



THE SIGNIFICANCE OF «TAFSIRI HILOL» IN ADDRESSING THE PROBLEM OF ASKING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE ABOUT THE MEANINGS OF QUR'ANIC VERSES

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Abstract. *This paper investigates the scholarly and methodological problems that arise in the course of determining the meanings of the verses of the Noble Qur'an and of obtaining exegetical explanations by means of artificial-intelligence technologies, together with the significance, in removing those problems, of the work «Tafsiri Hilol» of Shaykh Muhammad Sodik Muhammad Yusuf and of the applications of that work developed for Android and iOS devices and for computers. Employing descriptive-analytical and comparative methods, the methods of Qur'anic studies and the rules of exegesis, the study examines the reliability of the information presented by artificial intelligence, the correct apprehension of the contextual content of the verses, and the conformity of exegetical explanations to scholarly sources. By analysing the commentaries upon the Qur'anic verses given in «Tafsiri Hilol», it further considers the possibilities of using, for the verification and evaluation of information obtained through artificial-intelligence tools, those verses in which the manner and the sources of acquiring knowledge, scholarly trustworthiness and the criteria of justice are set out. The results of the research do not reject contemporary artificial-intelligence programs absolutely; rather they disclose that observing the criteria of using such programs as instruments prevents a person from going astray, that instruments cannot take the place of the human factor, of the mufti and of the scholar, and that any question concerning either the text or the meaning of the verses of the Qur'an ought to be sought not from artificial-intelligence programs but from verified sources such as «Tafsiri Hilol».*

Keywords: *artificial intelligence, Noble Qur'an, Qur'anic exegesis, «Tafsiri Hilol», Shaykh Muhammad Sodik Muhammad Yusuf, Qur'anic studies, comparative analysis, contextual analysis, reliability of information.*

INTRODUCTION

In an age in which artificial intelligence has come to occupy a leading place in the global field of knowledge, in which its applications are entering every household, and in which the compass of its use embraces all spheres of life and almost every direction of human thought and activity, the phenomenon of using artificial intelligence

in religion, in the meanings of the verses of the Qur'an and in all the directions of the Islamic heritage has of late become widespread. As a result it is increasingly becoming an instrument relied upon for presenting a verse of the Noble Qur'an or a ḥadīth of the Prophet Muḥammad, may God bless him and grant him peace, for interpreting them, or for issuing a legal opinion upon religious questions (Abdullayev et al., 2016).

Formerly, when a mufti answered certain juridical questions, it was a natural scholarly circumstance for him to say «I do not know». The scholars of jurisprudence and the learned of religion have conveyed from generation to generation the celebrated saying related from the founder of the school, Imām Mālik b. Anas: «He who said 'I do not know' has issued a legal opinion». This saying expresses the caution of the scholar in refraining from issuing an opinion without knowledge; for the very saying of «I do not know» is in a certain sense itself a legal opinion, and it prevents haste in the issuing of a ruling.

The experience of the present day, by contrast, shows that artificial intelligence does not answer «I do not know». As a result ChatGPT and similar programs have become an instrument that recites the Qur'an, that knows the sciences of ḥadīth and of exegesis, that is used as a source of religious knowledge and that even fulfils the office of a mufti. The aim of this paper is to set out the errors to which such instruments give rise and to show, upon the basis of the verses commented upon in «Tafsiri Hilol», the scholarly criteria by which those errors may be prevented (Muhammad Sodik Muhammad Yusuf, 2022:9).

MAIN PART

Contemporary experience shows that these instruments commit a series of errors: they adduce the verses of the Qur'an in an imprecise form; they confuse two verses with one another or merge them; they depart from the text of the Qur'an established in accordance with the orthography of the codex of 'Uthmān; they interpret meanings erroneously; and they interpret verses without foundation. It likewise occurs that in setting out the exegesis of a verse they present some wise saying as a sound ḥadīth of the Prophet (Muratov et al., 2017).

If these circumstances are not forestalled, a serious problem arises. The problem is whether it is possible to trust artificial intelligence and to accept with equanimity the information of religious content that it gives. In a situation in which incorrect legal opinions and errors against the revealed law are being observed, the striving after rapid

information is growing stronger, particularly among the young people who make wide use of these applications. The greater part of them seek to obtain an answer without verifying the reliability of the information, without applying to the sections devoted to legal opinions, without reading a complete article upon the subject, without studying a book and without listening to the relevant recording.

Experiment has made known certain experiences of the users of artificial-intelligence programs. Among them are serious errors touching the Noble Qur'an, including the distortion of certain verses, their incorrect interpretation, the failure to observe the rules of pausing in the verses, and the failure to distinguish the sound from the weak among the reports of the Sunna and the ḥadīths; a number of evident errors have been recorded in the ChatGPT program in particular. One of the most serious of these is the fabrication of verses that do not in fact exist, their presentation within quotation marks and their attribution to a sūra or a verse number that does not exist. In certain cases words that they did not say and that are not recorded in their works are likewise attributed to the exegetes.

