



## A Comparative Study of the Meanings and Instances of Safaahat from the Perspective of Allameh Tabataba'i and Allameh Zamakhshari

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### **Abstract**

The Almighty God created humans, made them the noblest of all creatures, and bestowed upon them the blessing of intellect. However, sometimes human beings do not take advantage of this gift and waste it by engaging in foolish acts such as drinking alcohol, showing disdain for religion, and the like. In some verses of the Quran, the terms 'safih' and 'safaahat' are mentioned, and mufassirs have expressed their opinions on their meanings and instances. The present study, conducted using textual analysis and library research methods, examines the meanings and instances of the two terms from the perspectives of Allameh Tabataba'i and Allameh Zamakhshari to discuss the similarities and differences in the two mufassirs' views. The results of the study indicate that both mufassirs believe that safaahat means foolishness, ignorance, lack of wisdom, sleepiness, lightness, and some degree of foolishness. Allameh Zamakhshari considers those who waste and do not consume their wealth properly as safihs. Regarding the instances of safaahat, Allameh Zamakhshari mentions three instances of safihs, including Jews of little understanding, hypocrites, and polytheists. However, Allameh Tabataba'i has comprehensively addressed the instances of safaahat in several verses and has listed other instances of safihs in addition to Jews and polytheists, such as those who disdain the nation and religion of Abraham, murderers of children, orphans, drunkards, those who are not trusted, children before reaching the age of maturity, and lustful women. The implications of this study could be useful in understanding the Quranic concepts of foolishness and ignorance, as well as the instances in which they are mentioned. The study could also provide insights into the interpretations of Islamic scholars on these concepts and their relevance to contemporary society.

**Keywords:** *Allameh Tabataba'i; Allameh Zamakhshari; Comparative Study; Ignorance; Safaahat; Safih*

## 1. Introduction

The Quran is a heavenly book and the eternal miracle of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH). To understand the meaning of its lofty concepts, exploration and research in the exegeses by great mufassirs are necessary. One such concept in the Quran is 'safaahat', which means 'lightness of mind,' 'ignorance,' and 'intellectual deficiency'. According to Ameer Persian Dictionary), 'safih' means 'ignorant,' 'foolish,' and 'ill-mannered'. The equivalents of safih in Persian include words such as 'idiot,' 'moron,' 'unintelligent,' 'stupid,' 'ignorant,' and 'simpleton,' and the opposite of safih is 'wise.' In English, words such as 'silly,' 'lunatic,' 'fool,' 'stupid,' 'pixilated,' and 'daffy' are some of the equivalents of safih (Abadis Dictionary).

From the perspective of the Quran, turning away from the religion of Abraham (PBUH) is an instance of safaahat: "Who would forsake the religion of Abraham, except he who fools himself? We chose him in this world, and the Hereafter he will be among the righteous." (al-Baqarah, 130). Safih and its derivations appear 11 times in the Quran. An exploration of the previous studies indicates that no independent Quranic research has been conducted on this topic. In fact, previous studies on safih and safaahat, whose titles are listed below, mostly focus on the jurisprudential and legal nature of the two terms:

- *The marriage of the safih from the perspective of Islamic jurisprudence and Iranian law;*
- *The role of the ruler in the marriage and divorce of the safih and the insane from the perspective of Shia and Sunni schools of thought;*
- *The role of the ruler in the incapacitation of the safih;*
- *Interpretation of the word safih in the verse 'Do not give the feeble-minded your property, which Allah has assigned you to manage' (An-Nisa, 5). This article, which examines the verse from the perspective of some mufassirs, considers safih as every person who is foolish and unwise, whether male or female, young or old;*
- *The semantic field of safih and safaahat in the Quran and hadith. This study only focuses on some limited meanings and instances of safaahat without examining its meanings and instances from the perspective of Allameh Tabataba'i and Allameh Zamakhshari using a comparative approach; and*
- *Wisdom and safaahat in the Noble Quran, which examines some of the meanings and instances of safaahat in a general sense, again, without examining its meanings and instances from the perspective of Allameh Tabataba'i and Allameh Zamakhshari using a comparative approach.*

In order to fill the gap in research, the current study, conducted using textual analysis and library research methods, seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the meanings and instances of safih and safaahat from the perspective of Allameh Tabataba'i and Allameh Zamakhshari?
2. What are the similarities and differences in the views of Allameh Tabataba'i and Allameh Zamakhshari regarding the meanings and instances of safih and safaahat?

