FROM REVELATION TO INTERPRETATION: THE NECESSITY OF THE PROPHETIC TRADITIONS IN QURANIC EXEGESIS

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ABSTRACT

Interpretation of the Quran through prophetic traditions ranks as the second-highest source of Quranic interpretation. This topic was chosen because many Muslims in Norway are unaware of the necessity and status of the prophetic traditions or the origin of the method of Quranic interpretation. This research aims to address the lack of awareness about the necessity and status of prophetic traditions and the origin of the Quranic interpretation method. Existing research was investigated to define the consensus among Muslim scholars to clarify their position in order to reduce the confusion Muslims in general experience. This study conducted a comprehensive investigation of Muslim scholars' consensus to understand the traditional Islamic perspective on Quranic interpretation via the prophetic traditions. The sources were compared and analyzed to provide a thorough understanding for readers. The research revealed a consensus among Muslim scholars that it is important to know about the investigated topic to interpret the Quranic words correctly. In conclusion, Muslims are advised to base their interpretations on authentic sources and trustworthy methods.

Keywords: *Quranic interpretation, prophetic traditions, method, authentic sources.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

In this research, a specific branch of the method *tafsīr bi al-Ma'thūr* (interpreting the Quran using authentic sources) is discussed. The sources are the Quran, the prophetic traditions, and the sayings and teachings of the companions (Al-Ṣābūnī, 2003, p. 67). Muslim (1994, p. 23) defines the meaning of *tafsīr bi al-Ma'thūr* by explaining it as the process of interpreting the Quran via transmitted words. These words are transmitted (said) by God, the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, and by companions and their disciples about Quranic verses. The branch I discuss is Quranic interpretation via the prophetic traditions.

The following knowledge gap was identified during a survey conducted as part of the PhD research (Hussain, 2024, pp. 131; Figure 6, 135; Figure 14): Muslims in Norway lack awareness of the status of the prophetic traditions in Islam and are confused about the origin of the method of Quranic interpretation.

(1) 61.8% of Muslims surveyed in Norway replied that the prophetic traditions are not a part of the revelation of God.

(2) 33.5% of Muslims surveyed in Norway replied that the method of Quranic interpretation was founded by scholars after the time of the Prophet ﷺ.
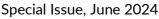
The gap that needs to be filled concerns the necessity of the prophetic traditions in Quranic exegesis, the status of the prophetic traditions, and the method of the Prophet ﷺ, his companions, and their disciples.

Even during the time of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, prophetic traditions were attacked and challenged as an authority, and this has been the method of Quranists, to criticize and continually downgrade the authority of the prophetic traditions (Al-Duraybī, 2015, p. 37). Al-Madanī (1997, p. 11) highlights that the Quranists' view is that the prophetic traditions are temporary; they are no more than a ruler's commands during his time. This view enables Quranists to separate the Quran from the prophetic traditions.

Understanding the branch "Quranic interpretation via the prophetic traditions" is fundamental for believers in Norway, and in general because it is the second-highest source of Quranic interpretation. Such understanding will mean believers know this is an established branch of Quranic interpretation from the first generation of Islam. This knowledge will also empower believers to counter theories that urge them to follow only the Quran and ignore other sources of Quranic interpretation.

The discussed branch (Quranic interpretation via the prophetic traditions) is an important branch of the method (interpreting the Quran using authentic sources) and has the second-highest rank in the field of Quranic interpretation. The prophetic traditions are all recognized as interpretations of the Quran, as the role of the Prophet ﷺ was to clarify the teachings of the

Quran through his actions, sayings, and approvals, which are known as the prophetic traditions. (Al-Nadwī, 2016, p. 20).

However, Quranic interpretation via the prophetic traditions is an interpreter's responsibility. The interpreter must evaluate and transmit interpretations based on authentic prophetic traditions, which define the meanings of Quranic verses. The interpreter is not supposed to collect any prophetic narration without checking its authenticity and relationship to the Quranic verse. Following Quranic interpretation via the Quran, the second method was Quranic interpretation via the prophetic traditions established by the Prophet ﷺ and followed by the companions, who passed it on to the later generations (Al-Rūmī, 1995, pp. 72–73, 19).

A conflict is created when an established method of interpreting the Quran is neglected, which leads to disregarding other principles or the entire science of Quranic interpretations. This conflict blocks the connection between Muslims and the meanings of the Quran. Hence, it is important to address this issue and prove that Quranic interpretation via the prophetic traditions is an approved method, and the prophetic traditions are not temporary and changeable, but a part of what God has revealed to guide humans. Identifying this problem will help Muslims connect with the Quran and understand it through the words of the Prophet ﷺ.

The Muslim community in Norway is facing challenges due to not having sufficient knowledge about the status of the prophetic traditions. The following research questions were formulated to explore the discussed topic:

(1) What evidence supports the essential role of prophetic interpretation in understanding the Quran?

(2) What is the status of the prophetic traditions?

(3) What are the established historical methods for an interpreter to use for Quranic interpretation?

The aim is to examine and clarify the role of prophetic interpretation in Quranic exegesis, emphasizing its historical foundation, importance, and current relevance, and to explore the established historical method guiding interpreters in Quranic interpretation.

The following objectives help to accomplish these aims:

(1) Investigate the historical and textual evidence that confirms the essential role of prophetic interpretation in understanding the Quran.

(2) Evaluate the status of the prophetic traditions according to Islamic sources.

Examine and clarify the established historical methods used by interpreters for Quranic interpretation, concentrating on the practice of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, his companions, and subsequent scholars.

Given the increasing challenges posed by philosophies urging to ignore the prophetic traditions as a source of Quranic interpretation means that the investigation of Quranic interpretation via these traditions is essential. The investigation emphasizes the established method of Quranic interpretation

and refutes misconceptions about the prophetic traditions, strengthening the connection between Muslims and the Quran.

