

The Examination of the Qur'ānic Principles of Aḥmad Subḥī Maṣṣūr in Introducing the Qur'ān as the Only Source of Islamic Legislation With an Emphasis on the Book *Al-Qur'ān wa Kafā Maṣṣadaran lil-Tashrī' al-Islāmī*

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(Received: December 5, 2020 ; Revised: February 13, 2021 ; Accepted: April 4, 2021)
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Abstract

In his book *Al-Qur'ān wa kafā maṣṣadaran lil-tashrī' al-Islāmī*, Subḥī Maṣṣūr relies on the Qur'ān to try to introduce the Qur'ān as the only source of legislation in Islam and prove the non-authoritativeness of the sunna of the Prophet of Islam (s) . He claims that the qur'ānic verses reveal that the Qur'ān is a complete book that entails all truths, introduces itself as sufficient for the guidance of people, and prevents people from referring to any source other than itself. In the opinion of Subḥī Maṣṣūr, the presumptive nature of the issuance of traditions and the policy of Ḥadīth writing prevention by the Prophet (s) form another indication for the sufficiency of the Qur'ān for legislation as well as the negation of any authoritative role for the sunna in this regard. However, it seems that to fulfill and confirm the Qur'ānism theory, he has treated the qur'ānic verses selectively, has made interpretations that disagree with the linguistic context of the verses, has ignored the texts that point out the authoritativeness of the sunna, and probably has suggested uncommon justifications for them.

Keywords: Qur'ānism, Authoritativeness of the sunna, Authoritativeness of Ḥadīth, Comprehensiveness of the Qur'ān.

Introduction

Aḥmad Subḥī Maṣṣūr is a contemporary Sunnī intellectual that believes in Qur'ānism and tries in his book to prove this stance using the qur'ānic verses. Nonetheless, from the viewpoint of the absolute majority of the Shī'a and Sunnī scholars, the sunna of the Prophet (s) is the second valid religious source that cannot be ignored in the identification of religious truth. Therefore, the main question of this article is that what qur'ānic evidences form the basis of Subḥī Maṣṣūr's belief and how logical or disputable these evidences are.

Subḥī Maṣṣūr and the book *Al-Qur'ān wa kafā maṣṣadaran lil-tashrī' al-Islāmī*

Subḥī Maṣṣūr is an alumnus of the history major from Al-Azhar University. In line with teaching at that university in 1977, he started suggesting his viewpoint on the Qur'ānism. He

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now works in “Al-Markaz al-Islāmī lil-Qur’ān al-Karīm” institute in Virginia, US. One of his books is *Al-Qur’ān wa kafā maṣḍaran lil-tashrī‘ al-Islāmī* that evidently shows his intellectual principles about Qur’ānism theory. It is noteworthy that Qur’ānism is a theory that asserts,

1. The Qur’ān is a comprehensive and complete book that has not left anything unnoticed; it explains itself without any need to the sunna, and is the only source of legislation in Islam;
2. Muslims are not obliged to obey the Prophet’s (s) sunna, and his sunna is essentially not authoritative.

Subhī Maṣḍūr’s principles about the belief in the exclusiveness of the authoritativeness of the Qur’ān and so the rejection of the authoritativeness of the prophetic sunna include the following.

Proving the sufficiency of the Qur’ān as the only source of Islamic legislation

In line with his Qur’ānist stance, he believes that the noble Qur’ān entails Islam completely – i.e., all its generalities and details – and has left nothing unnoticed. Therefore, Muslims do not need the sunna to know the teachings of Islam and receive its rulings. Accordingly, he relies on some verses of this divine book to support his viewpoint. These can be classified in several categories.

Verses that deem God and His Book as sufficient for the Servants

- Is not God enough for his Servant? (Qur’ān 39:36)
- And is it not enough for them that we have sent down to thee the Book which is rehearsed to them? (Qur’ān 29:51)
- Say: "Shall I seek for (my) Cherisher other than God, when He is the Cherisher of all things (that exist)?" (Qur’ān 6:164)

After mentioning these verses, Subhī Maṣḍūr writes,

Verily these noble verses that promote the sufficiency of God as the Lord and the sufficiency of the Qur’ān as the Book are all rhetorical questions, i.e., they reject those who have adopted books other than God’s Book (Subhī Maṣḍūr, 2005: 8).

Verses that introduce the Qur’ān as the right and the non-Qur’ān as presumption

- ... And indeed it is a Book of exalted power. No falsehood can approach it from before or behind it ... (Qur’ān 41:41-42)

With regard to these verses of the Qur’ān 42, he concludes the rightfulness of the Qur’ān and the presumptiveness of the non-Qur’ān. He writes,

The problem of we Muslims is derived from the point made by the tradition scholars, who emphasize that the large part of the traditions attributed to the Prophet of Allāh (s) are the solitary ones that corroborate presumptions. Nonetheless, they order us to follow this presumption, while the presumption does not free us from the need to the right (Subhī Maṣḍūr, 2005: 11).

Verses that praise the Qur’ān as explainer and interpreter

- We have sent down to thee the Book explaining all things... (Qur’ān 16:89)
- ... when He it is Who hath sent unto you the Book, explained in detail ... (Qur’ān 6:114)

It is evident that his reliance on these verses is to remove the role of the Prophet (s) in explaining the divine verses. For example, he writes about the role of the Qur'ān as the explainer, "Explaining is the explication of something that needs clarification, and something that is evident by itself (i.e., the Qur'ān) does not need something to explicate and explain it" (Subhī Maṣṣūr, 2005: 19).

