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<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor of Quran  
and Hadith Department, Faculty  
of Humanities, Tarbiat Modares  
University, Tehran, Iran,  
E-mail:  
kh.ahmadi3103@yahoo.com

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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# The criteria of effective cognitive method in the theory of interpretation of the Holy Quran

Khadijeh Ahmadi Bighash<sup>1</sup> 

**Abstract:** The Holy Qur'an is the only revealed scripture that is immune of distortion, and includes the plan of human guidance, in all ages and for all individuals, whose verses must be comprehended accurately and correctly. This has proposed various exegetical theories by exegetes for many years. How can we provide a way to make these theories applicable, and determine a method to avoid them of engaging in interpretive relativity, interpretive pluralism, and even interpretive anarchism? Is it possible to provide such a model? Descriptive analytical procedure introduces the efficacy of an exegetical theory in terms of methodological criteria such as non-interference of exegete's presumptions, the development of theories without the development of lexical meanings, the relation of language and culture of the time, the recognition of goals of verses and surahs, the identification of the outward and inward levels, etc. all lead to discover deeper levels of understanding of the Qur'an and result in quantitative and qualitative expansion of understanding the divine verses. It causes a valid and firm exegetical theory among others.

**Keywords:** Exegetical (Interpretive) Theory . criterion of efficient cognitive method. The Qur'an.

## Introduction

Exegetical logical bases of the holy Qur'an require that the exegete, before interpreting, specifies his own interpretative theory and observes it throughout the interpretation. The usage of an interpretive theory helps him find a clear, definite and certain system of thought, in addition to an

interpretive theory framework. For an exegete, he may know his interpretive theoretical framework but has actually been changed over the time, and hence his interpretation does not have a well-defined system of thought. Thus the theory becomes ambiguous and complex, leading to anxiety and bewildering of his exegetical face. Accordingly, it depends on an exegetical theory based on efficient cognitive criteria in the interpretation of the Qur'an. A descriptive-analytic study applying library documents, suggests that some of the efficient criteria of exegetical theory may be extracted from other sciences such as sociology, social sciences, and so on. Such Qur'anic theory, that is based on these efficient criteria, compared to other interpretative theories, would be firm and dynamic, resulting in a better and more quantitative and qualitative impact of Qur'anic verses on their addressees. These categories are about the product of interpretative theories in understanding, not their process or presupposing. This study seeks to answer questions such as: What does the efficiency of the exegetical theory in the Holy Qur'an mean? What does it relate to reality, truth, and falsehood? and On what methodological criteria it will be based and firm?

### Research Background

Various books have been written on the interpretation of the Qur'an, in particular the exegetical principles, bases, methods, and tendencies, some of which are as follow:

In books *al-'Itqān fi 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* by Jalāl al-Dīn Al-Suyūṭī (2015), *Ṭabaqāt al-Mufasssīrīn* by Muhammad bin Ali Dāwūdī (1972), *Qur'an in Islam* by Muhammad Hussein Ṭabāṭabā'ī (2007), *Manāhil al-'Irfān fi 'Ulūm al-Qur'an* by Muhammad Abdul-Azim Al-Zurqānī (2006) *Al-Tafsīr wal-Mufasssīrūn* by Muhammad Hussein Dhahabī (1974), *Al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufasssīrūn fi Thawbih al-Qashīb* by Muhammad Hadi Ma'rifat (1997), *Classes of Shiite Commentators* by 'Aqīqī Bakhshāyeshī (2011), *Al-Mufasssīrūn Hayātuhum wa Manhajuhum* by Sayed Muhammad Ali 'Ayāzī (1992), and *Introduction to Qur'anic Exegeses and Exegetes* by Reza Ostady (2004), some of companions and successors are briefly introduced, and in some cases their biographies are presented.

The issue of exegetical principles is discussed in books of Qur'anic sciences and exegesis such as: preface of *al-Tibyān* by Sheikh Ṭūsī (1943), preface of *Majma' al-Bayān* by Ṭabrisī (1916), *Principles and Methods of Exegesis* by 'Amid Zanjani (1994), *Principles and Methods of Exegesis* by Shaker (2003), *Terms and Ways of Exegesis and Exegete* by Kamran Izadi Mobarakeh (1997), *Methodology of Qur'an Exegesis, Introduction to the Qur'an Exegesis, and the Method of Qur'an Exegesis* by Mohammed Ali Isfahani (2019), *the Method of Qur'an Exegesis* by Mahmoud Rajabi (2013), *Uṣūl al-Tafsīr wa Qawā'idihī* by Sheikh Khalid Abd al-Rahman al-'Ak (1985), without mentioning the efficient criteria of an exegetical theory.

