



The Cultural Influence of Female Exegesis on Exploring the Sermons and Commandments of the Noble Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him and His Household)



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Received:

4/7/2023

Accepted:

26/9/2023

Published:

1/12/2023

DOI: 10.55568/n.v3i6.101-127.e



Keywords: Reference, Female Interpreter, Biography Texts, Interpretive Heritage, Biography Verses, Female Exegete

Abstract

The focus on the Prophet's biography is a priority in the interpretative space of the text, as it forms a cultural background that follows the Quran for the interpretive seeker. Thus, the biography and the Quran constitute two interconnected elements in the reference points of the text. The biography elucidates and clarifies the text, and the Quran stands as the primary source, representing the highest level of reliability in recording the biography of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household) due to its contemporaneity with events and divine formulation. Feminist interest in interpreting the Quranic text has deep roots since the time of revelation. Women left their marks during the era of the Prophet and thereafter. These imprints were embodied starting with Lady Khadijah and Lady Fatimah (peace be upon them), as well as the female companions and the Prophet's wives, continuing until today, where female voices resonated with an interest in the Holy Quran. They scrutinized the revealed text, exploring the reasons behind its revelation. Among the female interpreters who dedicated their pens to interpreting the Quran and delved into the study of the prophetic biography are Aisha Abdul Rahman, Kareeman Hamza, Zeinab Al-Ghazali, Hanan Lahham, Nasrat Amin, Majida Fares Al-Shammari, and Nouria Nasser. These scholars examined the biography of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household) in terms of legislation, education, and jurisprudence. Within these contexts, this study specifically focuses on the noble prophetic biography, particularly in the chapter of sermons and advice. The primary reference in this reading is the Holy Quran, with the study drawing on external references such as language, society, history, and, importantly, prophetic sayings from the Sunnah, such as Hadiths and narrations.

Preface

The noble prophetic biography embodies an exemplary discourse, considering the esteemed individual and the significance of this biography in worldly dimensions of nobility and values. Its divine formulation is evident in the Quranic discourse, utilizing it as a means to carry the legislative, doctrinal, and educational burdens of the prophetic message. Thus, when the exegete delves into it within the Quranic context, they perceive it as a source of legal rulings and detailed explanations of the words of Allah.

In scrutinizing Quranic verses, female interpreters play a pivotal role as they contemplate and explore the meanings of divine revelations through commentary. Specifically, they focus on the noble biography of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him and his Household, and the profound impact of his words, statements, sermons, and admonitions. This research delves into the Quranic biography, whether narrated directly or through the narrations of companions and commentators.

The study sheds light on the prophetic influence on women's interpretations and their approach to explicating the biography within the Quranic context. It further explores how these interpreters utilize the noble prophetic biography, incorporating its effects within the interpretation of Quranic verses. The research classifies these approaches based on their prevalence and the nature of each interpretative methodology.

The investigation comprises four main sections. The first section, titled "Social References," delves into how female interpreters address the Prophet's humanitarian stances. Recognizing the Prophet's compassionate interactions with various facets of Muslim life, women interpreters articulate his kindness towards women, men, and children in their daily affairs.

The second section, “Narrative References,” examines the incorporation of the Prophet’s sayings or sermons within the interpretation of Quranic biographical texts. It encapsulates a comprehensive understanding of the Prophet’s interactions with the Muslim community, depicted through Quranic narratives and discourse.

The third section, “Historical References,” focuses on the narration of the Prophet’s speeches during his campaigns and battles. This section contextualizes historical narrations within the framework of interpretation, occasionally isolated from standard exegetical works, yet containing valuable historical insights.

The final section, “Explanatory References,” elucidates the eloquent and rhetorical dimensions of the Prophet’s words or recommendations. It underscores the methodological use of linguistic and rhetorical analysis in explicating the Prophet’s utterances or directives.

Moreover, it is worth mentioning, given the study’s significance as a novel perspective in the field of interpretation, especially coming from a female perspective. Some of the female-centric interpretations were not readily available in Iraq, necessitating an exploration beyond its borders. The study highlights the diversity of approaches, emphasizing the impact women have made in elucidating the words of Allah and His noble Messenger, peace be upon him and his Household. Due to the limited pages of the research, the multiple sections serve as a concise presentation, recognizing that the topic merits an academic thesis for a more comprehensive exploration of the details and verses not covered in this study.

Finally, all praise is due to Allah, the Lord of all worlds, and blessings and peace upon His noble Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, and his pure and righteous Household.

Introduction

The study of cultural references delves into the backgrounds that both the text and the author rely on, exploring the foundations upon which they are built. Each text is inherently bound by its references, and therefore, the term “reference” in its broad sense refers to returning and reverting to the cultural origin encompassing sciences, knowledge, customs, and more, aiming to understand the adopted ideologies. Every culture inherently needs a reference to establish its value and meaning.

The noble Prophetic biography, fundamentally, serves as a religious and cultural reference from which Islamic jurisprudence derives its thoughts and methodology. Hence, it is the reference for the Muslim individual in ethical behavior and conduct. Embracing the Prophetic biography stems from its authenticity as a divine source. The behavioral facts of the Prophet in their entirety are considered signs from Allah, making the Prophetic biography a source of authority, second only to the Quran, in documenting Islamic and human history. Therefore, the Prophetic biography holds dominion over other sources based on this attribute, namely the reliability.