Verses that introduce the Qur'ān as entailing everything

- Nothing have we omitted from the Book (Qur'ān 6:38)
- ... nor anything fresh or dry (green or withered), but is (inscribed) in a record clear (Qur'ān 6:59)

In order to answer the predictable question, i.e., not mentioning the details of the devotional rulings and actions such as the prayer and fasting in the Qur'ān, Subhī Maṣṣūr considers "omitted" in the Qur'ān 6:38 as the ignorance of using a necessary things and says,

We do not face a problem about the number of prayer units or the manner of doing it, because if it were so, the Sublime God would explain the number and times of prayer. However, God revealed the Qur'ān to express what we need. There is no room in the Qur'ān for redundancy about things we do not need, and if the details of saying prayers were expressed in the Qur'ān, it would be ridiculous, because we have been familiar with and have done it consistently from the time of our childhood (Subhī Maṣṣūr, 2005: 18-19).

Verses that introduce the Qur'ān as the Right Path and the non-Qur'ān as moving out of the Right Path

- Verily, this is My way, leading straight: follow it: follow not (other) paths.... (Qur'ān 6:153).

In the opinion of Subhī Maṣṣūr, the word "this" means the Qur'ān and the term "(other) paths" refers to the traditions attributed to the Prophet (s).

He also says,

What God forbade Muslims from happened, and Muslim turned to the traditions that were attributed to the Prophet while their chains of transmission were disputed. When they got deviated from the Right Path (the Qur'ān) and abandoned it, they were afflicted with following the "(other) paths" and forgot God's promise (Subhī Maṣṣūr, 2005: 26).

Evidences of Subhī Maṣṣūr for the confirmation of the non-authoritativeness of the sunna

The other issue that Subhī Maṣṣūr wants to prove in his book is the non-authoritativeness of the Prophet's (s) sunna. He tries to prove this through many ways. However, in order to ease proving his claim, he first suggests strange and illogical definitions for the words "rasūl" (which might be translated to apostle) and "nabī" (which might be translated to prophet). To this end, he deems two personality aspects for the Prophet (s), and claims that the word "nabī" represents Muḥammad b. 'Abullāh in his personal life and relationships. At this station, Muḥammad (s) is a human like any other human being and does not have the responsibility of preaching, guiding, etc. When the Qur'ān addresses him as "nabī," the orders are related to his personal issues and the people are not obliged to obey "nabī." The term "rasūl" represents another aspect of his personality that is at the station of delivering the divine revelation and the recitation of the Qur'ān, and it is only in this role that obeying him is equal to obeying God (Subhī Maṣṣūr, 2005: 31).

After this introduction, he puts forth some evidences to prove the non-authoritativeness of the sunna. These can be classified into two general categories, namely the qur'ānic and non-qur'ānic evidences.

The qur'ānic evidences for the non-authoritativeness of the sunna

To prove the non-authoritativeness of the sunna, the author of the foregoing book relies on some qur'ānic verses, as follows.

Verses that order to obey "rasūl" where "rasūl" means the Qur'ān

In his definition, Subhī Maṣṣūr describes "rasūl" as the prophet delivering the divine revelation. However, after facing the verses that order Muslims to obey the "rasūl" of Allāh, he finds his claim for the unnecessariness of following the Prophet (s) endangered. Therefore, in a sudden change of stance, he announces that the word "rasūl" in these verses is God's Book. Explaining the verses that order obeying God and "rasūl," he does not stick to his own definition of "rasūl" and takes it as the Qur'ān. His justification for this is that since the Prophet (s) after his prophetic appointment delivered only the Qur'ān, there remains no room to correspond the word "rasūl" in the verses with him; rather, we can say that the word "rasūl" is the Qur'ān. Of course, he presents a different justification for this claim in every suchlike verse, as the following examples reveal.

- And how would ye deny Faith while unto you are rehearsed the Signs of God, and among you Lives the Apostle? (Qur'ān 3:101)

Based on the clause "among you Lives the Apostle," he concludes, "Now that the Prophet is not among us, it becomes evident that the word rasūl means God's book that is not available to Muslims" (Subhī Maṣṣūr, 2005: 32).

- To you they swear by God in order to please you: But it is more fitting that they should please God and His Apostle, if they are Believers.

With regard to this verse, he argues, "If the referent of the word 'rasūl' was Muḥammad (s), God would say, 'It is more fitting that they should please them both.' However 'rasūl' here only means God's 'Speech.' It is because of this that a singular pronoun is used to imply God and His Speech" (Subhī Maṣṣūr, 2005: 33).

Verses that order obeying the Qur'ān and prohibits obeying the non-Qur'ān

Another group is comprised of verses that Subhī Maṣṣūr exploits to show that the Qur'ān prohibits following the non-Qur'ān, such as what follows,

- Follow (O men!) the revelation given unto you from your Lord, and follow not, as friends or protectors, other than Him (Qur'ān 7:3).

With regard to the clause "follow not, as friends or protectors, other than Him" he writes, "The issue is clear and does not need a discussion, i.e., [it is] the necessity of following only the Qur'ān" (Subhī Maṣṣūr, 2005: 48).

Verses that show the Prophet (s) did not do free investigation (legislation) in religious decrees

The author of the book opens a chapter titled "Can the Prophet do free investigation for legislation?" in the middle of his discussion on the non-authoritativeness of the Prophet's (s) sunna, and immediately answers "The Prophet might not do free investigation for legislation." He then refers to two groups of verses to support his stance.

Verses that introduce the responsibility of “rasūl” to be exclusively delivering the revelation

- ... But what is the mission of apostles but to preach the Clear Message? (Qur’ān 16:35)
- Thy duty is but to convey (the Message) (Qur’ān 42:48)

Subḥī Maṣṣūr says, “The exclusiveness in the verse indicates that the “Rasūl” of Allāh is only responsible for delivering the divine revelation” (Subḥī Maṣṣūr, 2005: 46).

