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Dissension in Tafsīr Principles and its Impact on Allama ‘Anāyat Allah Khan al-Mashraqī's Tafsir "Tazkirah" (1888-1963)

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Abstract

All disciplines of knowledge are regulated by certain principles, associated with particular branches of study. Holy Qur’ān, as an everlasting miracle, contains injunctions and rulings to all facets of life for all ages. Tafsir, literally ‘to explain’ is the explanation of Holy Qur’ān. To provide elucidation for better understanding, different kinds of Qur’ānic interpretations are being penned from early Islamic history. Principles of Tafsir, as a separate academic field, developed in the early centuries of Islamic History in different phases. Few Tafsir principles are unanimously agreed upon among exegetes while others are not accepted by all. Thus, dissension in Tafsir principles leads the interpreters to ponder in Qur’ān differently and bring valuable aspects of Qur’ānic teachings into the light. This research paper briefly reviews the fundamental principles of Tafsir and its impacts on Allamah Anayat Allah Khan

al-Mashraqīs Tafsir "Tazkirah". Exegetes of the Subcontinent have contributed significantly to Tafsir Literature. In all interpretations, exegetes established and describe a few principles which they did follow to interpret Holy Qur'ān. Exegeses in the subcontinent can be classified into two major types, Tafsir bi al-Riwāyah (explanation through sound transmissions), and Tafsir bi al-Ra'ay (Interpretation by reasoning). Generally, the latter one was not approved by mainstream Islamic theologians of the subcontinent. Moreover, the comparison and relevancy of Tafsir Tazkirah to traditional Tafsir, as well as, the outlook of this modernist exegete, is also a prime concern of this research paper. By adopting qualitative methodology, findings would be concluded in the end.

Keywords: Tafsīr Principles, Urdu Exegeses, Subcontinent, Tafsīr Tazkirah, ‘Allamah ‘Anayat Allah al-Mashraqī

1. Foreword:

Though the Holy Book, Qur'ān, last message from Creator to mankind revealed in the Arabic language yet language is not the only tool to understand this message (text and meaning) in detail. That is not the only case with Qur'ān but scriptures of all three Semitic religions Judaism, Christianity and Islam did face the same issue. Certain Divine injunctions and decrees were interpreted differently by a theologian of these religions. Therefore different schools of thought did appear within one religion over the passage of time.¹ Qur'ān has been interpreted by different sources and methodologies. Systematic principles and methodologies of interpreting Qur'ān are called Tafsīr Principles. Many Muslim theologians and exegetes did interpret Qur'ān by depending on sound Prophetic (PBUH) traditions and companions (r.a) reports while few give priority to their own reason. The prime reason behind this issue is how to determine and fix the exact meaning of the Qur'ānic text as desired and required by Lord Almighty? Like many other languages, Arabic has also many words which have more than one meaning. The difference in meaning can lead to a difference in understanding and result. Above all, the question is who has the supreme authority to describe and fix the exact meaning of the Qur'ānic text that should be followed by others. In Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) life that was not an issue, He was the only authority to interpret Qur'ānic words through his actions and words. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was declared receiver as well as the interpreter of revelation by Allah Almighty.

وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

¹ House of Hillel and Shammai is well established theological school of thought in Judaism. Christianity is divided into Eastern Orthodoxy, Catholicism, Anglicanism, Protestantism and many more.

And We revealed to you the message [i.e., the Qur’ān] that you may make clear to the people what was sent down to them and that they might give thought.²

As Prophet (PBUH) departed this world his trained companions (r.a) teaches Qur’ān to the people around them by promoting Prophetic traditions and transmissions. Fatal outcomes of wrong Qur’ānic understanding can be understood from crises developed by extremist deviated group of Muslims called *Khawarij* in 1st Islamic century.³ Present Tafsīr literature can be classified into two main categories and Tafsīr bi al-Mathūr (interpretation of Qur’ān based on by Prophetic traditions) and Tafsīr bi al-Ra’ay (Interpretation based on reason). Hitherto, in the presence of criticism for each other, both kinds of Tafsīr are being written from early age till the present time. Tafsīr Tazkirah by ‘Allamah Mashraqī is also been considered a Tafsīr based on reason. This article is a humble effort to analyze this exegesis.

2. Literature Review:

From early Islamic history till recent times a number of books are written on principles of Tafsīr. Besides some primary books written in Arabic, many other books were consulted written in the subcontinent to have deep insight on this academic issue. Shah Wali Allah (d.1762) notable work about Tafsīr Principles *Al-fauz al-kabīr Fī Usūl al-Tafsīr* was a landmark that can be traced in later exegetes work even after two centuries. Shah Walī Allah’s work mainly represents mainstream traditional *Tafsīr bi al-Mathūr* school of thought with exceptions in a few areas. Whereas In *Tafsīr bi al-Rā’ay*, Sir Sayyad Ahmad Khān (d.1898) noteworthy work *al-Tahrīr fī Usūl al-Tafsīr* is considered as a pioneering document. In addition to that Moulānā Hamiduddin Farāhī (d.1930), Moulānā Amīn Ahsan Islāh (d.1997), Moulānā Muhammad Hanīf Nadwī (d.1987) also contributed to this field. Two Ph.D dissertations are written on this topic.⁴ Many valuable research articles are also written on this topic including Methodology of Ibn-e-Taymiyyah in *Muqaddamah fī Usūl al-Tafsīr* by Dr. Sana Allah,⁵ and Tafsīr in the age of Sahabah, Methodologies and salient features by Dr. Muhammad Sa’d Siddiqui.⁶

