

## INTERPRETING THE QUR'AN IN SOUTH ASIA A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF METHODOLOGICAL TRENDS

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### **Abstract**

*This study conducts a comprehensive examination of the diverse methodologies employed in interpreting the Qur'an within the context of South Asia. The region's rich cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity has given rise to a plethora of interpretive approaches, reflecting the dynamism and complexity of Islamic scholarship in this geographic space. Through a critical lens, this analysis aims to unravel the various methodological trends that have emerged over time and assess their implications for the understanding and application of the Qur'anic text. The research delves into historical developments, exploring the evolution of Qur'anic interpretation in South Asia from early traditions to contemporary methodologies. It examines the impact of regional cultural influences, linguistic nuances, and theological perspectives on the interpretive frameworks adopted by scholars. By scrutinizing key works and prominent scholars, the study identifies patterns, divergences, and convergences in methodological approaches, shedding light on the intricate tapestry of Qur'anic exegesis in the South Asian context. Furthermore, the research critically assesses the role of socio-political factors in shaping interpretive methodologies, considering how historical events, colonial encounters, and contemporary challenges have influenced the lenses through which the Qur'an is interpreted. The study also investigates the interplay between traditional and modernist approaches, exploring the tension and dialogue between classical scholarship and contemporary reinterpretations in South Asian Qur'anic exegesis.*

**Keywords:** Historical Context, Linguistic Analysis, Philosophical Approaches, Scripture.

### **INTRODUCTION:**

The interpretation of the Qur'an has been a perennial intellectual endeavor, shaping the theological and cultural landscape of Muslim societies throughout history. Within the expansive and diverse region of South Asia, the interpretation of the Qur'an takes on a distinct character, reflecting the multifaceted tapestry of languages, cultures, and religious traditions that coalesce in this geographic space. This study embarks on a critical analysis of the methodological trends employed in interpreting the Qur'an in South Asia, aiming to unravel the intricate web of approaches that have evolved over centuries. South Asia stands as a microcosm of religious diversity, encompassing various Islamic traditions alongside Hinduism, Buddhism, and other faiths. Within this pluralistic context, scholars have engaged in a continual process of understanding and interpreting the Qur'an, adapting its teachings to the rich cultural and linguistic milieu of the region. This study recognizes the significance of South Asia as a locus for diverse interpretive traditions, where the Qur'an has been expounded upon through a spectrum of methodologies.

The historical trajectory of Qur'anic interpretation in South Asia is marked by the interplay of indigenous traditions and external influences. From the early centuries of Islamic expansion into the Indian subcontinent to the contemporary era, scholars in South Asia have grappled with the task of interpreting the Qur'an within the context of their unique religious, linguistic, and cultural heritage. This study seeks to trace the evolution of methodological trends, examining the impact of local traditions, linguistic variations, and theological perspectives on the interpretive frameworks employed by scholars. The critical analysis undertaken here extends beyond the historical narrative

to explore the contemporary dynamics of Qur'anic interpretation in South Asia. Sociopolitical factors, colonial encounters, and modern challenges have all left indelible imprints on the methodologies adopted by scholars in understanding and articulating the meanings of the Qur'an. Moreover, the study delves into the ongoing dialogue between traditional and modernist approaches, investigating how these dynamics shape the current landscape of Qur'anic exegesis in the region. By engaging in a critical assessment of the methodological trends, this study aspires to contribute to a deeper understanding of the intellectual currents that have shaped the interpretation of the Qur'an in South Asia. Recognizing the plurality of approaches within Islamic scholarship, the research seeks to foster a nuanced appreciation for the diverse ways in which the Qur'an continues to be interpreted, debated, and applied within the multifaceted religious and cultural mosaic of South Asia.