In so doing, the paper first discusses the conceptual and etymological analysis of safaahat and its synonyms and antonyms. Second, it examines the verses containing derivations of safih from the perspective of Allameh Tabataba'i and Allameh Zamakhshari. Third, it extracts the two mufassirs' similar and different opinions regarding the meanings and instances of safaahat. Finally, it explains the instances of safaahat from the perspective of Tafsir al-Mizan and Tafsir al-Kashaf (two famous Quranic exegeses).

## 2. Introducing Allameh Zamakhshari and Allameh Tabataba'i

### 2.1 Allameh Zamakhshari

Abu al-Qasim Mahmud ibn Umar al-Allameh Zamakhshari (1074-1143) was a medieval Muslim scholar of Iranian descent. He traveled to Mecca and settled there for five years and has been known since then as 'Jar Allah' (meaning 'God's Neighbor') (Versteegh, 2002).

He is the author of Tafsir al-Kashaf and a literary and eloquent Arabic writer. Tabarsi, who lived in the same era as Allameh Zamakhshari, was fond of Tafsir al-Kashaf and decided to summarize it while also including the views of the Shia. This is why he wrote Jami' al-Jawami'. Many scholars such as Beyzavi and Fakhr al-Razi have used Tafsir al-Kashaf and even included it in their tafsir works.

Allameh Zamakhshari was humble towards the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) and expressed many narrations about their virtues. He reinforced the Mutazilite school of thought linguistically and presented opposing opinions to the Ash'ari school of thought, which is why he was accused of being biased toward the Shia. Ayatollah Ma'rifat regards him as someone who goes beyond a particular school of thought in presenting scientific discussions and introduces his view of the Quran as a free, enlightened, and educated human perspective. The reason for the acceptance of this tafsir among the Shia is the author's emphasis on narrating the virtues of the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) (Alavi Mehr, 2015).

### 2.2 Allameh Tabataba'i

Seyyed Mohammad Hossein Tabataba'i (1903–1981), commonly known as Allameh Tabataba'i, was an Iranian scholar, theorist, philosopher, and one of the most prominent thinkers of modern Shia Islam. He is perhaps best known for his Tafsir al-Mizan, a twenty-volume work of tafsir (Quranic exegesis), which he produced between 1954 and 1972 (Hosseini Tehrani, 2005).

Tafsir al-Mizan is a unique exegesis of the Quran in terms of its methodology, creativity, scientific strength, reasonable analysis, consistency with scientific standards, and unparalleled diversity of topics. The sources of Tafsir al-Mizan include exegetical, hadith, historical, biographical, and other books. Allameh Tabataba'i paid great attention to the context of verses in his verse-by-verse tafsir. Some of the sources that Allameh Tabataba'i used in writing Tafsir al-Mizan include Raghib's dictionary, Fakhr al-Razi's tafsir, Majma' al-Bayan tafsir, Ibn Abbas's tafsir, Tafsir al-Kashaf, and Tabarsi's tafsir, among others (Ostadi, 2008). Tafsir al-Mizan is one of the most famous contemporary Shia tafsirs that has been well-received by Shia scholars and enthusiasts and has gained widespread popularity among Shia communities. Due to the recognition of Allameh Tabataba'i and Tafsir al-Mizan among Iranians and Shia, it is unnecessary to provide a summary of the content.

## 3. The Literal and Idiomatic Meanings of Safaahat

The term safaahat, derived from the root word 'safoh,' has been mentioned as having various meanings, including:

- 1) *Ignorance and unwiseness*: Some scholars have described safih as ignorant and unwise (Sa'di Abohabib, 1988; Qarashi, 1992; Hosseini Zobeidi, 1994; Khorramshahi, 2010).
- 2) *Feeling troubled*: Some linguists have described safih as feeling troubled (Sajjadi, 1994).
- 3) *Lack of intellectual growth and a lightness of mind*: Some scholars have considered safaahat to mean a lack of intellectual growth and a lightness of mind. They believe that safaahat means a lightness of mind that can cause a person to act irrationally due to anger or joy (Sajjadi, 1994; Hosseini Dashti, 2006).
- 4) *Little knowledge and intellectual weakness*: Some others, like Abu Hilal Askari, have described safih as having little knowledge and suffering from intellectual weakness (Askari, 1980).

