



Enacting Qur'anic Meaning in the Indonesian Tablighi Jamaat as a Transnational Islamic Movement



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Abstract

Qur'anic meaning in Indonesian Tablighi Jamaat operates through disciplined enactment rather than formal exegetical production. Situated within the movement's transnational circulation, this article examines how selected Qur'anic meanings are carried through *dakwah*, *ta'lim*, prayer, *zikr*, moral discipline, and *khurūj fi sabilillāh*. The analysis draws on internal Tablighi texts, particularly Fadhilat Tabligh, Fadhilat Qur'an, and Hayatus Sahabah, as well as the author's field-based records of *mudzakarah* and *bayān* sessions in Indonesia across different local religious settings. Talal Asad's notion of Islam as a discursive tradition provides the main theoretical ground, while Abdurrahman's formulation of embodied *fiqh* and Ibn 'Arabī's distinction between *'ilm al-'aqlī*, *'ilm al-aḥwāl*, and *'ilm al-asrār* function as operational lenses. The article argues that Tablighi Jamaat turns Qur'anic verses from textual evidence into repeatable practices that train the body, reform intention, organize time, cultivate moral dispositions, and generate transnational religious subjectivity. These practices also show how scriptural authority is mediated through collective routines, oral instruction, and movement-based forms of religious learning. By tracing the movement from verse to disciplined practice, the article demonstrates that Qur'anic meaning is enacted not only through interpretation in written commentary but also through embodied and socially transmitted forms of religious life. Such a reading extends Qur'anic studies beyond authored commentary and clarifies how scriptural meaning becomes socially portable through discipline, repetition, and movement practices.

Keywords: Tablighi Jamaat; Qur'anic meaning; religious discipline; Islamic transnational movement

Introduction

Across mosques, *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools), family networks, and temporary routes of religious travel, Tablighi Jamaat has carried the language of religious invitation with unusual persistence.¹ Since its emergence in North India in the 1920s, the movement has organized Muslim piety through small traveling groups, mosque-based learning, face-to-face exhortation, and repeated acts of self-discipline. Barbara Metcalf's study of *karguzārī* shows that reports of travel in Tablighi Jamaat are not merely narratives of movement, but also instruments of self-examination and moral education.² Dietrich Reetz similarly notes that Tablighi Jamaat combines reformist zeal

¹ Barbara D. Metcalf, "Living Hadith in the Tablighi Jama'at," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 52, no. 3 (1993): 584-608; Farish A. Noor, "On the Permanent Hajj: The Tablighi Jama'at in South East Asia," *South East Asia Research* 18, no. 4 (2010): 707-34.

² Barbara D. Metcalf, "Travelers' Tales in the Tablighi Jama'at," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 588 (July 2003): 136-48.

with Sufi-inspired guidance, ritual repetition, and internal organization, although it is not an initiatic *ṭarīqah* in the formal sense.³ Farish A. Noor places the movement within a wider geography of Muslim mobility in Southeast Asia, while Eva F. Nisa shows how Indonesian female Tablighi experience *pesantren* and cross-border travel as part of belonging to a global Tablighi *ummah*.⁴ These studies make clear that Tablighi Jamaat cannot be understood only as a doctrine, an organization, or a missionary network. It is also a disciplined form of religious movement through which piety is learned, repeated, carried, and socially transmitted.

Indonesia gives this transnational movement a local texture that cannot be reduced to the transfer of a South Asian model. Tablighi Jamaat did not enter Indonesian Islam as a political organization or as a formal exegetical school. It grew through mosques, *pesantren*, traveling preachers, kinship relations, and local forms of religious persuasion. Nisa's study is important here because it shows that Indonesian Tablighi *pesantren* did not simply import an external model, but adapted Tablighi practice to Indonesian educational institutions, including national curricula and the authority of local religious teachers.⁵ Studies on Indonesian Tablighi Jamaat also suggest that the movement works more through routine, discipline, and repetition than through public doctrinal declaration.⁶ Its authority is often quiet and socially carried. It appears in the ways people listen to *bayān* (religious sermon), sit in *ta'lim* (religious learning circle), travel in small groups, regulate speech, cultivate humility, and learn to understand religious obligation through shared practice. This local formation is crucial for the present article, because the question of Qur'anic meaning in Tablighi Jamaat cannot be separated from the ordinary pedagogical forms through which the movement trains its participants.

Existing studies has given us several strong ways to understand Tablighi Jamaat, but a more specific question remains less directly examined. Metcalf has shown that written and spoken texts in Tablighi Jamaat are secondary to practice and are meant to be internalized through repeated action.⁷ Gaborieau warns against reading the movement as a Sufi order in any simple sense, even though traces of Sufi vocabulary and discipline remain.⁸ Reetz explains how Sufi spirituality can energize reformist activism without turning the movement into a conventional *ṭarīqah*.⁹ Noor reads Tablighi Jamaat as a form of faith-driven globalization in Southeast Asia.¹⁰ Nisa shows how Indonesian *pesantren* become bridges between local religious learning and transnational Tablighi belonging.¹¹ A recent study on "silent *ṭarīqah*" and legal consciousness in Indonesian Tablighi Jamaat is also useful because it argues that *fiqh* can be embodied through *ta'lim*, *khurūj*, and *adab*, rather than only expressed through *fatwā* or formal legal discourse.¹² Yet these works still leave room for a narrower inquiry. How does Qur'anic meaning operate inside a movement that is not primarily known for producing formal works of *tafsīr*? The question matters because Tablighi

³ Dietrich Reetz, "Sufi Spirituality Fires Reformist Zeal: The Tablighi Jama'at in Today's India and Pakistan," *Archives de sciences sociales des religions* 135 (2006): 33-51.

⁴ Farish A. Noor, "On the Permanent Hajj," 707-34; Eva F. Nisa, "Insights into the Lives of Indonesian Female Tablighi Jama'at," *Modern Asian Studies* 48, no. 2 (2014): 468-91.

⁵ Nisa, "Insights into the Lives of Indonesian Female Tablighi Jama'at," 471-76.

⁶ Ahmad Yani Anshori et al., "The Silent Tarekat in Islamic Law: Legal Consciousness and the Chishti Sufi Legacy of the Tablighi Jamaat," *Ahkam: Jurnal Ilmu Syariah* 25, no. 1 (2025): 177-96, <https://doi.org/10.15408/ajis.v25i1.44979>.

⁷ Metcalf, "Living Hadith in the Tablighi Jama'at," 584-608.

⁸ Marc Gaborieau, "What Is Left of Sufism in Tablighi Jama'at?," *Archives de sciences sociales des religions* 135 (2006): 53-72.

⁹ Reetz, "Sufi Spirituality Fires Reformist Zeal," 33-51.

¹⁰ Noor, "On the Permanent Hajj," 707-34.

¹¹ Nisa, "Insights into the Lives of Indonesian Female Tablighi Jama'at," 488-91.

¹² Anshori et al., "The Silent Tarekat in Islamic Law," 177-96.

Jamaat frequently cites, repeats, and enacts Qur'anic meanings, but does so through forms that do not always resemble conventional exegetical writing.

The Qur'an in Tablighi Jamaat often appears through practical and pedagogical channels. Verses are cited in *bayān*, repeated in *ta'lim*, explained through *faḍā'il* (virtues), joined to stories of the *ṣaḥābah* (companions of the Prophet), and translated into disciplined practices such as prayer, *dhikr* (remembrance of Allah), sincerity, service, and *khurūj fī sabilillāh* (going out in the path of Allah). *Fadhilat Tabligh*, for example, presents selected Qur'anic verses and Prophetic reports as motivational foundations for religious invitation. Q. 41:33 is used to elevate calling people to Allah as a noble form of speech. Q. 3:104 and Q. 3:110 are connected to collective responsibility, moral exhortation, and the formation of a group that invites to good. Q. 20:132 and Q. 31:17 bring prayer, family discipline, patience, and moral instruction into one field of religious labor.¹³ *Fadhilat Qur'an* offers another register by presenting the Qur'an as divine speech that should generate love, reverence, recitation, and attachment to Allah.¹⁴ *Hayatus Sahabah* provides exemplary narratives in which religious knowledge becomes visible through sacrifice, travel, patience, and service.¹⁵ Read together, these texts suggest that Qur'anic meaning in Tablighi Jamaat is mediated through exhortation and example, not only through commentary.

Indonesian oral materials make the same pattern visible in local pedagogical speech. In a *mudzakarah* (religious discussion) on the six qualities of the *ṣaḥābah*, the speaker draws an important boundary: "*Enam sifat sahabat ... bukan merupakan wujud agama yang sempurna, karena agama yang sempurna terkandung dalam al-qur'an dan al-hadits*" (the six qualities are not the complete form of religion, because complete religion is contained in the Qur'an and *ḥadīth*).¹⁶ This statement prevents a simplistic reading of the six qualities as a substitute for scripture. They are better understood as a pedagogical condensation, a repeatable moral grammar through which scriptural authority is made teachable in movement practice. The same *mudzakarah* defines *da'wah*, *tabligh*, and *khurūj fī sabilillāh* as inviting, conveying, and going out in the path of Allah, and it cites Q. 41:33 as a basis for the nobility of calling people to Allah.¹⁷ Other oral materials emphasize *yaqīn* (certainty of faith), prayer, *dhikr*, Qur'anic recitation, sincerity of intention, respect for Muslims, and the distinction between *'ilm al-faḍā'il* (knowledge of virtues) and *'ilm al-masā'il* (knowledge of legal-religious questions).¹⁸ This distinction is analytically important because it prevents the claim that Tablighi Jamaat democratizes all religious authority without qualification. Motivational and ethical knowledge circulates widely, while *masā'il* remain connected to *'ulamā'* (religious scholars).

