The Interpretation of the *Hadith* on the Characteristics of Women and Its Implications for Islamic Law

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**Abstract:** This study discusses an analysis of the *hadith* about the characteristics of women and its implications for Islamic law. This article uses a study of the *sanad* (chain) and *matan* (wording or contents) of a *hadith*. It uses the theory of *ma'ani* *hadith* or science that discusses the meanings of a *hadith*, which allows the emergence of a textual and contextual understanding of a *hadith*. The understanding of a *hadith* is analyzed from the Islamic law perspective. This study concludes that the *sanad* (chain) and *matan* (wording or contents) of this *hadith* are authentic. The *Sanad* (chain) is authentic because it continues to the Messenger of Allah, the narrators are fair, *dhhabit* and there is no *zyudz* or *illat* found. Nevertheless, this *hadith* should be understood contextually or symbolically-metaphorically, although there are scholars who understand it textually or literally. The content of the *hadith* teaches humans that when dealing with women, they should be careful and treat them wisely because their character and nature are like crooked ribs. They should neither be treated harshly because it will break, nor left unnoticed because it will make them go astray. However, the *hadith* cannot be understood textually because it leads to women subordination; the *hadith* should be interpreted contextually instead, and by so doing women will be treated equally and fairly. Therefore, it is important to understand this *hadith* contextually to allow a fair treatment for women and with dignity because it will affect the interpretation of the Islamic law and Islamic teachings in general are maintained.

**Keywords:** Understanding of The Hadith, Women Characteristics, Textual and Contextual Understanding, Islamic Law

Kata Kunci: Pemahaman Hadis, Karakteristik Perempuan, Tekstual, Kontekstual, dan Hukum Islam

Introduction
There are particular strategies and science to understanding of a hadith, known as the science of ma’anil hadith, which is the science on the understanding meanings of a certain hadith. Science to understand the meaning of this hadith is important because the wording of a hadith contains various meaning: the Jawami al-kalim which refers to a short statement but yet contains multiple meanings, which are sometimes in the form of tamsil (imagery), ramzi (symbolic language), dialogue (conversational language), qiyasi (analogy or expression). This all will have implications for the understanding of textual and contextual of a hadith that leads to the understanding of the hadith, which is universal, temporal and local.\textsuperscript{1}

\textsuperscript{1}M. Syuhudi Ismail, Hadis Nabi yang Tekstual dan Kontekstual: Telaah Ma’anil al-

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According to Muhammad al-Ghazali, in understanding a hadith one must meet certain requirements and criteria: the wording of content of the hadith must be in accordance with the Qur’an, the content of the hadith must be in accordance with other authentic hadith, the hadith must be in accordance with historical facts, and the content of a hadith must be in accordance with scientific truth. Ahmad al-Adlabi and M. Shuhudi Ismail mentioned the rules of understanding a hadith: The hadith should not be in conflict with the instructions of the Qur’an; it should not be in conflict with rational truth, it should not be in conflict with sensory reality, it should not be in conflict with historical facts, and it should not be in conflict with the sunnatullah of the nature and humans.

It is indeed important to have a better understanding of the meaning of a hadith, since dated back to the early Islamic history, there were some attempts made to falsify a certain hadith. Besides, there were multiple meanings for a certain narration and some errors made in the narration of a hadith. In addition, as the there are thousands of hadith available, the ability to understand the real meaning of a certain narration becomes significant. There is also a possibility that certain hadith are more accurately understood textually, while others are better understood contextually. A hadith can be understood textually if it is relevant with its asbab al-wurud, and it should be understood textually if the narration required so. Likewise, a hadith should be understood contextually if it was required to do so by its specific contents.

In line with this argument, Ali Mustafa Yaqub agreed on the importance of understanding the hadith textually and contextually. According to Ali Mustafa Yaqub, there are times when a textual understanding is required. If a hadith happened to be understood contextually, it should be interpreted in refer to the interpretation of the the Qur’an and Sunnah through examining several factors; its (asbab al-wurud),


4Salahuddin Ibnu Ahmad al-Adlabi, Metodologi Kritik..., p. 25, 210-254.

5M. Syuhudi Ismail, Hadis Nabi yang Tekstual dan Kontekstual... p. 7.

