Research Paper

Smite on the Snout
Nunnation and its Stylistic Effects in the Qur'anic Chapter Al Qalam with reference to the prefixed letter N⊥n

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This article undertakes stylistic study of the Qur'anic chapter 68; *Al Qalam* (The Pen), which begins with a single letter *N⊥n*. The main thesis of the article is that the letter *N⊥n* is a microcosm of this chapter, around which the phonology, the main theme and the structuring of the lines of the chapter move. Seemingly unrelated episodes begin to show connections when the said letter is decoded regarding its phonetic and historical connotations. The methodology followed is that the initial letter as used in the first verse, is broken down into its phonemic constituents helps tofindthe related consonance and assonance of the lexical items and relates the main rhyme scheme to the letter. The meanings and connotations related to the alphabet (*N⊥n*) helps in relating the different topics of the three episodes and the place of articulation of the phoneme /n/ relates the traditional arrogance of the Arabs whose sole argument against the message was their pride, that is nose: the traditional metaphor of arrogance used in Arabic culture. The study, following Leech's tripartite model of stylistic analysis suggests phonological, semantic and syntactic connections between the chapter *Al Qalam* (The Pen) and the first letter *N⊥n*.

Key words: Prefixed letter, coherence, cohesion.

INTRODUCTION

The current period is witness to a new approach to the study of the Qur'anic text. In the spirit of Postmodernism, the Qur'an is studied as Text and discourse. It is open for analytical, literary studies (Haleem 1999), translation of the Qur'an is done asdiscourse rather than the linear translation of verses (Khalidi, 2008); Qur'anic stories are subjected to the study of Narratology (Afsar, 2006);Qur'an is studied as a literary text (Robinson, 2003; Afsar, 2006; Haleem, 1999); Cohesion and Coherence in the Qur'anic text is searched (Raof, 2001), (Robinson, 2003 and Textual Relation is traced (El Awa, 2005; Izutsu, 1959). Postmodernism in the Qur'anic studies, then, takes ideas from various branches of linguistics such as Stylistics,Text Analysis, Morphology and Syntactic Analysis. Moreover, text and context begin to play a more important role in the description of the text. In this paper, which is based on the doctoral thesis of Rehman (2012), we have undertaken to explore the

s⊥rahAl Qalam, (chapter 68 of the Qur'an) as text and discourse with special focus on the first letter of the chapter N⊥n. This takes us into the study of an intriguing subject of *Muqatta'aat*[1] (cut letters), 'the prefixed letters', 'mysterious letters' or '*fawatih*'(openings) that haveattracted scholars from east and west. According to Tabari (d.923), these lettersare abbreviations. ,Similarly,Tabrasi (d.550), Mawardi (d.1058/ AH62), Baydawi (1999) and Ibne Aabbas (q. Qurtubi 2003)argue that these letters contain the great name of Allah (*Isme A'zam*).", and they uphold the abbreviation theory[2], while Ibn Abbas and Ali support the greatest Name(Ism-e A 'zam) approach. Scholars such as Shirazi and Al Shawkani (n.d.) hold that these are "the secret of God" and therefore not to be touched.Jones (1962) calls them "battle cries", Noldeke (1860 q.Jeffery1924) andMassey (1996) call them scribe markers', Loth (q.Jeffery, 1924), Goossens (q. in Seale, 1957) refer to them as "kabalistic influence on the Prophet." and "the remains of the names of *surahs*". Besides, Bellarmy (1973) highlights them as the abbreviations of *Basmala* (the verse in the beginning of every Qur'anic chapter except chapter 12 and Morris(1998) calls them *memoria technica*. Taba Tabai (1973) and Islahi (1989) underline the need for further research in this area while Suy⊥ti had earlier mentioned the presence of themes related to the chapters that contain them.For more details, (Nguyen 2012, Jeffery (1924) and Rehman 2012).

As for N⊥n is concerned, scholars have related these letters to the rhyme of the chapter Al Qalam, (Jeffery 1924), yet calling it the most unlikely solution; also, the various meanings of the letter such as inkpot, the fish (Schwally q. Jeffery1924). This article, building upon the earlier theories, comes up with some phonological, semantic angles of the letter *n⊥n* to carry out stylistic analysis of the said chapter. But before analyzing the text it is important to discuss one primary issue that is related to the study of the Qur'an as text.

1.1 Is Qur'an a Text?

The Qur'an refers to one of its chapters as the best of stories, Q.12: 3. (El Awa 2005, p.36) and raises the question whether we are to deal with the Qur'an as a communicative text or not. In her view,' Whatever the answer to the question, it does not affect the claim that the same pragmatic principles can apply to interpretation

of this text. Traditional scholar have always referred to the poetry of J⌐ *hiliyya* (Pre-Islamic poetry) to explain the literary beauty of the Qur'anic text. The Qur'anic challenge, as many scholars agree, arises from linguistic uniqueness: '*And if you are in any doubt concerning that which We reveal unto our servant (Mohammad), then produce a s⊥rah of the like thereof, and call your witnesses besides God if you were truthful.*' (Q2, VV: 23). The Qur'an as text approach has encouraged different scholars to analyze Qur'an with new linguistic tools.

