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Critical Study of John Burton's Misconceptions about the Naskh in the Holy Qur'an

Dr. Muhammad Khubaib

Assistant Professor, Department of World Religions and Interfaith Harmony,
The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan

Email: muhammad.khubaib@iub.edu.pk

Sajid U Rahman

PhD Research Scholar, Department of Qur'anic Studies,
The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan

Email: sajidrahman86@gmail.com



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Critical Study of John Burton's Misconceptions about the *Naskh* in the Holy Qur'ān

Abstract

The Holy Qur'ān is the True Word of Almighty Allah which He has revealed to His last Prophet Muhammad. The Orientalists, who are basically Jews and Christians, deny this fact and create doubts about the Qur'ān. They claim that the Qur'ān was fabricated by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) himself with the assistance of previous scriptures. An orientalist, John Burton has written a book regarding the Holy Qur'ān named "The Collection of the Qur'ān" in which he has presented strange theories about the Qur'ān. In this article, John Burton's objections about *Naskh* (Abrogation) have analytically been studied; *Naskh* has been defined and justified in the light of the Qur'ān, previous Divine Books and rational arguments. Three kinds of *Naskh*; *Naskh-ul-Hukm Wa-al-Tilawa*, *Naskh-al-Hukm Dūn-al-Tilawa* and *Naskh-al-Tilawa Dūn-al-Hukm* have been explained with examples. Burton's view regarding *Naskh* like "Whether the Sunnah can abrogate the Qur'ān or not?", has been encountered and the relationship of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah has been established. The narrations that John Burton has quoted regarding *Naskh* like the verse of stoning, the narration of Hazrat Abu Mūsa Al-Asha'ri and the narration of Hazrat Ayesha, have been analyzed and the misconceptions of John Burton regarding "*Naskh*" have been clarified.

Keywords: Holy Qur'ān, Orientalists, John Burton, *Naskh*, Abrogation.

Introduction of the Topic:

Naskh is an Arabic word which literally means omission, deletion, elimination and cancellation. And technically it means "Omission of Sharia ruling in lieu of Sharia". In the English language the word "abrogation" is used for "*Naskh*". It means that sometimes Almighty Allah issues some Sharia rulings according to the circumstances of some era and later keeping in view some other circumstances with His mature wisdom, He abolishes that ruling and replaces it with another

Sharia ruling. This action is called “Naskh”. The old ruling which is cancelled is called “Mansukh” and the new ruling which replaces it is called “Nasikh”.¹

Introduction of John Burton:

John Burton was born in 1929. He served as a professor of Arabic at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland. ² We could find his three books named “The Collection of the Qur’ān” published by Cambridge University Press in 1977 AD, “The Sources of Islamic Law” and “An Introduction to Hadīth” published by The University of Edinburgh, Scotland in 1990 and 1995 AD accordingly.

John Burton's Views about the Topic:

In the third, fourth and fifth chapters of his book, “The Collection of the Qur’ān” John Burton raised objections to the Qur’ān regarding its term of Naskh. These chapters have been named respectively; “The Sub Science of Naskh”, “The Emergence of the Third Mode of Naskh” and “The Mus’haf: an Incomplete Record of the Qur’ān.” ³ At the beginning of the third chapter, he quotes:

“That there are indeed three modes of naskh has never been the universal view of the Muslims.”⁴

Then he discusses *Naskh-al-hukm wa al-tilawa* and objects to the Holy Quran through naskh by writing:

“Omission ought not to be predicated of a divine book, nor inadvertence of its divinely guided recipient.”⁵

Then Burton discusses the second kind of naskh; *Naskh-al-hukm Dūna al-tilawa* and divides the Muslims into “the Qur’ān party” and “the Sunnah party” and raises the question of whether the Sunnah can abrogate the Qur’ān or not? So he writes:

“The Quran abrogates the Quran; the Sunna abrogates the Sunna. On these two principles, the majority of the *usulis* were agreed. As to whether the Quran abrogates the Sunna, or the sunna abrogates the Quran, unanimity was not achieved.”⁶

He concludes from his discussion at the end of this chapter:

“Apparently we now have the Quran’s word for it: the mus’haf is incomplete and abrogation has occurred.”⁷

Then in the fourth chapter of his book objecting to the third mode of naskh; *Naskh-al-tilawa Dūn-al-hukm* Burton quoted many narrations, many of them he has altered their meanings and has travestied them to get his objectives and many of them do not reach the criterion of correctness. He has written the following narrations such as:

1. He quotes Hazrat Umer’s narration about the verse of stoning and writes:
“The stoning verse, therefore, once stood in the Quran texts. Why is it now absent?”⁸
2. Narration of Abu Aswad from Abu Mūsa Asha’ri that there was a Sūrah which was the same as the Sūrah At-Tuaba which they forgot. And the words; “If ibn-e-Ādam possessed two *wadi* (valleys) of property, he would ask for a third *wadi* and nothing can fill the belly of ibn-e-Ādam except dust.” were also the part of the Qur’ān.⁹
3. Burton quotes the Hadīth of Hazrat Ayesha that she said: “There were ten known sucklings in the Qur’ān and they were abrogated by five known sips and when the Holy Prophet died, they were being recited.” He objects that why these verses are not found in the present mus’haf?¹⁰

In the fifth chapter of his book, Burton repeats the same objections and concludes from the whole discussion that the Quran is incomplete.¹¹

Analysis of John Burton’s Views:

John Burton has quoted those narrations which the Muslim scholars have quoted in their books under the chapter “Abrogated Narrations.” The purpose of John Burton by quoting such narrations is to prove that the Qur’ān is an incomplete mus’haf, many verses and Sūrahs were the part of the Qur’ān but they are not found in the present mus’haf.