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temporal locality (al-makan wa az-zaman), aspects of causality (illah al-kalam), and sociocultural understanding within the (taqlid) society.⁶

There are also moderate and flexible understanding of the a hadith on women as promoted by Muhammad al-Ghazali, Abou El-Fadhl and Syuhudi Ismail. Al-Ghazali explained that in addition to being a housewife, women are also allowed to carry out activities outside their home, such as going to the mosque, women’s testimonies in criminal cases and women are allowed to become judges.⁷ Abou El-Fahdl emphasized on the need for a moderate approach in understanding a hadith because the basic principles of Islamic law are justice and equality between women and men. Therefore, if the hadith is understood correctly, there will be no hadith whatsoever that discredits women.⁸

Therefore, it is indeed important to refer to an appropriate approach in understanding the true meaning of a hadith. Shuhudi Ismail has reiterated that it is important for someone to understand a hadith both textually and contextually. This suggests that a certain appropriate strategy is needed to interpret the hadith, especially those discuss about women and their position within the Islamic community. The basic tenet of using a certain approach in understanding the hadith is not to demean the hadith itself; it is rather as a central strategy to elevate the status of the hadith. For example, there is a hadith, which seems to be literally contradictory, the true message in fact suggests otherwise when understood correctly. For that reason, it is indeed a need to refer to the science of mukhtalif al-hadis (the science to understand of seemingly contradictory prophetic traditions) or the al-jam’u wa al-taufiq method, which is mostly practiced by Imam Shafii, Imam al-Sayuthi, Ibn Qutahibah and other scholars.⁹

This kind of strategy used to understand the true message of the hadith is referred to as a scientific or philosophical approach to the understanding of a hadith. This is so, since the attempt to understand a certain hadith was conducted by exploring and using other branches of


⁷Muhammad al-Ghazali, Sunnah Nabi., p. 56-91.


sciences to reveal the wisdom and the meaning of the Prophet Muhammad’s message in His hadith. Sciences such as history, law, psychology, sociology, anthropology, politics and other sciences are of important in the attempt to understand the meaning of a hadith. In fact, in the present times, there is a branch of knowledge, known as the living hadith approach that requires social sciences such as sociology and anthropology in the attempt to understand the true message of a hadith.

In line with this particular perspective, Abou El-Fadhl and Fudhaili suggested that there was no a single hadith found to show inferiority position of women. The mispositioning of women is frequently the result of fault interpretation of a certain hadith. Islam in fact does not recognize women to be inferior creature whose intelligence was not high, unlucky and not good personal.10

Tanggareng emphasizes the need for a contextual approach in understanding a hadith. This contextual understanding is different from that of textual which tends to be literal. In fact, contexts will provide a more flexible and broad insights on certain issues. For example, it is related to women’s leadership which is textually not allowed but contextually it is not a problem for a woman to take a leadership position.11

Meanwhile, Supardin examines the chain (sanad) and the contents (matan) of a hadith using historical and contemporary approaches to understand the position of women. He concluded that women and men are equal and that there is a partnership in all aspects in spite of their natural differences at certain times.12

This work emphasizes on the study of sanad (chain) and the matan (contents) of a certain hadith, and in this particular work the attempt to study the contents (matan) of a hadith is reached through the ma'anil hadith, which is the science that examines the meaning of a hadith or perspectives of a narration, which relates to the Islamic law. This strategy of understanding the hadith results in the emergence of a textual and contextual approach to understanding a hadith. This way of understanding the hadith is then used to reveal the characteristics of women as portrayed in the hadith and their implications for Islamic law.

**Study of the Hadith about the Characteristics of Women**


1. *Takhrij al-Hadith*

The first step in conducting research on a *hadith* is through the use of *takhrij al-hadith* strategy. Etymologically *takhrij* can be interpreted as; 1) *al-istimbath*; something to produce), 2) *al-tadrib*; trained or getting used to and 3) *al-tawjih*; things to confront.¹³

Etymologically the meaning of *takhrij* according to the *hadith* scholars is multiple. However, the meaning used for the purpose of researching a *hadith* is the exploration or the search for *hadith* in the original source of references of the *hadith*, in which all *hadith* are still written in full *matan* (contents) and *sanad* (chain) of the a particular *hadith*.¹⁴

Furthermore, the *hadith* studied in this paper is the *matan hadith* which reads:

إن المرأة كالضلع...

If one uses the *takhrij bi al-fadz* method by referring to the *hadith* dictionary *al-mu'jam al-mufakhras li al-fadz al-hadith al-nabawi*, through tracing the word ¹⁵الضلع, the data is strengthened through showing the original *matan* (content) by referring to *al-mausu’ah al-athraf* ¹⁶, the work of al-Said bin Basumi dan al-*jami’ al-shagir* ¹⁷ the work of al-Suyuthi.