This article uses the phrase "enacting Qur'anic meaning" to name that movement from text to discipline. The phrase is not meant to suggest that every Tablighi practice is a direct interpretation of a specific verse. The claim is narrower. Selected Qur'anic meanings are taken up through a disciplined ecology of texts, speeches, routines, travel, and moral training. Meaning becomes something carried by the body, the tongue, the schedule, the group, and the route of *da'wah*. Talal Asad's anthropology of Islam provides the first theoretical ground for this reading. Asad asks scholars to see Islam not merely as a set of beliefs or texts, but as a discursive tradition in which

¹³ Muhammad Zakariyya Al-Kandahlawi, *Fadhilah Amal*, trans. Tim Penerjemah Masjid Kebon Jeruk (Ash-Shaff, 2015).

¹⁴ Al-Kandahlawi, *Fadhilah Amal*.

¹⁵ Muhammad Zakariyya Al-Kandahlawi, "Kisah-Kisah Shahabat," in *Himpunan Kitab Fadhilah Amal*, trans. Tim Penerjemah Masjid Kebon Jeruk (Ash-Shaff, 2015).

¹⁶ "Mudzakarah Enam Sifat Sahabat," author observation, author's archive.

¹⁷ "Mudzakarah Enam Sifat Sahabat," author observation, author's archive.

¹⁸ "Mudzakarah Enam Sifat Sahabat"; "Post-Maghrib bayān in Sragen"; "Indonesian bayān material on four-month *jamā'ah*," author observations, author's archive.

authoritative pasts, embodied practices, institutions, and forms of discipline shape Muslim subjects.¹⁹ This approach helps read Tablighi Jamaat without reducing it either to doctrine or to social organization. The movement is better understood as a traditioned field in which Qur'an, *ḥadīth*, *sunnah*, *ṣaḥābah*, *ʿulamāʾ*, elders, and repeated practices are joined. Through this lens, habits of prayer, speech, travel, listening, and self-restraint become part of how Qur'anic meaning is carried.

Landy Abdurrahman's formulation of embodied *fiqh* also informs this article, although the argument developed here shifts the object from *fiqh* to Qur'anic meaning.²⁰ Embodied *fiqh* refers to normativity carried through body, space, routine, and communal discipline. The present article adapts that insight to ask how Qur'anic meaning becomes embodied, not as a legal code alone, but as a moral and disciplinary form. Ibn ʿArabī's epistemic distinction between *ʿilm al-ʿaqlī* (rational knowledge), *ʿilm al-aḥwāl* (knowledge through states), and *ʿilm al-asrār* (knowledge of secrets) is used carefully as an analytic map.²¹ This article does not argue that Tablighi Jamaat is an Ibn ʿArabī-inspired movement. The distinction is used only to observe how textual knowledge, affective states, and sanctified transmission interact in the materials. A verse may be known as proof, felt as concern for religion, and authorized through repeated oral transmission from trusted texts and elders.

Tablighi Jamaat in Indonesia, this article argues, enacts Qur'anic meaning through a disciplined movement ecology. Qur'anic verses are not only cited as evidence. They are converted into practices of *daʿwah*, *taʿlīm*, prayer, *dhikr*, sincerity, self-reform, and *khurūj*. This does not make Tablighi Jamaat a formal exegetical school. Rather, it shows that Qur'anic interpretation can operate through movement pedagogy and transnational discipline. For Qur'anic and *tafsīr* studies, this expands the study of interpretation beyond authored commentary without abandoning textual responsibility. For the study of religious movements, it shows how a transnational Islamic movement forms subjects through the enactment of scriptural meaning. The study is based on a limited set of field records and selected Tablighi texts, supplemented by scholarship on the movement. It therefore does not claim to provide a comprehensive ethnography of Tablighi Jamaat in Indonesia. Instead, it examines several situated instances in which Qur'anic teachings are communicated through pedagogical speech, organized into repeatable moral qualities, and linked to the disciplines of *taʿlīm* and *khurūj*.

Method

Rather than treating Tablighi Jamaat as a formal exegetical school, this article approaches it through a qualitative textual-anthropological reading of Qur'anic meaning as it appears in movement pedagogy, oral instruction, and disciplined practice. The method combines close reading of internal Tablighi texts with analysis of textualized Indonesian oral materials. Its purpose is not to judge the correctness of Tablighi *tafsīr*, nor to issue a legal evaluation of the movement's practices. The article asks a different question: how do selected Qur'anic meanings become operative within a religious movement through speech, repetition, bodily discipline, and religious travel? This approach allows Qur'anic interpretation to be examined beyond authored

¹⁹ Talal Asad, "The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam," *Qui Parle* 17, no. 2 (2009): 1-30; Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).

²⁰ Landy Trisna Abdurrahman, "Embodied Fiqh: Tradisi Pemikiran, Orientasi Tekstual, dan Lokalitas Keislaman Tablighi Jamaat di Indonesia" (Doctoral Thesis, UIN Sunan Kalijaga, 2026), <http://digilib.uin-suka.ac.id/id/eprint/76716>.

²¹ William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-ʿArabī's Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989).

commentary, while still keeping the analysis tied to identifiable texts, cited verses, and concrete pedagogical forms.²²

The primary textual sources are *Fadhilat Tabligh*, *Fadhilat Qur'an*, and *Hayatus Sahabah*. These works are read as movement pedagogy rather than as formal works of *tafsir*. They arrange Qur'anic verses, Prophetic reports, and exemplary narratives in ways that motivate *da'wah* (religious invitation), piety, self-reform, prayer, patience, and service.²³ The Indonesian field materials come from three teaching settings documented by the author: a *mudzakarah* on The Six Qualities of The *Ṣaḥābah*, a *bayān* addressing religious responsibility, gratitude, prayer, and family life, and a post-Maghrib *bayān* in Sragen.²⁴ These records provide situated evidence of how speakers condense Qur'anic teachings and connect them with everyday religious discipline. Because the materials were drawn from a limited number of settings, they are not presented as representative of Tablighi Jamaat communities throughout Indonesia.

The analysis proceeds through four connected steps. First, the article identifies Qur'anic verses and Qur'an-related claims that appear in the internal texts and oral materials. Second, it maps the practices attached to those meanings, especially *da'wah*, *ta'lim* (religious learning circle), prayer, *dhikr* (remembrance of Allah), sincerity, and *khurūj fī sabīlillāh* (going out in the path of Allah). Third, it examines the distinction between *'ilm al-faḍā'il* (knowledge of virtues) and *'ilm al-masā'il* (knowledge of legal-religious questions), since this distinction shows how lay participation and *'ulamā'* authority are held together within the movement. Finally, the findings are read through Talal Asad's notion of Islam as a discursive tradition, Landy Trisna Abdurrahman's formulation of embodied *fiqh*, and Ibn 'Arabi's distinction between rational knowledge, knowledge through states, and knowledge of secrets.²⁵ This combination makes it possible to treat interpretation not only as textual explanation, but also as disciplined formation.

Results and Discussion

Six Qualities as a Pedagogy of Qur'anic Enactment

The pedagogical language most closely associated with Tablighi Jamaat is the language of the six qualities, yet these qualities should not be read as a closed doctrinal system standing apart from the Qur'an and *ḥadīth*. A local *mudzakarah* (religious discussion) on this theme begins by describing the completeness of Islam brought by the Prophet as encompassing "Iman, Ibadah, Muamalah, Mu'asyarat dan Ahlaq" (faith, worship, social dealings, social relations, and morals).²⁶ The statement is not merely introductory. It locates the six qualities within a wider religious horizon and prevents them from being mistaken for a substitute scripture or an independent theological program. The same *mudzakarah* makes the boundary even clearer when it states, "*Enam sifat sahabat ... bukan merupakan wujud agama yang sempurna, karena agama yang sempurna terkandung dalam al qur'an dan al hadits*" (the six qualities of the companions are not the complete form of religion, because complete religion is contained in the Qur'an and *ḥadīth*).²⁷ What appears here is not a

²² Talal Asad, "The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam," *Qui Parle* 17, no. 2 (2009): 1-30; Barbara D. Metcalf, "Living Hadith in the Tablighi Jama'at," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 52, no. 3 (1993): 584-608.

²³ Muhammad Zakariyya Kandhlawi, *Fadhilat Tabligh*; Muhammad Zakariyya Kandhlawi, *Fadhilat Qur'an*; Muhammad Yusuf Kandhlawi, *Hayatus Sahabah*, vol. 1.

²⁴ Mudzakarah Enam Sifat Sahabat, author observation, author's archive; Indonesian bayān materials, author's archive.

