



*ISHĀRATAL-NAṢṢ* IN THE *QUR'ĀN*: AN ANALYSIS OF  
ITS ROLE IN THE QUR'ANIC INTERPRETATION

BY

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## ABSTRACT

*Fuqahā'* (legal experts in Islamic Law) and *mufasssirūn* (commentators of the *Qur'ān*) have applied several well-defined as well as undefined methodologies to either interpret the *Qur'ān*, the first source of Islamic law, or to derive certain particular import/s from the word/s of Qur'anic *āyāt*. One such not so defined way to derive message from the Qur'anic word/s is deliberation over *ishārat al-naṣṣ* (implied meaning of revealed words). *Ishārat al-Naṣṣ* may be defined as far-fetched indication of certain meaning in a particular statement of the *Qur'an*. This, as a natural corollary, has been used and misused. *Mu'tazilah*, *Ashā'irah*, and *sufiyā'* are the most prominent in employing *ishārat al-naṣṣ* for their respective purposes. It is claimed that deviation in the interpretation of some Qur'anic injunctions is consequent upon manipulation of the revealed words in the name of *isharat al-nass*. This research focused on (1) reasoning on *ishārat al-naṣṣ* as a delicate tool to interpret the Qur'an, (2), role of *ishārat al-naṣṣ* in explaining in apparent contradiction among Qur'anic precepts and (3) pitfalls in the reasoning on *ishārat al-naṣṣ*. *Fiqhī ijtihād* by different *fuqahā'* leads, at times, to differences in the interpretation of the Qur'an. The main reason for this is different ways of reasoning on *ishārat al-naṣṣ*. The main thrust of this thesis is on how proper reasoning on *ishārat al-naṣṣ* may be used as an authentic method to interpret Qur'anic *āyāt*, on the one hand, and to remove apparent contradiction available in the revealed words, on the other. The methodology applied in this thesis is mainly analytical with critical overtones.

## ملخص البحث

استخدم الفقهاء والمفسرون في تفسير القرآن الكريم وتأويله أو استخراج الأحكام من آياته عدة مناهج، منها محددة تحديداً جيداً، ومنها غير محددة. ولا يوجد طريق أوضح من إشارة النص لاستمداد الرسالة من القرآن الكريم. وإشارة النص هي المعنى الذي لا يتبادر فهمه من ألفاظه، ولا يقصد من سياقه، ولكنه معنى لازم للمعنى المتبادر من ألفاظه، فهو مدلول اللفظ بطريق الالتزام. وقد يكون وجه التلازم ظاهراً، وقد يكون خفياً؛ وكنتيجة طبيعية، أساء البعض في استخدامها في الاستدلال. وأكثر من تناولوا هذا المنهج للاستدلال في إثبات مذاهبهم، أو لأغراض خاصة هم المعتزلة، والأشاعرة، والصوفيون. وقد صرح بعض العلماء أن الانحراف في تفسير الآيات قد دخل في القرآن عن طريق إشارة النص. لذلك يجب الاحتياط في الاستدلال بطريق الإشارة، وقصره على ما يكون لازماً للمعنى من معاني النص لزوماً لا انفكاك عنه. ويهدف هذا البحث إلى بيان: أ- أن هذه الوسيلة من الاستدلال موضوع حساس في تفسير القرآن الكريم، ب- ودوره في تفسير القرآن وبيانه في بادي النظر تناقض ظاهر بين التعاليم القرآنية. والاجتهاد الفقهي من قبل الفقهاء يؤدي في بعض الأحيان إلى اختلافات في تفسير القرآن، والسبب الرئيسي لذلك هو ما يوجد من الطرق المختلفة في الاستدلال بإشارة النص. والهدف الأساسي لهذا البحث هو بيان كيفية الوصول إلى التفكير السليم حول إشارة النص، وكيف يمكن استخدامها كطريقة أصيلة لتفسير الآيات القرآنية من جهة، وكيف يزال التناقض الواضح موجود في الكلمات كشفت من جهة أخرى. والمنهج المتبع في هذه الأطروحة هو المنهج التحليلي الذي يرافقه النقد في بعض الأحيان.

## APPROVAL PAGE

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigation, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degree at IIUM or other institutions.

Usman Ahmad

Signature.....

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**ISHĀRAT AL-NAṢṢ IN THE QUR'ĀN: AN ANALYSIS OF ITS ROLE IN  
THE QUR'ANIC INTERPRETATION**

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*This thesis is dedicated to my wife and children who suffered a lot due to my stay  
abroad.*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All praises be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds, the One and Unique, Who bestowed human beings with the blessings of cognizance and discernment and endowed man with such a potential that he is engaged to achieve the knowledge of God untiringly. Then blessings and salutations be to the Holy Prophet (SAW) who not only impregnated humanity with the passion of acquiring cognizance but also led to the sources of knowledge to satiate this passion.