- 5) *Intellectual deficiency*: Some linguists also consider safaahat to mean intellectual deficiency (Fayumi, 1994, pp. 279-280; Qarashi Banaie, 1992, p. 277), while some others believe that safaahat refers to physical and spiritual lightness due to intellectual deficiency (Mostafavi, 1989, pp. 145-147).
- 6) *Light-minded*: Safih has also been used to mean 'light-minded' (Hosseini Zobeidi, 1994, pp. 44-45).
- 7) *Wasteful and extravagant*: Some others have described safih as meaning wasteful and extravagant, referring to someone who does not preserve their wealth and spends it improperly or engages in deceptive transactions (Jaberi Arabloo, 1983, p. 110; Mojaddadi Barekati, 2009, p. 113). They believe that the person's spending habits are not wise, and in the law, safih is synonymous with 'non-lawful' (Daneshpoor & Babaie, 2007, p. 1).
- 8) *Safaahat as an antonym for patience*: Some believe that safaahat means the opposite of patience (Heravi, 2008, p. 210; Tarihi, 1996, p. 347). Others believe that the antonym of safih is 'rashid' (Mojaddadi Barekati, 2009, p. 104).
- 9) *Under the age of 18 or performing immature actions*: In the law, 18 years of age is considered the age of maturity. If a person does not act responsibly with their property after reaching maturity, they are called safih (like during childhood) (Qaemieh, 2010, p. 124).
- 10) *A comprehensive definition of safih*: Safih means someone who is unwise, lacks intelligence, does not know the value of wealth, and is wasteful and destructive. They have a lightness of mind and rush to speak inappropriately and indecently, and do not contemplate their affairs. In Islamic jurisprudence, safih is prohibited from freely acting with their property, and their buying, selling, and other transactions must be overseen by a guardian. (Hosseini Dashti, 2006, Vol. 3, p. 717).

In general, safaahat means the opposite of patience and forbearance and is antithetical to righteousness. It can mean ignorance, lack of knowledge, foolishness, and intellectual deficiency. Safih is someone who lacks self-awareness, cannot distinguish between good and bad, engages in improper transactions, and is prohibited from acting freely with their property in Islamic jurisprudence. They cannot preserve their wealth and spend it wastefully, and they do not consider their interests in their dealings, easily falling for deception. Safih is someone who is wasteful and spends their wealth inappropriately and outside of its proper context.

#### 4. Frequency of 'Safih' in the Quran

The word 'safih' and its derivations appear 11 times in the Quran, which includes 'safaha' (2:130), 'safahan' (6:140), 'sefaahat' (7:66 & 67), 'safihan' (2:128), 'safihona' (72:4), and 'al-sofaha' (2:13 & 142, 4:5, 7:155) (Abdulbaqi, 1985, p. 352). It should be noted that in some instances, derivations from other words such as 'jahil' and 'ghay' have been used as synonyms for safaahat (Farahidi, 1989, vol. 3, p. 390; Ragheb Esfahani, 1992, p. 620).

#### 5. Comparative Analysis of Allameh Tabataba'i and Allameh Zamakhshari's Views on the Meanings and Implications of Safaahat

##### 5.1 The First Instance: Verse 13 of Surah al-Baqarah

In verse 13 of Surah al-Baqarah, the Quran states: And when it is said to them, 'Believe as the people have believed, they say, 'Shall we believe as the fools have believed?' It is they who are the fools, but they do not know.

##### Allameh Tabataba'i

From the apparent meaning of the verse, it can be inferred that safih means ignorant and unwise, and the hypocrites referred to the believers as safihs and unwise. Allah also describes the hypocrites themselves as unwise and ignorant (Safavi, Translation of the Quran, 2008, p. 3). However, it should be

noted that Allameh Tabataba'i did not explicitly criticize the meaning of safih in this verse, but he accepted the apparent meaning of safih as referring to the hypocrites calling the believers ignorant and unwise (Tabataba'i, 1992, Vol. 1, p. 56).

### **Allameh Zamakhshari**

Allameh Zamakhshari believes that in this verse, safaahat means ignorance, lack of wisdom, and weakness and frailty of the intellect. The hypocrites accused the believers of being ignorant and unwise. They believed that they were on the side of truth and everyone else was in the wrong. If someone boarded the wrong ship, they considered them to be safih and unwise. They held positions of leadership among themselves and were wealthy, while most of the believers were poor. Some of them, such as Suhayb, Bilal, and Khubbab, were slaves, and the disbelievers considered them safih to humiliate and belittle them. Perhaps they also meant Abdullah ibn Salam and his followers who had lost their faith, even though they knew that they were not safih. Safaahat refers to weakness of intellect and lack of wisdom, which they did not have. Allameh Zamakhshari believes that verse 13 concludes with 'laya'lmoon' (meaning 'but they do not know') and the meaning of safaahat in this verse is ignorance and lack of knowledge, and the mention of knowledge (in contrast to safaahat) is the best match for it (Allameh Zamakhshari, 1987, vol. 1, p. 64-65).

