Syarh Al-Isyārī: The Sufi Approach to Interpreting the Prophet's Hadith

Viki Junianto[1*], Iqbal Nursyahbani[2], Ahmad Nurhamdani[3] and Achmad Roziqi[4]

[1,2,3,4] Faculty of Ushuluddin, Ma'had Aly Hasyim Asy'ari, Jombang, Jawa Timur, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

The syarḥ al-ishyārī approach is a method of hadith interpretation developed within the Sufi tradition, emphasizing texts' inner and symbolic meanings. However, this approach is often seen as deviating from the literal intent of the hadith. This study aims to examine the forms of syarḥ al-ishyārī within the Sufi tradition and evaluate its validity using five criteria formulated by al-Zurqānī. A qualitative research method based on library research was used, analyzing works such as Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah, Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn, and Mir'āt al-Ḥaqā'iq. The findings show that syarḥ al-ishyārī is acceptable if it does not contradict the apparent meaning, is free from weak interpretations, and aligns with both transmitted and rational evidence. This study recommends a cautious and methodological approach to Sufi interpretations of hadith. The main conclusion suggests that syarḥ al-ishyārī is a valid derivative interpretation when it adheres to strict scholarly boundaries.

Keywords: *Hadith; Sufi; Syarḥ; Isyāri*.

ABSTRAK

Pendekatan *syarḥ al-ishyārī* adalah metode penafsiran hadith yang berkembang dalam tradisi Sufi, yang menekankan makna batin dan simbolis dari teks-teks tersebut. Namun, pendekatan ini sering dianggap menyimpang dari niat literal hadith. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji bentuk-bentuk *syarḥ al-ishyārī* dalam tradisi Sufi dan mengevaluasi keabsahannya menggunakan lima kriteria yang dirumuskan oleh *al-Zurqānī*. Metode penelitian kualitatif berbasis penelitian pustaka digunakan, dengan menganalisis karya-karya seperti *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah, Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn,* dan *Mir'āt al-Ḥaqā'iq*. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa syarḥ al-ishyārī diterima jika tidak bertentangan dengan makna yang tampak, bebas dari penafsiran yang lemah, dan sesuai dengan bukti yang ditransmisikan serta rasional. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan pendekatan yang hati-hati dan metodologis dalam penafsiran hadith oleh Sufi. Kesimpulan utama menunjukkan bahwa *syarḥ al-ishyārī* adalah penafsiran turunan yang sah jika mematuhi batas-batas ilmiah yang ketat.

Kata Kunci: *Hadis; Sufi; Syarḥ; Isyāriy*

INTRODUCTION

As one of Islam's essential pillars, hadith requires explanation to be understood and accessible to all Muslims. In the scholarly field of hadith commentary (sharh al-hadith), scholars employ various approaches to comprehend and elucidate the meanings of the Prophet Muhammad's sayings. Approaches to hadith commentary are divided into two categories: textual and contextual (Afriani & Wijaya, 2021).

The textual approach is a method of understanding hadith that focuses primarily on the text or the narration. Scholars who adopt this approach tend to emphasize linguistic and grammatical analysis of the hadith text. They explore the meanings of words, sentence structures, and the rules of the Arabic language to uncover the meaning of the hadith. This approach is often called the Bayani epistemic, emphasizing clarity and textual precision. Its main objective is to preserve the integrity and originality of the hadith's meaning as it is conveyed (Fithoroini, 2021).

On the other hand, the contextual approach is a method of understanding hadith by considering the circumstances and conditions in which the hadith was conveyed. This approach does not focus solely on the text but also considers the historical, social, and cultural context surrounding the delivery of the hadith. Scholars who adopt this approach aim to understand the intent and purpose behind the Prophet's statements, actions, or rulings. By understanding the context, they seek to apply the teachings of the hadith in a way that is more relevant and applicable to contemporary situations (Usman, 2017).

Over time, a new approach to *syarḥ* (commentary) of hadith emerged within the Islamic intellectual tradition, differing from the classical hadith scholars' methods. This approach developed within the intellectual milieu of Sufi circles and is known as *ishārī* commentary (*syarḥ isyārī*). Unlike the textual approach, which emphasizes the outward meaning, or the contextual approach, which seeks to understand the text within its socio-historical framework, the *ishārī* approach focuses on uncovering inner meanings and revealing spiritual allusions believed to be embedded within the wording of the hadith. This method does not rely solely on linguistic tools or transmission science. However, it is rooted in spiritual experience, rigorous ascetic practice (*riyāḍah*), and the mystical path (*sulūk*), involving the purification of the soul and cleansing of the heart (Al-'Akk, 1986).

The study of *syarḥ isyārī* is important because it represents one of the Sufi community's creative responses to understanding hadith and transforming it into a source of inner

enlightenment. It also demonstrates that engagement with Islamic religious texts is not monolithic but pluralistic, shaped by the epistemological background and spiritual orientation of the *shāriḥ* (commentator). In this context, *syarḥ isyārī* is not merely a method of commentary but also an expression of profound faith experience and distinctive spiritual reflection. This study is also relevant for fostering a more inclusive understanding of the diverse methods of hadith commentary within the Islamic tradition.

It is undeniable that numerous writings have discussed the *al-ishārī* approach. Among them are the work of Abd Wahid titled "*Tafsir Isyari dalam Pandangan Imam Ghazali*" (Wahid, 2010), Zuherni AB's "*Tafsir Isyari Dalam Corak Penafsiran Ibnu' Arabi*" (Zuherni, 2017), and Riswan Suleman's work titled "*Tafsir Isyari Al Jailani*" (Sulaeman, 2022). These previous studies generally focus on applying the *ishārī* approach in Qur'anic interpretation, whereas its use in hadith commentary has received relatively little scholarly attention.