²⁵ Asad, "The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam"; Landy Trisna Abdurrahman, "Kerangka Teoritik," unpublished manuscript; William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-'Arabi's Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989).

²⁶ Mudzakarah Enam Sifat Sahabat, author observation, author's archive.

²⁷ Mudzakarah Enam Sifat Sahabat.

displacement of scripture, but a practical condensation of scriptural religion into a teachable and repeatable moral curriculum.

The six qualities operate, then, as a pedagogy of formation. They do not claim to exhaust Islam, but they identify dispositions through which religion can be trained in ordinary life. The qualities named in the *mudzakarah* are *yaqīn* upon the good sentence, prayer with concentration and humility, knowledge with *dhikr*, honoring Muslims, correcting intention, and *da'wah* or *tabligh* through *khurūj fi sabīlillāh*.²⁸ Each quality translates a broad field of Islamic teaching into a practical discipline. Faith becomes the reorientation of trust toward Allah. Prayer becomes a discipline whose effects must move beyond ritual completion into daily conduct. Knowledge is divided into virtues that may be circulated widely and legal-religious questions that require the authority of *'ulamā'*. Intention is trained as purification of motive, while *da'wah* is framed as the use of wealth, body, and time for religion. The interpretive work here is not primarily philological. It is pedagogical and disciplinary, turning Qur'anic and Prophetic authority into habits that can be remembered, repeated, and carried by ordinary participants.²⁹

Talal Asad's notion of Islam as a discursive tradition helps clarify why this condensation matters. A tradition, in Asad's account, is not simply a collection of beliefs inherited from the past. It is a historically formed field in which present practices are authorized, corrected, and disciplined through reference to authoritative texts, exemplary figures, and inherited forms of reasoning.³⁰ The six qualities work in this sense. They do not produce a detailed commentary on Qur'anic verses, but they create a sequence through which Qur'anic and Prophetic authority enters speech, body, time, and collective discipline. The repeated invocation of the *ṣaḥābah* is central to this process. The companions appear not merely as remembered figures from early Islamic history, but as templates through which present Muslims imagine the practical form of religion. Tablighi Jamaat's pedagogy thus does not ask participants only to know what the companions believed. It asks them to train themselves toward qualities associated with the companions as a way of making religion livable.³¹

Such pedagogy has an interpretive dimension, although it does not look like conventional *tafsīr*.³² The six qualities take the Qur'an's larger moral universe and render it into a compact curriculum of action. The act of interpretation lies in the movement from remembered meaning to practiced disposition. A participant is not only asked to understand faith, prayer, knowledge, sincerity, respect, and *da'wah*. He is asked to rehearse them until they become part of bodily conduct and social habit. This is the point at which Qur'anic meaning becomes enacted. The available oral material does not justify a broad claim that every Tablighi Jamaat circle in Indonesia teaches the six qualities in exactly the same way, nor does it prove that Tablighi Jamaat has a formal theory of Qur'anic interpretation. The stronger claim is more modest and more defensible: the *mudzakarah* shows a pattern of movement pedagogy in which the Qur'an and *ḥadīth* remain the stated source of complete religion, while the six qualities become a practical route for embodying that religion.

²⁸ Mudzakarah Enam Sifat Sahabat.

²⁹ Lina Dweirj, "The Qur'an: An Oral Transmitted Tradition Forming Muslims Habitus," *Religions* 14, no. 12 (2023): 1531, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14121531>.

³⁰ Talal Asad, "The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam," *Qui Parle* 17, no. 2 (2009): 1-30.

³¹ Zacharias Pieri, "Daily Ritual, Mission, and the Transformation of the Self: The Case of Tablighi Jamaat," *Numen* 66, no. 4 (2019): 360-80, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15685276-12341544>.

³² Hadia Mubarak, "Modern Approaches to Qur'anic Interpretation," in *Rebellious Wives, Neglectful Husbands*, 1st ed., by Hadia Mubarak (Oxford University PressNew York, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197553305.003.0004>.

From Verse to Da'wah Discipline

The most explicit connection between Qur'anic verse and Tablighi practice appears in the discussion of *da'wah*, *tabligh*, and *khurūj fī sabilillāh*. The *mudzakarah* defines these terms in a brief but operational sentence: “Dakwah mengajak, Tabligh menyampaikan dan khuruj fisabilillah adalah keluar di jalan Allah” (*da'wah* is inviting, *tabligh* is conveying, and *khurūj fī sabilillāh* is going out in the path of Allah).³³ It then cites Q. 41:33 through the phrase, “Tidak ada yg lebih bagus perkataannya melebihi orang yg mengajak kepada Allah” (no speech is better than that of the one who calls to Allah).³⁴ The verse is not opened through extended discussion of grammar, legal implication, or exegetical disagreement. It is received as a practical grammar for religious speech. Speech becomes noble when it calls to Allah, but within Tablighi pedagogy that speech is not separated from travel, discipline, humility, and self-reform.

Fadhilat Tabligh strengthens this pattern by arranging Qur'anic verses and Prophetic reports as motivational foundations for spreading religion. The text presents the work of calling people to Allah as a responsibility that cannot be confined to formal scholars alone.³⁵ Q. 41:33 receives particular emphasis because it frames invitation to Allah as a noble form of speech. Other verses widen the moral field of *da'wah*. Q. 3:104 supports the formation of a group that invites to good, commands right, and forbids wrong. Q. 3:110 links the status of the best community to faith and moral exhortation. Q. 20:132 connects religious responsibility to the family through prayer and patience, while Q. 31:17 joins prayer, commanding good, forbidding wrong, and endurance in hardship.³⁶ These verses are not randomly attached to Tablighi practice. They form a route from speech to discipline, from exhortation to organization, and from scriptural command to the training of religious subjects.

The movement from verse to discipline becomes clearer when *da'wah* is described as a means of self-reform. The *mudzakarah* states that *da'wah* and *khurūj* aim at “memperbaiki diri” (reforming oneself) through the use of “harta diri dan waktu” (wealth, body, and time) in accordance with Allah's command.³⁷ This formulation prevents a narrow understanding of *da'wah* as outward preaching alone. The person who invites others is also the person being trained. The body that travels, the time that is rearranged, the wealth that is spent, and the speech that is disciplined become part of the interpretive process. Q. 41:33, in this sense, does not merely authorize speaking about religion. It helps produce a subject who learns to speak, travel, listen, and reform himself within a shared moral order.³⁸

Metcalfe's work on Tablighi texts and practice is useful here because it explains why the relation between text and action cannot be reduced to citation. Her argument that written and spoken texts in Tablighi Jamaat are secondary to practice does not mean that texts are unimportant. It means that texts are designed to be taken up through repeated acts and disciplined bodies.³⁹ Scripture is not abandoned in favor of practice. Rather, scriptural meaning is mediated through practices that are portable across places.⁴⁰ A verse such as Q. 41:33 can move from *Fadhilat Tabligh* into *bayān*, from *bayān* into *khurūj*, and from *khurūj* into a participant's sense of moral responsibility. The verse

³³ Mudzakarah Enam Sifat Sahabat.

³⁴ Mudzakarah Enam Sifat Sahabat.

³⁵ Muhammad Zakariyya Kandhlawi, *Fadhilat Tabligh*.

³⁶ Kandhlawi, *Fadhilat Tabligh*.

³⁷ Mudzakarah Enam Sifat Sahabat.

³⁸ Valerie Gonzalez, “Phenomenology of Quranic Corporeality and Affect: A Concrete Sense of Being Muslim in the World,” *Religions* 14, no. 7 (2023): 827, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14070827>.

³⁹ Barbara D. Metcalf, “Living Hadith in the Tablighi Jama'at,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 52, no. 3 (1993): 584-608.

⁴⁰ Saipul Hamdi et al., “Self-Islah, Gender Relation and Socio-Economic Challenges on Tablighi Jamaat Proselytization Practices in Indonesia,” *Al-Albab* 10, no. 2 (2021): 189–202, <https://doi.org/10.24260/alalbab.v10i2.2087>.

travels because the movement has built routines through which it can be heard, repeated, embodied, and socially carried.

For this reason, *khurūj* should not be read only as a social activity or missionary technique. It carries a scriptural imagination. Participants do not merely move because an organization instructs them to move. They move within a moral world where speech, prayer, patience, invitation, and collective responsibility have Qur'anic resonance. The concept of "enacting Qur'anic meaning" is useful precisely at this point. Meaning does not remain in the verse alone, nor only in a written explanation of the verse. It circulates through the relation between verse, internal text, oral teaching, group formation, travel, and repeated discipline. *Da'wah* discipline therefore becomes a form of enacted interpretation, not because Tablighi Jamaat offers a formal *tafsīr* of every cited verse, but because selected Qur'anic meanings are made operative through the movement's pedagogy and practice.

