

An Analytical Study of the Concepts of ‘Āmm (Generalization) and Khāṣ (Specification): Their Characteristics and Implications for Qur'anic Exegesis in Nigeria

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<p>Abstract: The noble Qur’an is a book of universal guidance for all people, at all times and places, until the Day of Judgement. The purpose of revealing the Qur’an is to show people the correct path in their relationship with their Creator and with one another. Allah (S.W.T.) revealed this noble book to His beloved Prophet Muhammad (SAW) to explain and exemplify its contents for the Ummah to follow. Among the Prophet’s practical explanations are the concepts of generalization (‘Āmm) and specification (Khāṣ) regarding certain rules. Therefore, this paper attempts to illustrate examples of generalization and specification in the verses of the Glorious Qur’an and their implications for Qur’anic exegesis. Content analysis was used to generate the examples. The paper emphasizes the importance of understanding these two concepts for scholars of tafsir. Conclusion and recommendations are provided.</p>	<p>Review Paper</p>
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INTRODUCTION

The Glorious Qur’an is the foundational source of all Islamic legislation, which must be understood clearly to practice the religion perfectly. The process of understanding the Qur’an and its meanings has been ongoing since the time of the noble Prophet (SAW), during which the companions (Sahabah, R.A.) frequently sought the Prophet’s explanation for anything unclear in the revelations.

When Islam spread to various parts of the world, where different ethnicities and non-Arab tribes accepted the religion in groups, the need to study, clarify, and explain the Qur’an’s meanings increased significantly. This led Muslim scholars to establish various principles and guidelines to facilitate a clear understanding of the Qur’an. These include the knowledge of Makkan and Madinan chapters, Asbab al-Nuzul (circumstances of revelation), Mutlaq (unrestricted) and Muqayyad (restricted words), Nasikh (abrogating) and Mansukh (abrogated verses), Amthal (parables in the Qur’an), and Jadal (debates in the Qur’an), among others. All of these efforts aim to provide a clearer understanding of the Qur’an.

Many scholars in the Muslim world agree that no Muslim should engage in Qur’anic exegesis (tafsir) without acquiring several branches of knowledge, particularly Ulum al-Qur’an (the sciences of the Qur’an), to avoid misguidance. Among these essential aspects of Ulum al-Qur’an is the knowledge of ‘Āmm and Khāṣ, which this paper aims to explore, focusing on their meanings and implications for Qur’anic exegesis.

The Concept of ‘Āmm (Generalization)

Words in Arabic possess both literal and technical meanings. According to Ibn Munzir (2003), the word ‘Āmm is derived from the Arabic root meaning “to generalize.” Technically, al-‘Āmm refers to generalization. Scholars of Qur’anic Exegesis (Ulum al-Qur’an) interpret the term ‘Āmm in various ways, though most definitions are similar. Yunus (2005) defines ‘Āmm as a word that generally encompasses all that it applies to without any restrictions. Similarly, Philip (2005) describes it as “an expression of generality.” In Arabic, it refers to nouns that apply to things without numerical limitation, including everything that fits the description. However, Qurtubi (1988) points out that ‘Āmm expressions may also refer to specific things when used figuratively.

Forms of 'Amm (Generalization)

There are numerous examples of generalizing words in Arabic, but according to Yunus (2005), there are nine common forms of 'Amm expressions found in the Glorious Qur'an. These includes:

1. The word Kull "Amm" or "Arr" (all, every, or each) this word could be translated into English language. In a variety of ways depending of its usage in the context, it can occur at the beginning of a sentence or within a sentence. Example of this can be found in Allah's statement:

وانما توفون اجوركم يوم القيامة فمن زحزح عن النار وتدخل الجنة فقد فاز

Translation

This verse and many confirmed the usage of the word Kull in it generalized form.

2. The relative pronouns "Alladhi" and it Arabic derivatives; in singular dual or plural form. When the word "Alladhi" is acting as subject of the sentence in which case would be translated as "Whosoever". Example can seen in Qur'an 33:39 as it appears thus:

والذي جاء بالصدق وصدق به اولاءك هم المتقون

And he who brings the truth and (he who) accepts it as the truth these are they that guard (against evil).

The word "Alladhi" whosoever in this verse is general Am and refers to any one who believed in the Prophet (S.A.W) while the last part of the verse ended with "arr". In the plural form confirming generalization of pious and righteous people.

