

The Concept Of Steadfast (Al-I'tisam) To The Qur'an And The Sunnah For Humanizing Mankind

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Abstract

The Qur'an as well as the Sunnah are revelation sources for all explanation and orientation of Islamic knowledge. There are very sound and clear textual evidences with commits Muslims to perform al-Ictisam of both sources. Al-Ictisam or holding fast to the Qur'an and the Sunnah, is the Islamic principle expressed by the revelation through analogical style of language. To evade misconceptions and confusions, the analogy necessitates further explanation. Hence the article intends to elucidate the concept of performing al-Ictisam to the Qur'an and the Sunnah according to the authoritative methodology of Islamic knowledge. The concept of al-Ictisam to the Qur'an and the Sunnah should be observed from the aspects of faith, study, understanding, practice, appreciation as well as Islamic call (da'wah).

Keywords: al-Ictisam, the Qur'an, the Sunnah.

INTRODUCTION

The word I'tisam originally means to defend, entrench and seek protection [1]. The basis for the requirement of i'tisam to the Qur'an and the Sunnah is the word of Allah which means: "And hold fast all of you to the rope of Allah's, and do not be divided..." [2]. For someone to cling to a rope is equivalent for he or she to hold fast to the rope. Then the word rope is understood as the Din or religion of Allah (the Qur'an and the Sunnah) through figurative language of isti'arah (aesthetics). The function of the holy Qur'an

and the noble Sunnah as means to achieve salvation of the hereafter is equal to importance of ropes in attaining worldly safety [3]. This is also echoed by Prophet Muhammad who said: “I leave to you two things which eternally prevents all of you to go astray by holding fast to them: the book of Allah and my Sunnah” [4]. Book of Allah refers to the Qur’an revealed to Prophet Muhammad. While the Sunnah means every word, actions, decision and characteristics of Prophet Muhammad known through authentic narrations, which can or should be emulated by the Muslim ummah.

The Qur’an and the Sunnah are revelation of Allah, brought down to his Prophet gradually for 23 years, according to circumstances and events. Both are sources of explanation and the orientation of Islamic knowledge. Al-Shafi’i said: “The original source is the Qur’an and the Sunnah. Whenever both (original source) is not available textually, then analogy is to be performed based on them. When the hadith is authentic then it becomes the Sunnah. Muslim consensus (Ijma’) is stronger than individual narration. Hadiths is to be understood according to their apparent meaning (zahir), if any hadith contains several meanings, then understand them using the one nearest to the apparent meaning” [5]. Hence holding to the Qur’an and the Sunnah is an Islamic principle. However, this principle is less understood and further elaborations is necessary. The concept of al-I’tisam to the Qur’an and Sunnah should be observed from the aspects of faith, study, understanding, practice, appreciation as well as Islamic call (da’wah).

BELIEVING (IMAN) AND CONTINUOUS COMMITMENT (ISTIQAHAH)

Believing in the Qur’an and the Sunnah is the core of believing in Allah and his Prophet. Furthermore, believing in Allah and Prophet Muhammad is also the essence of the declaration of faith (syahadah) pledged by every Muslim. Therefore, the Qur’an and the Sunnah should be undividedly believed in terms of revelational values, source of reference and perfection of content. The priceless revelational values of both are affirmed by Allah through His verse which means: “None of what he (Prophet Muhammad) said is from his desire. His saying is none other than the revelation sent down to him” [6]. Similarly, Prophet Muhammad also

affirmed that: "What is given to me is no less than the revelation sent down by Allah to me..." [7]. The function of the Qur'an and the Sunnah as sources of reference can be derived from the next verse: "...Then if you come to disagreement on something, so have it returned to Allah and His Messenger, if you are true believers of Allah and the Day of Judgement..." [8]. Elucidating this verse, al-Shafi'i said: "To return to Allah is to return to His book (the Qur'an), while returning to the Prophet after his demise is the return to his Sunnah" [9]. The perfection of content of both sources is also asserted through the word of Allah as the following: "...on this day I have perfected to you my religion, and I have made sufficient my bounty, and I am also pleased to made Islam as your religion" [10]. Faith or iman should be followed with continuous commitment or istiqamah. Prophet Muhammad has commanded: "Say: 'I believe in Allah', then be continuously committed" [11]. He also said: "A group of my followers will be continuously committed to the truth. They will not be affected by those who abandoned them until the Last Day comes" [12]. Hudhayfah Ibn al-Yaman said: "O all reciters of the Qur'an! Be continuously committed (on the right path). Verily you have led far ahead at the front, but if you are inclined to the right or the left, then far will you go astray" [13].