While there is a wealth of scholarship on syarḥ al-ishyārī in Qur'anic interpretation, the application of this approach to hadith commentary remains underexplored. Previous studies have generally focused on its role in Qur'anic exegesis and have not sufficiently addressed its impact on understanding Prophetic sayings. This gap in the literature highlights the need for a thorough examination of how syarḥ al-ishyārī is applied to hadith and the criteria by which these interpretations can be validated. Existing studies on Sufi interpretations of hadith often fail to establish clear, scholarly criteria for assessing validity. This study seeks to fill this gap by providing a critical framework for evaluating syarḥ al-ishyārī based on five essential conditions, ensuring that such interpretations align with the apparent and deeper meanings of the hadith.

METHOD

As explained above, this paper aims to examine the approach employed by Sufi scholars in interpreting religious texts, focusing on two main aspects.

First, as reflected in several previous studies, the *ishārī* approach has been more widely recognized in Qur'anic exegesis. It has rarely, if ever, been thoroughly explored in the context of commentary (*syarḥ*) on the hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Therefore, the primary focus of this article is to demonstrate the existence of *ishārī* commentary practices within the Sufi scholarly tradition by presenting concrete examples drawn from Sufi *syarḥ* literature.

Second, *syarḥ ishārī* carried out by Sufi scholars often does not adhere to the established principles of hadith sciences or the conventional commentary methodology. This phenomenon raises a critical question: What epistemological or academic parameters can be used to assess the validity and legitimacy of such interpretations? The absence of clear criteria opens the door to a wide range of subjectivity, which may challenge hadith readers or researchers in distinguishing between spiritually valid symbolic meanings and unfounded interpretive deviations.

This study is carried out through three stages of analysis:

First, it employs a qualitative approach based on library research. Primary data are drawn from classical Sufi works such as *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyah* by Ibn ʿArabī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn* by Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, and *Mirʾāt al-Ḥaqāʾiq* by al-Burūsawī, which explicitly present examples of *ishārī* commentary on hadith. Secondary data consist of contemporary works and academic studies related to the methodology of *tafsīr ishārī*.

Second, the data are analyzed using content analysis by examining the structure of *syarḥ ishārī* in the primary sources and identifying the patterns, characteristics, and epistemological approaches employed. The findings are then compared with established scholarly standards in the sciences of hadith and exegesis to evaluate their relevance and validity.

Third, in assessing the validity of *syarḥ ishārī*, the study adopts the evaluative parameters formulated by Imam al-Zurqānī as the main analytical framework. This choice is based on two key considerations. First, al-Zurqānī is recognized as a prominent authority in the fields of hadith and hadith commentary, as evidenced by his intellectual contributions in works such as his commentaries on *al-Muwaṭṭaʾ* and *al-Manẓūmah al-Baiqūniyyah*. Second, al-Zurqānī explicitly outlined four criteria that must be fulfilled for an *ishārī* interpretation to be deemed valid both academically and normatively. These parameters are considered representative because, on the one hand, they provide legitimacy for spiritual and inner approaches to interpretation. On the other hand, they maintain methodological discipline to prevent excessive subjectivity.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Definition of Syarḥ Al-Isyāriy

The *syarḥ al-ishārī* method is a form of interpretation that seeks to uncover hidden or inner meanings behind words that may appear outwardly clear. The term *al-ishārī* or *al-ishārah* derives from the root word ش و ر (*shīn–wāw–rāʾ*), which, according to Ibn Fāris, carries two primary and opposing meanings. The first is "to indicate" or "to reveal" something, while the second is "to take" or "to seize" something (Ibnu Fāris, 2010). The meaning intended here is the first—thus, *al-ishārah* refers to "giving a sign" or "indicating something" (Ibnu Manẓūr, 2010). This definition is in harmony with the statement of Allah in Sūrat Maryam [19:29]: *fa-ashārat ilayhi* ("Then she pointed to him"). In line with Ibn Manẓūr's explanation, al-Manāwī further clarifies that *al-ishārah* also means providing direction through something inferred from speech (Al-Manāwi, 1990).

Al-Ṭūsī describes *al-ishārah* from the perspective of the Sufis as a form of indication that points toward subtle meanings which are difficult to articulate through outward expressions (*ʿibārah Al-ishārah* demands an understanding of hidden meanings that are inaccessible to the general public, in contrast to *taṣrīḥ*, which refers to explicit meanings derived from clear scriptural texts (*naṣṣ*). According to the practitioners of *ishārah*, *taṣrīḥ* is the interpretive method suited for the common people, while *al-ishārah* is employed by the spiritual elite to uncover hidden meanings and divine secrets. This view is supported by Farīd al-Dīn al-ʿAṭṭār, who quotes Imām al-Shiblī as saying: *"al-ʿibārah lughat al-ʿilm wa al-ishārah lughat al-maʿrifah"* ("Literal expression is the language of knowledge, while symbolic indication is the language of gnosis") (Al-ʾAṭṭār, 2015).

The terminological definition of the *syarḥ al-ishārī* method can be found in the statements of several scholars such as Khālid ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-ʿAkk, Muḥammad ʿAbd al-ʿAẓīm al-Zurqānī, and Abū Naṣr al-Sirrāj al-Ṭūsī. The definitions offered by these figures primarily pertain to *tafsīr ishārī*, with the Qur'an as the object of interpretation. However, the present study aims to shift the focus toward hadith as the object of interpretation. Nonetheless, both the Qur'an and hadith, in essence, revolve around hidden indications in the pursuit of meaning within a given *naṣṣ* (text) (al-Tībī, 1997, Al-Jakaniyy, 2020).