Yaqīn, Prayer, and Dhikr as Embodied Qur'anic Meaning

The oral materials show that Qur'anic meaning in Tablighi Jamaat is not directed only toward outward *da'wah*. It also works through an inward reorientation of trust, attention, and bodily discipline. In the discussion of the first quality, *Lā ilāha illā Allāh* is explained as the effort of "mengeluarkan keyakinan pada makhluk dari dalam hati dan memasukkan keyakinan hanya kepada Allah" (removing reliance on created beings from the heart and placing reliance only on Allah).⁴¹ A post-Maghrib *bayān* in Sragen expresses the same idea through an ordinary example of illness and medicine: "Kita tidak yakin obat yang menimbulkan, tapi kita yakin Allah subhanahu wa ta'ala" (we do not believe that medicine itself causes healing, but believe that Allah does).⁴² The point is not presented as a philosophical discussion of causality. It is given as a discipline of *yaqīn* (certainty of faith), a way of training the heart not to stop at visible means. The formula of faith is therefore not treated merely as a sentence to be known. It becomes a movement of the heart, a practical effort to relocate trust from created things to Allah.

Ibn 'Arabī's distinction between *'ilm al-'aqlī* (rational knowledge) and *'ilm al-aḥwāl* (knowledge through states) helps describe this movement, as long as the distinction is used analytically rather than genealogically.⁴³ Tablighi Jamaat is not being presented here as a movement shaped directly by Ibn 'Arabī's metaphysics. The distinction simply helps name a pattern visible in the materials. A person may know the creed conceptually, yet the pedagogical concern of the *bayān* and *mudzakah* lies in whether that knowledge has become a state of reliance. *Yaqīn* begins with doctrinal recognition, but it is not complete as a concept alone. It must be cultivated as a disposition. In this sense, Qur'anic monotheism is not only affirmed as belief. It is trained as an inner condition that reshapes how the believer reads food, medicine, effort, weakness, and dependence.⁴⁴

Prayer works through a similar movement from command to embodied moral form. The *mudzakah* defines prayer as concentration of the inner self and humility according to the way exemplified by the Prophet, and it gives prayer a purpose beyond ritual completion: "Membawa sifat-sifat ketaatan kepada Allah ... didalam shalat kedalam kehidupan sehari-hari" (bringing the

⁴¹ Mudzakah Enam Sifat Sahabat, author observation, author's archive.

⁴² Post-Maghrib bayān in Sragen, author observation, author's archive.

⁴³ William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-'Arabī's Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989).

⁴⁴ Nuraan Davids and Yusef Waghid, "Qur'anic Conceptions of Being Muslim, Mu'min, and Muh'sin," in *Ethical Dimensions of Muslim Education*, by Nuraan Davids and Yusef Waghid (Springer International Publishing, 2016), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-29317-2_8.

qualities of obedience to Allah within prayer into everyday life).⁴⁵ This is a strong statement of embodied interpretation. Prayer is not treated only as an obligation completed at a fixed time, but as a discipline expected to reshape ordinary conduct. The Sragen *bayān* makes the point more simply when it says, “Tidak hanya sekedar mengerjakan solat” (not merely performing prayer).⁴⁶ Another *bayān* stresses congregational prayer, especially *‘Ishā’* and *Ṣubḥ*, as “jantungnya shalat” (the heart of prayer).⁴⁷ These statements do not elaborate the legal details of prayer. They move instead toward the formation of a praying subject whose obedience is meant to travel from the ritual act into everyday life.

Prayer therefore becomes a bridge between textual command and moral formation. Qur’anic commands to pray are embodied through posture, time, congregation, humility, repetition, and disciplined attention. The desired movement is not only from ignorance to knowledge, but from ritual performance to transformed conduct.⁴⁸ This is close to Asad’s understanding of religious discipline, where practice forms capacities, sensibilities, and dispositions rather than merely expressing belief.⁴⁹ A Qur’anic command is obeyed, but it also trains the body and the self. The person who prays is expected to carry something from prayer into speech, social relations, restraint, and responsibility. Tablighi Jamaat’s pedagogy does not formulate this as a theory of interpretation, yet the interpretive movement is present. The meaning of prayer is made operative through disciplined repetition.

Dhikr (remembrance of Allah) and Qur’anic recitation extend the same training into the rhythm of daily life. The *mudzakarah* encourages participants to read the Qur’an every day, using the practical instruction “usahakan 1 juz 1 hari” (try to read one *juz* a day), along with repeated *tasbīḥ*, *ṣalawāt*, and *istighfār*.⁵⁰ A *bayān* similarly describes the heart as something to be filled with *tilāwah al-Qur’ān* (recitation of the Qur’an), gratitude, and *dhikrullāh*.⁵¹ Here the Qur’an appears not primarily as a text to be explained, but as divine speech to be recited, repeated, heard, and absorbed. The pedagogical emphasis falls on regularity and affective orientation. Recitation is expected to soften the heart, purify intention, and keep the believer attached to Allah. Meaning does not stand apart from sound, memory, reward, fear, love, and bodily habit.⁵²

This affective register is also visible in *Fadhilat Qur’an*. The work presents attachment to the Qur’an as inseparable from love of Allah, because the Qur’an is not merely a semantic object but Allah’s speech.⁵³ Such a view allows Qur’anic meaning to operate through reverence, recitation, repetition, and desire for closeness to Allah. For the study of *tafsīr*, the implication must be stated carefully. Tablighi Jamaat is not producing *tafsīr* in the same way a commentator explains vocabulary, grammar, legal implication, or narrative background. Yet Qur’anic meaning is still being received, shaped, and enacted. It forms dispositions through recitation, prayer, *dhikr*, *yaqīn*, and the expectation that religious practice should transform the heart. What appears here is interpretation as moral pedagogy, not commentary in the formal sense.⁵⁴

⁴⁵ Mudzakarah Enam Sifat Sahabat.

⁴⁶ Post-Maghrib bayān in Sragen.

⁴⁷ Indonesian Tablighi Jamaat bayān material on four-month jamā’ah, author’s archive.

⁴⁸ Dweirj, “The Qur’an.”

⁴⁹ Talal Asad, “The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam,” *Qui Parle* 17, no. 2 (2009): 1-30.

⁵⁰ Mudzakarah Enam Sifat Sahabat.

⁵¹ Post-Maghrib bayān in Sragen.

⁵² Lauren E. Osborne, “The Experience of the Recited Qur’an,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 48, no. 1 (2016): 124–28, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S002074381500152X>.

⁵³ Muhammad Zakariyya Kandhlawi, *Fadhilat Qur’an*.

⁵⁴ Nermeen Mouftah, “THE SOUND AND MEANING OF GOD’S WORD: AFFIRMATION IN AN OLD CAIRO QUR’AN LESSON,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 51, no. 3 (2019): 377–94, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020743819000357>.

Faḍā'il and Masā'il as an Epistemic Division

A crucial pattern in the Indonesian oral materials appears in the distinction between *'ilm al-faḍā'il* (knowledge of virtues) and *'ilm al-masā'il* (knowledge of legal-religious questions). The *mudzakarah* first defines knowledge as guidance that comes from Allah through the Prophet, then states the division directly: "Ilmu dibagi 2: 1. Ilmu Fadhoil 2. Ilmu Masail" (knowledge is divided into two: knowledge of virtues and knowledge of legal-religious questions).⁵⁵ The routes for acquiring each form of knowledge are not the same. *'Ilm al-faḍā'il* is linked to sitting in *ḥalaqah ta'lim* at home and in the mosque, inviting others to join *ta'lim*, and bringing the virtues into practice. *'Ilm al-masā'il*, by contrast, is linked to gatherings with *'ulamā'* (religious scholars), asking questions about worship and social dealings, and visiting those who possess recognized religious knowledge.⁵⁶ This distinction is small in wording, but large in implication. It shows that Tablighi Jamaat does not treat all religious knowledge as equally open to lay circulation.

This division complicates a simple argument about lay authority in Tablighi Jamaat. The movement clearly widens participation in religious exhortation.⁵⁷ Ordinary Muslims are encouraged to remind others, speak about virtues, listen to internal texts, organize time for *ta'lim*, and invite people to religious practice.⁵⁸ Yet the same pedagogy does not erase the authority of *'ulamā'*. Legal-religious questions remain connected to scholars, especially when the issue concerns worship, social dealings, and practical rulings. What appears here is not full democratization of *tafsīr* or law, but a selective democratization of reminder, virtue, and disciplined practice. Tablighi Jamaat allows religious concern to circulate widely, while keeping *masā'il* within a more restricted field of scholarly authority.⁵⁹

Metcalf's reading of Tablighi Jamaat helps place this pattern in a broader historical frame. She shows that Tablighi texts are not meant to stand alone as abstract doctrinal writings, but to be heard, repeated, and internalized through practice.⁶⁰ This explains why lay participation in Tablighi Jamaat often takes the form of disciplined action rather than formal interpretation. A participant may convey the value of prayer, remind others of Allah, invite people to *ta'lim*, and join *khurūj fī sabīlillāh* (going out in the path of Allah), but this does not automatically authorize him to resolve legal or exegetical problems. The movement expands responsibility without making every participant a jurist or commentator. In this sense, Tablighi Jamaat produces a religious subject who is expected to carry concern, not necessarily to claim interpretive mastery.