Undoubtedly, by all religious and historical standards, the Quran is the primary and most crucial source for documenting the Prophetic biography. This is due to several significant reasons, including the religious format of the events in the noble Prophetic biography, being part of the divine discourse – heavenly and divine. The Quran provides a tangible witness to the events, contemporaneously narrating the Prophetic biography. Thus, it has been said about its reference, “Everything the Prophet ruled by is derived from the Quran.”^{1*}

Considering that the Prophetic biography, as defined by researchers, encompasses the events related to the life of the Prophet from his birth until his death, the Qura-

1 Al-Alusi, Shihab al-Din Mahmud. *Ruh al-Ma’ani fi Tafsir al-Quran al-Azim wa al-Sab’ al-Mathani*, vol. 5-6, p. 357.

* He narrated it from Al-Shafei. It was also narrated by many other exegetes including Ibn Kathir and others.

nic commentator engages in interpreting by delving into the events of the biography based on information derived from the Quranic text. This implies that the space occupied by the biography and historical events in the Quranic discourse is vast, as evidenced by its significance, covering approximately 2,950 verses, equivalent to 48.9% of the total verses of the Quran. This underscores the importance of its themes and issues in constructing the Islamic state.²

Derived from the cognitive system embedded in the Quranic text, with the Quran serving as a methodology manifesting in the life of the Muslim individual both verbally and practically, it stands as the divine message sealed on the chest of the Prophet. From here, women took on their practical role alongside their male counterparts, constituting an essential part of the Islamic society. They contribute their feminine imprint to the interpretation of the Quran, as an integral part of Islamic law, and employ a feminist scholarly perspective drawn by examining the texts of hadith, narrations about the Prophet Muhammad, in addition to the commentaries that they rely on to reinforce their views and readings of the Quranic text.

When examining the history of women in the field of interpreting Quranic texts, especially the noble Prophetic biography, the example of Zahrā' stands out, particularly in her discourse with the people, known as the "Khutbah Fadak" and her address to the women of the Ansar. In these instances, she presented the biography of Muhammad as the Divine Messenger of the Islamic nation. She included the Quranic verses: "There has certainly come to you a Messenger from among yourselves. Grievous to him is what you suffer; [he is] concerned over you and to the believers is kind and merciful". Tawba: 128. She also included the verse: "Then is it the judgement of [the time of] ignorance they desire? But who is better than Allah in judgement for a people who are certain [in faith]" Maida: 50. In these instances, she employed Quranic

² Khaled Al-Zaydi, "The Science of Maghazi Receives Attention from Researchers of Prophetic Biography (Al-Madinah Al-Munawwarah)," Makkah Net, Riyadh, Wednesday, 12 Muharram 1441 H (corresponding to 11 September 2019).

interpretation to present her arguments on issues where she faced challenges related to the Prophet's life. She also utilized other Quranic texts that included interpretations of the noble Prophetic biography. In doing so, she adopted a specific approach in presenting the biography, combining verses in a single topic, demonstrating their harmony with the Quran, and interpreting the texts of the noble Prophetic biography through the Quranic lens, and vice versa.

In contemporary women's experiences with the noble Prophetic biography and the Holy Quran, which will be presented here as examples, there are noteworthy contributions to the field of interpretation. The first is the interpretive experience of Aisha Abdul Rahman, known as "Bint Al-Shati" in her book *The Clear Interpretation of the Quran*. Following this, the Islamic preacher Zainab Al-Ghazali Al-Jubaili continued the interpretive experiment, with her work *Reflections on the Book of Allah* published in 1994. Additionally, there is a known interpretation titled *Al-Tafsir Al-Khazin* authored by Nasrat Amin from Isfahan.

Adding to the feminist dimension in the field of interpretation, we find an interpretation by the preacher and media figure Fatima Kariman Hamza titled *Pearls and Corals in Quranic Interpretation*. In this work, she provided a comprehensive interpretation of the entire Quran. Moreover, recent interpretive experiments have achieved distinction in exploring and explaining Quranic verses. An example is Majida Fares Al-Shammari's *Clarification and Elaboration in the Interpretation of Quranic Verses*, where she embarked on explaining some chapters from *Al-Fatiha* to *An-Nahl* in eight volumes.

Women's interpretive experiences have diversified, enriching Quranic and Islamic knowledge. Notably, the contemporary interpretive work by preacher Naela Sabri Hashem, titled *The Illuminator of the Quran's Light*, stands out. She adopted an approach that

blends Quranic interpretation with commentary based on narrations.

There is also a recent women's interpretive experiment that embraced simplicity in presentation to convey Quranic concepts and objectives to every Muslim. This is exemplified by the work *Clear and Easy Interpretation* authored by Badriya Nasser, spanning two volumes, providing a comprehensive interpretation.

The feminist interpretation movement has been reaping the fruits of the Holy Quran, contemplating its verses and exploring its depths according to the available knowledge within their reach. Notably, they have focused on the prophetic legacy inscribed in the Quranic discourse. In addition to traditional interpretations, they have engaged in exploring the Prophetic biography, delving into intricate details of social life and the ethical heights of the Prophet Muhammad's character.

One prominent interpreter, Kariman Hamza, frequently employed examples from the Muhammadan biography as a model illustrating the broad-mindedness of Islamic teachings compared to other religions. She often referenced episodes from the life of the Prophet in her commentary on verses addressing issues like punishment, slavery, or inheritance, presenting him as an elevated example concerning the laws of other religions. In a separate book titled *Leader of Creation*, she specifically addressed the Prophet's military expeditions.