- Reminding man of Allah's favours (tadhkir bi ala' i Allah)
- Reminders from the past career of humanity (tadhkir bi ayyam Allah)
- Reminder of death and its subsequent conditions (tadhkir bil mawt wa ma ba'd al mawt)
- Discourse of dialectics and argumentations (ilm al mukhasamah)
- Discourse of injunctions (ilm al ahkaam)

Secondly; the term 'Ulum al Qur'an' denotes various avenues and discourses related to the Holy Qur'an which consequently act as tools to its proper understanding. <sup>6</sup>

Today, the horizon of Ulum al Qur'an has been far more expanded in the light of more rejuvenated and ongoing research and studies<sup>7</sup>. Many fresh aspects highlighting the miraculous nature of the Qur'an have been emphasized and expounded in the light of newly fangled rational and scientific discoveries. The recent academic studies and research have also played a significant role in further expansion of Ulum al Qur'an<sup>8</sup>. This ongoing enterprise highlights the ever flourishing nature of this book and the durability of its everlasting contents which Prophet (SAWW) predicted in the following hadith :

.....“ It is a book scholars cannot plumb the depths of; it never causes boredom through repetition; its fascination is endless.....”.<sup>9</sup> After this brief preliminary discussion, an introduction of enriched scholarship on various subjects of Qur'anic studies in the Subcontinent and a brief analysis of these monumental works are as following :

Ulum al Qur'an in the Sub continent :

The determination and zeal of Muslim scholars of the Subcontinent to spread the marvels of the Holy Qur'an through their writings is particularly remarkable. Their various generations kept instilling the reverential message of Qur'an in a number of dispositions hence rendering a priceless service to the book of Allah. Qur'anic scholarship in the Subcontinent not only conformed to the classical heritage of Qur'anic studies but also added a substantial amount of new avenues and unaccustomed trends to various Qur'anic discourses and subject .

Particularly, the contributions of Shah Wali Allah Dehlawi (d. 1762 A.H), and his noble family and veteran descendants to the service of Qur'an and the propagation of its authentic understanding will always remembered as an illuminating event in the Muslim history of Subcontinent. The vanguard of Shah Sahib's outstanding indulgence in Qur'anic research played a leading role in the development of Qur'anic understanding and propagation in the Subcontinent .

At present the scholars of the Subcontinent have significantly added to the topics of Ulum al Qur'an and rehabbed various new dispositions to relatively new avenues of Qur'anic coherence and injunctions. Moreover numerous diversified topics addressing the important issue of Qur'an and oriental scholarship have also been brought forth by the scholars of Subcontinent .

A relatively detailed analysis of these scholarships on various discourses will be provided in following .  
PRINCIPLES OF TAFSIR :

Tafsir (exegesis) of the Qur'an is the most important science for Muslims. All matters concerning the Islamic way of life are connected to it in one sense or another, since the right application of Islam is based on proper understanding of the guidance from Allah .

There are certain basic conditions and requirements that Muslim scholars have laid down in order to make a sound tafsir. Any tafsir, which disregards these principles, must be viewed with great caution, if not rejected altogether<sup>10</sup>.

The Muslim scholars of the subcontinent have produced an enriched scholarship on this specific topic. In the earliest period, there was a complete dearth of a comprehensive work addressing, principles and methodologies of Tafsir before Shah Wali Allah. His monumental work on the topic of Usool al Tafsir titled: “Al Fauz al Kabir fe Usul al Tafsir”. is the first comprehensive work of its kind.

Al Fauz al Kabir fe Usul al Tafsir :

Highlighting the importance of this monumental work, Syed Abul Hasan Ali al Nadawi writes ;

“For spreading the word of Allah and enabling the people of faith (both scholars and laymen) to approach the concrete understanding of the Holy Qur’an hence reviving the spirit of Islamic, Shah Wali Allah’s innovative and revolutionary masterpiece “Al fauz al kabir” (to our knowledge in the entire Islamic heritage) is an exceptionally unique work<sup>11</sup>.

Out of Shah Wali Allah’s magnificent scholarship, this book marks most conspicuous work on the Holy Qur’an. Originally written in Persian, its Urdu, Arabic and English translations are also available.

Shah Sahib divided his book into five chapters. In the first chapter he has meritoriously classified the Qur’anic themes into five encyclopedic arrangements.

Shah Wali Allah has further elucidated the themes in a reasonable detail especially focusing on Qur’anic discourse of religious dialogue with four notable deviant groups mentioned in Qur’an including the Pagans, the Hypocrites and the people of book (Jews and Christians).

Here Shah Wali Allah thoroughly discussed the reasons of the revelation as well. He acknowledges their core significance as a tool for understanding Qur’an in its context of revelation but does not view the unnecessary and expandable value given to them by the classical Mufasssireen very appropriate. He views the importance of knowledge of a specific event and different circumstances in history which are related to the revelation of particular Qur’anic passage and where the superficial meaning of a verse transforms into a cryptic, such instances are doubtlessly significant for a Mufasssir to contemplate on but -according to him- the trend of overemphasizing their importance should be trimmed back<sup>12</sup>.

