REINTERPRETATION THE MEANING OF *AHL AL-SUNNAH WA AL-JAMĀ'AH* IN THE BOOK OF *SYARH AL-SUNNAH* BY AL-BARBAHĀRI

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Abstract

The debate about the meaning of the term ahl al-sunnah wa al-jamā'ah in the iftirāq al-ummah hadith has not stopped until now. Each group has different views and claims to each other as the most deserving of that status. Al-Barbahari (d. 329 H), one of the figures of the Hanbali school of thought, tried to revive this understanding, but then tried to revive it haphazardly by modern Salafi-Wahhabi groups in order to legitimize the takfiri movement and anti-heresy sentiments. This article explains the views of al-Barbahari in the book Syarḥ al-Sunnah with several basic questions; first, what is al-Barbahari's view in interpreting ahl al-sunnah wa al-jamā'ah?, and second, what is the approach of manhaj wasaṭiyyah al-Azhar in explaining the same term? To analyze this problem, the writer uses descriptive-analytical method through the approach of manhaj al-Azhar al-Syarif and found the fact that Al-Barbahari has the characteristics of thinking that tend to be textual and pragmatic. Thus, there are many discrepancies in the discourse of aqidah, the use of reason in understanding the texts, and the methods of criticism and syarah of hadith are not appropriate.

Keywords: *Al-Barbahāri, Syarh al-Sunnah, Aqli-Naqli, Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah, Manhaj al-Azhar,*

Abstrak

Perdebatan mengenai pemaknaan term ahl al-sunnah wa al-jamā'ah dalam hadis iftirāq al-ummah belum berhenti sampai saat ini. Setiap golongan memiliki pandangan yang berbeda dan saling claim sebagai yang paling berhak menyandang status itu. Al-Barbahari (w. 329 H), salah seorang tokoh bermazhab Hanbali mencoba menghidupkan kembali pemahaman atas hal ini, tetapi kemudian coba dihidupkan kembali secara serampangan oleh kaum Salafi-Wahabi modern guna melegitimasi pergerakan takfiri dan sentimen anti-bid'ah. Artikel ini menjelaskan pandangan al-Barbahari di dalam kitab Syarḥ al-Sunnah dengan beberapa pertanyaan mendasar; pertama, bagaimana pandangan al-Barbahari dalam memaknai ahl al-sunnah wa al-jamā'ah?, dan kedua, bagaimana pendekatan manhaj wasaṭiyyah al-Azhar dalam menjelaskan term yang sama?. Untuk menganalisis masalah ini, penulis menggunakan metode deskriptif-analitis melalui pendekatan manhaj al-Azhar dan ditemukan fakta bahwasanya Al-Barbahari memiliki karakteristik pemikiran yang cenderung tekstual dan pragmatis. Dengan demikian, banyak ketidakserasian dalam diskursus akidah, pendayagunaan akal dalam memahami nas, dan metode kritik serta syarah hadis yang tidak tepat.

Kata Kunci: *Al-Barbahari, Syarh al-Sunnah, Aqli-Naqli, Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah, Manhaj al-Azhar*

A. Introduction

The hadith of *Iftirāq al-Ummah* is one of the hadiths whose meaning is still debated by scholars. The Prophet Muhammad saw said that his *ummah* would be divided into seventy-three groups one day. All of them are in hell, except one, those who are always follow the sunnah of the Prophet and his *shahābah*. This group in the hadith is called *al-Sawād al-A'zham* and *al-Jamā'ah*. In its development, the term *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah* emerged as a designation for the only group that has a ticket to heaven.

Referring to the hadith, the survivors are those who cling to the Prophet and his *shahābah*. They are also mentioned as the majority *(al-Sawād al-A'zham)*. In its interpretation, there are many opinions regarding this hadith. Therefore, in addition to looking at the background of the emergence of hadith (*asbāb al-wurūd*), there needs to be a complex review to find out the development of terms born from the hadith *Iftirāq al-Ummah*.

