



## A critical analysis of the way the Sunnah explains the Qur'an

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### Abstract

The paper started by giving the definitions of the key terms in it the definition of the Qur'an literally and technically, likewise it event on to define Sunnah literally and technically. It continues to enumerate the ways the Sunnah explains the Qur'an outlining the three basic ways of doing that. Similarly, the paper gives examples in each case with some basic issues in Islam and the paper concluded that the Sunnah emphatically explains the Qur'an, and sometimes it gives detailed explanation while in some cases it explains the Qur'an by giving independent laws which has origin from the Book and sometimes has no visible origin from the Qur'an.

**Keywords:** Qur'an, Sunnah, Hadith, Analysis and Ways.

## INTRODUCTION

In the name of Allah the most Gracious the most Merciful. All praises are due to Allah the Creator Cherisher and Sustainer of the entire Universe, May the most perfect peace and blessings be upon the seal of Allah's Prophets and Messenger and Prophet Muhammad Ibn Abdullah the Qurashite, the Hashimite and the Adnanite as well as his noble household and prestigious companions and those who follow them with goodness to the last day, Amin Ya Wahidu.

### The ways by which the Sunnah explains the Qur'an

#### Definition of Sunnah

The Sunnah literally means a path or way or usage or sanctioned tradition, customary procedure or action habit or practice.<sup>[1]</sup>

This path could either be praise worthy or blame worthy as it is mentioned in the Prophetic Hadith:

من سن في الإسلام سنة حسنة فله أجره وأجر من عمل بها إلى يوم القيامة، ومن سن سنة سيئة فعليها وزرها ووزر من عمل بها إلى يوم القيامة.

Meaning: "whoever guides to a good path (way) in Islam, he will have its reward and the reward of those who acted accordingly until the day of Judgment, whoever guided to a bad path (way) he have its sin (recorded against him) and the sin of those who acted accordingly till the day of Judgment".<sup>[2]</sup>

Technically, Sunnah according to the Hadith scholars is whatever is obtained from the Prophet (May Allah Peace and Blessing be upon him) of his sayings, deeds, and approval and his physical and moral qualities both before and after revelation whether it constitute a legal verdict or not.

#### Definition of Qur'an

Qur'an is literally derived from the phrases Qara'a, Yaqra'u, Qira'atan and Qur'an he read, he is reading the reading itself and the Book to be read constantly and persistently. Technically, however, the Qur'an is the name given to the last

<sup>1</sup> Caravan, J. M. honsweber, Dictionary of modern Arabic (Arabic to English), India: New Delhi, 1960, p. 433.,

<sup>2</sup> Muslim, Imam Sahih Muslim, Kitab al-Ilm, from Jabir ibn Abdullah, see also Darami, Imam Sunan al-Darami under the title of the Hadith from Jabir and Abu Hurairah may Allah be please with them.

divine revelation revealed to the last and best Prophet and Messenger Muhammad which is a permanent miracle through Angel Jibril (May Allah's Peace be upon them) both beginning with Surat al-Fatihah and ending with Surat al-Nas.<sup>[3]</sup>

There is a tight relationship between the Qur'an and the Prophetic *Sunnah* and the *Sunnah* had come purposely to interpret and comment practically on the Glorious Qur'an.

### **The ways in which Sunnah explains the Qur'an there are three principal ways in which Sunnah explains the Qur'an.**

1. The first is where the Sunnah acts as supportive by giving similar ruling to those in the Qur'an without resorting to details
2. The second, is where the Sunnah acts as explainer or commentator to the rules in the Qur'an by elucidating things that are mentioned in brief (Mujmal) or specifying those that are mentioned in general form (Umum) or restricting what otherwise appears unlimited (Mutlaq)
3. The third is where the Sunnah acts independently by giving additional rulings that have been mentioned in the Qur'an. All these cases have been confirmed by the Islamic scholars.

In the first case, the example could be cited of the pillars of Islam. In the Qur'an we find verses which talk about these five pillars of Islam.

For example the statement of Allah the Glorified the most high about prayer aid charity, concerning Fasting and concerning Hajj out most importantly concerning thee testification that there is no deity worthy of worship but Allah and that Muhammad (May Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him) is the servant and messenger of Allah the most high.