² Qur’ān, Sūrah al-Nahal, 16:44

Note: English Translation by Umm Muhammad, Sahīh International, (Saudi Arabia: Al-Muntada Al-Islamī, 2004)

³ Tahir bin Muhammad, al-Tabsīr fī al-Dīn wa tamīz al-Firqa al-Najīya ‘an Firq al-Halikīn, (Lebanon: ‘Alam al-Kutub, 1998) p.45

⁴ Muhammad Habīb Allah Qādi written his Ph.D thesis titled “An analysis of Tafsīr Literature and Qur’ānic understanding in Subcontinent” and awarded Doctorate Degree from Peshawar University in 2005. ‘Ubaid al-Rahmān Mohsin wrote his thesis “Principles of Tafsīr in subcontinent and its impact” and awarded doctorate degree from Punjab University Lahore in 2013.

⁵ Associate Professor, Dept. of Qur’ān and Tafsīr, ‘Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad

⁶ Professor, Dept. of Islamic studies, University of the Punjab, LHR

3. Kinds of Tafsīr Literature:

Tafsīr is a genre to which Muslim scholars contributed a fair amount. A great number of Tafsīr has been written from early Islamic history until the present time. There are two major classifications of Tafsīr literature, *Tafsīr bi al-Mathūr* (interpretation by Prophet PBUH sayings) and *Tafsīr bi al-Ra'ay* (Interpretation through speculation and reasoning). *Tafsīr bi al-Ra'ay* has further two more categories. One is acknowledged by mainstream Islamic theologians if it does not go against well-established mainstream Islamic teaching, ideology and philosophy. And if the interpretation goes against the unanimously agreed upon issues then Tafsīr is not appreciated and disapproved by mainstream Islamic intelligentsia. Over the passage of time different kinds of Qur'ānic interpretation and commentaries penned down i.e. Legal Tafsīr (*Āhkam al-Qur'ān* by *al-Jasās* d. 942), Rhetorical Tafsīr (*Majāz al-Qur'ān* by *Abū'Ubāyidah* d. 824), Allegorical Tafsīr (*Tafsīr Tustarī* by *Sahl al-Tustarī* d. 896) textual Tafsīr (*Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān* by *al-Farā* d. 822),

4. Principles of Tafsīr bi al-Mathūr:

According to mainstream Islamic scholars, Tafsīr principles and Qur'ānic sciences (*'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*) are considered synonyms terminologies. An interpreter is expected to excel in Qur'ānic sciences to have deep and perfect insight in Qur'ān. Few Tafsīr principles are as follows.

The *Mufasssir* (interpreter) must:

(1) Be sound in belief. (2) Know who the addresses of specific verses are. (3) Know what are different kinds and styles of address in Qur'ān? (4) Knows why, when and where certain verses were revealed? (5) Seek guidance from Qur'an and Prophet saying to interpret the Qur'ānic text. (6) Give priority to reports of *Sahabah* (Prophet Muhammad PBUH companions). (7) Knows the verses of abrogation (*Naskh*). (8) Symmetry in Qur'ān (9) Wisdom behind repetition in Qur'ān (10) knows Arabic language and grammar (11) Acquaintance to different Qur'ānic dialect (12) General and specific rulings.⁷

It should be kept in mind that advocates of *Tafsīr bi al-Mathūr* do not discourage logical reasoning too. As Allah Almighty asked to ponder in Qur'ān:

أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ أَمْ عَلَى قُلُوبٍ أَقْفَالُهَا

Then do they not reflect upon the Qur'ān, or are there locks upon [their] hearts?⁸

⁷ Nadvī, Faisal Ahmad, Tafsīr and Usūl al-Tafsīr, (Lucknow, Idarah Ahya'ay 'Elm wa Da'wat, 2016) p. 216-217

⁸ Qur'ān, Sūrah Muhammad, 47:24

But they set certain limits and conditions to use reason and do not allow speculations according to Qur'ānic ruling:

وَلَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ

And do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge.⁹

Medieval Muslim theologian Shaikh Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 1328) wrote noteworthy Tafsīr principles in which he states,

Interpretations based on personal reasoning are *Haram* (illegal).¹⁰ Moreover there is a consensus in Muslim Ummah that Prophetic narrations in books of Sahīh Bukharī and Sahīh Muslim are absolutely authentic.¹¹