FREQUENTING THE METHODOLOGY OF TATHABBUT

Tathabbut is the step taken to scrutinize information which is an important pillar in Islamic knowledge methodology. Allah says in His holy book: "And when a news of peace or fear come to them, they have it published. If they returned it to the Messenger and 'Ulil Amri (those possessing power) from their kind, certainly the people who wants to know the truth (will be able) to discover it from them (the Messenger and 'Ulil Amri). If not due to the bounty and blessings of Allah to you, you will find yourself following the footsteps of the devil, except a small number (of you) [14]. Regarding this verse, Ibn Kathir commented: "(This verse) is a refutation to people who rushed (to spread) particular items before checking their authenticity. He would be busy narrating and prolonging them although they might be incorrect" [15]. Prophet Muhammad stressed the importance of Tathabbut methodology through his saying: 'Whoever intentionally lie in my name, then he has reserved his place in the hellfire' [16]. The Companions of the Prophet observed this methodology in their intellectual activities. Abu Bakr for instance verified the authenticity of al-Mughirah's

narration through the testimony of Muhammad Ibn Maslamah, while Umar checked the authenticity of Abu Musa al-Asy'ariyy's narration with Abu Said al-Khudriyy [17]. The similar goes with Aishah who requested Urwah Ibn al-Zubayr to make assessment of the narration of Abdullah Ibn Amru [18].

Solaiman (peace be upon him), and confirm it from the news of the hoopoe bird:

Allah said in the story of Solaiman with the hoopoe bird: {He said, "We will see, are you truthful or were you of the liars?" [An-Naml: 20-27].

I say: If we took this as a motto for us in life, we would block the way for those who gossip and false slanderers who seek corruption and corruption among people.

The need of tathabbut is more urgent, when major tribulations happened during the age of the Companions. The slogan "tell us the name of your narrators" [19] was introduced to guard religious teachings from false information. In this context, al-Shafi'i said: "The origin of knowledge is tathabbut, (but) the result is salvation" [20]. Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani further clarified: "Then it is likely and most proper enough for a Muslim to study what comes from Allah and His Messenger. Afterwards he should try his best to understand their meanings and make himself busy to act upon them. If it is related to the fundamental of knowledge, then he ought to be busy in believing and being convinced with its truth. However, when it is related to the application of knowledge, then he must strive to obey it either by carrying out or abandoning it. If he has more time, then it is permissible for him to make himself busy with the study of speculations which might happen while having the objective to act it out when it becomes a reality. However, if the concentration to speculations revolves around those which is still in the air, while caring less for the implementation of commandments and prohibitions he has learned about, then this falls into the prohibitions. Verily learning the religion is commendable if the knowledge is to be implemented, neither for being hypocritical nor for entering disputes".

OBEDIENCE AND POINT OF FOLLOWING

Obedience and following are proofs of faith. Obedience to the Qur'an and the Sunnah are manifestation of obeying Allah and His Prophet. Allah says: "O believers! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and 'Ulil Amri (rulers) of your own kind..." [21]. In other verse, Allah has also said: "O our Lord! We have believed in whatever You have revealed, and **we follow Your Messenger**; then write our names with those who witnessed (affirming Your unity and the truthfulness of Your Prophet)" [22]. In the similar theme, Prophet Muhammad has said: "All of my followers will enter paradise except those who refuse to do so". They (his Companions) asked: "O messenger of Allah! Who will refuse to enter paradise"? He answered: "Those who obey me will enter paradise, but those who detest from obeying me then they are the one who refuse to do so" [23]. In other hadith, he also said: "Verily the comparison of me with what (truth) Allah has sent me with, is similar to a man who came to a tribe saying: O my people, I saw with my bare eyes that forces of the enemy (is advancing near). Verily I am the giver of bad tidings which can loosen one's clothing, so quickly save yourselves". A number of the tribesman obeyed the warning, they hastily left (the place) at night and survived. While others refused to believe, so they remained in that place until dawn, only to be destroyed by the army. That is the comparison of myself with those who obeyed and followed me. (In this, there is) also (the comparison of myself) with those who denied me and assume what I brought as nothing less than lies" [24].

The obedience to Muslim rulers is also the obedience to Allah and His Messenger. The Prophet explained: "Whoever obeyed me, then he is obedience to Allah. And whoever defy me, then he is defying Allah. Whoever obeys his 'amir (ruler), then he is obedience to me. And whoever who defy his 'amir, then he is defying me. Verily the Imam (ruler) is a shield in fighting, if he rules with piety (taqwa) and justice, then for him a great reward awaits. And if he rules with other than that (without piety and justice), then for him sins (as reward)" [25]. Al-Shafi'i said: "You rebelled against God but you displayed love of Him. This is impossible for Qiyas Badi' (Badi' [26] Analogy). If your love is truthful, then you will obey Him. Verily a lover will obey the ones he loved" [27].

