
The Spiritual Dimension of Imran Hosein's 'Methodology for the Study of the Qur'an': The Relevance of Esoteric Approaches to Contemporary Tafsir

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Abstract

This research is based on the need for an approach to Qur'anic interpretation that is able to answer the spiritual crisis of modern Muslims, amid the dominance of rational-textual interpretations that often ignore the esoteric dimension of revelation. This study aims to examine and evaluate Imran N. Hosein's tafsir methodology in Methodology for the Study of the Qur'an, which offers a paradigm for reading the Qur'an based on spiritual depth, spiritual intuition, and the integration of meaning systems. The method used in this research is library research with a content analysis approach to Hosein's works and other supporting literature. The results of the study show that Hosein emphasizes the importance of purity of soul, daily recitation, direct practice of verses, and the connection of verses in the cosmic structure as prerequisites for a complete understanding. He also rejects the atomistic interpretation approach and calls for the restoration of the authority of revelation as the main epistemic source in Islamic studies. This finding confirms that there are significant contributions related to Hosein's methodology in building a transformative, integrative and contextual Qur'anic interpretation, while challenging the dominant legalistic and secularistic paradigm in contemporary Qur'anic studies. Imran Hosein has presented a new method of understanding the Qur'an as a form of self-purification, moral commitment and openness to the inner light of revelation. His approach mediates between the spiritual traditions of classical Islam and the ethical-transformative needs of people in the modern era.

Keywords: *Imran Hosein, esoteric exegesis, spirituality, system of meaning.*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini berdasarkan dari kebutuhan akan pendekatan tafsir Al-Qur'an yang mampu menjawab krisis spiritual umat Islam modern, di tengah dominasi tafsir rasional-tekstual yang kerap mengabaikan adanya dimensi esoterik wahyu. Studi ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji dan mengevaluasi metodologi tafsir Imran N. Hosein dalam *Methodology for the Study of the Qur'an*, yang menawarkan paradigma pembacaan Al-Qur'an berbasis kedalaman spiritual, intuisi ruhani, dan keterpaduan sistem makna. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah studi pustaka (*library research*) dengan pendekatan analisis konten terhadap karya-karya Hosein dan literatur pendukung lain. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa Hosein menekankan pentingnya kesucian jiwa, tilawah harian, pengamalan langsung terhadap ayat, serta keterhubungan ayat-ayat dalam struktur kosmik sebagai prasyarat pemahaman yang utuh. Ia juga menolak pendekatan tafsir atomistik dan menyerukan pemulihan terhadap otoritas wahyu sebagai sumber epistemik utama dalam studi Islam. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa terdapat kontribusi yang signifikan terkait metodologi Hosein dalam membangun tafsir Qur'an yang transformatif, integratif, dan kontekstual, sekaligus menantang adanya paradigma legalistik dan sekularistik yang dominan dalam studi Al-Qur'an kontemporer. Imran Hosein telah menghadirkan sebuah metode baru dalam memahami Al-Qur'an sebagai bentuk penyucian diri, komitmen moral dan keterbukaan terhadap cahaya batiniah wahyu. Pendekatannya menjadi penengah antara tradisi spiritual Islam klasik dengan kebutuhan etis-transformatif umat di era modern.

Kata Kunci: Imran Hosein, tafsir esoteris, spiritualitas, sistem makna.

INTRODUCTION

The Qur'anic text, which is fixed and limited, is faced with the reality of the modern world which is full of dynamics, complexity and change. This condition requires interpretative efforts that are textual as well as contextual, so that the values and teachings contained in it remain able to answer the challenges of the times and are always relevant. (Mustaqim, 2011). In addition, Sufism also teaches that fulfilling spiritual needs is the key to directing worldly activities correctly (Nur Alfiah, 2024). Therefore, understanding and interpreting the Qur'an is a necessity in exploring universal values and connecting divine texts with dynamic social realities. Tafsir is not just a scientific discourse, but also an important tool to maintain the relevance of the Qur'an throughout the ages (Faiz, 2007). Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd emphasizes the importance of creative interaction between Muslims and the sacred text through the concept of *hadharah al-nash* (civilization of the text), where the meaning of the Qur'an takes place progressively and contextually as the times change (Abu Zayd, 1994)..

The discourse of renewing the understanding of the Qur'an is very important. Nasr Hamid, emphasizes that the progress of Islamic civilization is closely related to the way people interact creatively with the sacred text. He states that the text of the Qur'an is not only an object of passive reading, but must be a source of active dialectics between the people and the evolving social reality (Abu Zayd, 2003). Repetitive and normative readings need to be balanced with creative and constructive approaches. This means that classical interpretation methods that tend to be legal-formal must be opened to dialog with contemporary interpretation methods that are more responsive to modern social and cultural contexts (Arkoun, 2006; Sirry, 2015; Kamal, 2016).