As for introducing and examining exegeses, moreover, Goldziher in his book *Exegesis Approaches (Madhāheb al-Tafsīr al-Islamīyat)* (1921) along discussions such as traditional-based exegesis, exegesis in the light of belief, exegesis in the light of Sufism, exegesis in the light of religious sects and exegesis in the light of Islamic civilization, speaks about features of some Interpretations including *Jāmi' al-Bayān* of Ṭabarī, *al-Kashāf* of Zamakhsharī, *Tafsīr al-Qur'an al-Karīm* attributed to Ibn Arabī, *al-Qumī's Commentary*, *the Commentary of al-Manār*. However, only a few interpretations have been presented incompletely with gross errors. Ali Akbar Babaei has also introduced and commented on some of the exegetical schools in his book "*Exegetical Schools*" (2019). There is no comprehensive writing yet that defines the efficient criteria of an interpretive theory and its necessity. This study seeks to address the necessity of presenting these criteria in an interpretative theory abstractly and efficiently, examining its challenges.

### Theory of Efficient Exegesis

"Theory" derives from the Greek word "theoria"<sup>1</sup>, meaning opinion, thought, and sight of something in mind abstractly, out of ordinary perceptions.<sup>2</sup> Terminologically, it is a systematic set of ideas and plans being popular with followers (Dehkhoda, 1993; Moein, 1992; Amid, 1991, under the word "theory"). Scientific theories are the most reliable, accurate and comprehensive type of

<sup>1</sup>. Derived from the Greek word theoria, both from the root theo and horan.

<sup>2</sup>. On the one hand, theo means Divine Order and, on the other, horan means sight and visiting.

scientific information (Tankard, 2008: 29), which give descriptions of reality, summarize and synthesize them. The purpose of the theory, therefore, is to create a purposeful network of concepts and propositions that, through reasoning proofs of fact, consistent with scientific methods, establishes the criteria required for new science. Scientific theories are different from scientific hypotheses. The scientific hypotheses are estimations produced by a positive, limited and empirical phenomenon, while being scientific and powerful; they do not provide a comprehensive and subjective explanation. In contrast, a scientific theory has a profound and subjective explanation of a set of observed and related phenomena that address their cause and why. Thus, a scientific theory consists of one or more hypotheses supported by repeated experiments. Supporter and rejecter of a theory is the hypotheses behind which the theory is produced, and directly are tested (Delawar, 2011: 61). “*Tafsīr*” is *maṣḍar* of *tafīl* from the root “*f-s-r*”, meaning expression and explanation (Ibn Manẓūr, 1999, under *f-s-r*), discovering and presenting a reasonable affair, and so on. It is terminologically meant as knowledge of understanding and expressing meanings hidden in words and verses, and discovery of the will of God in any reasonable way. It includes meanings of all verses, whether they be *muḥkam* and *mutashābih*, *ẓāhir* and *bāṭin*, or *naṣ* and *ẓāhir*, and in general, receiving “God’s order”. In fact, whatever the interpreter can do with the help of the required sciences of interpretation (Suyūṭī, 1999, vol. 4, 213; ‘Amid Zanjani, 1994: 162) and closes to God by the rational and logical ways in any type of traditional, rational, mystical, etc. exegeses that is the interpretation of the verses. “Efficiency” (Competent/deft) means applicable and useful (Dehkhoda, 1993; Moein, 1994; Amid, 2011, under *karamad*), meaning the real realization or ability of the system to perform the essential functions of a theory, such that the majority or powerful individuals and groups who believe in that theory or school could observe it in the same way (Agha-Bakhshi, 2000: 446; Seymour, 1995: 11).

Efficiency is relative, depending on the specific goals, capabilities, and barriers of each phenomenon, and the total efficiency is the algebraic sums of the efficiencies of the various stages. The efficiency or inefficiency of a component of a compound phenomenon is a whole (Dehkhoda,

1993; Moein, 1992, under *karamad*; Afshari-Rad, 2010: 446). In expressing the efficacy of a phenomenon, one should pay attention to the differences between its goals, which affect the worldview of that phenomenon. For instance, divine systems based on religious worldview insist on spiritual values more than material.