### **Comparative Analysis**

Allameh Tabataba'i did not explicitly criticize the meaning of safihs in this verse, but he accepted the apparent meaning of the word which refers to the hypocrites calling the believers ignorant and unwise, as it is reflected in the verse. On the other hand, Allameh Zamakhshari provides a more detailed explanation and interprets safaahat as referring to ignorance and lack of wisdom, and refers to the fact that the hypocrites themselves are safih (i.e., possess safaahat) for accusing the believers of being ignorant and unwise. There is no difference between the two mufassirs in terms of the interpretation of this verse, and Allameh Zamakhshari only provides a more extensive explanation of safaahat.

## **5.2 The Second Instance: Verse 130 of Surah al-Baqarah**

In verse 130 of Surah al-Baqarah, the Quran states: Who would forsake the religion of Abraham, except he who fools himself? We chose him in this world, and in the Hereafter, he will be among the righteous.

### **Allameh Tabataba'i**

In this verse, safih means someone who is light-minded and has not recognized their own good and bad qualities (Safavi, Translation of the Quran, 2008, p. 20). Allameh Tabataba'i believes that those who turn away from the religion of Abraham are instances of 'safihs.' He states that 'turning away from the nation and religion of Abraham is due to the foolishness of the self, which is the result of not recognizing what is beneficial or harmful to oneself' (Tabataba'i, 1992, vol. 1, p. 300).

### **Allameh Zamakhshari**

Allameh Zamakhshari also believes that the phrase 'who fools himself' in this verse means someone who has weakened and devalued themselves, and the root of 'safoh' is lethargy and humiliation. When someone turns away from something that no wise person would turn away from, they have humiliated themselves greatly because they have opposed the wisdom of all intelligent people (Allameh Zamakhshari, 1987, vol. 1, pp. 190-191).

## Comparative Analysis

Allameh Tabataba'i interprets *safaahat* as the foolishness of the self and the failure to understand one's interests and harms, while Allameh Zamakhshari sees it as weakening and devaluing oneself, lethargy, humiliation, and turning away from something that no one else would turn away from. In this regard, both mufassirs have expressed similar views and have considered turning away from the religion of Abraham as undesirable. However, there is a minor difference between them in that Allameh Tabataba'i has presented a general understanding of the meaning of 'safih,' while Allameh Zamakhshari has emphasized the literal meaning and provided a concrete instance in society to better convey the meaning of 'safih.' Overall, both mufassirs have expressed similar views, and there is not much difference between them.

### 5.3 The Third Instance: Verse 282 of Surah al-Baqarah

Verse 282 of surah al-Baqarah, states: ...But if the debtor is of poor understanding, or weak, or unable to dictate himself, then let his guardian dictate in justice...

#### Allameh Tabataba'i

Allameh Tabataba'i believes that individuals who are safihs require a guardian in economic and life affairs. He states that 'whatever a safih can do in terms of spelling, they can do it, but whatever they cannot do, their guardian should do it for them' (Tabataba'i, 1992, vol. 2, p. 434). By 'safih,' he means individuals with limited intelligence (such as young children) or those who require guardianship and cannot manage their life and economic affairs independently.

#### Allameh Zamakhshari

In Tafsir al-Kashaf, it is stated that if you lend or borrow money from someone for a specified period, write it down... It is recommended to write down the debt so that both parties have greater security and assurance that they will not forget or deny it... In this context, 'safihan' means someone who, due to extravagance and lack of knowledge of proper management, has been prevented from taking possession of their property (Allameh Zamakhshari, 1987, vol. 1, p. 325).

## Comparative Analysis

Both mufassirs have similar views about safihs in this verse, and they both refer to someone who cannot manage their personal and economic affairs and cannot handle them independently. However, Allameh Tabataba'i emphasizes more on the need for a guardian, while Allameh Zamakhshari focuses more on the person's weakness in managing and administering their life.

### 5.4 The Fourth Instance: Verse 142 of Surah al-Baqarah

In Surah al-Baqarah, verse 142, Allah says: The foolish among the people will say, 'What has turned them away from their qibla which they used to face?'

#### Allameh Tabataba'i

Allameh Tabataba'i believes that *safaahat* means a person's failure to use their intellect correctly and not having a firm opinion. Jews and Arab polytheists were considered instances of safihs because their nature was not upright, and their opinions on religious and legislative matters were incorrect (Tabataba'i, 1992, vol. 1, p. 318). Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) prayed towards Jerusalem for thirteen years in Mecca and seven months in Medina until he was commanded by Allah to turn towards the Kaaba in Mecca. The Jews criticized and rebuked the Prophet (PBUH) and claimed that he followed them and

prayed toward their qibla. This caused extreme grief for the Prophet (PBUH), and he waited for divine intervention on this matter.