Hermeneutic approaches also offers a new framework of understanding in interpreting texts, including the Qur'an. This approach emphasizes the triadic relationship between the interpreter, the text, and the reader in a particular socio-historical context. Meaning is no longer centered on the text alone, but is born from the dynamic interaction between interpreters and contextual conditions. Hermeneutics shifts the focus from the sole authority of the text to a dialogical and multidimensional interpretive process (Gusman, 2013; Abu Zayd, 2002). al-Jabiri emphasizes the importance of considering two dimensions of context in understanding the verses of the Qur'an: the historical context when the revelation was revealed and the current context as a space for actualizing meaning. He calls this approach *ja'ala al-maqrū' mu'aşiran li nafsibi wa mu'aşiran lanā*, i.e. making the text relevant both in its original context and in the reality of today's readers (al-Jabiri, 2010). According to him, understanding the Qur'an must not break away from traditional treasures such as *asbab al-nuzūl*, *nāsikh wa mansūkh*, and the classification of *makkiyah* and *madaniyah*, which are an important part of *'ulūm al-Qur'ān*. The intellectual tradition of the salaf scholars is a crucial foundation so that the meaning produced is not uprooted from the historical roots of Islamic interpretation, while opening up space for renewal of meaning that is relevant to the dynamics of the times. (al-Jabiri, 2002, 2003)

Jamal al-Banna (1920-2013 AD), in *al-'Audāh ila al-Qur'an*, invited Muslims to return to making the Qur'an the main source of solutions to the crises faced by Muslims in the modern era. In the concept of *Tatswir al-Qur'an*, which literally means 'revolutionizing the Qur'an', he proposes the need for a critical study of the legacy of classical interpretation, with the aim of freeing the understanding of the Qur'an from historical burdens and interpretive authorities that are no longer considered relevant to the needs of the times. (al-Banna, 1983).

This idea is outlined in his major work *Tafsir al-Qur'an baina al-Qudama' wa al-Muhaditsin*. interestingly, he not only criticizes the epistemology of classical interpretation alone as above, but he often makes sharp criticisms of contemporary scholars related to methodological ideas of Qur'anic interpretation, namely Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid, Muhammad Arkoun, Muhammad Syahrur, and other figures. (Saifuddin, 2016)

In facing the dynamics of religious understanding in the contemporary modern era, various methodological offers from Sufi mufasirs have emerged to answer the challenges of the times while maintaining the spirituality and depth of the meaning of the Qur'an. This approach was born from the realization that modern realities that tend to be rational-positivistic often ignore the inner dimensions of the text of revelation. This approach revives the method of interpretation that explores the inner meaning through an esoteric or *isyari* interpretation approach.

Tafsir isyari is an interpretive approach that emphasizes the symbolic, spiritual, and mystical meanings of the Qur'an which is rooted in the classical Sufism tradition and relies on inner experience, spiritual intuition, and the connection of the heart with God. Figures such as Sahl al-Tustari, al-Qusyairi, and Ibn 'Arabi have laid the foundation of this method in the treasures of classical Islamic tafsir (Nasr, 2006) In the contemporary era, this approach has again received attention because it is considered capable of offering an alternative to intellectual trends that are dry from spiritual aspects. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, for example, emphasizes the importance of an esoteric approach in understanding the text of revelation so as not to be trapped in legalistic or historical readings alone. According to him, the meaning of the Qur'an is layered, and only through purification of the soul and inner approach can one access the deepest meaning of the sacred text (Nasr, 2006). Similarly, Annemarie Schimmel asserts that the spiritual dimension of Islam is a vital element that is inseparable from understanding the Qur'an (Schimmel, 1986).

Imran N. Hosein's book "Methodology for the Study of the Qur'an" offers an approach that is full of spiritual, intuitive and eschatological nuances, and emphasizes the importance of depth of meaning and symbolic reading of the revelation text, which places Sufistic aspects as an integral instrument of understanding.(Hosein, 2006) Imran Hosein emphasizes the importance of 'inner reading', understanding the inner reality of the text, and paying attention to the signs of the times (*ashr al-zaman*) in contextualizing the meaning of

verses. Such ideas not only indicate a shift from exoteric to esoteric approaches, but also represent the need for spirituality in modern Qur'anic interpretation. (Hosein, 2006)