Historically, there are many opinions as to when the term *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah* first appeared and was used. *First*, ibn Sirin's words at the end of the Companions' period "They (some Muslims) had never asked about sanad before, when the slander (conflict between Muawiya and Sayyidina Ali) arose, they questioned the narrators of hadith. If it comes from Ahl *al-Sunnah*, then they take the hadith. If it comes from heretics, they reject it. (al-Lathif, 1995, p. 24)

The second opinion comes from followers of Imam Ahmad sect. They mention the term *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah* for the first became popular in 218 A.H. The Abbasid Caliph of the time (al-Ma'mun) made the Muktazilites the official sect of government. Various important positions were given to them. Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal then emerged as the vanguard challenging the Muktazilite sect, especially the famous debate about the status of Qur'anic beings. Despite years of torture, he insisted that the Qur'an was not the being that the Muktazilite believed. After 28 months of painful torture, he left prison and reopened the *halaqah* of recitation. His disciples then proclaimed themselves *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah*. (Abi Ya'la, 2016, p. 13)

Later, Ibn Khallikan (608 AH) mentions "*Ahl al-Sunnah* are those who follow the sect of Imam Ash'ari (324 AH)." Furthermore, Ibn al-Subki (756 AH) said that Imam Ash'ari was the savior of the (Abu 'Ashi, 2021, p. 31) *Ahl al-Sunnah* sect from heresy because he managed to balance the use of *naqli* and *aqli* propositions. Seen from its development, the term *Ahl al-Sunnah* (Abu 'Ashi, 2021, p. 31) was born from the rejection of another group called "*Ahl al-Bid'ah*".

From several opinions that have been described, The author poses two fundamental questions. *First*, what is al-Barbahari's view in interpreting *ahl al-sunnah wa al-jamā'ah*?, and the *second*, what is the *manhaj wasaṭiyyah* al-Azhar approach in explaining the same term?. To analyze this question, the author uses descriptive-analytical theory which is compared with the views or paths taken by al-Azhar al-Syarif as one of the best educational institutions in the world. So that it will bring up a new perspective in explaining the term *ahl al-sunnah wa al-jamā'ah*. This becomes an interesting issue, because Imam al-Barbahari's view has its own charm. One of the reasons is the lack of discussion of creed in Hambali's perspective. On the other side, Al-Barbahari's conservative and textualist construction of thought is often claimed to be the cornerstone of the *takfiri* movement and anti-heresy sentiment.

B. Imam Al-Barbahari and the Configuration Thought in *Syarh al-Sunnah*

Imam al-Barbahari has the full name al-Hasan bin 'Ali bin Khalaf Abu Muhammad al-Barbahari. *Laqab* al-Barbahari itself is based on barbahar, a type of herbal medicine similar to *hashish* imported from Indian soil. (al-Sam'ani, 1977, p. 133) He was known to sell these herbal medicines, so that *barbahar* was attributed to him. There is a difference of opinion about the year of his birth, which is in 252 or 233 AH, which means he is 77 or 96 years old. However, scholars agree that he died on Rajab in 329 AH in the village of al-Mukharram (now 'Asir District, Bisha Province of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia).

Al-Barbahari's scientific journey was very long. He had many teachers, the majority of whom were dignitaries of the Hanabilah sect. Among them are Ahmad bin Muhammad bin al-Hajjaj bin 'Abd al-Aziz Abu Bakr al-Marruzi (275 AH) (Abi Ya'la, 2016, p. 56) or better known as Abu Bakr al-Marruzi and Sahl bin Abdullah bin Yunus bin al-Tustari Abu Muhammad (283 AH) who is more famous as al-Tustari. (al-Dzahabi, 1982, p. 330)

In line with his two teachers, al-Barbahari was known to be very strict against heresy, he ordered his students to stay away from heretics and immoral experts, even beware of small things on any matter that might become a big heresy in religion. (al-Barbahari, 1993, p. 16) It aims to dampen the potential influence of Muslims from those deemed to be polluting the religion. This was the main factor behind the embedding of the nickname "sunnah protector" by the scholars to him.

There were many scholars who gave praise to al-Barbahari, among them, Ibn Abi Ya'la: "Al-Barbahari has always been at the forefront of

denying heresy and a guardian of the foundations of religion." (al-Barbahari, 1993, p. 15) Imam al-Dzahabi also said: "Al-Barbahari was a role model jurist, an official of Hanabilah, his words and deeds were exemplary, had tremendous influence, as well as great honor." (al-Dzahabi, n.d., p. 33) Ibn Kathir mentions "al-Barbahari was an 'alim, zuhud, jurist of the Hambali sect, a man of great advice, he was very strict on heretics and immorality, and was highly respected by both scholars and ordinary people." (al-Barbahari, 1993, p. 15)

References to al-Barbahari's biography are minimal. This was due to the lack of documentation from his students and the pressure of the rulers of the time. Because according to available references, al-Barbahari and his followers faced quite severe trials in preaching the *ahl al-sunnah wa al-jamā'ah*, especially from the ruler. So it is not surprising that the fruits of his thoughts are also tightly guarded and even banned. As a result, apart from the book of *Syarhh al-Sunnah* no of his writings has been found that reaches the present generation.