For example, Khālid ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-ʿAkk, in his book *Uṣūl al-Tafsīr wa Qawāʿiduh*, explains that the *al-ishārī* method interprets a *naṣṣ* not based on its apparent, explicit, or literal meanings. This type of interpretation does not rely on the instruments of Arabic linguistics or the formal principles of *uṣūl al-tafsīr* in an explicit way. Rather, it is based

on subtle indications (*ishārāt*) that Allah unveils to practitioners of *riyāḍah* and *sulūk* (spiritual discipline). These indications, however, must remain consistent and harmonious with the outward meaning of the text that is recognized by the sharīʿah (Al-ʿAkk, 1986).

These indications are often symbolic in nature and require deep spiritual insight to uncover. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-ʿAẓīm al-Zurqānī also elaborates that the *syarḥ al-ishārī* method is not based on textual meanings that are understood outwardly (*ẓāhir*) and commonly within the framework of the Arabic language. Instead, it is grounded in implicit indications (*ishārāt khafiyyah*) that, nevertheless, can still be reconciled with the apparent meaning of the text (al-Zurqānī, 2011). Al-Zurqānī affirms that the *al-ishārī* method remains valid as long as it does not contradict the outward sense of the *naṣṣ* and can be brought into harmony with it (al-Zurqānī, 2011).

Meanwhile, Abū Naṣr al-Sirrāj al-Ṭūsī defines the *syarḥ al-ishārī* method as a means employed by the *ahl al-ḥaqq* (people of truth) to uncover the subtle indications (*ishārāt*) embedded in a *naṣṣ*. These individuals consistently adhere to and practice the Qur'an and hadith, both outwardly and inwardly. Because they act upon what they know from the Qur'an and hadith, Allah bestows upon them the knowledge of *ishārah*, a form of insight into matters they had not previously known. According to al-Ṭūsī, this *ʿilm al-ishārah* is granted to Allah's chosen servants whose hearts are pure, enabling them to perceive hidden meanings, inner secrets, and rare knowledge (*ghārib al-ʿilm*) contained in the Qur'anic text and the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (Al-Ṭūsi, 1437).

From the various definitions presented, the *al-ishārī* method contains three main elements. First, it does not interpret the wording of a ḥadīth explicitly as scholars of *ẓāhir* (literalists), such as Imām Dāwūd al-Ẓāhirī, would. Second, although it does not adhere strictly to the outward meaning, this approach must still align with and not contradict the *ẓāhir* (apparent) meaning of the ḥadīth. Third, this method is not intended for the general public, but rather for those who consistently follow the outward and inward teachings of the Qur'an and ḥadīth. It is to such individuals that Allah reveals the hidden meanings embedded within the ḥadīth texts, through hearts that have been spiritually purified (Ramli, 2008).

The *al-ishārī* method is known by various names, yet all share the same fundamental essence. One such designation is the *maslak al-faiḍī* (the path of divine inspiration), a method in which the interpreter of ḥadīth begins by understanding the apparent (*ẓāhir*) meaning of the words. For example, Imām Ibn Abī Jamrah, in interpreting the ḥadīth "*al-qitāl fī sabīlillāh*"

(fighting in the path of Allah), starts with its literal meaning, armed struggle against external enemies (*al-khārijī*). He then develops its *ishārī* meaning as the inner struggle (*jihād*) against internal enemies (*al-dākhilī*), such as the lower self and inner passions (Al-Jakaniyy, 2020).

The *al-ramzī* method, according to al-Ṭūsī, pertains to symbols (*al-ramz*) that point to hidden inner meanings behind the apparent (*ẓāhir*) wording, accessible only to those spiritually qualified to comprehend them. The *al-bāṭinī* method refers to meanings that are inwardly esoteric while still acknowledging the validity of the outward (*ẓāhir*) meaning. Meanwhile, the *al-ʿirfānī* method derives its name from its focus on ʿirfān (intuitive knowledge) and spiritual purification. This approach aims to uncover the esoteric meanings of the *sharīʿah* concealed within the text of the ḥadīth, which can only be accessed through the *qalb* (heart) via *kashf* (unveiling), *ilhām* (divine inspiration), direct perception (ʿiyān), and inner illumination (*ishrāq*) (Abshor, 2018).

The *al-ḥaqāʾiq* method, or the "approach of the people of spiritual realities," is rooted in the understanding that religion comprises three integral components: sharīʿah, ṭarīqah, and ḥaqīqah. The sharīʿah corresponds to Islam (outward practice), the ṭarīqah relates to faith (īmān), and the ḥaqīqah represents spiritual excellence (iḥsān). Since this approach emphasizes the purification of the soul and vigilance over it, it falls under the category of iḥsān, which is referred to as ḥaqīqah, and its adherents are known as the people of spiritual realities (ahl al-ḥaqāʾiq). It is also known as the al-ṣūfī method, due to the fact that the Sufis are the most prominent group associated with the study and application of this approach (al-Amīn al-Jakaniyy, 2020).

Evidentiary Foundations Supporting the Legitimacy of *Syarḥ al-Isyārī*

Adherents of the *Isyārī* approach (*al-Isyāriyyūn*) maintain that this method is grounded in strong scriptural evidence. Imām al-Dhahabī, in his *al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufassirūn*, affirms that the *Isyārī* method possesses legitimate Sharīʿah foundations derived from the Qur'an, supported by the Sunnah, and practiced by the Companions of the Prophet. Several Qur'anic verses criticize disbelievers for being capable of grasping only the outward meanings while failing to perceive the hidden dimensions. This critique underscores the significance of engaging with the inward or esoteric meanings of the Qur'an.