But our theologian also admits that there are a lot of fabricated and unauthentic narrations included in our intellectual heritage yet a true scholar differentiates between right and wrong transmissions.¹² He said using logic in presence of revelation can lead us astray like Mutazilites.¹³ Another contemporary scholar on Tafsīr principle Shaikh Manna' al-Qaththan says, by following interpretation based on sound transmission (*Tafsīr bi al-Mathūr*) one can save his faith.¹⁴ Following an interpretation based on reason is heretical doctrine.¹⁵ Sayyad Amīr Alī (d.1928) a prominent interpreter of Qur'ān in subcontinent gives his opinion on *Tafsīr bi al-Ra'ay*. He writes present rationalist behave weirdly. They claim to have knowledge of this whole universe but are unable to find the truth about their own being.¹⁶ On the other hand, Moulānā Abu al-Kalām Āzād (d. 1958) takes a balanced stand between the modernist and traditional school of thought in his exegesis *Tarjamān al- Qur'ān*. Moulānā Amīn Ahsan Islāhī¹⁷ and Moulānā Taqī Uthmanī¹⁸ in their distinguished work also strengthen the balanced, comprehensive and traditional Tafsīr Principles based on sound transmission and reasoning.

⁹ Qur'ān, Sūrah al-Isrā, 17:36

See also Qur'ān, Sūrah al-A'rāf, 7:33 "and that you say about Allah that which you do not know."

¹⁰ Ibn Taymiyyah, Muqadamah Usūl al-Tafsīr /translation by Abd al-Razzāq Malihabādai (Lahore: al-Maktabah Al- Salfiah, n.d) p. 65

¹¹ Ibid., p.36

¹² Ibid., p. 30

¹³ Ibid., p.51

Mutazilites: A rationalist school of Islamic theology flourished in 8th and 9th century disapproved by mainstream Islamic theologian.

¹⁴ Manna' al- Qaththan, Mabāhith fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān / translation by Abdullah Sarwer (Lahore: Maktabah Muhammadiah,2016), p.449

¹⁵ Ibid., p.453

¹⁶ Amīr Alī, Sayyad, Mawāhib al-Rahmān, (Lucknow: Maktabah Munshi Nawal Kashūr, n.d) v.1 p.13

¹⁷ Islāhī, Amīn Ahsan, Mabādai Tadabbur al-Qur'ān , (Lahore: Anjuman Khuddam al- Qur'ān , n.d), p. 169-198

¹⁸ Taqī Uthmanī, 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān aur Usūl al-Tafsīr, (Karachi: Maktabah Dar al-'Ulum, 1396 H.) p. 228,345,419,432

From the lines stated above, we can take a glimpse of the traditional point of view on Tafsīr Principles. Dr. Burhān Ahmad Fārūqī states his remarks on the traditional school of thought,

“In al-Itqān fī ‘Ulūm al-Qur’ān, that is included as a preface in Tafsīr Jalālayin, hundreds of Qur’ānic sciences (‘Ulūm al-Qur’ān) are discussed but these sciences cannot solve even a single problem which we are facing today. Because we are trying to understand Qur’ān from wrong direction yet our clergy has no idea about it.¹⁹

5. Principles of Tafsīr bi al-Ra’ay:

All the Exegetes who do prefer the interpretation of Qur’ān by reason and speculation have almost the same stance on this issue which is coming in the following lines. Sir Sayyad Ahmad Khān (d.1898) played a leading role as a pioneer exegete of *Tafsīr bi al-Ra’ay* in the subcontinent. He did write a booklet on Tafsīr Principles in response to the queries of one of his friends and eminent scholar Nawāb Mohsin al-Mulk (d.1907). Sayyad Ahmad admits that I’ve received a lot of criticism on my commentary of Qur’ān yet my friend’s queries²⁰ did compel me to explain my point of view on this very critical issue and make the people understand my Tafsīr Principles. Further, he explains his principles of Tafsīr.

- (1) Word of God (revelation/scripture) cannot go against the work of God (nature). Religion and science work in harmony and support each other.
- (2) Religion and dogma should be justified through reason otherwise human are not bound to follow.
- (3) Admitting whatever comes in scripture that do not proved on scientific grounds is the attitude of ignorant people.
- (4) There is no abrogation in Qur’ān.
- (5) To determine the meanings of the Qur’ānic word exegete must consider the context.
- (6) There is a strong probability that certain Arabic words of Qur’ān may have other meanings too which has not been discovered by theologian of classical Islamic era.
- (7) Meaning of Qur’ānic words can be determined from the Arabic *Jahili* (ignorant) poetry.
- (8) In the presence of *Isrā’ēliyyāt* (Jews and Christians Narratives), it is difficult to find authentic stories of Prophets and Messengers (peace be upon them).

¹⁹ Burhān Ahmad, Dr, Qur’ān or Musalmāno ke Zinda Masā’il , (Lahore: Services Book Club, 1996) p. 42

²⁰ Nawab Mohsin al-Mulk criticized Sir Sayyad and said your understanding of Qur’ān need to be revised because it is out of context. You made Religion subject to scientific knowledge. Science even does not acknowledge revelation as a source of knowledge. Concept of Prophet Hood, hereafter, Hell and Heaven has no place in science.