Another commentator, Hanan Lahham, authored a book titled *Guidance from the Prophetic Biography in Social Change*. In the introduction, she expressed the motivation behind her work, stating that there are aspects of the Prophet's biography that deserve thorough contemplation and study, as significant as the major events and miracles. This sentiment emphasizes the importance of exploring the Prophet's life beyond conventional narratives.³

These interpreters, among others, have engaged with various aspects of the noble Prophetic biography in their works, contributing to the evolving landscape of feminist Quranic interpretation.

³ Lahham, *Guidance of the Prophetic Biography in Social Change*, p. 15.

Section One

Social Frameworks

In the context of social frameworks, female interpreters have sought to represent the noble Prophetic biography as a formative feature of Muslim discourse, extending to encompass not only Muslims but all human individuals. The Prophetic biography is considered foundational for understanding Muslim behavior, representing narrative principles, known and inspired by God. As a divine source, it shapes the path of the believing individual, covering all aspects of life, from conduct to worship.

Individuals affiliated with an Islamic identity are obliged to embody praiseworthy qualities, and the character of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household) serves as the highest exemplar, glorified by Allah across the heavens and the earth. The Quranic discourse mirrors these virtues and attributes, celebrating and encouraging emulation. Textual interpreters may evaluate situations embedded with Quranic themes or the narratives of prophets and their communities, leveraging the Muhammadan journey as a model.

One such example is the commentary of Majida Fares Al-Shammari, who explored the life of the Prophet in his sermons and admonitions. By doing so, she showcased these aspects, especially the human and social dimensions, presenting the life of the Prophet in a text that simulates a situation involving the Prophet Shu'ayb (peace be upon him) and his people. This passage was treated as a social narrative. The verse is as follows: "They said, 'O Shu'ayb, does your prayer command you that we should leave what our fathers worship or not do with our wealth what we please? Indeed, you are the forbearing, the discerning!'" Hud: 87. ⁴

⁴ Al-Shammari, *Al-Tawdih wal-Bayan fi Tafsir Ayat al-Quran*, vol. 6, p. 466.

Certainly, the Quran's focus on the stories of the prophets served both doctrinal and educational purposes, distinct from its legislative objectives. The attention given to the biography of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) aligns with these three overarching goals.⁵

The inclusion of the female commentator in the interpretation of the noble Prophetic biography aimed primarily at deriving educational objectives. She approached this Quranic text, particularly in the context of the speeches and sayings of the Prophet, especially in the verse: "That you may do in your wealth what you will." She started with the framework of reading the text, as a result of an established cultural norm and the principles of Arabian culture.

The texts she presented reached a consensus on the subject. She quoted a passage from the Prophet's farewell sermon during the Farewell Pilgrimage, emphasizing the oneness of humanity, equality, and the prohibition of harming others' lives, wealth, and dignity.⁶ He also state: "Verily, your lives, your wealth, and your honors are sacred among you, just as the sanctity of this day, in this month, in this land, until the day you meet your Lord. Have I not conveyed the message? O Allah, bear witness."⁷ He finally state: "Know that every usury (interest) from the era of Jahillya is annulled. Your capital remains yours; you do not wrong others, nor are you wronged."⁸ The commentator argued that the reference point for her interpretation is the Islamic framework—the Quranic and Prophetic texts. This perspective encompasses a universal view of humanity without distinction based on civilization, color, or language.

Therefore, the reference point for the speeches of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household) was from that divine culture. Consequently, the noble Pro-

⁵ Al-Badri, *Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah*, p. 30

⁶ Al-Shammari, *Al-Tawdih wa al-Bayan fi Tafsir Ayat al-Qur'an*, vol. 6, p. 467.

⁷ Al-Shammari.

⁸ Al-Shammari.

phetic biography serves as a preservative reference that bears the responsibility of organizing human life. Zainab Al-Ghazali, another exegete, asserted that the Quran was revealed to the Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household) not only as guidance for his time but as a constitution for human life until the Day of Judgment. This is evident in the Quranic verse: “Mankind were one community, then Allah sent (to them) Prophets giving good tidings and warnings, and with them He sent down the Book with truth, so that it may judge between the people concerning their disputes.”⁹ Baqara, 213. Therefore, describing the pre-Islamic era (Jahiliyya), as presented by Majida Al-Shammary, signifies savagery and primitiveness. In the context of confrontations during the opposing pre-Islamic era, the Prophet redefined the prevailing relationship patterns among communities according to the logic of the Quran. Additionally, she presents a Prophetic hadith that supports the themes discussed in the sermons. The Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household) stated: “Deception and trickery are in the Fire,”¹⁰ indicating a warning about the consequences of deceit and dishonesty in the afterlife.

The concept of brotherhood within the Muslim community has been presented by the exegete Hanan Laham in her discourse on the social frameworks in the biography of the Prophet. She states: “The Prophet’s plan was effective in integrating the elements of the new society into brotherhood in Allah’s eyes, where all differences in lineage, wealth, and poverty fused into one body, ‘If one member ailed, all other parts of the body rallied in vigil and fever’”.¹¹

In other sources, the exegesis of Majida Fares Al-Shammari explores the Muhammadan biography by presenting the Muslim model. After emphasizing the necessity of acknowledging the other human being in terms of creation and referring to Islamic