Kitab *Syarh al-Sunnah* is written by Imam al-Barbahari which generally explains the characteristics of the ahl *al-sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah* group as well as its opponent called *ahl al-bid'ah* in 170 points -in other prints such as Maktabah al-Sunnah, it is felt wa tahqiq Dr. Sa'id al-Qahthawi only has 130 points. This number is also different from what is stated in the syarah books such as those of Salih Fauzan, Ahmad bin Yahya al-Najmi, Rabi' al-Hadi, etc. Apart from the differences in muhaqqiq, the models for writing these points are also different, some combine several points in one discussion or separate them- of discussion. *Ahl al-sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah* is not only the terminology of creed, but also includes jurisprudence, morals, political ideas, to scientific methodology. This makes the topic of discussion in it complex but concise.

Al-Barbahari has some confusion regarding the basic terminology used. Starting from the equality of Islam and Sunnah, positioning the status of the Qur'an and Hadith, rejection of takwil, to the meaning of sunnah and bid'ah. The fundamental reason for confusion is the lack of utilization of reason through various scientific discourses in understanding religion. Al-Barbahari's textualist and old-fashioned thinking caused him to hold absolute truth over religious understanding unilaterally.

Next in the realm of jurisprudence al-Barbahari was a follower of the Hambali sect. The opinion of Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal in the constellation of jurisprudence includes sect that are legitimized in validity. When referring to the Syafi'i sect (as the sect of the majority of Indonesian citizens), there will indeed be some differences with Hambali, but the

differences are not as contrasting as the Shafi'i-Hanafi sect. The legal product described by al-Barbahari in the book of Syarh al-Sunnah is arguably general and basic, so there is no need to explain it at length.

Then on the *syarah* and the use of hadith for *istinbath*. In the matter of hadith, sanad and matan are indispensable elements. Seeing how al-Barbahari understood the hadith in this book, textual and pragmatic tendencies will be very visible from the side of *fahm al-matn*. Hadith is used as a basis for creed and jurisprudence without linguistic, historical, or *maqāshidi* approaches. Even in the mention of hadith, matan only wrote a piece and then used it as a postulate for his opinion.

When viewed in terms of history, there are several hadiths that are not mentioned sanadnya. This makes the *muhaqqiq* have to work extra in both *takhrîj al-hadith* and *Syarh al-matn*. There is a strong and illustrious history, but not a few weak ones. Not only from hadith, *qaul al-shahābah* and scholars are widely used and positioned like hadith (because in writing hadith and others there is almost no difference as in the mention of sanad). This led to confusion in distinguishing hadith and *atsar al-shahābah*.

A series of basic thoughts in *Syarh al-Sunnah* is the framework of *ahl al-sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah* according to al-Barbahari. This group in short is those who observe all the commandments of Allah in the Qur'an and Hadith and shun all forms of heresy. This unfinished construction of thinking seems to be widely adopted by some groups in this modern era.

C. Manhaj Wasatiyyah al-Azhar al-Syarif

Al-Azhar al-Syarif is one of the oldest Islamic educational institutions in the world that still exists today after al-Zaitunah (Tunisia 737 CE) and al-Qarawiyyin (Morocco 857 CE). Founded by the commander of the Fatimiah Dynasty Jauhar al-Shiqili on 24 Jumadil Ula 359 H / April 971 AD in the form of a mosque in the capital of Egypt (Cairo). Al-Azhar has consistently produced many scholars of extraordinary caliber in the field of religion. Starting from tafsir, qira'at, hadith, balaghah, creed, literature, and various other discourses. ('Auf, 2017, p. 23)

One of al-Azhar's contemporary scholars, Sheikh Osama Sayyid al-Azhari who is also a professor of al-Azhar and advisor to the president of the Arab Republic of Egypt once conveyed 8 important components in Manhaj al-Azhar. (al-Azhari, 2012)

1. *Ittishal Sanadihi Riwāyatan wa Dirāyatan wa Tazkiyyatan* (Connectivity of scientific transmission lines in history, knowledge, and recognition). Sanad requires a face-to-face process directly in front of the teacher, both during the learning and post-learning period for

tashih understanding. So that the teacher is willing to give a diploma (recognition) according to the ability of his students in the form of sanad. The connectivity of this scientific transmission line also keeps a person from going outside the boundaries set in certain scientific fans.