The finding of the research suggests the following data:

   and the book of Anbiya: 64 = 1 history
2. Muslim: the book of al-Rida No. 65 = 4 history
3. Turmidhi: the book of Thalaq No. 12 = 1 history
4. Darimy: the book of Marriage No. 45 = 2 history
5. Baihaqi: No. chapter VII, No *hadith* 290 = 2 narrations
6. Ahmad: Juz II, p. 438, 449, 530 and Juz VI: p. 5 = 4 history

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¹⁴M. Syuhudi Ismail, *Kaidah Keshahihan...*, p. 85-86,


Here the author will explain some contents of the hadith from all the existing narrators:

a). Narrated by Bukhari

حدثنا أبو كريب وموسى بن حزام قطعا: حدثنا حسين بن علي، عن زائدة، عن ميسرة الأشجعي، عن أبي حازم، عن أبي هريرة رضي الله عنه قال:

قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: استوصوا بالنساء فإن المرأة خلقت من ضلع، وإن أعوج شيء في الضلع أعلاه، فإن ذهبت تقيمها كسدرتها، وإن تركتها لم يزل أعوج، فاستوصوا بالنساء.

b). Narrated by Muslim

حدثنا أبو عبد الله محمد بن إسماعيل بن بدرزاب الحسني، عن ابن وهب، عن ابن شهاب، عن حديثي ابن المسبب عن أبي هريرة، قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: إن المرأة كالضلع، إذ ذهبت تقيمها كسدرتها، وإن تركتها لم يزل أعوج، فاستوصوا بالنساء.

c). Narrated by Turmidzi

حدثنا عمو النافق وابن أبي عمر، (واللفظ لابن أبي عمر) قالا: حدثنا سفيان عن أبي الزناد، عن الأعرج، عن أبي هريرة، قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: إن المرأة خلقت من ضلع، لن تستقيم لك على طريقة، فإن استمتعت بها واستمتعت بها، وفيها عوج. وكسروا طلاقها.

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حثّثنا عبد الله بن أبي زياد. حثّثنا يعقوب بن إبراهيم عن ابن سعد. حثّثنا ابن أخي ابن شهاب عن
عمه، عن سعيد بن المسيب، عن أبي هريرة قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم "إنّ المرأة
كالضلع إن ذهبت تقيمتها كسرتها. وإن تركتها استمتعت بها على عوج."

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d). Narrated by Ahmad bin Hanbal

حدثنا عبد الله حدثني أبي ثنا محمد بن جعفر ثنا عون قال وحدثني رجل قال سمعت سمرة يخطب على من
بصرة وهو يقول سمعت رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم يقول: إن المرأة خلقت من ضلع وأنك إن ترد
إقامة الضلع تكسرها فدارها تعش بها.

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حدثنا عبد الله حدثني أبي ثنا يزيد قال أنا محمد بن إسحاق عن أبي الزناد عن الأعرج عن أبي هريرة
قال قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: لا تستقيم لك المرأة على خليقة واحدة إنها هي كالضلع إن
تقمها تكسرها وإن تركتها تستمتع بها وفيها عوج.

2. The scheme of the chain

The next step used in the understanding of the hadith is *i'tibar al-sanad* 22 or *sanad* (chain) scheme. The *sanad* is very important in the understanding of the *hadith* because it becomes a barometer of the authenticity of a certain *hadith*. This is so because the level of validity and accuracy of a *hadith* refers to the continuation of the *sanad* (chain) of the *hadith*.23

In addition, *i'tibar sanad* serves to obtain clarity about the possibility of witnesses or support (corroboration) who is located at the first level, namely *thabaqat* of companions, while *mutabi’* is a kind of support located at the level below prophet’s companions.24

The following explanation describes the scheme of the *sanad* allowing one to see if the witnesses and *mutabi* exist.

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Based on the *hadith* scheme contained from the narration of Ahmad bin Hanbal, it shows that there were witnesses and *mutabi’*, in which Abu Hurairah became the witness or supporter (corroborators) for Abu Zar al-Ghiffari, Aisyah and Sammarah, meaning that there were 4 companions narrated this *thabaqat*.

While in the case of *mutabi’*, Al-A'raj become *mutabi’* (supporters at the level after the companions) for Abu Yahdits and also Muhammad bin Ishaq is a *mutabi’* for Raqaaq.