9 Jubaili, Zainab Al-Ghazali. *Natharat fi Kitab Allah*. vol.1 p. 12.

10 Al-Shamari, Al-Tawdih wal Bayan fi Tafsir Ayat al-Quran. vol. 6, p.468.

11 Lahham, *Guidance of the Prophetic Biography in Social Change*, p. 170.

consciousness, it progresses to affirming other necessities that can be summarized in the social existence among Muslims, such as “harmony, brotherhood, affection, and love.” This is exemplified in the prophetic injunctions of the verse of Al-Anfal. Anfal, 63: “And He caused mutual affection and compassion to grow among them; had you spent all the wealth of the earth, you could not have caused mutual affection to grow among them, but Allah did it; surely He is Mighty, Wise.” The Prophet’s advice is articulated as follows: “Believers are like one body; when one member ails, the rest of the body responds with vigilance and concern.”¹² Additionally, she cites a prophetic tradition conveying a similar message, where the Prophet states: “Indeed, among Allah’s servants, there are people who are neither prophets nor martyrs. On the Day of Resurrection, prophets and martyrs will envy their status. They ask, ‘O Messenger of Allah, who are they?’ He replies: ‘They are a people who love each other with the spirit of Allah, without any kinship or monetary ties. By Allah, their faces are radiant, and they are on the Right Path. They do not fear when the people fear, nor do they grieve when the people grieve’.”¹³ The exegete then narrates a directive from the Prophet resembling brotherhood and its virtues: “When a Muslim meets his brother Muslim, he should grasp his hand and eliminate the sins from both of them, just as a leaf falls from a dry tree on a windy day. Otherwise, their sins will be forgiven, even if they were as abundant as the foam of the seas”.¹⁴ It is noteworthy that these biographical texts extend beyond individual dimensions to collective aspects of a culture that governs the behavior and regulates the psychological and social processes of its individuals. These narratives draw from the richness of the Sunnah in their narration, just as the Quran has expounded their cultural implications. The Quran serves as both a religious-legislative background and a social directive in these cultural expressions.

12 Al-Shamari, *al-Tawdīh wa al-Bayān fī Tafsīr Āy al-Qur’ān*, vol. 5, p. 441.

13 Al-Shamari.

14 Al-Shamari.

Section Two: Textual References

The textual reference, being one of the constant elements in various fields of interpretation and its methodologies, holds significant influence within the interpretative discourse. It is embodied in its cultural backgrounds, contributing significantly to the interpretative framework. Functioning as an Islamic memory, it encompasses narrations, discourses, and directives across various domains, constituting the foundational framework for Muslim identity. This reference has played a substantial role in guiding interpretative efforts, both towards the general Quranic text and specifically towards the prophetic biography.

Among the references representing the fundamental drivers for the exegete in their engagement with the Quranic discourse are:

First: Prophetic Tradition (Sunnah)

In the Quranic verse, “But the Messenger and those who believed with him fought with their wealth and their lives. For them are the good things, and it is they who will be successful”. Tawba, 88. Majida Fares Al-Shammari directs attention to a cultural reference. She invokes a narrated context from the farewell sermon of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his Household), incorporating it into three quotations that signify the relevance of the prophetic biography in the Quranic text.

Quoting the Prophet’s instructions regarding the Ansar, she emphasizes the cultural context, portraying them as those who inhabited the abode of faith before others, urging kindness towards them. She highlights their shared responsibilities, hospitality, and selflessness. The Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household) states: “I counsel you to treat the Ansar (supporters) well, for they are the ones who embraced both the abode (Medina) and faith before you. Have they not shared with you the fruits? Have they not opened their homes to you? Have they not preferred you over themselves? With them are the unique virtues.”¹⁵ Similarly, she quotes the Prophet’s

¹⁵ Al-Shamari, Al-Tawdīh wa al-Bayān fī Tafsīr Āy al-Qur’ān, 6: 151.

guidance concerning the Muhajireen, designating them as the early emigrants and advising goodness towards the Quraysh: “I advise you to treat the early emigrants well. I specifically advise you to be kind to the Quraysh.”¹⁶ Additionally, she includes the Prophet’s words after the Farewell Pilgrimage, expressing his position among them and cautioning against worldly competition: “Here I am, present among you, and I will be a witness against you. Your appointed meeting is at the Pond (of Kawthar), and I will be looking at it from my position. I am not afraid that you will associate partners with Allah, but I am afraid that the worldly life will entice you with its allurements.”¹⁷

The exegete’s emphasis on the Quranic text, narrating an aspect of the Prophet’s life during one of his expeditions, underscores the foundational role of the narrated context, serving as a subsequent source after the Quran in the exegetical consideration. The contextualization of the cultural reference in presenting the prophetic biography as an interpretation of the Quranic narrative carries a dual impact. On one hand, the biography serves as a framework for understanding and symbolic reflections of religious experience. On the other hand, the interpretation of the Quranic narrative through the biography forms a unified structure, governed by sacred divine and prophetic sources. As conveyed by Al-Suyuti, “The narration from the Prophet is the model,”¹⁸ echoing Ibn Kathir’s notion that, “The purpose is to seek the Quran’s interpretation from it. If not found there, then from the Sunnah.”¹⁹ Thus, the Quranic biography is divine in origin, while the sermon’s narrative is historical and factual.

In this context, the exact locus of interest lies for any exegete with a reference-oriented disposition, as they inherently recognize that the prophetic text presents the Quranic text in its authentic and tangible form. Here, the exegete may refer to the sayings of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household), whether in the form

¹⁶ Al-Shamari, *Al-Tawdīh wa al-Bayān fī Tafsīr Āy al-Qur’ān*, 6: 151.

¹⁷ Al-Shamari.

¹⁸ Al-Suyuti, *Al-Itqān fī Ulum al-Quran*, Al-Suyuti, vol., 4 p.207.