Sanad is a very important and fundamental thing in studying religious science. As the famous maqa of Ibn Sirin and Abdullah ibn Mubarok, "This is a religious science, so pay close attention to where you take it from" and "If it were not for sanad, someone would say anything casually." Sanad is a specialty of Muslims that no other Ummah has. (al-Baghdadi, 2009, p. 14)

2. *Al-'Ināyah al-Tāmmah bi Tahshil al-'Ulūm al-Âlah* (Studying the sciences of tools) such as: Nahwu, sharaf, balagahah, manthiq, etc. These sciences are the basis and key in order to understand the books that are actually in Arabic and form a systematic construction of thinking. The goal is that the scientific basis of students can be neatly organized before studying various scientific discourses.

The importance of learning tools before *maqāîshid* (such as jurisprudence, creed, and literature) to make it easier to understand the wording and find the purpose of *ibārot* compiled by the author of the book. When the meaning of a statement has been captured, then a student can combine or refute it with other arguments. This systematization can be achieved only if one has mastered the science of tools carefully.

3. *Al-'Ilm wa al-Ihāthah bi Maqāshid al-Syarî'ah* (Understanding and mastering the purpose and wisdom of sharia). The five pillars are *hifzh al-dîn* (guarding religion), *hifzh al-aql* (guarding reason), *hifzh al-nafs* (guarding the soul), *hifzh al-nasl* (guarding offspring), and *hifzh al-māl* (guarding property) or known as *Maqāshid al-Syarî*ah Imam Shatibi's (790 AH) is the basis of knowledge that must be known especially when extracting laws from the Qur'an or hadith.

Maqāsid al-Syarîah is one aspect that should not be left out in formulating a law. The urgency will be seen when faced with a phenomenon that is closely related to social events. When the various postulates of the passage have been understood and have implications for the establishment of law, the aspect of mutual benefit based on these five pillars will become the face of the importance of a law. (Raysūnī, 1995, p. 310) This approach to *maqashidi* emphasized

al-Azhar as one of the bases for taking laws so that the products produced are full of logical benefits, not just religious dogmas.

4. *Tanzî al-Qur'an al-Karîm 'alā Mawādhi'ih* (Able to position each verse of the Qur'an according to its place and portion with correct understanding). So, it is not arbitrary to call for jargon back to the Qur'an. Al-Azhar is very strict in its use of Qur'anic verses in *istidlāl*. There are many scientific tools and discourses that must be mastered and applied in the interpretation and application of Qur'anic verses.

   To become a *mufassir*, one must master various branches of science in depth, such as: tool sciences, *tajwîd*, *qirā'ah*, *asbāb al-nuzūl*, *ushūl al-fiqh*, hadith, literature, and many more. This does not include the conditions of commendable behavior and avoiding immorality. How complex are the conditions that must be met to be able to understand the Qur'an independently, let alone to interpret and apply it. ('Itr, 2020, p. 7)

5. *Ta'dzîm Sya'an al-Ummah al-Muhammadiyyah* (Glorifying the people of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). This attitude certainly gives birth to affection and concern for anyone. Regardless of ethnicity, race, country, or even religion, all human beings should be treated as human beings. In addition to the intellectual base, humanitarian and moral aspects are the methodologies that al-Azhar holds. So that it never denounces or disbelieves dissenting parties.

   A popular verse in the egalitarian chapter is QS. Al-Hujurat (49) verse: 13. The embodiment of this verse is indiscriminate solidarity between all mankind. All human beings are creations of Allah Almighty who are equally exalted on earth. This equality certainly negates all forms of discrimination that exist.

