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**احياء علوم الدين
للامام الغرالي**

Revival Circle
The Manners of Quranic Recitation

Part 4 :: Lesson 27
Understanding and Commenting on the Quran

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A Claim and its Response

You claim that the secrets of the Quran and its
subtle meanings are revealed to the spiritual
masters of the hearts.

How can that be?

For the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said,
"Whoever comments on the Quran **using his own
individual opinion** shall take residence in Hellfire."

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No Tafsir of the Quran Except the Outward Apparent Meaning?

Whoever claims that there is no other meaning to the Quran except that which is understood from outward exegesis (tafsir)

does no more than inform us about his own limitations – and he is perfectly right about himself!

However he is wrong in ruling **all** people are of his calibre and that they cannot go beyond his limitations.

Why Tafsir is **Not** Just Repeating What Has Been Transmitted:

1. If it could only be transmitted, it could only come from the Prophet ﷺ, yet only a few parts of the Quran were commented on that has reached us.

Therefore, the opinions and commentaries of the Companions would not be accepted either since we don't know if they heard it explicitly. We would have to say that is their opinion, and not take it.

We would have very little left in Tafsir/Explanation of the Quran then.

Why Tafsir is **Not** Just Repeating What Has Been Transmitted:

2. The Companions and early Exegetes differed on the meanings of some verses and words.

They could not all have heard it from the Prophet ﷺ himself, or it would have cancelled out other opinions. Sometimes their opinions contradict one another.

This shows that the early Muslims proposed meanings according to their understanding.

Why Tafsir is **Not** Just Repeating What Has Been Transmitted:

3. The Prophet ﷺ prayed for Ibn Abbas (ra), "O Allah, give him understanding of the religion and teach him the interpretation [of the Quran]!"

If interpretation was **only** what was explicitly transmitted, why was Ibn Abbas singled out for this prayer?

Why Tafsir is **Not** Just Repeating What Has Been Transmitted:

4. Allah says: {... But if they had referred it back to the Messenger or to those of authority among them, then the ones **who [can] draw correct conclusions** from it would have known about it.) [4:83]

This shows that the People of Knowledge can use their judgement to deduce things, which is different than transmitted knowledge.

Why Tafsir is **Not** Just Repeating What Has Been Transmitted:

Finally, what was quoted from the Companions about understanding the knowledges of the Quran shows otherwise.

Therefore, it is absurd that transmitted knowledge is a condition for valid interpretation of the Quran.

Then What Does the Hadith Against Explaining by One's Own Opinion Mean?

It could be understood in 2 different ways:

- 1) A person has a certain opinion on a matter and is inclined to interpret Quran according to their whim, then use that to validate his opinion. Without that whim, he would not have come to that conclusion. This is using Quran to argue for blameworthy innovations.

Then What Does the Hadith Against Explaining by One's Own Opinion Mean?

- 2) One rushes to explain the Quran by simply outward meanings of Arabic words, without prior knowledge of Scripture and reports related to it. One who doesn't follow the outward purport of the Quran yet interprets merely from Arabic language commits many errors. As a result, this is considered using personal judgement to explain the Quran.

Then What Does the Hadith Against Explaining by One's Own Opinion Mean?

Therefore, Scriptural proofs and Transmitted reports are **necessary** to understand the ***outward*** purport of the Quran to avoid errors,
And **only after** that does the scope of understanding and deriving new meanings become **wide**.

Aspects Where Transmitted Knowledge is Necessary

1) Brevity, omission and ellipses

- ex) {And we brought Thamud the She-Camel *in sight...*}
- ex) {...and they were made to drink the calf into their hearts due to their disbelief...} ie. *love* of the calf
- ex) {And we have revealed it on the Night of Decree} ie. the Quran

Aspects Where Transmitted Knowledge is Necessary

2) Ambiguous words with multiple meanings

- ex) "al-Ummah" has 8 different meanings!
- A group of people
 - Followers of a prophet
 - A man who exemplifies goodness
 - Religion
 - Duration and Timing
 - The lone follower of a religion amidst others
 - A mother

An example of the Outward Meaning and the True Nature of Meaning

Allah Most High says, {...and it was not you who threw, when you threw, but Allah threw.}

- Outwardly the meaning is clear, but inwardly, its purport is unclear, because there seems to be opposite things affirmed (who threw?).
- Only confusing if you don't understand that the Prophet ﷺ threw from one vantage point, and Allah threw from another vantage point.
