

Interpretive Digression and its Impact on the Diversity of Meaning Among Interpreters

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Abstract

Digression among exegetes is the clarification of Quranic verses by citing the interpretations of exegetes regarding the discussed text. It involves examining interconnected verses, balancing their opinions, and reviewing their arguments to critique and refute the less favored interpretation, providing reasoning and evidence for its refutation. Subsequently, the preferred interpretation is substantiated with evidence. This process is necessary because exegetes' interpretations may vary in their analysis of the Quranic text, and the Quranic verses can bear multiple meanings. Therefore, an exegete writing on a particular subject must carefully and meticulously scrutinize these interpretations, using keen judgment to weigh them and discern the accurate from the inaccurate, the preferred from the less favored, in cases of divergence. The exegete must select the interpretation that best suits their topic to clarify its elements and connect the Quranic styles in conveying the meaning.

The research required it to be divided into two sections and a conclusion.

The first section: It dealt with the criteria for acceptance and refutation and the rules of preponderance of interpretation according to the interpreters, in two topics: the first: the criteria for acceptance and refutation of statements according to the interpreters, and the second: the evidence for preponderance according to the interpreters.

As for the second section: I dealt with the digressions of the interpreters and their different sayings regarding the diversity of meaning, in two topics. The first: the digressions of the interpreters that have an impact in explaining the different meanings of Qur'anic verses, and the second: it addressed the emergence of digressions in interpretation and examples of the digressions of the interpreters. Then the conclusion, which included the most important results of the research.

Keywords: Digression, Interpretation, Impact, Diversity, Meaning.

1. Introduction

Praise be to God, Lord of the Worlds, and may blessings and peace be upon our Master Muhammad and his family. As for what follows:

Digression among exegetes is the explanation of Quranic verses by presenting the interpretations of exegetes on the discussed text, considering interconnected verses. It involves balancing their

opinions and reviewing their arguments to critique and refute the less favored interpretation, providing reasoning and evidence for its refutation, and then substantiating the preferred interpretation with evidence. This is because exegetes' interpretations may vary in their analysis of the Quranic text, and the Quranic verses can bear multiple meanings. Therefore, an exegete writing on a particular subject, upon finding these interpretations in the exegesis of a verse related to their topic, must carefully and meticulously scrutinize these interpretations, using keen judgment to weigh them and discern the accurate from the inaccurate, the preferred from the less favored, in cases of divergence. The exegete must select the interpretation that best suits their topic to clarify its elements and connect the Quranic styles in conveying the meaning, thereby reaching the Quranic guidance related to the subject under study.

1. Criteria for acceptance and response and weighting rules according to commentators

A. Criteria for accepting and rejecting the commentators' statements:

The criteria for acceptance and response differed among commentators, and I will mention some of them, as follows:

First: Al-Qurtubi said: That the noble Prophetic Sunnah be the standard for clarifying the intent of God Almighty in His Noble Book in terms of His command, duty, recommendation, guidance, and prohibition (Al-Tabari, 1421 AH, pp. 1/39-40).

Second: Criteria for interpretation according to Al-Qummi: It is that the noble Sunnah of the Prophet, the sayings of the infallible Imams who are the justice of the Qur'an, and that knowledge is with them, and the Qur'an is with them, is the criterion in explaining the intent of God Almighty in His Noble Book (Al-Qummi, 1412 AH, p. 1).

Third: Standards of interpretation according to Sheikh al-Tusi: It is the following (Al-Tusi, D. T., pp. 1/176–177):

1. Refer to the Sharia evidence from widely transmitted reports and those agreed upon by scholars.
2. Do not accept linguistic evidence in interpretation if it is commonly known and widespread among language experts.
3. Do not rely on solitary reports in explaining rare and unusual words.
4. Do not use it as evidence against the Book of Allah Almighty.
5. Do not assert definitively the intended meaning, because asserting definitively may be erroneous, even if it coincides with the truth.

Fourth: Criteria of interpretation according to Al-Wahidi: They are the following (Al-Wahidi, D. T., pp. 1/395–402):

1. Grammar and literature, as they are its mainstays. Mastering their principles and following the methods of the Arabic language in its use of striking metaphors, rare proverbs,

exquisite similes, and the indication of vast meanings with concise expressions, which are unparalleled in other languages.

2. The Sunnah elucidates the summary of the revelation, clarifies interpretation, and dispels the doubts of those with deviant and heretical views.

3. The sayings of the Companions and the Followers (may Allah be pleased with them) in interpreting rare words and Arabic expressions.

Fifth: Criteria of interpretation according to Al-Zamakhshari: It is proficiency in the science of meanings and explanation (Al-Zamakhshari, 2009, p. 1/7).