6. *Ḥamluhum ilā al-Hidāyah al-'Ammāh* (carrying the commission of conveying guidance to all mankind. The existence of religion certainly cannot be maintained without the delivery of knowledge to the community. So da'wah is a must for the *ahl al-'ilm wa al-ḥaq.* As is the popular hadith, the threat of a fire whip from a person who deliberately covers up his knowledge when asked by others. (Abu Dawud, No, 966)

   Spreading the peaceful values of Islam is an obligation for every Muslim. Of course, the portion of delivery is in accordance with the capacity of each person. This obligation is not only borne by scholars

or religious teachers. Whatever the profession has its own portion in preaching Islam according to expertise. This is why al-Azhar is also not only engaged in the religious field, but also social, economic, and even economic.

7. *Al-Mukawwanāt al-Kāmilah li al-'Ilm* (Mastering the scientific component comprehensively). Whatever the situation and problems faced, of course, there must be a lot of consideration in deciding the case. The tendency in certain groups must be abandoned first. Religious and socio-cultural aspects with various discourses must be mixed into decisions that bring peace to all groups according to religious rules.

The application of the seventh pillar can be applied in the meaning of hadith, for example. A hadith must first be studied in order to assess the quality of its mat. In this aspect, the science of mus{talaḥ al-hadîs, ilm*u rijāl* al-hadîs, the science of *'ilal al-hadîs*, the science of *sanad al-hadîs*, *tārîkh al-ruwāt*, the science of *al-jarḥ wa al-ta'dil*, the science of garîb al-hadîs, the science of *ma'ani al-hadîs*, asbā*b al-wurūd, nāsikh-mansūkh,* till *takhrîj al-hadîs*. (al-Khatib, 2018, p. 231) Finished with hadith tools, linguistic approaches, *ushūl al-fiqh, maqāshid al-sharî'ah, manthiq*, until the delivery of good results according to the rules of ushul al-da'wah need to be mastered. Only then can one be said to be comprehensive, the use of various scientific discourses in understanding hadith, for example. This is one of the most striking differences with Al-Barbahari.

8. *Al-Istifādah min al-Turāts al-Ummah wa al-Infitā 'alaihi wa al-Tawāssul ma'ah wa al-Binā' 'alaih* (Utilize, interact, elaborate, and build *turāts* as a scientific foundation). This is the foundation of great enthusiasm in resisting western hegemony in scientific references. *Turāts* are not only piles of classical religious books, but also cultural heritage and constructions of his thinking. In addition, by awakening Islamic science can advance its people as well. This great discourse is known as *tajdîd al-turāts*.

The urgency of *utilizing turāts* cannot be achieved without the scientific foundation and orientation that has been compiled in the previous methodological sequence. One must have a strong foundation and clear goals so as to maximize the variety of Islamic relics, especially in scientific thoughts and treasures. Because it cannot be denied that the progress of Islamic civilization in the Middle Ages

or even the West today cannot be separated from *turāts* Islam. (Zaqzuq, 2019, p. 15)

D. Differences in the Meaning of Some Basic Terms

Referring to the *Manhaj al-Azhar*, to understand the Qur'an hadith requires mastery of a series of disciplines of science and methodology. This is different from what al-Barbahari did in his Syarh al-Sunnah. This difference can be seen in contrast through reading some of the substance of the book using the perspective of *manhaj* al-Azhar.

اعلموا أن الإسلام هو السنة, والسنة هي الإسلام, ولا يقوم أحدهما إلا بالآخر.

Know that Islam is Sunnah, and Sunnah is Islam, neither of which can stand alone. (Abi Ya'la, 2016, p. 44)

Islam is famously a religion taught by the Prophet Muhammad saw with treatises condemning Allah Swt and lived all His commandments and abstained from all their prohibitions. While in terms of sunnah hadith scholars show the meaning of everything that is relied on Muhammad (peace be upon him) from speech, deeds, decrees, ethics, the nature of behavior, both before and after being appointed as an Apostle in the cave of Hira or before. (al-Khatib, 2018, p. 23) Here we see the logical flaw in the first point *of Syarh al-Sunnah*.

There is a basic rule regarding *ta'rif*:

معرف الشيئ :ما يقال عليه لإفادة تصوره.