Burton and other orientalists are well aware of the fact that naskh is not a new thing to the Muslims. Even the Jews and the Christians to whom the Orientalists belong are completely familiar with this term. We shall quote many arguments

from the Old Testament and the New Testament of the Bible under the heading of "Arguments of Abrogation from Previous Divine Books." Though there are some differences in opinions being humans, however, Muslims not only acknowledge the term naskh, but also, they have also written many books about naskh. The main writers of the books about naskh in the Holy Qur'ān are Abu-al-Farj Ibn-ul-Jouzi (597 A.H), Imām Abu Dawūd Sajistani (203 A.H), Imām Abu Ubayyd, Qasim bin Salām (224 A.H), Abu Ja'far, An-Nahhas, Makki-bin-Abi Talib and Ibn-al-Anbāri etc.

So the naskh in the Qur'ān is not such a thing on the basis of which the authenticity and the completeness of the Qur'ān could be objected upon. No one can blame the Qur'ān on the base of naskh. According to the Muslims, the act of abrogation continued till the death of the Holy Prophet (PBUH). So, the claim of Burton and other orientalists that there were many verses in the Qur'ān that are not found in the present mus'haf is useless. No change was made in the Holy Qur'ān after the death of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) because it was the Holy Prophet who was informed by Allāh that what should be left in the Qur'ān and what should be erased, what should be made part of the Qur'ān and what should be made part of the Hadīth because the Holy Prophet followed only what order was given to him by Almighty Allāh.¹² Whatever is present in the current mus'haf, it is the real and the complete text of the Qur'ān. What was to be abrogated from the Qur'ān is not part of the Qur'ān and what was to be kept in the Qur'ān not even a single word of it is absent from the Qur'ān. Allāh has revealed the Qur'ān and He Himself has taken the responsibility to keep it safe and sound from any changing.¹³

Firstly, we discuss the justification of naskh in the light of the Holy Quran, previous divine books in which John Burton and other orientalists believe and in the light of rational arguments, and then we shall clarify Burton's misconceptions about naskh.

Justification of Naskh:

All the rulings of the Holy Qur'ān were not revealed at once but Allah revealed them gradually to facilitate the people and to make the enforcement of Islamic orders easy and gradual because it becomes easy to follow the rules when they are enforced one by one with some delay and pause. Almighty Allah revealed many orders according to the need of time but when that time passed and the need of time changed, Almighty Allah abolished the first order and replaced it with new order. So many needless orders were replaced with new orders. It was before the completion of the Sharia and during the upgrading steps.

The concept of naskh can be understood better with the example of a doctor and a patient. A doctor recommends a medicine for a patient according to his situation but after some time when the patient somehow recovers and his health becomes a little bit better, then the doctor cancels his first recommendation and prescribes another medicine according to the need of the patient. No one can object to the replacement of the medicine. No one can claim that this action of the doctor is against the wisdom nor can declare the doctor unwise. The patient also acts on the advice of the doctor whatever the doctor advises him or changes his prescriptions, because everyone knows that the doctor is well aware of the patient's illness. Allah is the Creator of human beings and he knows their nature better than the doctor knows his patient. When the people embraced Islam, they were not in the strong condition of faith. So Allah revealed rulings which were easy for them to adopt and when their faith became stronger, then Allah made the rulings stronger. We like to explain it with the example of making wine unlawful gradually. At first, Allah revealed an easy order and said,

“They ask you (O Muhammad!) About wine and gambling, tell them that there is great sin in them both and some benefits for the people but their sin is greater than their benefit.”¹⁴

Almighty Allah revealed this verse to wash their brain and to make the wine and gambling hateful to them by declaring them the great sin and by clearing to them that the harmfulness of the wine and the gambling is more than their apparent worldly benefits. After sometimes Allah revealed another verse which was stronger than the first one and He said:

“O believers! Do not come near prayer while you are drunk”.¹⁵

This made them more cautious about the harmfulness of the drugs amongst which the wine is on the top. The Muslims loved the prayers and they did not want to leave the prayers at any cost. So they left drinking wine at the time of prayers. Their eagerness for wine had decreased and they were mentally ready to leave it. So Allah revealed the strongest order which replaced both previous orders and He said,

“O People who believed! Verily the wine (the intoxicants) and the games of chance and altars and divining arrows (are an) abomination from Satan's handiwork. So keep yourself away from it in order that you may become successful”.¹⁶

Likewise, all the rulings and the verses which had been replaced were due to the great wisdom of Almighty Allah because He is the Wise.

Arguments from the Qur'ān about Naskh:

There are many verses in the Holy Qur'ān which prove that naskh in the Qur'ān has been done by Almighty Allah himself. It is not the act of the Holy Prophet (PBUH). So Almighty Allah says:

“Whatever we abrogate a verse or we make it to be forgotten, we bring (reveal) a better than it or one similar to it. Do you not have knowledge that Allah is all-Powerful over all things?”¹⁷

Allah has attributed the act of abrogation to Himself which clears that the replacement of the verses and the rulings was not done by the Holy Prophet, rather it was done by Almighty Allah and it shows His powerfulness over everything and that Allah can do what He wants to do. Allah says on another place in the Holy Qur'ān:

“And when we change a verse on the place of another verse, and Allah knows better whatever He should reveal, they (disbelievers) say: You (O Prophet) are not but a fabricator. Rather, in fact, most of them do not know the reality and the purpose of the replacement of the verses”.¹⁸

In this verse, Allah clarifies that the disbelievers of the Prophet's era also referred to the act of abrogation to the Prophet like the orientalists of the present era. They also claimed that the Prophet himself invented the verses. Allah replied to them that it was He Who Himself revealed the verses and He knew the best when and what should be revealed and whatever verses should be replaced, but most people do not know the reason for the replacement of the verses.