Postmodern writers such as Neal Robinson (2003, p.93), Rauf (2004) and El Awa (2006) base their analyses of the Qur'anic text on the principles of cohesion and coherence in the Qur'an. Robinson has devised a new approach to consider the whole Qur'anic chapter as one unit: beginning of the s⊥rah and the various units that comprise a s⊥rah into one whole. He, relevantly, points out the significance of rhyme and rhythm which, he mentions, is related to the shift in the subject matter ofa s⊥rah. He mentions that "task is certainly much easier for the Arabist who can detect changes in rhyme and rhythm, and the occurrence of different structures. (2003, p99). In a similar vein, Angelika Neuwirth (2006, pp.97-114) contends that the rhymed phrases rather than just rhyme have key functions in the Qur'anic text. She points out that "Upon closer investigation, however, it is apparent that rhyme as such is not charged with this function, but there is now another device that marks the end. An entire syntactically stereotyped rhymed phrase concludes the verse" (pp. 103- 4). This is important information provided by Neuwirth, as traditionally, only rhyme was the point of ending and in English poetry it is the last syllable that produces rhyme. However, the Qur'anic text produces this effect in a rhymed phrase and this article follows Neuwirth's view of rhymed phrases for analysis. Mentioning rhyme in this context may not let anyone confuse the Qur'anic text with poetry as the Qur'an categorically denies itself as poetry, 69:41, 36:69, even condemning poets at times:

> And the Poets, It is those straying in Evil, who follow them, Seest thou not that they wander distracted in every valley? - And that they say what they practice not? (Q. 26, VV. 221 -226)[3].

> Sells[4] defends the case of the Qur'an in the following words;

> Indeed, when Mohammad first began reciting

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[1] Martin Nguyen 2012, The Exegesis of the *huruf al muqatta'a*. *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* (V.14. no.2 2012) pp.1-28.

[2] Abbreviation theory means that the letters join to make the name of Allah such Ar Rahman is the combination of alif, Ra, Ha, Ma and N.

[3] Abdullah Yoususf Ali's translations have been followed throughout this paper

[4] Michael Sells. (2007). *Approaching the Qur'an*, p.7 White Cloud Press. Oregon

verses of particular power and beauty, some called him a poet. A Qur'anic revelation made a distinction: poets speak out of desire and do not understand what they are saying while a Prophet speaks what is revealed to him by God. (Q.26, VV. 224-26)

Abdel Haleem (1999), writing on the themes and style of the Qur'an, points out many literary features such as the study of the use of imagery of water in the Qur'an, the use of metaphors and especially, the textual analysis. He also discusses the issue of coherence and remarks:

Although the Qur'an was not written in the form of an edited text, and the Prophet did not interfere in its revealed order, adding connecting sentences here and there, the connection between material within each $s^{\perp}rah$, is understood in Arabic, either by short conjunctions or pronouns, or certain words repeated referring to the earlier material, or contrasting with it, or giving an example. (1999, p. 11)

Haleem highlights many stylistic devices such as repetition, cohesive devices, and references which have been linguistically put together under the heading of Cohesion by Halliday and used for the Model adapted by the researcher. (2013). One can, therefore, see an emphasis on the search of coherence and cohesion in the Qur'anic text which has been repeatedly asserted by writers like Noldeke and Bell in the modern period and Robinson, Neuwirth and Haleem in the Post-modern period. Haleem warns the translators of the Qur'an to be aware of this and advises them to attempt to convey the Arabic into English equivalent. He also underlines the need for work on cohesion and cohesive devices in the Qur'an, remarking, "Much work has to be done in English on the cohesive devices in the Qur'an as they work in Arabic" (1999, p. 11).

Scholars of the Qur'anic stylistics in the contemporary period have thus an opportunity to benefit from the techniques of linguistic analysis such as assonance, consonance, rhyme endings, rhyming phrases, use of conjunctions, use of pronouns as cohesive devices, organization of $s^{\perp}rahs$ and comprehend their possible role as cohesive devices in the Qur'anic. What is, however, missing is that the subject of the prefixed letters, occurring in almost half of the Qur'an,[5] has not received any attention with respect to the latest development in the text study and discourse analysis, therefore, these letters deserve an altogether new approach that may pave the way for a new discussion

and closer reading of the text to offer some solution to this perplexing subject[6]. This paper follows the hypothesis propounded by Rehman (2013, p.251-261) that the letters have phonological, syntactic and semantic role in the chapters they occur. That chapters with the prefaced letters[7] must be revisited regarding those letters for the study of cohesion and coherence not only within the chapters but also inter-chapter studies specific to them only. For more details see Rehman (2013).

Analysis of the Chapter

The $s^{\perp}rah$ opens with the following words.

$N^{\perp}n$. By the pen and by the record which (men) write Thou art not by the grace of thy Lord mad or possessed. (68:1-2)

Apparently, there are three episodes in this chapter, the first one vv 11-15, takes up the case of a person who is well off and thinks he does not need any guidance as he has got wealth and sons. When to him are recited our signs, "*Tales of the Ancient, he cries.*" The second episode, vv 17-32 relates the story of the people of the garden who lost their garden when they were thinking they were about to reap the fruit of their effort and vv 48-50 that narrates the story of the Prophet Yunus (Jonah) who left his people and was swallowed by a fish and left him on the shore[ii8]. These episodes do not seem to be related in any apparent relationship, especially, when the beginning of the Chapter is about the disbelievers' accusations of the Prophet quoted above.

The stylistic study of the chapter regarding the prefixed letter $n^{\perp}n$, however, suggests very interesting relationship not only between the three episodes but also with the prefixed letter $n^{\perp}n$ and the whole text of the chapter. It seems as if the fabric of the chapter has been carefully woven to convey its message around various characteristic features of the prefixed letter $n^{\perp}n$. However, to understand how this happens one must probe the letter $n^{\perp}n$ from various angles such as its historical connotation, its phonemic constituents and its grammatical and morphemic implications in different verses of the chapter. Yousuf Ali makes very interesting

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[5] The prefixed chapters make 48% of the Qur'anic text,(Rehman 2012).p 106

[6] see Jeffery, A. (1924): 5-11 and Nguyen, 'Journal of Qur'anic Studies, 14 (2), pp. 1-28

[7] Prefaced letters, the new name was proposed in the Defense of my thesis by Dr Nadeem Bukhari from University of AJK Pakistan and as the research supports it, I thankfully use it.
[8] Afsar. "A Comparative Study of the Art of Jonah/ Yunus Narrative in the Bible and the Qur'an" *Islamic Studies*, vol.48, no.3 (2009), pp.319-339.