¹⁹ Al-Damashqi, *Tafsir al-Quran al-Azim (Introduction to the Exegesis)*, vol., 1 p.4.

of a sermon or an admonition, to elucidate and clarify the meaning of the Quranic verse. This reference may also serve the purpose of providing examples through noble Hadiths that closely align with the intended meaning of the Quranic verses.²⁰ Moreover, it can enhance delight and enjoyment by illustrating the harmonious relationship between noble Hadiths and Quranic verses regarding the presented meaning in the Quranic verses.

Within this framework, some exegetes have embodied their arguments regarding the texts of the Muhammadan biography. One such exegete is Nuria Nasser. Despite her reliance on a simplified illustrative approach without delving into the interpretations and differences among exegetes, her presentation of the prophetic text aims to elucidate the Islamic value of the Quranic biography, as emphasized in the Quran's discourse about the Prophet. She refers back to the biography text in the Quranic verse: "And indeed, you are of great moral character," Qalam: 4. connecting it to a series of prophetic admonitions. After explaining the general meaning of the text in simple language, stating that the Messenger of Allah possesses an unparalleled character of kindness, uprightness, endurance, and embodiment of the principles of goodness,²¹ she conveys his admonitions regarding the quality of goodness. For example, his saying: "Indeed, the believer reaches, with his good character, the rank of one who stands in prayer at night and fasts during the day". She also cites his statement: "Nothing is heavier on the scale of good deeds than good character,"²² emphasizing the implied directive to the Islamic principles affirmed by Allah and His Messenger Muhammad. The exegete's reference to the Prophet's words indicates the Islamic principles that Allah affirmed, and subsequently, the Prophet emphasized, linking the ethical aspect to the scale of righteous deeds and the worship program of the individual Muslim.

20 Al-Jubaili, Nadharat fi Kitab Allah, (Introduction to the Book), vol., 1 p.8.

21 Naesr ,Al-Tafsir al-Wadhiah al-Yasir, Nuriya Nasser, vol., 1 p.670.

22 Naesr .

Thus, her reference in directing the texts of the Quranic biography was an elective guidance, leading to its meaning and elucidation from the expressions of the Prophet's Hadith itself. This is particularly evident as she mentions this in the introduction to her interpretation, stating: "I have not neglected what supports these meanings and contents from the Hadiths and narrations reported from the Messenger of Allah and his infallible family, for further clarification and elucidation".²³

Second: Exegetes

The scholars have asserted that connecting the interpretation of the Quran with the statements of the commentators and their methodologies is a cultural exchange. Therefore, this cultural exchange is considered a testimony and endorsement of the saying of the Tabi'i. The authority of the commentator Zainab Al-Ghazali Al-Jubaili is a product of these considerations, as she sees in them models of the biography of the Prophet. She states: "I have diligently reviewed what my efforts allowed in the Sunnah. This source is the best interpreter of the Book of Allah Almighty. All our esteemed scholars who wrote about interpretation used to orbit within the realm of the Sunnah".²⁴

Moreover, during her study of the positions of the biography of the Prophet- as in the Quranic verse, "Say, [O Muhammad], 'If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you and forgive you your sins. And Allah is All-Forgiving and All-Merciful'"Al Emran: 31. - she reads the interpretation of Ibn Kathir, stating: "This verse is a judgment against everyone who claims to love Allah but is not following the Muhammadan way. Such a person is a liar in their claim in the same matter, until they follow the Muhammadan Shariah and the prophetic religion in all his sayings, actions, and conditions, as affirmed in the authentic Hadith of the Messenger of Allah: 'Who-

²³ Naesr ,Al-Tafsir al-Wadhih al-Yasir, Nuriya Nasser, vol., 1 p.6.

²⁴ Al Jbeili ,Nadharat fi Kitab Allah, (Introduction to the Book), vol., 1p.12.

ever performs an action not in accordance with our affair, it is rejected.”²⁵

The commentator also cites Ibn Kathir in the same context, saying: “And Ibn Kathir reported from the Salaf, stating, ‘A group claimed that they love Allah, so Allah tested them with this verse.’”^{26 27} Thus, the authority of the commentator has a dual nature, bridging between the transmitted heritage and what the Salaf narrated in the interpretation of the Quranic text for the biography. It is an accepted authority by everyone, as she affirmed in the beginning of her interpretation, stating: “Indeed, the Book of Allah is His final word on the Seal of His messengers, Muhammad.”²⁸

On the other hand, taking the opinion of the Tabi’in (second generation of companions of the Prophet) is from the interpretation with the reported, a fourth path taken by the commentator. Certainly, the Tabi’in are the closest in understanding the meanings of the Quranic verses, as they were close to the original meanings of the eloquent Arabic language that remained on its pristine purity. They were also close to the incidents and events associated with the descent of the verses.²⁹ It’s worth mentioning that the interpretation undertaken by the commentator in the reading of the biography text is one of the interpretations considered for its credibility and reliability. This is because it is “among the most well-known written interpretations with the reported, even one of the best; the author focused on narrations from the scholars of the Salaf, explaining the words of Allah Almighty with Hadiths and reports attributed to their narrators.”³⁰ Therefore, Al-Jubaili explicitly stated: “I have gained from the provisions of our earlier scholars, who excelled in interpreting the Book of Allah. I studied under Al-Qurtubi in his interpretation, and under Al-Hafiz Ibn Kathir, and under Al-Alousi, and Abu Al-Saud, and Al-Qasimi.”³¹