Guided by the research questions, I examine evidence supporting the prophetic traditions as a source of Quranic interpretation, consider their status, and explore how Quranic interpretation via these traditions was established.

This research proves the validity of the prophetic traditions as a source of Quranic interpretation by tracing its roots to the practice of the first Islamic generation.

The findings are significant for both refuting misconceptions and contributing to contemporary Islamic scholarship by clarifying the relevance and authenticity of Quranic interpretation via prophetic traditions.
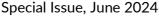
The above-mentioned knowledge gap is also filled by establishing the necessity of the prophetic traditions in Quranic exegesis and the first Islamic method of Quranic interpretation.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This review defines the necessity and status of prophetic interpretation, its relationship to the Quran, and the established method from the first generation in Islam. This section also discusses some misconceptions created by Quranists.

2.1 The Necessity of the Prophetic Traditions

Quranists claim the Quran is the only guidance needed to live an Islamic life. The Quranists' method is to rely heavily on the Arabic language and assign it preference over almost everything; therefore, they interpret meanings to Quranic

words and phrases that suit them, which can develop into strange viewpoints regarding Islamic creed and worship rites (Ilāhī Bakhsh, 2000, pp. 259, 275, 278, 295). This approach enables Quranists to change and adjust anything they feel like in the name of the religion.

Ibn Barjas (1993, pp. 35–36) disagrees with the Quranists' approach by commenting that the command to adhere to prophetic traditions is found in the Quran:

(1) The best role model for believers to follow is the Prophet ﷺ (Quran, 33:21).

(2) If the believers love God, they should follow the Prophet ﷺ (Quran, 3:31).

(3) The believers must obey the Prophet ﷺ to be guided in the right direction (Quran, 24:54).

The above Quranic verses clarify that the sincerity of believers in God depends on following the Prophet ﷺ, that obedience to the Prophet ﷺ is the right path, and that this can be done by following his example.

Lamīn (2018, p. 102) argues that prophetic traditions hold a dual role in Islam as both authority and evidence in the religion, in the same way that the Quran is based on the words of God: "Obey God and the messenger" (Quran, 3:132). Believers are also told of those who heard the prophetic traditions but chose to ignore them (Quran, 8:20–21). Those who disobey the Prophet ﷺ are misguided (Quran, 33:36), and such people will encounter difficulties and eventually be punished by God (Quran, 24:63). Lamīn (ibid, p. 103) continues that, based on

these verses, the scholars arrived at a consensus about the prophetic traditions being a fundamental principle of Islamic law and that these traditions clarify Quranic meanings.
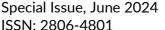
2.2 Status of the Prophetic Traditions

Much literature has been written about this topic, but there is a lack of understanding among Muslims in Norway regarding the status of the prophetic traditions and whether they are a form of revelation.

Al-'Azzāmī (2004, p. 14) argues that not all revelations are written as Quranic revelations because God addressed the prophets (4:163), but not all of them had heavenly scriptures, yet they were recognized as prophets. Therefore, those prophets had a form of revelation that may be defined as their "prophetic traditions." The Quran (53:3–4) confirms that the words of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ were revelations. The teachings based on the prophetic traditions cannot be false or deviant because the Prophet ﷺ never went astray (Quran, 53:2). This point confirms that the prophet's ﷺ traditions are the most correct explanations of the Quran.

The words "revealed", and "revelation" are also found outside the Quran in prophetic narrations, indicating the prophetic traditions were a part of revelation as well.

(1) The Prophet ﷺ said, "Surely, God revealed to me that you will be tested in the graves" (Al-Bukhārī, 2001, vol. 1, p. 48, narration #184).

(2) The Prophet ﷺ said that God revealed to him that people should be humble toward each other (Muslim al-Nīsābūrī, n.d., vol. 4, p. 2198, narration #2865).

(3) Once a man came to the Prophet ﷺ and asked about a ruling regarding the non-obligatory pilgrimage (ʿumrah), the Prophet ﷺ kept silent for a moment, and revelation came to him about the issue (Al-Bukhārī, 2001, vol. 2, p. 136, narration #1536).

However, although there are solid proofs, such as the above-mentioned quotes, confirming the status of the prophetic traditions, academics belonging to the Quranist school of thought counter the consensus. Quranists reject the mainstream Islamic belief that prophetic traditions are a form of revelation by creating confusion within Muslim communities. The goal of Quranists has always been to disconnect prophetic traditions from Islamic law (Ilāhī Bakhsh, 2000, p. 93). The mainstream Islamic belief is that authentic prophetic traditions are the second-highest source of Islamic law, but Quranists claim the Quran is clear and does not depend on any other source; hence, the prophetic traditions are unnecessary (ibid, p. 210). Furthermore, Quranists argue the prophetic traditions are not revelations but independent reasoning (ijtihād) of the Prophet ﷺ (Mazrūʿah, 2000, p. 462).

2.3 The Prophetic Traditions' Relationship to the Quran

The relationship between these two Islamic sources is deep. The Quran is the book of God, and the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ is the teacher who provided instructions to the people by
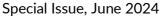
explaining the Quran. This authority was given to the Prophet ﷺ by the Quran itself; none of the explanations the Prophet ﷺ offered about the Quran contain any fault (Rafīq, 2003, p. 13). The Quran (7:157) clarifies that the role of the Prophet ﷺ was to be followed by believers, to command good and forbid evil, and to make lawful the pure things and forbid the bad things. The prophet's ﷺ role was to recite the words of God to teach people the Quran through his traditions and to purify people (Quran, 2:129). This link is the connection between the prophetic traditions and the Quran: to teach and clarify the rulings of God through the prophetic traditions.

A leading Quranist academic, Ghulām Aḥmad Parvez, from the modern era doubts this relationship between the Quran and the prophetic traditions. Parvez (2001, pp. 3–4) states that religious understanding must be undeniable to be established as the religion itself, and that although the Quran is undeniable, the prophetic traditions are not.

