature. *Bint al-Shāṭi's*

⁹ *Bint al-Shāṭi*, *Nisā' al-nabiyya*, (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1979).

¹⁰ *Bint al-Shāṭi*, *al-'ijāz al-bayānī li al-Qur'ān wa Masa'il Ibn al-Azraq: Dirāsah Qur'dniyah Lughawiyah wa Bayaniyah* (Cairo: Dār al-M'ārif, 1987).

¹¹ *Bint al-Shāṭi*, *Min Asrar al-'Arabiyah fī al-Bayan al-Qur'ānī* (Beirut: Jam i'āt Beirut al-'Arabiyah, 1972).

¹² Shuruq Naguib, *Bint al-Shāṭi's* Approach to *tafsīr*: An Egyptian Exegete's Journey from Hermeneutics to Humanity, *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, 17(1), pp.45–84

¹³ *Bint al-Shāṭi's*, *al-I'jāz al-bayānī li'l-Qur'ān wa-masā'il Naṭṭī b. al-Azraq*. (Beirut: Dār al-al kutub al-'ilmīyya, 2000), p.94

¹⁴ *Bint al-Shāṭi*, *al-Tafsīr al-bayānī*, vol. II, p.127

¹⁵ Her real name was 'A'isah 'Abd al-Rahmān, one of modern Egyptian authors. Her higher education was obtained at Cairo University where she earned her Ph.D. Since 1939, she was Assistant Lecturer at Cairo University, and in 1942 she became literary critic for *al-Azhar* magazine, and at the same year was appointed as the Inspectress of Arabic Language and Literature at the Ministry of Education. Between 1950-1957 she held position as lecturer in Arabic language at 'Ayn Syams University; in 1957-1962 as assistant professor, and since 1962 was Professor of Arabic Literature, and Chairperson of University College of Women.

¹⁶ The title of this work is *Bint al-Shāṭi*, *al-Tafsīr al-bayānī* (2 vols., Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif, 1962-1969). From now on it will be referred to as *al-Tafsīr al-Baydnx*.

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 exegesis is consist of two volumes in which commentary on fourteen *sūrah*¹⁷. The volume was published in 1962 and reprinted in 1966 and 1968 and the second volume in 1969, *Dār-ul-M'ārfia* of Cario (Egypt) was the publisher of both volumes. Her exegetic contribution can be assessed by examining her methodology in dealing with some important dimensions and different aspects of *tafsīr-ul-Qur'ān*. The importance of this work is her use of a method she acquired from her professor at Fu'ad I University in Cairo, *Shaykh Amīn al-Khulī* (d. 1966). He himself never wrote any *Qur'ānic* commentary, but he discusses many aspects of *tafsīr* in his publications. He calls his method *al-manhaj al-adabi* (literary method). He recommended the use of a topical approach in studying and commenting on the *Qur'ān*, and advocated a philological interpretation based on the chronological sequence of the text and the semantics of its own usage of Arabic.¹⁸

Her exegetical endeavor is often deemed to conform to *al-Khulī*'s approach,¹⁹ and offering 'a reliable picture of what a *Qur'ān* commentary by *Amīn al-Khulī* would have looked like'.²⁰ for example, *al-Khulī*'s notion of the *Qur'ān* as '*kitāb al-'Arabīyya al-akbar*' takes on a new meaning as the locus of the linguistic and cultural unity of the Arabs and the source of 'key solutions to many of the questions of our nationalist existence'.²¹ This view may be justifiable in light of her own proclamations in this respect, but it is, nevertheless, an overestimation, that ignores the personal and poetic in her relationship with *al-Khulī* as teacher and beloved husband. Ruth Roded argued widely about Ayesha '*Abd al-Rehmān* and her *al-Tafsīr al-bayānī lil-Qur'ān*. She said that some scholars regard '*Abd al-Rehmān*'s exegesis as a reflection of *Amīn al-Khulī*' theory as she writes for her "attempt" to apply *Amīn al-Khulī*' method of *Qur'ān* interpretation to "our new method", it is true because *Bint al-Shāṭi*' humbly accepted that the new method which she implemented in her study is based on the philological approach founded by her husband.²²

Bint al-Shāṭi' also preserves the ancient structure of verse-by-verse interpretation in her treatment of each of the fourteen Meccan *sūrah* in the two volumes of *al-Tafsīr al-bayānī*.²³ *Bint al-Shāṭi*' tries to summarize her unique method under four points:

1. To acquire an appropriate significance of the words and the styles of articulation, beyond what many would consider possible, through a watchful abstract examination.
2. To pick up a genuine comprehension of the *Qur'ānic* message through the soul of Arabic in light of the styles of *Qur'ān* itself.

¹⁷ Volume 1: Ad-Duha:93, Ash-Sharah:94, Az-Zalzala:99, An Nazi'at:79, Al Adiyat:100, Al Balad:90, At-Takathur:102

Volume 2: Al-Alaq:96, Al-Qalam:68, Al-Asr:103, Al-Layl:92, Al-Fajr:89, Al-Humazah:104 and Al-Mau'n:107.

¹⁸ *Amīn al-Khulī, Manāhij Tajdīd fī al-Nahw wa al-Baldghah wa al-Tafsīr wa al-Adab* (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'rifah, 1961).