3. When a name comes with a definite article "al" not in reference to something known as person, i.e not for the purpose of acquaintance, in this example 'al' is translate in English as all or every. Example can be traced in Qur'an 103:2 as:

ان الماء نسان لغة خسر

Meaning all men in general not specific.

Still, in Qur'an 2:275 where it reads as this:

الذين ياكلون الربوا لا يقومون الا كما يقوم الذي يتحيطه الشيطان من الكس

Those who swallow down usury cannot arise except as one whom

Shaitan has prostrated by (his) touch does rise.

Meaning all forms trade are considered lawful unless they have been expressly forbidden. The two verses are examples confirming generalization using definite article of "al".

4. When a subjective or conditional pronoun is used at the beginning of a sentence, such as whoever "man" whatever "ma" whenever "aynama" or whichever "ayyuma". All these expressions convey a meaning of generality in English language as in Arabic language. Examples of these include;

يا ايها الذين ءامنوا استعينوا بالكثير والصلاة ان الله مع الصابرين

Another example is;

ايما تكونوا يدرككم الموت ولا كنتم في بروج مشيدة

The above three verse explain the conditional pronoun where lam" generalizing comes with whoever, whatever, whenever, and whichever.

5. Generic noun adjunct to definite noun or pronoun arr. The following verse are examples;

(Quran 4:11) يوصيكم الله في اولادكم ، للذكر مثل حظ الانثيين

Translation

In this verse inheritance laws is for all children not a segment of them.

Another example is;

(Quran 24:62) انما المؤمنون الذين ءامنوا بالله ورسوله واذا كانوا معه على امر جامع

The generic noun amr is related to the passive pronoun "hi" making it general.

6. The indefinite in a negative or prohibitive context (an-Nikah), normally 'a' or 'an' is put before the Arabic indefinite form when it is translated into English, however in an expression containing a negation the indefinite should be translated to a way indicating generality. Example;

(Quran 2:197) الحج أشهر معلومات فمن فرض فيهن الحج فلا رفث ولا فسوق ولا جدال في الحج

Translation

The words rafath, fusuq and jidal are all indefinite and come in a negation form, thus this kind of construction generalized the meanings. Therefore, it means there should be no vulgarity, obscenity or argumentation during the performance of Hajj.

7. When indefinite word comes in a context of prohibition is refers to generalized as in the following example;

وقضى ربك ان لا تعبدوا الا اياه وبالوالدين احسانا إما يبلغن الكبر احدهما أو كلاهما فلا تقل لهما اوف

The coming of the word "uff" which is indefinite in a prohibition generalized its disrespect is totally prohibited to utter it to parents.

8. When indefinite word comes in a context of conditions it is considered to be generalized. Example;

(Quran 9:6) وان أحد من الشركين استجارك فاجره حتى يسمع كلام الله، ثم ابلغه مامنه

The word "Ahd" in the verse is an indefinite word that comes in context of condition, thereby generalizing instead of specifying. Therefore if any polytheist (Mushrik) seeks for your protection, then grant him.

9. When the word “man” (arr) comes as a conditional, interrogative or relative pronoun, then it is considered as generalize. Example;

(Quran 4:123) والذين آمنوا وعملوا الصالحات سندخلهم جنات تجري من تحتها (Quran 4:123)
الأنهار خالدون فيها أبداً وعد الله حقاً ومن أصدق من الله قيلاً

Another example;

(Quran 6:18) ألم تر أن الله يسجد له من في السموات ومن في الأرض والشمس والقمر والنجوم والجبال والشجر والدواب وكثير من الناس وكثير حق عليه العذاب ومن يهن الله فما له من مكرم إن الله يفعل ما يشاء

In the above examples the word “man” is conditional and interrogative always come with general meaning, but when it comes as relative pronoun, it is sometimes used as general and sometimes as specific, this is in consideration with the construction of the sentence that determining the meaning.

Types of “Amm” generalize

According to Qattam (1981) Amm expression may be divided into three (3) main categories in the context of the verse of glorious Qur’an as it occur. These categorization also concurred with the view of Suyuti (1978) as follows;

1. ‘Amm’ that remain on its generalization: This is the type which remain in its initiated meaning and nothing can specific or distinguished it from the general meaning because most of generalization in the glorious Qur’an are specified in one way or another. This type of ‘Amm’ is rare in the Qur’an as mention by al Balqeem (nd).