S. No.	Template	Word	Total
1	N⊥n/ endings	*majn⊥n/* 2 *mamn⊥n/* 3 *yud-hin⊥n/* 9 *yastathn⊥n/* 18 *majn⊥n/* 51	05
2	/⊥n/	*Yas=ur⊥n/* 1 *yub╥lr⊥rn/* 5 *maft⊥n/* 6 *n╕ 'im⊥n/* 19 *yatakh╕ fat⊥n/* 23 *╔⊓⊥n/* 26 *ma ╠r⊥m⊥n/* 27 *yatah╕ wam⊥n/* 30 *r╕ ghib⊥n/* 32 *ya'lam⊥n/* 33, *ta ╠kum⊥n/* 36 *tadrus⊥n/* 37 *takhayyar⊥n* 38 *ta ╠kum⊥n/* 39 *yasta=┘ ⊥n/* 42 *s╕ lim⊥n/* 43 *ya'lam⊥n /44 muthqal⊥n/* 46	18
3	/┘ n/	*Muhtad┘ n/* 7 *mukadh-dhib┘ n/* 8, *mah┘ n,Ban┘ n* 14/ *'awwal┘ n/* 15 *mu╥ bi ╠┘ n/* 17 *mu╥ bi ╠┘ n/* 21 *╥╕ rim┘ n/* 22 / *misk┘ n/* 24 *q╕ dir┘ n/* 25 *┗╕ lim┘ n/* 29 *=╕ gh┘ n/* 31 *mujrim┘ n/* 35/ *╥╥ diq┘ n/* 41 *mat┘ n/* 45 *╥╥ li ╠┘ n/* 50 *'alam┘ n/* 52	17
	Grand Total	Data from the whole chapter.	40

Table 1: showing /n/+/⊥/+/n/ morphemic templates in *Al-Qalam*

observations regarding the letter *n⊥n* which reads as under.

N⊥n may mean a fish, or an ink holder, or it may be just the Arabic letter of the alphabet *n⊥n*, in this case it may *refer* to either or both of the other meanings. Note also that the Arabic rhyme in this *s⊥rah* ends in *n⊥n*. The reference to ink would be an appropriate link with the mystic pen in verse 1. The reference to the fish would be appropriate with reference to the story of Jonah in verses 48-50. (1993, p. 1707)

Yousuf Ali, in fact, sets the direction of this paper by mentioning the fish and inkpot as connotatively related to the letter. He also mentions the rhyme scheme which points to the phonology of the text. To see how far the rhyme scheme is related to the letter /n⊥n/ we have carried out a detailed study of the rhyme scheme of this chapter. However, we begin by the phonemic breakdown of the letter *n⊥n* which is as follows;

/ n/+/⊥/+/n/

/n/is a voiced, alveolar nasal sound that means air is released to pass through nose as well as mouth in the production of this sound. The following sound is a long back round vowel which, like all vowels in English, is also voiced and adds to the voiced effect of the sound /n/ providing loudness and emphasis to what is being said, the third sound, is an allophone of the /n/ and help maintain the initial nasal effect throughout the tri

phonemic sound /n⊥n/.[9]

The above information helps in tracing some connections in the text. For example, the mention of pen becomes relevant to the prefixed letter meaning an inkpot and the mention of *Dhun N⊥n* (companion of the *n⊥n*/fish: Jonah) /21:87 also gets relevance to the prefixed letter. However, the fact that phonetically /n⊥n/is described as the nasal sound which exists in Arabic language in comparison with bilabial nasal /m/ just as in English language carries further connotations[10]. The knowledge that 'nose' carries special value in Arabic language and culture provides us with further meaning to the whole chapter which has a highly dominant nasal effect and mentions the long nose of the opponents; (v.16.)*'We shall brand him on the snout* (nose). In order to see the phonology of the text, the chapter Al Qalam was thoroughly surveyed and major lexical morphemes which contained the /n+⊥+n/ or /n⊥n/ rhymed words were collected. The following table shows this collection.

The Table 1 shows density of words with long back and front vowels in this chapter which along with the nasal /n/ combine to give this chapter a nasalized sound effect accompanied by long vowels which we have attempted to explain in the following section. As noted by Malmberg (1960) the /n/ followed by vowel sound gives enhanced nasalized effect.

[9]For a detailed discussion on the various allophonic variations of /n/ see Bertil Malmberg (1960)

[10]*Anfia*, means having a long nose and metaphorically refers to unnecessary pride in oneself. as recorded in Arabic Dictionary, *Student's English Arabic Dictionary*, Librarie Orientale. Place de l'Etoile, P.O.B. Beirut London. 1986.