Allah says in another place in the Holy Qur'ān:

“We shall teach you so you will not forget but what Allah wills.”¹⁹

These verses clearly explain that only Allah has the authority of abrogation and the Holy Prophet (PBUH) does not forget but whatever Allah wills to be forgotten.

Arguments of Abrogation from Previous Divine Books:

Most of the Orientalists are actually Jews or Christians. They believe in previous prophets; Moses or Jesus. So it will be useful to understand the concept of naskh that we should mention some references from previous divine books. The concept of abrogation is not related only to the Sharia of the Prophet Muhammad, rather it was present in the Sharia of the previous prophets.

Let us understand it with the example of prayer. In the era of some prophets, the prayer consisted of just *tasbih* (*Subhan-Allah*), *tehlil* (*la illah illa Allah*) and *dua* (Prayer), but in the era of other Prophets, some other *arkān* (pillars) like *ruku'*, *sajood*, (Prostration) etc., were added in the prayer. Furthermore, in the Sharia of previous Prophets, the prayer was only two raka'āt but in the Sharia of the Prophet Muhammad, five-time prayers were made obligatory. When we go through the Torah and the Bible, we come to know that there are many subordinate rules that have been abrogated in them, for example:

In the Sharia of Hazrat Ya'qub (Jacob) the marriage with two sisters at a time, was lawful even when Hazrat Jacob's two wives; Lia and Rachel were sisters.²⁰

But in the Sharia of Hazrat Mūsa (Moses), it was made unlawful.²¹ In the Sharia of Noah, every walking animal was halal,²² but in the Sharia of Hazrat Mūsa (Moses), some animals were made haram (forbidden).²³ In the Sharia of Hazrat

Mūsa (Moses), divorce was allowed for everyone,²⁴ but in the Sharia of Jesus divorce was allowed only in the case of adultery.²⁵

So, there are many examples of cancellation of old rulings through new rulings in Old Testament and New Testament of the Bible. Every upcoming nabuwwat (Prophet-hood) and every next revealed book cancelled many rulings of previous prophet-hood and books and issued new rulings. Many rulings of one prophethood were revealed by Almighty Allah and after sometimes they were replaced by new rulings. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) said:

“There was no prophethood but its rulings were abrogated.”²⁶

So, this terminology of nasikh and mansukh is not unknown to the orientalist. This technique has also been present in the religions which they follow and it is also rational and logical but Burton ignores all these facts and the reality of naskh, and objects on the text of the Holy Qur’ān due to naskh.

Rational Arguments on the Abrogation:

The orientalist consider that naskh in the orders of Allah is against intellect. They think that if we accept naskh then it will become mandatory to accept that Allah changes His opinion. They say that admitting nasikh and mansukh in the orders of Allah means that Allah issues some orders, and then He comes to know that He was wrong, so He withdraws His order.

This objection of the orientalist is of no sense. If someone using his sense thinks deeply, he can easily understand that naskh does not mean a change in opinion, rather it means issuing the rules according to the need of the circumstances. Nasikh does not declare the mansookh to be wrong. Rather nasikh determines the duration of the enforcement of mansookh and it clears that the mansookh act was appropriate till the time it was enforced but now due to the change in circumstances a new rule is needed to be enforced. When we study the history of Islamic Sharia, we come to know that in the beginning of Islam, the companions of the Prophet were new to embrace Islam. They had spent their whole life in the customs and traditions of an ignorant age. So, the Holy Prophet (PBUH) reformed them gradually for their mental and practical training. Almighty Allah also

revealed his rulings gradually and changed his rulings according to their circumstances and needs. Such kinds of changes in the Islamic Sharia are called naskh. If someone thinks positively without bias, he will surely reach the conclusion that changes of such kind are according to the wisdom of Almighty Allah and they are not fault in any way. The doctor is not called wise who suggests the same medicine in all circumstances and conditions but the wise doctor is he who changes the medicine with his keen observation with the changing situations of the patient and his illness.

This change is not particular with only Sharia ruling, rather the whole system of the world is running on this principal of change. Almighty Allah changes everything gradually. He creates man and all other creatures as infant, then baby then child, then man and then the senior citizen, Burton cannot object on this changing system of Almighty Allah and cannot claim that why he was not created as young man and why was he forced to pass through the gradual stages of becoming man? Allah is well aware of man's body and his soul and He knows well how to bring up man's bodily and spiritual system gradually. So naskh is not a defect any way.

The changes in seasons also depict this fact. Almighty Allah changes all the seasons one by one according to the need of mankind and other creatures. When summer is needed, He brings summer, when winter is needed He brings winter, likewise spring etc. These all changes are according to the great wisdom of Almighty Allah. Only a fool and stupid person can claim that first Allah brought the winter season, then He realized that He was wrong, so He brought the summer season. Likewise, only a stupid and foolish person can claim that first Allah revealed some rule and then He realized that He committed a mistake so He changed it with a new rule. If someone has a little bit of sense, he can understand that these changes are according to the need of circumstances and they show the great wisdom of Almighty Allah.

Kinds of Naskh:

There are three kinds of naskh in the Holy Qur'ān:

1) *Naskh-al-Hukm wa-al-Tilāwa:*

In this kind of naskh, both the ruling and the recitation are abolished. An example of this kind of abrogation is the narration of Hazrat Ayesha, in which she says:

“There were ten attested sips which made (the marriage) forbidden, revealed in the Holy Qur’ān. Then they were replaced by five attested sips. When the Holy Prophet (PBUH) died they were recited in the Holy Qur’ān.”²⁷

The first part of this narration about ten attested suckling which caused foster relationships forbidden, was abrogated completely with words and rulings but the words of the second part of this narration about five attested sips, were abrogated but its ruling was not abrogated.