The second chapter deals with the problem and difficulties one faces while trying to approach the Qur’an.

The third chapter refers to various Qur’anic styles, Notion of repetition in Qur’anic themes and positions and coherent structure of Qur’anic Surahs.

Chapter four is about Tafsir and related disciplines which critically explains the trends of Tafsir writing prevalent in the times of Sahabah and Ta’abeein.

Chapter five covers the explanation of enigmatic Qur’anic terms, describing their brief interpretation and reason of revelation. In this chapter Shah Sahib talked about the meaning and nature of the abrogation, maintaining its essential meaning. In the light of his embrative research, unlike the patriarchal trend he confined the number of abrogated verses to only five. He strongly believes that the other verse can be justified in many other possible modes<sup>13</sup>. Indeed, this work is justifiably considered as an elementary key to understanding the Qur’an. Shah Wali Allah essentially meant to write it with the vital purpose of providing a platform for a unique and comprehensive understanding of the Qur’an.<sup>14</sup> Fath al Khabeer bima la budda hifduhu fe i’lm al Tafsir :

Another Qur’anic scholarship of Shah Wali Allah named “Fath al Khabeer bima la budda hifduhu fe i’lm al Tafsir” is in Arabic. It covers the explanation of infrequent Qur’anic expressions as well as the instances and circumstances of Qur’anic revelation<sup>15</sup>. Beside these comprehensive works addressing principles and methodologies of tafsir, Nawwab Siddiq Hassan Khan (d. 1307 A.H)’s booklet in Persian “Al Akseer fe usul al Tafsir” and Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (d. 1315 A.H)’s work in Urdu “Al Tahreer fe usul al Tafsir” are two very significant titles on the principles of Tafsir.

Explaining the principles of Tafsir, Maulana Muhammad Malik Kandhalwi wrote a book titled ‘Ilm Usul al Tafsir. Maulana Muhammad Tahir Panjperi’s “Al Irfaan fe Usul al Qur’an” is another notable title in this regard.

Maulana Saeed Ahmad Akbar Abadi's "Fehm e Qur'an" explains the importance of various tools needed for understanding the Qur'an .

Maulana Hamiduddin Farahi also wrote a book on the principle of Tafsir which has been translated and edited by Khalid Masud under the title "Tafsir e Qur'an ke Usul". Rasheed Ahmad Jalandhari also contributed to this field of study by writing a book "Ilm e Tafsir aur Mufasssireen ."

#### PRINCIPLES OF QUR'ANIC TRANSLATION :

The Holy Qur'an is the word of Allah (SWT). One of the most conspicuous aspects of its miraculous nature is that, it creates a paramount rhythm and an intimate symphony through its profound language and vogue, which drives mankind to tears and ecstasy. It has always been unanimously admitted that the rhetoric and rhythm of the Arabic language of the Qur'an are characteristically very powerful and any translation is bound to be an imperfect attempt of the glittering splendor and the radiant beauty of the original text. However, the need and exigency of Qur'anic translations have always been felt and dwelled upon .

To set the pattern and parameters for the translation of the Qur'an and provides a detailed account of problems and obstacles one faces while going through the process of translation, Shah Wali ullah sahib rendered a very valuable writing on the topic titled: *Al Muqadimmah fe qawaneen al Tarjuma .* *Al Muqadimmah fe qawaneen al Tarjuma :*

Written in Persian, this booklet exclusively deals in the essentials of Qur'anic translation. Shah Sahib narrated that he wrote this booklet while writing his Tafsir but somehow it could not be published with the original Tafsir. He elaborately discussed the craft of Qur'anic translation, its significance, types and various problems one faces while translating the Qur'an in this work Moreover different kinds of translations and their drawback have also been discussed. 16

Apart from this work, Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanwi's "Al Taqseer fe al Tafsir" is another notable title which addresses the subject of translation and its principles .

**Important Translations of the Holy Qur'an in the Subcontinent:** Like many other noble trends, according to various historically acclaimed traditions, the hallmark of translating the Holy Qur'an in the Subcontinent was also initiated by Shah Wali Allah. He rendered the Qur'an for the first time into Persian language under the title of "Fath al Rahmaan fe tarjumat al Qur'an ."