Major parts of these narrations are irrational. Sir Sayyad further adds, there is no clear text in Qur'ān which endorses the birth of Jesus (peace be upon him) without father. In addition to that, Qur'ān does not support the claim that Prophet Yunus (a.s) was swallowed by fish. Qur'ānic word '*iltaqama*' literally means to grab used in that story. The rest of the story was fabricated by Jews and Christian that must be denied by Muslims.²¹ Nawab Mohsin al-Mulk asked Sir Sayyad, you tried your best to justify religion through science but we see science is being advanced. What if science acknowledges the supernatural in some later time which is disapproved today? Sir Sayyad replied then Qur'ān should be interpreted again according to the advanced scientific knowledge of that era. My mistakes should be referred to me because it is the error of my understanding, not Qur'ān.²² 'Allama Aslam Jirājpūri (d. 1955), the advocate of *Tafsīr bi al-Ra'ay*, writes few principles of Tafsīr in the preface of *Matālib al-Furqān fi Darūs al-Qur'ān*, interpretation by Gulām Ahmad Parvaiz. He claims that the principles of Tafsīr followed by Muslims Exegetes are not well established and contain many flaws.

- To him, from the traditional methodologies of Tafsīr, we can understand the meanings of each verse and word separately. As far the whole divine message of Qur'ān is concerned, these traditional Tafsīr principles and methodologies proved to be inefficient.
- Prophetic Traditions and transmission of the early Islamic era cannot play an important role to understand Qur'ān because a larger part of this literature is fabricated and not authentic. Transmitting chains are not reliable and most of the narrations are taken from Jews literature.
- The purpose and intention of writing Tafsīr in the early era were to get a reward (*sawāb*) from Allah, therefore primary Tafsīr literature are pages full of irrational things which proved to be useless in present time.
- Early interpreters were advocates of the idea of abrogation in Qur'ān. That is why they considered many valid legal injunctions of Qur'ān abrogated. We strongly condemn the idea of abrogation in Qur'ān. To us all legal injunctions and rulings are valid till final day and nobody has authority to abrogate even a single verse of Qur'ān.

²¹ Sayyad Ahmad, sir, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān wa Huwa al-Huda wa al-Furqān*, (Lahore, Rifah-e-Āam Press, n.d) p. 6-26

²² *Ibid.*, p. 35

- Traditional exegetes quote numerous sayings, ambiguous and contrary to each other to explain single verse and leave the reader confused. It also proved that they are not sure about authenticity of these sayings.
- ‘Allamah Aslam Jirājpūri further Adds, traditional exegetes seems more interested in the issues which have no importance in practical life i.e. characteristics of paradise, uniform and formation of Angels in the battle of *Baddar* etc.²³

However, Dr. Mahmūd Ahmad Ghāzī (d. 2010) in his series of lectures on Qur’ān said, five principles are established by Rationalist commentators for Qur’ānic interpretation based on reason. Interpretation should be in accordance with Arabic phrases and language. It should be in accordance with Qur’ān and Sunnah. Meaning of word should be derived carefully with reference to context. Interpreters should approve the consensus of Muslim *Ummah*.²⁴

It can be concluded from the lines stated in the paragraphs above that there is a great difference in Tafsīr Principles. Based on these principles, interpretations of both schools of thought are different to a large angle from each other. Surprisingly both creeds in their discourse consider the other one deviated from the well-established right path.

6. Life and literary contribution of ‘Allamah ‘Anayat Allah al-Mashraqī:

‘Allamah Mashraqī was born on 25th August 1888 in Amartasar, city of India. His father has close ties with eminent scholar Sayyad Jamāl al-Din Afghāni. ‘Allamah Mashraqī did Master in mathematics with distinction and received his gold medal from Punjab University Lahore. ‘Allamah Mashraqī decided to endure his higher studies in England where he continued his achievements in Christ College of Cambridge University. After completing his education he returned to India and served as a vice-principal of Islamia College Peshawar. Subsequently, he joined British Indian Government and served as an undersecretary in Shimla. He also served in the education department but on the issue of the khilafat Movement (1919-1924), ‘Allamah Mashraqī criticized the government and as a result disposed to a lower position. He was also disagreed on migration strategy which result in death of many migrants including kids and women.²⁵ That was a turning point for ‘Allamah Mashraqī and he decided to devote his life to uplifting work for Indian Muslims. He manifested his message by words and deeds. He wrote more than 30 books about Tafsīr, Life of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), Islamic Ideology,

²³ Pervaiz, Ghulām Ahmad, *Matālib al-Furqān fi Darūs al-Qur’ān*, (Lahore: Idara Talū ‘ Islam, 2003) p. 25
battle of *Baddar*: First Battle between Muslims and Pagans 624 CE

²⁴ Ghāzī, Mahmūd Ahmad, *Muhazrāt-e-Qur’ān* (Lahore: al-Faisal Nāshran, 2009) p. 243

²⁵ Al-Mashraqī, Anayat Allah, *Tazkirah*, (Lahore: Tazkirah Publicationers, 1998), v.3, p.12-19

Islamic philosophy and Current affairs, motivational poetry and political framework of his khāksār Movement.²⁶ ‘Allamah Mashraqī did prefer Pakistan to stay after India partition and supported Pakistan movement. He passed away in 1963 in Lahore.