2) *Naskh-al-Hukm Dūn-al-Tilawa:*

In this kind of naskh, the ruling is suppressed but the words remain in the Holy Qur’ān and they are recited. An example of this kind of naskh is that at the beginning of Islām, the period of iddah of the woman whose husband died was one year. As there is in the Holy Qur’ān:

“Those who die among you and leave (Their) wives, they should make a will of expenses for their wives without getting them out for one year”.²⁸

But when the verse of heritage was revealed then their part of heritage was fixed and their period of iddah was made four months and ten days. The ruling of this verse was abrogated though its words were not abrogated. And the nasikh which abrogates this verse is the following sayings of Almighty Allāh:

“Those who die among you and leave their wives behind them they (the wives) should keep themselves in wait for four months and ten days”.²⁹

3) *Naskh-al-Tilawa Dūn-al-Hukm:*

In this kind of abrogation, the words are abolished but the ruling is not suppressed, rather it continues to be acted upon. An example of this kind of naskh is the narration in which Hazrat Umer says:

“Indeed, Almighty Allāh has sent Muhammad (The Prophet P.B.U.H) and revealed on him the Book (the Holy Qur’ān) and the verse of *rajm* (Stoning) was also revealed, we read it, understood it and acted upon it. I fear that when a long time passes, someone may say: “We do not find the verse of stoning in the Book

of Allāh”. So they will go astray by leaving an obligation which Allāh has revealed. And the stoning has been proven in the Book of Allāh on the married man and woman who commit adultery when the testimonies are fulfilled or she becomes pregnant or they confess.”³⁰

So the verse of stoning was abrogated but its ruling remained and continued to be acted upon. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) himself acted upon it and the companions of the Holy Prophet also acted upon it.

The writer of *Tafsir-e- Kabir* writes:

“The abrogation (in the Qur’ān) can be of three kinds; only ruling, only recitation, or both the ruling and the recitation.”³¹

Encounter of Burton’s Views Regarding Naskh

John Burton has objected to the Holy Qur’ān through naskh. We have justified it through Qur’ān, Previous Religious Books and rational arguments. Now we clarify Burton’s Misconceptions about naskh in the Qur’ān. Burton has made the following objections regarding naskh:

Whether the Sunna can abrogate the Qur’ān or not?

Burton has objected to whether the Hadīth can abrogate the Qur’ān or not. He had divided the Muslims into “the Qur’ān party” and “the Sunna party”.

The Relationship of the Qur’ān and the Sunna:

Our reply is that though there is a difference of opinion among the Muslims we have to follow the teachings of the Qur’ān and Hadīth. All Muslims believe that the Qur’ān and the Hadīth are complements of each other. They explain each other and they qualify each other. Each one is incomplete without the other. When the Holy Prophet (PBUH) says about Islamic Sharia, worship and Jurisprudence, then these are not the sayings of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) himself. Rather it is the sayings of Almighty Allah because the Holy Prophet’s sayings about Islamic Sharia have been authorized by Almighty Allah as He says:

“And he (The Prophet) does not speak (about Islam) with his own wish. It (what he speaks) is nothing but a revelation revealed (to him by Allah).”³²

And Almighty Allah says in another place in the Qur’ān:

“Who obeys the Prophet, he has perfectly obeyed Allah.”³³

So, the Qur’ān is *wahy mattlu* (recited revelation) and the Sunna is *wahy ghairmatlu* (non-recited revelation). Both have been revealed by Allah and authorized by Him. So Almighty Allah says:

“Indeed Allah has bestowed the believers His great favor by sending among them a prophet from themselves who recites to them his (Allah’s) verses and purifies them and teaches them the Book (the Holy Qur’ān) and the Hikma (the Sunna of the Prophet), and verily they were before him (the Prophet) in clear error.”³⁴

In this verse there have been mentioned two things authorized by Allah. One is the Book of Allah and the second is Hikma; the Sunna of the Prophet which has also been revealed by Allah. So Almighty Allah says:

“Those people who have denied the Book and that (the Sunna) with which we have sent our prophets, they will surely know.”³⁵

The above mentioned verses clarify that there are two things which have been revealed by Allah and authorized by Him; one is the Book of Allah and the second is the Sunna of the Prophet which is the best explainer for the Book of Allah.

So the Qur’ān and the Hadīth have a deep connection with each other. Both have been revealed by Allah. The difference is just that both the words and the meanings of the Qur’ān are from Allah and the meanings of Sunna are from Allah but its words are from the Holy Prophet (PBUH).

The Three Statues of the Sunna as its Relation with the Qur’ān:

There are three statuses of the Sunna as its relationship with the Qur'ān. There is no dispute among the Muslims regarding this opinion. As Imam Shafī has said:

“As much as I know no (Islamic) Scholar disagree this opinion that the Sunna of the Prophet has three statuses.”³⁶

Imām Ibn e Qayyim Al-Jouzi has also mentioned three statuses of the Sunna. He writes:

“The Sunna as related to the Qur'ān has three statuses.”³⁷

These three statuses of the Sunna are as follows:

1. Adoption of the Sunna to the Qur'ān
2. Sunna as an interpreter of the Qur'ān
3. Sunna as a guide to the rulings about which the Qur'ān is silent

Let us explain them in detail:

Adoption of the Sunna to the Qur'ān:

The Sunna of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) agrees with all the rulings of the Qur'ān. It indicated the Islāmic rulings as the Holy Qur'ān has indicated. It will be according to the Qur'ān in enforcing the rules and it confirms the Qur'ānic rules as the Holy Prophet (PBUH) said:

“He, who follows me, has followed Allāh and he who disobeys me has disobeyed Allāh.”³⁸

This Hadīth confirms Allāh's sayings:

“He who follows the Prophet (of Allāh) has in fact followed Almighty Allāh.”³⁹

The Holy Prophet said:

“The Property of a Muslim man is unlawful (for others) except with his willingness.”⁴⁰

This Hadīth confirms the sayings of Almighty Allāh:

“And do not eat your properties among yourselves wrongfully nor give it to the rulers (as bribery) so that you may eat up knowingly a portion of the property of other people sinfully.”⁴¹

Hazrat Abdullah bin Umer narrates that the Holy Prophet said:

“Islām is based on the Five (pillars):

1. To testify that there is no one to be worshipped except Allāh and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allāh.
2. To offer (five time compulsory) prayers.
3. To pay obligatory charity (Zakāt)
4. To perform the Pilgrimage to Makah (Hajj)
5. To fast during Ramadan Month.”