Examining this book becomes relevant in the current context, Imran Hosein's work opens space for reading the Qur'an that not only answers intellectual questions, but also touches the deepest layers of human consciousness. Therefore, the study of Hosein's methodology is important in an effort to explore the relevance of the Sufistic approach in interpreting the Qur'an in the modern-contemporary era. Imran Hosein does not only read the Qur'anic text literally (exoteric), but emphasizes the importance of symbolic reading (*isyari*). According to him, many verses contain inner meanings that cannot be accessed except with spiritual depth and intuition. For example, in interpreting the story of Dzulqarnain (QS. al-Kahf: 83-98), he does not read it as an ordinary historical event, but rather as a prophetic geopolitical code that explains the shift in world power between materialistic and spiritual forces at the end of time. (Hosein, 2007) Imran Hosein also emphasizes that al-understanding must involve a purified *qalb* (heart). He often refers to the importance of the "nur of God" in unlocking the deepest meaning of the verses. This is very close to the principle of *ladunni* knowledge in Sufism, which is inner knowledge given by God directly to His pious servants. (Hosein, 2011)

Several academic works at PTKIN Indonesia discuss Imran Hosein's thoughts. **First**, Ahmad Luhfi Maghfurin's thesis from UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya (2016) examines Hosein's views on paper money in muamalah fiqh. Maghfurin assessed that Hosein's view that forbids paper money without a gold standard is not in line with modern reality, and needs a contextual-substantial approach. **Second**, Moh Saeful Anwar's thesis from UIN Walisongo Semarang (2018) also discusses Hosein's view on usury of paper money, using Hosein's work on dinar and dirham as the main source. Just like the previous thesis, this thesis does not mention tafsir methodology. **Third**, Sirajuddin Bariqi (2020), This article examines Imran N. Hosein's interpretation of Ya'juj and Ma'juj in the context of the modern world, The author of this article highlights that Hosein's approach tends to be subjective and inconsistent, as it is not fully based on valid traditions. Nonetheless, Hosein's interpretation provides a new perspective in the discourse of Islamic eschatology, although it needs to be balanced with more rigorous scientific studies.

This scientific article is a literature review and character study named Imran Nazar Hosein, so the data collection is entirely literature. Primary data is obtained from Imran

Hosein's book entitled *Methodology for Study of the Qur'an*. While the secondary data used are other works produced by Imran Nazar Hosein in the study of the Qur'an and Sunnah such as *Constantinople in The Qur'an*, *The Quran Dajjal and the Corpse*, *Dajjal The Qur'an and The Beginning of History*, *Surah al-Kahf and The Modern Age*, *The Gold Dinar and Silver Dirham*, *Islam and The Future of Money*, *The Prohibition of Ribah in the Quran and Sunnah*, *An Islamic View of Gog and Magog in The Modern Age* and *Jerusalem in The Qur'an; An Islamic View of The Destiny of Jerusalem*. The research data will be analyzed using a content analysis approach to get concrete ideas about the method of tafsir in the context of finding solutions to the problems of Muslims in the modern contemporary era.

DISCUSSION

Ontological Foundations, Epistemological and Spiritual Dimensions of Qur'anic Studies

In *Methodology for the Study of the Qur'an*, Imran Hosein begins his exegetical methodology by affirming the Qur'ān's theological validity and authority as the unchanging and transcendent *kalām* of Allāh. Hosein views the recognition of the Qur'ān's authenticity and divinity as a pre-assumption of faith (*iman*) that must precede the entire process of understanding. His main arguments include: *first*, the integrity of the Qur'ānic text that has been preserved both in writing and memorization from the time of revelation to the present day; *second*, the majesty of Qur'ānic literature that remains unparalleled, evidenced through the *tahaddī* (challenge) to anyone to match a single surah; *third*, the Prophet Muhammad's status as *ummī*, which negates the possibility that the content of the Qur'an is a construction of earlier literature; *fourth*, the absence of contradictions in the non-chronological structure of the Qur'an, despite its revelation taking place over a span of two decades and in various changing socio-political situations. (Hosein, 2006)

Hosein not only defends the authenticity of revelation, but also argues that all approaches to interpretation - whether spiritual, social or symbolic - must stem from a belief in the divinity of the Qur'an. Without this foundation, exegetical activities would turn into mere literary or historical studies and would tend to ignore spiritual transformation. He rejects the secular approach that treats the Qur'ān as an ordinary text, and reminds us that openness to the Qur'ānic *nur* is only possible when the reading is based on reverence and

submission. (Hosein, 2006) Thus, this explanation serves as the ontological and epistemological foundation for Hosein's esoteric methodology. He invites the reader to go beyond dogmatic assent to the truth of the Qur'ān, but also to recognize the spiritual mechanisms that allow the revelation to be read in layers and, therefore, to be opened with a purified heart. This approach distinguishes itself from both classical history-based tafsir methods and modern rationalism, and is closer to the Sufistic tafsir framework that emphasizes the inner connection between text, soul and God.