¹⁹ *Issā J Boullata*, 'Modern *Qur'ān* Exegesis', p.104

²⁰ Jansen, *The Interpretation of the Qur'ān*, Publisher: Cambridge University Press; Online publication date: March 2011. p.68

²¹ *Bint al-Shāṭi*', *al-Tafsīr al-bayānī*, vol. I, p.9

²² Roded, Ruth, 'Bint al-Shāṭi's Wives of the Prophet: Feminist or Feminine?', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 33:1 (2006), pp.51–66

²³ In vol. I: Q. 93, Q. 94, Q. 99, Q. 100, Q. 79, Q. 90, and Q. 102, and in vol. II: Q. 96, Q. 68, Q. 103, Q. 92, Q. 89, Q. 104, and Q. 107.

3. To make the topical approach as the base of her *Qur'ānic* study. This may be one reason why she chooses the fourteen *sūrahs* which clearly show topical unity.
4. To abstain from including any immaterial components in the translation of *Qur'ān* and to have the sequential request of the disclosure and recorded setting of the verses taken into consideration.²⁴

***Bint al-Shāfi's* Standpoint of *Qur'ānic* artistic inimitability in her *Tafsīr*:**

Bint al-Shāfi points out that, regardless of the various opinions that exist on the subject, there is no disagreement on the rhetorical inimitability of the *Qur'ān*. It was in fact widely acknowledged in Muhammad's own day, even by those who did not believe in his prophet hood. The unbelievers' claims that the *Qur'ān* was magic, poetry, and *kahāna* (soothsaying) even though they knew that the *Qur'ān* was actually none of these things²⁵ according to *Bint al-Shāfi*, a clear affirmation of the extraordinary power of the *Qur'ān* to affect the hearts and minds of those who had not seen the like of it except in the words of magicians, poets and soothsayers.²⁶ That is why the tyrants of the *Quraysh* warned people against listening to the *Qur'ān*, for its extraordinary power is said to have persuaded many, like 'Umar ibn al-Khattāb, to embrace Islam.²⁷ *Amīn al-Khulī* goes on to argue that the literary quality of the *Qur'ān* is recognized by all Arabs, no matter what their religions and tendencies, as long as they are conscious of their Arabness. This is also recognized by non-Arabs who have a historical relation to the Arabs and have accepted Islam as their religion. And even those who have not accepted Islam as their religion but have mixed and assimilated with Arabs and taken the Arabic language as their own, consider the *Qur'ān* as one of the literary principles of their life, because it occupies an important place in their literary studies.²⁸ According to *Bint al-Shāfi*, the purposes of this text can be fathomed only if its style and meaning are soundly comprehended in the same way that it had been by its first Arab hearers. *Bint al-Shāfi*, however, was not satisfied with the explanations of the rhetorical inimitability offered by previous scholars, some of whom were mentioned earlier. After alluding to their opinions on the subject, she says:

Nevertheless, the rhetorical inimitability [that they have referred to continued to evolve within the boundaries of the unchanged traditional forms and overblown explanations. Someone like al Khattabī does not find the explanations [of *Qur'ānic* rhetorical inimitability) satisfying in this regard, or able to cure the "disease of ignorance." The explanations are even considered no longer compatible with the glory of the miraculous book, and do not have any significance to this generation of Arabs who desire to unite with the miracle of the highest example of rhetoric.²⁹

Bint al-Shāfi views the *Qur'ān* as a literary text. Being a literary text, it should be approached through literary methods. She attempts to analyze the *Qur'ān* from an intrinsic viewpoint, utilizing Arabic sciences like rhetorical science and Arabic grammar.

²⁴ The summary in English is quoted from I. J. Boullata, "Modern Qur'ān Exegesis: A Study of Bint al-Shāfi's Method," *Muslim World*, 64 (1979), pp. 104-105. Boullata refers this summary to *al-Tafsīr al-Bayānī*, vol. 1, pp.10-11

²⁵ Hanafi Ahmad, *Mu'jizāt al-Qur'ān* (Cairo: Matba'at Lajnat al-Bayān al-'Arabi, 1954); and Muhammad Shahrur, *al-Kitāb wa al-Qur'ān* (Cairo: Dār al-M'ārif, 1990), pp.187-8

²⁶ *Bint al-Shāfi*, *Kitāb al-Akbar* (Omdurman: Jami'at 'Umm Durmān, 1967), p.3

²⁷ *ibid*

²⁸ *Amīn al-Khulī*, *Manahij Tajdīd fī al-Nahw wa al-Balāghah wa al-Tafsīr wa al-Adab*. (Cairo: Dār al-M'ārif, 1961), pp.271-301

²⁹ *Bint al-Shāfi*, *al-I'jāz al-bayānī li'l-Qur'ān wa-masā'il Nafi' b. al-Azraq*, 135

This approach allows the exegete to obtain the objective meaning of the verse and avoid any extraneous influences.³⁰ The traditional authors, says *Bint al-Shāṭi*', were occupied in discussing all aspects of *balāghah*, detached from the concept of *m'jizah*, because of their opinion that the sciences of *balāghah* are the arguments which prove the '*ijāz*' and the means to understand it. This opinion is different from that which was prevalent at the time of *Bint al-Shāṭi*'. In her time, *balāghah* was studied through the *Qur'ān*. Therefore, *Bint al-Shāṭi*' is against the mode by which *Qur'ānic* verses are interpreted in the light of scientific knowledge; for example, she argues that there is not a single verse in the *Qur'ān* which calls attention to the study of biology, anatomy etc., while interpreting the word (علق)³¹ she firmly criticizes those innovators who endeavor to decipher this word as indicated by understandings got from the fields of embryology, physiology and science, she contends that the *Qur'ān* was uncovered to an unskilled Prophet and an ignorant group which didn't know and had not considered embryology and couldn't envision that the *Qur'ān* would introduce something that they couldn't comprehend as early Muslims comprehended the word (علق) as just alluding to any material that sticks, for example, blood, they had no compelling reason to contemplate embryology or to counsel any references in a restorative library so as to fathom the importance of the verse which state '*He who creates man from clot*', she asserts, All the verses concerning the creation of man, are intended to convey the sense of the omnipotence of Allah Who creates man from a blood clot or mingled fluids which become a new creature, that is man, who is to be the subject of reward and punishment.³²