7. Introduction of Tafsīr Tazkirah:

‘Allamah al-Mashraqī wrote in preface of his exegesis about why, when and how he decided to write down this commentary. According to ‘Allamah Mashraqī,

“When I was studying in England I was not interested in Islam, Muslims affairs or Qur’ān as I was a distinguished scholar of Math and pure sciences. But when I returned back to India in 1913 and stayed six years over here, the rhetorical writings of one cleric enraged me because he was misleading the deprived Muslim nation. I was 32 years old at that time. My prime motive was to write down a brief essay on Muslims Decline. To perform this task as I started to study Qur’ān to collect material for my essay, meanwhile scientific facts which Qur’ān contains caught my attention”.²⁷

Tafsīr *Tazkirah* is available in three volumes with around three hundred pages in each. However ‘Allamah Mashraqī did mention in preface that he completed six volumes of this commentary.²⁸ To have better elucidation, the reader of this exegesis must have an idea of the political and social situation of Muslims of that era, especially the second quarter of the 20th century.

8. Salient features of Tafsīr Tazkirah:

This exegesis does not follow the arrangement and order of Qur’ānic chapters (*Surahs*) rather ‘Allamah Mashraqī did focus on topics and collected interlinked concerned verses about one theme from different chapters and discussed it under one major topic. ‘Allamah Mashraqī recounts his experience and states,

At first, I was reluctant how to understand these multifarious and complicated Qur’ānic ideas but later on, I came across one verse and decided to adopt this methodology.²⁹

فَاقْرَأُوا مَا تيسَّرَ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ

so recite what is easy [for you] of the Qur’ān.³⁰

²⁶ Ibid., p.8

²⁷ Tazkirah, (Lahore: Idarah al-Isha‘ah Tazkirah, 1964), v.2, p. D (ض)

²⁸ Ibid., p. z (ظ)

²⁹ Ibid., p. z (ظ)

³⁰ Qur’ān, Sūrah al-Muzammil, 73:20

In contents of exegesis different topics have been listed i.e. *Touhīd* (Oneness of Creator), Obedience to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), philosophy of worship, the wisdom of *Salah*, Right Path,³¹ Unity of Muslim Nation, Socialism in Islam, Polytheism, Sectarianism, day of judgment³², etc.

8.1. ‘Allamah Mashraqī views on fixing the meaning of Qur’ānic words:

‘Allamah Mashraqī suggests that,

To extract perfect meaning from Arabic words of Qur’ān we have no other way but to consult to Qur’ān itself. The only reason of fading the essence of divine message is that we start depending on lexicography’s and other external materials to understand the divine Message. Therefore Qur’ānic terminologies i.e. *Īman* (faith), *Shirk* (partnership/polytheism), *Kufr* (rejection and disbelieving), *Taqwa* (God-fearing) are mere words and lost their impression in our lives.³³

Qur’ān explains itself as it states:

وَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ تِبْيَانًا لِّكُلِّ شَيْءٍ

And We have sent down to you the Book as clarification for all things³⁴

By following his self-established principle to explain Qur’ānic words ‘Allamah Mashraqī didn’t mention a single word from Arabic poetry, and Arabic lexicography in his interpretation. ‘Allamah Mashraqī claims,

“There is no authority of *Ijmā’* (Consensus), personal reasoning or opinion, and individual or collective legal ruling (*fatwa*) to interpret Qur’ānic meaning and teaching”.³⁵

Surprisingly, to him, exegesis written based on sound transmissions (*Tafsīr bi al-Mathūr*) or reasoning (*Tafsīr bi al-Ra’ay*) both are unacceptable.

8.2. Allamah Mashraqī Views on Prophetic Traditions & Sayings:

‘Allamah Mashraqī didn’t use prophetic traditions to explain Qur’ānic verses but at a very few places. ‘Allamah Mashraqī considers documentation of prophetic traditions and transmission as an affliction and hurdle to understanding the true spirit of Qur’ānic divine message. He further adds

³¹Tazkirah, Contents of Volume 1

³² Tazkirah, Contents of volume 2,

³³ Tazkirah, v.1, p. 91-92

³⁴ Qur’ān, Sūrah al-Nahal, 16:89

³⁵ Tazkirah, v.1, p. 47

“Prophetic sayings were bound to a certain time and place therefore Messenger of Allah prohibits his companions (r.a) from documentation of his words. With the authority of Abu Sa‘eed al-Khudri, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, Do not write anything from me, whoever has written anything from me other than Qur’ān, let him erase it.”