3. The study of the hadith *Sanad*
   a. Abu Hurairah (w. 59 H)
The full name of Abu Hurairah is Abu Hurairah al-Dausiy al-Yamani. He is the companion of the Prophet Muhammad.25 Among his teachers were the Prophet Muhammad, Abu Bakr, Umar, al-Fadhil bin Abbas bin Muttalib, Ubay bin Ka'ab, Usamah bin Riyad, Aisyah, Nudrah and Ka'ab bin Akbar. While some of his students were: Ibn Abbas, Ibn Umar, Anas bin Jabir, Marwan bin Hakam, Said bin Musayyab, Sulaiman al-Aqdar, Qais bin Abi Hazm, Malik bin Abi Umar, Malik bin Amar, Abu Idris al-Haulani and al- A'raj.26

Abu Hurairah was one of the companions of the Prophet Muhammad PbuH. He narrated the hadith of the Prophet as many as 5347. He narrated the highest number of the hadith. He was an expert in jurisprudence, mujtahid and even prayed for by the Prophet Muhammad for him to always memorize the hadiths received from the prophet.27

Although there have been criticisms of his personal credibility, he was still considered as the companions who have narrated the hadith the most, and in fact various sources suggest that Abu Hurairah was a person who spent his time exploring, learning and conveying the hadith. After all, when it is believed that all companions are fair; kullu sahabah udul (every companion is fair), then he must be a just person as he was one of the prominent companions of the prophet.

In addition, the other criticism suggests that Abu Hurairah did not have a shahifah or a book of the hadith. However, this criticism was denied by M. Mustafa Azami citing the narration of Basyir bin Nahik suggesting that Abu Hurairah produced his book of the hadith. This concluded that it was very possible that Abu Hurairah wrote the book of the hadith at a later time, and then kept it away.28

Therefore, it is difficult to deny the extent Abu Hurairah has engaged himself with the activities that explore and study the hadith-and thus he must maintain the relationship (ittisal al-sanad) between the Prophet Muhammad SAW and himself, and thus it is difficult to deny the closeness of Abu Hurairah to the prophet, and thus he would be able to narrate from the Prophet, and in his narration, he oftentimes uses the symbol tahammul qala (قال) using the al-qiraah method.

b. Al-A’raj (w. 110 H)

27 Hasbi Ash-Shiddieqy, Sejarah dan Pengantar..., p. 53.
28 M. Mustafa Azami, Hadis Nabawi, p. 137-140.

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Al-A’raj’s full name is Abu Abdurrahman bin Hurmuz al-A’raj. Abu Dawud al-Madani, Maula Rabiah bin Haris bin Abdul Muttalib. Among his teachers were Abu Hurairah, Abdullah bin Malik bin Habibah, Ibn Abbas, Muawiyah bin Abi Sufyan, Abu Salamah bin Abdul Rahman, Ubaiddillah bin Abu Rafi’. While his students were Abu al-Zinad, Zaid bin Aslam, Sahih bin Kisan, al-Zuhry, Ayyub, Ja’far bin Rab’ah, Zaid bin Ibrahim, Abdullah bin Fadhil and Ubaiddillah bin Abi Ja’far.29

There are some opinions of ulama about him: 1) Ibn Zaid said that he was a tsiqah and had narrated many hadiths; 2) al-Muqdani admits that Dawud and al-A’raj is tsiqah; 3) al-Ajaly: praise him that he is tsiqah; 4) Abu Zur’ah bin Haris also states that he is tsiqah and 5) Abu Uyainah: says that his knowledge is deep and he is tsaduq, he narrates many hadith from Abu Hurairah.30

It then shows that there is not a single scholar who denounces or plunders Al-A’raj’s personal credibility, in which all of them say he is fair and tsiqah. He received a hadith from Abu Hurairah by using the symbol tahammul (عن).

So thus, between al-A’raj and Abu Hurairah there is a continuation of the sanad (ittisal al-sanad) and it is not interrupted or the history is marfu’.

c. Abu al-Zinad (W. 131 H)

Abu al-Zinad’s full name is Abdullah bin Zakwan al-Quraish: Abu Abdurrahman al-Qurrasy: Abu Abdurrahman al-Madani, al-Ma’sif, Abu al-Zinad, Maula Ramlah. Among his teachers were Anas, Aisyah bint Aaid, Abu Umammah bin Sahlah, Said bin Musayyab, Abu Salamah bin Abdurrahman, Abani bin Usman, and Al-A’raj. His students; Ibn Umar, Umar bin Abi Salamah, Abu Qasim, Salih bin Qisan, al-A’masy, Ubaidad bin Umar, Mailk bin Anas and Muhammad bin Ishaq.31