25 Al Jbeili ,Nadharat fi Kitab Allah, (Introduction to the Book), vol., 1p.12.

26 Al Jbeili.

27 Al-Alusi, Tafsir al-Quran al-Azim, vol., 1p.366.

28 Al Jbeili, Nadharat fi Kitab Allah, (Introduction to the Book), vol., 1p.11.

29 Ma’rifah, Al-Tafsir wa Al-Mufasssirun fi Thawbih al-Qushub, vol., 2p.544.

30 Ma’rifah.

31 Al Jbeili, Nadharat fi Kitab Allah, (Introduction to the Book), vol., 1p.12.

Section Three: Historical References

The heritage or historical reference has been presented to individuals in all eras and to all nations as a rich and fertile material, a generous source of creativity. The historical data endows a particular sanctity and a connection with the consciousness of the nation. The heritage has a vivid and lasting presence in the nation's psyche. When a writer aims to reach the consciousness of his nation by employing some components of its heritage, he resorts to the most influential means to impact it.³² Similarly, when an interpreter seeks to draw insights from the Quranic biography text related to a historical event, incident, battle, sermon, or any text bearing historical reality, undoubtedly, this adds, with its sacred aspects, a sense of unity and integration.

The events of the Prophet's biography, as a historical reference, are a mirror reflecting the sacred self with what it inherited from heaven and its divine light. Therefore, the interpreter's utilization of the texts of the Prophet's biography and interpreting them from a historical perspective is not just transient cosmic phenomena. It is due to the comprehensiveness that is subject to renewal and sustenance throughout history.

When we examine the texts of the biography regarding the female interpreter, we find that she notably invoked historical references. This invocation carries a distinctive aesthetic character in utilizing the great personality of women and their roles in public life. It aims to reflect symbolic mirrors that align with her vision of the heritage of the biography. This approach assists her in conveying contemporary experiences to the audience because ordinary language may not fully capture the essence of the experience. Hence, the reliance on the Muhammadan symbol is employed to infuse a sense of movement, enrich the text with imaginative symbolism, and create an impact on the audience.³³

32 Zaid, Ali Ashari, *Istid'ad al-Shakhsiyat al-Turathiyya fi al-Shi'r al-Arabi al-Mu'asir*, p..16

33 Al-Naser, Dr. Iman Isa, *Wahdat al-Nass wa Ta'addud al-Qira'at al-Tawiliyya fi al-Naqd al-Arabi al-Mu'asir*, p. 277.

In her interpretation of the Qur'anic verse: "And it is not for the believers to go forth [to battle] all at once. For there should separate from every division of them a group [remaining] to obtain understanding in the religion and warn their people when they return to them that they might be cautious," Tawba: 122. Fatimah Kariman Hamzah, employs a historical narrative. Here, she delves into the biography with a focus on historical content, studying narrations from a segmented historical perspective.

Starting with the verses recounting the incident of the Battle of Tabuk (Tawba:118-122), she traces her methodology when presenting examples of the biography. She follows the conventional pattern among most interpreters, emphasizing that knowing the context of the revelation is crucial. However, she adds her unique touch by incorporating her interpretive approach.³⁴ Notably, she relies on significant sources of the Prophet's biography, such as Ibn Ishaq (d. 151 H), Ibn Hisham (d. 213 H), and contemporary sources like Muhammad Al-Ghazali (d. 1414 H).

Furthermore, in her reading of the text, she adopts a contemporary ideological framework, attempting to attribute the Arab role during the Prophet's biography based on modern interpretation. For instance, she asserts: "There was no regular army in the era of the Prophet... The characteristics of the modern state that we know today did not appear until a couple of centuries later."^{35*}

However, her statement is not without ambiguity, as the author of *The Story of Civilization* argues the opposite, affirming that the Prophet founded the Arab state. He emphasizes that in one generation, the Prophet achieved victory in a hundred battles and, within a century, built a great empire that remains a significant force in half of the world to this day.³⁶

34 Al-Wahidi, *Asbab al-Nuzul*, p.4.

35 Hamza, *Al-Lu'lu' wal Marjan fi Tafsir al-Quran*, vol., 2p.16.

36 Durant, Will, *The Story of Civilization*, vol., 13p.47.

* It is worth mentioning that the explanation here is not a critical viewpoint of the stance of female exegetes. It is a perusal of the referential point of their ideas in this arena.

Continuing with the commentary of Kariman Hamza, the focus shifts to the incident related to the Battle of Tabuk, presented as a concrete example of the Prophet's biography. The commentator provides an excerpt from her extensive text, concentrating on the killing of Al-Ahrath bin Umair Al-Azdi when the Prophet sent him to the governor of Busra.

The incident unfolds during the Battle of Tabuk, a significant event marked by a diplomatic mission. The Roman governor of Balqa in the Levant played a crucial role in this narrative. Al-Ahrath bin Umair Al-Azdi was appointed as the messenger of the Prophet, entrusted with delivering a book inviting the Romans to embrace the faith. However, tragedy struck as the Roman governor killed the messenger of the Prophet, who was on a peaceful mission to convey the message of Islam. After this tragic incident, news reached the Prophet that the Romans were mobilizing to annihilate the Muslims in Medina. In response, the Prophet called upon all Muslims to join him in facing this imminent threat. The commentator notes that besides engaging in battle, there were numerous tasks assigned to the Muslim community, adding layers of complexity to their responsibilities.³⁷

In the exploration of the biographical texts, particularly the sermons and commandments, Zainab Al-Ghazali Al-Jubaili emphasizes the legal nature of these texts, centered around the principle of the type of narration. She leads the audience to a specific text from the biography of the Prophet related to the Battle of Uhud, quoting the verse from the Quran: "Remember, O Prophet, when you left your home in the early morning to position the believers in the battlefield. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. Remember when two groups among you 'believers' were about to cower, then Allah reassured them. So in Allah let the believers put their trust." Al Emran: 121-122.