For instance, Allah says: "*What is [the matter] with these people that they can hardly understand any statement?*" (*An-Nisāʾ:78*) "*Then do they not reflect upon the Qur'an? If it had been from [any] other than Allah, they would have found within it much contradiction.*" (*An-*

Nisāʾ:82) "*Then do they not reflect upon the Qur'an, or are there locks upon their hearts?*" (*Muḥammad:24*) (Al-żahabī, 1997).

A ḥadīth narrated by Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī recounts that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said: "*A servant was given the choice by Allah between the worldly pleasures he desired and that which is with Allah, and the servant chose what is with Allah.*" Upon hearing this, Abū Bakr wept and said, "*May our fathers and mothers be ransomed for you!*", realizing that the servant being referred to was none other than the Prophet himself (peace be upon him), and that he alone fully understood the virtue of choosing what lies with Allah (al-Ḥajjāj, 1999, Al-Bukhari, 1978).

The Prophet's action demonstrates the legitimacy of using symbolic expression (*ishārah*) in communication, while Abū Bakr's response reveals the variance in companions' capacity to grasp hidden meanings. The statement, "*And Abū Bakr was the most knowledgeable among us concerning it,*" affirms that only certain individuals possess the spiritual insight to perceive the latent significance embedded within such expressions. It also acknowledges the existence of hidden indications that can only be understood by those endowed with deep knowledge and an awareness of divine subtleties (al-Amīn al-Jakaniyy, 2020).

Furthermore, the ḥadīth "*Indeed, among knowledge is that which resembles a hidden treasure*" (*inna min al-ʿilm kāhay'ati al-maknūn*) indicates that some forms of knowledge are concealed and accessible only to scholars who truly know Allah. When this knowledge is disclosed, it is rejected only by those who are heedless of Him (al-Sulamī, 1981).

This implies that within sacred knowledge lies an esoteric dimension, comprehensible solely to scholars who possess genuine recognition (*maʿrifah*) of Allah. Their spiritual depth and wisdom enable them to grasp meanings beyond the reach of most people. When such knowledge is conveyed, it is only those distant from God who deny or doubt it, and such rejection merely reflects a deficiency in both understanding and divine connection (Afabih & Junianto, 2022).

Ḥadīths Interpreted Through the Lens of *Syarḥ al-Ishārī*

The author will present several well-known ḥadīths that are frequently heard and studied within Muslim communities, and which, in fact, have been subject to *syarḥ* or interpretation through the *ishārī* method by several Sufi scholars. These examples include the following:

1) The Ḥadīth of Jibrīl

قَالَ : فَأَخْبِرْنِيْ عَن الإحْسَانِ, قَالَ : أَنْ تَعْبُدَ اللهَ كَأَنَّكَ تَرَاهُ فَإِنْ لَمْ تَكُنْ تَرَاهُ فَإِنَّهُ يَرَاكَ.

He said, "Then tell me about iḥsān." The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied, "It is to worship Allah as if you see Him; and if you do not see Him, indeed He sees you."(Al-Bukhari, 1978)

Several Sufi scholars offer an *ishārī* interpretation of the Prophet's words:

<div dir="rtl">فَإِنْ لَمْ تَكُنْ تَرَاهُ</div>

" If you do not see Him,"

This phrase is understood as an allusion to one of the effects of the spiritual station (*maqām*) of *fanā'*. In Sufi tradition, *fanā'* refers to the annihilation of the self—an experiential state in which the ego dissolves, allowing the individual to lose awareness of their own independent existence and to be absorbed in the divine presence. In this state of *fanā'*, the Sufi is believed to attain a direct witnessing (*mushāhadah*) of Allah, wherein the boundaries between the Creator and the created are effaced. Thus, *fanā'* becomes the path through which one reaches the beatific vision of the Divine, enabling an intimate, experiential perception of God's reality.

However, this Sufi interpretation has been met with criticism from prominent ḥadīth scholars such as al-Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (al-Asqolani, 2000) and al-Suyūṭī (al-Suyūṭī, 1997). They argue that such a Sufi interpretation is inconsistent with the rules of Arabic grammar and the correct understanding of the hadith text. In Arabic, the verb تراه should grammatically be rendered as تره, with the omission of the weak letter (*'illah*), due to its syntactic position as the result clause (*jawāb syarṭ*), in accordance with Arabic grammar rules. However, all authentic hadith narrations indicate that this verb form is never rendered in the jasm (apocopate) state, thus rendering the Sufi interpretation unsupported by any valid hadith textual evidence.

Furthermore, in other narrations, such as those cited by Khamis and Sulaymān al-Taymī, it is stated:

<div dir="rtl">فإنك إن لا تراه فإنه يراك</div>

"For if you do not see Him, indeed, He sees you."
Similarly, a narration from Abū Furwah states:,

<div dir="rtl">فإن لم تره فإنه يراك</div>

" If you do not see Him, then surely He sees you."

These two narrations indicate that God's vision of His servant is a certainty and is not contingent upon the servant's ability to see Him. They emphasize the awareness that God is always observing His creation, one of the fundamental tenets of faith in Islam. These narrations

clearly reject the interpretation that a human being can see God as a consequence of the *maqām al-fanā'* (the spiritual state of annihilation), since their primary emphasis is on the unceasing and unrestricted surveillance of God over His creation.

