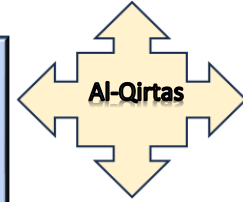


Reevaluating Hadith Skepticism: Javed Ahmed Ghamdi's Analysis of  
the Seven Quranic Variants



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### Abstract

This article of investigation is concerned with a discussion of Hadith skepticism, which mainly attacks the Seven Quranic Variants discussed by Javed Ahmed Ghamdi. The rationale behind choosing this topic is that it directly involves the realm of Islamic scholarship which covers all the ways to avoid the discrepancies among the different Qur'anic texts. This study quantifies Ghamdi by Me this, a qualitative analysis, applying Ghamdi's works as a research base out of his vast selection of writings and public talks. Then, the findings show us, how the author seems to be searching for the balance in using traditional and modern ways of exegesis, language and history. He in fact is judging the present contemporary interpretations as orthodox challenging the Hadith literature and suggesting a return to Quran as the primary source of the Islamic jurisprudence. Conclusions emphasize the importance of the variety of perspectives among Islamic scholars and seek solutions which require ongoing dialogue in order to address complex theological questions. Besides, the research becomes part of the global discourse, and it contributes to the present-day disputes of the reliability of Hadith.

**Keywords:** Hadith Skepticism, Quranic Variants, Javed Ahmed Ghamdi, Historical Analysis

### Introduction

The discussion of Hadith criticism and its effect on Islamic science has been one of the controversial topics, particularly with reference to the narration of the Quranic seven variations, known as the Saba'a Al-Ahruf. These divergent opinions of some scholars have pointed out some inconsistencies about these narrations, and the reliability of Hadith is something that is still challenged within certain circles. Consequently, the central question here is how to explain convincingly the existence of these few contradictory versions with the standard idea of a Quranic text that Quran itself was perfect. Several scholars have proven very influential in this discourse with Javed Ahmed Ghamdi being of paramount importance. Ghamdi, a notable Scholar, represents a new whole trend in Islamic studies which is the critical approach to traditional Islamic scholarship and the relook at many Islamic doctrines (Siddiqui, 2018). He adopted the

seven variants of the holy Quran as his main source on the basis of his overall critique of the fields where tradition varies from authenticity.

Javed Ahmad Ghamdi, who is originally from Pakistan was born in 1951 and over the years, due to his dedication to the study of Islam he gained fame as a leading scholar in the said field. Illiterate in traditional Islamic sciences, he slowly followed with a more critical approach to the holy texts and sensitive dogmas later. By setting up the Al-Mawrid Institute of his own with specialization in Islamic Research and Education (Siddiqui, 2018). The seven Quranic variants which Ghamdi takes up, indeed have the support of the Islamic texts because they were the result of his rigorous study. Furthermore, he is in a position to challenge what the orthodoxy grapples with and a big problem for such is their unquestioned acceptance. Ghamdi contends that the legendary record of Bukhari and Muslim regarding these variants, as handed down in Hadith literature, is lacking in the necessary supporting authorities and may as well present incorrect views of the original Quranic revelation (Ghamdi, Meezan). On the contrary, Ghamdi suggests examining the incidences of such variants that can be done through a systematic and a critical approach.

Ghamdi argues that contextual understanding of the Qur'anic text should be considered as a basic principle of interpretation, taking into account linguistic and historical factors. According to him, these seven variants should be counted as representing the diatessaron, or the four original Arabic phrases of the Quran or as the different dialects and speech manners during the revelation (Ghamdi, Meezan). In addition, he counter-argues that the persistence of these varieties in the way which is urged for by some exponents of the Hadith may hamper the appeal of the Qur'an to a broad public. This implies that a more abstract type of recitation from the Quran, which is linked to the grammar theories of Arabic language and the main objectives of Islamic jurisprudence, will be helpful for the today's Muslims (Siddiqui, 2018). The view that is taken on seven Quranic variants by Ghamdi has certainly roused much controversy within Islamic camps. This has intensified the quest for dismantling the flaws and the possible dire consequences of the traditional Islamic philosophy. Though some issues are still in discussion, these ideas are indeed essential to understanding the processes and techniques for transmitting the most prominent Islamic texts.

The purpose of the research article "Reevaluating Hadith Skepticism: Javed Ahmed Ghamdi's Analysis of the Seven Quranic Variants" aims to investigate one of the human faculties within the Graded Narrative (Hadith) criticism, which is the seven variants concerning the Quran. This article supposed to enlighten about the standpoint of Javed Ahmed Ghamdi on the newest trends and their impact on Islamic Studies. The prophet mentioned several similar versions that vary from each other and through a thorough reading of the Islamic texts and a revision of the traditional views, Ghamdi to some extent argues that these variants are diverse connected to the authenticity and importance of them. Ghamdi's theory and methods of applying Islamic texts are the brain of this article, and the goal of this article is to participate in the discussion of Islamic texts, with emphasis on the Hadith and Quranic subjects.