Bukhari, Sahīh al-Bukhari, the book of Belief, Chapter: Your invocation means you faith, Hadīth: 8

This Hadīth of the Prophet confirms the following verses of the Qur’ān:

“So (O People) believe in Allāh and His prophet and the Light (The Qur’ān) that We have revealed and Allāh is Well aware of what you do”⁴²

And Allāh says:

“And establish *as-Salah* (The Prayer) and give *az-Zakah* (the obligatory charity) and bow down with those who bow down.”⁴³

And Allāh says:

“And Hajj (Pilgrimage) to the house is a duty of people which owed to Allāh by those who can make their journey to it. As for those who disbelieve, then Allāh needs nothing from the worlds.”⁴⁴

And the Verse:

“O People who have believed! Fasting had been made obligatory upon you as it was made obligatory on those people who were before you, so that you may fear Allāh.”⁴⁵

And the Hadīth of the Prophet:

“Beware! Verily I have been given the Qur’ān and another thing like it with (Hadīth).”⁴⁶

Confirms the sayings of Almighty Allāh:

“And he (the Prophet Muhammad) does not speak anything with his own desire. It (whatever he speaks) is nothing but a revelation revealed (to him by Allāh).”⁴⁷

Sunna as an interpreter of the Qur’ān:

Sometimes Sunna explains in detail the rules mentioned in the Qur'ān. So it expresses Qur'ān's summarized rules, clarifies its comprehensive things, binds its absolute commandments and specifies its general rules.

For example, the Qur'ān has ordered to offer prayer, to pay zakāt, to observe fast and to do Hajj but the Qur'ān leaves their details and explanation on the Sunna. It is Sunna that expresses how to offer prayer, what percentage of the property is to be paid as obligatory charity, how to observe fast and what is the proper way to perform Hajj. All the details of the Qur'ānic rules have been expressed in the Sunna of the Prophet because Almighty Allāh has said:

“And We have revealed to you (O Prophet Muhammad P.B.U.H) the message (the Holy Qur'ān), so that you may explain to the people clearly what was sent down to them and so that they may give thought.”⁴⁸

So Sunna is the best interpreter and explainer for the Holy Qur'ān. Hazrat Abdullah narrates that when this verse was revealed: “Those who have believed and did not mix their belief with Az-Zulm (wrong deeds)”⁴⁹. It became difficult for the companions of the Holy Prophet (PBUH). So, they asked the Prophet (PBUH): Who has not wronged to himself among us? The Holy Prophet (PBUH) replied: “This verse does not mean what you have thought, rather it is as Hazrat Luqman said advising to his son: “O my (beloved) son! Do not join others in worship with Almighty Allāh. Indeed joining others in worship with Almighty Allāh is verily a great wrong.”⁵⁰

Hazrat Adi bin Hatim narrates that when the following verse was revealed: “And continue eating and drinking until the white thread (light) of dawn appears prominent to you (distinguishing) from the black thread (of night).”⁵¹ The Holy Prophet (PBUH) said to me: That (the word *al Khait-ul-abyadh*) refers to the light of day from (*al khait-ul-aswad*) the darkness of the night.”⁵²

So, the Sunna has defined the meanings of Qur'ānic words “*al-khait-al-abyadh*” (white thread) and *al-khait-al-aswad* (black thread). There are many other examples in which Sunna of the Prophet has explained the Qur'ānic verses.

Sunna as Guide to the Rulings about which the Qur'ān is Silent:

We have proven with arguments that the Qur'ān and the Sunna both have been revealed to the Holy Prophet (PBUH) by Almighty Allāh. Allāh has revealed some rules of the Islāmic Sharia in the Qur'ān and some of them in the Sunna. So, Sunna also guides us about many rules of Islāmic Sharia about which the Holy Qur'ān is silent because both the Qur'ān and Sunna are complements for each other, both complete each other, qualify each other and clarify each other. The Qur'ān is incomplete without the Sunna and the Sunna is nothing without the Holy Qur'ān.

Hafiz Ibn Qayyim al-Jouzia writes:

“The Sunna makes such rules obligatory about which the Qur'ān is silent and the Sunna declares many things unlawful about which the Holy Qur'ān is silent.”⁵³

There are many examples of this kind of Sunna in the narrations. Hazrat Ayesha narrates that the Holy Prophet (PBUH) said:

“Fosterage (breast feeding) makes unlawful all those which consanguinity (birth) makes them unlawful.”⁵⁴

The Holy Qur'ān has forbidden from taking in marriage two sisters in wedlock simultaneously as Allāh said:

“And (it has been made unlawful to you that you take two sisters at the same time in marriage, except what has passed before. Surely, Allāh is Ever Forgiving and Most Merciful.”⁵⁵

And the Sunna has added in this Qur'ānic ruling as Hazrat Abu Huraira narrates that the Holy Prophet said:

“A woman should not be married to the man to whom her paternal aunt has already been married and likewise, a woman should not be married to the person to whom her maternal aunt has already been married.”⁵⁶

So it is Sunna which has made it unlawful to marry a woman and her maternal aunt or a woman and her paternal aunt to the same person, during the same time period.