Material needs of human beings may have limitations but their aspiration for acquiring more and more cognizance is never satiated even after knowing all the secrets of this universe. This eagerness keeps them restless and they continuously wander from one stream to another. My journey to Malaysia had also been under the same passion. While I was teaching in the University of the Punjab, my friends commended me to join a great educational institute like International Islamic University of Malaysia to achieve my Ph. D. Therefore, after completing all the stages of legal procedure I was able to proceed further to my destination. All the intricacies related to the admission were overcome with the sincere help of Dr. Noor Usmani. I am greatly thankful for his help and guidance. After being registered as a student in the Department of Quran & Sunnah Studies, I was directed to start my research work under benign guidance of Ptof. Dr. Israr Ahmad Khan. I sensed two streams of affability and knowledge alongwith other virtues in his self running together, whose waters were sweeter than each other. I have never observed so many dimensions of a personality like his. He is a teacher, a father, a friend, a scholar, a researcher, a guide and above all a fascinating human being. I pray for his long life and health. He guided me to the right direction in my research and encouraged me to proceed with fortitude and steadiness. I shall always remember him with best wishes.

After the approval of research topic as well as synopsis I started my research work that proved to be as difficult as to grow flowers in a wild desert full of weeds and thorns. However, with consistent and hard work I collected battered, scattered and small ideas and arranged and compiled them into a thesis form that is submitted.

During present research, I consulted books written in different languages particularly, Arabic, English, and Urdu. Although, the primary sources have been utilized but even secondary sources have also been taken up where required. Unnecessary and non related material has been avoided and it is tried to use only that material which is directly related to the topic and that was compulsory to add up.

I have also tried to present my work in an improved expression to maintain the standard of the work. Regarding the subject of the research, it is entirely unique and novel and no book of any language is available on this topic. However partial discussions are found abundantly in the books of many scholars. Those discussions have been presented here in a new perception and style.

Most of the material is extracted from the researcher's own understanding and these subtle points and their unique presentation cannot be found in any other work.

The third and fourth chapters of the thesis are particularly the result of researcher's own creation. Thus the work becomes a beautiful confluence of research and creation.

Man can only try to utilize his limited intellectual potential that is, no doubt, incomplete, defective and faulty. Thus, it is not surprising if there are some faults and defects in a human attempt. There would be some weaknesses in this work also. However, the researcher has tried his best to present a novel research in a new style, utilizing an analytical method with a criticism based on argumentation. Instead of all these circumspections, it is just a student's attempt, having no claim of perfection. Therefore, there is strong possibility of imperfection and defects.

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## TABLE OF TRANSLITERATION

b = ب	z = ز	f = ف
t = ت	s = س	q = ق
th = ث	sh = ش	k = ك
j = ج	ṣ = ص	l = ل
ḥ = ح	ḍ = ض	m = م
kh = خ	ṭ = ط	n = ن
d = د	ẓ = ظ	h = ه
dh = ذ	‘ = ع	w = و
r = ر	gh = غ	y = ي

**SHORT:**    A = ' ;      I = ِ ;      U = '̣

**LONG:**      ā = ا̣ ;      ī = ي̣ ;      ū = و̣

**DIPHTHONG:**    ay = اِ ي̣ ;      aw = اِ و̣

# CHAPTER ONE

## 1.0. INTRODUCTION

The *Qur'ān* deals with human life, its needs, its nature, its problems and their solutions (21:10). That is why Muslim scholars in the field of *tafsīr* and *fiqh* right after the time of the last Prophet (S.A.W) interpreted the *Qur'ān* by using certain methodologies that led to the emergence of principles to derive messages from the *Qur'ān*. Ḥanafī jurists have classified the most widely used principles of interpreting the Qur'anic text into four categories: (1) *'Ibārat al-Naṣṣ*, (2) *Dalālat al-Naṣṣ*, (3) *Iqtaḍā' al-Naṣṣ* and (4) *Ishārat al-Naṣṣ*<sup>1</sup>. Shāfi'ī jurists developed similar principles of interpreting the *Qur'ān* but they named them *al-manṭūq* and *al-mafhūm*. They discuss *'ibārat al-naṣṣ*, *Iqtaḍā' al-naṣṣ* and *ishārat al-naṣṣ* under the title of *al-manṭūq*.<sup>2</sup> Jurists did not introduce and confine these principles of interpreting the *Qur'ān* to merely derive legal rulings from the *Qur'ān*; they also defined them in a comprehensive manner and as general principles to understand and interpret the Qur'anic message. The task of jurists (*fuqahā'*) warranted deliberation over the Qur'anic text and Hadith text hence they were also *mufasssirūn* and *muḥaddithūn* and they spent their life to understand the *Qur'ān*.<sup>3</sup> These principles as classified by *fuqahā'* were taken as principles of *tafsīr* by *mufasssirūn*.<sup>4</sup> Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī has discussed them in his book *al-Itqān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* as modes of reasoning over

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<sup>1</sup> Sa'd al-Dīn Mas'ūd, Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ al-Talwīḥ 'alā al-Tawḍīḥ li matn al-Tanqīḥ fī Uṣūl al-Fiqh* (Bayrūt: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1996), 1:242.