According to the explanation of specialists in artificial-intelligence programs, it is not correct to call such a circumstance an error or a deception, since the machine does not apprehend these concepts and has not been programmed to answer «I do not know»; on the contrary, it was created in order to return an answer to any question whatsoever, and its mechanism of operation, which rests upon probability, may lead to the production of incorrect information. The problem deepens still further when the human being is removed from the office of rational criticism and discrimination and the reins of thought are handed over to a machine that possesses neither consciousness nor responsibility.

Experiment shows that the technologies of artificial intelligence have certain limitations in apprehending the spiritual and the inward aspects of the questions of the revealed law, since such questions demand a profound apprehension of the text from the juridical point of view and the perception of its layers of meaning, of its consequences, of its purposes and of the wisdom within it. None of this can be attained by the automatic processing of simple information alone: for this there is needed the living heart, the deep perception and the intellect illumined by the light of revelation that are found in muftis and in the exegetes among the scholars (Muhammad Sadiq Muhammad Yusuf, 2024).

The principal problem lies not in the technology itself but in the information that it produces automatically. That information does not always contain in itself the spirit of rational reflection and the depth of the purposes of the revealed law; at times it is deprived of the necessary context, or it becomes the cause of a distortion of meaning through incorrect interpretation. For this reason the mufti, with his rational capacity and his conscientious responsibility, must participate at every stage. A number of verses in «Tafsiri Hilol» may serve as the solution of the problems set out above, and they serve likewise for the preparation of the programmatic guides that ought to be elaborated by the specialists of the field in order to forestall those problems.

God Most High says: «Do not follow that which you do not know. Indeed the hearing, the sight and the heart – all of these shall be questioned» (Qur’ān 17:36). Although at the time when the exegete was commenting upon these verses the instruments of artificial intelligence had not yet become widespread and had not entered into use, he commented as though apprehending that the verses of the Qur’an embrace also the circumstances that may arise in the future: «Islam calls for every matter to be conducted upon a scholarly foundation. It calls for standing aside from that which one does not know. ‘Do not follow that which you do not know.’ Only after a thing has been known clearly and precisely should it be believed and a judgment given concerning it. To give judgment by conjecture, upon trust in the word of another, or in reliance upon various indefinite indications, is not proper to the Muslims. To convey what one knows just as it is, is likewise a trust. Whatever word the ear hears, it must convey precisely without betraying it. If the eye sees a thing, it must give clear information about the very thing it has seen and known, without betraying it. Likewise, whatever the heart perceives, it must convey that thing with precision. Every thing that these members have known and perceived is reckoned a scholarly trust, and not to betray a trust is a great responsibility. The eye, the ear and the heart are all answerable for every thing: if not in this world, then assuredly in the next. That responsibility in the hereafter in particular has urged the Muslims never to betray the scholarly trust, and they have always given correct information about what they knew. Verses resembling this noble verse, and the ḥadīths of our Prophet, may God bless him and grant him peace, have constantly called them to give correct information without betraying the scholarly trust. In one of his ḥadīths our Prophet, may God bless him and grant him peace, said: ‘Beware of conjecture, for conjecture is the most false of speech’» (Muhammad Sadiq Muhammad Yusuf, 2025:III/411-412).

From the verse adduced above and from its exegesis it became clearly known that there is a responsibility in putting questions to artificial-intelligence programs rather than to the scholars and in accepting blindly the information that these programs present, and that this is evaluated as a betrayal of the scholarly trust.

The second verse is the saying of God Most High: «If you do not know, ask the people of remembrance» (Qur'ān 16:43). The exegesis of this verse likewise presents the principal solution of the very problem studied in this paper: «The people of remembrance are the people of the divine books; ask them. They will tell you whether the prophets were men, or angels, or something else. Although in this place the people of remembrance – the people of recollection and of knowledge – are the people of the former divine books, it is true that every other question has its own people of remembrance. Accordingly the saying of God Most High in this noble verse, 'If you do not know, ask the people of remembrance', has remained a general rule. If a Muslim does not know something, he must learn it from one who knows it, from the people of remembrance of that field. Things other than those pertaining to creed and to religion must be learned even if from one who is not of the religion» (Muhammad Sadiq Muhammad Yusuf, 2025:III/333-334).