Definition of a thing: Is something that is said about a thing to give an idea of it. (al-Taftazani, 2005, p. 135)

Therefore it is required for *mu'arrif/ta'rif* (definition) more specific than *mu'arraf* (defined). So it is not permissible for *mu'arrif* to be more general (*a'amm*), too particular (*akhash*), composed of opposites (*muḍaf*), and more vague (*akhfa*). If it does not meet this basic condition, then a definition can be said to be vanity because it does not understand. This is what happened to al-Barbahari's definition, on the one hand he equated the two terms, but then distinguished their positions by needing each other. This shows the lack of application of the science of tools (logic), in contrast to the methodology of al-Azhar. (al-Taftazani, 2005, p. 135)

وأن القرآن إلى السنة أحوج من السنة إلى القرآن.

Indeed, the Qur'an needs the Sunnah more than the Sunnah to the Qur'an. (al-Barbahari, 1993, p. 89)

The inconsistency in the use of diction is really visible in point number 70. If it is understood that the Qur'an needs Sunnah more in the Islamic sense than or vice versa, of course its meaning will be very ambiguous. Though clearly the meaning of sunnah here is hadith. If a textualist were to read the whole book, it would be difficult to reconcile the reality of the text with his rationale. In fact, if you read the entire contents of the book of *Syarḥ al-Sunnah*, it can be concluded that al-Barbahari is a textualist and even tends to be *mujassimah*. *Mujassimah* is a group that resembles Allah Swt, like a creature because it has a physical form.

Although historically there have been those who reject the sunnah as a legal basis, al-Barbahari's construction of thought remains unjustified. (al-Azami, 1980, p. 21) Then, the discussion of the term *ahl al-sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah* will not be separated from *al-Firqah*, *al-Jamā'ah* and lafadz "*Kulluhā fī al-Nār illā wāhidah*" (all in hell except for one group). The existence of such popular diction makes anyone who feels his group is right, can party blame the other group. This causes absolute truth claims not only to occur between religions, but even between factions within one religion.

Regarding differences of opinion or division of factions, historically al-Barbahari's account of the emergence of several factions in Islam can be said to be true but not enough to explain the sequence of events. Briefly, at the end of the time of *khulafā' al-rāshidîn* there appeared several factions in Islam. The factor was none other than the political conditions that occurred at that time, especially after the Shiffin war, the arbritase between the friendly groups of Ali bin Abi Talib and Muawiyah bin Abi Sufyan. Groups that were originally rooted in differences of views in politics spread and rooted in creed. Those who first appeared were: Shi'a, Kharijite, Murji'ah, and Qadariyah. This is what al-Barbahari called (Gharabah, 1973, p. 23) *Ushūl al-Bid'ah*. From these four groups later branched out into 72 groups that were said to be heretical. (al-Baghdadi, 1988, p. 26)

Regarding differences, in general it is not a serious problem as long as it is at the branch level (*furū'*), not on religious grounds (*ushūl al-dîn*). Because in fact Islam opens the door of ijtihad as much as possible to its people, especially in the matter of jurisprudence. This refers to the flexible and dynamic nature of jurisprudence. Every scholar in his area legitimately has a different opinion on each issue. Of course, with a note that it does not violate the basic signs that have been outlined by religion in the Qur'an and sunnah.

Returning to the lafadz hadith "*Kulluhā fī al-nār illa wāhidah*", there needs to be a special interpretation on this group of survivors. It is mentioned in the first narration that one day everyone will claim to be *this*

al-firqah al-nājiyyah. In the case of differences in jurisprudence, it is not impossible to say everything is true. But in the realm of creed, Islam has strict standards so that there is no tolerance. So it is not surprising that everyone feels that he is the most righteous and then considers other groups wrong and heretical. This is what al-Barbahari also did textually in *Sharḥ al-Sunnah*.

Things that can be categorized as differences that lead to group differences revolve around several things, including: The oneness of God and his attributes, matters of prophetic status, and *qada'-qadar*. Other matters such as *imāmah*, *ru'yah ilā Allah*, and takwil are also debated in themselves. (al-Baghdadi, 2009, p. 27) There appeared groups such as: Rafidhah, Jahmiyah, Jabariyah, Najjariyah, Karamiyah, Mujassimah, to Muktazilah. They then disbelieved other factions.

Those who claim the truth usually claim to be *ahl al-sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah*. Linguistically, *jamā'ah* means a group that is then understood as the majority. This is corroborated by the hadith of the people of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) will not gather in error. As the ulama is the heir of the Prophet, so as long as there is a scholar prophetic values will continue to be in his people. So stay with *al-Jamā'ah* as al-Barbahari explains. Part of the Sunnah is to remain in the ranks of the Jama'ah (majority) because textually, indeed the truths described belong to those who are the most numerous.