Table 2: Lexical Cohesion in *Al Qalam*			
S. No.	Template	Word	Total
1	/noun/ with /⅃/ and /⊥/.	*majn⊥n/* 2 *majn⊥n/* 51, *n ⌐'im ⊥n/* 19 *⫟n/* 26, *ma ⌐r⊥m⊥n/* 27, *raghib⊥n/* 32, *s⌐ lim⊥n/* 43, *muthqal⊥n/* 46, *mamn⊥n/* 3 *maft⊥n/* 6, *ya'lam⊥n/* 33 *yasta= ⌐ ⊥n/* 42, *Muhtad⅃ n/* 7 *mukadh-dhib⅃n/* 8, *Ban⅃ n* 14/, *'awwal⅃ n/* 15, *mu⫟ bi ⌐⅃ n mah⅃ n/* 17 / 17, 21. *q⌐ dir⅃ n/* 25, *⌐⌐ lim⅃ n/* 29 *mu⫟ bi ⌐⅃ n/* 21 *⫟⌐ rim⅃ n/* 22/ *misk⅃ n/* 24 *=⌐ gh⅃ n/* 31 *mujrim⅃ n/* 35/ *⫟⌐ diq⅃ n/* 41 *mat⅃ n/* 45 *⫟ ali ⌐⅃ n/* 50 *'alam⅃ n/* 52	30
2	Pronoun	*yastathn⊥n/* 18, *tadrus⊥n/* 37 *takhayyar⊥n/* 38, *yatakh⌐ fat⊥n/* 23 *yatah⌐ wam⊥n/* 30, *ta ⌐kum⊥n/* 36 yud 'awna/ 42,43,68. yaq⊥⊥⊥na/ 36, 51 *ta ⌐kum⊥n/* 39, *ya'lam⊥n/* 44, yaktub⊥na/ 47	14
3	Verb	*Yas=ur⊥n/* 1 *yub⫟ i⊥rn/* 5, *yud-hin⊥n/* 9	03
4	Adjective with/ ⅃ n/ and /⅃ m/.	/*mah⅃ n/* 10, /*mann⌐ 'in/* 12, /*ath⅃ m/* 12	03
5	2nd person singular/plural	*'anta/* 2 *'inna laka/* 3, *'inna rabbaka* / / *tud-hinu/* 7	04
6	3rd person singular	*Man/* 7 *'an k⌐ na/* 13	02
7	1st person sing. And pl. Accusative	*'inn⌐* / 17, *'inn⌐* / 26. na ⌐nu/ 27, *rabbin⌐* / *'inn⌐* , *kunn⌐* / 29, *'inn⌐ kunn⌐* =⌐ *gh⅃ n*/31, *rabbun⌐* /, *yubdilan⌐* / *'inn⌐ 'ih⌐ rabbin⌐* , *r⌐ ghib⊥n/* 32,	15
8	Imperative	/*'anighd⊥*/ 22	01
9	Conjunctions	'am,37,39,47, 41, 46, 47 'an/49	07
	Total (approx.)		80

A second look at the data of *Al Qalam*/ (Table 1) shows that the s⊥rah contains a collection of lexico grammatical morphemes of /n⊥n/. It is replete with the examples of /n⊥n / in various aspects: lexical, grammatical and phonological. The Table 2 re-arranges the data of table 1 (and expands) into various grammatical lexical categories to show that the occurrence of/n⊥n/words can be patterned into grammatical categories shown in Table 2.

The Table 2 shows the presence of lexical and grammatical templates with nasal /n/ phonemes further supported by /m/ presence. The morphemic templates with long back and front vowels have been noted in eighty instances. The long back vowel is part of the prefixed letter /n⊥n/and occurs in the major end lines, (See 2.3) while the front vowel contrasts with it. In the following sections, we have attempted to show that different phonological, lexical, syntactic and semantic patterns move around the letter /n⊥n/and hence there are stylistic reasons (discussed below) for the prefixed letter to begin the chapter *Al Qalam* with.

General Theme and Style

Phonologically, it is significant to note that the endings of the lines contain the first and last phoneme of the prefixed letter *(n⊥n)* forming many of the *n⊥n* templates of the chapter. Take the example of the word *majn⊥n*, (possessed) which occurs in the beginning and end of v.2 and v. 51 of the s⊥rah. Similarly, words such as *mamn⊥n*/v.3 (end), *layastathn⊥n*/v.18 (making no exception), and *yud-hin⊥n*/v.9 (so they compromise), carry the last *n⊥n* particle that consistently echoes the prefixed letter. This constant echo of the *n⊥n* embodying sounds is more than an artistic recreation of the prefixed letter. It has semantic, phonological and syntactic connections as discussed below.

Different Connections with the letter *n⊥n*

The meaning of the letter *n⊥n* is connotatively related to '*inkpot*' and '*the fish*'.[2] Verse no, 1 and 48 hint towards these connotative relationships.' "*N⊥n* (the inkpot) *and*

the pen, with which, they write. *N⊥n* (inkpot) is juxtaposed with the pen in the first verse which is related to inscription. Exegetes such as Islahi[11], Maudoodi[12] uniformly relate this to the fact that this implies the universal evidence that knowledge provides support to the message given by the Prophet (peace be upon him) that it is based on truth. The second reference is related to the *n⊥n* as ' the fish', verse 48 says, 'Do not be like the companion of the fish.' referring to the event of Y⊥nus 'the Prophet Jonah, who left his nation because they (his people) would not obey and ultimately ended in the belly of the fish according to the Bible and the Qur'an[13]. Verse two denies the opponents' claim of the Prophet being /*majn⊥n*/ (possessed). Its significance lies in the fact that the chapter begins with *N⊥n* and moves to develop a counterargument against the opponents' point of view, of the Prophet (peace be upon him) being possessed, systematically through different episodes. The phonological assonance, inflectional and derivational variants of [*n⊥n*], work together with different linguistic tools to present the counterargument. Thus, organized cohesive patterns emerge that have the /n/asphoneme and, *n⊥n* as a letter in focus. These patterns can be seen in the rhyme scheme, the lexical selections, syntactic choices and semantic relationships that are in cohesive and coherent relationship with the letter *n⊥n*. The possible significance is pointed out wherever necessary. However, before moving to the rhyme scheme of this chapter, it is important to explain the rhyme endings in the Qur'anic context. Neuwirth:[14] takes up this point and comments in the following words:

The early- and densely structured –parts of the Qur'an reflect an ancient Arabic linguistic pattern, termed saj; as prose style marked by very short and concise sentences with frequently changing patterns of particularly clear-cut often expressive rhymes…the rhyme end takes the form of a simple —⊥n or ⌐n pattern. (2006, p. 103)

This distinguishes, the Qur'anic pattern of rhyme ending as not limited to the last phonemic sound but extending to the preceding vowel sound.