Another component of her *Qur'ānic* interpretation is strong thought of historical certainties about event of disclosure, for instance, while examining *Ad-Duha*, 93:3, she says that as per a few exegetes, like *Ar-Razi*, the occasion that proceeded the *ibtā'*-*al-wahī* was the moment when a dog of Prophet's grandson Hassan (R.A.) and Hussain (R.A.) entered the house of the Prophet, Gabriel then said to Prophet '*Don't you know that we never enter the house in which is a dog or picture?*'. To *Bint al-Shāṭi*', this report does not make sense, because the historical fact indicate towards that Hassan (R.A.) and Hussain (R.A.) were born three or four years after hijra, whereas *Ad-Duha*, which is one of the first surahs of the *Qur'ān* revealed several years before the migration. So she regards historical consideration as a crucial tool for assessing the authenticity of *Asbāb al-nuzul*.³³

Boullata summarizes *Bint al-Shāṭi*'s points on this issue as follows: That she ... offers new thoughts and new understanding, revealing certain textures never watched, for example, those in regards to the utilization of the detached voice in *Qur'ānic* scenes of the day of revival which, in her view, stress the resignation of the universe and the immediacy of all creation in complying with the staggering occasions of the day.³⁴

Applying this method to her *tafsīr*, *Bint al-Shāṭi*' discovered the unique nature of *Qur'ānic* expression which encouraged her to do more study of *Qur'ānic* usage.³⁵ She

³⁰ Jarot Wahyudi, Literary Interpretation of The Qur'an: "Fawāṣil Al-Āyāt," "Qasam" And "Istifhām," Three Examples From *Bint Al-Shāṭi*'s "Tafsīr", Islamic Studies, Vol. 37, No. 1 (Spring 1998), pp.19-28

³¹ *Al- Qur'ān*, Al-Alaḥ:2

³² *Bint al-Shāṭi*', *al-Tafsīr al-bayānī*, vol. II, pp.18-20

³³ *Bint al-Shāṭi*', *al-Tafsīr al-bayānī*, Vol. p.1,35

³⁴ Issa J. Boullata, "The Rhetorical Interpretation of the *Qur'ān*: i'jāz and Related Topics." In Andrew Rippin (ed.) Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Quran. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), pp.139-157." p.154

³⁵ *Bint al-Shāṭi*', *al-Tafsīr al-bayānī*, vol. 1, pp.9-15

illuminates some of the result of her investigation in her publications, and then discusses it in full in the book that specifically dealt with the issue of *Qur'ānic* rhetorical inimitability. *Bint al-Shāṭi*' tries to provide the reader with a new approach. She maintains that the rhetorical inimitability of the *Qur'ān* lies in every particle word, verse and structure.

The theory of *Bint al-Shāṭi*' pertaining to rhetorical inimitability revolves around the literary excellence of the *Qur'ān*, and focuses on *Qur'ānic bayān* which involves particular *Qur'ānic* usages. These usages are important to the understanding of the exact meaning of the word or sentences of the *Qur'ān*, which in turn is a vehicle to gain a better understanding of the *Qur'ānic* messages. Many of them only repeated the theory of *balaghah* (eloquence) proposed by their predecessors, but some proposed their own theories, these most especially include *Sayyid Qutb* and *Bint al-Shāṭi*'.³⁶ *Bint al-Shāṭi*'s elaboration of the rhetorical marvel of the *Qur'ān* leads to an understanding of the meaning of key words in the *Qur'ān* which in turn provides a better understanding of the contents of the *Qur'ān* in general. Her attempt to prove the rhetorical inimitability of the *Qur'ān* is conducted by using an exegetical method, which is assessed in the light of three particular domains:

1- The openings of *Qur'ānic* chapters and the *ḥurūf muqatta'ah* (Mysterious Letters)

2- The case of synonyms

3- Oaths in *Qur'ān*

1-The openings of *Qur'ānic* chapters and the *ḥurūf muqatta'ah* (Mysterious Letters)

The abbreviated or mysterious letters called *ḥurūf muqatta'ah* or *fawātiḥ al-suwar* (surah openings) have been the subject of various guesses by *Qur'ānic* reporters old and additionally present day. Muslim researchers and *Qur'ānic* reporters hold that those letters are parts of *Allāh's* name, or that they are names of His angels and prophets, or the name of the section, or the initials of the copyists. Some even say that those letters are a piece of alphabetic letters with numerical esteem, which indicate the length of a religion, of a country, or of the world.³⁷ Many authors recommended the standpoint of *Abu Bakr* that there is a secret in the Book of Allah and His secret is to be found in the letters that initiate the *sūrahs*, and only Allah knows their meaning, however, are of the opinion that those *fawātiḥ al-sūwar* are a divine secret.³⁸