During the noon prayer, the Prophet (PBUH) was in the Mosque of Bani Salim and had prayed two rak'ahs of the noon prayer when Gabriel descended and placed his hands on the Prophet's shoulders, turning him towards the Kaaba. This incident led to the revelation of the following verse to the Prophet (PBUH): 'We have certainly seen the turning of your face toward the heaven, and We will surely turn you to a qibla with which you will be pleased. So, turn your face toward al-Masjid al-Haram'. As a result, the Prophet (PBUH) prayed two rak'ahs toward Jerusalem and the other two rak'ahs towards the Kaaba. After this incident, there was a lot of uproar and confusion among the Jews and the people as to why the Prophet (PBUH) had turned away from the previous qibla (Tabataba'i, 1992, vol. 1, pp. 318-319, 325, 331).

### **Allameh Zamakhshari**

Allameh Zamakhshari explains 'The safihs will say...' as referring to the foolish Jews who disliked facing the Kaaba. Some have also said that it refers to hypocrites who were very eager to criticize Islam and make fun of Muslims. Others have said that it refers to polytheists who said that the Prophet (PBUH) first turned away from the qibla of his ancestors and then turned towards it (Allameh Zamakhshari, 1987, vol. 1, p. 198). Therefore, in Tafsir al-Kashaf, the instances of safihs are considered to be foolish Jews, hypocrites, and polytheists, depending on various opinions.

### **Comparative Analysis**

Allameh Tabataba'i first explained the term safaahat as a person's failure to use their intellect correctly and not having a firm opinion. He then went on to discuss the instances of safihs and also narrated the story of the verse. On the other hand, Allameh Zamakhshari did not explain the meaning of the term safihs and only mentioned their instances (including Jews, hypocrites, and fools). Therefore, although both mufassirs discussed the instances of safihs, Allameh Tabataba'i also explained the concept of the term itself.

### **5.5 The Fifth Instance: Verse 140 of Surah al-An'am**

The Noble Quran states: Lost are those who kill their children foolishly, with no basis in knowledge, and forbid what God has provided for them—innovations about God. They have gone astray. They are not guided' (Al-An'am, 140).

### **Allameh Tabataba'i**

Allameh Tabataba'i believes that killing one's children is one of the instances of safaahat and ignorance (Tabataba'i, 1992, vol. 7, pp. 362-363).

### **Allameh Zamakhshari**

Allameh Zamakhshari also believes that 'this verse is about the tribe of Rabi'ah, Mudhar, and those Arabs who used to bury their daughters alive out of fear of poverty and slavery. They did so because of their ignorance and lack of knowledge that it is God who provides sustenance to their children, not them! They buried their daughters alive due to their foolishness' (Allameh Zamakhshari, 1987, vol. 2, p. 72).

### **Comparative Analysis**

It seems that Allameh Tabataba'i only briefly mentioned that killing one's children is an instance of safaahat and ignorance, while Allameh Zamakhshari specifically referred to the instance mentioned in

the verse, which is the tribe of Rabi'ah, Mudhar, and others who used to bury their daughters alive, and explained the reason behind it as their foolishness and ignorance. Therefore, it appears that Allameh Zamakhshari provided a more comprehensive and detailed explanation of the instance, while Allameh Tabataba'i briefly mentioned the issue.

### **5.6 The Sixth Instance: Verses 66 and 67 of Surah al-A'raf**

The Quran states in Surah Al-A'raf, verses 66-67: But the eminent among those who disbelieved from his people said, 'We see you in foolishness, and indeed, we think you are among the liars.' (al-A'raf, 66) He said, 'O my people, there is not foolishness in me, but I am a messenger from the Lord of the worlds' (al-A'raf, 67).

#### **Allameh Tabataba'i**

Allameh Tabataba'i explains these verses by stating that the people of Hud considered him a safih and unintelligent man, and regarded his beliefs as incorrect. They believed him to be one of the liars (Tabataba'i, 1992, vol. 8, p. 177).

#### **Allameh Zamakhshari**

Allameh Zamakhshari explains that the phrase 'fi safaahat' means that the noble Prophet (PBUH) was considered to have a light and weak intellect by those who opposed him (Allameh Zamakhshari, 1987, vol. 2, p. 116). The method of the prophets in dealing with such people, who accused them of being misguided and foolish, was to respond with words that reflected their knowledge and intellect, to ignore their inappropriate behavior, and to avoid any confrontation with them. Even though these enemies were among the most ignorant and misguided people, the prophets treated them with good manners and ethics, demonstrating greatness (Allameh Zamakhshari, 1987, vol. 2, p. 116).

