



Reviewing the Viewpoint of Régis Blachère about the Term "Omni" (The Illiteracy of Prophet Muhammad PBUH)

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Abstract

The subject of Prophet's illiteracy and being uneducated is one of the important challenging issues of Quranic sciences in the field of Quranic Miracle, which is almost discussed by orientalist and scholars of Islamic sciences; the concept of illiteracy is the subject of their dispute, some scholars say illiteracy means not being educated but other scholars say illiteracy means someone who is literate but is attributed to Mecca, which is the main pivot of their opposite ideas. Meanwhile, some orientalist like Will Durant agreed on the illiteracy of holy Prophet; but some like Blachère disagreed the illiteracy of holy Prophet (PBUH). The famous French Orientalist, Régis Blachère, in the preface to his translation of the Quran in French, has presented his views on several issues like Quranic sciences and history. The illiteracy of the Prophet is one of the points that the scholars of Quranic sciences have discussed in the Qur'an's miracle debate. But some orientalist like Blachère have not accepted the illiteracy of holy Prophet and have criticized the viewpoint of Muslims. He considers the origin of the Muslim's viewpoint about the Prophet's illiteracy as the wrong interpretation of the term "Omni". He has defined the phrase "Al-Nabi Al-Omni" as the Prophet of idol worshipers. In this article, by descriptive-analytic method, the writers first examine the literal meaning of the word "Omni" and then by citing related verses, and expressing the commentators' viewpoint, have proved that Omni means the Prophet's illiteracy. In addition to literal and interpretative documents and Quran, other strong proofs and documents have been presented that the Prophet was illiterate and he could not read and write.

Keywords: Omni Prophet; Ommīyīn; Régis Blachère; Orientalists; The Miracle of Quran

1-Problem

The subject of Prophet's illiteracy, before Bi'tha¹, is agreed by all Muslim scholars and his illiteracy, after Bi'tha, is agreed by some Muslim scholars. The orientalist and scholars of Islamic issues have been two groups about the concept of the illiteracy of Prophet: some know the Prophet of Islam as Ommi² i.e. illiterate. Some other define Ommi in another way and don't consider Prophet as illiterate.

One of those, who claims the Prophet has not been illiterate and the word Ommi does not mean illiteracy, is Régis Blachère, the famous French orientalist.

In the book "on the threshold of Quran" he questions the illiteracy of the Prophet (PBUH) (Blachère. p. 20), and he defines the Ommi Prophet (PBUH) as the "Prophet of the idolaters" (refer to: Blachère, p. 21).

2-Background

Some studies have been conducted about the illiteracy (being Ommi) of the Prophet (PBUH), from the viewpoint of Qur'an and the Muslims and orientalists.

But so far, no independent research, which comprehensively assess all the views of Blachère about the illiteracy of Prophet, was not found. Articles about the Prophet's illiteracy include:

1. Ommi; uneducated or non-People of the Book? Fiqhizadeh, Abd al-Hadi; Kavand, Alireza. Spring and summer 1391, No. 24.
2. Reviewing the "Ommi" i.e. the illiteracy of the Prophet of Islam (PBUH) Vaseghi Rad, Mohammad Hussein. Autumn and Winter 1391, No. 6.
3. Examining the meaning of "Ommi" i.e. the illiteracy of the Prophet of Islam in the Qur'an and its differences with the traditions of the Book Başā'ir ad-Darajāt, Azimi, Vali. Autumn and Winter, 1395, No. 5.
4. The Ommi Prophet from the Viewpoint of Orientalists and its Criticism, Mortazavi, Seyyed Mohammad. Summer 1386, No. 9.
5. The Critical Analysis of the Viewpoint of Muhammad Abed Al-Jaberi on the Meaning of the Prophet as "Ommi" Author: Fiqhizadeh, Abd al-Hadi; Kariminia, Morteza; Ghaderi Rahghi; Mohammad Taghi; Spring & Summer 1396, No. 34.
6. An Analysis and Critique of Sebastian Gunther's View on "Al-Nabi Al-Ommi" from the Viewpoint of Contemporary Shi'ite commentators, Moadab, Seyyed Reza, Mousavi Moghadam, Seyyed Mohammad, Autumn 1386, No. 15.
7. In the light of the Qur'an, a study on the word "Ommi", Zabihi, Mahmud. Autumn, 1372, No. 40.
8. The Qur'anic Application of the word "Ommi", Haji Babayee Arki, Somayeh, Autumn and Winter 1387, No. 17 & 18.
9. The concept of the "Ommi" Prophet (PBUH) and the Orientalist's claims, Dolat Abadi, Māsoumeh; Orientalist's Quranic Studies; Autumn and Winter 1389, No. 9.

¹ بعثت
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10. Reviewing and Assessing the Orientalists' Opinions on the "Omni" Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), Ibrahim, Ibrahim; Tahmasebi Boldaji, Asghar. Autumn 1393, No. 18.