Sixth: Criteria of interpretation according to Ibn Attiya: It must be followed in interpretation: the sayings of the predecessors, and the sciences that are related to understanding the text (Al-Andalusi, 1413 AH, p. 1/35).

Seventh: Criteria of interpretation according to Al-Tabarsi: They are the following (Al-Tabarsi, 1418 AH, pp. 1/14–15):

1. Parsing science.
2. Explanation of the infallible in the similarities and expressions for the meanings of the verbal common.
3. Consensus, especially in the interpretation of something for which there is no interpretation from the infallible.

Eighth: Criteria of interpretation according to Abu Hayyan Al-Andalusi: These are the linguistic sciences that include explaining the meaning of the word, grammar, morphology, rhetoric and rhetoric, the science of hadith, the science of the principles of jurisprudence, and the science of theology (Al-Andalusi, 1422 AH, pp. 1/101–109).

Ninth: Standards of interpretation according to Tabatabai. It is the following (Al-Tabatabai, 1417 AH, pp. 1/14-15):

1. Interpretation of the Qur'an by the Qur'an.
2. Scientific and philosophical research on issues of verses.
3. Sayings of the infallible Imams (peace be upon them).

B. Evidence of weighting and its differences according to interpreters.

The criteria for preponderance (Tarjih) among the exegetes are confined to: (the Quran and the authentic Sunnah, language, and reason). Under this comprehensive evidence, there can be various branches, such as derivation in language, grammatical rules, or the principle of interpreting words. Additionally, under rational evidence, consensus (Ijma) of the exegetes, analogy (Qiyas), contextual evidence, and others can be included. Also included under the criteria for preponderance are other fundamental rational evidence, especially in legal exegesis, such as Istihsan (juridical preference), Urf (custom), Masalih Mursalah (consideration of public

interest), Sadd al-Dhara'i (blocking the means), and Sharia of previous communities. The application of these evidence depends on the school of thought of the exegete. If the exegete follows the Maliki school, they will prioritize Maliki evidence, and if they follow the Shafi'i school, they will prioritize Shafi'i principles, and so on (Al-Gharnati, 741 AH, p. 9). As follows:

First: Preference according to the Qur'an:

In the interpretation of the Almighty's saying: "O you who have believed, obey God and obey the Messenger and those in charge among you" (The Holy Qur'an, Surat An-Nisa, verse: 59), Ibn al-Arabi reviews the sayings regarding the meaning of (and those in charge among you) and then gives preference Based on the Qur'an, it says in meaning: (And those in authority among you), about which there are two sayings:

First: Maymun bin Mahran said: They are the companions of the brigades, and this is Al-Bukhari's choice. It was narrated on the authority of Ibn Abbas that it was revealed about Abdullah bin Hudhafa when the Prophet (may God's prayers and peace be upon him and his family) sent him on a brigade.

Second: Jabir said: They are the scholars, and most of the followers said so, and Malik chose it and al-Tabari chose it.

Then Ibn al-Arabi said: "In my view, the correct interpretation is that they are both the leaders and the scholars. As for the leaders, authority belongs to them, and the rules are theirs. As for the scholars, because asking them is an obligatory duty for the people, their answers are binding, and following their fatwas is mandatory, including for the husband towards his wife, especially since we have established that all of these are rulers. Allah Almighty named them as such, saying: 'The prophets who submitted [to Allah] judge by it for the Jews, so did the rabbis and scholars' (Quran, Surah Al-Ma'idah, Ayah: 44). Allah Almighty informed us that the prophet is a ruler, the rabbi is a ruler, and the scholar is a ruler, and the matter refers to the scholars. This is because the matter has been passed on to the ignorant, and it is incumbent upon them to ask the scholars (Ahkam al-Quran: 1/452)." Ibn al-Arabi used the Quran as the criterion for preponderance, preferring the meaning of the verse in Surah Al-Ma'idah, that "those in authority among you" are both the scholars and the leaders, contrary to al-Tabari, Malik, and others from the Tabi'un who said that they are only the people of knowledge.

Third: Preference according to the correct hadith:

Example: Al-Qurtubi said when interpreting the Almighty's saying: "And We glorify Your praise and sanctify You" (The Holy Qur'an, Surat Al-Baqarah, verse: 30), the interpreters disagreed regarding the glorification of the angels, so Ibn Masoud and Ibn Abbas said: Their glorification is their prayer, and from the Almighty's saying: "If it had not been, Who "The glorified ones" (The Holy Qur'an, Surat Al-Saffat, verse: 143), meaning those who pray.

