

The New Approach of Understanding Hadiths Kawni through Scientific Facts.

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Abstract

Nabawi Hadith is the second source of Islamic Shari'a revealed by Allah s.w.t to MuHammad s.a.w. Other than explaining the laws, it also elaborates on matters related to the universe and humans (hadith kawni). Some of the hadiths include the group of mushkil al-hadith. In line with the exponential development of scientific fields, some of the scholars have benefited from scientific research in their understanding of the hadith texts. In most of the circumstances, scientific interpretations and i'jaz 'ilmi are seen to highlight the image of Islam as the religion of knowledge and science, sometimes causing some parties to make scientific interpretation blindly and carelessly. This study seeks to explain the guideline (dawabit) in understanding kawni hadiths through scientific research. The study outcome shows that scientific facts can be benefited as the wasilah in understanding kawni hadiths.

Keywords: New Approach, Kawni Hadith, Scientific Facts, *Tafsir 'ilmi*, *I'jaz 'ilmi*.

Introduction

Among the characteristics of nabawi hadiths is *al-syumuliyah*- it encompasses various topics and themes in life, in line with the holistic-oriented shari'a of Islam itself. Among the themes that have become the center of attention to these recent scholars is the science of human existence and the existence of the universe. The collection of kawni hadiths (related to the universe and humans) has started a long way, that was since the era when the sunnahs were compiled. Al-Bukhari, (2001) reserved a book in his al-Jami' entitled: "*Kitab Bad` al-Khalq* (the start of the event) and it contains 17 chapters related to the universe. There are 160 hadiths including 22 *mu'allaq*, and 93 repeated hadiths. All were recorded by Muslim (1954) except for 15 hadiths. Al-Bukhari also recorded in the book 40 *athar* (statements) of the companions and *tabi'in* (Ibn Hajar, 1959). Other than *Bad` al-Khalq*, there were other titles similar to kawni hadith like *al-Tibb* (Medicine) and *al-At'imah* (Food) where the titles can also be found in the works of other scholars like Muslim and al-Tirmidhi. Recent works lean more on scientific

interpretations on kawni hadiths. Al-Najjar (2009) has listed nine scientific sub-themes and 79 examples of hadiths that carry science themes. SaliH Rida (Al-Rida, 2001) debated 116 scientific sub-themes based on nabawi hadith. Yusuf al-Haj AHmad divided *i'jaz 'ilmi* into seven main themes and every theme is divided into more than five sub-themes.

The scientific discussions of hadith have been preceded by the interpretation of the al-Quran based on science, named *al-Tafsir al-'Ilmi* and scientific methodology in the (*al-Manhaj al-'Ilmi fi al-Tafsir*) that began as early as 5th Hijra. Some of the early advocates of this movement included al-Ghazali (505H), al-Baydawi (685H), al-Suyuti (911H). Earlier on, it was opposed by some of the scholars who did not agree with the scientific approach in the process of interpreting the al-Quran. Some of the earliest ones in protesting scientific interpretation would be Abu Hayyan al-Andalusi (745H) and al-Shatibi (790H) (Al-Dhahabi, 1978).

Although the term *al-SharH* is commonly used for the process of elaborating hadiths, the terms *al-Tafsir al-'Ilmi* has begun to be used by some of the scholars in elaborating upon the science-themed hadiths. The works of Yusuf Ismail (2015) and SaliH al-Amin al-Ma'iz (2018) employ the term *al-Tafsir al-'Ilmi* to explain the benefits of dates in the hadith.

Following the *al-Tafsir al-'Ilmi* movement, another movement emerged in harmonising the revelation and scientific facts or *al-I'jaz al-'Ilmi*. *Al-I'jaz al-'Ilmi* not *al-Tafsir al-'Ilmi*. Yet, both are inter-related and both use scientific approach.