11. A new look at the issue of the "Omni" Prophet (PBUH) Hammami, Abbas; Shayesteh Fard, Rahmat. Spring and summer 1391 - No. 10.

In addition, a related article was found as follows:

12. Biography of the Prophet (PBUH) before the Prophethood: A review of the opinions of Régis Blachère, Shafie Khouzani, Ziba; Alemzadeh, Hadi; Spring & Summer 1393, No. 19.

This paper examines the various aspects of the life of the Prophet before the Prophethood. One of these aspects is the literacy of the Prophet, which is discussed in almost 6 pages, but the article considers all the debates of Blachère on the "Omni" Prophet comprehensively and completely.

In this article, by examining the verses containing the word "Omni" and by studying the lexical and interpretive books, and using the descriptive-analytical method, we explain the meaning of the word "Omni" from the viewpoint of the Qur'an, and we answer the documents of Blachère who claims the Prophet is literate.

3. Examining the Word "Omni" in the Word and Commentary

Blachère knows the word "Omni" in a sense other than lack of familiarity with reading and writing, firstly, we express the views of the people of the word in this regard, and then we examine the applied meaning of this word in the Quran.

3.1 Examining the Meaning of "Omni"

The term "Omm" means the principle, the base and the root. (Ṭurayḥī, 1375, v. 6, p. 9 and Mostafavi, 1360, v. 1, p. 134). In other words, whatever that is the principle of the existence or the upbringing or modifying something, is called "Omm" (Ragheb, 1412 AH, p. 85). Khalil ibn Ahmad says: "Omm" is the basis of everything that is associated with with other things" (Farahidi, 1410 AH, v. 8, p. 426). Therefore, the original meaning of "Omm" can be understood as the foundation of anything, from which some other things may be derived. Like Omm Al-Ra'as, Omm3 Al-Qura and Omm Al-Kitab. (Ragheb-Isfahani, *ibid*, p. 85; Mostafavi, *ibid*)

The term "Omni", in Arabic, means someone who cannot write or read a book (Ibn Manzur, 1414 AH, v. 12, p. 34; Fumie, 1414 AH, v. 1, p. 23). Qutrub says: "Omni" from the Ommih; ignorance and negligence means little knowledge. (Ragheb, *ibid.*, P. 87) Ṭurayḥī says: "Omni" in Arabic language are the Arab pagans who don't have a Book." (Ṭurayḥī, 1375, v. 6, p. 11)

It is also said that it is attributed to "Omm", that is, someone who is ignorant of writing. And does not write according to his original nature (Ibn Fares, 1404 AH, v. 1, p. 28). As he has been born of a mother because writing is acquisitive, not congenital. (Ibn Manzur, *ibid*)

Some also consider al-Ommi as attributed to the Arab Ummah because most of them were illiterate. (Fumie, *ibid*), Ragheb Isfahani quotes Fara; they were the people who did not write. And this is a virtue for the Prophet because he has no need to maintain it and he has trust in the divine guarantee that

God has mentioned in the Qur'an: We will read to you soon, so you will not forget. It is said that Ommi is related to Omm Al-Qura. (Ragheb, *ibid*, p. 87)

Therefore, the Prophet of Islam is also called "al- Ommi" because the Arab nation neither wrote nor read a letter, and Allah sent them a messenger, who also neither wrote, nor read. As stated in the hadith, "we are an illiterate nation, neither write nor count; i.e. rightly, we are an Ommi group, neither write nor count." That is to say, they are based on their own birth principle. They have not learnt writing and counting. So they are on their original nature. (Ibn Manzur, *ibid*)

3.2. Exploring the applied meaning of the word "Ommi" in the Quran

The word Ommi has been used in six verses of the Quran. Two cases have been used singularly and as an adjective for the Prophet (PBUH) (Al-A'raf/157-158) and one has been used in the form of Ommīyouṅ (al-Baqarah/78) about the Jews and three have been used as Ommīyīṅ (Al-Imran / 20 and 75). In the following, the idea of Sunni and Shia commentators, separately, is presented below each verse:

3-2-1- The term Ommīyouṅ (al-Baqarah/78)

The Holy Qur'an states in the verse 78 of sūrah al-Baqarah: "And among them are the illiterate who know nothing of the Book except hearsay...".

The term Ommīyouṅ⁴, whose singular is Ommi, means the person who cannot read and write (Tabari, 1412 AH, v. 1, p. 296, and Tabataba'i, 1417 AH, v. 1, p. 215). Here the meaning is the general Jewish and their ignorant people. Because they have fallen into distress and there is no hope for them to believe. (Tha'labī, 1418 AH, v. 1, p. 267). In this verse, the term Ommīyīṅ means the Jewish people, or the literate people who knew reading and writing, but they distorted the Heavenly Book, or they are people who did not know how to read and write, and therefore, they did not know anything from the scriptures, except false and superstition. (Tabataba'i, *ibid*)

3.2.2 The term Ommīyīṅ (Al-Imran / 20)

The holy Quran in verse 20 of Al-Imrān says: "... and say to those who have been given the Book and to the common folk: Have you surrendered!..."