Here are some views of scholars about him, 1) Abdullah bin Ahmad states that he is tsiqah, 2) Abu Zur’ah and Al-Dimasyqi say he is tsiqah; 3) Ibn Madani stated that ‘I did not find in Medina, after the tabi’in the most pious person besides himself”; 4) Al-Ajaly states that he is a tsiqah tabi’in; 5) Abu Hatim states that he is tsiqah; 6) Al-Bukhari states that the most

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29 Ahmad bin Hajar al-Asqallani, Tahzib al-Tahzib, Juz VI, p. 257.
30 Ahmad bin Hajar al-Asqallani, Tahzib al-Tahzib, Juz VI, p. 257.
authentic *sanad* is Abu Al-Zinad, Al-A’raz and Abu Hurairah; and 7) Ibn Said and Razad stated that he is *tsiqah*.32

This information suggests that that Abu al-Zinad is an undoubtable narrator. There is not a single *hadith* scholar denounced Abu al-Zinad, all *hadith* critics considered him *tsiqah* or pious.

Thus, the chain between Abu al-Zinad and al-A’raj is continuous because Abu al-Zinad is a student of al-A’raj. He narrated the *hadith* from his teacher using the symbol *tahammul* by using the symbol of ‘an (عن).

d. Muhammad bin Ishaq (W. 150 H)

His full name is Muhammad bin Ishaq bin Yasar bin Khayar, Kusfan al-Madani, Abu Bakr, Abdullah al-Muttalib. His teachers were among others: Abu al-Zinad. Ummayah Abdurrahman, Musa, al-A'raj, Ubaidillah bin Abdullah bin Ummar, Ma'bad bin Ka'ab bin Malik, Muhammad bin Ibrahim, Ashim bin Umar bin Qatada. Among of his students are; Yahya bin Said al-Anshary, Yazid bin Abi Habib, Yazid bin Harun, Jarir bin Harun Abdullah bin Said bin Abi Thiad, Ibrahim bin Said al-Hamadany.33

Scholars all have positive views on him, for example 1) Ibn Main argued that he is *tsiqah*; 2) Ibn Shihab also suggested that he is an intelligent person; 3) Abu Muawiyah stated that Ibn Ishaq is a *hafidz*. 4) Ibrahim bin said also mentioned that he was a resident of Mecca who had many *hadiths* narrated in his day; 5) Abu Zur’ah al-Dimasqhi mentioned that Ibn Ishaq was a great scholar. All the hadith scholars believed that he was a good person.34

Almost all *hadith* critics judge Muhammad bin Ishaq as *tsiqah* and intelligent, and not a single scholar considers him to be flawed. Thus the path of the chain between Muhammad bin Ishaq and Abu al-Zinad is continuous in which he narrated the *hadith* using the symbol of *tahammul* ‘an (عن).

e. Yazid bin Harun (w. 206 H)

His full name is Yazid bin Harun bin Zadiy, Abu Khalid bin al-Wasith. Among his teachers were Sulaiman al-Taimiy, Humaid al-Tanul, Ahsim al-Ahwal, Ismail bin Abi Khalid, Abi Malik al-Asyajay, Yahya bin Said al-Ansahary, Muhammad bin Ishaq and Sard al-Jaririy. Some of his students were Baqiyah bin al-Walid, Adam bin Abi Isya, Ahmad bin Hanbal, Hay bin Rahwaih, Yahya bin Mu'ain, Ali bin al-Madani..35

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All scholars have positive views on him: 1) Abu Talib ibn Ahmad stated that he is a person whose ability to memorize hadith was remarkable, he memorized many hadith including many of authentic hadiths; 2) Ibn al-Nawawì also mentioned that he was tsiqah; 3) Ibn Main also stated that he was tsiqah; 4) Al-Hayb: states that he is tsiqah, and it was recorded in the hadith; 5) Muhammad bin Qadamah al-Jauhaniy stated that he memorized 5200 hadith. 6) Ibn Said stated that he is tsiqah and has a strong memorization of the hadiths.36

Scholars in the field of hadith stated that Yazid bin Harun was a tsiqah and tsbut (firm stance), and that he has no reproach or jarh, and by contrast, the hadith scholars considered him as ta’dil.

f. Ahmad bin Hanbal (w. 241 H/855 M)

Ahmad bin Hanbal’s full name is Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Hambal bin Hallal bin Asad al-Syaibanì or Abd. Allah al-Marwariy and al-Baghdadi were born in Baghdad. His teachers were Al-Shafi’i Sofyan bin Uyainah, Jarir bin Abd. Hamid, Basyar bin Abdullah Hamid, Ismail bin Asyiah, Yahya bin Sari al-Qatthan, Abd. Jamal bin Thalalisd, Abdullah al-Munnir, Abd. Razaq, Abu Bakr bin Ayyas including Yazid bin Harun and many others. His students were Bukhary, Muslim, Abu Dawud, Aswad bin Amir Syahdan, Ibn Mahdi, Abu Yazid bin Harun, Quthaibah, Dawud bin Umar, Ali al-Madani, Husayn bin Mansur and his son Abdullah bin Ahmad.37