In the subsection entitled “The Believing Christian, the Believing Jew, and the Qur'an”, Imran N. Hosein offers an inclusive and transformative reading of the Qur'anic verses that address the *Ahl al-Kitāb* community. Starting from QS. al-Māidah [5]:83 and QS. Āli 'Imrān [3]:199, he emphasizes that some Jews and Christians-whom he refers to as “the believing Jews and Christians”-have the spiritual capacity to recognize the truth of the Qur'ān as an authentic revelation of God, even if they do not necessarily formally convert to Islam. Hosein underscores that when individuals from among *Ahl al-Kitāb* hear the Qur'ān and weep in recognition of its truth, it demonstrates their inner readiness and true faith. This response is more authentic than a dogmatic rejection of the final revelation. The verses are evidence that the Qur'ān recognizes spiritual plurality and rewards honest non-Muslim spiritual openness. (Hosein, 2006)

Hosein interprets QS. Āli 'Imrān [3]:113-115 as a description of a group of *Ahl al-Kitāb* who stand at night in prostration and recitation of God's verses. These, he says, not only deserve to be called believers, but are also promised reward and security from God, as affirmed in al-Baqarah [2]:62. Hosein implicitly criticizes the exclusivist attitude of Muslims, who tend to generalize that all Jews and Christians are in error or disbelief. According to him, formal religious identity is not as important as the depth of faith and inner response to the truth, and this reflects the Qur'anic principle of judging people based on sincerity and deeds, not labels. (Hosein, 2006) Thus, according to him, this is not just a defense of the divine status of the Qur'ān, but also a starting point for the esoteric and spiritual approach to interpretation that Hosein will elaborate on later.

The subtitle “Preparation for Study through Continuous Daily Recitation of the Qur'an” is the initial stage in his methodological construction that emphasizes the importance of the spiritual dimension in Qur'anic studies. Unlike the normative academic approach that places language mastery, tafsir, and analytical tools as the starting point of

Qur'anic study, Hosein starts from the ritual aspect of praxis oriented towards the transformation of the soul, namely daily recitation in Arabic tartil. Explicitly, Hosein takes QS. al-Muzzammil [73]:4 as the main argument: “وَرَتِّلِ الْقُرْآنَ تَرْتِيلًا” (and read the Qur'an slowly and tartil). According to him, this command does not merely concern the manner of recitation (tajweed), but rather represents a spiritual cycle aimed at shaping the reader's inner consciousness to be in tune with the properties of revelation. Daily recitation in Arabic is regarded as a process of intimacy with revelation - a recurring closeness that allows the Qur'ān to penetrate the outer layers of the intellect into the depths of the *qalb*. (Hosein, 2006) In this phase, recitation is not a static ritual practice, but an epistemological path to open the “gates of understanding” that cannot be accessed only through conventional critical studies. This makes tilawah a form of “spiritual window cleaning”, so that the Qur'ānic *nur* can be reflected and received. For Hosein, an unclean spirit would block the emanation of esoteric meanings, and result in Qur'ānic studies only producing

Imran Hosein also underlines the connection between the conditions of time and the spiritual intensity of recitation. He recommends recitation after prayer and at night (*qiyām al-layl*), because at these times, the external and internal atmosphere is considered most conducive to deep contemplation. This is in line with QS. al-Muzzammil [73]:6-7 which indicates that night is a more powerful and appropriate time for spiritual communication. This approach shows that the dimension of time has spiritual qualities that affect the inner absorption of revelation. He strongly rejects the notion that the study of the Qur'ān can be done with a neutral and objective approach alone, as assumed in the secular academic model. He argues that understanding the Qur'ān demands total engagement between the intellect and the *qalb*, between *zīkr* and *fikir*, and that recitation that is disconnected from spiritual recitation will lead to distortion of meaning or simply dead knowledge. In non-practical terms, what Imran Hosein believes has certainly been elaborated by other scholars such as Muhammad Qurash Shihab, Sayyed Hossein Nasr, Amin Abdullah, Buya Hamka and Fazlur Rahman.