Verses that show that the “Rasūl” of Allāh did not issue any decree by himself and in every event waited for the divine revelation

- They ask thee concerning (things taken as) spoils of war ... (Qur’ān 8:1)
- They ask thee concerning the Spirit (of inspiration) ... (Qur’ān 17:85)

After mentioning these verses, Subḥī Maṣṣūr writes, “The qur’ānic reality emphasizes that when the “Rasūl” of Allāh was asked a question, he waited for the divine revelation for an answer. Therefore, the Divine Speech was revealed [with the structure] ‘They ask thee about ... (Say) ...’ (Subḥī Maṣṣūr, 2005: 50).

He then concludes,

Any decree needed for legislation is present in the Qur’ān in the form of qur’ānic revelation. The Prophet (s) did not issue any decree by himself out of the Qur’ān, his free investigation was only for correspondence, and it is for sure that his free investigation for correspondence was related to his own era and cannot be applied to the later generations and eras (ibid: 55).

Non-qur’ānic evidences on the non-authoritativeness of the sunna

In this part, he relies on some traditions and invalidates the existing traditions in an effort to prove his claim.

Traditions on prohibiting the tradition writing

Subḥī Maṣṣūr says,

If the sunna, like the Qur’ān, was part of the Islamic sources, it should be taken into account like the Qur’ān by the Prophet. However, the opposite of this is narrated by the history, that is, the Prophet paid complete attention to recording and writing the Qur’ān, but prohibited writing traditions (ibid: 69).

He mentions some narrations from Abū Sa‘īd Khudrī, too (e.g., Aḥmad, Dārimī, Tirmidhī, and Nashā’ī have narrated from Abū Sa‘īd Khudrī that the Prophet (s) was asked for permission to write but he did not allow (ibid)).

The presumptiveness of the issuance of the existing traditions

Subḥī Maṣṣūr mentions this discussion at the end of the second chapter of the book as an introduction to the criticism of Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī traditions and says, “The narrations that exist in the 3rd century LH Ḥadīth collections were developed after the demise of the Prophet (s), and the writing of traditions was prohibited for one century before then. Now, how could these traditions be attributed to the Prophet?” (ibid: 72).

He adds that, “The Ḥadīth scholars have consensus on the accuracy of the tradition ‘Anyone who attributes a lie to me will be in Fire,’ and this proves that attributing lies to the Prophet (s) started from his lifetime” (ibid: 73).

With these introductory points, he tries to convince the reader to accompany him in distrusting the existing Ḥadīth collections and the sunna.

The criticism of Subḥī Maṣṣūr's evidences for the sufficiency of the Qur'ān as the only source of Islamic legislation

Since Subḥī Maṣṣūr has relied on the qur'ānic verses to verify his evidences, we try in this article to rely only on the qur'ānic verses to reject his Qur'ānism theory, although there are definitive narrative and historical evidences against his claim.

Criticism of the first group evidences (God and His Book are sufficient for the Servants)

Having a deeper examination of the linguistic context of the verses used by Subḥī Maṣṣūr in this part helps reader avoid the distorted understanding of the verse. For example, the verse "And is it not enough for them that we have sent down to thee the Book which is rehearsed to them?" (Qur'ān 29:51) is after the verse "Ye they say: 'Why are not Signs sent down to him from his Lord?' ..." (Qur'ān 29:50).

In other words, the Qur'ān 29:51 is an answer to the sarcastic remark made by some against the Qur'ān who did not consider it as a sign of prophethood and a rhetorical question addressed to the Prophet (s) that says, "Isn't it enough for them the miraculousness of this book that is read for them!?" (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1996, vol. 16: 209).

In the verse, "Is not God enough for his Servant?" (Qur'ān 39:36), too, the Sublime God announces that He is sufficient for His Prophet's affairs against the polytheists (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1996, vol. 17: 397). Can one claim that obeying God makes Servants needless to obeying His Prophet (s)? Isn't it the case that the Servants have gained their knowledge about God and the way to worshipping him from the Prophet (s)? Isn't it the case that God in His noble Book repeatedly orders His Servants to absolutely obey His Prophets (s)? Examples are as follows.

- And obey God and the Apostle; that ye may obtain mercy (Qur'ān 3:132)
- He who obeys the Apostle, obeys God ... (Qur'ān 4:80)
- Ye who believe! Obey God, and obey the Apostle, and those charged with authority among you. If ye differ in anything among yourselves, refer it to God and His Apostle, if ye do believe in God and the Last Day: That is best, and most suitable for final determination (Qur'ān 4:59)

Criticism of the second group evidences (Definitiveness of the Qur'ān and presumptiveness of the traditions)

In this part, due to the presupposition of Subḥī Maṣṣūr on the inaccuracy of the traditions attributed to the Prophet (s), he introduces the sunna as corroborating the presumption and mentions some example verses that order us to follow the right and avoid following the presumption. Since this stance refers in a way to the non-authoritativeness of the sunna, it will be examined in the discussion related to it.

Criticism of the third group evidences (The Qur'ān is the Right Path and the non-Qur'ān is moving out of the Right Path)

It seems that the unintentional or intentional confusion of the references of the words has moved Subḥī Maṣṣūr to make illogical understandings about the verses. How can the verse "Verily, this is My way, leading straight: follow it: follow not (other) paths" (Qur'ān

6:153) be taken to mean that God orders following the Qur'ān and prohibits following the sunna!?