The commentator attributes the biography to its sacred essence, narrating the incident in the context of its realistic events. The Battle of Uhud, occurring in the year

³⁷ Hamza, 'Al-Lu'lu' wa al-Marjan fi Tafsir al-Quran, vol., 12p.16.

3 AH in Shawwal, was triggered by the killing of leaders from Mecca, the survival of a caravan led by Abu Sufyan, and the subsequent declaration by those who lost their leaders to allocate the caravan's wealth to kill Muhammad. The Prophet prepared for battle with seven hundred companions, instructing the archers, led by Abdullah bin Jubayr. The archers, numbering fifty men, received specific instructions from the Prophet to hold their position, whether victory favored the Muslims or not.^{38*} The commentator emphasizes the precision in dealing with the biography, viewing it as a narrative with a perpetual connection to the realm of truth. The sayings of the Prophet are considered foundational, requiring specific methodologies and approaches that align with the nature of the narration.³⁹

To illustrate this, the commentator refers to the same incident recounted by Kari-man Hamza in a book dedicated to the conquests of the Prophet. She highlights the moment when worldly desires, the pursuit of wealth, and the lust for acquisitions influenced the archers, causing them to forget the Prophet's command and neglect their duty to God. This deviation resulted in the neglect of their assigned positions and a focus on collecting spoils.⁴⁰

Conclusively, Zainab Al-Ghazali Al-Jubaili draws an educational lesson from this biography, suggesting that God intended to impart a lesson to the nation, a lesson they would not have learned if the battle had concluded in victory. The breach in obedience to God and His Messenger, as demonstrated by those entrusted with the orders of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household), serves as a poignant reminder of the consequences of such lapses.⁴¹

38 Al Jbeili, *Natharat fi Kitab Allah*, vol., 1p. 245-246.

39 Abu Azab, Sulaiman Abdullah. "Criticism Discourse in the Legal and Poetic Text: Between Reality and Metaphor – Comparative Criticism and Methodological Transformations," in *Transformations of Critical Discourse*, 11th International Criticism Conference, (25-27/7/2006), 1234.

40 Hamza, Sayyid al-Khalk (Uhud – al-Ahzab – Khaybar), vol., 4p. 18.

41 Al Jbeili, *Natharat fi Kitab Allah*, vol., 1p. 246.

* It is worth noting that the discussion is not about providing criticism regarding the perspective of the female interpreter. Instead, it is about presenting the reference of the female interpreters in reading the text of the Prophet's biography in their interpretations, vol., 1p. 409.

Another commentator, Hanan Lahham, in the context of discussing disobedience to God and the Prophet, refers to a prophetic text that mirrors a Quranic verse and aligns with historical events. The Quranic verse about the believers' characteristics, stating: "O you who have believed, whoever of you should revert from his religion - Allah will bring forth [in place of them] a people He will love and who will love Him [who are] humble toward the believers, powerful against the disbelievers; they strive in the cause of Allah". Maida: 54.

The commentator then quotes two Hadiths that emphasize the sweetness of faith and the love for the sake of God. "Three in whom sweetness of faith doth dwell: that God and His Messenger be more beloved to him than all else, and that he loves a man only for God's sake, and that he hates to revert to disbelief as he hates to be cast into the fire."⁴² He also stated: "A man is with him whom he loves."⁴³

The discussion revolves around the concept of love for the sake of God and how it relates to faith. The prophetic texts are used to illustrate the importance of maintaining love for God and His Messenger above all else, as well as the sweetness of faith that accompanies such devotion. The approach highlights the emotional and spiritual aspects of following the Prophet's biography, indicating that adherence to his teachings leads to the love of God.⁴⁴ The biography, in this context, serves as a source of guidance and emotional education, fostering a deep connection between the individual and their faith.⁴⁵ The overall tone suggests a constructive and reconciliatory approach in understanding the legislative, educational, and doctrinal objectives embedded in the Prophet's biography.

42 Lahham, Lahham, Hanan. T'amulat fi Surat al-Ma'idah, p. 102.

43 Lahham.

44 Lahham.

45 Abu Azab, Al-Takhayyul Bayn al-Qur'an al-Karim wal-Ahd al-Qadeem, p. 6.

In a passage from Surat An-Nisa, Kariman Hamza, drew inspiration from the meanings of the Prophet's sermon during the Farewell Pilgrimage, considering it a historical reference. She utilized its wording and meanings to interpret the significance of the Almighty's statement: "And smite them...". Nisa: 34: "And those wives whose disobedience you fear, then admonish them and forsake them in bed, and strike them. But if they obey you, seek no means against them. Indeed, Allah is ever Exalted and Grand." She asserts: "The Prophet stated in his farewell sermon, where he allocated a significant portion to advice regarding women: 'Do not let anyone you hate share your bed. If they do, admonish them without severity.' ...If we take the Messenger of God as our good example, both in action and speech, none of us would harm his wife... He also stated: 'The best among you is the best to his family.' He also stated: 'Treat women well.' Ali (peace be upon him) stated: 'A woman is a source of comfort, an arena for fight'.⁴⁶ Regardless of employing this biography in the social context of a Muslim's life, the historical data of the biography served as a starting point for questioning social reality and subsequently using it to critique the present from the perspective of Muhammad's biography. Therefore, its inclusion was a glorification and revival of it, describing that the purified Sunnah has three tasks: the task of interpreting the Book of God, the task of detailing the wise remembrance, and then the task of legislating matters not explicitly addressed in the Holy Qur'an."⁴⁷