2.4 The Original Method of Quranic Interpretation

Yāsīn (1999, p. 5) states that the science of Quranic interpretation is one of the highest and superior sciences in Islam; its fundamentals are the Quran and the prophetic traditions. It is the first science in Islam; its topic is the words of God, and the goal is to explain these words. *Tafsīr bi al-Ma'thūr* (interpreting the Quran using authentic sources) is the best method to obtain knowledge of Quranic meanings. The method's sources are the Quran, the prophetic traditions, the sayings of the companions, and the commentaries of the disciples of the companions.

Ibn Ṭarhūnī (2005, p. 21) mentions the Prophet ﷺ would clarify the meanings of the Quran to his companions. The companions had four sources: the Quran, the Prophet ﷺ, independent reasoning through knowledge of the Arabic language, and the people of scripture. This situation led to institutes being established by the companions, so they could pass on the method of Quranic interpretation to their disciples. In the first generation of Islam, Quranic interpretations via the prophetic traditions were already the second-highest source and were used by the companions.

Ḥammūsh (2007, pp. 36–38) concurs with the above method and mentions the Quran as the primary source of Quranic interpretation. He emphasizes that the Quran must be followed and that no scholar from the first generation opposed the Quran by using his own logic or theories. The prophetic traditions were the second-highest source according to Ḥammūsh. He explains that if Quranic interpretation comes authentically through the Prophet ﷺ, one cannot seek or demand the sayings of the Arabs, because the Prophet ﷺ was more aware of the intended meanings of the Quranic words. Moreover, in cases if a Quranic verse was abrogated, the prophetic traditions would serve to elaborate on that.

Quranists dispute this consensus as well. They do not accept the prophetic traditions as the second-highest source of Quranic interpretation or as a source that must be consulted; they claim this was not the method employed at the time of the Prophet ﷺ (Parvez, 2001, p. 5).

Quranist academics disagree with Muslim scholars, and by their own method create an environment of changing religious

teachings (Ilāhī Bakhsh, 2000). Muslim scholars argue that, to preserve the original teachings and understandings of the Quran, the prophetic traditions must be followed to avoid error (Lamīn, 2018, p. 102).
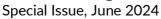
Understanding the status of the prophetic traditions as a form of revelation will fill the knowledge gap by providing Muslims in Norway with an understanding of Quranic interpretation. Quranists attempt to degrade the status of the prophetic traditions, but the evidence is stronger than their theories. The relationship between the prophetic traditions and the Quran makes it clear they cannot be separated (Quran, 2:129).
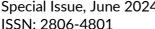
This review helped to clarify that the method of Quranic interpretation was established by the Prophet ﷺ and his companions. This research emphasizes the importance of using correct and valid sources and methods when interpreting the Quran. The results of the research will be of benefit to Muslims in general.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Approach

This research employs a qualitative methodology, utilizing content analysis to investigate the chosen literature. Content analysis is a well-established method for systematically analyzing written documentation (White & Marsh, 2006, p. 22). A nuanced exploration of various works was possible via the selected method. The aim was to clarify the necessity and status of the prophetic traditions and the method for Quranic interpretation established by the first Muslim generation. The content analysis enabled me to identify patterns, themes, and

trends systematically within the literature, such as the authenticity of the prophetic traditions, before applying them to a specific Quranic verse. This approach led to a thorough investigation of the discussed topic, offering a wide-ranging understanding of the scholarly consensus on the role of prophetic traditions in Quranic interpretation.

3.2   Data Collection

Data collection was conducted manually via a thorough selection of relevant literature. Those books were handpicked and focused on scholars' arguments regarding the prophetic traditions and methods of Quranic interpretation. The most used data source for content analysis is written (Stemler, 2015). It was important to use authoritative and comprehensive sources, so literature without reliable sources and research was rejected. The selected literature, compiled by Islamic scholars from different periods, enabled a varied and in-depth investigation of the discussed topic. This meticulous selection enabled an accurate content analysis and qualitative examination of Quranic interpretation via the prophetic traditions. Additionally, the research conducted during the PhD thesis was a great help because of awareness of much of the relevant literature.

3.3   Sample Selection and Coding

This process involved choosing literature that specifically discussed the research topic to ensure it contained both arguments for the guidelines of Quranic interpretation and the scholars' consensus about it, but it was also important to review literature written by Quranist academics to highlight their

perspective. The sample comprised literature from historical periods and contemporary contexts. This inclusion sought to capture the origin of the Quranic interpretation method used by the first Muslim generation and the principles of contemporary scholars to understand the consensus and the relationship between them.

By applying the chosen approach, I systematically detected and analyzed patterns, themes, and trends related to my research questions. By categorizing and coding significant data, I discovered the underlying structure and meanings within the literature, which provided beneficial insights into the role of prophetic traditions in Quran interpretations.

3.4 Data Analysis

A qualitative approach was applied with an in-depth examination of the literature to identify repetitive topics related to the prophetic traditions. A thorough qualitative analysis identified patterns and key understandings within the texts. It was important to compare the selected literature with the literature that agreed with the scholarly consensus, but it was also important to review it in light of my PhD research by comparing it with the Quranists' opinions. This method identified the connections and relationships within the data, as well as the contradictions.

4. ANALYSIS

The research aimed to clarify for Muslims in Norway the necessity and status of the prophetic traditions and the origin of the method of Quranic interpretation via these traditions. Content analysis of the selected literature was analyzed to

answer the research questions systematically. To understand the confusion found via the survey in the PhD thesis, the literature of Quranist academics was also examined, so their viewpoints could be presented and refuted via the results of this research.

The literature by Muslim scholars agreed with each other and had a recurring theme that emphasized the credibility of the sources used to interpret a verse of the Quran. All the scholars argued that authentic prophetic narrations are above other narrations (Yaʿqūb, 2004; Al-Nuqrāshī, 1986; Muslim, 1994). This point also made it important to verify the prophetic narrations used in the research; therefore, their classifications by scholars were included in the references.