However, an example can be found in the verse;

(Quran 4:176) يستفتونك قل الله يفتيكم في الكلالة

Allahs knowledge is absolute thus it is general. Another example is;

(Quran 4:49) ألم تر إلى الذين يزكون أنفسهم بل الله يركي من يشاء ولا يظلمون فتيلاً

According to Suyuti (1978) there are no exception to the above law, whether they be real mother, step mothers, mothers in-law or mothers by suckling.

2. There is the figurative ‘Amm’ in which the general meaning of the expression was never intended, according to Tabaris (1992) the verse in the Glorious Qur’an that refers to the people in surah al-Nisa where Allah (SWT) says;

(Quran 4:173) فاما الذين آمنوا وعملوا الصالحات فيوفيه أجورهم ويزيدهم من فضله وأما الذين استنكفوا واستكبروا فيعذبهم عذاب اليم

The first meaning of “the people” refers to specifically Nu’aym Ibn Mas’ud, while the second expression refers to Abu Sufyan and the Quraish soldiers.

Another example is;

وإذ قال ربك للملائكة إني جاعل في الأرض خليفة

The word Angels means in general Angels, but here it is specified to Angel Jibril (A.S) because he is the only one who called not the rest of the angels.

3. The third type of “Amm” is the specified “amm” where as the generality of the “Amm” expression is qualified by one of the specifying words or phrase; this type of Amm cover meanings of the word in term of wordings not in term of the legal judgement. Example of this Amm is very many in the Glorious Qur’an as it occurs in the following verses;

(Quran 5:3) اليوم أحل لكم الطيبات وطعام الذين أوتوا الكتاب حل لكم وطعامكم حل لهم والمحصنات من المؤمنات والمحصنات من الذين أوتوا الكتاب من قبلكم... (Quran 3:97) ومن دخله كان آمناً والله على الناس حج البيت من استطاع إليه سبيلاً، ومن كفر فإن الله عني عن العلمين

According to Qattan (1981) the generality of “all people” in the verse is specified in the adjective clause which followed it i.e arr who are able to,

Concept of Khass (Specification)

According to Ibn Munzir (2003) ‘Khass’ is derived from the Arabic word ‘Khassa’ which means to specify. Therefore, the root of the word is ‘al-Khas’ meaning specification. Specification (Khas) is the opposite of generalization (Am). According to Suyuti (1928) the word takhsis specification of the general is accomplished by specifying word or phrase formal either within the general statement themselves or outside of them. In other word Khas is a process of exempting from a general word some of what it comprises in meaning with prove of the exemption.

Philip (2005) opined that the word ‘Khas’ is a noun which is applied to a limited number of things. According to Qattan (1981). There are broad two types of “Khass” and the separated or disjointed Khass. He further said the journal Khass is the type that nothing separated between the generalization (Am) and the specification (Khass), menaing that both the ‘Am’ and the ‘Khass’ came together in one single statement within the general statement. According to Qattan this type of specification is further sub divided into five (5) types: Which includes;

1. Exception case (Istithna), this is when general judgement is passed and then followed by a preposition of exception and a clause or phrase which qualifies it. Therefore are many examples in the Glorious Qur’an e.g.

(Quran 103:1-3) ان الإنسان لفة خسر (1) والعصر

إلا الذين آمنوا وعملوا الصالحات وتواصوا بالحب وتواصوا بالصبر

Another example:

(Qur'an 70:19-22) وإذا مسه الخير منو (20) إذا مسه الشر جزوعا (19) إن الإنسان خلق هلوعا

2. Adjective/Modification (Sifah): This is when “Am is described with a certain adjective or relative pronoun alladhi or allti (who or which) which turn it to be specific. As in the following example;

(Quran 4:23) النساء إلا ما لكت إيمانكم (والمحصنات من

The sentence “to whom you have gone in..” is a description of ‘Your wives’ add. This indicates that step-daughter is only prohibited to a man, if she is from a woman he have marital intercourse with her.

3. Condition (Shart): This is when a condition is attached to generalization “Am” for its realization. Thus, conditional clause function as specifiers, it is usually introduced by a subordinate word such as if ‘in’ example;

(Quran 24:33) وليستغف الذين لا يجدون نكاح حتى يغنيهم الله من فضله

Therefore, knowing good and honesty in slaves is the condition of giving them writing for emancipation.

Another example is;

(Quran 2:180) كتب عليكم إذا حضر احدكم الموت أن ترك خيرا الوصية

The obligation of writing bequest is only a conditional to those who posses wealth.