### **Comparative Analysis**

In this case, Allameh Tabataba'i has also provided a simple explanation, defining safaahat as being foolish and having incorrect beliefs. However, Allameh Zamakhshari has elaborated on the topic further and, in addition to the lexical definition, has also discussed the approach of the prophets in dealing with disbelievers, emphasizing that they acted rationally in their dealings with them.

### **5.7 The Seventh Instance: Verse 4 of Surah al-Jinn**

The Quran states in Surah Al-Jinn, verse 4: But the fools among us used to say nonsense about God.

#### **Allameh Tabataba'i**

Allameh Tabataba'i believes that safih in this verse means being heedless, which results from a lack of intellect. The phrase 'safih ma' refers to the polytheists who were among the jinn before them (Tabataba'i, 1992, vol. 20, p. 41). The Jinn used to believe that whatever the humans and Jinn said was true and they never lied against God. When they encountered the polytheists and heard their claims of having a relationship of kinship with God, they believed in them and became idolaters like them. They were in disbelief until they heard the Quran and realized the truth. Their confession is a refutation of the denial of the human and jinnish idolaters (Tabataba'i, 1992, vol. 20, p. 41). Allameh Tabataba'i also mentions that some have suggested that the verse refers to Iblis, who was also among the jinn. However, this possibility is unlikely based on the context of the verse (Tabataba'i, 1992, vol. 20, p. 41).



## Allameh Zamakhshari

Allameh Zamakhshari believes that the term *safih* in this verse refers to Iblis, the cursed one, and another disobedient jinn. 'Shattat' means exceeding limits and committing unjust and ugly deeds. The sentence 'It is the attribution of a spouse and child to Allah' refers to the impiety of those who attributed having a spouse and children to God. They exceeded the limits and committed the sacrilege of attributing such relationships to God (Allameh Zamakhshari, 1987, vol. 2, p. 623).

## Comparative Analysis

In this case, Allameh Tabataba'i not only provided the lexical definition but also discussed the context of the term *safih*. On the other hand, Allameh Zamakhshari focused only on the context of the verse. However, the main difference between Allameh Tabataba'i and Allameh Zamakhshari is that Allameh Tabataba'i considers it unlikely that the term refers to Iblis, while Allameh Zamakhshari cites Iblis as the first instance that comes to mind in the verse. Therefore, Allameh Tabataba'i and Allameh Zamakhshari have a difference of opinion on this matter.

### 5.8 The Eighth Instance: Verse 5 of Surah an-Nisa

The Quran states in Surah An-Nisa, verse 5: 'And do not give the immature ones your property that God has made a means of sustenance for you, but provide for them with it and clothe them and speak to them words of appropriate kindness.'

#### Allameh Tabataba'i

Allameh Tabataba'i believes that *safih* means intellectual immaturity, which in essence refers to the absolute softness and weakness of something that should not be weak. It is used to describe someone deficient and incapable of managing their worldly affairs, but is careless about their religious duties and may commit sins in that regard. In this sense, *safih* connotes negligence (Tabataba'i, 1992, vol. 4, p. 169-170). Regarding the verse 'Do not give the immature ones your property more than their need,' the discussion is about the property of orphans. The commandment instructs the guardians of orphans to take charge of their affairs and manage their properties in a way that allows them to grow. Therefore, the term *safih*s in this verse does not refer to all immature individuals, but only to the immature ones who are orphans (Tabataba'i, 1992, vol. 4, p. 170).

Allameh Tabataba'i states that 'testing the orphan' means observing their growth and development. If their progress is observed, then their property should be given to them. This way of speaking indicates that reaching the age of marriage is not the reason for giving the orphan's property to them, but rather it is necessary when the reason arises, and the orphan is capable of independently managing their property when they reach the age of maturity (Tabataba'i, 1992, vol. 4, p. 172-173). Allameh Tabataba'i introduces orphans as an instance of *safih*s after narrating a tradition from Imam Sadiq (AS) (Tabataba'i, 1992, vol. 1, p. 300 4/ 177). In another tradition from Imam Sadiq (AS) regarding *safih* in this verse, Allameh Tabataba'i states that it refers to someone who cannot be trusted (Tabataba'i, 1992, vol. 4, p. 177). Allameh Tabataba'i also narrates another tradition from Imam Sadiq (AS) that states that whoever drinks wine is also considered *safih* (Tabataba'i, 1992, vol. 4, p. 177).