The Definition of Tafsir Ilmi, I'jaz 'Ilmi and the Association between both

There are various definitions for 'ilmi. Al-Juday' (2001) explaining tafsir 'ilmi as the elaboration on verses with the themes of the universe, human existence and so on using scientific facts that have yet to be known previously. The definition limits the 'ilmi to certain verses only and not the entire verses of the al-Quran. According to al-Zandani (n.d.), Tafsir 'Ilmi is the elaboration on the meaning of the Quranic verses or nabawi hadiths based on the scientific theories. Al-Zandani's definition also includes two other elements which is the elaboration of nabawi hadiths and interpretation based on scientific theories. According to al-Rumi (2003), tafsir 'ilmi exposes the relationship between Quranic texts and scientific facts. This is the humans' attempt to delve into the meanings of the Quran (Al-'Alamiyah, n.d.).

I'jaz 'Ilmi is the revelation through al-Quran or Sunnah about a scientific fact where it is beyond the understanding yang mana ia adalah di luar kemampuan minda dan pencapaian manusia pada zaman Rasulullah s.a.w (Al-Zandani, n.d.).

Clearly, I'jaz 'Ilmi is not a form of interpretation but a statement about the reality that has proven scientifically. Nonetheless, the statement requires an interpretive methodology that can expose the reality intended. The methodology is tafsir 'ilmi. Thus, it can be concluded that tafsir 'ilmi is the wasilah to i'jaz 'ilmi. As the objective of i'jaz 'ilmi is normally found on verses that concern with the universe and humans, tafsir 'ilmi only focuses on the following verse also known as *al-ayat al-kawniyah*. Due to the fact that hadiths containing the same themes and their relations to scientific facts can lead to proof of the truth brought by Muhammad s.a.w and Islam, some of the scholars also included the studies of *kawniyah* hadiths in the scope of interpretation of 'ilmi dan i'jaz 'ilmi.

The Implication of tafsir 'ilmi

Scientific methodology is believed to be able to strengthen the understanding towards Quranic and hadith texts especially those with the theme of the universe and humans. It is not only testament to the supremacy of Allah s.w.t as the Divine power of the universe, but it also drives us to believe in the truth of the al-Quran and hadith (Al-Qudah, 2008). In the knowledge of hadith, scientific methodology is seen to be able to remove the ambiguity in understanding some of the mushkilat al-ahadith (hadiths seen as contradictory to the evidence of shar'i and the mind). Some of the rejected hadiths as the matan contains information thought to be impossible, contradict the al-Quran and with the source of *israi'iliyyaat* the status gets to be reconsidered when science proves that it does exist and it is not impossible (Al-Qudah, 2008). Even so, scientific discovery also helps in understanding the actual process of human existence stated in several hadiths and at the same time, the laws of fiqh built upon certain understanding that can be reevaluated so that it will be consistent with the progress of the science and technology (Al-Qudah, 1986).

Other than that, understanding and interpretation based on scientific methodology should be able to expose Islamic revelations as a discourse that is relevant in all eras, advocating the spread of knowledge, and in tandem with modern scientific laws. This should be able to rectify the misconception held by some parties on the religion and the belief that religion and knowledge or science are two separate aspects.

Nevertheless, the process is also seen to cause Quranic texts and Hadiths to be manipulated according to a certain theory- the interpretation also strays from the actual meaning, since there is no clear guideline. For instance, the verses in the al-Quran and Hadith have outperformed science in some discoveries due to the fact that there have been several signals from both with regard to the said discoveries, and this is not within the actual meaning conveyed in the al-Quran and hadith (Hilmi, 1982). Apart from that, finding facts or theories through the Quran and Hadiths would lead to the misunderstanding on the main role of both revelations as the source of faith. Having science as the basis of interpretation to the verse or hadith can cause *takalluf* or over-explanation that can lead to deviancy in the religion. Connecting the texts of the Quran and hadiths with ever-changing traits, can make both revelations exposed to criticisms and arguments (Al-Rumi, 2003). Placing something without any form basis at all, onto Muhammad s.a.w in the name of *i'jaz 'ilmi* is also included as counterfeiting hadith.

However, some of the scholars opined that a hadith with the status of *da'if* can be classified as *Hasan* if it is consistent with scientific facts (Al-Qudah, 2008). Some of the scholars have the opinion that scientific facts or logic cannot be considered as supporting the hadith *da'if* so it is evaluated as *Hasan* or thought of as part of Prophet's hadiths (Bazamul, 2003).