FOLLOWING ACCORDING TO KNOWLEDGE

Following the Qur'an and the Sunnah means to hold fast to the teachings of both after knowing the particular proofs and evidences. Allah says in the Qur'an: "Say (o Muhammad): 'This is my path, where I call mankind to the religion of Allah **with clear proofs and evidences**, that of me and **of people who followed my path**. Glory be to Allah (from all beliefs and actions of polytheism), and I am not from the polytheists" [28]. He also says: "Then we made you to be on a legislation (shariah) from the affairs (of religion). Hence **follow the legislation** and do not follow the desires of the ignorant" [29].

LIQUIDATING FANATICISM (TA'ASSUB), LOOSEN BLIND IMITATION (TAQLID)

The benchmark of obedience and following is the courage to put aside opinions from the school of thought which contradicts the evidences and methodology of the religion. Al-Shafi'i said: "When you find in my treatise (opinions) contradicting the Sunnah of the Prophet, then you should speak (hold fast) to that Sunnah of the Prophet and abandon my opinion" [30]. It is not necessary for mujtahids or expert scholars who perform ijtihad to know all Sunnah available in the world. As a matter of fact, they might endorse opinions in conflict with the authentic Sunnah. Therefore, it is not permissible to be obsessed with fanaticism and blind following towards certain infallible figures including great mujtahids. Here the obedience and following of the Qur'an and the Sunnah is the revelational way to dilute fanaticism of personality cult and loosen the shackles of blind following. The concept of adhering to mazhabs or schools of Islamic thought should be free from fanaticism, as schools of thought only served as repository of rulings (fatwa) of various mujtahids who are expert scholars but they are not infallible. Fanaticism of mazhabs conflicts the principles of the Din. Prophet Muhammad said: "...And whoever fights under the blind (fanaticism) banner, he is angry due to fanaticism, he calls to fanaticism, he helps because of fanaticism; then his death is alike death during pre-Islamic days (jahiliyyah)..." [31]. Fanaticism of mazhabs means committing oneself with the opinions of only one mazhab or obliging the following of a particular mazhab although it is contradictory to the proofs and

methodology of the religion [32]. Starting with it, fanaticism will only encourage blind following.

Blind imitation means following just any opinion without basirah or correct understanding of the religious arguments. Al-Shafi'i said: "Any of my speech in conflict with anything authentic from the Messenger of Allah, then the it (the words of the Messenger of Allah) is more important and **do not make blind following (taqlid) of me**" [33]. So, the concept of adhering to a particular mazhab should be free from fanaticism and blind following, as both can easily trigger intrareligious enmity. It is saddening when issues regarding the non-fundamental (furu') become the dispute factors in the society, due to fanaticism and blind following.

APPRECIATING THE METHODOLOGY OF EASE (TAYSIR)

Linguistically taysir means to ease. In the shariah terminology, taysir refers to the simplifying of religious teaching, in accordance with the letters and spirit of the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Taysir is never intended to reduce religious teaching, but it is the pinnacle of religious moderation. Prophet Muhammad said: "Verily the religion (of Islam) is easy, there will be no one who makes the religion difficult unless he will be lost. So, you shall correct, hover, give glad tidings and ask for help (make the most of opportunity) from journeys during the mornings and evenings, plus some from journeys during early night hours" [34]. The Prophet also reminded Mu'az Ibn Jabal and Abu Musa Al-Ash'ari: "Both of you should simplify (and) do not burden, give glad tidings (and) do not intimidate, cooperate and do not enter into disagreement" [35].

Methodology of Taysir is the opposite from methodology of Takalluf. Takalluf means speaking the unnecessary, or doing the difficult, or bearing unfamiliar burden [36]. The terminology of Takalluf refers to the inventing the unnecessary in religion, until it is burdensome and exceeded the real intention of the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Islam outwardly rejects the approach of Takalluf. Allah says: "Say (O Muhammad): "I do not request from you any form of payment in conveying the teachings of the Qur'an, and I am not from the ones who practice Takalluf" [37]. Illustrating the meaning of this verse, Ibn Kathir said: "I do not desire and do not look for any payment for the duties of prophethood. Verily I only perform

what is ordained, neither with addition nor reduction” [38]. Umar Ibn al-Khattab said: “We were prohibited from Takalluf” [39]. Al-Bukhari placed in his Sahih a chapter entitled: “Chapter: (In stating) disliked (makruh) matters such as excess questioning and **performing takalluf with unbeneficial issues**, as well as the saying of Allah “Do not ask of something, for if it is answered, you will be burdened” [40]. Ibn Hajar Al-ʿAsqalani said: “Therefore, a group of the predecessor scholars (Salaf) condemns the act of questioning the unhappened as a behavior containing takalluf, extremity and creating unnecessary speculation in religion” [41].