The majority of the scholars structured their literature by presenting the historical establishment and development of the method of Quranic interpretation (Al-ʿAk, 1986; ʿUmar al-Ḥājī, 2007; Al-Nuqrāshī, 1986). They did this to prove a strong connection between the contemporary method and the first method.

It is clear there is a conflict between the understanding of mainstream Muslim scholars and Quranist academics; the prophetic traditions are being downgraded by the latter and their role is misrepresented (Parvez, 2001). Therefore, mainstream Muslim scholars have recognized the need to clarify the status and relevance of the prophetic traditions (Ilāhī Bakhsh, 2000).

Muslims in Norway lack an understanding of the status of the prophetic traditions and the origin of the Quranic interpretation

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method, which was the reason for this research. By concentrating on the specific branch of "Quranic interpretation via the prophetic traditions" of "interpreting the Quran using authentic sources," the united standpoint of the scholars regarding the importance of prophetic traditions became clearer.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 The Need for Prophetic Interpretation of the Quran

The interpreters of the Quran, those who memorize it and live by it, are, according to Al-'Ak (1986, p. 27), the people of God; they are closest to Him (Al-Qazwīnī, 2009, vol. 1, p. 146, narration #215, al-Arnā'ūṭ: acceptable).

Interpretation facilitates understanding the jurisprudential rulings derived from the book of God, as jurisprudence depends on conclusions drawn from Quranic texts and prophetic traditions. Juridical rulings are invalid if the understanding is incorrect and based on interpretation. Quranic interpretation reduces the differences in texts and protects the Islamic nation from individuals who twist the meanings of texts to fit their desires or issue judgments based on a misguided understanding of the Quran (Al-'Ak, 1986, p. 31).

Al-Suyūṭī (1974, vol. 4, p. 196) explains that the Quran was revealed when the people were most eloquent in the Arabic language; however, they often faced difficulties understanding the words. They asked the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ about the meanings of verses, such as 6:82: "Those who believe and do not mix it up with injustice, they will be guaranteed security, and they are rightly guided." The people asked, who among us does

not wrong himself? The Prophet ﷺ interpreted the verse to them using the words of God: "Surely, polytheism is a great injustice!" (Quran, 31:13). This question and interpretation explain that the people of that time needed to understand the depth of the Quran despite being experts in the language. The prophetic understanding was necessary to understand the type of injustice God spoke about in the verse. Therefore, it is clear that prophetic traditions have a higher status than the Arabic language itself.

Further elaborating on this point, Al-Nuqrāshī (1986, p. 16) highlights that people always face new situations and continue to expand in every field. Challenges may appear in both religious and worldly matters and to have a correct Islamic understanding of these matters, believers need a source of knowledge to understand the deeper meanings of the Quran. Therefore, the need for Quranic interpretation is great because it guides people regarding the words of God and connects them with Him. Quranic interpretation builds a bridge between the original words and present-day understanding. Al-Nuqrāshī (ibid, p. 18) continues that Iyās ibn Muʿāwiyah, a disciple of the companions, said that people who recite the Quran but do not know the interpretation of it are like people who receive a letter from their king but do not have a lamp to read it by and understand it; they may panic without understanding the content. On the other hand, people who know the interpretations have a lamp and can understand the meanings of the letters.

ʿUmar al-Ḥājī (2007, pp. 20–21) asks a relevant question about Quranic interpretation: If there are so many Quranic exegeses

interpreting the Quran word by word for the people, why is there a need to research and go back to the time of the Prophet ﷺ and the companions? He then highlights several elements that make it necessary for a scholar not to accept everything and to research to detect the true meanings through authentic sources, as many scholars rely heavily on their own understanding and feelings instead of authentic sources. The scholars should not rely on popular names in the field but on authentic sources that can be traced to the Prophet ﷺ.

Yaʿqūb (2004, p. 55) agrees with the above-mentioned point and adds that interpreters must investigate and rely upon authentic prophetic narrations when they interpret. One must place one's trust in the authentic prophetic narrations because the Prophet ﷺ knew best about the Quranic words.

5.2 The Relationship Between the Quran and the Prophetic Traditions

ʿUmar al-Ḥājī (2007, p. 47) states that the relationship between the Quran and the prophetic traditions is complete; whatever was revealed briefly in the Quran, the prophetic traditions provided details, and whatever was revealed generally in the Quran, these traditions specified it. Based on this view, ʿUmar al-Ḥājī claims the Quran's text and meanings are revelations from God, and the prophetic traditions are revelations from God regarding their meanings. Regarding the textual aspect, the prophetic traditions are known as the words of the Prophet ﷺ.

The Quran proves this point by clarifying that the Prophet ﷺ did not speak from his own desires; what he said was revealed to him (Quran, 53:3–4). If a person only relies on the Quran and

says that whatever is lawful and unlawful in it is the only law, they should know that what the Prophet ﷺ commanded was the same as the command of God (Al-Tirmidhī, 2009, vol. 4, p. 603, narration #2855, al-Arnā'ūṭ: authentic). The Prophet ﷺ stated, "I was given the Quran and that which is like it along with it" (Al-Sijistānī, 2009, vol. 7, p. 13, narration #4604, al-Arnā'ūṭ: authentic chain).

Al-Qurṭubī (1964, vol. 1, pp.38) comments that "which is like it along with it" means the Prophet ﷺ received a book of revelations recited to him, and he also similarly received explanations of it. Therefore, the Prophet ﷺ was permitted to clarify whatever was in the book, to make it general or specific, and to make extra rulings (his command would be like the command of God).