QabIsah bin Dhuw'aib narrates that a grandmother arrived to Hazrat Abu Bakr and asked him about her right of inheritance. Hazrat Abu Bakr replied to her:

“Nothing has been mentioned for you (grandmother) in the Book of Allāh (the Holy Qur’ān) and I don’t know anything about your right of inheritance in the Sunna of the Holy Prophet. So, you should go back until I ask the other people about this.” So, Hazrat Abu Bakr asked the people about this matter. Hazrat Mughirah bin Shu’bah said: “I was there when the Holy Prophet (PBUH) gave her (a grandmother) a sixth. Hazrat Abu Bakr asked: “Was any other person present with you?” So (another companion) Muhammad bin Maslamah stood and said the same as Mughirah bin Shu’bah had said. So Hazrat Abu Bakr implemented that (sixth) for her.⁵⁷

We come to know many things from this narration: Firstly, the Holy Qur’ān is silent about the right of inheritance for the grandmother. It is Sunna which has provided her the right of inheritance. So Sunna is the complement for the Qur’ān. Secondly, the companions of the Holy Prophet also believed that there were two main sources for the Islāmic jurisprudence; the Holy Qur’ān and the Sunna of the Prophet (PBUH). Thirdly, they did not give fatwa until they acquired the knowledge of the Qur’ān and the Sunna. Fourthly, they gave the Sunna as much importance as they gave to the Qur’ān. So they required witnesses to prove the Sunna as they required witnesses to prove the verse of the Holy Qur’ān and when the Sunna of the Prophet was proved by witnesses, they accepted its rulings as they accepted the rulings of the Holy Qur’ān.

There are many examples for this; as the right of interceding, judgment with one witness and swearing, stoning the married man or woman who commits adultery and the obligation of expiation on the person who breaks the fast in the month of Ramdhan, all these rulings have not been mentioned in the Qur’ān, rather Hadīth has guided the ummah about all these rulings.⁵⁸

Almost all the Muslims believe that both the Holy Qur’ān and the Sunna of the Prophet are main sources of Islāmic Sharia, and that Sunna explains the rules of the Qur’ān and also guides the people about those rulings about which the Qur’ān is silent. Some Muslim scholars name it naskh and some of them name it customizing the general.

Reply to Burton's Objection Regarding the Verse of Stoning:

John Burton has quoted a narration that Hazrat Umer brought the stoning verse to the Qur'ān collecting committee but the committee did not include that verse in the Qur'ān and that verse is not present in the current mus'haf. So the Qur'ān is incomplete.

We have justified naskh from the Qur'ān, the Hadīth and the Bible and from rational arguments and we have explained that the naskh is of three kinds. One of those three kinds of naskh is *Naskh-al-Tilawa*, *Dūn-al-hukm*, in which the words are abrogated but the ruling is not abrogated. This stoning verse is of that kind of naskh.

The question arises that if this verse has been abrogated then why Hazrat Umer brought it to include in the Holy Qur'ān.?

The answer to this question is that this verse had been revealed by Allah. Then there could be three options: (1) either its words were abrogated but its ruling was not abrogated. (2) Or it was made part of *wahy ghairmatlu* (the Sunna of the Prophet) because both the Qur'ān and the Sunna have been revealed by Allah. Hazrat Umer could not know it but the Holy Prophet knew it. Therefore he neither recited it nor ordered the writers of the revelation to write it as the verse of the Holy Qur'ān. Rather he disliked to get it written as a verse of the Qur'ān.

It is narrated that the companions of the Prophet were discussing the rule of stoning and this verse, meanwhile, Hazrat Umer went to the Holy Prophet and asked him to dictate to him the verse of stoning. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) replied: "I cannot do so."⁵⁹

This narration clearly indicates that this verse was not to be part of the Qur'ān. If it was the part of the *wahy matlu'* then the Holy Prophet would not have denied writing it in the Qur'ān.

Burton has objected to the word *Kitabullah* (The Book of Allah) which the Holy Prophet (PBUH) has used in the following narration:

Two persons brought their case to the Holy Prophet (PBUH) for judgment. The Holy Prophet said: "I swear by Allah! I shall judge between you according to *kitābullāh* (the Book of Allah). A hundred goats and the slave will be returned to

you and your son will be awarded a hundred whips and he will be banished for one year and O Unais! Go to that woman, if she confesses then stone her.” So she confessed and he stoned her.⁶⁰

Burton objects that *kitābullāh* means the Holy Qur’ān but the ruling of stoning is not present in the Holy Qur’ān. It means that the Qur’ān is incomplete. This objection cannot be justified because there can be many meanings of *kitābullāh*. Firstly, *kitābullāh* means the Book of Allah, and only Qur’ān is not the book of Allah, Torah is also the book of Allah. The verse of stoning is present in the Torah. It may occur that Allah has not revealed any new verse of stoning but He has revealed his order to seek the verse of stoning from Torah because this verse of Torah was safe and was not altered, as it is in another Hadīth of Bukhari that the Jews came to the Holy Prophet and said to him that a man and a woman from themselves had committed adultery and asked him to judge among them. The Holy Prophet asked them: “What is the legal punishment of stoning (*al-rajm*) in the Torah?” They replied: “They are insulted and lashed.” Abdullah bin Salam said: “You are lying. The ruling of stoning is present in the Torah.” They brought the Torah and opened it. One of them covered the verse of stoning with his hand and read the verse following and preceding it. Abdullah bin Salam asked him to lift his hand. When he lifted and uncovered the page, there was the verse of stoning written in the Torah. They said Abdullah bin Salam was true. “O Muhammad the verse of stoning is present in Torah.” So the Holy Prophet ordered to stone them and they were stoned.⁶¹

So the book of Allah can mean Torah and it has been proved that the verse of stoning was the part of Torah not the part of the Qur’ān.