In general, the interpreter's understanding, opinion and view on the principles, bases and method of interpretation of the Qur'anic verses, all originated from his interpretive theory, according to which the interpreter provided a thought system, making this theory lasting and effective in the audience (Mojtahed Shabestari, 1996: 23; Amin al-Khūli, nd, 21). When evaluating the efficacy of a compound phenomenon, such as interpretive theory, one must consider the whole of that set, and it cannot be regarded as efficient or ineffective on the basis of the efficiency or inefficiency of a component.

### **Criteria for Producing an Efficient Theory in Other Sciences**

Presenting the efficacy of an interpretive theory and compiling it, is not a mere compilation; rather, because it lacks background and, of course, is not indigenous to the field of interpretation, it is necessary to borrow some criteria from other sciences capable of interpretive knowledge. Sometimes they should be smoothed or edited, in order to allow a measure of the efficacy of an interpretive theory, on an *ijtihadi* rather than imitative basis. Sciences which first their origins are transparent and their foundations enjoy maximum integrity; and second, they have epistemic and structural coherence, possessing the power and capacity to produce more and easier theories. The interpretive theory, in terms of its acquired method, is divided into two types of *ijtihadi* and imitation. The *ijtihadi*, in contrast to the imitative, means that the interpreter achieves a theory by conducting personal research. Exegeses who do not have a coherent and methodical interpretation may have *ijtihadi* theory, but their theory may not be systematic, homogeneous, and balanced. The interpreter needs to arrange the results of his research according to efficient criteria, and refrain from imitating the standards of others' interpretative theories or those of other sciences without

query. To judge the possibility and impossibility of producing and presenting the theories of a science, in the Qur'anic interpretative theories, some of these sciences are examined here:

### ***Jurisprudence (Fiqh)***

Jurisprudence is a knowledge supported by various sciences including *'Uṣūl*, *Rijāl*, *Dirāyah*, Hadith, etc., through which it has clear origins and maximal foundations, as well as, relatively epistemological and structural coherence. It can therefore be claimed that this knowledge has the capacity to produce theories. Some jurisprudential theories such as ownership, contract, condition, custom, etc. are not necessarily jurisprudential issues, though they reduce the volume of jurisprudential theories, making the theories systematic and refusing to accept any claim as a theory (Jum'ah-Muhammad, 2000: 334). Jurisprudential theory has efficient criteria such as coherence and purposefulness, generalizability and inclusiveness, describing phenomena and related data in causal network, capability of truthfulness and falsehood, and are changed in various jurisprudential issues, and other criteria that vary in different jurisprudential contexts, especially those are more in line with human attitudes, based on common and rational practices (called as *'imḍā'iyāt* in Jurisprudence) and are more accessible.

### ***Social Sciences***

Another science whose study of criteria and theories may be useful and practical in delivering efficient interpretative theory is the social sciences. Theory in the social sciences is a relatively coherent outline of specific criteria based on certain social life and society, including ontology, epistemology, anthropology, methodology, as well as criteria related to the nature of society. Recognizing the dominant value of social theories drives the social theorist to propose a plan for the whole society or a part (Davies, 2008: 39). Social theories seek to design an ideal social world, often requiring a sort of attitude about changing the existing status or “the world as it is”. Albeit it does not stop at what exists but speaks of what must be existed. Clearly, social theory can never be

purely subjective and intuitive, but must regard the capabilities and competences of contemporary society to reach goals. It should be noted that religious and non-religious social theory have some differences, such as the transcendental component of social-religious theory, which lends its supernatural color to other elements.

### ***Sociology***

Another science whose study of criteria and theories may be applied in bringing efficient interpretative theory is sociology. In sociological theories, the rules ordering social phenomena have been discovered and formulated, which are free from ambiguity as well as refutable and tested. This science presents specific research hypotheses, predicts as much as possible the evolution of affairs, and derives all of these criteria from a form of rational and value-free formulation (Davies, 2008: 9). Sociological theory claims loyalty to the values governing science, and does not go beyond the reach of a science to predict social phenomena and bring about limited changes (Johnson, 2008:12). Sociology is often known as a conservative science that justifies the status quo. Accordingly, various epistemic areas such as critical theory, feminism, and cultural studies, emphasizing particularly on the critique of society, have often begun to critical sociology as an epistemic dependent on existing conditions (Abazari, 2010: 354).