Guideline

According to the writer, scientific methodology in understanding revelation texts and the association between scientific facts and the reality found in the al-Quran and hadith can give an additional meaning to *mukjizat* under the condition that it considers the following aspects:

The Existence of a Hadith before it Becomes an Argument

The status of a hadith must be ascertained first before it becomes the basis of practice. All Muslim scholars are in unison to accept verified hadiths and hasan as the basis of the laws. There has been a dispute in accepting hadith da'if as evidence. However, none of the hadith experts or fiqh members have legitimised hadiths that are too da'if and mawdu'. The importance of checking for the validity of the hadiths is seen through the statement made by Ibn Sirin (110 H) as reported by al-Imam Muslim (261 H) in al-SaHiH (Hajjaj, 1954)

"They (hadith experts) have never asked about sanad. As a slander takes place (after the murder of Uthman ibn 'Affan in 35 H) they began to ask, name us your rijal. So if the one reporting it was a member of the sunnah, the hadith would be used. If the one reporting was a member of the bidaah, the hadith would be rejected"

When a hadith has been verified based on the methodology, scientific elaborations might be able to be of use when it comes to understanding the meaning of the hadith. Any empirical fact or scientific law can be fundamental to the actual meaning of a hadith. According to al-Zandani (n.d.), if a piece of evidence or nas is *ẓanni*, it has to be explained in line with scientific facts. If a scientific fact contradicts a hadith that is naturally *ẓanni al-thubut*, the hadith has to be explained so that it will be consistent with the contradicting fact. If the meaning cannot be made consistent together with scientific facts, the facts must be prioritised compared to the hadith that is characteristically *ẓanni*.

For example, based on evidence (the clearest meaning in mind) of the Ibn Mas'ud r.a hadith, the proper process of the embryo formation takes 120 days. However, the fact shows that it happens in 40 days. Here, the hadith has to be explained in line with the facts. Additionally, several other hadiths that are also verified contain meanings consistent with the embryology facts (Al-Qudah, 2008).

If a status of a hadith is considered da'if, (caused by the issues on the sanad), da'if jiddan or mawdu', there is no need to examine the meaning or to use scientific facts to support the meaning. In this situation, it is unreasonable to label the meaning of a hadith that is proven da'if as i'jaz 'ilmi merely because it is consistent with scientific discovery. Hadith da'if means most probably it does not exist or it is not the statement made by the Prophet. The need to believe in hadith da'if and the validity of the hadith based on the methodology of the fiqh members cannot serve as the basis to the justification of using scientific facts to support hadith da'if and to continue to see it as i'jaz 'ilmi. This is because the need to succumb to hadith da'if is confined by the term and condition stipulated. One of them is not it is not based on Prophet s.a.w (Al-Asqalani, n.d.). scholars have the tendency to evaluate this verified hadith although there is an issue with the sanad as it is consistent with the text of the Quran, ijma' and the generality of Syara'. However, the validity of the matan based on the fiqh members' consideration does not mean that the sanad is also valid and we can rest them on the Prophet. In this issue, what is meant as Hujjah would be the Quranic texts, ijma' and the common laws of syara' and not the hadith da'if. Thus, scientific facts or logic cannot be weighed upon as supporting a hadith da'if so they are evaluated as Hasan or thought to be part of the hadiths of the Prophet s.a.w (Bazamul, 2003).

Understanding Hadith Texts

It is important to understand the hadiths based on the language and the time in which the hadiths came. The Arabic words often used for nabawi hadiths normally contain more than one meaning. Thus, the meaning of Haqiqi (main or surface meaning) and majazi (second meaning) must be distinguished. The *istinbat usuli* method is really helpful in understanding these Arabic texts. As the meanings supporting a fact or scientific law are obtained through various indicators, like *dalalat al-mantuq al-sarih* (actual meaning of an utterance), *dalalat al-isharah* (meaning beyond the intended meaning and whether the statement is correct or not is not dependent on it), *dalalat al-ima`* (statements containing the premise or the basis of a law), and *dalalat al-mafhum* (not the meaning of a statement but understood from it), the knowledge of *dalalat al-lafz* (Al-Najjar, 2009) must be mastered.

There are also words with meanings changing through time, such as *al-taswir*, *al-sa`ih*. Thus, it is important to know the time frame of a term. There are also words that are seldom used (*gharib*). The knowledge about the references related to *al-alfaz al-gharibah* (rare utterances) is truly helpful in these matters.