Kitābullāh can also mean the order of Allah. As Allama Aini (855 AH) writes while explaining this Hadīth No: 6827 of Sahīh-al-Bukhari:

“Here *Kitābullāh* is in the meaning of “order of Allah,” because the verse of stoning is not mentioned in the Qur’ān. The word “Kitāb” has also been used in the meaning of “Obligation” as Allah said: “*Kutib ‘alaikum-us-siamu*”.⁶² *aifuriza* which means that fast has been made obligatory on you.”⁶³

So the word *Kitābullāh* does not mean only the Qur'ān rather it has been used for whole Islamic Sharia because the complete religion has been revealed by Allah. In Sūrah An-Nisa, verse No: 24, the word *kitābullāh* has been used for "Ahkām-e-Ilahia" (Islamic Jurisprudence). The words of the verse are:

"And it is unlawful for you to marry the women who are already married except those who become your slaves. Allah has declared these rulings obligatory upon you."⁶⁴

So, the meaning of "Kitābullāh" here is "The obligation of the rules of Allah."

On another place in the Qur'ān the word "Kitāb" has also been used for obligation as Allah said:

"Verily the prayer has been obligated on the believers in time."⁶⁵

So it does not mean what Burton has understood. The word *kitābullāh* consists of the whole Sharia and Islamic jurisprudence that is why, the Holy Prophet (PBUH) did not include this verse in the Holy Qur'ān because he knew that this verse was not revealed as part of the Qur'ān. Rather it was revealed as part of the Sunna because the Sunna has also been revealed by Almighty Allah, as Allah said:

"He (the Prophet) does not speak anything from himself. It (whatever he speaks) is nothing but a revelation revealed (to him by Allah)."⁶⁶

And the Holy Prophet (PBUH) said:

"Be aware! I have been giving the Qur'ān and one another thing like it (Sunna) with it."⁶⁷

So the verse of stoning was a part of the Sunna but it was highlighted so much because of its importance. There are two possibilities for Hazrat Umer to bring the verse of stoning to the Qur'ān collection committee:

Firstly, he was unaware of the abrogation of the words of this verse or that it was the part of Torah or the Sunna of the Prophet. So he brought it to be included in the Holy Qur'ān. As a human being it can be possible. There are many examples for this. For example, on the occasion of the death of the Holy Prophet (PBUH), Hazrat Umer was unaware of the verse:

“Muhammad is not but a prophet, verily other prophets have passed away before him. So, if he dies or is killed will you turn back on your heels?”⁶⁸

He came to know this verse when he was reminded by Hazrat Abu Bakr.⁶⁹

Therefore, it is possible that Hazrat Umer did not know the reality of the stoning verse but when he came to know then he withdrew his views.

Secondly, he was aware of all this but he brought this verse to include it in the footnotes (*hashia*) of the mus'haf because of its importance that is why he said;

“I am afraid that people would say that Umer has increased in the Book of Allah which was not its part, otherwise, I would have written it (the stoning verse) in the corner (Footnote) of the mus'haf.”⁷⁰

The words “*ma laisa minhu*” (which is not its part) and “*fi nahiat-il-mus'haf*” (not in the Mus'haf but in the corner of the Mus'haf) clearly indicate that Hazrat Umer was well aware of the fact that the stoning verse was no more the part of the Qur'ān. He only showed its importance. Otherwise, if he believed that this verse was part of the Qur'ān then no one could stop him from adding it to the Qur'ān because the Qur'ān collection committee was established with his suggestion, and he could do so during his caliphate because he was a powerful caliph but he did not do so because he knew that this verse was not part of the Qur'ān but it was very important obligation revealed by Allah. Therefore, Hazrat Umer insisted much on this ruling. So he said in his sermon:

“I fear that when a long time passes someone would say: “We do not find the stoning in the Book of Allah.” So they may go astray by leaving an obligation which Allah has revealed. Beware! Verily the stoning is obligatory on the married person who commits adultery when it is proved by witnesses, pregnancy or confession. Beware! Indeed, the Holy Prophet (PBUH) stoned and we also stoned after him.”⁷¹

In this sermon, the words “*la najid-ar-rajma fi kitābullāh*” Prove that Hazrat Umer believed that the stoning verse was revealed by Allah but it was not part of the Qur’ān. Either it was revealed in the Torah and the Holy Prophet was also ordered to act on it or it was revealed in the Qur’ān but its words were abrogated with the great wisdom of Almighty Allah but its ruling remained as the Sunna of the Prophet or it was revealed as the Sunna of the Prophet because the whole Sunna is also revelation by Allah on the Prophet, and the words: “*rajama Rasoolullah*” (the Messenger of Allah stoned) clarify this opinion that this ruling should be acted upon because the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and his companions acted upon it.

Critical Analysis of Burton's Objection Regarding the Narration of Abu Mūsa Al Asha'ri:

Burton also objects to the Qur’ān through the narration of Abu Mūsa al Asha’ri that a Sūrah was revealed which was as long as Sūrah Al-Bara’a but later, I forgot it. I remembered only the verse: “If ibn-e-Ādam possessed two wadi (valleys) of property, he would demand for a third wadi and will not fill the belly of ibn-e-Ādam anything except dust.”⁷²

Our reply is that this narration and other narrations like this are all from a kind of abrogation. That is why they were forgotten and withdrawn from the minds of the people. This narration has been narrated by many other companions like Zaid bin Arqam and Buraida etc. Mostly the words have been used: *Kunna naqrau suratan* (with first person plural.) “We used to read a Sūrah”⁷³ which clearly depicts that not only Abu Mūsa but many other companions knew this Sūrah. It was famous among them, so not only Abu Mūsa but all of them forgot this Sūrah. Because it is from the kind of naskh, as Allah says:

“(O Muhammad) we shall make you recite (it) so you will not forget except what Allah wishes, verily He knows all that is apparent and all that is hidden.”⁷⁴

Almighty Allah has clarified in these verses that the Prophet will not forget anything that is revealed to him but what Allah wants to abrogate, the Holy

Prophet (PBUH) and his companions will forget it. So what Allah wished to be abrogated, they forgot it.