Hosein's position shows a reconstruction of tafsir epistemology that is very different from the traditionalist or rationalist paradigm. If in the classical exegetical approach scientific preparation is based on mastery of Arabic grammar, exegetical science, and hadith (al-Dzahabi, 1976; Taymiyyah, 1996; al-Qaththan, 2001), Hosein prioritizes it with inner discipline and continuity of Qur'anic remembrance. Hosein's paradigm suggests that the

study of the Qur'an is a form of worship that demands serious and continuous spiritual cultivation. Hence, his approach can be read as part of the *isyāri* tradition of tafsir, but with explicit methodological content. He asserts that only readers trained in spiritual discipline—through *daily tartil recitation*—will be able to receive “tafsir inspiration” from God, or as the Sufis say: *futūḥāt ilābiyyah*. Therefore, Imran Hosein positions *tilawah* not merely as a preliminary activity, but as a key epistemic requirement in the esoteric and spiritual methodology of Qur'anic interpretation.

Imran N. Hosein's *Methodology for the Study of the Qur'an* addresses a dimension that is rarely examined in the literature on tafsir methodology: the urgency of prompt obedience to what has been understood from revelation as a condition for developing deeper understanding. Under the title “Preparation through Promptly Acting in Accordance with What is Understood”, Hosein develops the idea that receiving meaning from the Qur'ān is not just the result of reasoning, but the result of praxis commitment to the revealed guidance. Hosein builds an argument from QS. al-Baqarah [2]:2-3, that the Qur'ān explicitly calls it a guide “for the pious”. Piety, according to Hosein, is not merely a spiritual category, but an existential readiness to turn understanding into action. This means that readers of the Qur'ān who gain an understanding of a verse, but do not immediately follow it up in behavior and life choices, will experience stagnation and even lose access to further meaning. This understanding is not accumulative, but morally and spiritually conditional. This central point expands the horizon of interpretive epistemology. If in the classical paradigm knowledge is acquired through sanad, language analysis and the context of *asbab al-nuzūl*, then in Hosein's approach, knowledge from the Qur'an is “rewarded” or “inspired” to those who have demonstrated existential readiness through charity. This marks an epistemic shift from instrument-based *tafaqqub* to spiritual and moral integrity-based *tafabhum*. (Hosein, 2006)

Hosein's approach can be noted as follows; **First**, the assumption that Qur'ānic understanding will only develop if it is accompanied by action can limit the contemplative and theoretical dimensions of Qur'ānic studies. In an academic or higher education context, not all forms of study should have direct implications for action. Intellectual understanding can serve as an introductory stage, which is not always accompanied by immediate implementation. (Saeed, 2006) **Secondly**, Hosein's approach seems to assume homogeneity of understanding, i.e. that one will always be able to immediately understand the meaning of a verse clearly and correctly, so that it can be immediately put into practice. In fact, in

hermeneutic reality, the process of understanding is very complex, multi-layered, and does not always lead to certainty. In this case, the demand for “action before deeper understanding” has the potential to create premature or even erroneous compliance if it is not accompanied by sufficient scientific guidance. (Rahman, 1982).

However, the value that Hosein emphasizes - the link between understanding and honesty in commitment to truth values - is an important contribution in reminding us that the Qur'ān is not merely a material for academic study, but a book of life that calls for transformative action. In Sufism studies, this principle is in line with the concept of *'ilm al-hāl*, that useful knowledge is knowledge that transforms one's inner and outer states, making it clear that Hosein's methodology stands on a dynamic and conditional epistemological framework, where the reader's spiritual *maqām* becomes the doorway to the depth of Qur'anic meaning. This demands not only literacy and reasoning, but also ethical observance as an entryway to deeper spiritual interpretation.

Restitution of the Authority of Revelation: A Critique of Epistemic Degradation in Modern Qur'anic Studies

In the chapter entitled “Do Not Ignore, Bypass, or Disrespect the Qur'ān in the Pursuit of Knowledge”, Imran Hosein strongly criticizes the historical - and contemporary - tendency to marginalize the role of the Qur'ān in the formation of Islamic knowledge. According to him, one of the fundamental crises in modern Islamic civilization is the neglect of the Qur'ān's epistemological position as the primary and absolute source of truth. He calls this a form of disrespect for the Qur'ān, although outwardly Muslims still revere the *Mushaf* and recite it ritually. Hosein maps these forms of disregard in three forms: (1) ignoring the Qur'ān in the formulation of law, giving precedence to *hadith* and the opinions of scholars of the *madhhab*; (2) treating the Qur'ān as a secondary text, merely supplementing *fiqh* or theological arguments; and (3) reading the Qur'ān through the lens of external ideologies, such as secularism, modernism, or Western materialism. (Hosein, 2006)

He asserts that *al-Qur'ān yahkumu wa lā yuhkamu 'alayh*-Qur'ān judges, not is judged. This illustrates Hosein's return to the nubuwwah paradigm, an approach that places revelation as the highest epistemic authority, not just a textual entity. He criticizes the tendency of traditional *fiqh* to rely too much on legal traditions without synthesizing them with the Qur'anic system of meaning. For example, on the issue of *muamalat* or usury, he points out that some *fiqh* opinions fail to capture the structure of the prohibition of *riba*

because they are based only on the wording of the hadith, not the overall construction of meaning in the Qur'an.