The Prophet ﷺ said that if a person thinks God forbade only what is found in the Quran, he is wrong, because God preached, commanded, and prohibited him things as numerous as the things in the Quran, or even more (Al-Sijistānī, 2009, vol. 4, p. 656, narration #3050, al-Arnā'ūṭ: acceptable chain). Al-Qurṭubī (1964, vol. 1, p.38) explains this statement is a warning that one should not oppose the prophetic traditions by claiming they are not mentioned in the Quran, because it was the method of the renegades (*khawārij*) to understand the Quran only by its apparent meanings and to ignore the prophetic traditions that explained the Quran. Al-Qurṭubī (ibid, p. 39) also mentions a saying that is difficult for Quranists to accept: "The Quran depends more on the prophetic traditions than the prophetic traditions on the Quran." The meanings of the Quran need the

prophetic traditions more because the prophetic traditions' role is to explain the Quran.

The primary source of Islamic knowledge, the Quran, clarifies that the role of the Prophet ﷺ and his traditions is to clarify the Quran:

(1) All the messengers were sent to their people, knowing their language, to explain the message to them (Quran, 14:4).

(2) The Prophet ﷺ was instructed to judge among people according to what God showed him (Quran, 4:105).

(3) Through teaching people both the Quran and wisdom [prophetic traditions] the prophet's ﷺ role was to recite the words of God, purify people, and teach them what they did not know (Quran, 2:151).

Al-'Ak (1986, p. 128) explains there are three elements to this relationship, and that the prophetic traditions do not move outside of these elements and do not contradict the Quran:

(1) The prophetic traditions agree with the Quran, and their command is one; the proofs from them follow and support each other.

(2) The prophetic traditions are the explanations of what the Quran intends to convey; the brief statements are explained in detail, and the specifics of the general statements are clarified.

The prophetic traditions clarify whatever the Quran kept silent about regarding something being an obligation or a prohibition.

5.3 What are the Sources of Quranic Interpretation?

The scholars aim to build their interpretations upon the prophetic interpretations of the Quran. The field of Quranic interpretation is vast in the Islamic sciences, and the tradition of interpreting the Quran was initiated by the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ himself. His companions interpreted the Quran according to the Prophet's ﷺ teachings and passed on the tradition to their disciples. In this way, the tradition continued and grew.

The *ḥadīth* literature has always been a primary source of Quranic interpretation because it enabled the scholars of Quranic interpretation to use the collected data under the specific verses they needed to address or explain. The *ḥadīth* literature was categorized by dividing it into categories with the most authentic narrations, and then the narrations with a lesser degree than the authentic narrations.

The believers in the time of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ relied on the following sources to interpret the Quran: the Quran, the prophetic traditions, independent reasoning (*ijtihād*), and the people of the book: the Jews and the Christians.

The foremost source utilized by the first generation of Islam for interpreting the Quran was the Quran itself. According to Ibn Taymiyyah al-Ḥarrānī (1980, p. 39), the most authentic method to interpret the Quran is to interpret it with the Quran itself, and this view is according to scholarly consensus (Al-Yūsufī, 2016, p. 98). Al-Suyūṭī (1974, vol. 4, p. 200) claims that, if someone wants to interpret the Quran, he must seek its meaning in the Quran itself, because if it is mentioned briefly in one place, it is explained in another. The story of Prophet Moses

is an example of this point; it is mentioned several times in the Quran, sometimes with details and sometimes briefly. Therefore, al-Dhahabī (2010, vol. 1, p. 37) claims that whenever an interpreter interprets the Quran, he must look at what the Quran has said about the verse he is investigating. This process should be conducted by comparing the Quranic verses to explain the detailed and specific meanings. This interpretation cannot be overruled by anyone because God Himself is explaining His own words, and nobody knows them better than Him.

The second most important source is the prophetic traditions, and it was the Prophet ﷺ who taught the companions to interpret the Quran via the Quran. Whenever the companions did not understand the meaning of Quranic words, they asked the Prophet ﷺ. This was also the role of the Prophet ﷺ because the Quran was revealed to him so he could explain it to people, which made them ponder the words of the Quran (Quran, 16:44). This is why the collectors of prophetic narrations made chapters in their collections specifically about narrations interpreting Quranic words (Al-Dhahabī, 2010, vol. 1, p. 45). The narrations in these chapters explain words that may be misunderstood or do not have clear meanings. The companions asked questions even when they knew the meaning of the word in their language, because when the Prophet ﷺ explained it, the meaning became clearer, and it could be applied to a specific matter. The *ḥadīth* experts who investigated the prophetic narrations and classified them played an even more important role than the collectors because they sorted out the weak and fabricated narrations.

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Al-'Ak (1986, p. 125) argues the Quran orders Muslims to adhere to the prophetic traditions because they interpret the Quran.

Al-Nuqrāshī (1986, p. 25) quotes al-Shāfi'ī, who explained that whatever the Prophet ﷺ judged and ordered was according to what he understood of the Quran.
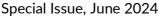
Al-Yamanī (1987, p. 152) states that this form of Quranic interpretation is accepted and confirmed through Quranic and prophetic texts and the consensus of the scholars. Al-Yamanī based his argument on "Whatever the messenger gives you, take it, and whatever he forbids you, abstain from it" (Quran, 59:7), and that the Prophet ﷺ received both the Quran and that which were similar to it.

Al-Ḥarbī (2008) makes a very interesting point by stating that prophetic narrations are the origin, whereas the rules of Arabic follow the narrations, and the Quran governs the Arabic language's rules and not the other way around. Therefore, the language cannot be given precedence over the Quran and the prophetic narrations.

Al-Ghazālī (1982, vol. 1, p. 291) also warns against interpreting the Quran by giving preference to the Arabic language over the prophetic narrations explaining the meanings of the Quran. Al-Ghazālī explains that this was the method of people who gave preference to their own theories rather than facts.

5.4 Status of the Prophetic Traditions

God made the revelation a living miracle of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. All the other prophets were given miracles, but the miracles

were no longer present after the time of those prophets. The Prophet ﷺ had many miracles performed by God, but the ever-living miracle is the revelation (Quran).