### **The Efficiency, and Truth and Falsehood**

The relation of efficacy to truth and falsehood, and its correspondence to reality and truth, is a means according to which the effectiveness of an opinion or action is measured. Its importance is so that it has been concerned by schools such as pragmatism and functionalism:

### ***The Pragmatist School***

“Pragmatism”, an action or theory regarded as good by man, claims that it makes a connection between belief and practice, and expands the concept of the mind with the efficacy of behavior

(Connolly, 1989: 7, 427). According to pragmatists, if an idea leads to a good and effective result for man, it must be regarded as truthful, otherwise it will be false. For truth, it is not something that exists without man. As such, the meaning of the theorem has been changed in pragmatism, and a thought or belief is in itself neither true nor false; it is true only in the course of experimentation and its results, either false, or efficient and inefficient. Religion, for example, has no place in modern philosophy because it is not practical; but the pragmatism accepts it with regard to its usefulness and benefits (moral, social, etc.) to man (Peirce, 1931: 8, 33). The efficiency of the truth of something is not permanent and immutable, but it develops and evolves over time. What is true now may not be true in the future, because in the future, other ideas and theories become true and new with new circumstances as well. That is, all affairs are subject to results (James William, 1995: 433) and we will never come to efficiency and absolute truth. For our science, issues, and problems are always changing, and at every step, efficiency and truth enable us to satisfactorily investigate and solve the current issues and problems of that time. According to the scholars of this school, whatever is true for an individual at a particular time may not be true for someone else at the same time (Azarang, 2011: 57). To criticize the efficacy and truth of Pragmatism, one must say that what this school has chosen to define truth and evaluate propositions and knowledge cannot prove its claim; all things are measured on the basis of objective and practical usages are partially acceptable, but the determination of efficiency, function, and utility as the criterion of truth, as well as assessment and evaluation of cases with challenges such as conflicting the truth with practical benefits, in various ways and repeatedly throughout life, all are examples of it .

### ***Functionalism School***

Functionalism means result and effect, which in the logic of functionalism the effect or consequence of a phenomenon will affect the stability, survival and cohesion of the social system (Tavassoli, 1997: 217; Malinowski, 2000: 195; Gould, 1997: 679). In the school of functionalism,



because of the centrality of utility and striving for maximum profit, utility is the only objective criterion for distinguishing truth from falsehood, and efficiency from inefficiency. Thus, in the ontological dimension, it ignores the metamaterials, and furthermore, reduces the existence of society to a material existence, leaving no room for transcendental issues. From the anthropological point of view, ignoring the nature, the authority and accepting the pessimistic view of man, failed to draw a line between the originality of man and the acceptance of society as an extra-human being. In the epistemological dimension, it ignores the epistemic role of reason and revelation and reduces the means of knowledge to sense. From a methodological point of view, this theory, in addition to ignoring epistemic sources, reduces man's immaterial dimensions and desires to his materials (Reitzer, 2001: 121-122; Kozer, 2001: 202). Emphasized on the benefits of a phenomenon or a human action, thus, the theory underscores relativism, supernatural criteria for the evaluation of objects, and, undermining the effectiveness of religious affairs and distinguishing between religious and moral values and between ethics and power, it restricts efficiency only to such affairs, without metamaterial and religious ones.

Although the efficacy intended by such schools is incompatible with our most primitive religious and Islamic issues, the efficacy and fundamentals of truth and falsehood, in the sense of being central to the utmost benefit and usage in various matters, including in interpretive theory, brings about the effectiveness and consistency of the theories.

### **Methodological Criteria for Exegetical Theory**

The method or the way to obtain a purpose respectively and continuously refers both to the path itself and the rules and means of reaching it. Methodology, in interpretative theories, is a process that the interpreter pursues in understanding the verses and the disagreement on it will make difference understanding of the verses. Efficient methods of an interpretive theory include:

### ***Non-interference of Interpreters' Foregoing***

The evolution of exegeses reveals the fact that interpretations have always accepted the line of the interpreters' beliefs and presuppositions as well as the sciences of their time since the beginning of their development (Ayazi, 1999: 52-63). Understanding correctly does not mean that one's minds must be devoid of any presuppositions, for this is impossible. Good understanding is to know what previous information are, so they will be edited well-documented and well-reasoned, and used effectively. Interpretative theories are sometimes the foundations of Islamic science, such as: the origin of emergence, the validity of one set of concepts, and the lack of validity of the other, the scope of citing theology merely; and sometimes the theories that are most frequently discussed in the modern age, such as: the theories of the scope of expectation of religion and how the language of religion is. In all these assumptions, the role of the interpreter will manifestly play itself in the interpretation of the Qur'an. In addition to the role of these theories in interpretation, other issues such as the interpreter's scientific knowledge, the interpreter's psychological and biological points, etc. are supposed for him, which should not necessarily have an impact on comprehension. So how to understand the message from the text will vary depending on the assumptions and opinions of the audience. There are various methods among the scholars who have interpreted the Qur'an based on their personal, social, historical, etc. knowledge and tendencies, and have discovered a layer of the Holy Qur'an according to their expertise (Khomeini, 1993: 93-95). For instance, a jurist who interprets by aid of deducing divine commands from the Qur'an and hadith, his mental records and information from the outside world influence his *fatwas*, so that the Arab's *fatwas* show its Arabic face and the other's so on. Because of the influence of these factors, the interpretation is evolving, and is considered human, non-sacred, so attributing these interpretations to *Shari'a* and religion is because of ignorance of their originating factors, e.g. in the verse: "Allah is He Who raised the heavens without any pillars that ye can see" (Ra'd: 2), unlike the commentators who interpreted this verse rationally as not-suspending of the heaven, there are commentators who are aware of earth's gravity and its various issues, saying: "This verse refers to a power that non-

grounded objects can also be suspended in space, because the gravity keeps stars and celestial bodies in the sky, which is accordance with the fixed rules of God, the Almighty” (Sadeghi, 12-13, 246). Also a commentator who insists on the role of women in Islamic society, contrary to the traditions about consulting women and even not-consulting them or if someone does so should oppose them (Abu Hajar, 2001: 241), in the interpretation of verses such as: “If they both decide on weaning, by mutual consent, and after due consultation, there is no blame on them” (Baqarah: 233) and “Said one of the (damsels): ‘O my (dear) father! engage him on wages: truly the best of men for thee to employ is the (man) who is strong and trusty” (Qasas: 26), not only allow consulting women, but consider it proper and desirable action in some cases (Majlisi, 52, 193; 77, 215; 74, 165; 100, 262).

### ***Evolution of Ideas, Without Evolution of Vocabulary Meanings***

The emergence of new meanings for a word over time should not be implied as the evolution of the meanings of word over time; rather, new meanings are other concepts that, in addition to earlier ones, are understood from these terms and prior meanings never convert into news. For, words are meant for individuals’ capacity of understanding, not for real identities and hidden attributes that are not understood by all. These meanings are fixed over time without change. If with the advancement of human science, a new understanding is revealed or scientific theories of truth are changed, it will have no effect on the evolution of the meanings. Because while the new theory makes new features and characteristics come to mind when imagining, hearing or seeing them, but those criteria, because of their unknown status at the time of emergence, are not part of the meanings of words nor the announcer intended them. It is clear that the true and real attributes of the objects as they are in the text were not part of the single meanings, so that their discovery and evolution in its theories would become effective in the literal sense. In virtual meanings, if the use of the word in the intended sense is prior to the emergence of the new theory, the features and attributes discovered after the use of the word in the light of new theories for that meaning are not intended by the speaker, and does not use the word to imply to it, and hence it is not part of the

meaning of the word. Theories are therefore effective in the possibility of new real or virtual applications of the term and may give rise new real and virtual meanings of the word. However, in the actual and virtual applications of that term, taken before the emergence of new theories, it can never affect and change their meanings. Therefore, the actual or virtual meanings of a speaker in his vocabulary may not only be changed with the evolution of theories, but also need to be ignored in order to understand them exactly.