Major Shi'i and Sunni commentators say under this verse: Al-Ommīyīṅ means Arab pagans, who does not have Book. (Tabari, 1412 AH, v. 3, p. 143; Abu al-Fotouh Razi, 1408 AH, v. 4, p. 238; Tabarsi, 1372, v. 2, p. 719; Qurtubī, 1364, v. 4, p. 45; Zamakhshari, 1407 A, v. 1, p. 347; Bayḍāwī, 1418 A.H., v. 2, p. 10; Tabataba'i, *ibid*, v. 3, p. 122; Tantawi, ND, v. 2, p. 5).

The audience of this verse is all of the opponents of the Prophet (PBUH). Because some of their opponents were the People of the Book (Jewish and Christian) (right or wrong), and some were not People of the Book (like idolaters). Fakhr Razi says: "The Arab pagans are called Ommi for two reasons; first, they did not have a holy Book. So they looked like those who neither read nor wrote. Second, they were not those people who read and write, although there was someone who had the ability to write. In general, they all are called Ommi (Fakhr Razi, 1420 AH, v. 7, p. 175)

⁴ أُمِّيُونَ

It seems that this meaning can also be restored, in the same famous sense (not able to read). Because the polytheists are referred to this characteristic, not because of their polytheism or lack of obedience to the holy Books, but because of their inability in writing and reading. Its singular, in the form of *Ommi*, has been used in the case of the Prophet Muhammad. It is certain that the Prophet of Islam has not been Jewish or Christian, so they are not considered to be a People of the Book. Of course, considering the division of the people into the two categories of People of the Book and *Ommīyīn* in the verse, it is clear that the meaning of *Ommīyīn* is not merely the inhabitants of the *Omm Al-Qura* (Mecca). Thus, the *Ommi* view in the meaning of the *Omm Al-Qura* inhabitants is not true in this regard, and the only possibility remains.

3.2.3 The term *Al-Ommīyīn* (*Al-Imrān/75*)

The holy Quran in verse 75 of Surah *al-Imrān* says: "... because they say:" It is not Incumbent on us [to be faithful] to the unlearned people" ..."

In this verse, the word *Ommi* means unlearned. This verse implies that: The Jews, because of their arrogant and self-control spirit, called themselves People of the Book, and called other people *Ommi* and illiterate. They said: "The illiterate people do not have priority on us, which means that the non-Israelites have no right to dominate the Israelites." (Samarqandi, ND, v. 1: p. 224, Tūsī, ND, v. 2, p. 504, Tabarsi, 1372, v. 2, p. 777. Fakhr Razi, 1420 AH, v. 8, p. 264, Ibn Atiyah, 1422 AH, v. 1, p. 459. Ibn Kathīr, 1419 AH, v. 2, p. 52. Tabataba'i, ibid, v. 3, P. 261)

3-2-4. the term *Al-Ommīyīn* (*al-Jumu'ah/2*)

The Holy Qur'an says in verse 2 of Surah *al-Jumu'ah*: "Allah is the One who sent among the illiterate people a Messenger from Among themselves ..."

In this verse, the word "*Ommīyīn*" is the plural of the word "*Ommi*". The commentators have stated several aspects about this verse:

1- Some say: The meaning of *Ommīyīn* is the Arab people; most of them did not read and write. In the midst of this *Ommi Ommah*, Allah sent a messenger from among themselves. (Zamakhshari, 1407 AH, v. 4, p. 529; Fakhr Razi, 1420 AH, v. 30, p. 538; Bayḍāwī, 1418 AH, v. 5, p. 211; Amoli, 1413 AH). v. 3, p. 321; Alusi, 1415 AH, v. 14, p. 288; Tabataba'i, ibid, v. 19, p. 264; Ibn Ashur, ND, v. 28, p. 186)

2-Some people state: *Ommīyīn* is against the People of the Book, and it means those who did not have a Book. (Suyuti, 1404 AH, v. 6, p. 215; Feiz Kashani, 1415 AH, v. 5, p. 147). Qurṭubī quotes Ibn-Abbas, *Ommīyoun* means all Arab People, either those who can write or those who cannot write. All are *Ommi* because they are not People of Book. (Qurṭubī, 1364, v. 19, p. 91)

3. Some commentators regard *Ommi* as belonging to *Omm Al-Qura*. (Bahrani, 1416 AH, v. 5, p. 374). Of course, Shaykh Tūsī and Tabarsi have mentioned this view after expressing the famous commentary, and say its reason is that Mecca is *Omm Al-Qura*. (Tūsī, ND, v. 10, p. 4; Tabarsi, 1372, v. 10, p. 428)

It is worth mentioning that some of the hadith sources of Imam Jawad (PBUH) have narrated, according to this verse, reading and writing is certain for the Prophet (PBUH), and considers the term "*Ommi*" attributed to the *Omm Al-Qura* (Saffar, 1404 AH, P. 225; Mofid, 1413 AH, p. 263; Ibn Babawayh, 1398, p. 54; Ibn Babawayh, 1385, v. 1, p. 125).