The Rhyme Scheme

First let us look at the rhyme scheme of the lines below. We have chosen the first twenty-nine verses out of the total fifty-two which is almost half of the chapter and representative of the whole chapter.

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[11]1989

[12] 1981

[13] Afsar 2009

[14] Also please see 2.3.2 of this study and Bell's, *Introduction to the Qur'an*.1958. The University Press Edinburgh on the same subject., pp.67-73,

1) *N⊥n walqalami wam⌐ yastur⊥n*   a
M⌐ anta bini 'mati rabbika bi majn⊥n   a
Wa-inna laka la-ajran ghayra mamn⊥n   a
Wa-innaka la ' ah⌐ khuluqin az⌐ m   c
5) *Fa sa tub⌐ iru wa yub⌐ ir⊥n*   a
Bi-ayyikum ul maft⊥n   a
Fah⌐ tuti 'il mukadh-dhib⌐ n   b
Wadd⊥ law tudhinu fa yudhin⊥n   a
Wah⌐ tuti' kulla hal⌐ fin mah⌐ n   b
10) *Hamm⌐ zin mashsh -in binam⌐ m*   c
Mann⌐ 'in lilkhayri mu'tadin ath⌐ m   c
'utullin ba'da dhalika zan⌐ m   c
An k⌐ na dh⌐ ma⌐ lin waban⌐ n   b
Idh⌐ tuth⌐ 'alayhi ay⌐ tun⌐ q⌐ la as⌐ =⌐ rual-awwal⌐ n   b
15) *Sa nasimuh⊥ 'alaalkhur=⊥m*   c
Inn⌐ balawn⌐ hum kam⌐ balawn⌐ a⌐ -h⌐ baal jannati idh aqsam⊥ la ya⌐ rimunnah⌐ mu⌐ bi ⌐ n
Wa h⌐ yastathn⊥n   a
Fa =⌐ fa 'alayh⌐ =⌐ -ifun min rabbika wahum n⌐ -im⊥n   a
Fa a⌐ ba ⌐at kassar⌐ m   c
20) *Fatan⌐ daw mu⌐ bih⌐ n*   b
Anighd⊥ 'ah⌐ ⌐arthikum in kuntum ⌐⌐ rim⌐ n   b
Fan =alaq⊥ wa hum yatakh⌐ fat⊥n   a
Al h⌐ yadkhulanna h⌐ al-yawma 'alaykum misk⌐ n   b
Wa ghadaw 'ah⌐ hardin qadir⌐ n   b
25) *Fa lamm⌐ ra' awh⌐ q⌐ ⊥ inn⌐ la ⌐ ll⊥n*   a
Bal na ⌐nu ma ⌐r⊥m⊥n   a
Q⌐ la awsa=uhum alam aqullakum lawla tusabbih⊥n   a
Qal⊥ sub ⌐⌐ na rabbin⌐ inn⌐ kunn⌐ ⌐⌐ lim⌐ n   b
29) *Fa aqbala ba '⌐uhum 'ah⌐ ba⌐in yatah⌐ wam⊥n*   a

The above sample shows dominant occurrence of rhyme 'a' (⊥n) and 'b' (⌐n) with minor variation of 'c' (⌐m). Out of twenty-nine lines, twenty-four have the long back and long front vowels plus /n/ ending. As noted by Sells[15] '…the effect of ghunna (nunnation), is a nasalized hum that occurs with certain combinations of /n/ and /m/ or doubled n.' This organized structure added by the dominant rhyme and theme, is in contrast to what the Prophet was accused of: 'being possessed':[16] One would not expect a possessed person addressing philosophical issues such as the meaning of life[17], the source of life, the end of life and the source of knowledge of past, present and future along with producing a systematically

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[15]Sells 2007, p.163

[16] Surely a possessed's speech is disorganized in structure and rhyme.

[17] Ibid P.165

developed argument with a patterned structure and claim of all the past, present and future knowledge at its back.[18] It sets the melody of the s⊥rah comprising long back and front vowel with abundant /n/ endings. Of course, it may be argued that vowels are vital part of words; however, the insistence on the choice of long back vowel instead of short and long front vowels is significant here as it mirrors the vowel of the prefixed letter, n⊥n. This consistent assonance with slight variation between back and front vowels breaks the monotony of tune and keeps the listener attented. This is related to the oral character of the Qur'an which has attracted listeners and was considered the major problem by the opponents: Abu Jahal and others have been known to be listening to the Qur'an for its oral beauty.[19]

> Abu Jahl once secretly went out by night to listen to Muhammad as he was praying in his house while Abu Sufyan b. ⊡arb and al-Akhnas b. Sharīq al-Thaqafi also did the same thing. Every one of them chose a place to sit where he could listen, and none knew where his fellow was sitting. So they passed the night listening to him, until as the dawn rose, they dispersed. On their way home they met and reproached one another, and one said to the other, 'Don't do it again, for if one of the light-minded fools sees you, you will arouse suspicion in his mind.' Yet they continued doing this for the next two days.