According to the author, Hosein's view opens up room for discussion. The dominance of the Qur'an as the sole reference for legal interpretation may lead to the neglect of *sanad* methodology and the discipline of hadith criticism that has been developed over centuries. In the methodology of *ushul fiqh*, hadith is not only a source of law but also a medium for explaining and concretizing verses that are general (*'amm*) or absolute (*mutlaq*). (al-Khin, 1996; Kamali, 2003) Hosein's view risks a high degree of subjectivity in assessing hadith based solely on the compatibility of meaning, which could open the door to interpretations that escape traditional scientific authority. (Rahman, 1982)

In contemporary Qur'anic studies, Hosein's arguments find common ground with reformist thinkers such as Fazlur Rahman, who demands the reconstruction of Islamic law based on "Qur'anic moral ideas" rather than literal texts (Rahman, 1982). Similarly, Amina Wadud emphasizes the urgency of reading the Qur'an directly to produce a contextual and gender-just understanding, without first being limited by classical fiqh precedents. (Wadud, 1999) Hosein's position in this regard is firm and restorative of Qur'anic authority, calling for all Islamic knowledge systems - whether *fiqh*, tafsir or theology - to be returned to the central orbit of revelation. This is an important pillar in the framework of her esoteric exegetical methodology, which does not merely seek meaning, but demands integrity between the source, approach and spiritual goal of Qur'anic study.

A Critique of Atomistic Interpretation

In *Methodology for the Study of the Qur'an*, the section entitled "Do Not Study Any Verse of the Qur'an (or Any Hadith) in Isolation" is a logical continuation of the spiritual and epistemological methodological framework built by Imran Hosein. In this chapter, he sharply criticizes the practice of reading a verse or hadith in isolation, without regard to its interrelationship with the overall meaning structure of the Qur'an. Hosein calls such an approach a form of exegetical atomism - the habit of understanding Qur'anic verses in isolation, locally contextualized, and unconnected to the Qur'an's global network of meaning. The result of this approach, according to him, is the birth of an understanding that is superficial, distorted, or even counterproductive to the moral message and overall Qur'anic guidance. (Hosein, 2006)

As an example of his critique of atomistic interpretation, Imran Hosein highlights how understanding a single Qur'anic verse without considering the overall system of meaning can lead to conclusions that are morally and maqāṣid al-sharī'ah highly problematic. One of the examples he raises is the practice of fiqh justification of child marriage based on QS. al-Ṭalāq [65]:4. “*And those women among you who no longer menstruate (menopause)... and who have not menstruated, their 'iddah is three months...*”. Some classical scholars understood the phrase “*and those who have not menstruated*” to mean girls who have not reached the age of puberty, who are allowed to marry and divorce, because they have an *'iddah* (waiting period after divorce). This interpretation, when read atomistically, without considering the Qur'anic value system of justice, maturity, and child protection, can be understood as if Islam permits child marriage absolutely. (Hosein, 2006)

Hosein emphasizes the importance of the “system of meaning” in the Qur'an. He likens the verses of the Qur'an to the stars in the sky, which can only be understood when seen in constellation - that is, the pattern of interrelation and mutual support between verses. Verses are not interpreted alone, but always in the context of the relationship of the overall Qur'anic value structure. (Hosein, 2006) This approach correlates with the principle of thematic interpretation (*tafsir mawḍū'ī*) developed in modern tafsir studies, where the understanding of a Qur'anic theme must be examined through all relevant verses and synthesized in a coherent framework. However, in contrast to the systematic academic approach, Hosein provides spiritual content and moral consequences: that understanding verses partially is not only scientifically wrong, but also spiritually dangerous, as it can mislead the soul from the direction of complete divine guidance.