The ulama have a positive views on him, such as 1) Ibn al-Madani stated that there is no one whose memorization skill is more powerful than Ahmad; 2) Quthaibah stated that Ahmad was the Imam; 3) Al-Ajali stated that he is tsiqah, tsbut in hadith, expert on hadith and noble history; 4) Al-Shafi’i stated that “I came out of Baghdad and I did not leave anyone who was more faqih”, zuhud and wara’ and the most intelligent than Ahmad bin Hambal; 5) Abdullah al-Hurairah suggested that Ahmad bin Hambal was the most pious of his time; 6) Abu Ubaiyah stated that no one can match his intelligence in the Islamic teaching; 7) Yahya bin Adam stated that Ahmad is our Imam; 8) Abu Tsur stated that Ahmad is our teacher and imam as well; 9) Abu al-Zakas stated that “I do not see anyone more eloquent and more sane than Ahmad”.38

Ahmad bin Hanbal was given the title of Amir al-Mukminin fi al-hadis, a title that is the highest in hadith, not a hadith scholars have

37 Ahmad bin Hajar al-Asqallani, Tahzib al-Tahzib..., Juz I, p. 66.
38 Ahmad bin Hajar al-Asqallani, Tahzib al-Tahzib..., Juz I, p. 66.
denounced Ahmad bin Hanbal had defects and reproaches. On the other hand, Ahmad is considered ta’dil and has a very high and noble capacity and credibility.

In addition, he authored the hadith book al-Musnad and founded a school of jurisprudence, the Hanbali school of thought which is developing in the Middle East, especially in Saudi Arabia in the current context. Thus, between Ahmad bin Hanbal and Yazid bin Harun the chain continues. He narrated his hadith using the symbol tahammul حداثنا.

Thus, when conducting a study on the sanad or the chain (naqd al-sanad), there are several rules for the authenticity of the sanad that must be met. In order to have the authentic sanad, some requirement should be made: 1) the chain is continued, ittisal, 2) fair; 3) dhabith, 4) not syadz and 5) not having illat.39

After conducting a thorough examination of all existing narrators, through the chain of Ahmad bin Hanbal, Yazid bin Harun, Muhammad bin Ishaq, Abu Yazid, al-A’raj and Abu Hurairah. None of these narrators, from the first thabaqat to the final ones were considered weak or defective and illat. The scholars viewed them to be tsiqah, just and dhabit and the most important thing was that the chain (sanad) continued up to the Messenger of Allah.

Since the requirements for the quality of a hadith were fulfilled, the hadith under the narration of Ahmad bin Hanbal is authentic. There were other narrators strengthened the authenticity of the hadith, such as Bukhari, Muslim, Turmidhi, Darimi and Baihaqi.

For this reason, it was most likely that the hadith from Ahmad was authentic. In fact, Al-Suyuthi in the book al-jami ‘al-Shagir considers it authentic.40 Meanwhile, Turmidhi in his book viewed it as hasan sahih, in which the chain of the hadith was trustworthy.41

**Hadith on the Characteristics of Women and Their Influence on Islamic Law**

M. Syhudi Ismail suggested three methodological steps of the hadith research activities: first, examining matan (content) by looking at the quality of the sanad; second, examining multiple compositions of the matan consisting of similar meaning and third, examining the content of the the hadith.42

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On the other hand, one of the objectives of the examination of the matan of the hadith is the possibility of having ziyadah. The Ziyadah literally means an addition, while in the terminology, it means that the addition of lafadz or sentence (statement) in the matan or content of a hadith. The addition was narrated by another narrator, but it is not clearly reported.\(^{43}\) Likewise, idraj, which means insertion of a certain matan into a certain hadith indicating that the matan was originally from the prophet. This is so since there have been insufficient explanation of the matan as narrated by individual narrators.\(^{44}\)

The examined Hadith is in the following:

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\text{my examination of the hadith reveals that the hadith was narrated through the understanding of its meaning, (riwayat bi al-makna). There are 6 mukharrij and about 14 narrations. Literally, there are two words used in the hadith,} \\
\text{المرأة ان كالضلع and} \\
\text{المرأة خلقت من ضلع} \\
\text{The first word means that “women are like a rib” while the second word suggesting that “women were created from a rib”. The first expression was narrated by Ahmad, Darimi, Bukhari, Turmidhi, and Muslim, while the second expression is found in all the narrations of Baihaqy, Muslim, and Ahmad. Although there are some contextual differences, purpose and meaning of the hadith are similar.} \\
\text{Of all the matan, Muslim and Baihaqi’s narrations contain a ziyadah, which is the word:} \\
\text{فإذا شهد أمرًا فليكمل بخير أو} \\
\text{ليسكت واستوصوا بالنساء} \\
\text{Although these are ziyadah, they do not change any meaning, they strengthen the meaning and the message of the hadith instead, since the hadith was narrated by the tsiqah narrators, and thus the ziyadah is accepted.}^{45}
\]

While idraj was found in Ahmad’s narration, such as in the word: 

\[
فان لن تستقيم لك على \\
\text{or in this particular sentence} \\
\text{تحرص على إقامته تكسره}
\]

\(^{43}\) M. Syuhudi Ismail, \textit{Metodologi Penelitian ...}, p. 135.  
\(^{44}\) M. Syuhudi Ismail, \textit{Metodologi Penelitian ...}, p. 137.  
\(^{45}\) M. Syuhudi Ismail, \textit{Metodologi Penelitian ...}, p. 137.
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Thus, even though there are multiple versions of the matan, where ziyadh and idraj also occur, they do not result in the weakening of the matan of the hadith, because this hadith is authentic, which were narrated by trustworthy individuals, and most important thing is that the meaning is not in conflict with the message of the Qur’an, it is logic, and scientific as well. However, this hadith should be comprehended symbolically, since it is full of prophetic messages using metaphorical words, in which ones need to have an in-depth scrutinization to comprehend its meanings (jawami al-kalim).

However, Rashid Rida criticized the ulama who interpreted it literally as al-Qurtubiy who quoted the hadith as is. Rashid Rida argued that if the story of Adam and Eve was not mentioned in the Old Testament, this hadith would not be easily interpreted by Muslims. The story of Adam and Eve is found in the Old Testament, Genesis II: 21-22), which described how God created Eve by taking a rib of Adam and covered it with meat. So God made a woman from the bone, which had been removed from Adam.  

However, metaphorically, the expression of women like ribs is similar to that suggesting that women are like the full moon in the middle of the dark night or women are like roses with thorns. Some people maintain the literal and textual meaning of the hadith, but if it is understood contextually, many people agree that the meaning of the hadith is not suggesting that women as really created from the rib.

According to M. Shuhudi Ismail, the hadith is clearly a prophetic word that contains deep moral messages. If it is analyzed through the message in the matan, it is considered the Jawami al-Kalim, which is a short and yet has a meaningful expression, as well as a metaphor (parable) of symbolic-metaphorical language (ramzi).  

In line with Abou El-Fadl in understanding the hadith about women are like ribs, it requires precision and caution to understand matan and its narrations including if one understands this hadith textually that women are the same as bent ribs.

Therefore, the actual intention and purpose of the hadith is that men should deal with women wisely, because there are different character traits and attitudes between men and women. If men are not aware of these individual differences, they will most likely take unprecedented actions in

47 M. Syuhudi Ismail, Hadis Nabi yang Tekstual dan Kontekstual..., p. 9.
48 Khaled M. Abou El-Fadhl, Atas Nama Tuhan..., p. 325-335.

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their attempt to teach women. If men fail to take wise steps and strategies to teach women, the women will certainly be led astray as it is a bent rib.\footnote{M. Quraish Shihab, \textit{Wawasan al-Qur'an...}, p. 300.}

This view of M. Quraish Shihab seems to be understood contextually or metaphorically-symbolistically, not literally or textually as understood by many traditional scholars. In line with that, Samih Abbas asserts that the view that Eve was created from a rib was not supported by strong evidence. If there are some evidences however, they may come from the people of the book, so it must be interpreted metaphorically.\footnote{Ahmad Fudhaili, \textit{Perempuan di Lembaran Suci...}, p. 214-215.}

\textit{Matan} of the \textit{hadith} that equates women with ribs must be understood contextually. There are similarities in nature and character of women and rib. If the husbands do not know the (weakness) of women, they most likely use violence and coercion, which will result in disharmony and even divorce in the household.\footnote{Muhammad bin Khusfah al-Nawawi Wasath al-Abiy, \textit{Syarh al-Abiy wa al-Masyasu Ala Shahih Muslim}, Juz V, Bairut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ahwis, 1994, p. 178-179.}