In her exegesis, *Bint al-Shāṭi*' also risks to deal with a difficult yet interesting field of *Qur'ānic* knowledge that is *ḥurūf muqatta'ah*. She has tried to explain some letters in the selected *sūrahs*³⁹; for example she explains that the letter (ح) mentioned in just the beginning of *sūrah Al-Qalam*, is used to inform people of the Prophet's time that the *Qur'ān* contains some letters that they were familiar with but could not understand them, the purpose was to make them believe that they were unable to produce such a *Qur'an*. At that point, she endeavors to relate this *sūrah* to the beforehand uncovered one, *sūrah Al-Alaq* that attracts consideration regarding the indication of Allah, the making of man from a blood coagulation, and after that his learning with the pen when he knows not and *sūrah Al-Qalam* which uncovered after it, starts with the letter (ح) in order to attract thoughtfulness regarding the baffling letters which features the significance of perusing

³⁶ *al-Kafrāwī, Salahudīn*, 'Methods of Interpreting the Qur'ān: A Comparison of *Sayyid Qutb* and *Bint al-Shāṭi*', *Islamic Studies* 37:1 (1998), pp.3-17

³⁷ *al- Alūsī, Shahāb al-Dīn al-Sayyid Muḥammad*, *Ruh al Ma'ani*, (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1997) vol. 28, p.29 see also *Mustafa al-Marāghī, Tafṣīr al-Maraghī*, (Cairo: Dār al-M'ārif, 2001). vol. 1, p.169

³⁸ *Bint al-Shāṭi*', *al-Tafṣīr al-bayānī*, vol. I, pp.128-134

³⁹ Here, it should be noted that all interpretations (including those of *Bint al-Shāṭi*') of these mysterious letters/symbols are not entirely satisfactory and reliable as they are all based on arbitrary assumptions.

Exegetical Method of *Bint al-Shāṭi*'s *al-Tafsīr al-bayānī* – li'l- *Qur'ān al-Karīm* - An Analytical Assessment and information which are subject to these in sequential order letters.⁴⁰ It should be noted, however, that all interpretations (including those of *Bint al-Shāṭi*') of these mysterious letter-symbols are not entirely satisfactory as they are all based on arbitrary conjectures. Those letters shall forever remain a mystery.

Her careful examination of *sūrahs* with introductory letters drove her to discover a few things that had been disregarded by others. To demonstrate the discoveries of *Bint al-Shāṭi*', two cases are proper here. The first is the announcement of *al-Zamakhsharī* with reference to *sūrah* (*al-Qal am*). He specifies that in this *sūrah* (with the underlying letters) the rhyme of every one of its verses are the same as the underlying letter. *Bint al-Shāṭi*', then again, found an alternate actuality. Utilizing her *manhaj istiqrā'*, she calls attention to the way that not every one of the verses in this *sūrah* have a similar rhyme: verses 5⁴¹, 11⁴², 12⁴³, 13⁴⁴, 16⁴⁵, 20⁴⁶, 34⁴⁷, 40⁴⁸, 48⁴⁹, and 49⁵⁰ have different ones.⁵¹ This initial points to the *Qur'ānic* miracle and calls attention to the secret of letters which is the object of reading, knowledge, and writing as commanded in the first revealed *sūrah*.⁵²

The second instance is the statement of *Rāzī* that each *sūrah* with starting letter(s) by and large starts with the specify of *al-Qur'ān*, *al-Kitāb*, or *al-Tanzīl*, except for three *sūrahs*: 19, 29, and 30. In these cases, *Bint al-Shāṭi*' observed that in spite of *al-Rāzī*'s statement, those three *sūrah* contain references to the *Holy Book*, though not at their outset. In *sūrah*. 19, there is a mention of *al-Kitāb* in verses 16⁵³, 41⁵⁴, 51⁵⁵, 54⁵⁶ and 56⁵⁷; then it closes with two verses, 97⁵⁸ and 98⁵⁹, that clearly refer to the *Qur'ān*. In *sūrah*. 29, verses 45-52⁶⁰ contain reference to *al-Kitāb*; and in *sūrah*. 30, verse 58⁶¹ mentions *al-Qur'ān* while the last two verses, 59⁶² and 60⁶³, contain argumentation for

⁴⁰*Bint al-Shāṭi*', *al-Tafsīr al-bayānī*, vol. II, p.43

⁴¹فَسْتَبْصِرُ وَتُبْصِرُونَ

⁴²هَكَذَا مَثَلًا يَنْبَغِي

⁴³مَثَلًا لِلْخَيْرِ مُعْتَدًا أَيْم

⁴⁴عَلَّامٌ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ رَسِيم

⁴⁵سَنَسِيحُهُ عَلَى الْخُرُوطِ

⁴⁶فَأَصْبَحَتْ كَالصَّرِيم

⁴⁷إِنَّ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ عِندَ رَبِّهِمْ جَنَّاتٍ التَّوْبِ

⁴⁸سَلَامٌ أَيْمُهُمْ بِذَلِكَ رَعِيم

⁴⁹فَاصْبِرْ لِحُكْمِ رَبِّكَ وَلَا تُكِنْ كَصَاحِبِ الْخَوْتِ إِذْ نَادَى وَهُوَ مَكْظُومٌ

⁵⁰لَوْلَا أَنْ تَدَارَكُهُ رَحْمَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِ لَنُبِذَ بِالْعَرَاءِ وَهُوَ مَذْمُومٌ

⁵¹*Bint al-Shāṭi*', *al-I'jāz al-bayānī lil-Qur'ān wa-masā'il Nafi' b. al-Azraq*, p.134

⁵²*Ibid. pp.146-147*

⁵³وَأَذْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ مَرْيَمَ إِذِ اتَّخَذَتْ مِنْ أَهْلِهَا مَكَانًا شَرْيًّا