First, considering the linguistic context of the verses, the word “this” in the foregoing verse refers to the divine religion rather than the Qur'ān (Fakhr Rāzī, 1999, vol. 14: 185; Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1996, vol. 7: 520; Zamakhsharī, 1987, vol. 20: 80). Second, the Sublime God introduces the noble Prophet (s) as the one responsible for guiding people to the Right Path (which is the same as the Divine Path),

- ... verily thou dost guide (men) to the Straight Way (Qur'ān 42:52)
- follow not (other) paths: they will scatter you about from His (great) path (Qur'ān 6:153)

The word “paths” here refers to the ways that God does not like for his Servants, such as disbelief, tendency to Judaism and Christianity, and other deviations (Zamakhsharī, 1987, vol. 20: 80). Is it possible to consider following the Prophet (s) and his sunna – which is emphasized many times in the Qur'ānic verses – as the instances of other “paths” and deviating ways!?

Criticism of the fourth group evidences (Comprehensiveness of the Qur'ān or needlessness of the Qur'ān to the sunna because the Qur'ān answers all needs)

Since all Qur'ānist sects rely on the Qur'ān 6:38 and 16:89 to prove the comprehensiveness of the Qur'ān and its needlessness to the sunna, the more detailed examination of these verses is needed. Nonetheless, before addressing these two verses, it is necessary to discuss the concept of the comprehensiveness of the Qur'ān.

The concept of the comprehensiveness of the Qur'ān

There are two viewpoints about the comprehensiveness of the Qur'ān. The strong version of this viewpoint asserts that the Qur'ān not only contains religious sciences and knowledge, but it also includes all human sciences and knowledge out of the religion scope, including experimental sciences, medicine, and astronomy (Naṣīrī, 2008: 332).

This viewpoint is not welcomed so much by the Qur'ān researchers and the exegetes of the Divine Scripture, although it has had few proponents in every era. This viewpoint is attributed to people such as Muḥy al-Dīn 'Arabī, Ṭanṭāwī, and Mullā Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī (Rawshan Ḍamīr, 2012: 243).

Some other theoreticians believe in the weak version of the Qur'ān comprehensiveness theory, which means the representation of all Islamic knowledge in the Qur'ān. For example, 'Allāma Ṭabāṭabā'ī takes the term “all things” in the Qur'ān 16:89 as referring to the issues related to guidance (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1996, vol. 12: 324-325). Ṭabrisī in *Majma' al-bayān* has a similar stance (Ṭabrisī, 1994, vol. 6: 586).

Moreover, Fakhr Rāzī believes that non-religious issues are out of the scope of the Qur'ān (Fakhr Rāzī, 1999, vol. 20: 258). It is noteworthy that the Qur'ānists and Subḥī Maṣṣūr take the comprehensiveness of the Qur'ān to be about religious teachings of Islam (q.v. Subḥī Maṣṣūr, 2005: 18).

Comprehensiveness of the Qur'ān as an outcome of its scope and purpose

Comprehensiveness is a relative issue that totally depends on the two factors of scope and purpose. For example, the scope of medicine is the human body and its purpose is knowing diseases and providing treatments for them. Accordingly, when Muḥammad b. Zakariyyā (who has written the book *Man lā yahḍur al-ṭabīb*) asserts that he has presented everything

needed in that book, we know based on the scope (i.e., medicine) and the purpose (i.e., naming diseases and providing their treatments) of the book that with “all needs” he means the ones within the medicine framework.

Such a stance is true for the Qur'ān, too. That is to say, the sound and systematic judgment of the comprehensiveness of the Qur'ān is possible only when its scope and purpose are known.

All verses that talk about the purpose of the revelation of the Qur'ān have stipulated that its main addressee – i.e., its scope – is the human and the purpose of its revelation is to guide him. Some suchlike verses are the Qur'ān 39:41, 2:231, and 3:3-4.

With regard to the scope and purpose of the Qur'ān (i.e., the human and his guidance), we can accept the weak version of the comprehensiveness of the Qur'ān theory, that is, learning the knowledge and sciences related to the guidance of the human.

The relationship between the comprehensiveness of the Qur'ān and its needlessness to the sunna

Now that we accept the weak version of the Qur'ān comprehensiveness theory, the doubt cast by the Qur'ānists about the needlessness of the Qur'ān to the sunna in the explication of Islamic teachings seems more significant. In the following discussion, this doubt is answered.

The relationship between the comprehensiveness of the Qur'ān and the necessity of expressing the details of Islamic teachings

With regard to the purpose of the Qur'ān to guide the humans, its comprehensiveness means that all discussions related to the guidance of the human are mentioned in it (and this is the case in fact). On the other hand, it is undeniable that many details about Islamic decrees, Resurrection, etc., are not mentioned in the Qur'ān. Therefore, the point that some discussions are not mentioned in the Qur'ān does not mean that the comprehensiveness of the Qur'ān can be rejected; rather, those discussions have been simply out of the scope and purpose of the Qur'ān right from the beginning. With this introduction, it seems appropriate now to examine the verses about the comprehensiveness of the Qur'ān¹.

The first verse

- ... and We have sent down to thee the Book explaining all things, a Guide, a Mercy, and Glad Tidings to Muslims (Qur'ān 16:89)

When interpreting this noble verse, we come to significant points about the single words of the verse, such as the following ones.