This is an important evidence in favour of the serene effect the Qur'an could create on the minds of staunch enemies such as Abu Jahal and Abu Sufyan. The present study looks at some of the oral effects created by the rhyme and rhythm in the chapter Al Qalam. The selective rhyme structure related to the prefixed n⊥n with the mentioning of pen and inkpot connotations begins to have 'value' gradually making it a serious work of art: an address which is poetic but not poetry (see footnote 3). It transforms the address of Mohammad (peace be upon him) a serious academic business that surpasses the flimsy remarks and deserves serious academic response rather than accusations based on prejudice, ignorance and arrogance.

Nasality[20], Nose and Arrogance

The oral symphony created through the /⊥n/ rhyme engages the opponents in a debate they started, and attempts to persuade them to its point of view. Long vowels rate highest in resonance and sonority along with nasal sounds, their combination creates a sustained persuasive effect over the listeners while the /n/ phoneme makes a phonological link with the origin of their arrogance which on the one hand is the reason of their refusal and on the other hand the target of the message: '.Soon shall We brand (the beast) on the snout!' 68:16.The real beauty is that with the consistent n⊥n sounds, it transforms the whole chapter into a long nasal rebuttal befitting the opponents' arrogance.[21] The verses are short; however, the long vowels create long verse effect giving the addressees/ listeners enough time to reflect upon the subject.

The Arab arrogance was one of the major factors in rejecting Mohammad's (peace be upon him) message.[22] The Qur'an has registered this at various places; in Q. 17:51, 40:56 and 43:31, the disbelievers are reported to address the Prophet with arrogance, the Prophet is called majn⊥n, 15:6, in this Qur'anic chapter the issue is dealt in greater detail in vv. 10-16.

> Heed not the type of despicable men, ready with oaths, a slanderer with calumnies hindering good, transgressing, beyond bounds deep in sins, he possesses wealth and (numerous) sons. When to him are rehearsed our signs, tales of the ancient, he cries, soon shall we brand (the beast) on the snout.

The last verse is sa nasimhu 'alal khurt⊥m[23]. We shall brand him on the snout. Snout recalls the proverbial usage of nose which stands for pride and arrogance in Arabic language[24]. By calling it snout the Qur'anic text notes the exaggerated pride of the disbelievers who instead of listening to the logic of the message give way to their tribal pride and cease to accept the truth. The nasality created by the repeated use of /n⌐/ initially, medially and finally with long vowel, mentioning of the snout/long nose and the prefixed letter n⊥n combine to produce this effect which can only be appreciated if one looks at the phonological role of nasal /n⌐/, the Arabic proverbial use of nose and the context in which the Prophet's message was first presented. The Islamic prayer, not incidentally, demands to prostrate oneself in

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[18]There is no evidence in the known history of mankind of any such literary masterpiece produced by possessed people.

[19]The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of ibn Is⊡āq's Sīrat Rasul Allāh with introduction & notes by Alfred Guillaume, Oxford University Press, 1955.p 142

[20]Pronounced with the voice issuing through the nose, either partly,asinFrench nasal vowels, or entirely (as in m, n, or the /ng/ of song).

[21] مُنَتَكَبِّرًاايَرْفُض (to deny because of arrogance)

[22] See Izutsu, Toshika Ethico. 2002 Religious Concepts in the Qur'an. Pp 142-152.

[23]soon shall we brand on the snout. 68:16

[24] /anafa/ as recorded in Arabic Dictionary, Student's English Arabic Dictionary, Librarie Orientale. Place de l'Etoile, P.O.B. Beirut London. 1986.

front of God with nose touching down the ground thereby accepting the Highest Authority and His Guidance. This facility of submission and humility will be denied to those who refute it now; '*On the day when it befalls in earnest, and they are ordered to prostrate themselves but are not able*.' /42. This draws the cycle complete. First they are asked to give up arrogance and be humble but later when this facility is withdrawn, they would desire to do so but would be denied.

General Stylistic comments

The *s⊥rah* first engages the listeners by countering something they began, their accusations against the Prophet (peace be upon him), being possessed. The verse v. 2 runs *m⊓ 'anta bi ni'mati rabbika bi majn⊥n*[25]. Thou art not, by the Grace of thy Lord, mad or possessed. The movement of the adjective *majn⊥n* (possessed) away from the second person pronoun '*anta you* to the end of line is significant in three ways; it distances the word *majun⊥n,* from the personality of the Prophet (peace be upon him)[26], syntactically, reinforcing what is said semantically, and keeps the rhyme of the *s⊥rah* intact which in turn maintains the *n⊥n* ending. The beginning sound of the phrase *ni'mati rabbika*, '*by the Grace of thy Lord'* is also significant as it alliterates with the prefixed letter. Furthermore, the next verse clarifies the Prophet's position as the one greatly blessed, *inna laka la 'ajran ghayra mamn⊥n*;[27]; *'Nay, verily for thee is a Reward unfailing:'*. Compare the two templates *majn⊥n 'possessed'* and *ghayramamn⊥n'unfailing'*, both standing at the end of lines 2 and 3 respectively creating equivalence: both contrasting in meaning. Additionally, the third phoneme of the words contrast: /j/ and /m/ making the equivalence sharper. The emphatic conjunction *inna laka 'indeed for you',* and the word *'ajran, \reward'* maintain the /n/ symphony further supported by *innaka la 'a⊓ khulqin 'az⅃ m, '* and *thou* (stand) *on an exalted standard of character*. The next verse /6 challenges; they will know, *bi ayyukum-ul-maft⊥n*[28] '*Which of you is afflicted with madness.'* So the tables are turned on the accusers; the template *maft⊥n,* '*the afflicted one'* may now be compared with the final templates of verse 2 and 3 which maintains the same structure, yet contrasts in meaning: *majn⊥n* versus *maft⊥n*. Till verse 6, we have had short exchange like dialogues with /⊥n/ endings with the exception of verse 4

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[25] You (O Prophet) are not by the blessings of thy Lord a possessed one.