Moreover, Allameh Tabataba'i narrates a tradition from Imam Baqir (AS) in which he stated that if a man realizes that his spouse or child is *safih* and prone to corruption, he should not let them have control over any of his property, because God has made wealth a means of sustenance for him. Then he added that the meaning of 'means of sustenance' is livelihood (Tabataba'i, 1992, vol. 4, p. 177). Allameh Tabataba'i also stated that *safaahat* has a broad meaning and several application levels. It can refer to the *safaahat* that causes prohibition and prohibition of possession, the *safaahat* of a child before reaching

maturity, the safaahat of a promiscuous woman, the safaahat of a wine drinker, and the absolute safaahat of those who cannot be trusted (Tabataba'i, 1992, vol. 4, p. 177).

### **Allameh Zamakhshari**

Allameh Zamakhshari believes that safihs means those who are wasteful with their wealth, spending it on unworthy and inappropriate matters, and are incapable of striving for its improvement and prosperity. They cannot manage it properly and bring it to the right use. In this verse, the address is directed toward the guardians of individuals who are immature. Some mufassirs have stated that the addressees of this commandment are all the believers, and they are commanded not to entrust their property to anyone, whether they are relatives or strangers, men or women, who are immature and will ruin their property by managing it inappropriately and causing it to be destroyed (Allameh Zamakhshari, 1987, vol. 1, p. 471).

### **Comparative Analysis**

In this regard, Allameh Tabataba'i provides a more detailed discussion than Allameh Zamakhshari and uses narrations to help understand the meaning of 'safihs.' He introduces several instances of safihs such as orphans, those who are deficient in their religious duties, and wine drinkers. Allameh Tabataba'i provides specific instances, while Allameh Zamakhshari only speaks in general terms. One of the most significant differences between the exegetical methods of Allameh Tabataba'i and Allameh Zamakhshari in this verse is that Allameh Tabataba'i includes the person who is sinful and can manage their worldly affairs but ruins their afterlife among the safihs, whereas such a meaning is not seen in Allameh Zamakhshari's tafsir.

### **5.9 The Ninth Instance: Verse 155 of Surah al-A'raf**

In verse 155 of Surah al-A'raf, the Quran states: 'And Moses chose from his people seventy men for Our appointment. When the tremor shook them, he said, 'My Lord, had You willed, You could have destroyed them before, and me too. Will you destroy us for what the fools among us have done? This is but Your test—with it You misguide whomever You will, and guide whomever You will. You are our Protector, so forgive us, and have mercy on us. You are the Best of Forgivers.'

### **Allameh Tabataba'i**

Allameh Tabataba'i, in his interpretation of this verse, believes that safihs refer to disobedience, disrespect, stubbornness, or indifference toward God's position. He questions whether God would punish them for the ignorance of some foolish individuals who were safihs and lacked understanding (Tabataba'i, 1992, vol. 8, p. 272), in which in this context, safihs means ignorant individuals.

### **Allameh Zamakhshari**

Allameh Zamakhshari, in his Tafsir al-Kashaf, believed that the request for a sign from God in this verse was due to ignorance and lack of wisdom (Allameh Zamakhshari, 1987, vol. 2, p. 164).

### **Comparative Analysis**

Allameh Tabataba'i understands safihs in this verse to mean disobedience, disrespect, and ignorance towards God, while Allameh Zamakhshari sees the request for a sign from God as a result of ignorance. Allameh Tabataba'i provides more detailed explanations of the concept of safihs, whereas Allameh Zamakhshari focuses more on the specific instance of the request for a sign in this verse and considers it as an instance of safaahat.

## 6. Summary of the Comparative Analyses

	Allameh Tabataba'i	Allameh Zamakhshari	Comparative Analysis
<b>Surah al-Baqarah, 13</b>	No mention of the meaning of safaahat and acceptance of the apparent meaning.	Mention the meaning of safaahat and provide more detailed explanations.	Both mufassirs were similar and had no differences. Imam Allameh Zamakhshari's explanations were more extensive.
<b>Surah al-Baqarah, 130</b>	safaahat means foolishness of the soul and not understanding one's benefit or harm.	safaahat means weakness, indecisiveness, laziness, and turning away from what no one else turns away from.	Both mufassirs spoke similarly, but there is a slight difference between them.
<b>Surah al-Baqarah, 282</b>	safih means those who need guardianship.	Those who cannot manage economic issues due to extravagance.	Both mufassirs spoke similarly, but their emphasis is slightly different.
<b>Surah al-Baqarah, 142</b>	Allameh Tabataba'i provided comprehensive explanations in addition to the explanation of the word.	Only mentions an instance.	Allameh Tabataba'i's explanation is more comprehensive and complete.
<b>Surah al-An'am, 140</b>	Killing children is an instance of ignorance and safaahat.	An instance of the Rabi'ah and Mudhar tribes and a more detailed explanation of the verse.	Allameh Zamakhshari gave a more comprehensive and complete explanation of the verse.
<b>Surah al-A'raf, 66 &amp; 67</b>	safih means those with little intelligence and incorrect opinions.	Unwise and lacking intelligence: Reference to the method of the prophets in dealing with 'safih.''	Allameh Tabataba'i's explanation is brief, while Imam Allameh Zamakhshari provides a more detailed and comprehensive one.
<b>Surah al-Jinn, 4</b>	The meaning of safaahat is the sleepiness of the soul due to a lack of intelligence.	The meaning of safih is those who are Iblis, cursed by Allah, and other rebellious jinns.	There is a fundamental difference in the instance they provide. Allameh Tabataba'i does not accept that Iblis represents 'safih,' whereas Allameh Zamakhshari uses it as an instance.
<b>Surah an-Nisa, 5</b>	Orphans, deficiency in faith, and alcohol consumption.	General explanation.	Allameh Tabataba'i's explanation is more comprehensive and complete.
<b>Surah al-A'raf, 155</b>	safih means disobedience, disrespect, and ignorance toward God.	safaahat and ignorance mean requesting to see God.	Allameh Tabataba'i emphasizes the meaning of the word, while Imam Allameh Zamakhshari focuses more on the instance.