<sup>2</sup> 'Abd al-Malik bin 'Abd Allah, Al-Juwaynī, *Al-Burhān fī Uṣūl al-Fiqh* (Qaṭar: Dār al-Wafā', 1992), 1:298.

<sup>3</sup> Tafsīr of Imām Shāfi'ī has been compiled and available in a book form in 3 volumes: (See: Ahmad bin Muṣṭafā Al-Farrān, *Tafsīr al-Imām al-Shāfi'ī*. (Saudi Arabia: Dār al-Tadmuriyyah, 2006)

<sup>4</sup> 'Abd al-Ḥamīd, Moḥsin, *Dirāsāt fī Uṣūl Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* (Baghdad: Mṭba' Waṭan 'Arabī, 1980), 23.

the Qur'anic text.<sup>5</sup> An over view of the books of *tafsīr* unveils that *mufasssīrūn* based their interpretation of the *Qur'ān* on these principles consistently.<sup>6</sup>

Reasoning on '*ibārat al-naṣṣ*' is an act of deriving the meaning of the Qur'anic text as it appears from the words used therein.<sup>7</sup> Every Qur'anic *āyah* has some apparent meaning or meanings conveyed through the words. For example, the *Qur'ān* states:<sup>8</sup> "*But God hath permitted trade and forbidden usury*".<sup>9</sup> In this *āyah* two meanings are quite apparent: (1) there is a difference between trade and usury, and (2) trade is permitted and usury is prohibited. These two meanings are apparent and explicit in the text and no extra *tadabbur* and *ijtihād* are required to derive these meanings.<sup>10</sup>

*Dalālat al-Naṣṣ* of the Qur'anic text is defined by Bazdawī<sup>11</sup>, a well-known Ḥanafī jurist, as pronounced meanings of the text that are valid to apply to similar situation or in an identical case due to commonly effective cause. The cause can be understood from the words of the text without any deep contemplation.<sup>12</sup> For example, the *Qur'ān* says:<sup>13</sup> "*And say not them a word of contempt.*"<sup>14</sup> The cause of

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<sup>5</sup> Jalāl al-Dīn, al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān fi 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* (Saudi Arabia: Majma' al-Malik al-Fahd, 2000), 4:489.

See also discussion of *al-manṭūq* and *al-maḥḥūm* in (Muhammad bin Bahādur, Al-Zarkashī, *al-Burhān fi 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* (Ed: Muhammad Fadal Ibrāhīm), (Bayrūt: Dār al-Ma'rifah, n.d.), 4:51.

<sup>6</sup> See: Abū Sa'ūd, Muhammad bin Muhammad, *Irshād al-'Aql al-Salīm ilā Mazāyā al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* (Bayrūt: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1990), 6:104.

See: Muhammad Thanā Allah, al-Maḥḥarī, *Tafsīr al-Maḥḥarī* (Bayrūt: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 2004), 1:340, 3:284.

<sup>7</sup> Abd al-'Azīz, Al-Bukhārī, *Kashf al-Asrār 'an Uṣūl Fakhr al-Islām al-Bazdawī* (Bayrūt: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1997), 1:106.

<sup>8</sup> *Al-Qur'ān, al-Baqarah: 275*

<sup>9</sup> A.Yusuf Ali, The Holy Qur'ān Text, Translation and Commentary, (Beirut: Printing Production, 1965), 1:111-112.

<sup>10</sup> Sukrija Ramic, Language and the interpretation of Islamic Law (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 2003), 7.

<sup>11</sup> Alī bin Muhammad al-Bazdawī (400-480AH) was, in his time, referred to as Fakhr al-Islām (the pride of Islam), because of his learning. (See Baqā, Muhammad Maḥḥar. (1414AH). *Muḥam al-Uṣūliyyīn*. Makkah al-Mukarramah: Maṭābi' Jāmi'ah Umm al-Qurā.)