1. Al-Kitāb (the Book): The Muslim scholars unanimously agree that the word “al-kitāb” in this noble verse is the revealed Arabic Qur'ān that now exists among Muslims rather than the text of Umm al-Kitāb or the Guarded Tablet (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1996, vol. 1: 11; Zamakhsharī, 1987, vol. 2: 628; Zuḥaylī, 1997: 14). This consensus is accurate, because the verse itself says, “We have sent down to thee the Book.”
2. Tibyān (explaining): there are two possibilities with regard to this word, i.e., it is either gerund or noun. In either case, it has an exaggeration aspect and means “clearly explicating” (Zamakhsharī, 1987, vol. 2: 628). This term indicates that the Qur'ān is directly explicating, because indirect explication is inconsistent with exaggeration. Therefore, it is not possible to have belief both in the superficial explication and the

1. The examination of these verses about the comprehensiveness of the Qur'ān comes from the book *The comprehensiveness of the holy Qur'ān* by Karīmī.

comprehensiveness of the noble Qur'ān (Karīmī, 2012: 218), and some exegetes have this same opinion (Fakhr Rāzī, 1999, vol. 20: 258; Ṭabrisī, 1994, vol. 6: 586).

3. *Kulli shay'* (everything): based on what we said, the scope of the term “everything” is determined by the scope and purpose of the Qur'ān. Accordingly, the Qur'ān emphasizes that it entails everything related to the scope and purpose of its revelation.

- It should be noted that in this noble verse, apostrophe (which is one of the figures of speech) is used.

Apostrophe in this noble verse implies that the noble Qur'ān clarifies everything only for the noble Prophet (s) and – following him – for the Infallibles (a) (Karīmī, 2012: 219; q.v. Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1996, vol. 12: 470). Of course, this does not contradict the notion that the Qur'ān is “explaining” things for others up to their level of understanding. The degree to which the noble Qur'ān is “explaining” is different for different people due to their level of understanding, and it is at the height of clear explication for the noble Prophet (s) and the other Infallibles (a) (Karīmī, 2012: 219).

However, some verses of the noble Qur'ān evidently introduce the explanation of the divine verses as a responsibility of the noble Prophet (s).

- ... We have sent down unto thee (also) the Message; that thou mayest explain clearly to men what is sent for them, and that they may give thought (Qur'ān 16:44)
- And We sent down the Book to thee for the express purpose, that thou shouldst make clear to them those things in which they differ, and that it should be a guide and a mercy to those who believe (Qur'ān 16:64).

These verses imply the authoritative nature of the Prophet's (s) speech in his explanation of the Qur'ānic verses and announcing the need to the Prophet's (s) sunna in understanding the Qur'ān (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1996, vol. 12: 261). This does not disagree with the consideration of the Qur'ān as “explaining,” as 'Allāma – referring to this same verse (Qur'ān 16:44) and the clause “... to instruct them in Scripture ...” in the Qur'ān 62:2 – stipulates that explaining and instructing happens when the content is generally clear and understandable (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1996, vol. 3: 85).

The second verse

- Nothing have we omitted from the Book, and they (all) shall be gathered to their Lord in the end.

The important points about the single words of this verse are as follows.

1. *Al-Kitāb*: considering the initiation of the verse, many exegetes deem the meaning of *al-Kitāb* in this noble verse to be the Guarded Tablet (Ṭabarī, 1991: 169; Zamakhsharī, 1987, vol. 2: 21) or take it – with a doubt – to mean both the Guarded Tablet and the Qur'ān (Ṭabrisī, 1994, vol. 4: 461). At any rate, the possibility of taking the word “*al-Kitāb*” to mean the Qur'ān cannot be rejected (Fakhr Rāzī, 1999, vol. 12: 527; Ḥaqqī Burūsawī, n.d.: 28).
2. *Farratnā*: “*farratā*” means shortened (Rāghib Iṣfahānī, 1995: 631), and “*mā farratnā*” means “we didn't left out” and “we were not ignorant” (Ṭurayḥī, 1997: 265); that is, “We did not left out or ignore anything in the Book.”
3. *Shay'*: with regard to the meaning of “*mā farratnā*,” it might be possible to say that “*al-Kitāb*” refers to the Qur'ān. If this is the case, the referent of the word “*shay'*” (thing) in the clause “explaining all things” will be everything that is related to the guidance of the human (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1996, vol. 7: 115). Moreover, the same discussions made about integrating this verse and the verses that introduce the speech of the Prophet (s) as authoritative can be applied to this verse.

The criticism of the qur'ānic evidences of Subḥī Maṣṣūr about the non-authoritativeness of the sunna

It seems necessary to first address the distinction made about “nabī” and “rasūl.”

The criticism of his definition of “nabī” and “rasūl”

Defining and limiting the status of the words “nabī” and “rasūl,” Subḥī Maṣṣūr gives in no evidence other than the results of an incomplete exploration of the qur'ānic verses. Here we refer to some refuting cases derived from the qur'ānic verses that show the meanings of “nabī” and “rasūl” are not the way Subḥī Maṣṣūr suggests.

The qur'ānic verses on the necessity of obeying “nabī”

Contrary to Subḥī Maṣṣūr's claim that Muslims are not bound to obey “nabī,” numerous verses¹ of the noble Qur'ān order obeying “nabī” (s), including “O Prophet! sufficient unto thee is Allah,- (unto thee) and unto those who follow thee among the Believers” (Qur'ān 8:64). This verse and cases like it indicate that “nabī” should be followed by people.

Verses on addressing “nabī” in legislative issues

In this verse, some verses² are pointed out that violate Subḥī Maṣṣūr's claim about the exclusion of the qur'ānic addresses to “nabī” to personal issues, such as, “O Prophet! Strive hard against the unbelievers and the Hypocrites, and be firm against them” (Qur'ān 9:73). Here, the Sublime God orders His Prophet to “strive hard” (i.e., jihād, holy struggle) against disbelievers and hypocrites and “be firm against them,” because their end is nothing but Fire (Mudarrisī, 1999: 123). It is clear that the order to do holy struggle is not a personal issue.