## Conclusion

Safaahat means the absence and opposite of patience and forbearance, as well as foolishness, lack of intelligence, and lightness of mind caused by a lack of sufficient intelligence. It also means ignorance, lack of wisdom, and incompetence. safih refers to someone who cannot distinguish between good and bad and has incorrect business practices.

Regarding the similarities and differences in the interpretations of safaahat and safih by Allameh Tabataba'i and Allameh Zamakhshari, it can be said that according to Allameh Tabataba'i, safaahat means ignorance, lack of wisdom, foolishness, lustful behavior, and a lightness of mind caused by a lack of sufficient intelligence. He includes instances such as Jews, idolaters, murderers of children and orphans, alcoholics, untrustworthy individuals, childish behavior, and lustful women. Meanwhile, he considers safih to be those who are averse to the nation and faith of Abraham, Jews, Arab polytheists, murderers of children and orphans, alcoholics, untrustworthy individuals, and those who cannot be trusted. Additionally, he includes instances such as children who have not yet reached the age of maturity and lustful women as instances of safaahat.

On the other hand, according to Allameh Zamakhshari, safaahat is used in the sense of ignorance, lack of wisdom, incompetence, weakness and feebleness of mind, lowliness, faintness, lack of reason, and unawareness. Meanwhile, safih is used to describe those who waste wealth and cannot manage it properly and are therefore prevented from possessing it. These are individuals who waste their wealth and spend it on things that are not worthy or beneficial and are unable to improve or prosper through it or manage it properly. According to Allameh Zamakhshari, instances of safih include foolish Jews, hypocrites, and polytheists, as stated in various sources.

In terms of meaning, both mufassirs agree that safaahat means foolishness, ignorance, lack of wisdom, lightness of mind, and a lack of sufficient intelligence. Allameh Zamakhshari considers those who waste wealth and cannot manage it properly as safih. When it comes to the instances of safaahat, Allameh Zamakhshari mentions three instances of 'safih,' which are foolish Jews, hypocrites, and polytheists. On the other hand, Allameh Tabataba'i provides a more comprehensive list of instances of safaahat in several verses of the Quran. In addition to Jews and polytheists, he also includes other instances of safih such as those who show aversion towards the nation and faith of Abraham, murderers of children and orphans, alcoholics, untrustworthy individuals, childish behavior, and lustful women, as well as children who have not yet reached the age of maturity.

In verse 4 of Surah Al-Jinn, Allameh Zamakhshari considers Iblis (Satan) as an instance of safaahat, but Allameh Tabataba'i disagrees with this viewpoint and criticizes it. In several instances, Allameh Tabataba'i provides a more comprehensive analysis, while Allameh Zamakhshari's analysis is more comprehensive in a few cases.

One of the implications of this study is that it could contribute to a better understanding of the Quranic concepts of foolishness and ignorance and the instances in which they are mentioned. The study has also provided insights into the interpretations of Islamic scholars on these concepts and their relevance to contemporary society. For example, the study's findings could help to shed light on the reasons behind certain behaviors such as drinking alcohol, which is considered a foolish act in Islam.

However, there are some limitations to this study that need to be addressed. Firstly, the study has only analyzed the perspectives of two Islamic scholars. Thus, it is important to explore the views of other scholars to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the meanings and instances of safaahat and safih. Secondly, the study has solely relied on textual analysis and library research methods. Future research could consider using other research methods, such as interviews or surveys, to gain a deeper understanding of how these concepts are perceived in contemporary society.

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