



Investigating and Interpreting the Qur'an: Methodological Questions

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The Islamic culture is textual in its nature and it is based on the Holy Quran which founded its ideas and worldviews. Therefore, the Qur'anic text has always required, from the dawn of Islam, constant unearthing and interpretation. After the passing of the Prophet (PBUH), who was considered the optimal exegete, Arabs faced a variety of challenges in interpreting the Holy Quran despite their linguistic dexterity.

In this context, several arts and sciences have emerged as an attempt to answer a range of questions associated with the Holy Qur'an, the art of tafsir (interpretation) is one of these sciences that aimed at understanding the eloquence and meanings of it. The nature of tafsir varies given "the formation", "background" and "contextual challenges," of the exegete. So, historically, one could find different tafsirs, including "tradition-based exegesis", "rational exegesis", "jurisprudential exegesis", "principles-based exegesis", "indicative exegesis" "thematic exegesis", "linguistic exegesis", "scientific exegesis" and other types which are affected by the exegete's formation on the one hand, and by the challenges, compulsions, and questions of the context.

This momentum signifies the depth of the heritage of exegesis and the willingness of scholars to understand the purposes of contemplation and interpretation of the Holy Quran through comprehending its meaning, contextualizing it with time and place, and uncovering its lights. Since tafsir denotes the revealing of concealed meanings in the Holy Qur'an, this process needs means and mechanisms that, in their entirety, constitute a profound methodology, because the greater the concealed, the more ijihad is required to formulate those means and mechanisms that demonstrate the enormity of the Qur'anic text. However, we note that several means used in the interpretation of the Holy Quran do not achieve the purposes of the Qur'anic eloquence, where tafsir had become concealing and unilluminating.

Hence, the methodological process needed to be framed around the purposes of interpreting the Qur'anic rhetoric in a manner that is corresponding with the specificity of this rhetoric in terms of its source, language, systems, and purposes so that the adapted method achieves illumination and the purposes of tafsir.

The process of tafsir is not only a mechanism but also a precise and comprehensive methodology that needs to be reformed and revolutionized. Al-Tabarani in his Mu'jam narrated that Ibn Mas'ud said that: "Whoever wants the

best of the old and later times, should investigate and journey through the Qur'an, for it contains good (knowledge) of the old and later times". In another narration: "Whoever wants knowledge, should investigate through Qur'an. One of the great meanings of *tathwir* is tilling which was mentioned in the Holy Qur'an:[They tilled the Earth] (Rum: 9) to mean ploughing and cultivating the land for agriculture, for without it the land is unsuitable for farming. Hence, our scholars interpreted and associated *tathwir* with in-depth research to not only discover apparent statements but also to dive into multi-layered meanings inside the Holy Qur'an. Thus, al-Zarkashi quoted some scholars to have said that this journeying through the Holy Qur'an "Does not occur with simplistic and apparent interpretations" (Al-Burhan: 2/154).

If we contemplate upon the act of *tathwir* in past narrations, we observe that it is associated with two main concepts namely, good/knowledge, on the one hand, and the old/later times, on the other. This denotes that the Holy Qur'an hoards the entire good, including the principles of science and knowledge and the primary source of knowledge and sciences in the Islamic tradition. We do not mean that the Holy Qur'an contains every detail of knowledge and sciences as some contemporary approaches claim, according to the so-called "scientific miraculousness and inimitability" by projecting contemporary knowledge on the Qur'anic text. However, the actual intent should revolve around the signs and indications related to miracle aspects in Holy Qur'an, which need to be harmonized with new sciences and discovered contextually. Accordingly, the Holy Qur'an is by no means a replacement for science, but a source of constant inspiration and stimulation for sound hearts and minds to seek knowledge and sciences in different and open ways at all times and places.

Coming back to our main discussion on the sciences of tafsir, which aims to clarify the jewels of the Holy Qur'an and reveal its endless concealed meanings demonstrated by all the different numbers of tafasir that dealt with more than the apparent meanings. Therefore, tafsir encompasses and requires mechanisms and constant contemplation, creativity, investigating, and journeying through Holy Qur'an. Hence we understand the multiplicity of Qur'anic interpretations and the different approaches used by exegetes accordingly. However, this variety in the tafsir heritage, in my opinion, raises two main issues and challenges.

The first challenge is related to methodology for we observed that the science of tafsir methods faced stagnation at a certain point and persisted in our approach to realizing the function of the Qur'anic speech. Thus, we are proposing the possibility of adding new methods and frameworks of tafsir in the contemporary era that achieve the intent of journeying through the Holy Qur'an.

The second challenge lies in the fundamentals and principles of tafsir and investigating the Holy Qur'an. Knowing that the Quran is an open book, its lights are not confined to a specific group of readers, so interpreting it requires several strong and renewed methodologies to profoundly dive into its meanings based on

maqasid in their universal, partial, general, and specific levels. Therefore, seeking those lights without the maqasid of the Qur'an and awareness of context would reverse the anticipated purposes, thereby doing more harm than good.

Therefore, I believe, that the sciences of tafsir have yet to reach an integrated form of the "fundamentals of tafsir" as a systematic framework that rules the process of interpreting the Holy Qur'an and journeying through it. This is also achieved by applying a holistic approach based on tafsir, the Islamic sciences, and renewed systematic and epistemological wisdom.

Accordingly, the Third Issue of the Journal of Contemporary Maqasid Studies attempts to develop constructive theoretical fundamentals for modern-day tafsir to highlight the jewels of the Holy Qur'an, expand, and elaborate its meanings in order to develop open patterns for Qur'anic meanings that realize the higher purposes of the revelation through comprehensive approaches between the various methods and sciences.