The preaching responsibilities of “nabī” in the qur'ānic verses

Subḥī Maṣṣūr believes that “nabī” is not responsible for preaching and guiding. However, some qur'ānic verses³ show the falseness of this assertion, such as “O Prophet! Truly We have sent thee as a Witness, a Bearer of Glad Tidings, and Warner” (Qur'ān 33:45). The terms “Bearer of Glad Tidings and Warner” means that he brings the glad tidings about the divine reward and Paradise for the believers who obey God and warns the disobedient disbelievers about divine punishment and the Fire of Hell (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1996, vol. 16: 494). This verse introduces bringing glad tidings and warning as the responsibilities of the “nabī”; this shows that “nabī” bears the responsibility of preaching and guiding.

Verses that consider for “nabī” a status higher than that of others

Despite what Subḥī Maṣṣūr suggests that Muḥammad (s) as “nabī” is a person like other human beings with the same status, there are some verses of the noble Qur'ān that refer to the higher status of “nabī,” such as “The Prophet has a greater claim on the faithful than they have on themselves,” (Qur'ān 33:6).

The meaning of “greater claim” here is that when facing with a conflict of his interests and those of the Prophet (s), a Muslim – during the command era – should prioritize the interests

1. Qur'ān 7:157-158; 60:12; 5:81; 66:8; 9:117.

2. Qur'ān 8:65; 66:9; 33:59, 45.

3. Qur'ān 2:213; 22:52.

of the Prophet of Allāh (s). Due to the generality that exists in the verse, this prioritization is related to all religious and mundane affairs (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1996, vol. 16: 276; q.v. Zamakhsharī, 1987, vol. 3: 523).

The criticism of Subḥī Maṣṣūr's qur'ānic evidences on the non-authoritativeness of the sunna

Here we reiterate the doubt cast by Subḥī Maṣṣūr and then offer our criticism.

The criticism of the first doubt (taking the word "rasūl" as referring to the Qur'ān)

One of the verses that Subḥī Maṣṣūr uses to prove this claim is the "And how would ye deny Faith while unto you are rehearsed the Signs of Allah, and among you Lives His Messenger?" (Qur'ān 3:101).

There are some problems with Subḥī Maṣṣūr's claim.

1. If the word "rasūl" meant the Qur'ān, there would be no need to bring the word "rasūluh" (which means "His Messenger" but is taken by Subḥī Maṣṣūr to mean the Qur'ān) after the word "āyāt" (verses/signs) that implies the Qur'ān. This is far from the eloquence of the Qur'ān.
2. The word "rasūl" is never used in the qur'ānic verses as "the Qur'ān," and no exegete has interpreted the word "rasūl" as the Qur'ān.
3. The use of "rasūl" for a person is common in the qur'ānic text for a person who is appointed by God to undertake a specific mission (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1996, vol. 2: 211).

Another verse he relies upon is "To you they swear by God. In order to please you: But it is more fitting that they should please God and His Apostle, if they are Believers" (Qur'ān 9:62).

Subḥī Maṣṣūr asserts that the singularity of the pronoun in "yārḍūhu" (please him) is because it implies "God and His Speech" and it should have been "yārḍūhumā" (please them both) if it were to refer to "God and His Apostle."

The response is that first, the same reason that justifies the singular pronoun for "God and His Speech" is true for "God and His Apostle."

Second, in the light of the linguistic context of the foregoing verses, some refuting cases for his assertion can be found. For example, it is said, "... We have sent thee as an apostle to (instruct) mankind. And enough is God for a witness" in the Qur'ān 4:79 and "He who obeys the Apostle, obeys God" in the Qur'ān 4:80. The second sentence corroborates the sentence "We have sent thee as an apostle to (instruct) mankind" and simultaneously gives the reason for its ruling, i.e., it says that God sent the Prophet (s) as an apostle, so everyone who obeys him as His apostle is in fact obeying God (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1996, vol. 5: 2). As it is seen, the verse 79 here stipulates that the meaning of obey "rasūl" is obeying the noble Prophet (s).

The criticism of the second doubt (the prohibition of following the non-Qur'ān)

Subḥī Maṣṣūr refers to "Follow (O men!) the revelation given unto you from your Lord, and follow not, as friends or protectors, other than Him ..." (Qur'ān 7:3) and interprets it as a command to obey the Qur'ān and a prohibition of following the non-Qur'ān (including the prophetic sunna and the Ḥadīth collections).

The question is whether following the noble Prophet (s) and his sunna is not part of the truths of the Qur'ān, and whether following the Prophet (s) is different from following the Qur'ān.

Many qur'ānic verses stipulate the validity of the sunna of the Prophet (s) and whatever attributed to him. These could be classified into four categories¹.

A. The authoritativeness of the Prophet's (s) judgment

Some of the verses on the necessity of obeying "rasūl" are the ones in which the Prophet's (s) judgment is deemed necessary to be followed by Muslims, such as "The answer of the Believers, when summoned to God and His Apostle, in order that He may judge between them, is no other than this: they say, 'We hear and we obey': it is such as these that will attain felicity" (Qur'ān 24:51).

The linguistic context of the clause "The answer of the Believers ... is" in which the word "kāna" exists and the trait of "faith" is indicated by the word "mu'minīn" (believers) imply that "We hear and obey" is in response to the invitation of God and apostles and is a requirement of having faith in God and Apostle (as the words "kāna" and "mu'minīn" show that the owners of the faith trait have always been so). The requirement for the deep belief in following the judgment of God and His Apostle is to answer positively the summoning to obey the judgment of God and Apostle, not to reject it.

Moreover, God praises the believers who immediately put into practice His orders and accept with no doubt the judgment of God and the Prophet (s) when they are summoned by the Prophet (s) for judgment (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1996, vol. 15: 148).