The author of Tafsir al-Kashef, after explaining this narration, rejects it. He states his reasons as this: first, this term means inability to read and write. Second, the Qur'an itself states in verse 78 of Sūrah al-Baqara: "And some of them are illiterate people who have no knowledge of the Book." Therefore, considering that the verses are the interpreter of each other, Ommi means illegible. Third, the Prophet of Islam (PBUH) says: "We are the Ommi Ummah who don't write and don't calculate" (Mughniyya, 1424 AH, v. 7, p. 322). Mughniyya, in another narration, specifies this attribute to the Prophet and no other Prophets, because the Prophet, in spite of being Ommi and illiterate, brought people from darkness to the light. And he affected the life of the peoples at any time and any place (ibid., v. 3 p. 404)

3-2-5- Al-Ommi (Al-A'raf / 157 and 158)

The Holy Quran says in verses 157 and 158 of Surah al-A'raf: "those who follow the unlettered messenger..."

For the word "Ommi" in this verse, as in the previous verse, various aspects have been expressed: 1) the one who does not write (Tūsī , ND, v. 4, p. 559), and does not read (Moqatel ibn Soleiman, 1423 AH, 67/2); 2- Attributed to the Arab group (Fakhr Razi, 1420, v. 15, p. 380); 3- attributed to the mother (Tabarsi, 1372, v. 4, p. 749); 4- attributed to "Omm al-Qura", i.e., Mecca (narrated by Imam Baqir PBUH)) (Tūsī , ND, v. 4, p. 559; 'Ayyāshī, 1380 AH, v. 2, p. 31; Qomi Mashhadi, 1368, v. 5, p. 198)

3-3. Studying the Word "Ommi" in Tafasir

According to the aforementioned verses, commentators such as theologians have interpreted the word "Ommi" in three ways, and we discuss their views in this section.

3-3-1- Illiterate

Most commentators follow this view. They agree on the meaning of illiteracy. But they don't agree at its root. Some attribute it to "Omm" namely mother, and they consider Ommi as a person, who congenitally don't read and write. (Tabataba'i, ibid, v. 1, p. 215). "

Others say they are related to the "Ommah". That is, the person who is habitually the majority of the people. Because the majority of people did not know reading and writing. Of course, some consider the Ummah as meaning creation. In this case, Ommi is someone who has been remained on his basic creation and state that is illiteracy.

Nevertheless, the meaning of "Ommi", either attributed to Omm or to the Ommah; and Ommah, either meaning the congregation of people or the meaning the creation, however, Ommi means illiterate. (Tūsī, ND, v. 1, pp. 317- 318)

3-3-2- the People of Omm Al-Qura

Proponents of this view attributed Ommi to "Omm Al-Qura", that is, Mecca. They have documented their view regarding verse 92 of Surah al-An'am: "... and to warn the inhabitants of Mecca and those around it ..." In this verse, Mecca is expressed as "Omm Al-Qura". This possibility is rejected by some reasons:

The first reason: the word "Omm al-Qura", which is the center of villages, is not the proper name of Mecca. But any point that is the center of the villages is called Omm al-Qura. As mentioned in verse 59 of Surah Al-Qaṣaṣ: " And never your Creator and Nurturer Destroyed a town before raising up a Messenger to recite to them Our Revelations." So this word has a descriptive title, not a nominal title. It is clear that a person is assigned to a place when the name of the place is known to him and it is a proper name not a general name.

Second reason: If we consider Ommi, as attributed to Omm al-Qura, we have limited it to the people of Mecca. While according to the commentators, in verse 20 of sūrah Al Imran, the meaning of Ommīyīn, is the pagan Arab (either Meccan or non-Meccan). In addition, the term Ommīyūn (Baqarah/78) refers to the common people of the Jews. Obviously, the Jews, whom the Qur'an calls "Ommi", have not been from Mecca; they have mostly been in Medina and around Medina. More importantly, this word also applies to the common people of the Jews who were not literate, even if they were considered to be People of the Book. As detailed in the discussion of the word Ommīyīn in verse 78 of Surah Baqara.