### Overview of Hadith Skepticism

Hadith skepticism, a subfield of Islamic scholarship, is the critical evaluation of the Hadith sources, their content and authenticity, beliefs and commandments of Muhammad (PBUH) the Prophet. The reason behind the emergence of this skepticism is a number of issues, including the foundations for their narrations as well as the eventual capacity of people to make fraud or weak narrations, and the systematic goal of Hadith critics. It bears on the traditional view that the Hadith literature is an association that posits Hadith as an infallible source of Islamic law and doctrine, it supports the interpretation that the Hadith authentication is a something that must be scrutinized (Brown, 2009). Skepticism of Hadiths has a long history that goes back to the earlier period in Islamic and persons like Ibn al-Rawandi and Ibn al-Mukkafa questioned their authenticity and their impact as a part of the Islamic jurisprudence. On the other hand it grew in popularity in the contemporary era with the sudden start of critical historical methods and the birth of scholars like Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida; these scholars were seeking to reconcile Islamic traditions with modernity and so were re-evaluating the corpus of Hadith.

The debates regarding historical context of the Hadith skepticism are not new which revolve around the credibility of the oral transmission, the compilation of the Hadith collections as well as the authority of the Hadith narrators. During the initial Islamic stage, the method of oral transmission was the most important one in maintaining and transmitting Hadiths. Consequently, the issue of authenticity became vital for the narrators to make sure their Hadith was correctly cited. This led to developments in the respective criteria for checking the trustworthiness of a Hadith chain and the reputation of the Hadith transmitters (Brown, 2009). Compiling the Hadith in the works of scholarly Imam Bukhari and Imam Muslim as a body of literature reinforced Hadith authority but at the same time challenged the selections and the exclusions of certain Hadiths. More controversies and disagreements regarding legal and theological interpretations of conflicting narrations that are in accordance with the Hadiths were also deemed by scholars as a valid reason for them to have second thoughts about the position and stand of Hadiths in Islamic jurisprudence (Robinson, 2003). Therefore, the debate over the reliability of Hadiths is characterized by the unceasing discourse and deliberations regarding the trueness of Allah's discourses, their manner of communication to future generations of scholars, which gives rise to Islamic scholarship in future centuries.

The lack of uncertainty of Hadith literature's authority is a result of several factors, including the credibility problems of Hadith transmission, which material led to disputes about originality and authenticity, and, eventually, fabrication or manipulation. About this skepticism there is the historical context of Hadith transmission, where the oral was the main relocation method, consequently, memory becomes fallible and thus the possibility of wrongful transmission in the transmission chains may occur (Brown, 2009). Likewise, the spread of weak or fabricated Hadiths hence casting a shadow on the authenticity of corpus, the body of Hadith tradition serves as another vital issue (Al-Azami, 2003). Critics also impute unevenness's and contradictions between Hadith collections and as well as the influence of political and in between, Islamic sectarian agendas on the making of selection and interpretation (Brown, 2009). On the other

hand, the development of modern critical methodologies have brought about scholars changing views in traditional approaches to the authentication and interpretation of the Hadith leading to critical thinking among some folks thus (Robinson 2003).

Hadith denial has a number of considerable effects as far as the traditional scholarship study and the orthodox Islamic practices are concerned. Scholarly, it questions the basis of the traditional usage of hadith as a main source of jurisprudence of Islamic law, and it leads to debates on whether or hadith should take a central role in the process of shaping the Islamic law. Scholars who doubt the authority of Hadiths normally stress upon a more critical technique of evaluating Hadiths, highlighting the need of considering every aspect from the context of the time and message it carries and keenly scrutinizing it from the historical perspective (Al-Azami, 1731). Furthermore, the different recitations of Quran are a matter of scientists' study stimulating the research and discussion within the Quranic Studies area and enriching the understanding of the Quran by its linguistic and textual implication.

Secondly, skepticism directed against the Hadith contributes to the changing perception of the Muslim community regarding using the Stems and elders. Although those who cast doubts on Hadiths may put Qur'an at the peak of their list of the authoritative sources of guidance, it still creates different opinions or the way they interpret this religion within Muslim communities (Brown, 2009). Not only that skepticism in Hadiths undermines the authority of the religious community; but dignitaries themselves and religious institutions that utilize Hadith literature as a guide and explanation of its teachings. Therefore, the Hadith denial promotes pluralization of viewpoints inside the Muslim community and enables the believers to actively think about and evaluate the Holy Scriptures what in the long run, determines the changing nature of Islamic literature and tradition.