This should also be considered as an efficient criterion in interpretative theories. It is not hence necessary to understand the meaning of the Qur'anic verses and other religious texts, based on the new meanings, which have emerged along with the knowledge and theories of later times, but must strictly refrain from it, and only interpret it with regard to the concepts of the words at the descent time. Also, if there is a semantic transformation of the Qur'anic vocabulary in the light of the evolution of scientific theories, such that it appears necessary in understanding the Qur'anic terms, since the meanings go back to the theories, as theories are changed, the meanings of the words are changed too. For instance, when the theory of the large luminous sphere for which the word *Shams* was introduced is changed, the meaning of *Shams* is changed as well; i.e. in the past the meaning of the sun was a luminous mass rotating around the earth and now it means a huge mass from gas that the earth orbits it. According to this view, the verses of the Qur'an and religious texts could and should be interpreted and explained in the light of the new meanings that emerge by data and theories of the day, and accordingly the evolution of religious knowledge is essential and inevitable (Soroush, 2018: 130, 131, 285, 301, 302, 350, 351, 462). Thus, although words may become true or virtual meanings over time, these new concepts do not appear to be universal; that is, not all words acquire new meanings within a certain time (Babaei, 2017: 103-107). Certainly the interpreter must be careful in presenting his interpretive theory to consider the real and virtual meanings of the Qur'an, and avoid the changes occurred after the Qur'an's Revelation. A word may find new real and virtual meaning over time, and possibly real and virtual meanings of the time of Revelation are ignored.

### ***The Relationship between Language and Culture of the Time***

Language, through its important role in human social life, is influenced and transformed by many of the developments and transformations of its society, and perhaps by other extra-psychic social institutions. The quality and quantity of linguistic transformations depend on, but not equal to, those of non-linguistic developments.

Socio-cultural developments occur much earlier than linguistic changes and are well reflected in language and its theories. In fact, language is the culture and community of its audience. Hence, it is impossible to know a language apart from its own culture. Any change in social and educational development is possible through language and culture, so that understanding only the rules of the language and the inter-language layers cannot be applicable for understanding every language; it requires understanding the different levels of meta-language, including the cultural, social, political and other layers and preconceptions in which discourse holds. That's why for the efficiency of a theory the methodological criteria of understanding linguistic functions are important. Some of these functions include: describing facts and truths, causal explanations of phenomena, transmitting experiences and cultures of the past, affective-emotional functions, etc. (Saeedi Roshan, 2006: 21-22).

To present an efficient interpretative theory, the interpreter needs to deal with the manner of the Holy Qur'an's confronts to the elements of the culture of the descent age, such as: confronting the negative elements, emphasizing and evolving positive elements, using folk language for giving better understanding (Khosrow-Panah, 2014: 12), etc.

### ***Finding Goals of Surahs and Verses***

The Qur'an states a wide variety of subjects. It also does not gather them together, but rather disperses them in accordance with the specific purpose in the verse. Even the stories narrated about the ancient nations and previous prophets, each part of them fits the specific purpose of the verse. In fact, the method of the Qur'an is appropriate to the specific purpose of the verse for which it

was sent down: “and We have sent down to thee the Book explaining all things” (Nahl: 89). The Qur’an was revealed over twenty-three years, on various occasions. In any case, whatever was needed has been stated in the verses (Ṭabrisī, 2000: 15, 127). The Qur’an, like all last holy Scriptures, was revealed directly to the Prophet (PBUH), in the language of his audience. Allah, the Almighty, says: “We sent not a messenger except (to teach) in the language of his (own) people” (Ibrahim: 4). For, it was to be understood and thought by people in order to be guided and educated (Ṭabāṭabā’ī, 2014: 11, 103).

In dealing with its audience, the Qur’an observes the level of knowledge and intelligence of individuals, as well as the environment and the coordinates around, in order to guide them completely. Divine truths and verses have come down and have been made available to man in tangible and linguistic terms. Hence, understanding and explaining the general purposes of the Qur’an, those of the Surahs, and those of the verses, are the methodological criteria for the efficiency of an interpretive theory that must be considered by an exegete.

### ***Finding Outward and Inward Levels***

The immortality, eternity, and comprehensiveness of the Qur’an in the ever-changing context of time, and the necessity of respecting the comprehension of all audiences of the revelation in all ages, naturally bring forth numerous levels in the Word of Revelation. These qualities require, on the one, that all the concepts of the ages and generations, which are beyond the realm of the human sense and intellect, are supplied from the source of revelation to human beings, while, on the other, observing the audiences’ understanding requires that the divine revelation must be understandable by them.