The third reason: if a word is attributed to Omm al-Qura, then, according to the literary rule, it should be called "Qarawi" instead of "Ommi". Because in attribution to genitive construction (i.e. the head and dependent noun or the modified noun and the modifying noun⁵), particularly when the head is a word like "Ab⁶" (i.e. father) or "Omm⁷" (i.e. mother) or "Ibn⁸" (i.e. son) or "bent⁹" (i.e. daughter), it is attributed to the head not the dependent noun. As it is said in the attribution to Abu Talib, Abu Hanifeh, Bani Tamim, Talebi, Hanafi, Tamimi. (Motahari, 1993, v. 3, p. 231-230)

3-3-3. *The Arab pagans and the non-owner of the heavenly Book*

Most commentators, according to verse 20 of Surah Al-Imran, chose this comment. But the truth is that this meaning is not something other than the first meaning. That is not to say: Any people who do not follow a heavenly Book will be called "Ommi", though they are educated and literate people. This word refers to Arab idolaters since they were illiterate people. What is the basis of the use of this word about Arab idolaters is their unfamiliarity with reading and writing, not their lack of obedience from one of the scriptures. Therefore, when this word is used as a plural noun, it refers to Arab pagans. But when it is used as a singular word, it refers to the Prophet (PBUH), and no commentator has said this means that Prophet has not followed and holy Book. There are not more than two probabilities: one is the unfamiliarity of the Prophet with the writing, another is that he is from Mecca. Rejecting the second possibility-for the reasons that have been mentioned before- only the first possibility is mentioned about the Prophet. So Prophet was called "Ommi" because he was unable to read and write. (ibid, 231)

Therefore, the third meaning refers to the same first meaning and the second meaning was also rejected. By this explanation, for the word Ommi in the Qur'an, there is only one meaning; that is, the same illiteracy. The same result was achieved with lexical reviews.

According to the mentioned issues and according to lexical and interpretive evidences, Blachère's claim is not true about the meaning of the term "Ommi" as the Prophet of the idolaters.

⁵ مضاف و مضاف اليه
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⁹ بنت

4- Investigating Blachère's Citation to Verse 48 of Surah Al-'Ankabut

In order to confirm his claim that *Ommi* means the Prophet of idolaters (PBUH), and that Prophet (PBUH) knew reading and writing, Blachère cites the verse 48 of sūrah Al-'Ankabūt "Not before this didst thou recite any Book, or inscribe it with thy right hand for then those who follow falsehood would have doubted" (Al-'Ankabūt/48)

Narrating the word of Will, he claims that Muhammad (PBUH) knew reading and writing, and this verse just expresses the unawareness of the Prophet from Books of the Jews and Christians before Bi'tha. (Blachère, 1374, p. 23)

This verse does not prove the claims of Blachère and the phrase "from Book" is not just the heavenly books. Because, regarding the fact that in the vocabulary books, there are various meanings for the "book" such as to write, writing, written letter, and heavenly books. (Ragheb, 1412 AH, p. 699; Fumie, 1414 AH, v. 2, p. 524). Therefore, there is no reason for choosing the meaning of the heavenly Book, and the meaning of "Book" is not limited to the heavenly Book, and it means any inscription.

In addition to the literal meaning, the word form also implies a general meaning. Because in the verse, the "book" has been used as an unknown word, and according to the Arabic rules, the negative unknown word is public. In other words, the meaning of the word "book" is not a specific book, such as Jewish and Christian books, but includes any kind of inscription.

By examining various interpretations, we find that the main commentators have rejected the knowledge of Prophet toward reading and writing. Of course, in the case of the mention of reasoning in the verse "then those who follow falsehood would have doubted". For if the Prophet was literate and aware of reading and writing before the prophecy, then the followers of falsehood and unbelievers would doubt in his prophecy. But there was no doubt about the fact after Bi'tha, since it was possible to be taught by "Gabriel". Of course, this group with this idea, also imply the Qur'an as a miracle and said that it is surprising that a person who has not been familiar with reading and writing and the one, who is not educated and literate, then has brought a book and ritual that everyone is unable to bring like it. (Ibn Kathīr, 1419 AH, v. 6, p. 258; Tabarsi, 1372, v. 8; p. 450; Feiz Kashani, 1415 AH, v. 4, p. 119; Abu al-Sa'ud, 1983, v. 7, p. 43)

Allameh Tabataba'i, while interpreting this verse, denies the habit of reading and writing about the Prophet. Namely as you did not get used to reading and writing before the Quran descended, you do not read and write now. Well, you've not learned writing and reading, otherwise the excuse-seekers would doubt the rightness of your invitation. But the majority of people had known you so, therefor there was no doubt that this Quran is the book of Allah and it has been revealed to you from God. (Tabataba'i, *ibid*, v. 16, p. 139)

In any case, reading and writing of the Prophet is denied. Of course, this issue is certain and beyond doubt before Bi'tha. After Bi'tha also, the Prophet did not have such a habit. Of course, his inability to read is not a reason for his illiteracy! Because Prophet had the gift of divine knowledge. Therefore, the existence of knowledge is entirely evident to him. But Blachère's claim is not proved that Prophet could read and write. Because, on one hand, it was stated that the Prophet did not read, and on the other hand, Blachère is trying to prove that the Qur'an was adapted from other heavenly books, and the Prophet recalled the Quran to the people by studying the previous books. While the Qur'an explicitly rejects the view of the adaptation of the Qur'an, here it is not possible to discuss it. (Herein, Refer to: Shakir and Fayyad, *Qur'an and Hadith Studies*, 1389, No. 1, pp. 119-138). By this expression, even if we cannot infer the illiteracy of Prophet regarding the verses, the claim of Blachère is not verifiable again.