E. **Utilization of Intellect in Understanding *Nash* and Analysis of Manhaj al-Azhar al-Syarif**

Among the characteristics of *ahl al-sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah* is balancing the use of *aqli* and *naqli* postulates. The balance between the two makes religion understandable not only and dogma, but also a rational thing acceptable to the human intellect. Inequality in the use of reason can cause people to fall into the liberal valley, while blind *taqlîd* on the text also causes the mind to be stodgy and undeveloped.

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واعْلَم رَحِمَكَ الله ، أنَّ الدِّينَ إنَّمَا جَاءَ مِنْ قِبل الله تبارك وتعالى، لم يُوضع على عقول الرِّجَالِ وآرائهم، وعلمه عند الله وعند رسوله ﷺ ... الخ.

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Know (may you be loved by Allah) that indeed the religion of Islam comes from the side of Allah Almighty and is not based on human reason and opinion. Religious knowledge comes from Allah Swt and his Messenger saw. (al-Barbahari, 1993, p. 67)

Al-Barbahari mentions that religion is not formed on the construct of human reason and opinion, but only comes from Allah and what His

Messenger explained to the Companions. Indirectly, what is meant is the Qur'an and Hadith. Indeed, there is no need to question when someone forbids others to ijtihad using their passions, let alone using religion as a means of social coercive control, let alone to gain votes in practical politics. But this kind of speech tends to encourage people to be textualist and not open to exploratory understanding and reasoning.

Even though the most basic teaching of *tawhid*, namely the oneness of Allah Almighty, needs to be explained rationally. The commonly used naqli proposition is surah al-Ikhlas verses 1-4. The existence of this verse is indeed very clear about the oneness of God. When this verse later meets non-Muslims who do not believe in the Qur'an or some Muslims who are too rationalist and tend to deify reason, there is a need for a comprehensive explanation of the nature of God in the form of singular (*wahdāniyyah*).

In the Egyptian *version of al-Azhar's version of ahl al-sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah*, to explain the existence and oneness of Allah there are five methods that can be used. *First*, the postulate of the systematization of the universe (*al-'Ināyah*). This postulate invites the audience to think that the rules, axes, and systematics of this complex universe are impossible without a single superpower entity beyond all this. *Second*, the postulate of rationality (*aqli*). Here are known five arguments, namely about capacity, causality, instinctive, social, and comparative. (al-Raji, 2019, pp. 15–45) Each of these *aqli* postulates then has its own branch and scholars have lengthy explanations of this, especially in countering the many accusations (*syubhāt*) about divine entities in Islam.

The third postulate is called the psychological/instinctive postulate (*al-Fithri*). According to research and analysis of psychologists, humans naturally feel fear, anxiety, hope, and various other feelings. Humans do interact with each other to vent these emotions. But hysterically, man continues to look for the ultimate source of strength to depend on himself. This is also the postulate of ahlusunnah in his theology. (al-Raji, 2019, p. 35) *Fourth*, there is the postulate of social value (*al-Ijtimā'i*). By consensus, all human beings believe in their conscience that there is good and bad. Regardless of how the person behaves, the standard of kindness is not relative but absolute. This requires the existence of a source of good and a complete opponent of evil which is the One True God. (al-Raji, 2019, p. 42)

The last postulate is comparative (*al-muqārān*). Here the comparison is between believers and non-believers. People who believe and believe in all religious teachings until eschatological things tend to feel more secure, controlled, and have a place to lean on. While those who do not believe in supernatural things tend to stagnate and continue to struggle with the

nature of their minds. Departing on the original goal of creating a harrmonical life, there is certainly the existence of god there. It can be concluded that al-Barbahari tends to refuse to postulate with these various approaches. In fact, even in addition to creed, jurisprudence also requires many propositions and arguments that require analysis and critical thinking to understand. (al-Raji, 2019, p. 44)

The position of hadith as the second source of law after the Qur'an makes the interpretation of one hadith or even a fragment of it requires a long journey in the academic realm. It requires *takhrîj*, matan validity test, sanad quality analysis, understanding asbāb al-wurūd, mastery of *gharîb* al-hadith, *'ilal al-hadith*, *jarh wa ta'dîl*, until *tārîkh al-ruwāt*. Not in order to complicate things, without maintaining and a form of caution over the use of hadith.