[26]Carter, R.,et all for a similar dealing of a sentence by Dickens.p144

[27]Nay for thee is a reward unfailing.68:3

[28]Which of you is afflicted with possession?

which addresses the Prophet (peace be upon him), but the next verse 7 is long and it presents a different argument '*it is God who knows of the guidance receivers.*' Verse 8 directly addresses the Prophet (peace be upon him)' *so listen not to those who deny the truth'* The two words *muhtad⅃ n 'the guided ones'* and *mukadhib⅃ n'the deniers'* share assonance but contrast and create opposite meanings without mentioning to the Prophet (peace be upon him) that his opponents are doomed, followed by the description of the base character of one of the staunch opponents in v v.11-16 quoted above [29](Darya Abadi 2007).

The Parable of the People of the Garden, VV 17-32

Having engaged the opponents in an argument against irrational, arrogant behaviour, the text of the chapter refers to an example from past to reinforce the present argument: the parable of the people of garden who were too proud to care for the poor. The people of garden who wanted to reap the full reward of their garden without any concern or belief for any higher authority (which necessitated share of the poor and needy). Their wealth leading them to arrogance (The nose issue), which gets them due punishment. Verse 18 *wa ⊓ yastathn⊥n*, '*but they made no exception*' is a reminder for the people who consider themselves the sole authority of all their affairs. The text retains the main rhyme scheme that follows the long back vowel ending with /⊥n/. This is significant as Islahi suggests that the normal grammatical rules do not allow this and *lam yastathn⊥* for verse v. 18 would have been the preferred grammatical phrase. The addition of long back vowel and the /n/ rhyme show preference in the face of grammatical deviation. Their (the people of the garden) doom is narrated as a warning for the addressees of the Prophet (peace be upon him) in 14 *an k⊓ na dh⊓ m⊓ liw- wa ban⅃ n, '*who having wealth and sons'* feel secure (think they do not need any higher guidance), should understand and pay heed.

Change of Rhyme and the subject matter

The people of the garden lost their garden and wealth and ultimately accepted their error of judgment saying; *q⊓ lu inn⊓ ⊩ l-⊥n*,[30], ⊩ *l-⊥n* is significant for its layers of meaning; referring to physical as well as spiritual loss of path and ultimate destruction. *bal na ⊨nu ma ⊨r⊥m⊥n*[31], Now, one among the brothers reminds *alam aqullakum law ⊓ tusabbi ⊨⊥n*[32], In verse 33 a comparatively long

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[29]Walid Ibn Mughayra or any of the kind.

[30]we have surely lost our way.Q. 68:26

[31] Indeed we are shut out (of the fruit of our harbor).Q. 68:27

[32]Did I not say why not glorify Allah? Q. 68:28

one *ka dh⌐ likal 'adh⌐ b wa la 'adh⌐ bul '⌐ khirati 'akbar law k⌐ n⊥ ya 'lam⊥n*,[33]. This warning is followed by the reward of the believers where we note a clear shift of the rhyme and assonance: (marking the argument and counter argument). Note the line ending /⌐m/ of v. 34 after a long spell of /⊥n/ and /⌐ n/ in vv 11-33: significant, for the change of rhyme goes with the change of addressee from disbelievers to believers. The two phonological contrasts may point to the two sides of the argument developed in this chapter: the divinely guided and the ones who consider any Divine guidance unnecessary.

The Prophet of the Fish, VV 48-50

The next episode in the following verses 35-39 refers to an altogether different reaction meted by a Prophet who was sent to a certain people, but who preferred to follow his own whims and turned away[34]. This relates to the story of Prophet Y⊥nus(Jonah) as explained below. Further note 35-39 that maintains /*n*/ and /⌐ *n*/ assonance while addressing the dissidents and then making a shift to /⊥*m*/ in v.48 when addressing the Prophet (peace be upon him). *fa⌐ bir li ⌐ukmi rabbika wa ⌐ takun ka ⌐⌐ ⌐ibil ⌐⊥t*[35], '*so wait with patience for the command of thy Lord and be not like the companion of the fish.*' This verse relates (the Prophet peace be upon him) to the Prophet Y⊥nus and ultimately to the brotherhood of all prophets advising him to be patient and not deterred by the trouble creators. The reference is significant, the letter/ *n⊥n*/ connotes fish and refers to *Dhan-n⊥n*, '*the companion of the* /*n⊥n*/(*the fish) or the Whale*' 21/87 and thereby provides another cohesive link not only intra textually but inter-textually that goes beyond this chapter to other chapters in the Qur'an and other revealed material of great religions (Jonah 1: 1-2). The theme of power of the higher authority connects the episodes. The three sections of the chapter are thus related by the theme of the need for humility, guidance from the higher authority and abandoning arrogance. They are related by the nasality of the letter *n⊥n* and arrogance related to the nose of Arabs; *anfia* meaning pride. The next section links the aspect of nasality further to the use of the grammatical words so emphatically laid in this chapter.