4. Limitation (al-Ghayyah): This is when a limit is prescribe for generalization “Amm” usually introduced by a subordinator until “hatta” and also accompanied by negative. Example

(Quran 2:222) ويسألونك عن المخيض قل هو اذا فاعتزلوا النساء في المخيض ولا

تقربوهن حتى يطهرن فاذا تطهرن فاتوا هن من حيث امركم الله إن الله يحب التوابين ويحب المتطهرين

Another example;

(Quran 2:19) أو كصيب من السماء فيه ظلمات ورعد وبرق يجعلون اصابعهم في

اذانهم من الصواعق حذر الموت والله محيط بالكافرين

The word until in the two verse limit the generalization of the law.

5. Substitution of the part from the whole: (Badal al-ba`ad mima-kull): This is when a substitution came after a generalization is mentioned, usually introduced by a subordinator “whoever” (man). Example:

(Quran 3:97) فيه آيات بينات مقام ابراهيم ومن دخله كان ءامنا والله على الناس

حج البيت من استطاع اليه سبيلا ومن كفر فإن الله غنى عن العالمين

The phrase “those who can afford” is a substitute from mankind in general, which implied that pilgrimage is obligatory not in mankind general but only those who can afford the journey.

Separate/Disjoin Khass (Specification): According to al-Dhabir (1995) separate or disjoin Khass is a situation where the ‘Khas’ specification is not mentioned together with generalization ‘am, rather it is mentioned in another verse of the Qur’an or in Hadith or general consent of Ulama (Ijma) or by analogy (Qiyas). Suyub further said by this sperated Khas is of four (4) types (a) Generalization specified by Qur’an, (b) Generalization specified by Hadith, (c) Generalization specified by Ijma and (d) generalization specified by analogy (Qiyas).

1. Generalization specified by al-Qur’an: Qur’anic statement may become specified by another verse found elsewhere in the Qur’an. Example;

(Quran 2:228) والمطلقت يتربصن بانفسهن ثلاثة قروء ولا يحل لهن ان يكتمن ما

خلق الله في ارحامهن ان كن يؤمن بالله واليوم الآخر ويعولتهن احق بردهن في ذلك ان ارادوا اصلاح ولهن مثل الذي عليهن بالمعروف وللرجال عليهن درجة والله عزيزحكيم

In the above verse, Allah’s statement cover all categories of divorced women. But specification was made in another verses.

(Quran 65:4) والىء ياست من المخيض من النساءكم ان ارتبتم فعدتن ثلاثة أشهر

والىء لم يخضن واولت الاحمال اجلهن ان يضعن حملهن ومن يتق الله يجعله من امره يسرا

ياايهاالذين ءامنوا إذا نكحتم المؤمنات ثم طلقتموهن من قبل ان

تسووهن فما لكم عليهن من عدة تعتدونها فمتعهن وسرحوهن سراحا جميلا

In the two above verse specification was made after generalization by substituting the waiting period for divorced women pregnant to be until delivery and for those whom the marriage was not consummated there is no waiting period.

2. Generalization specified by sunnah or Hadith: generalization in some statement of the Glorious Qur’an may be specified by the Prophet’s sayings and action, because Prophet (S.A.W) is made to explain the generality of the Qur’an to mankind. Example Prophet (S.A.W) explain this verse

(Quran 2: 275) الذين يأكلون الربوا لا يقومون إلا كما يقوم الذى يتحبطه الشيطان

من المس ذلك بائعهم قالوا انما البيع مثل الربوا واحب الله البيع وحرم الربوا فمن جاءه موعظة

من ربه فانتهى فله ما سلف وامره إلى الله ومن عاد فاولاءك أصحاب النار هم فيها خالدون

Which refers only to all lawful forms of trade and forbade other categories of trade as in the Hadith of Ibn Umar (R.A) said, the noble Prophet (S.A.W) forbade in the semen of male animals Bukhari Vol 5 No 484. In another Hadith by Ibn Umar said Prophet (S.A.W) forbade the sale of a pregnant animals progeny before its delivery, Bukhari Vol 3, No 353.

These Ahadith are among the fear that make specification from the generalization of the verse of Qur’an.

3. Generalization specified by the consensus of Jurist (Ijma’): There are some few case where scholar may consensusly agreed to specified a law from generalization. Example;

(Quran 4:11) يوصيكم الله في اولادكم للذكر مثل حظ الانثيين فانكن نساء فوق

اثنتين فلهن ثلاث مترك وان كانت واحدة فلهما النصف والابويه لكل واحد منهما السلس مما ترك إن كان له ولد

As slave is unanously agreed by the jurist that a slave child does not inherit nor was he inherited for slavery is the third hinderance of inheritance, thus, a slave child is specified from the general children.