2) The Hadith of the House and the Angels

عن ابن عباس رضي الله عنه، قال: سمعت أبا طلحة رَضِي اللهُ عَنْهُ، يقول: سمعت رسول الله ﷺ يقول: «لا تدخل الملائكة بيتا فيه كلب، ولا صورة تماثيل

From Ibn ʿAbbās (RA), who said: "I heard Abū Ṭalḥah (RA) say: I heard the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) say: 'The angels do not enter a house in which there is a dog or an image/statue" (Al-Bukhari, 1978).

mām al-Ghazālī explains that the heart is the dwelling place of the angels and serves as their spiritual abode. In his view, vile traits such as hatred, anger, arrogance, and greed are likened to barking dogs that drive the angels away, preventing them from entering a heart that is filled with such qualities. Consequently, the divine light of knowledge and understanding from Allah (SWT) will not penetrate the heart except through the mediation of angels. Allah the Exalted says:

"It is not for any human being that Allah should speak to him except by revelation, or from behind a veil, or by sending a messenger to reveal, by His permission, whatever He wills. Indeed, He is Most High and Wise." (Sūrat al-Shūrā, 42:51)

Angels are entrusted with the task of instilling knowledge and illuminating the heart with divine insight, for they are free from blameworthy and corrupt traits, as stated in the words of Allah:

"*They do not disobey Allah in what He commands them but do what they are commanded*." *(Sūrat al-Taḥrīm, 66:6)*

Only a purified heart is worthy of receiving the presence of angels. Imām al-Ghazālī explains that understanding a hadith through *ishārah* (symbolic interpretation) requires an exploration of its inner meaning, not merely its outward expression, while still remaining anchored to authentic sources. This process involves a transition from the "house" (a creation of man) to the "heart" (a creation of God). Vile traits within the heart, likened to the impurity of dogs, prevent angels from entering that heart.

The light of inner vision grasps meanings, rather than mere physical forms. While the physical world is governed by appearances, the Hereafter is shaped by meanings, where form follows meaning. Numerous texts emphasize that the reckoning of deeds is based on their inner

meanings. For instance, a person characterized by arrogance may be judged as insignificant as an ant, signifying that deeds are assessed by the inner intent behind them (al-Ghazālī, 2021).

3) The Hadith on Temporary Marriage (*Nikāḥ al-Mut'ah*)

سبرة الجهني رأيته عنه، أنه قال: أذن لنا رسول الله ﷺ بالمتعة، فانطلقت أنا ورجل إلى امرأة من بني عامر، كأنها بكرة عيطاء، فعرضنا عليها أنفسنا، فقالت: ما تعطي ؟ فقلت ردائي، وقال صاحبي : ردائي، وكان ردائي، وكنت أشب منه فإذا نظرت إلى رداء صاح صاحبي رداء صاحبي أجود من أعجبها، وإذا نظرت إلي أعجبتها، ثم قالت : أنت ورداؤك يكفيني، فمكثت معها ثلاثا، ثم إن رسول الله ﷺ قال: من كان عنده شيء من هذه النساء التي يتمتع، فليخل سبيله

"It is narrated that Sabrah al-Juhanī and his companion were granted permission by the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) to engage in mutʿah (temporary marriage). They approached a woman from the Banū ʿĀmir who appeared to be a strong and youthful maiden. They each proposed marriage to her. The woman asked, "What will you give me?" Sabrah replied, "My cloak," and his companion said, "My cloak," too. However, his companion's cloak was better than Sabrah's, so the woman was initially more inclined toward him. Yet, upon seeing Sabrah, she was also attracted to him. She eventually decided, "You and your cloak will suffice for me." Sabrah remained with her for three days. Thereafter, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "Whoever has any of these women (through mutʿah), let him release her."

According to al-Burūsawī's explanation, this ḥadīth can be understood on two levels: *ẓāhir* (external/literal) and *ishārah* (symbolic/inner). On the literal level, al-Burūsawī states that the hadith indicates that mutʿah marriage was permissible up until the conquest of Mecca. Symbolically, the woman in the hadith represents the natural soul (*nafs al-ṭabīʿī*), while the conquest of Mecca signifies the opening of the heart (*fatḥ/futūḥ*). The act of mutʿah represents a temporary union between the higher soul (*nafs al-ʿulya*) and the natural soul (*nafs al-ṭabīʿī*), which is referred to as a spiritual *ḥāl* (state). Before the opening of the heart, such a state is necessary. However, after that opening, it is no longer needed, as the natural marriage (*nikāḥ ṭabīʿī*) becomes the primary and enduring union.

Natural marriage symbolizes the spiritual union between the spirit (*rūḥ*) and the tranquil soul *(nafs al-muṭmaʾinnah)*, a state also known as wuṣūl (arrival at the spiritual goal). This implies that for the sālik (spiritual wayfarer), the early stages of the path involve temporary spiritual states as preparation for wuṣūl. Once wuṣūl is truly attained, the spiritual experiences that were once fleeting become constant. The pleasure derived from natural marriage is thus a reflection of the bliss of spiritual union following wuṣūl (al-Burūsawī, 2009).

4) Hadith on Negative Assumption

أخرج الطبراني في الأوسط : حدثنا أحمد قال: حدثنا داود بن رشيد قال : حدثنا بقية بن الوليد، عن معاوية بن يحيى،

عن سليمان بن مسلم، عن أنس بن مالك رَوَاهُ عَنهُ قال: قال رسول الله ﷺ: احترسوا من الناس بسوء الظن

Narrated by al-Ṭabarānī in al-Muʿjam al-Awsaṭ: Aḥmad reported that Dāwūd ibn Rashīd narrated to him, saying: "Baqiyyah ibn al-Walīd narrated to me from Muʿāwiyah ibn Yaḥyā, from Sulaymān ibn Muslim, from Anas ibn Mālik, who narrated from the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) that he said: 'Protect yourselves from people through suspicion (bad opinion)."

Al-Nahrajūrī offered a symbolic (*ishārī*) interpretation that diverges from the apparent (*ẓāhir*) meaning of this ḥadīth (al-Sya'rānī, 2022).