Al-Suyūṭī (1974, vol. 1, p. 160) refers to al-Zuhrī stating that revelation is God's communication to His prophets: He makes it firm in a prophet's heart, so the prophet speaks via the revelation and writes it down. This is the speech of God, but there are some revelations the prophet receives; he does not speak them to anyone by himself, write them down, or command anyone. However, the prophet conveys the revelation to the people as a statement and clarifies to them that God commanded him to explain and transmit it to them.

Al-Shāfi'ī (1990, vol. 7, p. 314) highlights that whatever the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ made obligatory was via revelation.

Ibn Ḥazm al-Andalusī (1977, vol. 1, pp. 96–97) discusses how the scholars presented different views in the first period, but 'Alī said that the companions considered the Quran to be the primary reference in matters of legislation, and the Quran itself affirmed that believers should obey whatever the Prophet ﷺ commanded them because he did not speak of his own desire but that which God revealed to him (Quran, 53:3–4). This belief made the scholars conclude that revelations come in two forms from God to His Prophet ﷺ:

(1) The Quran is a revelation that is recited, composed, and miraculous in its structure.

(2) The prophetic narration is a revelation conveyed, not composed, not miraculous in its structure, not recited,

but read [narrated]. Its role is to explain what God has revealed through the Prophet ﷺ (Quran, 16:44).

Ibn Ḥazm al-Andalusī (ibid, p. 98) emphasizes the inseparable connection between the Quran and authentic prophetic narrations. They are the same because they are both from God, and the ruling about them is the same as well. God made obedience to the second form of revelation (authentic prophetic narrations) obligatory, just as with obedience to the first form (the Quran). This point is affirmed in the Quran, in which the belief is connected to obeying God and His Prophet ﷺ, and if the believers disagree over anything, they must refer it to God and His Prophet ﷺ (Quran, 4:59).

There are many arguments in addition to those mentioned above, but to illustrate the argument, the two following narrations should be sufficient for the believers to understand:

(1) The Prophet ﷺ said that if people think God only forbade what is found in the Quran, they are wrong, because God preached, commanded, and prohibited him things as numerous as the things in the Quran, or even more (Al-Sijistānī, 2009, vol. 4, p. 656, narration #3050, al-Arnā'ūṭ: acceptable chain).

(2) Al-'Asqalānī (1959, vol. 13, p. 291) demonstrates that the prophetic traditions are a form of revelation through an authentic narration: "The angel Gabriel used to descend to the Prophet ﷺ with the prophetic traditions just like he descended to him with the Quran."

- The word "descend" means the words came as a form of revelation, as the Quran did.

The arguments in this section clearly prove that the prophetic traditions based on authentic narrations are understood as a form of revelation according to the Quran, *ḥadīth* literature, and scholarly opinion.

5.5   Three Forms of Prophetic Traditions

Al-Shāfiʿī (n.d., p. 90) states that the prophetic traditions had three forms and that no scholars disagreed about this point. These traditions and narratives interpret the Quran.

5.5.1 Prophetic Narrations Containing Quranic Words

Prophetic narrations contain the exact same words as the Quran. One verse of the Quran states some grave sins: to worship anything else alongside God, to kill somebody, and to fornicate (Quran, 25:68). The same meaning appears in a prophetic narration in which the Prophet ﷺ was asked about the worst sin. The prophet said to worship something alongside God, the next is to kill your children out of fear that they would eat with you, and after that, to fornicate with one's neighbor's wife. ʿAbdullāh said that verse 25:68 was revealed about the verse (Al-Bukhārī, 2001, vol. 6, p. 109, narration #4761).

5.5.2   Prophetic Narrations Interpreting the Quran

Prophetic narrations explain Quranic words that are not completely clear or are mentioned briefly, specify something general, or present a practical form of Quranic rulings. These

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narrations are many and fall under the role of the Prophet ﷺ to clarify the meanings of the Quran (Quran, 16:44).

5.5.3 Prophetic Narrations Explain What the Quran is Silent About

This category contains narrations that explain things the Quran is silent about. On this point, the scholars disagree. Al-Shāfiʿī (n.d., p. 90) highlights four statements from the scholars:

(1) These narrations containing rulings the Quran does not directly address are an authority and right given to the Prophet ﷺ by God, so he could issue a ruling in addition to the specific ruling in the Quran.

(2) These narrations are from the Prophet's ﷺ deep understanding and pondering of the Quran. The basis of rulings from these narrations is to be found somewhere in the Quran.

(3) These narrations come as a hidden revelation to the Prophet ﷺ from God.

(4) These narrations are a form of inspiration from God, and they are entered into the Prophet's ﷺ heart.

Many prophetic narrations are independent and were not specifically related to when a revelation was revealed, nor were they designed to support the ruling in a verse. Al-Shāfiʿī (ibid) states that some scholars believed that whichever prophetic tradition the Prophet ﷺ performed, its origin was in the Quran. The scholars referred to the daily prayers and transactions in buying and selling and their rulings. An example of this approach

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is that the Quran mentions the sacredness of Mecca (Quran, 2:125, 3:97, 3:96–97, 22:25–26) but not Medina, but the Prophet ﷺ declared Medina as sacred (Ibn Ḥanbal, 2001, vol. 2, pp. 267–268, narration #959, al-Arnā'ūṭ: authentic based on other confirming narrations).

Another example is that the Quran declared it unlawful to marry one's foster mothers and sisters by suckling (Quran, 4:23). The Prophet ﷺ made it unlawful to marry all relatives through suckling, the same as with blood relations (Ibn Ḥanbal, 2001, vol. 2, p. 334, narration #1097, al-Arnā'ūṭ: authentic based on other confirming narrations).

5.6 The Understanding of the Quran

The companions were blessed by God to understand the Quran through the Prophet ﷺ, and when there was a complication, he explained it to them because God made it His responsibility to make the Quran clear for the Prophet ﷺ (Quran, 75:17–19). Al-Dhahabī (2010, vol. 1, p. 33) disagrees with Ibn Khaldūn, stating a very interesting fact. Ibn Khaldūn believed the Quran was revealed in the language of the Arabs, hence, they all understand the meanings of the Quran. However, al-Dhahabī highlights that this is not true; not all Arabs, past or present, can understand the Quran.