The third is the saying of God Most High: «Say: my Lord has forbidden only indecencies, whether open or secret, and sin, and transgression without right, and that you associate with God that for which He has sent down no authority, and that you say concerning God that which you do not know» (Qur'ān 7:33). In the exegesis of this verse also the exegete said of the words «that you say concerning God that which you do not know»: «In questions relating to the essence of God and to divinity it is permissible to form a judgment only upon the basis of true knowledge. To give a ruling by supposition, by conjecture or in imitation of another is in no way possible» (Muhammad Sadiq Muhammad Yusuf, 2025:II/306-307). From this verse and from its exegesis it is likewise evident that the interpretation of the Qur'an demands strict conditions: a perfect knowledge of the Arabic language, of the causes of the sending down of the verses, of the science of the abrogating and the abrogated, of the science of the Makkan and Madinan verses and of a series of other Qur'anic sciences, of the conditions that must be found in the exegete, of the rules of exegesis and of the ḥadīths of the Prophet, may God bless him and grant him peace. These conditions lie outside the possibilities of algorithms that collect texts by a statistical method and that may

admit of errors of spelling, of confusion or of the issuing of erroneous legal opinions (al-Suyūṭī, 2019:I-II).

The fourth is the saying of God Most High: «You have been given but little knowledge» (Qur'ān 17:85). Commenting upon this verse the exegete said: «The pride that the servant takes even in that little knowledge fills the world. In reality he ought to give thanks to God, who made known to him the things that his perception reaches and that bring him benefit, and to refer the remainder to God. Everything in the human being is limited; among other things his intellect and his perception are bounded. He ought to occupy himself with the matters that lie within the compass of his intellect and his perception, and not to rack his brains in vain concerning the things that lie beyond it» (Muhammad Sodiq Muhammad Yusuf, 2025:III/442). The thought adduced in this verse and in its exegesis pertains precisely to artificial intelligence as well, as may be understood yet more clearly through the exegesis of another verse.

The fifth is the saying of God Most High: «God is the Creator of every thing, and He is Guardian over every thing» (Qur'ān 39:62). The exegete commented upon the verse thus: «Whatever thing exists in the world, God Most High alone created all of it. There is no creator other than He. For this reason all the affairs of the world, the affairs of the hereafter among them, are in His disposal alone. 'And He is Guardian over every thing': the governance of every thing is performed by Him alone, and this too is a clear proof of the divine oneness» (Muhammad Sodiq Muhammad Yusuf, 2025:V/227). Hence the instruments and all the means created by the hand of man are likewise created by man only when God says «Be». Artificial intelligence is a product created by the hand of man, which gathers the information entered into it from books and from websites. This verse and its exegesis call for God to be made the guardian in every work, that is to say for the criteria that He has established to be observed; and among these is the warning against relying upon artificial intelligence in writing the verses of the Qur'an or in interpreting them independently, without the supervision of qualified scholars (al-Ṭabarī, 1988; al-Qurṭubī, 1987).

It is known that the principal reasons for which users turn to artificial intelligence are the saving of time, the more rapid attainment of a result, and the search for the meanings and the exegesis of the verses of the Qur'an. From this point of view the existence of a search service in the «Tafsiri Hilol» application for iOS and Android devices and in the program developed for computers, the rapid finding of the sūras and

the verses by means of the search key, and the possibility of taking a quotation, show that it is not merely able to take the place of artificial intelligence, but is in several respects a preferable and a reliable source (Muhammad Sodiq Muhammad Yusuf, 2023).

CONCLUSION

The conclusion is that the time has come to elaborate, in the matter of artificial intelligence, conceptual views that draw their nourishment from the system of Islamic values and that serve the purposes of the revealed law. Such a view must not be limited to the merely passive consumption of any technology whatsoever. It demands efforts upon many levels: as a community that bears upon the earth the message that was revealed, it is obligatory to participate actively in shaping the future of technology and not merely to be a spectator.

In a complex age in which technology is developing with great rapidity, the Noble Qur'an remains an unchanging and an everlasting criterion. Illuminating our paths with its light and relying upon its guidance, it is necessary to strive to build a balanced future in which knowledge and faith, technology and values, intellect and spirit are harmoniously proportioned, which serves the interests of the human being and which exalts his dignity. From this point of view the research offers the following recommendations: to elaborate programs that teach the ethics of the correct and harmless use of contemporary artificial-intelligence programs in the institutions of education, and to form this skill in the young generation from the primary classes onward, thereby developing their human thinking and taking measures to produce an immunity that keeps human consciousness from defect, which is a task standing before the representatives both of the religious and of the technical fields; to increase the number and the quality of the specialized applications of other verified and reliable works of exegesis, as of the work «Tafsiri Hilol», and thereby to reduce people's recourse to artificial intelligence; and to widen the researches upon «Tafsiri Hilol» and upon other reliable and verified works of exegesis, thereby leaving no need for such instruments as the artificial-intelligence programs (Muhammad Sodiq Muhammad Yusuf, 2022:9).

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