

COMPREHENSION OF QURANIC KNOWLEDGE IN TERMS OF  
PROPHETIC TRADITIONS (AHADITH)

Shahzad Bashir

Research Student, S.H Institute of Islamic Studies, University of Kashmir, Srinagar,  
Jammu and Kashmir

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**Abstract:**

Muslims believe that Allah (SWT) revealed books of guidance unto His Prophets from Adam (AS) to Muhammad (SAAS). Among these books four important were revealed unto David, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad (SAAS). All these except the book of Muhammad (Quran), were distorted by their adherents. Quran replaced all the previous distorted scriptures. Prophet Muhammad was chosen by Allah (SWT) for the preaching and propagation of Quranic teachings in letter and spirit. He acted as the chief exponent of Quranic image. He is rightly called by Muslims as the personification of the Quran. He explains, elucidates and determines the Quranic verses. His teachings (excluding Quran), way of living or code of conduct is termed as Hadith that incorporates whole Prophetic legacy, from pre-Prophethood to post-Prophethood. Prophet acted as the practical Quran and disseminated the principles, values, doctrines and educated his community all that is ordained and destined by Allah (SWT). All what he educated and disseminated forms a huge corpus of knowledge. He was directed to disseminate this (Quranic) knowledge with his explanations and exegesis. Whatever came from the Prophet's side, acts as a chief source in understanding the Quranic outlook as far as comprehension and motivation of the text is concerned. Here the paper aims to discuss Prophetic legacy (Hadith) as a means for the understanding of the Quranic Knowledge.

**Key Words:** Comprehension, Hadith, Interpretation, Knowledge, Prophet & Quran

**1. Introduction:**

Literally, Knowledge is the total sum of what is known. It is an all-inclusive term which incorporates, all forms of known details and engulfs everything which is known in day today life and which will be available in the future. It is a magna phenomenon which is continuously in progression. It has its own dimensions and extents, covering each and every aspect of existence of life. The production or the generation of knowledge has many sources, ranging broadly from physical to metaphysical sciences or natural to social sciences. Here we are dealing with production of Knowledge in theology, that too in Islam and more especially in Quranic outlook.

The term Quran is derived from the root word, *qa-ra-'a* (قرأ), which means 'he read'. The word 'Quran' has been used in the Holy Book, Quran around 70 times in different meanings and connotations. Muslim scholars define the term 'Quran' as 'it is the book revealed by Allah (SWT) unto His Messenger (SAAS) and last Prophet Muhammad (SAAS), which starts with *Surah al-Fatihah* and ends with *Surah al-Nās*'.<sup>1</sup> The Holy Scripture, Quran was revealed unto Prophet Muhammad at the age of 40 in 610 C.E in the Cave of Hira for the time span of 23 years. The Quran has the distinction of being God's revelation which God Himself preserved in its totality, as is confirmed by the Quran itself.<sup>2</sup> From generation after generation, Muslims have taken steps to preserve the text of the Quran and maintain its authenticity. No matter how dramatically history might have changed, not a single verse of the Quran was tampered with; that is, nothing was added to, or taken away from or altered in the original text of the Quran. Thus, at the level of the form and structure of the Quran historical change is out of question.<sup>3</sup>

The Islamic or Arabic word for Knowledge is '*Ilm*'. Islamic world-view of knowledge is unique and exceptional. In Islam the ultimate source of Knowledge (*Ilm*) is Allah (SWT). Here Knowledge is the foundational base of all its creeds, doctrines, or morals. Islamic knowledge structure is based on the two pioneer sources of Quran and Hadith. Both Quran and Hadith lay emphatic emphases on the importance of Knowledge. Hundreds of Quranic verses highlight its significance and vitality. The Quranic revelation started with the word, (*Iqra'*) as the 'icon' of knowledge. Quran repeatedly uses words, which lay emphasis on the various capacities of thinking and contemplating on different signs of nature. *Tafakkur*, *Tadabbur*, *Ta'lm*, *Hikmah*, *Ilm*, etc. all these are the manifestations of knowledge.