أي سوء الظن بأنفسكم لا بالناس

"What is meant here is to harbor suspicion toward yourselves, not toward others."

It is clear that al-Nahrajūrī interprets the admonition as a call for self-scrutiny rather than mistrust of others. This stands in contrast to the interpretation of al-Ṣanʿānī, who explains that the hadith urges caution toward the deceitfulness of people by maintaining suspicion of them. This is because some individuals, upon discovering the secrets of those who are well-disposed toward them, may cause harm or take advantage of them.

Therefore, being cautious and harboring suspicion toward people can be seen as a form of wisdom. This attitude does not contradict the general prohibition against negative suspicion found in the Prophet's words:

إياكم والظن فإن الظن أكذب الحديث

"Beware of suspicion, for suspicion is the most false of speech"

This prohibition only applies to those who are not suspected of wrongdoing. Suspicion toward those who are likely to commit harm is not forbidden. Hence, there is no restriction on harboring suspicion toward individuals whose behavior warrants caution, while doing so toward those beyond suspicion 5is indeed prohibited (al-Ṣan'ānī, 2011). In his commentary, al-Nahrajūrī explicitly rejects the literal interpretation with his assertion "not toward others," even though the wording of the hadith clearly designates "*al-nās*" (people) as the object of the verb *iḥtarisū* (protect yourselves), not "*anfusakum*" (yourselves).

5) The Ḥadīth of Divine Descent (*Nuzūl*)

عن أبي هريرة رضا القة. أن رسول الله ﷺ قال: ينزل ربنا تبارك وتعالى كل ليلة إلى السماء الدنيا حين يبقى ثلث الليل الآخر

يقول: من يدعوني فأستجيب له، من يسألني فأعطيه، من يستغفرني فأغفر له

"Our Lord, Blessed and Exalted is He, descends to the lowest heaven every night when the last third of the night remains, and He says: 'Who is calling upon Me so that I may respond to him? Who is asking of Me so that I may give to him? Who is seeking My forgiveness so that I may forgive him?'

This ḥadīth is classified among the *aḥādīth al-ṣifāt*, the traditions that describe the attributes of Allah. Regarding this narration, Muḥyiddīn Ibn ʿArabī offers an *ishārī* (symbolic or mystical) interpretation. He explains that the "descent" (*nuzūl*) of Allah to the lowest heaven refers not to a physical movement but to a metaphysical transition from the *maqām al-aḥadiyyah* (station of absolute oneness) to the *maqām al-khalq* (station of creation). He relates this interpretation to the ḥadīth of the Isrāʾ and Miʿrāj, in which the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) encounters Adam (peace be upon him) in the lowest heaven, which is symbolically considered the first realm in the hierarchy of creation.

Ibn ʿArabī also delves into the esoteric meanings of the disjointed letters (*ḥurūf al-muqaṭṭaʿāt*) at the beginning of certain Qur'anic chapters, particularly the letters *alif-lām-mīm* (الم). He interprets *alif* as a symbol of divine oneness (*tawḥīd*), *mīm* as a symbol of divine power (*qudrah*), and *lām* as the connection between them. The shapes of the letters *alif* and *mīm*, according to him, visually represent the divine descent to the lowest heaven. However, this descent should be understood as symbolic of purification and sanctity, not as physical anthropomorphism. Even in the absence of explicit textual proof, Ibn ʿArabī infers a deep spiritual symbolism from these letters, viewing them as metaphysical signs of divine action and presence (Arabi, 2009).

6) The Hadith of the Black Stone (*Hajar Aswad*)

أخرج الترمذي في سننه حدثنا قتيبة، قال: حدثنا جرير، عن عطاء السائب، عن سعيد بن جبير، عن ابن عباس رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهما قال: قال رسول الله ﷺ: نزل الحجر الأسود من الجنة، وهو أشد بياضًا من اللبن فسودته خطايا بني آدم»، وقال: حديث ابن عباس حديث حسن صحيح

At-Tirmidhi narrated in his Sunan: Qutaibah told us, he said: Jarir narrated to us from 'Aṭā' as-Sā'ib, from Saʿīd ibn Jubayr, from Ibn 'Abbās (may Allah be pleased with them both), who said that the Messenger of Allah said: "The Black Stone descended from Paradise, and it was whiter than milk. The sins of the children of Adam made it black."

Muḥyiddīn Ibn 'Arabī explained the term *sawwadatahu* as "it turned black" in its literal and outward sense. However, he also interpreted *sawwadatahu* to mean: *"I made it a leader (sayyid) over humanity through their actions of kissing and touching it."* He explained that the Black Stone (*al-ḥajar al-aswad*) attained the status of leadership due to the sins of the children

of Adam, which became the reason they were commanded to kiss and touch it, so that their sins might be forgiven. From this perspective, it becomes evident that the Black Stone holds a status of leadership.

Ibn 'Arabī then drew a comparison between the leadership status of the Black Stone and that of Adam (peace be upon him) and his descent from Paradise. He stated that the sin of Adam (AS) was the cause of his emergence as a leader on earth, and that the reason the Black Stone descended from Paradise in a state of whiteness was to demonstrate its status of leadership when it returns to Paradise, signified by its now-black appearance. This is because the Black Stone is considered a symbol of the Right Hand of God on earth (Arabi, 2009).