This anti-atomistic approach also has serious implications for the way hadith are understood as Hosein states that no hadith should be accepted or interpreted without being tested for its compatibility with the Qur'anic system of meaning. He positions the Qur'an as the epistemic filter for the *hadith*, not the other way around. This explicitly challenges the classical tradition of *usul al-hadith*, in which sanadically authentic *hadith* are often accepted even if their content (*matn*) appears controversial, on the assumption that their meaning does not explicitly contradict the Qur'an. Hosein rejects this passive model and demands active confirmation of the structure of meaning. (Hosein, 2006)

This approach touches on long-standing issues in tafsir and hadith studies, namely the question of authority and the order of sources. Hosein's rejection of verse fragmentation is very relevant in preventing the misuse of the text, but it opens a space for debate in terms of who is authorized to compose the “system of meaning” of the Qur'an. (Abu Zayd, 1993; Arkoun, 2002) Without an explicit verification methodology, this approach risks creating a subjective system of meaning, where each individual can compose patterns of meaning according to his personal intuition, not through scientific consensus. Hosein has a role and contribution in urging the birth of an interpretive paradigm that is complete, integrated, and aware of the position of verses in the network of revelation, not just local analysis. In the midst of the growing culture of verse-cutting in political and legal debates, and even popular sermons, Hosein's approach is important as a reminder that the Qur'an does not exist as pieces of law, but as a structured and systemic hudā (guidance).

In Hosein's discussion “The Verses of the Qur'ān Are Like the Stars in the Sky”, Imran Hosein develops a key idea in his tafsir methodology: that the verses of the Qur'ān do not stand alone, but rather form a unified system of meaning that is symbolically and spiritually interconnected. He uses a cosmic metaphor—*the verses are like the stars in the sky*—to illustrate that the meaning of the Qur'an can only be understood when the verses are read in a cohesive pattern of relationships, like constellations of stars. This metaphor is not merely illustrative, but representative of a distinctive ontological and hermeneutical framework. According to Hosein, a valid interpretation is one that is able to capture the relationship between verses in a value system, rather than merely explaining the meaning of one verse locally. (Hosein, 2006)

Qur'anic meaning is not linear or fragmentary, but systemic, integrated and analogical. This means that one verse can explain or lead to an understanding of another verse, even if the textual or thematic context is different on its face. Hosein gives an example of how the reading of verses about *Dajjal*, *Ya'juj wa Ma'juj*, the *riba* financial system, or signs of the end times, cannot be done by referring to just one or two verses, but by reading a broader and symbolic “map” of meaning relations. (Hosein, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2017)

Hosein borrows the spirit of classical *isyārī* and *Sufī* exegesis, where verses are not only read linguistically and legally, but also through spiritual intuition, existential experience, and the light of divine guidance (*nur*). (Izutsu, 1983) However, unlike traditional *isyārī* interpretations that are heavily influenced by mystical spiritual experiences, Hosein

emphasizes the end-time and geopolitical dimensions as the application field of the meaning structure. (Hosein, 2009) This approach expands the epistemology of interpretation, from mere *tafsīr li alfāz* (explanation of words), to *tafsīr li al-manẓūmah* (revelation of structure). This is in line with the trend of contemporary *tafsīr* that began to pay attention to aspects of intertextuality in the Qur'an, as developed by Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd (structural hermeneutics) and Toshihiko Izutsu (semantics of the Qur'anic meaning field). However, unlike the neutral academic approach, Hosein keeps his approach centered on spiritual awareness, not academic.

Application of Imran Hosein's Tafsir Methodology to Social Themes

After outlining the basic principles of his methodology-which rests on the integration of spiritual disciplines, systemic inter-relationships between verses, and a critique of literal and fragmentary approaches-Imran Hosein then applies this framework to a number of important themes in Islamic life.

Hosein's approach to the methodological application of Qur'anic exegesis differs sharply from two major currents of contemporary exegesis: first, the *fiqh-centric* current that interprets verses with the aim of formulating formal laws; and second, *the progressive-contextual* current that emphasizes the social function of the Qur'an in modern reality. Hosein takes a distinctive middle position: he does not reject the significance of law, but he understands that the interpretation of law in the Qur'an is part of the process of *tazkiyah* (purification of the soul) and *tarbiyah* (spiritual education). He sees the value of justice and ethical consciousness as the spirit of the law itself, and the separation of law from spiritual consciousness will lead to rigidity and distortion.

The central framework he uses in this application is the concept of system of meaning - that is, the understanding that every verse must be read in a network of Qur'anic meanings as a whole and supporting each other. Thus, the application of the law cannot simply rely on one or two verses that appear clear on their face, but must be placed within an overarching framework of Qur'anic values, such as justice (*'adl*), benefit (*maṣlahah*), wisdom (*ḥikmah*), and purification (*tazkiyah*). (Hosein, 2006).