### **The Narration of Seven Quranic Variants**

The practice of seven Quranic versions, Ahruf al-Saba'a, which is a translation of the Quran in several ways, was encouraged by Prophet Muhammad to allow the early Muslim community in reading and comprehending the Quran without any difficulty in communication variations or dialect differences. These variations are referred to as one of the Quranic miracles; the translation or trans-cultural versatility is supported by the miracle (Gillet, 2012). Regarding the seven Quranic variants, their value lies in the way they are helping interpret the Quranic text as a manifestation of its complexity and richness, and in a final consequence, the implications of these variants for Quranic interpretation and recitation.

Intellectually, the exploration of the seven Quranic prototypes sheds some light of the historical development of the Quran recitation and also the evolution of Arabic during Revelation. The oral portrayal of the Holy Quran in the past centuries, in my opinion, is not only indicative of the importance of the Quranic text, but it also reinforces the sincere and diligent efforts of Muslim scholars of the past, to confirm the accuracy and trustworthiness of the Holy Quran (Ibn Warraq, 2002). Additionally, the variants serve as a subject of scholarly inquiry, stimulating research and debate within the field of Quranic studies and contributing to a deeper understanding of the Quran's linguistic and textual nuances. The transmission and preservation

of the Quran have a rich historical background that dates back to the time of Prophet Muhammad and his companions. Initially, the Quran was transmitted orally, with the Prophet reciting verses to his followers, who memorized and recited them in prayers and gatherings. During the lifetime of the Prophet, the Quranic revelations were also written down on various materials, including parchment, bones, and palm leaves (Robinson, 2009). After the death of Prophet Muhammad, the Quranic text was compiled into a single manuscript during the caliphate of Abu Bakr, and later standardized during the caliphate of Uthman ibn Affan. Uthman's compilation ensured the uniformity of the Quranic text and facilitated its dissemination across the Muslim world (Robinson, 2009). Throughout Islamic history, scholars and scribes devoted themselves to the meticulous preservation and transmission of the Quran, employing rigorous methods of memorization, recitation, and textual criticism to safeguard its authenticity (Gilliot, 2012). Various schools of thought within Islamic scholarship have differing views on the acceptance and interpretation of the seven Quranic variants. Orthodox Sunni scholars along with the view of the Quranic variants being part of the divine revelation and of persistent language diversity are generally accepted (Gilliot, 2012). The Imams and Sunni scholars believe that the diversification of the Quranic text not distorting its intentions but rather by enriching it linguistically.

Nevertheless, some of Shia scholars and modernist thinkers who have been skeptical raised that Quranic variants have some difficulties illustrating the preservation of Quran of its exact restorative as it is a unity. Most Shia scholars don't ascribe to the Kharijites rejection of the variants. Some of them believe the term used by the raddiyah to characterize the kharijites was anthropomorphism while others interpret them metaphorically or allegorically and focus on the spiritual meanings of the texts (Ibn Warraq, 2002). Specifically, this makes it clear that the versions of the Quran that have been embraced today can be traced back to different theological perspectives and methodology among Islamic scholars and adding to the idea that Islam has a long-standing diverse interpretation among the Muslim population.

#### **Javed Ahmed Ghamdi's Response**

Javed Ahmed Ghamdi challenges the conventional version of the seven Quranic variants. He does not conform to their interpretation and analyzes language in the Islamic literature. In his critique, Ghamdi maintains that the conventional edition of Quranic context, which is being documented in Hadith texts, is not fully testable and presented no proof of its reliability. Traditional establishment may not be accurate at reflecting the original revelation. He asserts that variants must not be seen as alternative text versions, but rather exercises of the linguistic range and flexibility with which the early Arabic language accommodates the different as (local readings) and iqraat (modes of recitation) utilized at the time of revelation. What Ghamdi opposes is this approach of unyielding following of the rule that is recommended by those Hadith scholars that it might be obstructing the Quranic message absorption by any penetrating people. On the contrary, he advises a more linguistic and functional style of recitation rendering it a literal instrument of the broader objectives of Quranic principles. Contextual approach to Quranic text for close attention to meaning in Linguistic and historical factors is main lead of concurrent new style of interpretation. Ghamdi based his arguments on a detailed study of the Hadith and the



words of the Quran. He makes doubt in the Hadith narrations, in which the seven versions were transferred, and he believes that in latest interventions and intra-sectarian agendas, these could be biased. Besides the literary and historical proofs, he gives linguistic as well as historical proofs also to underline the fact that Arabic was linguistically diverse and Arabs had different dialects and type of speech at the time of revelation. Furthermore, the Quranic verses that may be indicated grant flexibility of Quranic reciting since they are clear and the dissimilarities among tongues are not barriers. He maintains that the message Quran contains span a large context, which goes beyond its speaking linguistic medium. It should not be a single interpretation criticized or limited to any stand of reading point.