The same distinction clarifies the role of *Fadhilat Tabligh* and *Fadhilat Qur'an*. Their emphasis is not systematic law. Their genre is motivational, pedagogical, and affective. They gather Qur'anic verses, Prophetic reports, and exemplary stories to produce concern, attachment, reverence, and action.⁶¹ In the terms of the *mudzakarah*, these works belong largely to the domain of *faḍā'il*. Their authority lies in shaping religious desire and discipline rather than resolving detailed legal problems. This is why repeated reading in *ta'lim* matters. The texts are not merely repositories of information. They are instruments through which participants learn what to admire, what to fear, what to repeat, and how to direct ordinary time toward religion.

⁵⁵ Mudzakarah Enam Sifat Sahabat, author observation, author's archive.

⁵⁶ Mudzakarah Enam Sifat Sahabat.

⁵⁷ Bulbul Siddiqi, "Spiritual Journey Within the Tablighi Jamaat," in *Becoming 'Good Muslim,'* by Bulbul Siddiqi (Springer Singapore, 2018), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-7236-9_5.

⁵⁸ Bulbul Siddiqi, *Becoming 'Good Muslim'* (Springer Singapore, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-7236-9>.

⁵⁹ Arsalan Khan, "The Ethics of Hierarchy and the Moral Reproduction of Congregational Life," in *The Promise of Piety*, by Arsalan Khan (Cornell University Press, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.7591/cornell/9781501773525.003.0005>.

⁶⁰ Barbara D. Metcalf, "Living Hadith in the Tablighi Jama'at," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 52, no. 3 (1993): 584-608.

⁶¹ Muhammad Zakariyya Kandhlawi, *Fadhilat Tabligh*; Muhammad Zakariyya Kandhlawi, *Fadhilat Qur'an*.

Ibn ‘Arabī’s epistemic categories can help name this layered movement, provided they are used carefully. *‘Ilm al-‘aqlī* appears in the citation of verses, reports, and named categories of knowledge. *‘Ilm al-aḥwāl* appears when those materials are intended to generate concern, sincerity, humility, and reliance on Allah.⁶² *‘Ilm al-asrār* requires even greater caution. This article does not claim that Tablighi Jamaat possesses esoteric knowledge, nor that its participants understand themselves through Ibn ‘Arabī’s metaphysics. The category is used only to mark how sanctified meanings are carried through trusted elders, revered texts, exemplary stories, and repeated transmission. A participant may not produce a formal commentary on the Qur’an, but may still receive Qur’anic meaning through a chain of authorized practice.

This epistemic division is also where Tablighi Jamaat becomes especially relevant to the study of religious movements and authority. Authority in this case is neither fully institutional nor fully individual. It is distributed across several layers. Texts authorize reminder. *‘Ulamā’* authorize *masā’il*. Elders and experienced participants authorize discipline through example. The group authorizes movement through collective routine. Qur’anic meaning travels through this layered structure, not as free personal interpretation, but as guided participation in a disciplined moral world. For that reason, Tablighi Jamaat should not be described simply as a lay *tafsīr* movement. The more precise claim is that it produces a pedagogy of Qur’anic enactment in which general exhortation is widely circulated, while specialized religious questions remain tied to scholarly authority.⁶³

Khurūj as an Epistemic and Disciplinary Practice

Among the practices associated with Tablighi Jamaat, *khurūj fī sabīlillāh* is the clearest example of how religious meaning becomes movement, schedule, and bodily discipline. A local *mudzakarah* defines *khurūj fī sabīlillāh* simply as “keluar di jalan Allah” (going out in the path of Allah), but the explanation does not stop at spatial departure. The same material links *khurūj* to *memperbaiki diri* (self-reform) through the use of “harta diri dan waktu” (wealth, body, and time).⁶⁴ This formulation is important because it shifts the meaning of travel from mobility as movement between places to mobility as moral training. One does not only leave a house, a workplace, or a familiar social environment. One leaves a settled arrangement of time, comfort, speech, and self-importance in order to enter a rhythm where religion becomes the organizing center of daily life. The schedule mentioned in the *mudzakarah*, “minimal 4 bulan seumur hidup, 40 hari setiap tahun, 3 hari setiap bulan dan 2,5 jam setiap hari” (at least four months in a lifetime, forty days each year, three days each month, and two and a half hours each day), should therefore not be read as a universal legal obligation.⁶⁵ It functions more precisely as a pedagogical rhythm, a way of making religious concern measurable, repeatable, and socially accountable within the movement.

The epistemic force of *khurūj* lies in the fact that it teaches by rearranging the conditions under which a person knows, speaks, and acts. A participant may hear about *da‘wah* in a sermon, but *khurūj* places that hearing inside a lived sequence: leaving home, joining a group, sleeping simply, adjusting to others, visiting mosques, listening to *bayān*, speaking carefully, and submitting ordinary time to a collective religious schedule. Knowledge is not only transmitted as content. It is produced through exposure, dependence, embarrassment, patience, and repetition. This is why

⁶² William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-‘Arabī’s Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989).

⁶³ Riyaz Timol, “Religious Authority, Popular Preaching and the Dialectic of Structure-Agency in an Islamic Revivalist Movement: The Case of Maulana Tariq Jamil and the Tablighi Jama’at,” *Religions* 14, no. 1 (2022): 60, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14010060>.

⁶⁴ Mudzakarah Enam Sifat Sahabat, author observation, author’s archive.

⁶⁵ Mudzakarah Enam Sifat Sahabat.

khurūj cannot be reduced to preaching activity. It is also a discipline of being preached to by circumstance. Hunger, fatigue, awkward encounters, limited privacy, and the need to follow group adab become part of the pedagogy.⁶⁶ The participant learns that religious speech has a cost. Calling others to Allah demands that the caller's own time, body, and desire for ease be placed under discipline.

Such a reading also clarifies the relationship between outward mission and inward reform. The *mudzakarah* does not describe *khurūj* merely as a technique for reaching others. It explicitly ties it to self-improvement.⁶⁷ The direction of movement is therefore double. The participant goes outward toward other people, yet the practice turns back upon the self. The one who invites is also being trained. This double movement is crucial for understanding how Qur'anic meaning is enacted in Tablighi Jamaat. Q. 41:33, which elevates the speech of the one who calls to Allah, does not remain a statement about noble speech. Through *khurūj*, that speech is attached to a disciplined arrangement of time, companionship, humility, and sacrifice. The verse becomes a pattern of conduct. Its meaning is carried not only by the tongue, but by the route taken, the schedule followed, and the bodily willingness to leave ordinary comfort.

Barbara Metcalf's study of *karguzārī* helps illuminate one dimension of this process, but the point can be pushed further. Reports of travel in Tablighi Jamaat are not simply narrative records of where participants went and what they did. They turn experience into a shareable moral memory.⁶⁸ A journey becomes meaningful when it is narrated as trial, assistance, failure, correction, or renewal. In that act of reporting, participants learn how to interpret their own experience through the movement's moral vocabulary. Difficulty becomes training. Delay becomes patience. A successful invitation becomes divine help rather than personal skill. A moment of weakness becomes a warning against pride. *Karguzārī* therefore does not merely preserve memory after *khurūj*. It teaches participants how to remember their movement religiously. Travel produces experience, narration orders experience, and ordered experience becomes transmissible knowledge.

Noor's account of Tablighi Jamaat in Southeast Asia as a movement of faith-driven mobility also helps situate *khurūj* beyond the local scene.⁶⁹ The movement travels through mosque networks, kinship ties, migration routes, and cross-border religious encounters, but its mobility is not only logistical. Movement itself becomes a sign of seriousness. To leave one's familiar place for *khurūj* is to enter a temporary arrangement in which ordinary status is softened. Professional identity, local prestige, and domestic comfort are suspended, at least partially, while the participant is absorbed into the discipline of the group. This temporary relocation makes Tablighi Jamaat portable across social and national boundaries. Its pedagogy does not require every participant to master a complex theological vocabulary. It requires them to enter a routine: pray together, listen, visit, speak modestly, serve others, and repeat.

Portability is one reason *khurūj* matters for understanding Tablighi Jamaat as a transnational movement. A formal commentary depends heavily on language, scholarly training, and textual competence.⁷⁰ *Khurūj* depends on a more mobile grammar of practice. Participants can recognize

⁶⁶ Rüdiger Seesemann, "Embodied Knowledge and *The Walking Qur'an* :," *Journal of Africana Religions* 3, no. 2 (2015): 201–9, <https://doi.org/10.5325/jafireli.3.2.0201>.

⁶⁷ Mudzakarah Enam Sifat Sahabat.

⁶⁸ Barbara D. Metcalf, "Travelers' Tales in the Tablighi Jama'at," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 588 (2003): 136–48.

⁶⁹ Farish A. Noor, "On the Permanent Hajj: The Tablighi Jama'at in South East Asia," *South East Asia Research* 18, no. 4 (2010): 707–34.

⁷⁰ Brannon D. Ingram, "The Portable Madrasa: Print, Publics, and the Authority of the Deobandi 'ulama," *Modern Asian Studies* 48, no. 4 (2014): 845–71, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X13000097>.

the movement through repeated gestures even when language is limited.⁷¹ Nisa's work on Indonesian female Tablighis shows how cross-border participation helps produce a sense of belonging to a global Tablighi *ummah* through shared religious routines, Qur'anic recitation, hospitality, and *da'wah* work.⁷² This does not mean language is irrelevant. Rather, the movement has created forms of religious participation that allow belonging to be felt before it is fully explained. The shared schedule, the shared adab, and the shared bodily discipline become signs of membership in a transnational moral world.