5- Examining Blachère's Claim in Relation to the Source of Ommi's Meaning to the Illiteracy of Prophet (Pbuh)

By clarifying the meaning of Ommi and Blachère's error in understanding this term, we will examine another part of his word. Blachère in his book acknowledges that the root of the thinking of Prophet's illiteracy, among Muslims, is due to the incorrect interpretation of the word Ommi. He adds: The accepted belief of Muslims today is that the Prophet did not have this knowledge. This idea is based on an old tradition, which was widely used in interpretations. (Blachère, *ibid*, 20)

By this statement, Blachère considers the source of Muslim's belief in Prophet's illiteracy, the interpretation of the term "Ommi". While this claim is not true. Because there is a lot of evidence about the Prophet's illiteracy, which we will discuss later.

5-1. Quranic reasons of Prophet's illiteracy

In addition to the verses which include the term "Ommi", the verse 48 of the sūrah Al-‘Ankabūt also implies the Prophet's illiteracy. The commentators interpreting this verse agree on the Prophet's illiteracy and his inability to read and write before Bi‘tha. Obviously, this explicit meaning of the verse implies the issue of the lack of education of the Prophet, without there is the word "Ommi" in the verse. Two aspects of this verse were expressed.

5.2 Non-Quranic reasons of Prophet's illiteracy

According to the history, no one has considered the Prophet as the educated people of Mecca. The historians, including Balādhurī, believe that the educated people of Mecca were eighteen people that the name of the Prophet is not among them. This issue was of great importance. The Prophet, from the childhood, had lived among the people of Mecca, and the people were quite familiar with their past and present. Under these conditions, if the Prophet had been taught by someone, then, of course, he would be famous among the people as an educated person, and in that case, of course, the historians would record its report. Because the early Muslims had a great interest in his prophecy and were very diligent in preserving his works and behaviors, and they recorded the circumstances and events of the life of the Prophet (PBUH), with the details. From the preaching and meetings of the Prophet with the tribal leaders to his manner of dressing, all have been recorded in the books of the Sunnah and Sira. How can one accept that the Prophet has been taught by someone or he was able to read and write, but the people have not recorded it and have not mentioned the name of his teacher in the historical books, which is far more important than other matters!

In the traditions, the issue of the illiteracy of the Prophet has been mentioned. Some attributed the illiteracy to the Prophet. Shaykh Saduq in the book of Al-Tawhid, the chapter of debate of Imam Reza (AS) with the people of religions, has described the Prophet as an illiterate person. (Ibn Babawayh, 1398, p. 429; Tabarsi, 1403 AH, v. 2, p. 423; Majlesi, 1403 AH, v. 10, p. 309). In others, the term Ommi has been used in this sense. As Allameh Majlesi, along with a hadith about the introduction of the Prophet, has said: "O Moses! He is the one who does not get the line and literacy from another person, and he is a good servant ... "(Majlesi, *ibid*, v. 1, p. 772)

Supposing that if Muslims neglected, but never the opponents of Prophet would neglect such an important issue easily. Eventually, they would exaggerate the literacy of Prophet. In spite of this certain historical proofs, if hypothesized, it was not mentioned in the Qur'an either; it was clear to the Muslims that the Prophet was not educated. Now, given the meaning of the word Ommi, we can say the Prophet

was uneducated, in addition to not finding a document on the handwriting of the Prophet, this can confirm that the Prophet was illiterate.

Another point is that, despite the controversy in the concept of the word "Omni", there is no difference in the issue of the Prophet's illiteracy.

Another point is that in spite of the dispute in the concept of the word Omni, but there is no dispute in the illiteracy of Prophet before Bi'tha. The same consensus among scholars is the reason for this. With this argument, it is proved that Blachère's claim that Muslims believe in the illiteracy of the Prophet, is not acceptable based on the interpretation of the word "Omni".