7) The Hadith of Imamah

أخرج مسلم في صحيحه عن أبي مسعود الأنصاري رضايته عنه، قال: قال رسول الله ﷺ: يوم القوم أقرؤهم لكتاب الله، فإن كانوا في القراءة سواء، فأعلمهم بالسنة، فإن كانوا في السنة سواء، فأقدمهم هجرة، فإن كانوا في الهجرة سواء، فأقدمهم سلما، ولا يؤمن الرجل الرجل في سلطانه، ولا يقعد في بيته على تكرمته الا بإذنه

"Narrated by Muslim in his Ṣaḥīḥ, from Abū Mas'ūd al-Anṣārī (may Allah be pleased with him), who said: The Messenger of Allah said,"The one who is most proficient in reciting the Book of Allah has the greatest right to lead the people in prayer. If they are equal in recitation, then the one who is most knowledgeable of the Sunnah. If they are equal in knowledge of the Sunnah, then the one who migrated earlier. If they are equal in migration, then the one who embraced Islam earlier. And a person should not lead another in prayer within the domain of his authority, nor should he sit in his seat of honor in his house without his permission."

Muḥyiddīn Ibn 'Arabī interpreted this ḥadīth in the context of the virtue of the Ka'bah (*Bayt al-Ḥarām*) as the *imām* (leader) of all mosques. The Ka'bah is given precedence over all other places of worship because it encompasses abundant blessings and manifest signs (*āyāt bayyināt*), such as the Maqām Ibrāhīm, al-Multazam, the Black Stone (*Ḥajar Aswad*), al-Mustajār, and the Zamzam well. These distinctive features make the Ka'bah a place of immense blessings, just as an imām is characterized by mastery in Qur'anic recitation.

In terms of knowledge of the Sunnah, *Bayt al-Ḥarām* is the richest location in Sunnah practices, as it is the site where the rituals of ḥajj and 'umrah are performed, rituals that are accompanied by many Sunnah acts not found elsewhere.

Regarding the concept of *hijrah* (migration), the presence of the Black Stone (*Ḥajar Aswad*) the oldest stone to descend from Paradise and described as *"the Right Hand of Allah*

on earth" serves as a witness for all who touch it. This signifies the majesty and sanctity of *Bayt al-Ḥarām* from the very beginning, akin to an imām who was the first to migrate.

In the context of Islam, Ibn 'Arabī explains that the Ka'bah is referred to as *"silm"* in the ḥadīth, a term which connotes peace, safety, and security. He supports this interpretation with the verse of Allah the Exalted:

وَمَن دَخَلَهُ كَانَ ءامِنًا (آل عمران: ٩٧)

"And whoever enters it [the Sacred House] shall be safe" (Ali Imran:97)

This unique quality is exclusive to *Bayt al-Ḥarām* and is not shared by any other mosque. Furthermore, the Ka'bah is the oldest place of worship, as stated in the Qur'an:

إِنَّ أَوَّلَ بَيْتٍ وُضِعَ لِلنَّاسِ لَلَّذِي بِبَكَّةَ مُبَارَكًا وَهُدًى لِلْعَالَمِين

"Indeed, the first House [of worship] established for mankind was that at Bakkah [Makkah] blessed and a guidance for the worlds" (Ali Imran: 96).

This virtue highlights the exceptional status of the Ka'bah as the *imām* of all other mosques and places of worship, based on its historical primacy and its central role in Islamic religious practice (Arabi, 2009). In this *syarḥ* (commentary), Ibn 'Arabī not only employs an *ishāri* (esoteric) interpretive approach but also uses *istidlāl* (deductive reasoning) based on specific evidences, particularly Qur'anic verses, to support his views.

Criteria for Acceptable *Syarḥ al-Isyārī*

In explaining ḥadīth using the *syarḥ al-ishārī* (esoteric commentary) method, the author outlines five essential conditions that must be fulfilled according to Shaykh al-Zurqānī. It is stated that the interpretation of a ḥadīth through *syarḥ al-ishārī* must meet at least one of these five criteria in order to be considered valid and acceptable (al-Zurqānī, 2011). While al-Zurqānī originally proposed these parameters to assess *tafsīr al-ishārī* in interpreting Qur'anic verses, the author adapts them as a framework for applying the *syarḥ al-ishārī* approach in interpreting the sayings of the Prophet. This adaptation is based on the shared nature of Qur'an and ḥadīth as sources of revelation, a view reinforced by al-Jakaniyy, who asserted that both are divine in origin, harmonious in meaning, and free from contradiction as they come from the same Source (Al-Jakaniyy, 2020).

Below is a detailed explanation of these five conditions:

1) *Syarḥ al-Isyārī* **Acknowledges the Literal Interpretation**

Syarḥ al-ishārī must align with the apparent (ẓāhir) meaning of the ḥadīth and must not contradict the original text, either in wording or meaning. In the event of a contradiction, the

apparent meaning must take precedence, as it represents the primary meaning, while the esoteric interpretation is derivative and susceptible to error (Ibnu Taimiyah, 2004).

An example of a problematic *syarḥ al-ishārī* is found in the interpretation of the ḥadīth of Jibrīl regarding *iḥsān*, which defines *iḥsān* as *fanā'* (spiritual annihilation) that enables one to behold Allah. However, the apparent narration of the ḥadīth only states that *iḥsān* is to worship Allah as though one sees Him, and if one does not see Him, to know that He sees you, without any reference to *fanā'* or the actual vision of Allah. Therefore, such an esoteric interpretation is deemed incorrect and inadmissible.

A similar issue arises in the *syarḥ al-ishārī* of the ḥadīth of the Black Stone (*Ḥajar Aswad*). Linguistically, if the term *sawwādathu* (made it black) is derived from *siyādah* (leadership), then the stone should logically be referred to as *al-ḥajar al-sayyid* (the leader stone), not *al-aswad* (the black one). Furthermore, *siyādah* implies that a leader's actions and words are followed, an attribute that cannot reasonably apply to an inanimate stone. Hence, this *syarḥ al-ishārī* is considered flawed and unacceptable.