The methodology of takalluf sparks the problem of extremism (ghuluw) and innovation in religion (bidʿah). Extremism in religion will only bring destruction and disaster as has occurred among the People of the Book (Ahl al-Kitab). Allah says in the Qurʿan: “Say: ‘O People of the Book! Do not exaggerate in your religion other than the truth, and do not follow the vain desires of people who went astray before and led astray, and also (now) they have strayed themselves from the right path” [42]. Prophet Muhammad also said: “Shun extremism in religion as indeed the people before you have perished because of extremism in religion” [43]. Clarifying this hadith, Ibn Taymiyyah commented: “The expression ‘shun extremism in religion’ is general and inclusive to all forms of extremism, either in belief or practice...” [44]. In another hadith, the Messenger of Allah also said: “The extreme shall perish (uttered thrice)” [45]. Al-Nawawi said: “Perished be the extremist who exceed the limits in their sayings and actions” [46]. The phenomenon of extremism and innovation in religion stems from extreme rationalist interpretation which transgress the objectives of the revelation. The capacity of intellect is limited and can easily be affected by materiality as well as desires. Thus, the thought of human mind should be regulated by the institution of revelation.

LIMITING INNOVATION IN RELIGION (BIDʿAH)

Innovation in religion or bidʿah is the forged approach in affairs of religion [47]. It challenges divine legislation and objectives of shariah or divine law. Hence bidʿah is the very opposite of prophetic Sunnah. Prophet Muhammad ordered his followers to adhere closely to his Sunnah and to avoid bidʿah. The Prophet said: “Verily whoever among you who lives after me, he will encounter

lots of disagreement, so hold fast to my Sunnah and the Sunnah of the Rightly Guided Caliph after me, (hold it so tightly by) biting it with your molar teeth, and avoid innovated things (in religion) as they are bid'ah and all bid'ah will go astray" [48]. Al-Shafi'i said: "I advise (you) to have piety (taqwa) in Allah, to cling to the Prophetic Sunnah and the athar (practice) of the companions, to leave bid'ah and desires". Al-Shafi'i also said: "Bid'ah is of two types: what contradicts the Book (Qur'an), Sunnah, athar or consensus (Ijma^c) then it is the deviated bid'ah, for bid'ah that is not in conflict with all (the religious sources), then it is the not the disgraceful bid'ah" [49].

SUBJUGATING RATIONALITY TO THE WILL OF REVELATION

Sahl Ibn Hunayf have said to the army of Siffin: "Scrutinize your intellect with prejudice!". That is what he said to rescind his rationalist interpretation which was in conflict with the prophetic decision to sign the Hudaibiyah Treaty while the Muslim army is much stronger than their enemy [50]. However, the decision of Prophet Muhammad has proven to be most correct as it is a part of revelation although the intellect would accept the reverse of it. The saying of Sahl can be explained as: "at times when the logic of rationality confronted the revelation of the Qur'an and Sunnah, then to suppose the errors of rationality is more secure than opposing the Qur'an and the Sunnah". Al-Bukhari mentions this narration of Sahl under the chapter entitled: "Chapter: in stating the censure of rationalist interpretation and the takalluf of analogy (qiyas)" [51].

The intellect can strive to perform ijtihad as long as the process is in harmony with the revelation. Anyway, due to its limitations, the intellect must not be placed higher than revelation. The maxim of Islamic Law (Qawa'id Fiqhiyyah) also asserted that "ijtihad is not to be performed at places where the revelation had been established" [52]. Al-Shafi'i said: "Verily for the intellect, a limit ended its frontier, just like a limit ended the horizon of plain eye sight" [53]. This scholar also asserted: "Analogy (qiyas) is performed during emergency (darurah). However, persons who utilized their logic at the same time do not believe that they can really suit a particular objective of the divine legislation. Thus, they are obliged to make their best ijtihad in achieving reward from Allah, although they could be erroneous. Only Allah is the best

guide” [54]. Ibn Abd al-Barr al-Qurtubi said: “The majority (jumhur) from the People of Knowledge said: ‘The reprehensible rationalist interpretation are opinions in the legislation of the religion based on istihsan, suspicion (dhann), mu’dhal (weak) narrations and assumptions. **Then rationalist interpretation is being utilized,** branched and detailed with various speculations before it really happened. They (People of Knowledge) said: “For someone to make himself busy with this matter will only retard the Sunnah and encourage ignorance of it” [55]. Rationalist interpretation in conflict with the objectives of revelation will only open the doors of religious damage. The deviation of Moses’s Torah and Jesus’s Gospel started with rationalist interpretation, particularly hermeneutics. The same goes with the deviation of the Batiniyyah (esotericism) which stemmed out of allegoricalism of rationalist interpretation. Furthermore liberalism, rationalism, relativism, pluralism, inclusivism, extremism and other ideologies is deeply rooted in rationalist interpretations.

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