Hadith is not only briefly judged by its matan, but also its narration and various other factors. In an effort to understand the sometimes vague matan hadith, al-Azhar always puts forward the original meaning before performing takwil. The importance of takwil in understanding hadith needs to be emphasized and placed proportionally so as not to fall into the abyss of *mujassimah*. The meaning of a hadith also needs to be compared with opinions about other hadiths in order to get comprehensive results. Too short in interpreting the hadith can trigger multiple other interpretations to placement that is not suitable alias haphazard.

Unlike the left such as the textualist Salafi-Wahabis, al-Azhar comes with the offe of recitation with various approaches to the turats. The use of basic logical rules, a deepening approach according to discourse, to broad reading can be a bridge of dialogue to harmonize between turats and reality. This makes al-Azhar's views broad but not out of the confines of religion. (Thayyib, 2018, p. 137) The following is an example of understanding the hadith in *Syarh al-Sunnah*.

قَالَ: قُلْتُ: كَيْفَ أَصْنَعُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، إِنْ أَدْرَكْتُ ذَلِكَ؟، قَالَ: تَسْمَعُ وَتُطِيعُ لِلْأَمِيرِ، وَإِنْ ضُرِبَ ظَهْرُكَ، وَأُخِذَ مَالُكَ فَاسْمَعْ وَأَطِعْ

One said, "What should I do if I know that (the ugliness of the government), O Messenger of Allah?" He replied, "Listen and obey your leader, even if you have your back whipped or your property taken away."

The above hadith became the basis of al-Barbahari saying it is imperative for Muslims to obey the government in any situation. As a textualist, it is certainly not necessary to analyze various aspects of a hadith

to apply. Although it seems simple and practical, but this method results in many misunderstandings and propaganda products that are sometimes irrational.

When studied through a *sanad* approach, it must be examined first whether there is a problem *rāwi* or not. In fact, this hadith is only narrated through Hudzaifah al-Yamani which means *garib*. The status of other rawis also needs to be taken into consideration in determining the quality of hadith. The events and context of the events at that time should also not be left to take substance to the hadith before finally being used as an argument to be preached to Muslims in general.

When such a study of *dirāyah-riwāyah* has been completed, it should be related to the approach of *maqāsid al-sharîah*. Is blind taqlid to a government that is clearly tyrannical will bring us benefits? If not, of course, we will use other arguments to refute it.

Even if this hadith is astudy of sanad, should we practice it textually? Of course not. There are many ways to understand the words of the Prophet Muhammad. Lafaz like this often has to be understood figuratively (*maj*). So consequently, there must be a historical analysis of the hadith to then be practiced according to its portion. This sequence of thinking methods is a small example of *the manhaj al-Azhar* in the interpretation of hadith and rational balancing with *nash*.

Al-Azhar with all its tools is a balancing model of the use of reason and muqaddas texts in beristinbath. As a beacon of *ahlusunnah wa al-jama'ah*, the right-left axis converges on the ideal concept of al-Azhar. This is why al-Azhar and its scholars are now known as the mecca of world Islamic scholarship. (Thayyib, 2018, p. 22)

F. Conclusion

Al-Barbahari's interpretation of *ahl al-sunnah wa al-jama'ah* in his book Syarh al-Sunnah is very limited and has a weak scientific approach. The characteristics of his thoughts which tend to be textual and pragmatic are related to the dark historical events when Al-Qahir Billah was the caliph of the Abbasid dynasty. However, in the modern era, movements such as salafi-wahabi even claim it as the principle of their *da'wah*. Such thinking is certainly not in accordance with scientific mandates such as in *Manhaj Wasaṭiyyah* al-Azhar. This *Manhaj* contains the methodology, characteristics, and typology of al-Azhar in the study of religious discourse and the practice of social relations.

Al-Azhar upholds the position of the scientific chain (sanad) in learning. This *Manhaj* also teaches in-depth and systematic analysis,

tolerance for differences, and balancing the use of *aqli* and *naqli* propositions in reading *turāts* for *istinbāṭ* and *istidlāl*. This should also be done by al-Barbahari in building a methodological basis for interpreting the term *ahl al-sunnah*. The goal is to get a comprehensive meaning and in harmony with what was expected by the Prophet.

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