Khurūj therefore functions as an epistemic and disciplinary practice at once. It teaches by making participants inhabit the meanings they hear. It disciplines by converting Qur'anic exhortation into time, route, bodily effort, and collective accountability. It forms knowledge not as private interpretation, but as guided participation in a repeatable practice. This is why the phrase "enacting Qur'anic meaning" is appropriate here. A verse may be cited in *Fadhilat Tabligh*, repeated in *bayān*, condensed in *mudzakarah*, and carried into *khurūj*. Its durability comes not only from textual authority, but from being attached to practices that can be repeated across places. Tablighi Jamaat does not turn every participant into an exegete. It trains participants to become carriers of reminder, concern, and disciplined movement. In that training, Qur'anic meaning becomes socially portable and bodily persuasive.

Moral Taṣawwuf without Over-Sufizing the Movement

The question of Sufism has long followed scholarly discussions of Tablighi Jamaat, and for good reason. The movement emerged from a South Asian Islamic world in which Deobandi reform, Sufi lineages, mosque-based discipline, and lay religious mobilization were not always easily separable. Reetz captures this complexity by arguing that Tablighi Jamaat combines reformist zeal with Sufi-inspired spirituality, leadership patterns, ritual discipline, and self-organization.⁷³ Gaborieau, however, gives an equally necessary warning. Tablighi Jamaat should not be reduced to Sufism, since many older Sufi forms are residual, modified, or displaced within the movement.⁷⁴ A careful reading must therefore avoid two opposite errors. The first is to erase every Sufi trace because Tablighi Jamaat does not function as a formal *ṭarīqah*. The second is to inflate every moral vocabulary of self-discipline into proof that the movement is secretly or essentially Sufi. The materials examined in this article support a middle position: Tablighi Jamaat can carry a moral language of *taṣawwuf* without becoming a Sufi order in the institutional sense.

The post-Maghrib *bayān* in Sragen is useful because it shows precisely this modest and moral use of Sufi vocabulary. The speaker states, "Ilmu yang ketiga yang harus ada pada diri kita dalam hidup adalah ilmu tasawwuf" (the third knowledge that must be present in our life is the knowledge of *taṣawwuf*), and then explains that "tasawwuf adalah kumpulan dari sifat-sifat yang baik" (*taṣawwuf* is a collection of good qualities).⁷⁵ The examples that follow point to ethical dispositions such as patience, humility, and contentment. Nothing in this passage suggests formal initiation, a

⁷¹ Yusron Razak and Saifudin Asrori, "Ritual, Religion, and Reform: The Impact of Khuruj on the Tablighi Jamaat Community," *Buletin Al-Turas* 30, no. 2 (2024): 245–60, <https://doi.org/10.15408/bat.v30i2.40670>; Muhammad Ulul Albab Musaffa and Landy Trisna Abdurrahman, "FIKIH PAKAIAN JAMAAH TABLIGH: ANTARA DOKTRIN, IDENTITAS, DAN STRATEGI," *Harmoni* 22, no. 1 (2023): 48–69, <https://doi.org/doi.org/10.32488/harmoni.v1i22.642>.

⁷² Eva F. Nisa, "Insights into the Lives of Indonesian Female Tablighi Jama'at," *Modern Asian Studies* 48, no. 2 (2014): 468–91.

⁷³ Dietrich Reetz, "Sufi Spirituality Fires Reformist Zeal: The Tablighi Jama'at in Today's India and Pakistan," *Archives de sciences sociales des religions* 135 (2006): 33–51.

⁷⁴ Marc Gaborieau, "What Is Left of Sufism in Tablighi Jama'at?," *Archives de sciences sociales des religions* 135 (2006): 53–72.

⁷⁵ Post-Maghrib bayān in Sragen, author observation, author's archive.

binding *silsilah* (chain of spiritual transmission), allegiance to a *murshid* (spiritual guide), or the ritual curriculum of an institutional Sufi order. The speaker does not present *taṣawwuf* as a separate path standing beside the Qur'an and *ḥadīth*. He uses it as a name for moral refinement. This matters because the evidence itself asks to be read at the level of ethical formation, not institutional classification.

A more precise reading emerges if *taṣawwuf* is treated here as a vocabulary of moral cultivation. In the Sragen *bayān*, the word does not function as a claim about organizational identity. It helps name the qualities that a religious subject should develop after learning belief, worship, and religious responsibility. The order is important. *Taṣawwuf* appears not as an escape from ordinary religious practice, but as its moral interior. Prayer without humility, knowledge without adab, and *da'wah* without sincerity would remain incomplete forms of religiosity.⁷⁶ The speaker's use of *taṣawwuf* therefore points to a concern that is central to Tablighi Jamaat more broadly: religion must not remain at the level of information or outward action. It must enter the heart, soften behavior, discipline speech, and reshape the way a person lives with others.

This is also where the argument about embodied Qur'anic meaning gains depth. If Qur'anic meaning is enacted through Tablighi Jamaat, it is not enacted only as outward movement or public preaching. It is enacted through the formation of moral states that make practice religiously meaningful. *Yaqīn* (certainty of faith), humility in prayer, sincerity of intention, honoring Muslims, patience in travel, and concern for others are not decorative virtues added after the "real" work of *da'wah*.⁷⁷ They are the inner conditions that allow *da'wah* to be understood as service rather than self-display. The concern is not simply whether one speaks about Allah, but what kind of self is formed by that speech. In this sense, moral *taṣawwuf* in the materials does not compete with Qur'anic meaning. It names one of the ways Qur'anic meaning is made inhabitable.

The embodied *fiqh* framework helps sharpen this point without turning Tablighi Jamaat into a *ṭarīqah*.⁷⁸ Embodiment asks us to see how religious normativity is carried through bodies, routines, spaces, and social discipline. Applied to Qur'anic meaning, the same insight suggests that interpretation may appear as trained conduct rather than explicit commentary. A verse about calling to Allah becomes meaningful when the caller learns humility. A command to pray becomes formative when prayer trains obedience beyond ritual time. Recitation becomes transformative when it fills the heart with reverence and remembrance. These processes overlap with concerns often associated with *taṣawwuf*, but they do not require the institutional form of Sufism. The analytical task is to notice the moral texture of the practice without forcing it into an identity claim that the data do not support.

Ibn 'Arabī's epistemic distinction can be useful here only if it remains an analytic aid, not a genealogical assertion. *ʿIlm al-aḥwāl* (knowledge through states) helps describe why moral and affective conditions matter for knowing.⁷⁹ The materials repeatedly suggest that knowledge of Allah is incomplete if it remains merely a sentence. It must become *yaqīn* in the heart, humility in prayer, remembrance through *dhikr*, patience during *khurūj*, and sincerity in the act of inviting

⁷⁶ Wael Hegazy, "The Salience of Saintliness in Islam: A Sufi Perspective," *Teosofi: Jurnal Tasawuf Dan Pemikiran Islam* 11, no. 1 (2021): 1–19, <https://doi.org/10.15642/teosofi.2021.11.1.1-19>.

⁷⁷ Ashraf Salaheldin, "Role of the Sentimental Methodology of Qur'an in Da'wah in Promoting the Islamic Discourse in the West," *Bulletin of The Faculty of Languages & Translation* 18, no. 2 (2020): 179–220, <https://doi.org/10.21608/bflt.2020.166235>.

⁷⁸ Abdurrahman, "Embodied Fiqh."

⁷⁹ Selman Dilek, "The Philosophical Nature of Mystical Knowledge Ibn Al-'Arabī's Examination of the Debate on the Eternity of the World in Islamic Intellectual History," in *Philosophy and Mysticism in the Islamic World*, ed. Reza Hajatpour (De Gruyter, 2025), <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783112218204-008>.

others.⁸⁰ Yet this does not mean Tablighi Jamaat teaches Ibn ‘Arabī’s metaphysics or understands itself through his categories. The usefulness of the category lies in its ability to illuminate a structure already visible in the materials: knowledge is expected to become a condition of the self. When the Sragen speaker describes *taṣawwuf* as good qualities, he is not theorizing mystical epistemology. He is expressing, in local pedagogical language, the idea that religion must become character.