Ghamdi's view on the seven alternative readings from the Quran have further deepened the existing debate in the Islamic community. While some thinkers applaud his efforts to reconsider received scholarly views and develop cognitive skills, others criticize his overtly tongue-in-cheek position and very low estimation of traditional scholarship. The popular Muslim view about Ghamdi's solutions are that they have a mixture of both support and criticism. Some are inclined to see the good in his argument as a way to bring modern language understandings and medieval interpretation in compliance with Islamic tradition, while for others his approach is some kind of threat to Hadith literature and traditional Islamic schools. The Ghamdi's work has interacted with numerous language and dialectic dynamics in the Islamic community exhibiting this through the process of revival of the Quran and the implications on containment and preservation of the same. The community is also divided into groups that uphold the traditional version and the other group that is in favor of modernity in Islamic thought.

### **Critique and Analysis**

Ghamdi's approach toward Hadith skepticism and his presentation of seven Quranic different versions, has some strength. Secondly, he takes a frontal stance towards the fixation on authorities and ancient texts by offering a different viewpoint and encouraging students to rethink archaic beliefs. Through this method, communication and enrichment is established and the Quran is appropriated in a more profound fashion. Moreover, Ghamdi's offering of linguistic and historical perspective is invaluable for understanding the process underlying the Quranic variants and describing the cultural and linguistic issues in medieval Arabia.

But one might identify some vulnerability spots of his opinions. He is thought to have cast doubts on the value of Hadith texts as if causing interruptions into the most trusted resources of Islamic tradition with no proper proof. Even though rejecting the validity of Hadiths is rightful, disregarding them completely might result in a no-sight of any knowledge about Muhammad's teachings community. On the other hand, Ghamdi centres his study on the language differences of the Quranic text. This may make some of the seven variants that are seen as authoritative by the prophet, lose their importance undermining the traditional felt of Quranic preservation.

Ghamdi's position can be paralleled with other scholarly views which question the accuracy of the Hadith accounts and the cast textual variants of the Quran. Some thinkers, like Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida, were also of the opinion that there should not be an extreme towards the way the Hadith is being treated while the Quran preserving policy was

stressed. Historically Muslims discuss that in all likelihood Hadiths may include miscommunication as well as fabrications which however have no authority on Quran (Brown, 2009). Among those who follow traditional values of the community, the Quranic variant from the different chains of transmission forms the base of religious practice along with the Hadith literature as ancient Islamic doctrine. To them it is understood that the accuracy of sources should be preserved and differing views that contradict the orthodox theory are rejected (Al-Azami, 2003).

Ghamdi's position on the seven Quranic variants is a highly crucial matter when it comes to theology and jurisprudence of Islam. He creates a new approach, which proposes an adaptation from a traditional physical act of Quran recitation and interpretation, thus challenging the traditional ideas of Islamic laws and theology. Different methods of teaching such as grammatical analysis and paying attention to contexts can lead to reinterpretation of Quran verses and legal statues, influencing how Islamic law is implemented in contemporary circumstances. But the thoughts and ideas also raise doubts about Islamic tradition authority and the main place of Hadith literature that lead to the everyday religious practices shaping. On the plus side his methodology calls for deep, critical thought centering on the Quran in the context of which he is trying to question the role and authoritativeness of classic sources of Islamic law and theology. However, this could create different interpretations and disputes in the entire Muslim nation.

### **Conclusion**

Ultimately the article addresses the problem of Hadith skepticism as Javed Ahmed Ghamdi confronts the seven Quranic variants. This serves to establish his critical perception of conventional literature in Islamic studies and disprove seven variants' tradition story, with a particular focus on the linguistic and historical context they are used in. The speech of Ghamdi refutes traditional conceptions of rituals. He uses Quranic recitation as an example of being more lenient in terms of recitation of the Quran. This fact adding to those questions to Hadith skepticism as well as to the Ghamdi blows up the conversations of Quranic preservation and they shed the light of its consequences on Islamic theology and jurisprudence. Such a perception of Ghamdi allows us to comprehend the principles of diversity in a more subtle and detailed manner, creating new ways of application of Islamic laws in the context of modern life. Future research may go deep into the historical backdrop of the Quranic variants, acceptability of the views of Ghamdi among the Muslims, and comparative work of some other scholars in the same field as the Islamic literature for the comparison without abating dialogue within Islamic research.

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