⁵⁴وَأَذْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِذْ كَانَ صِدِّيقًا نَبِيًّا

⁵⁵وَأَذْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ مُوسَى إِذْ كَانَ مُخْلَصًا وَكَانَ رَسُولًا نَبِيًّا

⁵⁶وَأَذْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ إِسْمَاعِيلَ إِذْ كَانَ صَادِقَ الْوَعْدِ وَكَانَ رَسُولًا نَبِيًّا

⁵⁷وَأَذْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ إِدْرِيسَ إِذْ كَانَ صِدِّيقًا نَبِيًّا

⁵⁸فَاتَّبَعْنَا بِسِتْرَانَا لِنَبَيِّنَ لَهُ الْيُسْرَى مِنْ أَمْتَيْنِ وَأَنذَرْنَا بِهِ قَوْمًا لُذًّا

⁵⁹وَكَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا قَبْلَهُمْ مِنْ قَرْنٍ هَلْ يُحِصُّ مِنْهُمْ مِنْ أَحَدٍ أَوْ تَسْمَعُ لَهُمْ رِكْزًا

⁶⁰أَقُلْ مَا أَوْحَى إِلَيْكَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ

⁶¹وَلَقَدْ صَرَّفْنَا لِلنَّاسِ فِي هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ مِنْ كُلِّ مَثَلٍ وَلَئِنْ جِئْتَهُمْ بِآيَةٍ لَيَقُولُنَّ الدِّينُ كَذْرُوبُوا إِنَّ أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا مُبْطِلُونَ

⁶²كَذَلِكَ يَطْبَعُ اللَّهُ عَلَى قُلُوبِ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

⁶³فَأَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ حَنِيفًا فِطْرَةَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِخَلْقِ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

the *Qur'ān*. One might say that these two instances are easily detected even by ordinary readers of the *Qur'ān*, yet *Bint al-Shāṭi* deserves credit as the first scholar to bring them to light.

The investigation by *Bint al-Shāṭi* of *fawātih al-sūwar* is led by gathering the included *sūrahs* and verses, and masterminding them in the sequential request of disclosure. *Bint al-Shāṭi* presents the verses of each *sūrah* that contains the idea of the greatness of the *Qur'ān* and its supremacy.

1. Those letters are required to draw in thought in regards to how *Qur'ān* is made out of vernacular containing practically identical letters merged and characterized incredibly into a heavenly revelation provoking legitimate uniqueness.

2. Those letters are intended to acquaint the material that alludes with the *Qur'ān*, the Book (*al-Kitāb*), or the Revelation (*al-Tanzīl*), and which specify its adversaries, its test to them, and its help by Allah in spite of resistance.⁶⁴ However *Bint al-Shāṭi* merits credit as the principal researcher to uncover them.

2-The Case of Synonyms:

The specialists in the Arabic language have for quite some time been contending over the instance of equivalent words. They are separated into two gatherings; the primary hold the view that equivalent words exist, the other say that equivalent words don't exist. The supporters of the main gathering affirm that diverse words can speak to one single significance, while the second gathering contends that each word passes on particular importance not to be connected to different words.⁶⁵ *Bint al-Shāṭi* defines *tafsīr* as an attempt to understand the *Qur'ān* that consists in explaining and clarifying the text by using interpretive as opposed to synonymous language.⁶⁶ She says that it is a discipline that has been practiced by Muslim scholars from a very early period, and acknowledges that such exegetes as *al-Farrā'* (d. 207/822),⁶⁷ *al-Tabarī* (d. 310/923),⁶⁸ *al-Zamakhsharī* (d.538/1144),⁶⁹ *al-Rāzī* (d. 606/1210),⁷⁰ *Abū Hayyān* (d. 754/1344)⁷¹ and *Muḥammad 'Abduh's* (d. 1905),⁷² made invaluable contributions to this field. However, their interpretations, according to her, are colored to a great extent by tendentious projections, sometimes based on sectarian and extra-*Qur'ānic* materials, and often ignore the miraculous nature rhetorical inimitability of the *Qur'ān*.⁷³

One of the essential discoveries of *Bint al-Shāṭi* is that what the language specialists generally characterize as equivalent words never show up in the *Qur'ān*. As indicated by *Bint al-Shāṭi*, the *Qur'ān* picks its wordings painstakingly so that there is no single word that can be supplanted by some other typically called equivalent words in the lexicons or books of analysis. Each word has its own particular importance, which is not

⁶⁴ *Bint al-Shāṭi*, *al-I'jāz al-bayānī li'l-Qur'ān wa-masā'il Nafi' b. al-Azraq*, p.141

⁶⁵ Ibid. pp.194-198

⁶⁶ *Bint al-Shāṭi*, *al-Tafsīr al-bayānī*, vol. II, p.9

⁶⁷ See *Abū Zakarīya Yahya ibn Ziyād al-Farrā'*, *Ma'ani al-Qur'ān*, ed. *Muhammad 'Ali al-Najjār* (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-'ilmīyya, 1998)

⁶⁸ See *Muhammad 'ibn Jarīr al-Tabarī, Jami' al-Bayan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an* (Beirut: Dār al-al kutub al-'ilmīyya, 1986-7).

⁶⁹ *Abū 'Iqāsim Maḥmūd ibn 'Umar al-Zamakhsharī, Al-Kashshāf 'an Haqā'iq al-Tanzīl wa 'Uyun al-'Aqāwīl*, (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'arif, n.d.) vol.2, p.662

⁷⁰ See *Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī Muhammad ibn 'Umar, al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, n.d.).