B. The equality of obeying the Prophet (s) and obeying God

In many verses of the noble Qur'ān, obeying the Prophet (s) is introduced to be at the same level as obeying God, such as "He who obeys the Apostle, obeys God: But if any turn away, We have not sent thee to watch over their (evil deeds)" (Qur'ān 4:80).

C. The introduction of the Prophet (s) as the excellent exemplar

The Qur'ān introduces the Prophet (s) as the exemplar of the goodness, "Ye have indeed in the Apostle of God a beautiful pattern (of conduct) for any one whose hope is in God and the Final Day, and who engages much in the Praise of God" (Qur'ān 33:21).

In this noble verse, the Prophet (s) is introduced as the excellent exemplar in an absolute manner with no exceptions. This shows that the believers should follow the Prophet (s) in a comprehensive manner. Undoubtedly, such a scope means the validity and authoritativeness of all aspects of his majesty, including his sunna (Naṣīrī, 2008: 136).

D. The necessity of adhering to all teachings of the Prophet (s)

Aside from the previously mentioned verses that imply the authoritativeness of the Prophet's (s) sunna, the most articulate verse on this stance is "...So take what the Apostle assigns to you, and deny yourselves that which he withholds from you ..." (Qur'ān 59:7).

The articulateness of this verse has several aspects.

1. The "conjunctive mā" (what) in the clause "mā ātakum" (what ... assigns to you) includes everything issued by the Prophet (s), including behavior, speech, dictation, etc.
2. The orders to undertake the obligations and the leave the prohibitions are mentioned next to each other.

1. This classification and its explanations are adopted from the book *The interrelationship of the Qur'ān and the sunna* by Naṣīrī.

3. The recommendation to observe piety and the warning about the severe divine punishment reveals the authoritativeness of the Prophet's (s) sunna and shows that it is deemed as accompanying piety (q.v. Naşīrī, 2008: 137).

It is noteworthy that by ignoring a huge amount of divine verses that announce the authoritativeness of the sunna, adopting some ambiguous verses (e.g. Qur'ān 3:7), limiting some other verses to their causes of revelation (Qur'ān 59:7), and making strange esoteric interpretations (about the verses on the necessity of obeying the Prophet (s)), Subḥī Maṣṣūr tries to reject a truth he faces.

The criticism of the third doubt (the Prophet's (s) did not do free investigation for legislation)

In his discussion on the sufficiency of the Qur'ān and its description as the “explainer” and “light” as well as his subsequent effort to superficially prove the lack of need to the sunna, Subḥī Maṣṣūr limits the verse “...that thou mayest explain clearly to men what is sent for them...” (Qur'ān 16:44) to its cause of revelation. Here he takes “nās” (men, people) and “what is sent for them” to refer to the People of the Book and the previous revealed Scriptures, respectively, and introduces – in his own opinion – the highly emphasized sunna and the exegetes as groundless. To this end, he tries to use verses such as “The duty of the messenger is only to convey (the message)...” (Qur'ān :99) to limit the scope of the prophetic mission to preaching the divine revelation, and so promote the idea that the sunna expansion of religious decrees is invalid, a stance that is against the viewpoint of the Shī'a scholars and the majority of Sunnī scholars.

In the Shī'a narrations, there is discussion on delegating Islam to the Prophet of Allāh (s) that denotes the role of the Prophet (s) in Islamic legislation in the light of divine training. For instance, Kulaynī narrates from Imām Ṣādiq (a) with his own chain of transmission,

God trained his Prophet in a good way, and when He finished training him, He said, “And thou (standest) on an exalted standard of character” [Qur'ān 68:4]. Then He delegated the issues of religion and nation to him so that he can take control of regulating the policies regarding His Servants, and He said, “... take what the Apostle assigns to you, and deny yourselves that which he withholds from you” The Sublime God made obligatory the five daily prayers in 10 prayer units, and the Prophet of Allāh (s) added seven units to them, and [so] the daily prayers become obligatory in 17 prayer units. (Kulaynī, n.d.: 9)

In the rest of this narration, he refers to some other legislation cases made by the Prophet (s).

Muṣṭafā Sabā'ī, a Sunnī theoretician, writes about the three roles of the sunna, that is, emphasis (tacit approval), exegesis (explanation), and expansion,

There is no disagreement among scholars about the existence of these three types in the sunna. Their only difference is about the third type on the question that if the sunna can independently give in new rules in these cases or what suggested in the sunna should be extractable in a way – even through esoteric interpretation – from the verses of the Qur'ān. Some (such as Shāṭibī) have adopted the second stance, but the common people and the majority of scholars believe in the first viewpoint, that is, the sunna can independently express the rulings. (Sabā'ī, 2007: 415).

He then gives in the evidences of the believers in the independence of the sunna, including the infallibility of the Prophet (s) (ibid: 418).

Moreover, if the Qur'ān alone could answer all needs and were considered the only source of Islamic knowledge, it would be senseless for the Sublime God to require people to refer to Him and the Prophet (s) at the time of small and intellectual disputes (Naşīrī, 2008: 308), “If

ye differ in anything among yourselves, refer it to God and His Apostle, if ye do believe in God and the Last Day” (Qur’ān 4:59).

Based on an interpretation by Imām ‘Alī (a), “Reference to Allah means that we decide according to the Qur’an while reference to the Prophet means that we follow his Sunna” (*Nahj al-balāgha*, 2005, Sermon 125).

Now, considering the verses the limit the prophetic mission to preaching, along with the foregoing points and the linguistic context of the Restriction verses, we find out that the restriction expressed in these verses is instances of related restriction. That is to say, in response to the false belief of the polytheists (that if Muḥammad (s) was the Apostle of God he should do something so they would compellingly become monotheists) and to pacify the Prophet (s) after disbelievers’ denial of him, God restricts the prophetic mission to preaching (Ṭabāṭabā’ī, 1996, vol. 12: 239).