Other than that, several other aspects have to be considered in understanding the hadith like the context, topic, *sabab al-wurud* (the original story) and *maqasid al-shari`ah*. Some of them are only known through *sabr al-riwayat wa al-alfaz* (collecting the stories and narrations of the hadith). As long as it does not contradict the Arabic methods, it is allowed although it is out of the context. For instance, in the hadith Hudhayfah bin Usayd r.a (Hajjaj, 1954, no:2645) the process of human existence is explained from the embryo although the actual context explains about fate. That said, explaining without linguistic reason (*takalluf*) merely to support a fact or theory is prohibited at all costs (Al-Najjar, 2009).

Possibly, some of the utterances or narrations are seen to contradict other sources of utterances or narrations. Thus, one should understand the methods adopted in dealing with *mukhtalif al-hadith* or *mushkil al-hadith*. Some of the things stated in the hadith are the *wasilah* that keeps changing through time and situation. The main issues are maintained and need to be understood. For example, the use of the *sugi* or chewing stick is a consistently changing *wasilah*. The main aim for its use is for dental and mouth care (Al-Qaradawi, 1992; Al-ZuHayli, 2006).

Tafsir 'ilmi is not the only way to Understand Hadith

As Muhammad s.a.w was granted *jawami` al-kalim* (a brief expression but very meaningful) and Arabic words are considered *Hammalat awjuh* (having more than one meaning), *tafsir ilmi* is not the only way to understand hadith nabawi. In other words, the demand for understanding the laws from hadiths is not just met with *tafsir 'ilmi*. Studies in this field (*i`jaz 'ilmi*) show that most of the meanings consistent with the facts are obtained through *dalalat al-isharah* (beyond the meaning intended by the speaker and whether it is true or not does not depend on it) and all the laws and teachings needed are issued and debated by previous Muslim scholars. *Tafsir 'ilmi* functions to consolidate the existing understanding. Thus, it is not reasonable to make light the efforts and contributions of the previous scholars who had worked really hard in delving into the true meanings of the hadiths and extracting the laws from them (Al-Najjar, 2009).

Verification of Facts

A fact that is connected to a hadith must be verified beforehand by experts. If the facts are the already existing discovery, the reference of the facts must be academic in nature (Al-Najjar, 2009). As science is based on observations and experiments (Encyclopaedia, n.d.) and the decisions are forever changing, it is reasonable to confirm the value of a finding that is to be related to the meaning of a hadith. Theoretical scientific laws cannot be chosen as the method in interpreting hadith texts. This can make the revelations disputable when the supporting theories are rejected and even questioned.

Avoid the Detailed Argument on I'jaz 'ilmi

The purpose of the scientific methodology is to understand the hadith kawni which mostly lean on scientific interpretation delivered by MuHammad s.a.w. The need to understand hadith kawni stems from the actual function of the revelations as the source of faith. Detailed and intricate studies on a given topic involving certain specification and expertise need to be avoided (Al-Najjar, 2009). This causes the understanding of hadith to not leading to the original reason as to why the scientific methodology is developed in the Quranic and hadiths interpretation. Assuming that the al-Quran – as well as hadith – as the reference for Physics, Chemistry or any branch of knowledge would serve as the misconception about the actual trait and role of these revelations (Al-Rumi, 2003).

Conclusion

Based on past discussions, scientific facts can be used in the understanding of nabawi hadithseven more so for the hadiths that contradict any evidence of shar'i and the mind. However, it has to take into account the validity of the hadith, the understanding of the meaning based on Arabic framework and the method of istinbat usuli, the identification and confirmation of facts from experts. Detailed debates more interconnected with science compared to hadiths mut be avoided. Tafsir 'ilmi is not the only way to understand revelations. Even in most cases, it is more on the consolidation of meaning and the laws decreed by previous scholars of hadiths.

These things need to be taken into account as a new guide and model in understanding the hadith kawni, especially those categorized as mushkil al-hadith. It has the potential to highlight the side of knowledge that exists in the sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad s.a.w in facing the era of science and technology by maintaining the authenticity of Islamic sources through a correct understanding and guided by authentic methods.

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