46 Hamza, Al-Lu'lu' wa al-Marjan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an, vol., 1p. 197.

47 Khawli, Basyuni Muhammad. Preserving the Principles of Islam and Developing Tools for Dealing with Reality, p. 90.

Section Four

Linguistic References (Explanatory)

In this methodology, the commentator focuses on “understanding the language of the Quran by closely examining all the forms of the expression found in the Holy Quran. They then move from connecting various linguistic elements to understanding the genuine linguistic meaning, and they do not neglect this work even in the most authentic expressions.”⁴⁸ Perhaps one of the best proponents of this explanatory approach among female interpreters is Dr. Aisha Abdul Rahman, also known as “Bint Al-Shati” (the daughter of the shore). She claims to have innovated this method, which involves “examining the Quranic expression in all instances, to reach its significance; presenting the stylistic phenomena in all its counterparts in the clear Book, contemplating its specific context in the verse and the surah, then the general context in the entire Quran, seeking its manifest eloquence”.⁴⁹

Another fundamental aspect within the adoption of the explanatory context is that the science of rhetoric (balaghah) is one of the most important interpretive means to understand the intended meaning of the Quranic text. The eloquent style conveyed by the Quranic discourse has a miraculous and divine aspect.

In the context of the explanatory methodology, when delving into a text from the biography of the Prophet, this commentator starts by considering the possibilities suggested by the text and its context as considerations for understanding the eloquent mystery. When reading the biography of the Prophet in the verse “And indeed, you are of a great moral character”, Qalam: 4. you begin by examining what other commentators mention. You then evaluates it against the Quranic context and text to judge its acceptance or rejection. For instance, when dis-

48 Group of Researchers. ‘Al-Tafsir al-Bayani,’ Risalat al-Quran Magazine, Issue 1, Dar al-Quran al-Karim, Iran – Qom, 1st edition, 1411 H, p. 31.

49 Abdul Rahman, Aisha. Al-Tafsir al-Bayani lil-Qur’an al-Karim, “Bint al-Shati,” (Introduction to the Book), vol., 2p. 7.

cussing the interpretation of Al-Tabari, who linked the verse to the religion and quoted Aisha saying that the Prophet's character was the Quran,⁵⁰ the exegete finds these interpretations distant for two reasons: Firstly, from a contextual perspective, the verse is Makki and predates the revelation of what is known as the Quranic moral values.⁵¹ Secondly, from a linguistic perspective, the term "khuluq" (character) doesn't consistently convey the religious sense throughout the Quran.⁵² Additionally, the text itself does not accommodate all the interpretations given by Al-Tabari. The verse is a divine affirmation witnessing to the greatness of Muhammad's character, confirming the noble qualities he was known for, granting him strength against deniers and oppressors. Muhammad's character was a cultural treasure in Arab society, whether before or after the mission, and it was not tied to the Quran's revelation on him. Thus, Dr. Aisha Abdul Rahman emphasizes the contextualization of all social, cultural, and religious aspects in directing this text from the biography. She states that "this verse confirms what Allah knew about His chosen Prophet who, since his youth, was known among his people for the loftiness of his character. In his adolescence, he was a trustworthy, truthful, noble, and chaste young man, as stated by his uncle Abu Talib in the sermon of Muhammad's marriage to Lady Khadijah: 'After this, there is none comparable to Muhammad among the youth of Quraish in nobility, virtue, grace, and intellect'".⁵³ Therefore, the Quran "did not alter the language in its fundamental structures, nor did it take words out of their meanings... Similarly, it did not legislate the replacement of their customs, nor did it change their methods and ways. It did not prohibit them from their familiar forms of similitude, representation, omission, or expansion".⁵⁴

50 Abdul Rahman, Aisha. Al-Tafsir al-Bayani lil-Qur'an al-Karim, "Bint al-Shati," (Introduction to the Book), vol., 2, p.50-51.

51 Abdul Rahman.

52 Abdul Rahman.

53 Abdul Rahman.

54 Al-Jurjani, Asrar al-Balaghah, p.394.

Conclusion

After examining the cultural references in the interpretation of the biography of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his Household) by female exegetes, the following results emerged:

1. The biography of the Prophet has played a significant role in the interpretations of women, serving as a reference on various social, cultural, political, and Islamic legal aspects. It has provided readers with a religious-cultural exploration in heritage and its texts.

2. The biography of the Prophet has taken another turn, extending beyond the confines of interpretation, with some interpreters incorporating works on the Prophet's conquests, wars, stories with companions, or his letters to leaders of other religions. Examples include exegetes like Kariman Hamza and Hanan Lahham.

3. Female exegetes have embarked on presenting the texts of the biography from various intellectual perspectives, aligning them with the context of the Quranic text and its significance. It is undeniable that these interpreters have been directly or indirectly influenced by the methodological approaches of earlier scholars in their interpretation.

4. Some female interpreters have made narrations (hadith or historical accounts) about the Prophet Muhammad a key reference in interpreting most of the biographical texts. They distinguished these texts, as they were explained through the Prophetic biography itself, irrespective of the source's reliability.

5. Some interpreters followed a comparative methodology, juxtaposing Islamic rulings, especially regarding social matters like the status and role of women, with other religious doctrines. They sought to understand how Prophet Muhammad addressed these issues within his community.

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