On the theme of the relationship with *Ahl al-Kitāb*, Hosein presents a more inclusive, nuanced reading of the Qur'an, and judges people based on their spiritual response to truth, rather than simply theological identity. Hosein emphasizes that not all *Ahl al-Kitāb* are

rejected or labeled as infidels, as the Qur'an itself acknowledges the existence of “believers from among them”, namely:

- a. QS. Āli 'Imrān [3]:113-115: “Among the People of the Book there are those who stand upright ... they believe in Allah and the Last Day, and enjoin the good.”
- b. QS. al-Māidah [5]:83: It is narrated that when they heard the Qur'an recited, “their eyes welled up for the truth”, and they said: “O our Lord, we have believed.”
- c. QS. al-Baqarah [2]:62 and QS. al-Ḥajj [22]:17 also indicate a guaranteed reward for Jews and Christians who truly believe.

Based on these verses, Hosein asserts that the Qur'ān recognizes a plurality of responses to the truth, including from outside the Muslim community. Taking a seemingly exclusive verse - for example, al-Māidah [5]:51, which reads “*do not take the Jews and Christians as friends (awliya')*” - Hosein argues that this verse must be read in conjunction with other verses stating the possibility of their faith, to create a full and fair understanding. The meaning of *awliya'* in the verse does not mean “no friends”, but in the context of politics, power, and military alliances that oppress Muslims. The verse is thus not an absolute prohibition on social relations, but rather a warning against collaboration with imperialistic or oppressive forces. (Hosein, 2006)

Hosein emphasizes that the measure of “faith” is not a formal identity (Islam, Judaism, Christianity), but an inner response to truth when confronted with revelation. A Christian who weeps when he hears the Qur'an being recited and recognizes it as truth (QS. Al-Maidah [5]:83) is a spiritual believer, even though institutionally he may not have converted to Islam. He proposes that social relations in Islam be based on Qur'anic spiritual values, not just formal legal categories. (Hosein, 2006)

Hosein's approach shows that the Qur'anic interpretation of interfaith relations is open-ended and multilevel. He views the Qur'an as a moral book that: Values genuine differences of belief, Distinguishes between ideological enemies and spiritual partners, Judges faith on the basis of openness to truth rather than mere verbal declarations. Academically, this approach is in line with the growing ethical and inclusive interpretations in contemporary Qur'anic studies, as discussed by: Tariq Ramadan, Abdullah Saeed and Amina Wadud, who also call for a reading of the Qur'an that is based on the values of justice and inner response, not merely the legal text.

However, Hosein's approach remains distinctive because of the esoteric and end-time dimensions of his argument: he argues that disregard for the Qur'an's inclusive principle will lead to an end-time global confrontation, and that true believers from *Ahl al-Kitāb* will ally with Muslims in the struggle against modern oppression (Dajjal and his global system). Through this example, it appears that Hosein's method not only offers a symbolic and esoteric reading, but also has significant practical relevance in addressing contemporary ethical issues, including in dealing with interfaith discourse, legal policy, and the development of Islamic social ethics. He opens up new possibilities that Qur'anic interpretation does not have to be trapped between fiqh and social interpretation, but can be rooted in spiritual depths that revive divine messages in a meaningful and contextual way.

CONCLUSION

Imran Hosein's Methodology for the Study of the Qur'an offers a distinctive and original approach to tafsir, characterized by a strong emphasis on the esoteric, spiritual and systemic dimensions of understanding revelation. In contrast to traditional history-oriented tafsir methods, or modernist approaches that emphasize historicism and rationality, Hosein constructs a methodological framework grounded in the sanctity of the soul, an inner connection with God's verses, and the reading of the Qur'an as a living, integrated system of meaning. At the heart of his methodology lies the belief that the Qur'an is not simply a text to be interpreted, but a light to be internalized. Therefore, understanding the Qur'an must begin with spiritual disciplines, such as daily recitation, direct practice of the verse understood, and an inner attachment to the values of revelation. He rejects atomistic interpretive approaches that read verses in isolation, and emphasizes the importance of understanding the Qur'an as a cosmic, holistic, and transformative web of meaning.

Hosein shows how this approach can be used to re-read normative issues such as the prohibition of alcohol, and social issues such as relations with *Ahl al-Kitāb*. In the case of the prohibition of alcohol, he shows that the Qur'an did not enact the law instantly, but through a gradual spiritual process. In interfaith relations, he rejects an exclusivist approach and asserts that the Qur'an makes room for non-Muslims who have spiritual faith in the truth, even if they do not formally convert to Islam.

Hosein has made a significant contribution in reopening the spiritual and integrative dimensions of the Qur'an amidst the tendency towards fragmented and technocratic

readings. As such, Imran Hosein not only presents an alternative exegetical methodology, but also offers a new way of viewing the Qur'an as a living map, which demands not only understanding, but self-purification, moral commitment, and openness to the inner light of revelation. In the context of contemporary Qur'anic studies, his approach builds a bridge between the spiritual traditions of classical Islam and the ethical-transformative needs of the people in the modern era.

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