<sup>12</sup> Abd al-'Azīz, Al-Bukhārī, *Kashf al-Asrār 'an Uṣūl Fakhr al-Islām al-Bazdawī*, 1:116

<sup>13</sup> *Al-Qur'ān, al-Isrā': 23*

<sup>14</sup> A.Yusuf Ali, The Holy Qur'ān Text, Translation and Commentary, 1:703.

prohibiting to utter any word of disrespect to parents is the avoidance of offending them and it is evident from the Qur'anic text. Inferred meanings of this *āyah* suggest that all types of offence will be prohibited due to effective cause like abusing, cursing and beating them etc.<sup>15</sup>

*Iqtaḍā' al-Naṣṣ* (Essential Purport) of the Qur'anic text is defined by Bazdawī as a logical addition to the meanings of the Qur'anic text that is essential to complete the meanings of the text.<sup>16</sup>

For example, the *Qur'ān* says:<sup>17</sup> “Prohibited to you - Your mothers, daughters, sisters.”<sup>18</sup> The word of marriage has not been mentioned in the text but it is essential to add this word to the Qur'anic text to complete the meanings of the *āyah*.<sup>19</sup>

Bazdawī defined *ishārat al-naṣṣ* as definite but implicit and indirect meanings of the Qur'anic text that are not intended by the text directly but can be derived by contemplation upon its words.<sup>20</sup>

Reasoning on *ishārat al-naṣṣ* of the Qur'anic Text has a vast and recognizable role in *tafsīr*. *Ishārat al-Naṣṣ* of the Qur'anic Text is not merely a term of Ḥanafī jurisprudence; it has been utilized to interpret the *Qur'ān* intensively in the books of *tafsīr*. Jurists have employed it to derive solution of the legal issues related to human life from the *Qur'ān*. *Mufasssirūn* have employed it to prove that how the *Qur'ān* is a miracle and its limited number of verses provide the answer to any question of human intellect. *Mutakallimūn* (theologians) have used it to see whether the Qur'anic text really supports deviational thoughts and dogmas of various camps and sects. Some

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<sup>15</sup> Sukrija Ramic, Language and the interpretation of Islamic Law, 19-20.

<sup>16</sup> Abd al-'Azīz, Al-Bukhārī, *Kashf al-Asrār 'an Uṣūl Fakhr al-Islām al-Bazdawī*, 1:122.

<sup>17</sup> *Al-Qur'ān, al-Nisā'*: 23

<sup>18</sup> A. Yusuf Ali, The Holy Qur'ān Text, Translation and Commentary, 1:190

<sup>19</sup> Sukrija Ramic, Language and the interpretation of Islamic Law, 32.

<sup>20</sup> Alī bin Muhammad al-Bazdawī, *Kanz al-Wuṣūl ilā Ma'rifah al-Uṣūl* (Karachi: Mīr Muhammad Kutub Khanah, n.d.), 11.

Şūfīs have used it in the Qur’anic interpretation to strengthen their intuitional thoughts but their way of using it is different from *mufasssirūn* and *fuqahā’*. They call their *tafsīr* as *al-tafsīr al-ishārī*. *Ishārat al-Naṣṣ* is not similar to analogy (*Qiyās*) or metaphor (*Majāz*). Analogy is akin to *dalāat al-naṣṣ* in which divine cause of any injunction is explored and then its commandment is applied to the new one due to the similarity of the cause. *Ishārat al-Naṣṣ* is an entirely different method of reasoning. One way of proving the *Qur’ān*’s miraculous authority is to highlight how the *Qur’ān* indirectly and implicitly imparts injunctions that are deciphered in the rapidly changing world to acquire the guidance from the *Qur’ān*.

Some examples are quoted below to illustrate how *ishārat al-naṣṣ* plays a notable role in the Qur’anic interpretation.

The *Qur’ān* says:<sup>21</sup> “*Marry women of your choice*”<sup>22</sup> The direct and textual meaning of this *āyah* is the legitimacy of polygamy up to four. But indirectly and implicitly this *āyah* also narrates that marriage between man and man, woman and woman and between man and eunuch is totally unlawful. These meanings are not direct and not evident but Qur’anic words “*min al-nisā’*” reveal that *nikāh* (marriage) is allowed only between men and women.

The *Qur’ān* says:<sup>23</sup> “*Relate not thy vision to thy brothers*”<sup>24</sup>

This *āyah* tells the story of Prophet Yūsuf (A.S). Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī derives from this *āyah* using reasoning on *ishārat al-naṣṣ* that it is permissible to conceal and not to disclose any blessings of Allah or any precious thing to envying person or envious one to avoid any harm.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> *Al-Qur’ān, al-Nisā’*: 3

<sup>22</sup> A. Yusuf Ali, The Holy Qur’ān Text, Translation and Commentary, 1:179.

<sup>23</sup> *Al-Qur’ān, Yūsuf*: 5

<sup>24</sup> A. Yusuf Ali, The Holy Qur’ān Text, Translation and Commentary, 1:551.

<sup>25</sup> Jalāl al-Dīn, Al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Iklīl fi Istīnbāṭ al-Tanzīl* (Jeddah: Dār al-Andlus, 1422/2002), 2:68.