6. Examining Blachère's Claim about the Imputation of Some Historical Incidents to Prophet's Illiteracy

The other reason of Blachère for Prophet's literacy is Treaty of Hudaibiyyah, as well as requesting a pen and a paper by Prophet at the end of his life. It must also be said that Blachère's citation to Treaty of Hudaibiyyah is also incorrect. Because, according to historical reports, the Prophet used the writers and scribes to write letters and treaties. (Balādhurī, 1988, pp. 454-455). Balādhurī has mentioned the name of the scribes of the Prophet in his book, and Mas'udi, in addition to their names, has mentioned the work of each one. (Mas'udi, ND, pp. 245- 246) In addition to mentioning the letters of the Prophet in his book, Ibn Sa'ad, at the end of each letter, also brought the author's name. (Ibn Sa'ad, 1410 AH, v. 1, pp. 204-208)

In the books of Sira, many letters and inscriptions have been quoted, but in none, the name of Prophet himself has been registered as the author. Even Ibn Athīr in Asad al-Ghabeḥ reports a contract, which implies the Prophet was unlettered at the time of Bi'tha. (Ibn Athīr, 1385 AH, 1965, v. 1, p. 257)

In the case of Treaty of Hudaibiyyah, the writer of the letter was also Amir al-Mu'minin Ali (AS). (Kulaynī, 1407 AH, v. 8, p. 326; Feiz Kashani, 1406 AH, v. 26, p. 374; Ibn Hisham, ND, v. 2, p. 317; Ya'qubi, ND, v. 2, p. 54) Imam Ali wrote the letter by spelling the Prophet. Soheil disagreed with writing Bismillah and the title of the prophecy at the beginning of the treaty. He asked the Prophet to write "Bismek Allahomma: بِاسْمِكَ اللَّهُمَّ" instead of "Bismillah Al-Rahman al-Rahim: بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ" and "Muhammad ibn Abdullah: مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ" instead of "Muhammad the Messenger of Allah: مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ". (Balādhurī, 1417 AH, v. 11, p. 11; Maqrizi, 1420 AH, v. 1: p. 295; Vaqedi, 1409 AH, v. 2, p. 610)

Blachère quotes Bukhari, Soheil explicitly says to the Prophet: "write it down! As you wrote (formerly) Bismek Allahomma." It is clear that Soheil here refers to an inscription before the emigration, and maybe even before the Bi'tha (Blachère, *ibid*, 24)

It is worth mentioning; Historical books do not agree to quote this event. Vaqedi states: "Write down, as we write, Bismek Allahomma" (vaqedi, *ibid*) in the Sira of Ibn Hisham and the history of Tabari, the request of Soheil, has been mentioned only with the verb "Oktob10: write." (Ibn Hisham, *ibid*; Tabari, v. 2, p. 634)

The Shi'a texts and many of the Sunni books have given the phrase "write as we write." (Kulaynī, *ibid*; Feiz Kashani, *ibid*; Balādhurī, 1417 AH, v. 1, p. 349 and v. 11, p. 11; Maqrizi, *ibid*, ...) Some have also not used the word "writing", and this phrase "If we knew that you were the Messenger of Allah, we did not fight you:" He said to Ali: "Eliminate this phrase11". (Ya'qubi, *ibid*, v. 2, p. 189; Beihaqī, 1405 AH, 1985, v. 4, p. 146; Dhahabī, 1413 AH, 1993, v. 2, p. 390)

¹⁰ أكتب

¹¹ امحه

Thus, the sentence "write as you wrote", which Blachère attributes to Soheil ibn 'Amro - in Shi'a sources, no one has mentioned the phrase, and in the Sunni sources, some have mentioned this phrase (Soheili, 1412 AH, v. 2, p. 83; Beihaqī, *ibid*, v. 4, p. 105; Nuwayrī, 1423 AH, v. 17, p. 231; Hadhrami, 1419, p. 326; Nadvi, 1425 AD, p. 382). But most historians brought the same phrase "write as you wrote".

According to various historical documents, based on the fact that the Prophet (PBUH) didn't write, the phrase "write as you wrote" is not accepted. Because it is necessary to say that the Prophet used to write in the past, while such a claim is indeterminate and historical evidences prove the contrary. On the other hand, given the dichotomy of Sunnis resources, we must inevitably refer to sources with more authenticity. The texts of the third century of the Sunni People, have mentioned the phrase "as we write" in sources such as 'Ansab al-Aṣḥraf and al-Maghazi, have mentioned the phrase "as we write" (Balādhurī, 1417 AH, v. 1, p. 349, Vaqedi, *ibid*); therefore, Blachère quoted the phrase "as you wrote" from some Sunni books. But the phrase "as we write" is more correct and Soheil has used the phrase in the Treaty of Hdaybiyyah. In addition, Sohail, as the representative of the pagans, has tried to write the treaty, according to their will, which is more consistent with the phrase "we write".