In the Glorious Qur'an, Allah the Glorified the most exalted says: know therefore, that there is no God but Allah, and ask forgiveness for your fault and for the men and women who because for Allah knows how you are more about and how you dwell in your homes.<sup>[4]</sup> In another verse in the Surat al-Fathi, He says: "Muhammad is the messenger of Allah..."<sup>[5]</sup>

Allah the most high says: "Be steadfast in prayer and establish regular charity"<sup>[6]</sup>

This verse is referring to prayer and zakat, likewise Allah the most high says about the pillar of fasting, "Oh you who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed to those before you that ye may learn self-restraint"<sup>[7]</sup>. About the fifth pillar Hajj Pilgrimage, He also said, "Pilgrimage is duty men are to Allah, those who can afford the journey"<sup>[8]</sup>. All these statements of Allah is in accord with various Ahadith that are talking about these five pillars of Islam, for example the popular Hadith of Abdullahi Ibn Umar (May Allah be pleased with them) in which the Prophet May Allah's Peace and Blessings be upon him, said "Islam is built upon five pillars: Testifying that there is no deity worthy worship except Allah and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah, the establishment of regular prayer and giving out regular charity, fasting of Ramadan and pilgrimage to the sacred house of Allah, to him who has the means."<sup>[9]</sup>

On the prohibition side, an example are the verses which talk about the prohibition of consuming each other's wealth in vanity except through mutual consent of the owner or legal trading, Allah the Most High the Glorified says: "O you who believe eat not up your property among yourselves in vanities but let there be traffic and trade by mutual good will". Agreed upon by Bukhari and Muslim, Imam Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, Kitab al-Imam, see also Imam Muslim, Kitab Al-Imam in some places, fasting was given as the last pillar, No kill or destroy yourselves: for verily, Allah has been to you Most Merciful."<sup>[10]</sup> This verse and others of the same signification cares upon to the tradition in which the Prophet (May Allah's Peace and Blessings be upon him) said: "the life, property and dignity of a Muslim is sacred upon his fellow Muslim"<sup>[11]</sup>

**كل المسلم على المسلم حرام دمه وماله وعرضه, لا يحل مال امرئ مسلم إلا بطيب من نفسه**

Read thus: and the Hadith in which he said: "It is not lawful to consume the wealth of a Muslim except by mutual consent from him".

<sup>3</sup> Caravan, J. M. Honsweber, Dictionary of modern Arabic (Arabic to English), Op, Cit.

<sup>4</sup> A. A. Yusuf, The Holy Qur'an English Translation of the meanings and commentary, at Madinah al-Munawwarah, King Fahad, Holy Qur'an printing Complex, Qur'an, 47: 19.

<sup>5</sup> Qur'an 48: 29

<sup>6</sup> Qur'an 2: 23

<sup>7</sup> Qur'an 2:113

<sup>8</sup> Qur'an 3:97

<sup>9</sup> Bukhari and Muslim, Shih al-Bukhari Kitab al-Iman.

<sup>10</sup> Qur'an, 4: 29 and see Qur'an, 2: 188.

<sup>11</sup> Muslim, Imam, Kitabul Bir Hadith from Abu Hurairh, see also Tirmidhy.

In the first example, these are correspondence between verses and the traditions concerning pillars of Islam. In the second example, there is correspondence between the two, each pointing to the prohibition of shedding a Muslim's blood consuming his property illegally, or degrading his dignity by a fellow Muslim.<sup>[12]</sup>

In the second case, where the Sunnah is explanatory to the rules in the Qur'an are numerous, this relates to the many legal rules of the Qur'an like the details, the modes and the times of observing the five pillars of Islam, mutual transactions (Mu'amalat) and related issues, there are instances where the Sunnah specifies, particularize or restricts legal rules in the Qur'an.