Over-Sufizing Tablighi Jamaat would obscure this structure rather than clarify it. The movement’s reliance on *Fadhilat Tabligh*, *Fadhilat Qur’an*, *Hayatus Sahabah*, mosque-based *ta’līm*, *da’wah*, and *khurūj* does not resemble the full curriculum of a formal Sufi order. Its authority is not organized primarily around initiation into a *ṭarīqah*, nor around a technical program of mystical ascent. Its moral vocabulary may overlap with *taṣawwuf*, but its organizational grammar remains that of a reformist missionary movement built around travel, exhortation, repetition, and lay participation. Reetz’s formulation is valuable precisely because it describes a relation rather than an identity: Sufi spirituality may energize reformist zeal without making the movement itself a conventional Sufi order.⁸¹ Gaborieau’s caution keeps the analysis from mistaking residue, influence, or vocabulary for institutional continuity.⁸²

The point, then, is not to decide whether Tablighi Jamaat is “really” Sufi or “not Sufi.” That binary is too blunt for the evidence. The more useful question is how Sufi-like moral formation operates within a movement that does not present itself primarily as a *ṭarīqah*. The Sragen *bayān* suggests that *taṣawwuf* can appear as an ethical register within Tablighi speech. It names the cultivation of patience, humility, contentment, and other qualities that make religious practice inwardly serious. These states are not left private. They are organized through public routines: listening in *ta’līm*, praying in congregation, joining *khurūj*, honoring Muslims, correcting intention, and repeating Qur’anic recitation. Moral states become socially repeatable. This is why the phrase “moral *taṣawwuf* without over-Sufizing the movement” is necessary. It allows the article to recognize the moral and affective depth of Tablighi Jamaat’s pedagogy while still respecting the institutional limits of the evidence.

Indonesia as a Site of Transnational Da’wah Imagination

The Indonesian materials do more than show how Tablighi Jamaat teaches discipline to its participants. They also reveal how the movement imagines Indonesia within a longer history of religious transmission. One *bayān* frames the arrival of Islam in the archipelago through a striking sentence: “agama ini tidak datang melalui angin atau air, tetapi dibawa oleh manusia-manusia pilihan Allah” (this religion did not come through wind or water, but was carried by human beings chosen by Allah).⁸³ The statement does not function as neutral historical description. It places Islam’s arrival within a moral grammar of movement, sacrifice, and human agency. Religion travels because people carry it. Faith becomes present in a place because someone leaves another place, bears hardship, speaks, teaches, and transmits. The same oral material mentions the *Wali Songo* and other ‘*ulamā*’ as figures through whom Islam spread across the archipelago.⁸⁴ Through this narrative, present Tablighi *da’wah* is not imagined as a new activity detached from Indonesian Islamic memory. It is placed within a chain of earlier journeys, earlier teachers, and earlier acts of religious labor.

⁸⁰ William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-‘Arabī’s Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989).

⁸¹ Reetz, “Sufi Spirituality Fires Reformist Zeal,” 33-51.

⁸² Gaborieau, “What Is Left of Sufism,” 53-72.

⁸³ Indonesian Tablighi Jamaat *bayān* material on four-month *jamā’ah*, author observation, author’s archive.

⁸⁴ Indonesian Tablighi Jamaat *bayān* material on four-month *jamā’ah*.

This framing matters because Tablighi Jamaat is often perceived as foreign to Indonesia due to its South Asian origin. Such a perception is not entirely baseless at the level of genealogy, since the movement emerged from North India and carries many traces of Deobandi reformist culture. Yet genealogy alone cannot explain how the movement becomes meaningful in Indonesian settings. Nisa's work complicates any simple foreign-local opposition by showing how Tablighi practice is localized through *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools), local teachers, Indonesian educational norms, and cross-border religious networks.⁸⁵ Noor's study of Tablighi Jamaat in Southeast Asia makes a similar point from another direction. The movement's regional presence depends on routes, reception, mosque networks, and mobile religious actors rather than on simple transplantation from one center to passive peripheries.⁸⁶ The Indonesian *bayān* adds a further layer. It narrates Indonesian Islam itself as the result of travel and transmission. Within such a narrative, *khurūj* does not appear only as an imported South Asian practice. It can be heard as a contemporary continuation of the older movement through which religion was brought, taught, and rooted.

The logic of this narrative should not be overstated. The article does not claim that all Indonesian Muslims accept Tablighi Jamaat's self-placement within the history of Islamization.⁸⁷ Nor does it claim that the *bayān* offers a critical historiography of Islam in Indonesia. Its importance lies elsewhere. The narrative shows how Tablighi speech localizes transnational practice by attaching it to Indonesian Islamic memory. The Prophet, the *ṣaḥābah*, 'ulamā', *awliyā'*, the *Wali Songo*, and present participants are placed within a moral chain of transmission. The chain is not historical in a narrowly archival sense. It is pedagogical. It teaches listeners to see religious movement as a recurring form of responsibility. Present *da'wah* becomes meaningful because it is imagined as carrying forward what earlier religious carriers once did.

Indonesia therefore becomes more than a geographical recipient of a transnational movement. It becomes a site where Tablighi meanings are translated into local vocabularies and moral memories. Terms such as *usaha agama* (religious effort), *pengorbanan* (sacrifice), *mudzakarah* (religious discussion), *bayān*, *ta'lim*, and *khurūj* show how Indonesian religious speech absorbs and reshapes Tablighi pedagogy. These terms do not merely label activities. They make the movement intelligible within Indonesian Muslim sensibilities. *Pengorbanan*, for instance, gives *khurūj* an affective weight. It does not describe travel as movement alone, but as the giving of time, body, comfort, and resources for religion. *Usaha agama* similarly turns *da'wah* into a shared moral project, not simply a sermon delivered by a specialist. Through such vocabulary, Qur'anic meanings tied to invitation, prayer, patience, and moral responsibility enter local speech.

Nisa's discussion of Indonesian female Tablighis offers another view of this transnational imagination, even though gender is not the main empirical focus of the present article. She shows how *pesantren* and *mastūrah khurūj* allow women to imagine belonging to a global Tablighi *ummah*.⁸⁸ Her interlocutors describe encounters with Tablighis from different countries and explain that Qur'anic recitation, *ḥadīth*, hospitality, and the language of Allah's greatness create connection even when linguistic communication is limited.⁸⁹ This point is important for the present argument because it shows that transnational belonging in Tablighi Jamaat is not carried only

⁸⁵ Eva F. Nisa, "Insights into the Lives of Indonesian Female Tablighi Jama'at," *Modern Asian Studies* 48, no. 2 (2014): 468-91.

⁸⁶ Farish A. Noor, "On the Permanent Hajj: The Tablighi Jama'at in South East Asia," *South East Asia Research* 18, no. 4 (2010): 707-34.

⁸⁷ Saipul Hamdi, "DEMAZHABIZATION OF ISLAM, DIVINITY ECONOMY AND NARRATIVES OF CONFLICT OF THE TABLIGHI FOLLOWERS IN SAMARINDA EAST KALIMANTAN," *Al-Albab* 4, no. 2 (2015), <https://doi.org/10.24260/alalbab.v4i2.285>.

⁸⁸ Nisa, "Insights into the Lives," 468-91.

⁸⁹ Nisa, "Insights into the Lives," 488-91.

through doctrine or organizational membership. It is felt through repeatable practices. People may not share a fluent language, but they can share recitation, prayer, adab, hospitality, and the discipline of *da'wah*. Meaning travels through bodies and routines before it is fully translated into conceptual explanation.

Such mobility also explains why a purely textual approach would miss part of the phenomenon. Qur'anic verses matter, but they matter as part of a mobile field of practice. A verse cited in *Fadhilat Tabligh* may enter *bayān*. A phrase heard in *bayān* may be remembered during *khurūj*. A journey may later become *karguzārī*, and *karguzārī* may become a lesson for others. The movement from text to speech, from speech to travel, from travel to memory, and from memory back to instruction is one of the ways Tablighi Jamaat sustains Qur'anic meaning across regions. This is not a linear process in which a text is first interpreted and then applied. It is circular and cumulative. Meaning is repeatedly heard, embodied, narrated, corrected, and carried again.

The broader implication is that transnational circulation is also hermeneutical. Religious movements do not travel only by moving people, institutions, and printed texts. They also travel by making certain meanings portable.⁹⁰ Tablighi Jamaat's Qur'anic meanings become transnational not because every participant reads the same formal commentary, but because participants enact a shared discipline around selected meanings. Calling to Allah, praying with discipline, cultivating *yaqīn*, honoring Muslims, joining *khurūj*, and listening in *ta'lim* become portable forms of interpretation. Indonesia is therefore not merely a local branch of a South Asian movement. It is a site where Qur'anic meaning is re-spoken through Indonesian memory, local pedagogy, and transnational discipline. In this sense, Tablighi Jamaat is not only a transnational religious movement. It is also a transnational interpretive formation.

Enacting Meaning beyond Formal Tafsīr

What appears across the materials is not the absence of Qur'anic interpretation, but a different location of interpretive work. Tablighi Jamaat does not usually ask its participants to enter the Qur'an through the scholarly apparatus of formal *tafsīr*, with its attention to grammar, variant readings, legal disagreement, occasions of revelation, and chains of exegetical authority. Its pedagogy moves through another route. A verse is heard, repeated, joined to a virtue, attached to a practice, and then carried into a schedule of bodily discipline. Q. 41:33 becomes more than a statement about noble speech. It becomes a reason to speak carefully, to invite others, and to accept responsibility for one's own religious reform. Q. 3:104 and Q. 3:110 become collective concern and the formation of a group that calls to good. Q. 20:132 and Q. 31:17 become prayer, family discipline, patience, and moral endurance. Qur'anic recitation is not treated only as access to semantic content, but as a daily practice that softens the heart and binds the self to Allah. Stories of the *ṣaḥābah* do not function merely as historical memory. They become templates through which sacrifice, service, and religious seriousness are made imaginable.⁹¹

This movement from verse to practice should not be mistaken for a replacement of text by action. Tablighi Jamaat does not leave the text behind. It places the text inside a working ecology of pedagogy. *Fadhilat Tabligh* and *Fadhilat Qur'an* gather verses, reports, and exemplary material in order to generate concern, reverence, and movement.⁹² Indonesian *mudzakarah* (religious discussion) and *bayān* (religious sermon) translate those concerns into local speech, often through

⁹⁰ Edward Baring, "Ideas on the Move: Context in Transnational Intellectual History," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 77, no. 4 (2016): 567–87, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jhi.2016.0031>.