⁷¹ See *Muhammad Ibn Yusuf Abu Hayyan, al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr al-Musamma bi al-Bahr al-Muhīt* (Riyād: Maktaba 'wa Matabi' al-Nasr, n.d.).

⁷² See *Muhammad 'Abduh, Tafsīr Juz 'Ammā* (Beirut: Dār al-al kutub al-'ilmīyya, 2000)

⁷³ *Bint al-Shāṭi*, *Al-Qur'ān wa al-Tafsīr al-'Asrī* (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif, 1970), p.24-32; and , *Bint al-Shāṭi*, *al-Tafsīr al-bayānī*, vol. II, p.8

Exegetical Method of *Bint al-Shāṭi*'s *al-Taḥsīn al-bayānī – li'l- Qur'ān al-Karīm* - An Analytical Assessment quite the same as others. The *Qur'ān* utilizes each word to express a specific importance or thought, which can't be communicated by different words. *Bint al-Shāṭi*'s careful investigation of those words yields a noteworthy conclusion, specifically the significance of each word utilized as a part of the *Qur'ān* can not be utilized to denote the importance of another word. One of the essential discoveries of *Bint al-Shāṭi*' is that what the language specialists typically characterize as equivalent words never show up in the *Qur'ān*.

As indicated by *Bint al-Shāṭi*', the *Qur'ān* picks its wordings precisely so that there is no single word that can be supplanted by some other ordinarily called equivalent words in the lexicons or books of analysis. Each word has its own significance, which is not quite the same as others. The *Qur'ān* uses each word to express a specific significance or thought, which can't be communicated by different words. *Bint al-Shāṭi*'s meticulous investigation of those words yields a huge conclusion, to be specific the importance of each word utilized as a part of the *Qur'ān* can't be utilized to signify the significance of another word.

The words *nabi* and *rasul* used as a part of the *Qur'ān* are the easiest case of this case. The two words are generally appointed a similar significance; each word can be translated with the importance of the other. The investigation of *Bint al-Shāṭi*', however, yields a different result. She argues that if we interpret S. 69:40 (إِنَّهُ لَقَوْلُ رَسُولٍ كَرِيمٍ) "Behold, this [*Qur'ān*] is indeed the [inspired] word of a noble apostle," with (إِنَّهُ لَقَوْلُ نَبِيِّ) "That it is indeed the speech of a prophet," the meaning would be impaired, since the *Qur'ān* is not the utterance of a prophet (*nabī*), but it is a mission which he has to deliver, and he could not act in that capacity unless he has the status of a messenger (*rasūl*). Therefore, this 'mission' can only be attributed to the person who is a 'messenger,' and not merely a 'prophet.'⁷⁴

The third example of this case is the words زَوْج and امْرَأَة. *Bint al-Shāṭi*' observes that these two words are used in the *Qur'ān* in different senses, though lexically the two words might carry the same meaning. The *Qur'ān* uses زَوْج when it speaks about marriage relationship in terms of procreation in which love, compassion, and peacefulness are the binding forces; otherwise it uses امْرَأَة. In *sūrah*. 30:21, Allah says:

خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا لِتَسْكُنُوا إِلَيْهَا⁷⁵

(He creates for you mates out of your own kind)

and in S. 25:74 He tells us the prayer of those *'ibād al-rahmān*:

رَبَّنَا هَبْ لَنَا مِنْ أَزْوَاجِنَا قُرَّةَ أَعْيُنٍ⁷⁶

"O our Sustainer! Grant that our spouses and our offspring be a joy to our eyes,

If love, mercy, and bond between the couple are loss, either by dishonesty, or difference in faith (*'aqidah*), then *Qur'ān* uses امْرَأَة instead of زَوْج. for example In *sūrah*. 66:10-11 *Qur'ān* states:

ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا لِّلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا امْرَأَةً تُوْحٍ وَّامْرَأَةً لُّوطٍ كَانَتَا تَحْتَ عَبْدَيْنِ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا صَالِحَيْنِ فَخَانَتَاهُمَا⁷⁷

⁷⁴ *Bint al-Shāṭi*'s, *Min Asrār al- 'Arabiyyah*, (Cairo: Dār al-M'ārif, 1990), p.38

⁷⁵ *Al- Qur'ān*, Ar-Rum:21

⁷⁶ *Al- Qur'ān*, Al-Furqan:74

⁷⁷ *Al- Qur'ān*, Al-Tahreem:10

For those who are bent on denying the truth God has propounded a parable in [the stories of] Noah's wife and Lot's wife: they were wedded to two of Our righteous servants, and each one betrayed her husband;

Both the wives of *Nūh* and *Lūt* were disbelievers, while their husbands were the messengers of Allah, and therefore both wives are referred to as *إمْرَأَةٌ*. The spouse of Pharaoh, the ruler of Egypt, was an adherent of Faith of Moses, and thusly she is alluded to in the *Qur'ān* as *إمْرَأَةٌ*.

Another unobtrusive point featured by *Bint al-Shāṭi* is the reason for marriage is the continuation of life by multiplication. In the event that this objective can't be expert because of some reason, at that point the spouse is alluded to as *إمْرَأَةٌ*. *Zakariya* implored Allah that he be given offspring although his *إمْرَأَةٌ* (wife) was infertile. In *sūrah*. 19:5 we can read his plea to Allah:

وَأِنِّي خِفْتُ الْمَوَالِيَ مِنْ وَرَائِي وَكَانَتِ امْرَأَتِي عَاقِرًا فَهَبْ لِي مِنْ لَدُنْكَ وَلِيًّا⁷⁸

"Now, behold, I am afraid of [what] my kinsfolk [will do] after I am gone, for my wife has always been barren. Bestow, then, upon me, out of Thy grace, the gift of a successor.