This point makes it clear that although people may understand a language and culture, they will always depend on the sources and methods followed by the first generation of Islam.

Al-Nuqrāshī (1986, p. 20) concurs with Al-Dhahabī on this point, stating that the companions could understand the Quran

differently despite being Arabs; therefore, they depended on a source they could acquire accurate knowledge from.

5.7 The Method of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ

Muslim (1994, p. 28) reveals how the Prophet ﷺ would interact with the companions regarding Quranic interpretation: whenever a statement could become unclear, the Prophet ﷺ offered an explanation that made it easier to comprehend.

Ẓafar (1991, p. 39) highlights that one of the prophet's ﷺ methods was to interpret the Quran by using the Quran.

The other method was to explain it with his own words and independent reasoning. The Prophet ﷺ showed and clarified the interpretations through his sayings, actions, and approvals (Al-'Ak, 1986, p. 112).

5.7.1 Interpretation via Statement

The form of interpreting via statement can be understood through the following:

Once, Abū Bakr inquired of the Prophet ﷺ about verse 4:123, which states that the judgment would not be according to the desire of the Muslims or the people of the book; rather whoever does wrong will be punished for it. Abū Bakr expressed concern that the punishment would be severe, and so he sought clarification about whether people would be punished for every wrong action. The Prophet ﷺ explained that when people are sick, face difficulties, experience sorrow, and encounter harm, these things expiate the punishment (Ibn Ḥanbal, 2001, vol. 1,

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pp. 229–230, narration #68, al-Arnā'ūṭ: authentic based on other confirming narrations).

To observe the prayer after the _dulūk_ (sinking/setting) of the sun (Quran, 17:78) was explained as its declining after being at its zenith, or midday (Al-Madanī, 1985, p. 11, narration #20).

The mother of the believers, 'Ā'ishah, informed us that whenever she heard something from the Prophet ﷺ and did not understand it, she used to ask him so he could explain the meaning. She narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said that the one who will be called to account will, without doubt, be punished. She asked, "But does not God say that 'He will receive an easy reckoning'?" (Quran, 84:8). The Prophet ﷺ clarified this verse only meant the presentation of the accounts, but the one who will be discussed with about his deeds will be ruined (Al-Bukhārī, 2001, vol. 1, p. 32, narration #103).

5.7.2   Interpretation via Action

One of God's main goals in sending prophets to earth was to teach people how to live according to His law. When the believers heard the command "Establish the prayer" (Quran, 73:20), they were unsure how to perform and observe the prayer. The Prophet ﷺ made it clear that his physical action was their role model to follow by saying, "Pray as you see me perform it" (Al-Bukhārī, 2001, vol. 1, p. 128, narration #631).

In pre-Islamic Arabia, there were many customs and traditions during the pilgrimage season and daily life. God commands believers to perform the obligatory pilgrimage (_ḥajj_) and optional pilgrimage ('_umrah_) for His sake (Quran, 2:196). Such a command could have been confusing for the companions

because they clearly understood the message in their language but needed to understand what they had to do in practice to perform this worship. Therefore, the Prophet ﷺ joined his companions during the pilgrimage known as the Farewell Pilgrimage to prove it is obligatory once in a lifetime and how to perform the pilgrimage. Therefore, no pre-Islamic customs that went against the law of God would remain during the pilgrimage. Only in the *ḥadīth* compilation of al-Bukhārī are there 258 narrations about the pilgrimage in a chapter. If the traditions were not in a physical form, people would not know or have access to these narrations teaching them this obligatory worship.

5.7.3   Interpretation via Approval

Approval of the Prophet ﷺ is also recognized as a form of interpretation. ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ narrated that, during a war campaign, he had a sexual dream, and ablution for major impurity became necessary for him, but it was a cold night, and he was afraid that, if he performed ablution, he would fall ill or even die of the coldness, so he performed ablution with pure sand or dust and prayed the dawn prayer with the others. This incident was mentioned to the Prophet ﷺ, so he asked why he prayed in that state with his fellows. ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ told the Prophet ﷺ why he did so and said that God says to not kill oneself (Quran, 4:29). This answer made the Prophet ﷺ laugh, and he did not say anything else to his companion (Al-Sijistānī, 2009, vol. 1, p. 249, narration #334, al-Arnāʾūṭ: authentic). This illustrates that the Prophet ﷺ approved the companion's understanding and action based on a Quranic verse. It also

taught the believers that, during difficult circumstances, the law reduces the burden of a duty.

The above-mentioned narrations demonstrate the method of the Prophet ﷺ when explaining the Quran and the method of the companions when asking for clarification when they did not understand something. Although the Quran was in Arabic, the language of the people of its time, they could not understand everything and needed guidance. They also needed to see the commands be performed, because if they did not, the danger of wrong actions could harm their faith and worship. When the companions understood a command from the Quran based on their own reasoning and acted according to it, they would ask the Prophet ﷺ to be 100% certain. This last-mentioned action of the companions is a lesson for those academics who strive to make the role of prophetic traditions a temporary practice that can be overruled by rulers and academics. The religion does not forbid believers to use their intellect, but it requires them to use the sources of Islam and not transgress the boundaries of the Lord.

5.8 The Method of the Companions

ʿUmar al-Ḥājī (2007, pp. 197–199) lists the most famous Quran interpreters among the companions and discusses their methods:

(1) ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAbbās

He relied on interpreting the Quran via the Quran, then interpreted the Quran via the prophetic traditions, and if he found no information using either, he employed independent reasoning based on the principles of the first two sources, and

he also used explanations of the Arabic language as a source. He established the Quranic interpretation institute in Mecca, where many famous Quran interpreters developed, such as Saʿīd ibn Jubayr, Mujāhid, ʿIkrimah, Ṭāwūs ibn Kaysān, and ʿAṭāʾ ibn Rabāḥ (Al-Nuqrāshī, 1986, p. 32).