Accordingly, I want to cordially thank all the contributors to this third issue who shared the same inspiration and message and have imparted their knowledge to this issue. Firstly, I would like to thank Dr. Farida Zomorod, known for her valuable works on tafsir and Qur'anic sciences, who contributed with a distinguished study entitled: "The Fundamentals of Maqasid-based Tafsir: an Investigation of the Concept and its Applications in the Views of Early Scholars" in which she tried to investigate the fundamentals of maqasid-based tafsir, its origins, and guidelines that are common in other tafsirs in comparative perspectives.

Dr. Farid Chokri, a specialist in maqasid issues, also participated in this issue with an article entitled "Maqasid-based Tafsir of the Holy Qur'an, between Activation and Disruption." Dr. Chokri created important methodological classifications in this regard; In terms of premise, there is the guided maqasid-based exegesis and the conclusive maqasid-based exegesis. In terms of purpose, he mentions the availing, activating, and complementing maqasid-based exegesis, and reversing, disruptive, and obstructive maqasid-based exegesis. He differentiated each classification and provided some examples and suitable rules for each of them.

Dr. Azzam Abu-Rayash has also kindly contributed to the third issue with an article written in the English language entitled "Analysis of Environmental Sustainability in the Holy Quran: Maqasid Framework." In his article, Dr Azzam started from a set of basic concepts in the Holy Quran related to the environment, towards the concepts of corrupting (*ifsaad*) and bettering (*islaah*) earth, along with the key objectives of being custodians and inheritors of the earth (*istikhlafisti'mar/wirathah*). He also dealt with the concept of utilization (*taskheer*) which is coupled with the 'communities like you' (*umam*) that share the planet and resources with us. This study is an attempt to contemplate and interpret the Holy Qur'an using the maqasid methodology to analyze environmental issues.

Since the subject matter of this issue is inseparable from studying the principles and origins of tafsir, it is important to seek earlier methodological principles in the tafsir heritage. In this context, the article of Dr. Driss Rouiba entitled “Maqasidi Approach and its Impact on the Principles of Tafsir Science in the Thought of Imam al-Shafi’ie” through which he argued that al-Shafi’ie was one of the earliest founders of the principles of tafsir by investigating his book *al-Rissalah*.

The book review section in this issue contained a valuable contribution from Dr. Ismail Hassani, a formidable researcher in maqasid and Islamic thought, who reviewed the latest book of the Moroccan philosopher Taha Abdul-Rahman entitled “*Al-Ta’sis al-Itimani li ‘Ilm al-Maqasid*.” In light of Hassani’s lengthy and valuable review, we decided to divide it into two parts that are going to be published in this issue and the upcoming one. The significance of this book lies in being part of Dr. Taha Abd al-Rahman’s project, which aims at establishing a philosophy based on the universal values of the Holy Qur’an and its higher objectives. Hence, Professor Taha tried in his book to discuss the contemporary theses in the light of this Qur’anic-based philosophy, according to an unprecedented logical and philosophical approach.

In the translations section, Dr. Mawloud Mohadi, the Deputy Managing Editor at JCMS and a budding researcher of maqasid and civilizational thought, contributed to the third issue with a valuable translation of an article written by Prof. Dr. M. Abdel Halim on *The Role of Context in Interpreting and Translating the Qur’an*, where the author analyzed the impact of dismissing the context on Qur’anic translations and interpretations at the level of meaning and understanding. Although the article dealt with challenging and different areas of knowledge, Dr. Mawloud was able to seamlessly simplify the meanings and ideas of the article to the Arabic language readers.

Lastly, Dr. Mawloud also contributed to this issue by conducting an in-depth and profound scholarly dialogue with Professor Jasser Auda who is well known for his worthwhile and multifaceted writings on maqasid and Islamic thought. The dialogue aimed at benefiting from Professor Jasser’s approaches and thoughts on tafsir and maqasid, especially his prominent maqasid methodology. His answers demonstrated an amalgamation of deep knowledge in sciences, experiences, and wisdom.

In conclusion, I want to thank all our contributors whose efforts laid the foundation for the third issue of JCMS to take shape. Special gratitude to Professor Jasser Auda who helped conceptualize this issue through constant discussions and insights. I also want to thank the managing editor of JCMS, Dr. Zaid Barzinji for his valuable input through meetings, organizational contributions, and guidance; thus, striking an example of sincerity, honesty, and dedication.

I also want to extend my thanks to Dr. Mawloud Mohadi the Deputy Editor-in-Chief at JCMS for his dedication, and patience. Despite the extensive technical work that includes correspondence with authors, reviewers, editors, and editorial

members, he was also involved in the overall conceptualization of the third issue and contributed to it with a translation and a dialogue with Professor Jasser that demonstrate his maqasid-based thinking.

I am also pleased to stretch my gratitude to Professor Yasser Tarshany, Dr. Addi Arrahman, the deputy managing editor, Dr. Ahmed Syukran, Aulia Rahmat, and other editors and reviewers for their dedication, revisions, and contributions. Finally, I want to thank again every participant in the third issue of JCMS and extend my apologies to other contributors whose works did not see the light of publishing in this issue, yet we will be looking forward to receiving their submissions and contribution to our upcoming issues. May Allah SWT abundantly reward everyone for disseminating, sharing, and blessing us with their knowledge.

Jamila Tilout

Editor-in-Chief, Journal of Contemporary Maqasid Studies

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