The Prophet of Islam (PBUH) says: “Indeed the Qur’an has outward (*ḍāḥr*) and inward (*baṭn*) levels” i.e. every Qur’anic verse includes two sides of levels. The outward level has made it eternal and universal. The hidden layers laying beyond the literal and clear meanings of the Qur’an, on one side, have enriched the Divine Word in a unique way, and on the other, have rendered it more

eloquent as well as in accordance with the state of the verses. It is very clear that if all the intentions were expressed by terms explicitly, these features would be eliminated and then verses be blamed of being balderdash and incompatible with the need of time (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1995: 28-32). In the Infallibles' (AS) sayings also it is referred to this inward (hidden) level, such as:

«عن فضيل بن يسار قال: سألت ابا جعفر عن هذه الرواية: « ما من القرآن آية الا ولها ظهر و بطن» فقال: ظهره تنزيله و بطنه تاويله، منه ما قد مضى و منه ما لم يكن يجرى كما يجرى الشمس و القمر»

“Fuḍayl bin Yasār asked from Imam Sadiq (AS) about the phrase ‘any Qur’anic phrase has indeed outward and inward’. Imam replied: ‘Its outward is its revelation and its inward is its interpretation. Some of it has been past and some has not (will reveal later), as sun and moon which goes continuously”. (Ṣaffār, 1982: 199; Suyūṭī, 1999: 77).

To access the interpretive and esoteric meaning of the Holy Qur’an, too, requires some criteria including: harmony between hidden meanings with clear ones of verses (Shirazi, 1978: 82), finding the central axis of the message (Ma'rifat, 1989: 1, 290-291), adaptation to the general spirit of the messages of the Qur’an (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 2014: 1, 11), understanding the manifests of the Qur’an, as introductory to its hidden layers, finding valid evidences and indications, etc.

## Results and Findings

Since the advent of the revelation of the Holy Qur’an as a scripture that covers the last religious teachings completely and comprehensively, many have come to understand and interpret the Qur’an, and the expansion of the Qur’anic exegesis also led to exegetical theories and schools. New interpretative theories are likely to emerge over time. The paper’s findings are as follow:

1. The criterion for understanding the revealed text is the intentional understanding of the Sender Himself as well as its communicator, but this is reflected in the mirror of the interpreters’ understandings and theories and their expectations of religion.
2. Having a criterion and a roadmap in interpretative theories will result in not confining the interpretative understandings, and will expand the understanding of the Divine Book in quality and quantity.

3. The principles of honesty, lying, truth, and reality in the efficiency of interpretative theories must be consistent with religious and Islamic principles, not with individual preferences and different communities.

4. Interpretative theories will be applied, permanent and firm on methodological criteria such as: non-interpreter's presumptions, evolution of theories without change of vocabulary meanings, relationship of language and culture of the time, understanding of the purposes of *surahs* and verses, and knowing outward and inward layers.

The analysis of the various aspects of the efficient criteria in interpretative theories reveals a new window in the exegetes' views in this area, especially when no research has been still produced in the field.

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## معیارهای روش شناخت کارآمد در نظریه تفسیر قرآن کریم

خدیجه احمدی بیغش<sup>۱</sup> 

### چکیده

قرآن کریم تنها کتاب آسمانی مصون از تحریف، و شامل برنامه هدایت بشر، در همه اعصار و افراد است، که باید آیات آن به طور دقیق و صحیح فهمیده شود. این امر سبب به وجود آمدن نظریات مختلف تفسیری مفسران در قرون متمادی، شده است. چگونه می توان نقشه راهی را چید تا این نظریات، کارآمد گردند، و راهی را تعیین کرد، تا تنوع نظریات تفسیری سر از نسبیت تفسیری، پلورالیسم تفسیری و حتی آثار شیسم تفسیری در نیاورد؟ آیا امکان ارائه چنین مدل و الگویی ممکن است؟ معرفی کارآمدی یک نظریه تفسیری، از حیث معیارهای روش شناختی مانند عدم دخالت پیش دانسته های مفسر، تحول نظریات بدون تحول معانی واژگان، رابطه زبان و فرهنگ زمانه، شناخت اهداف آیات و سور، سطح و بطن شناسی و... موجب کشف لایه های بیشتر در فهم قرآن شده و گسترش کمی و کیفی فهم آیات الهی را به دنبال خواهد داشت که به پایداری و مانایی یک نظریه تفسیری از میان سایر نظریات منجر می شود.

واژه های کلیدی: نظریه تفسیری، معیار روش شناخت کارآمد، قرآن.

<sup>۱</sup> استادیار گروه قرآن و حدیث دانشکده  
علوم انسانی دانشگاه تربیت مدرس.  
تهران. ایران.  
E-mail: Kh.ahmadi@modares.ac.ir