⁹¹ Muhammad Zakariyya Kandhlawi, *Fadhilat Tabligh*; Muhammad Zakariyya Kandhlawi, *Fadhilat Qur'an*; Muhammad Yusuf Kandhlawi, *Hayatus Sahabah*, vol. 1.

⁹² Kandhlawi, *Fadhilat Tabligh*; Kandhlawi, *Fadhilat Qur'an*.

compact definitions, repeated phrases, and practical reminders. *Ta'lim* (religious learning circle) gives those reminders a rhythm of listening, while *khurūj fi sabilillāh* (going out in the path of Allah) gives them a bodily and social form. Interpretation is therefore distributed across genres. It appears in books, oral instruction, travel, group discipline, everyday schedules, and narrative memory. No single genre contains the whole meaning, because meaning is made durable through their interaction.

The stronger analytical point lies precisely in this distribution. Formal *tafsīr* usually stabilizes meaning through explanation. Tablighi Jamaat stabilizes selected meanings through repetition and enactment. Its pedagogy does not ask first, “How many possible interpretations does this verse have?” It asks, more practically and more urgently, “What kind of Muslim should this verse produce?” This is not a minor difference. It shifts the center of interpretation from semantic elaboration to religious formation. The question is not only what Q. 41:33 means in a lexical or exegetical sense, but how a person becomes the kind of subject who feels responsible to call others to Allah without turning that call into pride, argument, or self-display. Meaning here is not only understood. It is rehearsed until it becomes a disposition.

Such a model helps avoid two weak conclusions. One would say that Tablighi Jamaat lacks Qur'anic interpretation because it does not produce formal commentary. That claim is too narrow because it treats interpretation as if it exists only in authored exegetical texts. Another would say that every Tablighi practice is automatically a full *tafsīr* of the Qur'an. That claim is too expansive because it dissolves the difference between disciplined reception and scholarly commentary. The evidence supports a more careful middle position. Tablighi Jamaat produces an enacted Qur'anic pedagogy. It is selective because it foregrounds particular verses and meanings. It is practical because those meanings are attached to prayer, *da'wah*, *dhikr*, sincerity, service, and travel. It is affective because it seeks *yaqīn* (certainty of faith), humility, concern, and love of the Qur'an. It is disciplinary because these states are trained through repeated routines rather than left as private feelings.

The distinction between *'ilm al-faḍā'il* (knowledge of virtues) and *'ilm al-masā'il* (knowledge of legal-religious questions) gives this middle position its internal boundary. Tablighi Jamaat widens participation in religious reminder, but it does not necessarily give every participant authority to resolve legal or exegetical questions. Virtues circulate widely through *ta'lim*, *bayān*, and invitation. *Masā'il* remain tied to *'ulamā'* (religious scholars).⁹³ This distinction matters because it shows that the movement's interpretive life is neither fully democratic nor fully clerical. Lay participants are trained as carriers of reminder, not as independent jurists or exegetes. They carry selected Qur'anic meanings into social life, but the movement still recognizes that some forms of knowledge require specialized authority. Its interpretive practice is wide in circulation, yet bounded in claim.

The embodied *fiqh* framework helps name this structure, provided it is adapted carefully. If *fiqh* can be embodied through routine, space, and communal discipline, Qur'anic meaning can also be carried through disciplined formation.⁹⁴ Tablighi Jamaat turns selected Qur'anic meanings into what may be called embodied scriptural pedagogy. Participants learn by listening, reciting, walking, visiting, serving, correcting intention, and submitting ordinary time to a religious order. The interpretive act is not isolated in the mind of a commentator. It is stretched across the body of a participant, the route of a group, the repetition of a text, and the moral memory of a journey. This does not eliminate the need for textual responsibility. It shows that responsibility to the Qur'an may also appear as the effort to become the kind of person whom the verse calls into being.

⁹³ Mudzakarrah Enam Sifat Sahabat, author observation, author's archive.

⁹⁴ Abdurrahman, “Embodied Fiqh.”

Asad's idea of discursive tradition remains useful here, not as a decorative theoretical label, but because it explains how authority can be dispersed without becoming arbitrary.⁹⁵ Tablighi Jamaat links present practice to the Qur'an, *ḥadīth*, *sunnah*, *ṣaḥābah*, elders, internal texts, and repeated routines. Authority does not sit in one place. It is layered. A verse authorizes a virtue. A text arranges the virtue for repeated reading. A *bayān* translates it into local urgency. A group routine tests it through movement. A report of travel turns it into memory that can teach others. This layered structure helps explain why the movement can travel across differences of class, education, language, and locality. A highly technical commentary may not move easily across such differences. A disciplined routine of prayer, *ta'lim*, *da'wah*, and *khurūj* can move more readily while still carrying scriptural resonance.

The final significance of this pattern is not that Tablighi Jamaat offers a hidden alternative to formal *tafsīr*. Its significance is that it forces Qur'anic studies and the study of religious movements to notice a form of interpretation that works through formation.⁹⁶ Qur'anic meaning in Tablighi Jamaat often appears as urgency before it appears as argument, as discipline before it appears as exposition, and as concern before it appears as abstraction. This emphasis has limits. It may leave complex interpretive questions underdeveloped, and it can privilege repetition over critical debate. Yet its social power cannot be understood if one looks only for authored commentary. In the materials examined here, Qur'anic meaning becomes real through a disciplined ecology of speech, recitation, travel, memory, and moral training. That is the point at which Tablighi Jamaat becomes visible not only as a transnational *da'wah* movement, but also as a transnational formation of enacted scriptural meaning.

Conclusion

Qur'anic meaning in Indonesian Tablighi Jamaat operates less as a formal exegetical project than as a disciplined ecology of religious formation. The movement is not best understood as a school of *tafsīr*, yet the Qur'an is not peripheral to its practice. Selected verses and Qur'an-related claims are carried into *da'wah*, *ta'lim*, prayer, *dhikr*, sincerity, *khurūj*, and moral concern. Meaning moves through a layered process: from text to oral instruction, from oral instruction to bodily discipline, from bodily discipline to travel, and from travel to renewed religious subjectivity. Such a process shows that scriptural meaning can become operative without always appearing as commentary in the formal scholarly sense.

The central argument, then, is that Tablighi Jamaat enacts Qur'anic meaning by making it livable, repeatable, and socially portable. Q. 41:33 becomes a grammar of calling to Allah. Verses on collective responsibility, prayer, patience, and family discipline become a curriculum of movement practice. The six qualities of the *ṣaḥābah* condense Qur'anic and Prophetic authority into a practical pedagogy that can be remembered and trained. The distinction between *'ilm al-faḍā'il* and *'ilm al-masā'il* gives this pedagogy an important internal boundary. Lay participants are encouraged to become carriers of reminder, virtue, and practice, while legal-religious questions remain tied to *'ulamā'*. The movement therefore widens religious participation without necessarily dissolving scholarly authority.

Theoretical language helps clarify this pattern only when it remains close to the materials. Asad's notion of discursive tradition explains how Qur'an, *ḥadīth*, *sunnah*, *ṣaḥābah*, elders, texts, and repeated routines form a field of authority rather than isolated references. The embodied *fiqh* framework helps show how normativity is carried through bodies, spaces, schedules, and communal discipline. Ibn 'Arabī's epistemic distinction is useful only as an analytic map for

⁹⁵ Talal Asad, "The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam," *Qui Parle* 17, no. 2 (2009): 1-30.

⁹⁶ Siddiqi, "Spiritual Journey Within the Tablighi Jamaat."

observing how knowledge may move from conceptual recognition to moral state and transmitted practice. None of these frameworks should be used as decorative theory. Their value lies in helping us see why Qur'anic meaning in Tablighi Jamaat appears as concern, discipline, humility, repetition, and movement, not only as explanation.

Several limits remain important. The Indonesian materials used here consist of textualized oral materials and selected internal Tablighi texts. They are sufficient for a focused textual-anthropological argument, but they do not constitute a full ethnography of Tablighi Jamaat in Indonesia. The argument does not claim to represent all Indonesian Tablighi circles, all regional variations, or all gendered practices. Further research should observe *ta'lim* sessions, local *bayān*, *mudzakah*, and preparation for *khurūj* in specific Indonesian sites. Interviews with senior participants, younger members, women involved in *mastūrah* activities, and local '*ulamā*' would deepen the analysis of authority, reception, and variation. Such work would allow Tablighi Jamaat to be studied not only as a transnational *da'wah* movement, but also as a movement that carries scripture through disciplined forms of life.

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