Role of Grammatical particles

Along with the lexical items which abound with the

special nasal character of the chapter, the grammatical particles equally carry the nasal echoing in Al Qalam. Conjunctions and grammatical particles are part of the four tools of cohesion (Halliday 1985, p. 309), the others being reference, ellipsis, and lexical organization. The choice of subordinate conjunction such as /in/22 and /*ann*/14 and 'an/32 along with coordinating conjunction such as /'*am*/37, /'an/49 and other grammatical particles such as accusative *inna* /3, /7, /38, *innaka*/4, /*inn⌐* / 17, 26, 29, 31, and 32 continue to reverberate in the chapter with their nasal effect. Different subjects of the *s⊥rah* whether it is the moral support to the Prophet (peace be upon him)/3 and 4, or the punishment to be levied on the opponents of the message, 17 or the people repenting their mistakes 29, or Allah's promise of reward for the faithful, 34, or His argument with the disbelievers, 38- 39; make selective use of those particles which have /n/ common creating nasal effect. This creates phonological harmony between the verses reflecting the semantic coherence apart from performing their functional role in the text. This multiple role of language is explained by Cumming and Simmons (1983, p 7)

> One of the distinguishing characteristics of literary texts is the way in which they manipulate their sounds or letters. In ordinary texts, we expect sound and symbol to be transparent to meaning. But in literature it often happens that the sounds or symbols of the medium become important in themselves. They are not there just to encode a meaning –their peculiar arrangement constitutes part of the meaning of the text. In losing their transparency, they become objects of attention. We are forced to reflect on the features of the medium of language, not just on the meaning which the medium conveys.

This dual role can be noted in *Inna*/[36] 3, *innaka*/[37]4, *inna*/[38]7, *inn⌐* /[39]17, *inn⌐* /26, *inn⌐ kunn⌐* /[40]29, *inn⌐ kunn⌐* /31, *inna*/34, 38, 39, 45 *innahu*/[41]51. The /*na*/ repetition is, significant from stylistic perspective as it emphasizes the message along with /*na*/ symphony maintaining the overall nasality discussed above phonologically and semantically.

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[33]such is the punishment in this life, but greater is the punishment of the hereafter, if only they knew.Q. 68:33
[34]See Afsar 2009.
[35] So wait with patience for the command of thy Lord and be not like the companion of the fish.

[36]verily
[37]Verily you.
[38]Verily We.
[39]Indeed, We.
[40]Surely we were.
[41]Indeed, he.

Significance

Explicit statement made in verse 2, *ma 'anta bi ni 'mati rabbika bi majn⊥n*[42] gets profound meanings. The /na/ and /ma/, with their creation of the nasal schema in the chapter, address the very nature and root cause of the opposition of the Prophet (p b u h) matching matter and manner. (Mc Elroy 1888, pp 29-33). The implicit message: '*nay not you, indeed they are possessed.*' The theme of the *s⊥rah* proceeds in a systematic way from denial of what the opponents say to clarifying their actual present position which is ignorance, arrogance and insanity of response and warning them of the consequences they are about to meet. This is supported by exegetes, such as Ali, Maudoodi, Islahi, and others; however, the implicit message, stated above, is hidden in the language as explained above. The stylistic beauty lies in how the resources of language have been utilized around the letter *n⊥n* achieved with the help of different features: selection of content words/lexical items and grammatical particles, as discussed in previous section that reinforce the desired effect.

CONCLUSION

The letter /*n⊥n*/ becomes the key word to this chapter for its historical, connotative, phonological and semantic connections within and outside the text. It connects the apparently unrelated episodes of the chapter and suggests stylistic justification for the selection of lexicon in the text. Various grammatical, phonetic and semantic functions of the letter /*n⊥n*/ have been used to develop the schema of negating the accusers of the Prophet and calling the audience to the message intended for them. The place of articulation of (nasal na) relates the chapter to the Arabic arrogance (Nose-snout-*Khar⊨⊥m*)[43] which echoes throughout the end lines, lexical and grammatical selection of the lexicon, internal rhymes and /n/ consonance of the chapter. The /*ma*/ words and endings parallel and reinforce the nasal effect. The connotation of nasal/n/ with 'inkpot' and 'the fish' makes other connections possible. The former juxtaposes with the pen putting the world of knowledge as the strongest evidence behind the teachings presented by the Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) in the time to come while the latter puts the history of the brotherhood of Prophets as evidence from the past. Similarly, the episode of the people of the garden relates all these by the strongest

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[42]Thou are not by the Grace of thy Lord mad or possessed',

[43] The reference to *Khatoom* instead of nose takes the implication further as it makes those who neither have knowledge nor follow it when it arrives from +human to – human.

theme recurring throughout the Qur'an: Only 'We (Allah) have the power' (68:25, 42, 48 and 21:87).

The Holy Quran is replete with /⅃ n/, /⊥n/ and / ⅃ m/ rhymes, as mentioned by Sells and Neuwirth, it also places knowledge over and above human ignorance 39/9. It may elsewhere mention the power that redeems Yunus from the belly of the fish 21/87. It also mentions the story of the owner of the garden and his fall due to his boastful remarks 18/42. However nowhere have all these been patterned into one whole, where the focus of all these has emphatically been against the opponents of the *Nabi* (The prophet) in the foregrounded environment of the letter /*n⊥n* /. This being so becomes the focus of stylistic enquiry presented in this article. A graphological deviation may perhaps help: oNly N⊥⊥N.

The above discussion demonstrates the efficacy of the text as discourse (Widdowson's 1991) approach that looks at the whole text of a chapter (*surah*) making its own context and creating meaning out. The Qur'anic coherence and cohesion can be understood better in the light of study of the text as discourse which shows that apparently jumbled episodes and lines have deeper connections which would otherwise be opaque to surface, linear reading. The prefaced letters, commonly known as *Huroof ul Muqatta'at*, therefore, seem to have a very important role to play in understanding the cohesion and coherence of the prefaced chapters and these chapters deserve a separate dealing from the non-prefaced chapters in the light of a new approach proposed here.

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