It was said: Their glorification is raised by raising one's voice in remembrance. Al-Mufaddal said.

Qatada said, "Glory be to God, praise be to God for his custom in language."

Then Al-Qurtubi said: It is correct. When Abu Dharr narrated that the Messenger of God (may God bless him and his family and grant them peace) was asked: Which speech is best? He said: (God has not chosen for His angels or for His servants. Glory be to God and praise be to Him) (Abdul Baqi, 2009).

Fourth: Preference by language:

For example: What was mentioned by Ibn al-Arabi in the interpretation of (pardon) from the Almighty's saying: "And they ask you what they should spend. Say, 'pardon'" (The Holy Qur'an, Surat Al-Baqarah: Verse: 219).

Ibn al-Arabi said: The scholars differed regarding it in six opinions:

First: It is what is left over from the family, said Ibn Abbas.

Second: Moderation without extravagance or extravagance, as Al-Hasan said.

Third: What the soul allows, Ibn Abbas also said.

Fourth: Charity on the back of a rich person, said Mujahid.

Fifth: obligatory charity, Mujahid also said this.

Sixth: It is abrogated by the verse on zakat. Ibn Abbas also said this.

Then Ibn al-Arabi said after mentioning these sayings: The happiest of these sayings with verification and authenticity are those supported by language, and the strongest of them is because (Ahkam al-Qur'an, by Ibn al-Arabi: (1/153). It is noted in this example that Ibn al-Arabi presents the commentators' sayings about forgiveness and then mentions He discusses it from the sources of the language, refines it, and adopts what the language has supported, which is the first to be investigated and correct here.

Fourth: Preference based on rational evidence:

For example: The analogy of two daughters to two sisters in sharing two-thirds of the inheritance. In the interpretation of the verse from Allah's saying: 'They ask you for a ruling. Say, "Allah gives you a ruling concerning the Kalalah. If a man dies, leaving no child but only a sister, she will have half of what he leaves, and he will inherit from her if she has no child. But if there are two sisters, they will have two-thirds of what he leaves. If there are siblings, men, and women, for the male is a share equivalent to that of two females. Allah makes clear to you [His law], lest you go astray. And Allah is Knowing of all things."' (Surah An-Nisa: Ayah 176), Ibn al-Arabi said: 'This was a precise observation and a great principle in consideration and reliance, and the Almighty intended by this that we are to use analogy in rulings' (Ahkam al-Quran, by Ibn al-Arabi: 1/341).

2. The commentators' digressions and their various sayings

A. The commentators' digressions that have an impact in explaining the different meanings of Qur'anic verses.

First: Definition of digression linguistically and terminologically:

1. Definition of digression in language:

The root of the word (expelled) [Ṭ-R-D] is a single, correct origin indicating removal or driving away. It is said: "I drove him away." The ruler expelled him and banished him if he removed him from his country. The word "chasing" also means the act of chasing prey. The word "prey" refers to the prey itself. "Peer-chasing" refers to competitors pushing against each other; it is said so because one chases the other. The expression "something continued steadily" means something follows consecutively, one after the other. This is called so metaphorically, as if the first drives the second (Al-Razi, 952, 3:455).

Definition of digression in terms:

- a. It is defined as: the utterance of speech in a way that requires another speech, and it is not intended specifically, but rather incidentally (Al-Jurjani Al-Hanafi, d. 816 AH: p. 20).
- b. It is defined as: when the speech is about one of the arts, then another art that suits it becomes available to him, so he mentions it in his mention (Al-Suyuti, (d. 911 AH: p. 634).
- c. It is defined as: moving from one meaning to another meaning connected to it. By mentioning the first, it was not intended to lead to the mention of the second (Al-Saeedi, 1391 AH: p. 591).

Second: The emergence of digression in interpretation:

The emergence of digression in exegesis traces back to the advent of rational exegesis during the period of compilation. Exegesis took a significant step forward during this stage, extending from the Abbasid era to the present day. Initially, the compilation of exegesis was limited to the transmission of what was handed down by the predecessors of this ummah (Islamic community). However, it progressed to include exegesis that mixed rational understanding with transmitted interpretation. This development was gradual, beginning first as attempts at personal understanding and preferring some interpretations over others. This was acceptable if the rational aspect adhered to the confines of language and the meanings of Quranic words.