Other versions mentioning the word "Oktob12; i.e. Write", also, do not prove Blachère's claim. For as it is written in the book of Sira, the Prophet's scribe is Amir al-Mu'minīn. He wrote the contents of the treaty as the Prophet said. (Refer to: Balādhurī, 1417, *ibid*; Vaqedi, *ibid*; al-Salehi al-Shami, 1414 AH, 1993, v. 5, p. 54; Diyarbakir, ND, v. 2, p. 21). Indeed, the parties to the contract are only the Prophet and Sohail, not his scribe. Therefore, when Sohail says to the Prophet: (write), it is evident that he means that order your scribe to write this. And he doesn't mean the Prophet himself to write.

Moreover, all the hadiths contained in narrative resources are not the exact words of the innocent Imams, but some of the hadiths have come to us through the "quotes of meaning" from the infallibles, that is, in these narratives, the narrators have narrated the meaning of the infallible word. Therefore, many of the narrators were not bound by the same words, and the narrator has recoded the words of imams by his own words. In the case of the Hadith of Soheil, there is also the possibility of such a hypothesis, so it is impossible to refer to such words in the narrative to prove their claims.

Blachère continues to refer to the news of the last moments of the Prophet's life, and considers it more important than the Treaty of Hdaybiyyah. He claims that when the Prophet asked the writing instruments to write a phrase that the Ummah would not go astray, then the Prophet had the ability to write. (Blachère, *ibid*, 24)

Blachère here refers to the famous Ḥadith of Dawāt and Qirtās i.e. the hadith of pen and paper. According to the Shi'i narrative resources (Salim ibn Qais Helali, 1405 AH, v. 2, p. 794; Mofid, 1413, p. 36; Ibn Tawoos, 1413 AH, p. 521) and Sunni narrative resources (Balādhurī, 1417 AH, v. 1, p. 562, Tabari, 1412 AH, v. 3, p. 193; ibn Abi al-Hadīd, 1404 AH, v. 2, p. 55; Ibn Athīr, 1385 AH, 1965, v. 2, p. 320 and v. 3, p. 363; Ibn Sayyid al-Nās, 1414 AH, v. 2, p. 407; v. 2, p. 132) In the last moments of his Noble life, the Prophet (PBUH) said: " Give me an ink and a camel bone to write something for you so never go astray."

This reason also does not confirm Blachère's claim as the Prophet could read and write. This hadith does not explicitly say that the messenger of Allah intended to write himself. The Prophet might have ordered to write In the presence of people to take them as witness. In this case, ascribing himself, is correct in Arabic literature. These types of ascriptions are called "virtual ascription". Virtual ascription is one of the eloquence aspects and it is common in Arabic and non-Arabic language. As it was mentioned, the Prophet's method was such that their scribes did care about writing the letters of the Prophet and ascribed all those letters to the Prophet. While the Prophet did not write any letter himself. Suppose, if we accept that the Prophet (PBUH) has decided to write something himself, again the claims of Blachère is

not proved. Because he claims, the Prophet was literate and may have received Quranic verses from other heavenly books. This event, however, relates to the final moments of his holy life and the revelation had been over.

7- Examining the Claim of Blachère on The Literacy of the Prophet's Relatives

Blachère ultimately uses the literacy of close relatives of the Prophet as confirmation of his claim. He says there are some claims that Mohammad (PBUH) could read and write. In addition, we have some reasons, based on which we can think that other members of his family, such as his uncle Abitaleb and his cousin Ali, have learned this knowledge. (Blachère, *ibid*, 26)

Obviously, there are no relation between the literacy of family members. It can be assumed that Abu Talib or Ali ibn Abu Talib (AS) were literate, but the Prophet was not. Therefore, it does not have any implications and this claim is not correct.

Conclusion

According to what was mentioned, the following can be emphasized as a summing up and conclusion:

1. The French Orientalist Régis Blachère has challenged the Prophet's illiteracy, which has been documented by Muslim scholars in the Qur'anic miracle. By criticizing the evidences of the Muslims, he knows the Prophet as an educated person who is familiar with reading and writing; Blachère, rejecting the Muslim reasons and delivering his own evidences, points out the following points:

- a) The term Ommi does not mean uneducated, but means the Prophet of the idolaters;
- b) Historical events such as: Treaty of Hudaibiyyah and the hadith of pen and paper in the final moments of the life of the Prophet confirm his ability to write;
- c) The friends and relatives of Prophet were able to read and write.

2. In the critique of evidences and documentations of Blachère, it was said that, first, the study of the literal meaning of the word "Ommi" and also according to the commentator's view, among the three possible meanings of this term, "illiterate" is a preeminent meaning. Secondly, the only reason of the Muslims for the illiteracy of the Prophet is not the use of Ommi about him, but there are other evidences, both Quranic and non-Quranic, about the illiteracy of the Prophet.

3. Also, the evidences and reasons of Blachère about the the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah and the hadith of pen and paper were reviewed, and it turned out that none of these evidences proves the reading and writing of the Prophet.

4. Blachère's argument to the literacy of some of the members of the Prophet's family and its association with the literacy of the Prophet is corrupted because there is no such association rationally and traditionally.

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