**2. Body:**

Knowledge in Quranic perspective is dynamic in its nature. It has its own principles values and sources to stand on. The Quranic paradigm of Knowledge is not interpretable without any practical or explicable example or model. The ambiguous, general, absolute, complex, and compact nature of the Quran validates a model for the clarification, specification and restricting the absolute nature of the Quranic text. For exploring the Quranic text, there must be the means to unveil the meanings and different connotations of the Divine text. For fulfilling this very purpose for the better understanding of the Quran, Allah sent his messenger Muhammad (SAAS) as an exemplar for humanity and a source of Quranic interpretation. Allah (SWT) says;

In truth, in (the holy being of) Allah's Messenger [blessings and peace be upon him] there is for you a most perfect and beautiful model (of life) for every such person that expects and aspires to (meeting) Allah and the Last Day and remembers Allah abundantly.<sup>4</sup>

The Prophetic example or legacy of Muhammad is termed as Hadith or Sunnah in the annals of Islamic thought. Quran validates and confirms the close intimation of Quran with Prophetic Hadith. Hadith is generally defined in Islamic Sciences, whatever was transmitted on the authority of the Prophet Muhammad (SAAS), his deeds, sayings, tacit approvals, or description of his '*sifāt*' (features) meaning his physical appearance, while *Sunnah* is used in the sense of Prophet's, (SAAS) 'mode of life', 'line of conduct' and 'established course of rule'.<sup>5</sup>

Therefore, Hadith or Sunnah is the explanation of the meaning of the word or the sentence or the verse that the *Ummah* needs to explain. So *Sunnah* came to clarify the ambiguous, make specific the general and restrict the absolute verse of Quran. This was achieved by the Prophet's statements, as well as his actions and approvals.

Prophetic example or his Hadith or Sunnah is the key source in understanding Quranic Knowledge. The significance of the Prophetic exegesis (Hadith) can be discussed in many verses for the comprehension and interpretation of Quranic text. Allah (SWT) introduces Muhammad (SAAS) as the explicator and interpreter of the Quranic text. Allah says;

And, (O Glorious Messenger,) We have revealed to you the Glorious Reminder (the Qur'an) so that you may explain clearly to people (the Message and the Commandments) that have been sent down to them and that they may meditate.<sup>6</sup>

Allah sent down for humanity the book in order to be believed, obeyed and practiced. Along the book He (SWT) sent unto Muhammad something more like that (Quran).<sup>7</sup> Here 'something' indicates 'Hadith' of Prophet Muhammad (SAAS). Quran always qualifies that Prophetic speech is revelation. Allah says;

He does not speak out of his (own) desire.

His speech is nothing but outright Revelation, which is sent to him.

(The Lord) of Mighty Powers (directly) conferred on him (perfect) knowledge.<sup>8</sup>

The second form of revelation<sup>9</sup> revealed by Allah (SWT) unto Muhammad (SAAS) is the explanation of the primary text (Quran) known as Hadith of the Prophet in the main stream Islamic thought. Below are few examples which clearly manifests that Hadith is mandatory for the Quranic comprehension and knowledge. Here Hadith acts as a source for the Quranic interpretation. Below are few Examples;

- ✓ (After proper judicial trial as per law) cut off the hands of both the man as well as the woman who steal, in retribution of (the offence) which they have committed, a deterring punishment from Allah. And Allah is Almighty, Most Wise.<sup>10</sup>

In this verse, for the word "thief" mentioned in it, is absolute, as is the case with the word "hand."

The Hadith or Sunnah explains the first of these two words and restricts it to mean, just the thief that steals a quarter of dinar. The Prophet Muhammad (SAAS) said "there is no cutting off of the hand except in (cases where one steals) quarter of a dinar and more."<sup>11</sup>

Likewise, the Prophet (SAAS) explained the second word "hand" with his action or with the action of his Companions and his approving of that. This is since they would cut the hand of the thief off from the wrist, as is well known from the books of Hadith.