4. Generalization specified by analogy (Qiyas): There are also some few cases where scholars made analogical deduction of law from the text of a verse or Hadith. Example;

(Quran 24:2) الزانية والزاني فاجلدوا كل واحد منهما مائة جلدة ولا تأخذكم بهما رافة في ديني الله إن كنتم تؤمنون بالله واليوم الآخر وليشهد عذابهما طاعة من المؤمنين

The law is been specified in another verse;

(Quran 4:25) ومن لم يستطع منكم طولا أن ينكح المحصنات المؤمنات فمن ما ملكت إيمانكم من فتياتكم المؤمنات والله اعلم بما نكم بعضهم من بعض فانكهنهن باذن اهلهن

The status of female slave before the judgement is been specified, so by analogy made slave is also specified because they have the same status before the law; either married or unmarried.

According to Philip (2005) there is also the generalization of Hadith which is in this situation. Example;

Abu Waqad al-Laythi said Prophet (S.A.W) said; Abu Daud Vol 2 No 2852

The judgement in the Hadith was specified by the following verse;

(Quran 16:80) جعل لكم من بيوتكم سكنا وجعل لكم من جلد الانعام بيوتا والله تستخفونها يوم ظعنكم ويوم اقامتكم ومن اصوافها واوبارها واشعارها اثاثا ومتاعا الى حين

The general meaning of the Hadith was specified by the above verse.

The implication of generalization “Amm” and specification “Khas” to the Qur’anic Exegesis.

The knowledge of generalization “Amm” and specification “Khas” is of great importance to the scholars of tafsir and other branches of Islamic studies, in order that application of Islamic. Laws does not becomes confused. Someone who is ignorant of Islamic law may try to apply them and end up doing haram acts and calling others to commit haram; this is because Islamic law and its principles like all other laws have certain general and specific goals which they are designed to achieve. According to Philip (2005) these laws are address society under a given set of circumstances source times the laws are directed to all people in the society under all circumstances, sometimes to people under specific circumstances. Hence the language by which these laws are delivery has to accurately distinguished between various cases in order to avoid any confusion and misinterpretation.

Arabic language which the glorious Qur’an was conveyed has a number of words, phrases, and clauses which may have various meanings that are necessary to clarify the intent of the law. Suyuti (1978) quoted a report that onces Ali Ibn Abi Talib (R.A) passed by a judge and asked him if he know in which laws Nasikh had occurred the man replied ‘N’ Ali said to him you have perished and casued others to perish.

According to Qattan (1981) a Mufassir must know that he is conveyer of Allah’s revelation and the interpretation of the Prophet (S.A.W). He should try to learn all the spares of Qur’anic knowledge before embarking on interpreting the Qur’an. Lack of these branches of knowledge may lead one to distorted the reality of the message of Allah (SWT) and as well lead other astray.

In the Qur’anic verses and Hadith, laws comes with these two aspects of the knowledge of Exegesis to distinguish one from another which may lead to correct understanding of the message.

CONCLUSION

An attempt was made to Explain the meaning of the two concepts ‘Amm’ and ‘Khas’ their various classification and examples. It must have observed that knowledge of ‘Amm’ and ‘Khas’ among other aspect of Ulum al-Qur’an is among the most ingredients needed, because of its wide application to the Qur’anic exegesis.

Different examples were cited to clarify issues related to these two concepts of which ignorance of it will definitely lead to many mistakes in the Qur’anic Exegesis and derivation of judgement from the interpretation.

This indicate and affirmed the views of scholars that it is necessary and importantly to acquire the knowledge of Ulum and Qur’an before making any attempt of Qur’anic Exegesis.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Muslims should try their possible best and especially the learned among them to acquire the knowledge of Ulum al-Qur’an in order to have proper interpretation and derivation of Islamic judgements.
2. Muslim organization seminars, workshops and conference which will leads scholars to have more knowledge in all the sphare of Islamic knowledge and particularly to ulum al-Qur’an.
3. Muslims should never make attempts of interpreting the Glorious Qur’an with more opinion, because it will lead them to distortion.
4. Prevent should intensify their efforts in educating their children in the field of Islamic knowledge, so as to build a faithful society and Nation at large.
5. Philanthropist should encourage scholars to public books in Islamic branches of knowledge, especially in the field of Ulum al-Qur’an by sponsoring the publication and other remunerations.

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