2) *Syarḥ al-Isyārī* Recognizes the Literal Interpretation

Al-Isyāri (esoteric) commentary acknowledges the validity of the ẓāhir (literal) interpretation. Therefore, anyone employing the al-isyāri approach should not reject the apparent meaning of a ḥadīth. Essentially, the al-isyāri interpretation is a derivative meaning, functioning as a symbolic representation of the intended message, rather than the primary meaning itself. Consequently, before offering an interpretation through the al-isyāri approach, one must first comprehend the literal meaning of the ḥadīth. This ensures that the esoteric interpretation does not deviate significantly from its principal meaning.

An example of the application of syarḥ al-isyāri can be seen in the interpretation of the ḥadīth concerning dogs, houses, and angels. In this interpretation, the house symbolizes the heart, the dog represents undesirable traits within the heart, and the angel signifies knowledge or wisdom. This esoteric meaning emphasizes that knowledge cannot enter a heart tainted by impurities. Such a reading remains consistent with the textual meaning: that a dog is ritually impure and that angels do not enter impure places. Thus, the al-isyāri interpretation is deemed appropriate and aligned with the original sense.

3) *Syarḥ al-Isyārī* Must Avoid Far-Fetched and Weak Interpretations

The al-isyāri approach must also avoid offering interpretations that are far removed from or weakly connected to the apparent meaning of the ḥadīth. This caution arises because

al-isyāri interpretations cover a broad semantic range, being inherently derivative in nature. Therefore, such interpretations must yield meanings that are acceptable, understandable to the general public, and not overly divergent from the primary message.

This principle can be observed in the esoteric interpretation of the ḥadīth on nuzūl (descent). The divine descent of Allah SWT to the lower heaven is interpreted as His movement from the maqām of aḥadiyyah (absolute oneness) to the maqām of creation, drawing a parallel with the meanings found in the ḥadīth of the Isrā' and Mi'rāj. Furthermore, this descent is symbolically represented by the Arabic letters alif, lām, mīm. However, such interpretations are considered excessively abstract and inaccessible to the general public, making them prone to misunderstanding or misinterpretation. Therefore, this explanation is deemed inappropriate within the framework of responsible esoteric commentary.

4) *Syarḥ al-Isyārī* Must Not Contradict Textual and Rational Evidence

As a derivative interpretation, the meaning derived through the syarḥ al-isyāri approach must not conflict with either naqlī (scriptural) or 'aqlī (rational) evidence. Ideally, an al-isyāri interpretation should be supported by both types of evidence. Therefore, any interpretation using this approach must consider its alignment with other authoritative sources to ensure its validity and to avoid any distortion or attribution of inappropriate meanings to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), especially given that the syarḥ al-isyāri is applied to interpreting ḥadīths.

An example of an esoteric interpretation that violates this principle is found in a ḥadīth concerning su' al-ẓann (negative assumptions or suspicion). In this case, the syarḥ al-isyāri interpretation suggests that harboring suspicion is not only permissible but even considered a form of wisdom. Such an interpretation clearly contradicts numerous other evidences that strictly prohibit suspicion against others. As a result, this esoteric interpretation is deemed incorrect and inappropriate.

5) *Syarḥ al-Isyārī* Must Be Supported by Valid Evidence

In line with the previous conditions, this final criterion similarly requires that esoteric interpretations (syarḥ al-isyāri), as derivative meanings, must be substantiated by authoritative shar'ī (Islamic legal) evidence. Unlike the literal meaning, which is generally clear and readily aligned with established doctrine, the al-isyāri interpretation is shaped by a process of symbolic understanding and often reflects the interpreter's subjective insights. Therefore, in order to be considered legitimate, such interpretations must be grounded in reliable shar'ī evidence,

ensuring that their application remains within the bounds of orthodoxy and is not misused by individuals lacking the necessary interpretive authority.

An example of this requirement can be found in the esoteric interpretation of the ḥadīth concerning the Kaʿbah. The syarḥ al-isyāri approach interprets the Kaʿbah as the "leader" or imām of all the mosques in the world. This is based on the fact that the Kaʿbah is a site of immense blessing, surrounded by virtuous deeds and religious significance, and located near other sacred symbols such as the Black Stone (Ḥajar Aswad), the Station of Abraham (Maqām Ibrāhīm), and al-Multazam. These qualities highlight the Kaʿbah's centrality and supremacy as a symbolic imām of all other places of worship. Importantly, this esoteric interpretation is reinforced by supporting textual evidence, making it both meaningful and acceptable within the framework of valid religious interpretation.

CONCLUSION

This study examines the application of the *syarḥ al-ishyārī* method in hadith interpretation by Sufi scholars, with the aim of evaluating the validity of Sufi interpretations of hadith texts. Based on an analysis of key works such as *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, and *Mir'āt al-Ḥaqā'iq*, the study finds that *syarḥ al-ishyārī* can be accepted as a valid form of interpretation as long as it meets five criteria of validity: it does not contradict the literal meaning of the hadith, acknowledges the ẓāhir interpretation, is free from weak allegorical interpretations, does not conflict with transmitted (*naqlī*) and rational (*'aqlī*) evidence, and is grounded in a strong basis. The findings of this research contribute significantly to the understanding of the Sufi approach to hadith, demonstrating that while it possesses a distinct character, *syarḥ al-ishyārī* must still be applied cautiously and within strict methodological boundaries. The study also recommends that Sufi interpretations of hadith be conducted with careful attention to the relationship between inner and literal meanings, as well as the importance of validation based on clear scholarly criteria.

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