We read in *sūrah*. 3:40, that when the angel announced the good news to him that Allah granted him a son, he exclaimed his astonishment almost in disbelief because, as he admitted, he is a very old man, and his *إمْرَأَةٌ*, referring to his wife, is sterile:

قَالَ رَبِّ أَنَّى يَكُونُ لِي غُلَامٌ وَقَدْ بَلَغَنِيَ الْكِبَرُ وَامْرَأَتِي عَاقِرٌ⁷⁹

[*Zakariya*] exclaimed: "O my Sustainer! How can I have a son when old age has already overtaken me, and my wife is barren?"

Then, after Allah granted them offspring, the *Qur'ān* uses the word in *sūrah*. 21:90 when it refers to the wife of *Zakariya*:

فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ يَحْيَىٰ وَأَصْلَحْنَا لَهُ زَوْجَهُ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا يُسَارِعُونَ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ⁸⁰

And so we responded unto him, and bestowed upon him the gift of John, having made his wife fit to bear him a child: [and,] verily, these [three] would vie with one another in doing good works,

The utilization of here is suitable as indicated by the hypothesis of *Bint al-Shāṭi*, on the grounds that the spouse of *Zakariya* is not any more desolate, and thusly, one of the motivations behind marriage is as of now satisfied.⁸¹

3- Oaths in *Qur'ān*:

The *Qur'ān* uses oaths more than 200 times.⁸² Seeming all the more normally in the *Makkī sūrahs* and considering both the settings of the disclosure and the perspective of the early gathering of people, this successive utilization of vows appears to have been an element of the *Qur'ān* 's configuration to be as compelling as conceivable in conveying its message.. The lion's share of Muslim exegetes hold the feeling that the standard capacity of the *Qur'ānic* promise happening at the start of a *sūrah* is to show the honorable position of the objects of the pledge. In any case, *Bint al-Shāṭi* goes past this position, contending that the utilization of the pledge in the *Qur'ān* is a complex device that can draw consideration as powerfully as conceivable to something open to tangible observation. She recommends that this question of recognition has qualities in a similar manner as something otherworldly that isn't communicated in the promise itself.⁸³ *Bint al-Shāṭi* offers some illustrations. When God swears "By the morning" (والصبح) it represents guidance

⁷⁸ Al- *Qur'ān*, *Maryam*:5

⁷⁹ Al- *Qur'ān*, *Al-Imran*:40

⁸⁰ Al- *Qur'ān*, *Al-Anbiya*:90

⁸¹ *Bint al-Shāṭi*, *al-I'jāz al-bayānī li'l-Qur'ān wa-masā'il Nafi' b. al-Azraq*, p.47

⁸² *Qattān*, *Mannā' al-Khalīl*, *Mabāhith fi 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*. (Cairo: Maktabah Wahbah, 1981)

⁸³ J.J.G. Jansen, *The Interpretation of the Koran in Modern Egypt* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1974), 75

Exegetical Method of *Bint al-Shāṭi*'s *al-Tafsīr al-bayānī* – li'l- *Qur'ān al-Karīm* - An Analytical Assessment and truth, "By the night" (واليل) represents error and falsehood. In *sūrah al-Najm* for example, God swears: وَالنَّجْمِ إِذَا هَوَىٰ "By the star when it plunges",⁸⁴ juxtaposing the image of a star falling from heaven to earth with the idea of divine revelation coming down from God to *Muhammad* (peace be on him).⁸⁵ *Bint al-Shāṭi*' may be correct insofar as her claim that she is the first to make the literary connection between the oaths and the rest of the *sūrah*'s message as part of the *Qur'ān*'s artistic illustration. Credit may be accorded here to her partly because Muslim scholars have generally not made this literary connection and because what Western scholars describe as an "enigmatic" oath makes no sense to them on its own if they do not turn "to other evidence in order to find the clue to the structural coherence,"⁸⁶ let alone serve as any appreciable literary allusion.

Bint al-Shāṭi's explanations represent a literary role of *Qur'ānic* oaths. To acknowledge the oaths' status and potential by utilizing them appropriately in any communication constitutes an effective style. If the *Qur'ān* had failed to employ oaths in its unyielding pursuit to convey its principal themes effectively, then one would possibly have found its style of communication to be short of its expected level.

لَا أَقْسِمُ بِحَذَا الْبَلَدِ - وَأَنْتَ جَلُّ حَذَا الْبَلَدِ

"I swear by this city, and you [O Prophet] are an inhabitant of this city".⁸⁷ Oaths preceded by a negative clause " لَا " are neither rare in the *Qur'ān* nor uncommon in Arabic. Occurring in about eight places,⁸⁸ this verse appears in one of two places in *Qur'ān*, *sūrah*. 90: 1 and 75: 1