The criticism of the non-qur’ānic evidences on the non-authoritativeness of the sunna

These evidences and their criticisms are as follows.

Traditions on the prohibition of writing Ḥadīths

Contrary to the opinion of Subḥī Maṣṣūr (that the noble Prophet (s) opposed writing Ḥadīths), it should be said that based on the existing indications, his highness not only did not have any opposition to writing Ḥadīths, but also made important recommendations to his Companions about writing his traditions. The compilation of the comprehensive book dictated by the Prophet (s) and penned down by Imām ‘Alī (a) (Kulaynī, 1987, vol. 1: 157), the book *Al-Ṣaḥīfa al-Ṣādiqiyya* by ‘Abdullāh b. ‘Amru ‘Āṣ (Ibn Athīr, 1989: 245), and other Ḥadīth collections compiled during the lifetime of the Prophet (s) refer to his attention to writing traditions.

The most important evidence put forth by Subḥī Maṣṣūr in this regard is a tradition by Abū Sa‘īd Khudrī¹ (Dārimī, 1991: 119), which is disputed by scholars as they disagree if its chain of transmission is discontinued or traceable (‘Ajjāj Khaṭīb, 1988: 306). Moreover, some transmitters in its chain of transmission are deemed as weak ones (Ma‘ārif, 2009: 63-64). In addition, its text is in conflict with many narrations that confirm the Prophet’s (s) agreement with writing traditions, as the last stance taken by the noble Prophet (s) in this regard was agreement with writing traditions when he ordered to be brought paper and pen to write his will in the last moments of his life (Ma‘ārif, 2010: 54).

Another issue that proves the non-issuance of the prohibition traditions by the Prophet of Allāh (s) is the strict stance taken by the first two Caliphs against writing traditions and the evidences they relied upon to command for the prohibition of writing traditions. That is, if the traditions prohibiting writing the Ḥadīths had been issued by the noble Prophet (s), not writing them was an ordinary act and the Caliphs’ strict act to prohibit writing them was senseless. Second, among the evidences presented by the first two Caliphs on prohibiting the narration and development of Ḥadīths – e.g., preventing disagreement among Muslims, announcing the Qur’ān as sufficient for guidance, etc. – no statement by the Prophet (s) is seen on prohibiting the writing of Ḥadīths.

1. The Prophet was asked [by some] for permission to write something but he did not allow them.

The combination of the right and wrong traditions due to the temporal distance between the demise of the Prophet (s) and the collection of traditions

Due to the time lapse between the appearance of the first Ḥadīth collection three centuries after the demise of the Prophet (s), Subḥī Maṣṣūr believes that Ḥadīth collections are full of fabricated traditions and that tradition scholars confess that the right and wrong are mixed in them.

If the judgment about traditions is based merely on the Sunnī Ḥadīth collections, suchlike doubts naturally seem correct, as the time lapse between the demise of the Prophet (s) and the development of the first Sunnī Ḥadīth collection – i.e., Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī (d. 265 LH) – is 250 years. The question that comes to mind here is that due to the prohibition of the development of traditions, how does Bukhārī claim narrating traditions from the Prophet (s)?

On the contrary, due to the connectivity of chains of transmission, the sunna and traditions narrated in the Shī‘a Ḥadīth collections do not face such a problem. For example, the first Shī‘a Ḥadīth collection was developed by Thiaqatul Islām Kulaynī (d. 329) when Imām Mahdī (may God hasten his reappearance) was in his minor occultation and had indirect relationships with the Shī‘as, and there was only one mediating person between Kulaynī and Imām Mahdī (may God hasten his reappearance) or Imām Ḥasan ‘Askarī (a). The reason is that the Shī‘as do not restrict narrations to the Prophet (s), but rather, they believe that the narrations by Imāms (a) have the same level of validity as those issued by the Prophet (s). Moreover, the Shī‘a scholars believe that despite the Caliph’s prevention of writing and developing traditions, Imāms and their Companions paid full attention to this issue (Naṣīrī, 2008: 217). Of course, there are some narrations in the Shī‘a Ḥadīth collections that are unanimously agreed by tradition scholars to be fictitious and fabricated.

It is appropriate here to mention the difference between the authoritativeness of the sunna and the authoritativeness of the traditions that exist in Ḥadīth collections. In other words, a tradition is authoritative when its issuance by an Infallible (a) is ascertained through the examination of definitive indications or due to its wide transmission. Therefore, the combination of the traditions of the Prophet of Allāh (s) with some fabricated traditions cannot be used to negate the authoritativeness of the sunna.

Conclusion

An exploration of the book *Al-Qur’ān wa kafā maṣṣaran lil-tashrī‘ al-Islāmī* indicates the following points.

1. Subḥī Maṣṣūr has written this book after adopting Qur’ānism and presupposing the non-authoritativeness and unnecessariness of the sunna of the noble Prophet (s).
2. In order to convince the reader, Subḥī Maṣṣūr does not refrain from exploring the verses that seemingly agree with his opinion. To this end, he makes interpretations that do not agree with the linguistic context. Moreover, he suggests baseless argumentations against the ones that demonstrate the authoritativeness of the sunna.
3. Despite his belief that the sunna is non-authoritative due to the combination of the sound and fabricated traditions, he sometimes relies upon solitary traditions to prove his claim.
4. The verses of the noble Qur’ān have repeatedly emphasized following the sunna of the noble Prophet (s), and in some verses, obeying the Prophet of Allāh (s) is introduced at the same level as obeying God.

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