Ibn Hajar in \textit{Fath al-Bary} explains that the meaning of عوج is something related to the character and tendency to be excessive in matters of worldly life (wealth and pleasure) and religious matters. Al-Nawawi also admits that this hadith contains an image, namely the parable of the rib for women, while the word قَتَلَت in some narrations is like the growth of a tree from the bones of date palms. When it is connected with the creation of Eve, some commentators suggest that Eve was in fact created from the rib of Adam, Al-Nawawi suggests that the scholars indeed differed on this matter.\footnote{O mankind! Have piety (taqwa) towards your Lord, Who created you from a single soul (Adam may peace be upon him) and from him created his mate and from the two of them dispersed a multitude of men and women. Have piety towards Allah by...}

Therefore, one should be gently in giving advice, in which some moderation between too harsh and not too gentle should be carefully applied. This is so because too much violence results in the feeling of oppressed, while too much gentleness will also result in disrespectful.

Some \textit{ulama} refer to the following verse of the Qur’an upon discussion the creation of women. QS. Al-Nisa (4) ayat 1:

\begin{quote}

\textit{Yitābīyayiyya al-nās anțavā zāykinu l-dīdi halāqku mīn nafs wa ḥādea wa ḥalāq minhā zūjahu āwāwi mīnham rājala kābirā wa nissentā}

\end{quote}

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whose Name you request one of another and be careful of the wombs (the rights of kinship). Surely, Allah is Watcher over you.

The creation of women claimed to have come from Adam come from the word *nafs*, such as al-Suyuti, Ibn Kathir, al-Qurtubi, al-Biq’a’i and even al-Tabarasi interpret the word as such. Meanwhile, Muhammad Abduh and al-Qasimi define the *nafs* as a certain type, the word *الطراب* and *الطين* were interpreted land or earth. 52

The second opinion seems to be more logical and in line with the true meaning of the hadith, which defines the word *nafs* as a type, meaning that the origin of human comes from the soil. However, if it is agreed upon in the first opinion, it is contrasted to another verse of the Qur’an stating that the position of men and women is equal. QS. Al-Isra’ (17) verse 70

And We have honored the Children of Adam. We carried them in the land and the sea, and We have given them as sustenance of the permissible things, and We have made them to excel by an appropriate excellence over most of those whom We have created

Nasaruddin Umar when interpreting verses about gender suggested that the main mission of the Qur’an was revealed to free people from various forms of discrimination and oppression, including sexual discrimination, skin color, tribe, ethnicity, and other primordial ties. Therefore, if the interpretation results in oppression and injustice, the particular interpretation needs to be re-examined. 53

Therefore, it can be understood that this hadith should be interpreted contextually rather than textually, or in the sense that it can be understood in a *majazi* and metaphorical way. But one has to be careful with women, because they are sensitive being. One should be too gentle or vice versa in treating women, and in the context of this hadith, someone should be gentle at treating women

For that reason, the understanding of the hadith if it is associated with Islamic law will have different implications. If it is understood through a textual or literal-literal understanding, it will cause women to be subordinated to men, whereas if it is understood in a symbolic-metaphorical context, women will be treated equally to men. This is so because textual understanding will put women into an inferior being and will result in unfair treatments. In fact, the view of society will cynically perceive women as weak creatures who have many deficiencies. Therefore, this hadith should be understood contextually or symbolically-metaphorically otherwise this hadith will be wrongly interpreted and cause harm to women socially, culturally and even legally.

Conclusion

Our discussion suggests that the hadith can be understood contextually. Through the hadith, the messenger of Allah warned and advised men to carefully and intelligently deal with women who have characters and tendencies like ribs. This Hadith is indeed authentic in the sanad and matan, it is a sahih sanad because it is continuous to the Messenger of Allah, the narrators are fair, dhabit and there is no zyudz and illat found in all narrators. However, it is necessary to use a contextual understanding method, which can be understood symbolically-metaphorically, even though there are scholars who understand it literally. The content of the hadith teaches humans that when they associate with women, they should not be treated harshly because they will break, but the treatment may not need to be too gently as it will disadvantage women themselves. If the hadith is interpreted through a textual or literal-literal understanding, it will lead women to be subordinated culturally and legally disadvantaged, whereas if it is understood contextually or symbolically-metaphorically, women tend to be treated as equal to men. Textual understanding will lead to unfair legal treatment for women. By contrast, contextual understanding will actually provide justice in the Islamic law. Understanding this hadith contextually is important so that women are treated fairly and with dignity and will have good implications for Islamic law and Islamic teachings in general.

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