Over time, these attempts at personal understanding grew and expanded, influenced by various fields of knowledge, diverse sciences, multiple opinions, and differing beliefs. This led to the writing of exegesis works that included a multitude of topics only distantly related to exegesis. During this period, the sciences of language were compiled, and grammar and morphology were documented. Legal disagreements became more pronounced, theological issues were raised, and sectarianism emerged during the Abbasid era. Islamic sects promoted their doctrines and advocated for them, many philosophical works were translated, and all these sciences and related research blended with exegesis to the point where they overwhelmed it. Consequently, some scholars who excelled in these sciences restricted their exegesis to the domain in which they specialized. For instance, grammarians focused exclusively on syntax and the many possible interpretations within it, alongside the transmission of grammatical rules, issues, branches, and disputes. Jurists, on the other hand, incorporated legal discussions, extending to the

establishment of legal evidence that might not be related to the verse and responding to opposing arguments. Thus, each scholar who excelled in a particular field tended to extensively include discussions and branches of their expertise in their exegesis, leading to numerous digressions in interpretation. This is how digression in exegesis originated and diversified (Al-Suyuti, 911 AH: p. 4).

Third: Examples of commentators' digressions in interpretation:

1. What Al-Qurtubi mentioned in his comprehensive interpretation of the provisions of the Qur'an when interpreting the Almighty's saying from Surah An-Nahl: "And horses, mules, and donkeys that you may ride as ornaments. And He creates what you do not know" (Surat An-Nahl: Verse: 8). Several issues were mentioned in the interpretation of this verse:

He mentioned in the first issue: the readings in the verse. He mentioned in the second issue: He mentioned the meaning of the verse.

It says: The scholars have stated that Allah Almighty granted us the ownership of cattle and beasts of burden and made them subservient to us. He permitted us to use them and benefit from them as a mercy from Him to us. Whatever an individual owns and is permissible to use from animals, renting it out is permissible by consensus among scholars, with no disagreement on this matter (Al-Jami' Li Ahkam al-Quran: 10/73). After this statement, it continues: "The ruling on renting riding animals and beasts of burden is mentioned in the books of jurisprudence" (Al-Jami' Li Ahkam al-Quran: 10/74). Nevertheless, it digressed into a discussion about the ruling on renting out riding animals and beasts of burden and traveling with them.

It is mentioned in the third issue, where it says: "There is no disagreement among scholars regarding the renting of beasts of burden and riding animals for travel. This is based on Allah's saying: 'And [He] carries your loads to a land you could not reach except with great difficulty' (Surah An-Nahl: Ayah 7). Scholars have also permitted a person to rent out an animal or a riding beast to a specific city, even if the exact place of lodging is not specified" (Al-Jami' Li Ahkam al-Quran: 10/75).

He digressed to mention many detailed branches related to this issue, eventually addressing the scholars' differences regarding the liability for a beast of burden if it perishes or dies on the way to the place where it was rented, whether the destination was exceeded or not. He then transitioned from this digression into discussing various issues and branches related to the ruling on renting riding animals and beasts of burden, moving on to the discussion of the rulings concerning the consumption of horse, mule, and donkey meat, and the zakat on horses, spanning several pages (Al-Jami' Li Ahkam al-Quran: 10/79). However, the verse did not indicate any ruling on this subject to be interpreted, and all these issues and branches belong to the books of jurisprudence. The noble verse: 'And [He] created horses, mules, and donkeys for you to ride and for ornamentation, and He creates what you do not know' (Surah An-Nahl: Ayah 8) is in the context of Allah's favor upon His servants with these blessings. This context is what should be the focus in the interpretation of the verse.

Sheikh Muhammad Abduh, in his commentary *Al-Manar* on the verse from Surah Yunus: "Is it a wonder for the people that We have inspired a man from among them, [saying], 'Warn the people and give good tidings to those who believe that they will have a position of truth with their Lord'? [The disbelievers] said, 'This is a manifest magician'" (Surah Yunus: Ayah 2), explained the meaning of the noble verse. He then digressed into discussing the prophethood of Muhammad (peace be upon him), citing the views of Orientalists. He extensively quoted the objections of those who deny the occurrence of revelation, then moved on to discuss resurrection and recompense, followed by a discussion on the deniers of miracles. He continued with a range of topics that strayed significantly from the interpretation of the verse (Al-Khashn, 2021, pp. 22–30).

2. Conclusion:

The research reached the following results:

1. There are different criteria for acceptance and rejection among commentators. Some of them relied on the noble Sunnah of the Prophet and the sayings of the infallible Imams. Some of them relied on the aspects of the language, the conditions of revelation, and knowledge of the sciences of the Qur'an, and some of them combined the two.
2. Commentators consider the rules of weighting in their digressions in the context of Qur'anic evidence, context, and language.
3. The commentators have digressions in their interpretations, as they depart from the topics of the Qur'anic verses and delve into external issues related to the verses. To diversify knowledge.

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