لَا أَقْسِمُ بِيَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ⁸⁹

Where such oaths open a chapter. Apart from the insufficiently substantiated interpretation that portrays God as declaring here that He intends no oath at all, the overwhelming contextual evidence supports this oath's affirmative nature. Yet the popular explanations for this style of oath, once again, are geared toward emphasis (*tākid*) or glorification (*ta'zim*).⁹⁰ For *Bint al-Shāṭi*', however, there are more literary implications for both the oath's structure (لَا أَقْسِمُ as opposed to أَقْسِمُ) and phraseology (أقسم as opposed to أحلف). The beauty of using لَا أَقْسِمُ (literally, I do not make an oath) rather than أَقْسِمُ (I make an oath) is not so much the intention to emphasize (though so credibly intended here), as it is the significance of applying such a style itself as a literary tool with discrete expression (*sirr al ta'bīr*). In the end, although an ordinary oath may emphasize something to a particular degree, the negative style accomplishes the same. In addition, it also serves as an effective mechanism for drawing more attention, arousing intense. She asserts that every word used in the *Qur'ān* conveys a particularly significant meaning that no other word can provide.⁹¹

Bint al-Shāṭi' believes that oaths of the *Qur'ān* are used to attract thoughtfulness regarding the current issue by utilizing discernible things and cases keeping in mind the end goal to present those wonder which are intangible and unique to human personality and creative energies; for instance she says that when Allah swears by the morning which when sparkles inhales away the dimness, and the night which hides it, He really showed

⁸⁴ *Al- Qur'ān*, 53:1. See the translation of Arthur J. Arberry, *The Qur'ān Interpreted* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p.550

⁸⁵ *Bint al-Shāṭi*', *al-Tafsīr al-bayānī*, vol. I, p. 250. See also *Muhammad Amīn*, *A Study of Bint al-Shāṭi*'s Exegesis, p.49

⁸⁶ Angelika Neuwirth, "Images and Metaphors in the Introductory Sections of the Mekkan Suras" in G. R. Hawting and Abdul-Kader A. Shareef, eds. *Approaches to the - Qur'ān* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), p.32

⁸⁷ *Al- Qur'ān*, *Al-Bald*:1-2

⁸⁸ *Bint al-Shāṭi*', *al-Tafsīr al-bayānī*, Vol. 1, p.147

⁸⁹ *Al- Qur'ān*, *Al-Qayamat*:1

⁹⁰ *Bint al-Shāṭi*', *al-Tafsīr al-bayānī*, Vol. 1, p.147

⁹¹ *ibid*

the noticeable marvel to speak to the subtle ones that are direction and truth from one perspective, and blunder and misrepresentation on the other.⁹² *Bint al-Shāṭi* shows her ingenuity in analyzing those *sūrahs* containing oaths. Her study suggests that *Qur'ānic* usage must be understood not by interpreting a single, remote verse but, rather, by studying a group of verses within a chapter. The next step is tracing the relationship between these verses, and determining their points according to their context, and not by interpreting those using external, unrelated materials. This is in full accordance with her exegetical method.

Conclusion:

This study reveals outstanding contribution of Bint al Shati in the field of Quranic Exegesis. She took inspiration from Muhammad Abduh's work and made excellent contribution in literary style and interpretation of Quran. Although she belonged to a conservative minded family but her thirst for education and knowledge took her far ahead in breaking all barriers and overcoming all hindrances. *Bint al-Shāṭi* was a firm and effective lady who have devoted her life to upgrading the condition of Muslims fundamentally through her scholarly interests. An examination of her initial career in Arabic language and literature uncovers that she was a great scholar rather than a social and political extremist. Later she ended up gaining perfection in the field of *Qur'ānic* interpretation.

Her editorial on fourteen early *Makkan sūrahs* is an artistic exposition which applies an inherent way to deal with understanding Quran. Her work executes the system created by the Egyptian philologist and scholar *Amīn al-Khulī*, *Bint al-Shāṭi*'s better half. Her significant scholarly exercises incorporate written work books and papers on *Qur'ānic* commentaries, Arabic writing, Islamic history, women liberation, social issues and in addition different imaginative works, for example, books and short stories. She likewise had composed the week by week segments for the Egyptian daily paper, *al-Ahrām*. Among her compositions, *al-Tafsīr al-bayānī li'l-Qur'ān*, is her most fascinating work. The purpose of this study is to analyze *Bint al-Shāṭi*'s views with respect to her exegetical study of the *Qur'ān*.

The paper concludes with a discussion on *Bint al-Shāṭi*'s stance on the primacy of a linguistic approach for understanding the *Qur'ān* and thus her divergence from *Amīn al-Khulī* who emphasized history above language in his *Manāhij tajdīdīhi*.⁹³ The emphasis on linguistic advances in *Bint al-Shāṭi*'s work into a religious philosophy of humankind in which ladies are similarly depended with comprehension the *Qur'ān*, uncovering her translation to be propelled by an enthusiasm for the *Qur'ān*'s literary inimitability.

Significant aspects of Bint al Shati's major contribution *al-Tafsīr al-bayānī li'l-Qur'ān* can be summed up as an attempt to prove the rhetorical inimitability of the *Qur'ān* by using an exegetical method focusing on three major areas; *hurūf muqaṭṭa'ah*, Synonyms and Oaths. All these three stylistic characteristics of Quran have been beautifully explained in her remarkable works. Her approach is not only powerful but intriguing too. It convinces the reader of Quran if divine beauty of this revelation and miracles of Arabic language. Her convincing works arouses interests of the reader in learning Quran and its language. Above all it is a motivation and an inspiration for women of contemporary era to indulge in the domain of *Qur'ānic* Exegesis which is a fathomless sea.

⁹² *Ibid*, Vol. 1, p.149

⁹³ *Sa'fān, Kāmil, Amīn al-Khulī fī manāhij tajdīdīhi* (Cairo: al-Majlis al-A'lā li'l-Funūn wa'l-Ādāb wa'l-'Ulūm al-Ijtīmā'iyya, 1970).