- ✓ Those who believe and do not mix up their belief with (*Dhulm*) wrong, it is they who are entitled to peace (i.e. fearlessness in the Hereafter) and it is they who are blessed with guidance.<sup>12</sup>

In this verse the word (*Dhulm*) misunderstood Companions as wrong or something like that. This difficulty in their understanding let them to ask Prophet Muhammad (SAAS), which of us doesn't mix their faith with wrong? So the Prophet (SAAS) replied, "it doesn't means that. It only means *Shirk*.<sup>13</sup> Didn't you hear what Luqman said? "Verily *Shirk* is a great wrong"<sup>14</sup>

- ✓ And when you travel in the land, there will be no sin on you if you shorten the Prayer (i.e. offer two instead of four mandatory cycles), if you fear that the disbelievers are likely to afflict you with distress. Assuredly, the disbelievers are your open enemies.

The literal wording of this verse necessitates that shortening the prayer while on a journey can only be done on the condition when one is in the state of fear. This is why some of the Companions asked Allah's Messenger, so then why do we shorten the prayer when we are in a state of security? He (SAAS) replied, "This is a charity that Allah has expended to you, take His charity."<sup>15</sup>

- ✓ Forbidden to you is carrion (the animal that dies and is not slaughtered according to Islamic Law) and (the discharged) blood and pork and that (animal) on which the name of someone other than Allah has been invoked while slaughtering, and (the animal) that dies by strangling or by a violent blow (not by any sharp instrument) or by falling from a height or the one that has been gored to death or which has been ripped apart and gnawed by a wild beast, save the one which you slaughter (before it dies), and (that animal too is forbidden) which has been slaughtered on idolatrous altars (dedicated to false gods)...<sup>16</sup>

The Prophetic statement regarding the deceased locusts and fish, as well as liver and spleen (types) of blood are lawful. It is reported that Prophet (SAAS) said, "two types of deceased animals and two types of blood have been made lawful for us: locusts and sea fish (meaning all types of fish), and the liver and the spleen."<sup>17</sup>

In another verse Allah (SWT) says;

O Messenger! Communicate (to the people all) that has been revealed to you from your Lord. And if you did not do (so) then you would not deliver the Message of the Lord. And Allah will (Himself) protect your (life) from the people. Surely Allah does not show the path of guidance to those who disbelieve.<sup>18</sup>

Whatever Prophet Muhammad has received in the form of revelation from his Lord consists of two forms; one in the form of Quran and another in the form of Hadith, for the comprehension and simplification of the former. The Quranic knowledge is the outcome of Prophetic endeavors. We receive both the scriptures from the Prophet as ordained by Allah for the guidance of humanity.

The Quranic text is dependent for its explanations and exegesis on statements, practices, and tacit approvals of Prophet Muhammad (SAAS). It is an established fact prevalent from the very classical or formative period of Islam that Hadith was considered as a basic criteria for Quranic interpretation and comprehension. That is why scholars said, "Quran is dependent on Hadith more than Hadith is dependent on Quran".<sup>19</sup> It is worthy to mention here, this dependence of Quran on Hadith never minimizes the status of Quran. After all Quran is the word of God and preserved on *Lauh-i-Mahfuz* with *Nazm* and *Rabt*, and Hadith is the word or action of Prophet Muhammad (SAAS). The only point of consideration is that as for as the explanation and

comprehension or an exemplar of Quran is considered, Prophet Muhammad holds the status of exemplar and his line of conduct and mode of living is the perfect model of Quran as discussed earlier. For this reason Yahya ibn Kathir said, Sunnah is the arbiter of Quran while as Quran is not arbiter of Sunnah.<sup>20</sup>

### 3. Conclusion:

Thus to conclude the corpus of knowledge which Quran generates is huge and dynamic in its nature. The Quranic knowledge being divine natured provides the basics for all sorts of Knowledge. It includes all knowledge structures from physical to metaphysical world. The Quran itself needs an exemplar and itself affirms his significance. Prophet Muhammad as an exemplar proves the ultimate *Sharih* (Law Giver) only after Allah (SWT). The Prophetic legacy commonly known as Hadith is the ultimate exegesis of the Quranic text. It explains the ambiguous verses and provides the basics for the exploration of the Quranic text. Hadith as a source in order to understand the Quranic knowledge is important in order to interpret the text in its true spirit as intended by Allah (SWT).

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