Observe the following cases:

- (i) The verdict of cutting a thief's hand, man or woman given in the Qur'an.<sup>[13]</sup> This seems to suggest that anybody who committed these in whatever manner or whatever the amount he stole, the punishment still applies. If reference is made to Sunnah, the following clarification will come to the time light.
  - (a) The hand of the confirmed thief must not be cut from the elbow but from the wrist.<sup>[14]</sup>
  - (b) The amount stolen must have reached Nisab (minimum amount) as one quarter of a Dinar (1/4) or three Darahim.<sup>[15]</sup>
  - (c) The thief must not have been connected with the exhibit such as where he was entrusted but he betrayed the trust.<sup>[16]</sup> Or even where he confiscated the article in a open space where people are observing him.
  - (d) The material must have been stolen from a fortified place not an open place or something carelessly displayed outside.
- (ii) The allotted shares in the Qur'an for the relatives inheriting each other, where for example where the father inherits from the child and vice versa.<sup>[17]</sup> The Sunnah came to specify that: difference in religion between and intentional killing of one by the other excludes from inheriting each other. This is because of the Ahadith of the Prophet (May Allah's Peace and Blessing be upon him) which says:

لا يتوارث أهل ملننين

لا يرث المؤمن الكافر ولا الكافر المسلم

Meaning: Adherents of two religions should not inherit each other.<sup>[18]</sup> "A Muslim cannot inherit an infidel, nor is an infidel allowed to inherit a Muslim."<sup>[19]</sup>

And there is also a Hadith that reads:

ليس للقاتل من الميراث شئ

Thus "The intentional killer gets nothing from the inheritance (of his killed heir)"<sup>[20]</sup>

- (iii) The third case is where the *Sunnah* gives rules upon which the Qur'an is silent. Independent rulings are given in the Qur'an. Eg in Surat al-Nisa'I where Allah talks about women who are prohibited degree of marriage to a man, the verse ended thus "... except for those, all others are lawful, provided you talk them in marriage with gifts from your property describing chastity not lost...."<sup>[21]</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Al-Suba'I, M. H. Op, Cit, P, 386.

<sup>13</sup> Qur'an, 5: 38

<sup>14</sup> Bukhari, Sahih Imam Al-Bukhari, Kitab al-Hudud from Caliph Ali may Allah be please with him.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, Hadith from Aishah may Allah be please with her

<sup>16</sup> Musnad Imam Ahmad, Sunan al-Tirmidhi, Sunan Abi Dawud, Kitab al-Hudud.

<sup>17</sup> Qur'an, 4: 7 and 11

<sup>18</sup> The compilers of Sunan Al-hakim and Ahmad Imam Musnad Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal from Abdullahi bin Umar and Usama bn Zaid.

<sup>19</sup> Al-Nasa'I Imam Sunan al-Nasa'I Kitabal Faraid Imam al-Dar Qutni and its Mauquf.

<sup>20</sup> Qur'an, 4: 23-24.

<sup>21</sup> Imam Muslim, Sahih Muslim, Kitab al-Nikah with different version from Aishah may Allah be please with him, see also Sunanal Tirmidhi, see also Bukhari imam, kitab al-Nikah from Aishah.

<sup>22</sup> Al-Sab'I M. H. Al-Sunnah wa makanatuha Fi al-Tashri'I al-Islami, Syria (Damascus), 1960, p, 330

<sup>23</sup> Bukhar, Sahih al-Bukhari, kitab al-Hudud, and Kitab al-Nikah.

<sup>24</sup> Bukhar, Sahih al-Bukhari, kitab al-Hudud,

The Sunnah played the role of increasing on the side of faster relations, apart from the mentioned Forster matters and daughters ie sisters to the person with whom they had suckled from the same breast, all the relations who are postural to the man are under consideration, this is because of the Prophetic Hadith:

إن الله حرم من الرضاعة ما حرم من النسب

Meaning: “Verily, Allah Has prohibited from the side of postural relations all what He had prohibited by virtue of kinship”<sup>[22]</sup>

In the same Surah, the combination of two sisters in marriage at the same time is prohibited and such prohibition was extended by the *Sunnah* to cover combination of wife’s paternal and maternal aunts (*Ammah* and *Khalah*) together with the wife by virtue of the fact that the same effective cause (Illah) for the prohibition is still there in the extended rulings since the Prophet (May Allah’s Peace and Blessings be upon him) had said: “For if you do thus (combination) you will definitely break your ties of kinship.”<sup>[23]</sup>

In the Surah al-Nur, where the punishment of hundred lashes were stipulated to the fornicators, the *Sunnah* clarified that in case of married persons stoning to death is the verdict and an unmarried male person who is guilty of this must be exacted one year, in addition to hundred lashes.<sup>[24]</sup>

## CONCLUSION

There are so many other instances to buttress these divisions which are outside the scope of this paper. Therefore, we can rightly say that the *Sunnah* explains the Qur’an either emphatically, explanatory and independently.

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