When the Holy Prophet (PBUH) made arrangements for Sūrahs and verses he did not include such surahs and verses in the Qur'ān and when the Qur'ān collection committee announced to bring the verses to them neither Abu Mūsa Al-Asha'ri nor any other companion brought this Sūrah to them because they all knew that it was abrogated. If they believed that this Sūrah was yet the part of the Qur'ān, they would have necessarily presented it in front of the Qur'ān collection committee.

The Holy Prophet (PBUH) also taught his companions about naskh. Imām Ibn-e-Kathir has quoted a narration from Tabrani that Hazrat Abdullah bin Umer narrates that the Holy Prophet (PBUH) taught two of his companions a Sūrah. They used to read it. One night, they stood for offering prayer but they could not read even a single word of it. They became worried about it. In the morning, they came to the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and told him. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) said: "That Sūrah has been abrogated. So leave it."⁷⁵

This narration clearly indicates that till the death of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) the act of naskh continued and it was with the great wisdom of Almighty Allah.

Clarification of Burton's Misconceptions about the Narration of Hazrat Ayesha:

Burton has also quoted the narration of Hazrat Ayesha about the verse of *rad'a* (breastfeeding) and he has objected to the Qur'ān through this narration that the verse of *rad'a* was part of the Qur'ān but it is not present in the current mus'haf. So the Qur'ān is incomplete.

The complete narration is as follows:

"Hazrat Ayesha narrates that it was revealed in the Qur'ān that ten known suckling make (the marriage) unlawful. Then that verse was abrogated and replaced by (the verse of) five clear suckling and when the Holy Prophet (PBUH) died they were being recited (by the Muslims who were still unaware of its abrogation)."⁷⁶

The main words that John Burton and other orientalists have highlighted are: "The Holy Prophet (PBUH) died and they were being recited in the Qur'ān." This narration has been narrated by many narrators, for example; Abdullah bin Abi Bakr, Qasim bin Muhammad bin Abi Bakr and Yahya bin Saeed al-Ansari. But only Abdullah bin Abi Bakr has narrated these words of the death of the Holy Prophet (PBUH). Let us see the narrations:

- 1) Qasim bin Muhammad bin Abi Bakr narrates from Amra that she heard Ayesha saying that it was revealed that not make the marriage unlawful by breastfeeding but ten suckling. Then they were replaced by five sucklings.⁷⁷
- 2) Yahya bin Saeed al-Ansari reports from Amra that she heard Ayesha saying that first it was revealed ten known suckling, and then they were replaced by five known suckling.⁷⁸

In this narration, the words that "the Holy Prophet died and they were being recited" are not mentioned. It proves that they were increased later on. Therefore, the researchers declared it the illusion of Abdullah bin Abi Bakr.

Imām Tahawi writes:

"No one except Abdullah bin Abi Bakr narrates these words, so it is illusion of the narrator."⁷⁹

If these are the words of Hazrat Ayesha then it means that these words of five suckling were abrogated but they were being recited by some people who were unaware of their abrogation because another narration of Hazrat Ayesha clearly proves that the verse of five sucklings was also abrogated in the life of the Holy Prophet.

Hazrat Ayesha narrates: "There were ten suckling in the Book of Allah. Then they were replaced by five. Then they were also abrogated before the Holy Prophet died."⁸⁰

So, this narration of Hazrat Ayesha clearly indicates that the verse of five sucklings was abrogated before the death of the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.)

Conclusion:

In the third, fourth and fifth chapter of his book, John Burton has objected on the Qur'ān through its doctrine of naskh. Naskh is a word of Arabic language which means omission and cancelation. Sometimes, Almighty Allah issues some sharia ruling according to the situation of some era. Then keeping in view some other situation with His mature wisdom He abolishes that ruling and replaces it with another Sharia ruling. This is called "abrogation". Naskh has been justified in the light of the Qur'ān, Hadīth, previous Divine Books and rational arguments. There are three kinds of *Naskh*; *Naskh al-Hukm Wa-al-Tilawa*, *Naskh-al-Hukm Dūn-al-Tilawa* and *Naskh-at-Tilawa Dūn-al-Hukm*. There is a very close relationship between the Qur'ān and the Hadīth. The Sunna has three statuses as it is linked with the Qur'ān; adoption of the Sunna to the Qur'ān, Sunna as interpreter of the Qur'ān and Sunna as guide to the rulings about which the Qur'ān is silent. The narrations that Burton has quoted as the verse of stoning, the verse of suckling and the narration of Abu Mūsa, do not justify his objection to the Qur'ān regarding naskh.

Recommendations:

1. The Muslims should sacrifice their personal benefits for the cause of Almighty Allāh and be united.
2. They should leave their sects and follow the teachings of the Qur'ān and the Hadīth so that no one could have the chance to attack the Qur'ān and the Hadīth due to their sectarian conflicts.
3. The Understanding of the Qur'ān Council should be established at the international level consisting of scholars who have a solid knowledge of the Islāmic teachings to analyze and satisfy the objections raised by the orientalist about the Qur'ān and Islām. Otherwise, their un-authentic work will be considered authentic and it will mislead many Muslims.

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