(2) ʿAbdullāh ibn Masʿūd

He employed a similar method to Ibn ʿAbbās, using the Quran, the prophetic traditions, and independent reasoning. According to Muslim (1994, p. 112), Ibn Masʿūd would also apply Arabic knowledge as his third source, and then independent reasoning. Muslim (ibid, p. 117) adds that Ibn Masʿūd also had another approach to using Quranic interpretation by the Quran: he would interpret words according to his understanding of their general meaning in Islam. For example, the word "darkness" in verse 21:87 is explained as the darkness of the whale's belly, the darkness of the sea, or the darkness of the night. He established the Quranic interpretation institute in Kufa, which became re-known for working hard with independent reasoning because, in Iraq, there were new matters unknown to Muslims in Mecca and Medina. His famous students were ʿAlqamah ibn Qays, Masrūq, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, and Qatādah (ibid, p. 33).

(3) Ubayy ibn Kaʿb

This companion also followed a method similar to the other companions. He established the popular Quranic interpretation institute in Medina. Some companions were students there, but many of their disciples studied in it. Many narrations of Ubayy ibn Kaʿb are found in Quranic interpretations. His famous

students were Zayd ibn Aslam, Abū al-ʿĀliyah, and Muḥammad ibn Kaʿb al-Quraẓī (ibid, pp. 32–33).

(4) ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib

The same method was established by him as the other companions. The above method used by the companions indicates a specific pattern among them and that the Quran and the prophetic traditions had a higher rank than independent reasoning and the Arabic language. People who ignore the principles of the religion prefer to adopt the opposite method of the companions and favor independent reasoning and the Arabic language over the Quran and the prophetic traditions.

5.9 The Disciples (*tābiʿūn*) of the Companions

The disciples of the companions adopted the method of the companions by acknowledging that the Quran and the prophetic traditions had a higher rank than their own opinions and the Arabic language. The disciples even ranked the interpretations of the companions of the Prophet ﷺ, as higher than their own understanding. The reason for this view was simple: the companions saw the Prophet ﷺ do or say something, so it is forbidden to reject a companion's interpretation because of one's own feelings or understanding (ʿUmar al-Ḥājī, 2007, pp. 272–274). Al-Nuqrāshī (1986, p. 29) adds that it depends on whether there is a personal opinion involved; the overall understanding would be that the companion heard it from the Prophet ﷺ.

The disciples of the companions established institutes for Quranic interpretation by adopting the same method as the companions and making the method the standard for

interpreting the Quran in several lands where their teachers and themselves traveled (ibid, p. 32).

The majority of the scholars agree that accepting the sayings of the disciples is approved because most of their interpretations come from the companions, but the scholars were critical of accepting interpretations without sound chains linking the opinions to a solid source (ibid, p. 34).

Al-'Ak (1986, pp. 79–80) emphasizes that the established method of Muslims over generations has been that, if you do not find the interpretation in the Quran, consult the prophetic traditions. If you do not find it there, the next step is to search for it in the sayings of the companions, and if it is not there, one should search in the comments of their disciples. If the interpretation is not there, then the interpreter will go to the Arabic language as a source. There is a pattern to follow. An academic is not allowed to ignore this process and pattern if he feels like doing so, because this is the requirement of the science, as with any other science. The requirements must be fulfilled and followed.

5.10   Interpreting via Weak and Fabricated Narrations

Ya'qūb (2004, p. 124) explains that the correct and sound method of interpreting the Quran is to avoid weak and fabricated narrations because they lead to deviation and wrong conclusions. This argument is based on the question, "And who is more truthful in his words than God?" (Quran, 4:87). When the words of God are based on only the truth, they should also be interpreted using true and authentic words. Scholars have criticized using such narrations:

(1) Ibn al-'Arabī al-Mālikī (2003, vol. 1, p. 14) states that it is inappropriate to pay attention to fabricated narration.

(2) Ibn Qudāmah al-Maqdisī (1986, p. 47) argues the attributes of God can be proved only via authentic narrations accepted by the predecessors of Islam, and they transmitted them and did not reject those narrations. Fabricated and weak narrations cannot be used, and one cannot believe in them.

(3) Al-Zarkashī (1957, vol. 2, p. 156) claims an interpreter can use many sources, but the original ones are four. The first source is a transmission from the Prophet ﷺ.

The above understanding becomes clear through the saying of the Prophet ﷺ that people should fear narrating anything from him except what they are certain of, as deliberate falsehoods about him will lead to condemnation in hellfire (Ibn Ḥanbal, 2001, vol. 4, p. 415, narration #2676, al-Arnā'ūṭ: authentic based on other confirming narrations).

The lesson drawn from this is that reliance on weak or fabricated narrations should be avoided completely. However, according to scholars, it is permitted to act according to weak narrations that have an origin in authentic narrations and the action leads to righteousness, but fabricated narrations are not a part of this (Ya'qūb, 2004, p. 128).

6. CONCLUSION

Believers are obliged to accept prophetic interpretation as long as that interpretation includes an authentic chain and has no abnormal or hidden defects. If something is proven authentic by the Prophet ﷺ, nobody can oppose it. The prophetic traditions can never contradict the Quran; people who do so have not understood the Quranic verse or the prophetic narrations, or that certain prophetic narrations may not be authentic, or that either the verse or the prophetic narrations were abrogated.

The role of the prophetic traditions is evident because the proofs in this research clarify that the physical form of the Quranic teachings is revealed through such traditions; without them, understanding the Quran is impossible.

The consensus of Muslim scholars about the prophetic traditions being the second-highest source of Quranic interpretation is deeply rooted in the Islamic tradition passed on by the first Muslim generation. The method of Quranic interpretation was not invented later by the scholars; the method was founded by the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ.

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