Moreover, he said chains of narrators in prophetic transmission are not authentic. Thus these words cannot be attributed to the Messenger of Allah.³⁶ Not only sayings of a Prophet but the interpretation of Qur’ān was the area considered prohibited by companions (r.a).” ‘Allamah Mashraqī argues, previous nations of Jews and Christians received wrath from Lord for the same reason because they did exaggeration in Lord Message.³⁷ ‘Allamah Mashraqī states,

“Comprehensive understanding of Qur’ānic subjects and consideration is not difficult if we put together all verses for this purpose. These are all surprisingly interlinked to each other”.³⁸

To Allamah Mashraqī Qur’ān do not need any external support to establish the meaning of its words. ‘Allamah Mashraqī also didn’t quote *Athār al- Sahābah* literally practices and narrations of Companions (r.a). ‘Allamah Mashraqī did also criticize ‘Ulamā and said, it is unfortunate that our Islamic scholars are not unanimously agreed upon the principles and methodologies of Tafsīr.³⁹

8.3. Absence of Juristic debates in Tafsīr Tazkirah:

‘Allamah Mashraqī interpretation of Qur’ān is free from juristic discussion. For instance while interpreting the following verse

إِنَّمَا الصَّدَقَاتُ لِلْفُقَرَاءِ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَالْعَامِلِينَ عَلَيْهَا وَالْمَوْلَفَةَ قُلُوبِهِمْ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ وَالْغَارِمِينَ وَفِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ
وَأَبْنِ السَّبِيلِ فَرِيضَةً مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ

Zakah expenditures are only for the poor and for the needy and for those employed for it⁴⁰ and for bringing hearts together [for Islam] and for freeing captives [or slaves] and for those in debt and for the cause of Allah and for the [stranded] traveler – an obligation [imposed] by Allah. And Allah is Knowing and Wise.⁴⁰

Unlike other traditional and non-traditional interpretations ‘Allamah Mashraqī didn’t mention even a single Prophetic tradition or juristic debate about the conventional idea of

³⁶ Ibid., p.73

³⁷ Tazkirah v.2, p. 94-98

³⁸ Ibid., v.1, p. 90

³⁹ Ibid., p. 53

⁴⁰ Qur’ān, Sūrah al-Taubah, 9:60

Zakah, neither the necessary criteria of wealth nor mandatory amount of charitable contribution.⁴¹ Moreover ‘Allamah Mashraqī takes a different stance on worship. To him, *Sajadah & Rakū* (prostration & bending) is not a physical state of worship required from humans rather it is a state of heart. Above all, it is a state of wholehearted submission towards the will of God.⁴²

9. ‘Allamah Mashraqī inclination towards Islamic Political Activism:

It can be observed that the central point of this exegesis is a renaissance of the Muslim Nation and to establish a political Islam. ‘Allamah Mashraqī stated in the preface of this exegesis, “his early idea was to write a booklet to discuss Muslim decline and solutions to come out from this situation”.⁴³ This notion was overwhelming throughout his interpretation of the Holy Qur’ān. It should be kept in mind he was a political activist and established a freedom movement *Khaksar* in 1931 aiming to advance the condition of people irrespective of any faith, religion or race.⁴⁴ He had not received formal theological education from any seminary.

10. Criticism on traditional Clergy:

Tafsīr Tazkirah is full of hard words pointing towards negative role of traditional clergy who themselves misunderstood message of Islam and misleading naive masses of Muslim Nation. To ‘Allamah Mashraqī,

Religion of our present clerk is only collection of some rituals including, ablution and bath for purification, counting number of prostrates in prayers, long beard, trousers above ankles, memorization of Qur’ān, celebrating the birth of Prophet (PBUH) and some words to seek refuge from Satan.⁴⁵

‘Allamah Mashraqī did express his anger on clergy and states, our Islamic scholars have wasted many centuries in useless conceptual debates like attribution of Heaven and Hell, Angels and Jinn.⁴⁶ According to him Qur’ān prohibits this attitude and says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اجْتَنِبُوا كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الظَّنِّ

O you who have believed, avoid much [negative] assumption.⁴⁷

⁴¹ Tazkirah, v.2, p.115

⁴² Tazkirah, v.1, p.107

⁴³ Tazkirah, v.2, p. D (ض)

⁴⁴ Al-Mashraqi, Anayat Allah, Tazkirah, (Lahore: Tazkirah Publicationers, 1998), v.3, p.19

⁴⁵ Tazkirah, v.2, p.210

⁴⁶ Tazkirah, v.1, p.75

⁴⁷ Qur’ān, Sūrah al-Hujurāt, 49:12

Moreover he stress that our present clergy is ignorant, hypocrites, selling the Qur’ān and misguiding the people. With owing to fact that, if they are right then there must be peace in the Muslim world because Qur’ān assures that:

الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَلَمْ يَلْبِسُوا إِيمَانَهُمْ بِظُلْمٍ أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمُ الْأَمْنُ وَهُمْ مُهْتَدُونَ

They who believe and do not mix their belief with injustice – those will have security, and they are [rightly] guided.⁴⁸

Qur’an guarantees that to believers, we provide security and a peaceful atmosphere but we see pagan and idolaters are comparatively in a more secure position than Muslims and enjoying prosperity.⁴⁹ Here ‘Allamah Mashraqī gives a strange statement

“Muslims themselves are disbelievers (kafir) thus receiving wrath and punishments from Allah Almighty whereas disbelievers (kafir & Mushrik) are Believers indeed and receiving rewards from Lord under the divine laws of nature”.⁵⁰

He further comes with the strange opinion that,

Today Muslims are **الْبَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ** and evoked Allah Almighty anger. Meanwhile, Europe is blessed, discovering and subjecting the universe through Qur’ānic laws. Allah wants to see nations and human being coalesced and Europeans are united whereas Muslims are scattered, conflicting with each other in the name of religion so Allah Almighty is supporting and helping the Europeans against Muslims.⁵¹

Further he adds the addressees of following verse are clergy of every age:

وَذَرِ الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا دِينَهُمْ لَعِبًا وَلَهْوًا وَعَزَّتْ لَهُمُ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا وَذَكَرَ بِهِ أَنْ تَبَسَّلَ نَفْسٌ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ

And leave those who take their religion as amusement and diversion and whom the worldly life has deluded. But remind with it [i.e., the Qur’ān], lest a soul be given up to destruction for what it earned;⁵²

He repeated again and again the following verses to strengthen his point of view that our traditional version of Islam is man-made and cannot lead us but to destruction.⁵³

وَأَنْتُمْ الْأَعْلَوْنَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ

and you will be superior if you are [true] believers.⁵⁴

⁴⁸ Qur’ān, Sūrah al-An‘ām, 6:82

⁴⁹ Tazkirah, v.2, p.216

⁵⁰ Ibid., p.218

⁵¹ Tazkirah, v.2, p.258

⁵² Qur’ān, Sūrah al-An‘ām, 6:70

⁵³ Tazkirah, v.2, p.214-215

⁵⁴ Qur’ān, Sūrah Al-Imran,3:139

‘Allamah Mashraqī further quotes following verse:

وَلَقَدْ كَتَبْنَا فِي الزَّبُورِ مِنْ بَعْدِ الذِّكْرِ أَنَّ الْأَرْضَ يَرِثُهَا عِبَادِيَ الصَّالِحُونَ (-) إِنَّ فِي هَذَا لَبَلَاغًا لِقَوْمٍ عَابِدِينَ

And We have already written in the book [of Psalms] after the [previous] mention⁸⁴⁷ that the land [of Paradise] is inherited by My righteous servants. 105. Indeed, in this [Qur’ān] is notification for a worshipping people.⁵⁵

‘Allamah Mashraqī writes that today we have so many *Masajid* (places for worship) but the Muslim nation is not being inherited Political hegemony in the world. On the other hand Allah Almighty says about disbelievers:

فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَعَذَّبْنَا لَهُمْ عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَمَأْلَهُمْ مِنْ نَاصِرِينَ

And as for those who disbelieved, I will punish them with a severe punishment in this world and the Hereafter, and they will have no helpers."⁵⁶

Our exegete, ‘Allamah Mashraqī said today’s disbelievers are enjoying all kinds of bounties in this world. It does mean that we have to redefine the exact meaning of disbeliever.⁵⁷ Most probably in the eye of Allah Almighty, we the so-called Muslims are disbelievers indeed. ‘Allamah Mashraqī also expresses his opinion that Muslims are not supposed to receive bounties, rewards and blessings in hereafter only but in this world too. We must seek and desire worldly pleasure as much as spiritually.

11. A strong voice to the unity of Muslim Ummah and anti-sectarianism:

‘Allamah Mashraqī again and again stress on importance of Unity among Muslim Ummah. To him Unity is the only key for Islamic revival. Supremacy of Islam and Muslims on International level is the only way to liberate and unburden deprived human being from exploitation by fellow beings. Our Īman will bear fruits only when Muslims are all united.

He strongly condemned and criticized ‘Ulama for tearing Muslim Ummah into pieces in the name of sects.⁵⁸ He further adds,

True divine message of Islam is invisible to our mainstream clergy because they are engaged in grammatical debates, unauthentic stories and trying to understand verses without context. Therefore common man is disappointed from their vision and version of Islam.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Qur’ān, Sūrah Al-Anbiya’,21:105

⁵⁶ Qur’ān, Sūrah Al-‘Imrān,3:56

⁵⁷ Tazkirah, v.2, p.214-215

⁵⁸ Tazkirah, v.1, p.53

⁵⁹ Ibid., p.55

12. Religious Pluralistic Approach of ‘Allamah Mashraqī:

‘Allamah Mashraqī takes a very bold stance in this regard and considers all religions from same origin. He states,

Indeed Islam is not to follow Muhammad (PBUH) but the law which revealed to him. And the same law revealed in Torah, Psalms, Gospels, Sutras, Vedas, Zend-Avesta and all other sacred texts.⁶⁰

‘Allamah Mashraqī used to write ‘peace and blessing be upon’ with Gautama Buddha (d.544 BCE) and Baba Guru Nanak (d.1539) names. Hitherto, Mashraqī also said today only Qur’ān is the book which can save mankind from crises.⁶¹

13. ‘Allamah Mashraqī criticism on western approach towards social sciences:

A reader can perceive that besides praising west for its advancement in scientific knowledge ‘Allamah Mashraqī severely criticized for western approach towards social ideologies and philosophies. ‘Allamah states,

“That is the ground where West fails. Human beings are not made of matter and should not be studied as a discipline of natural sciences. That is why spirituality lost its threads in Western societies and social values. Without spirituality West is aggressive and wild which ultimate bring rest of the world into trouble. West wants to enslave entire human beings. The concept of separation of church and state would be proved fatal for European nations. It is the time for West to give importance to Words of God (revelation) as much as to Work of God (scientific knowledge)”.⁶²

14. Tazkirah advocacy for scientific knowledge:

As we stated earlier ‘Allamah Mashraqī was a mathematician and scientist therefore he discussed theory of evolution, Biology, Anthropology, Geology and Astrology in details. He certified that theory of evolution is not against Qur’ānic concept of creation. There are different phases of human evolution. It is not as simple as described in Islamic literature “Adam were made from clay and Lord breathed into him”. ‘Allamah Mashraqī seemed to make mockery of Islamic scholars who do believe in this idea of human creation. He said these ignorant Muslims Scholars are denying theory of evolution because they have not a subtle idea of science.⁶³

⁶⁰ Ibid., p.62

⁶¹ Ibid., p.17,32

⁶² Ibid., p.31-33

⁶³ Ibid., p.11

Moreover, to him, knowledge can be attained only by scientific methodology as described by English philosopher Francis Bacon (d.1626).⁶⁴

15. Conclusion:

In the presence of all academic discourse taken into consideration in the above paragraphs, it can be stated very carefully, the message of Qur'ān is universal and free from time and space. Qur'an has always new meaning to offer to generations of all ages. Qur'anic thinkers of all ages tried their best to supersede emerging contemporary philosophies by Qur'ānic ideology. Rather they were Mu'tazilah or another Islamic rational theologian. The miracle of Qur'ān is indeed a challenge to all ideologies in terms of text and meaning. In the present era, it has been observed, conventional thinkers occasionally seem to be answerless to questions posed by contemporary scientific minds. To address these minds' rational interpretation of certain Qur'ānic verses is the utmost need of time. Hitherto, the problem arises when these rational thinkers go beyond some boundaries and try to redesign well-established systematic ways of worship and other dogmas. Our worthy thinker and political activist 'Allamah 'Anayat Allah Mashraqī brought a new revolutionary dimension and aspects of the Qur'ānic teaching of political Islam. 'Allamah Mashraqī was a great revolutionist of his age and has a crystal-clear vision of Islamic hegemony and supremacy. Tazkirah is a roadmap to regaining the lost dignity and self-respect of Muslim Ummah based on Qur'ānic political manifesto. To him, the reason behind the suffering of the Muslim nation is wrong interpretation and misunderstood message of Qur'ān by traditional clergy. We can comprehend 'Allamah Mashraqī approach by putting his all articles and discourse side by side. His message cannot be understood unless the reader has plenty of knowledge about the political scenario of that era in which 'Allamah Mashraqī lived and Tazkirah was written. His interpretation of verses about Touhīd has no match to another contemporary exegesis of that time. But on the other side 'Allamah Mashraqī neglected the very important part of Prophetic Traditions, Companions Reports, and centuries-old intellectual heritage. There is a need to filter and refine his thoughts. His outstanding understanding of political Islam cannot be ignored just on the basis of his views about well proved systematic ways of worship. His denunciation and adverse opinions with a grating language towards Mainstream Islamic clergy should not halt us to derive what is good in his thinking and writings. That is why it seems inappropriate to endorse this exegesis to readers at the beginning level. Traveling to Europe and studying there is a major factor that shaped his enthusiastic and revolutionary ideology. That is not the only case with 'Allamah

⁶⁴ Ibid., p.83

Mashraqī but other intellectuals of that era like Sayyad Ahmad Khān and ‘Allamah Muhammad Iqbal (d.1938) reacted in the same way. Both the scholars didn’t leave any stone unturned to wake Muslim Ummah by words and actions. Owing to the fact that, ‘Allamah Mashraqī has not received religious education and was not certified theologian from any traditional seminary. Therefore, we see, he had not a good command on Islamic Jurisprudence, Hadith Sciences and other technical issues of Islamic theology, as demanded at that time. His all understanding was based on his personal effort to fathom Qur’ān. Furthermore, as ‘Allamah Mashraqī noted in the preface, “My intention was to write down a brief account of Muslim decline which turned into Tafsīr”. Notwithstanding, a reviewer can notice his prime intention is overwhelming throughout his Tafsīr. Based on contents, Tazkirah can still be classified and considered as an account of Muslim decline and manifesto to regain Muslim Political supremacy, other than Tafsīr. Anyhow Tafsīr Tazkirah is a valuable addition in Tafsīr bi al-Ra’ay literature. ‘Allamah ‘Anayat Allah Mashraqī would be remembered for his intellectual contribution and revolutionary personality. (And our duty is but plain conveyance and Allah knows the best).



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