#### Fath al Rahmaan bi tarjumat al Qur'an :

This is a brief and simplified translation of the Holy Qur'an in Persian language. It also contains a valuable introductory note, which sets the pattern and parameters for the translation of the Qur'an and provides a detailed account of problems and obstacles one faces while going through the process of translation. Explaining the scope of Qur'anic translation, Shah Sahib writes: "Introducing a contemporary translation of the Holy Qur'an is a sincere need of our time. Consciously avoiding the sophisticated expression, a day to day, running and simplified Persian language has been adopted for this translation with the sole aim of enabling both common readers and scholars to understand the message of Qur'an ."

Highlighting the distinguished features of his translation he mentioned that the previous translations used either 'word for word' or 'summarized' style of translation. This work simultaneously provides a comprehensive blend of both which successfully makes up for many earlier errors.17

#### Important Translations of the Holy Qur'an :

The prestigious scholarship was further carried out by Shah Wali Allah's noble descendents. In response to the need of hour, his esteemed sons Shah Abdul Qadir and Shah Rafiuddin carried out the great ventures of translating the Holy Qur'an both, in running and independent modes of translation respectively. Their tremendously dignified enterprise of translation thoroughly cleared the concept of having an error free Qur'anic translation in order to meet the tremendous need in the non Arabic speaking Muslim word .

Some important Urdu translations of the Qur'an include works of Deputy Nazir Ahmad, Maulana Juna Gharhi, Maulana Mahmood ul Hassan, Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanwi, Maulana Fateh Muhammad Jalandhari and Maulana Ahmad Raza Khan .

The famous English translations of the Holy Qur'an by the scholars of the Subcontinent include Maulana Muhammad Ali MA's notable work. He served as the head of famous Lahori Branch of Qadiyanism .

Maulana Abdul Majid Daryabadi's translation is available with some detailed commentary notes. Sayyid Mawdudi's 'Tafheem al Qur'an' has also been rendered into English under the auspices of more than one project .

Almost all major indigenous languages of the Subcontinent are now enriched with the translation of the Holy Qur'an. To name a few would be Pushtu, Sindhi, Punjabi, Barahavi, Ballochi and Kashmiri. These translations have been made in both prose and poetry expression .

A relatively detailed analysis of Indian Civil Service Officer Abdullah Yusuf Ali's translation will be provided in following. Abdullah Yusuf Ali is an acclaimed English translator and commentator of the Holy Qur'an. His work has been published many times and is used widely in around the globe. According to Abdul Rahim Kidwai among the translations by the Indian Muslims, perhaps the most renowned is Yusuf Ali's Qur'an which found a tremendous favour and therefore, wide distribution, from its first appearance in 1934 until very recently. It remained the most popular English version not only among Muslims but within the Non-Muslims as well. While not a typically trained Islamic scholar in any formal sense, Yusuf 'Ali, had studied classics at Cambridge University, graduated as a lawyer from Lincoln's Inn in London, and was gifted with an eloquent, vivid writing style. He sought to convey the rhythm and richness of the Arabic with poetic English versification. While his rendering of the text is not unfair, there are some serious problems in few of his translated phrases as well as the copious footnotes; in many cases, he reproduces the exegetical material from medieval texts without making any effort at contextualization<sup>18</sup>. Furthermore his over exaggerated notion of mysticism also remains a matter of controversy .

He has also earned the strong criticism that writing a translation at a time both of growing Arab animosity toward Zionism and in a milieu that condoned anti-Semitism, Yusuf 'Ali constructed his oeuvre as a polemic against Jews .

- Art of Tajweed and Qiraaat :

In the earliest period, Tajweed (the mastery of beautifying the recitation of Qur'an) and Qira'at (Various modes and methods of Qur'anic recitation) were especially emphasized .

A significantly notable scholarly contribution was added to the art of Tajweed and Qira'at in that time. For instance Sheikh Abdul Haq Muhaddith Dehlawi's "Al durr al farid fe al Qira'at wa al Tajweed", Sheikh Muhammad Na'imullah Siddiqi Kakorvi (d. 1002 A.H)'s 'Sharh al Shatibiyyah' Maulavi Karamat Ali Jaunpuri (d. 1290 A.H)'s "Zeenat al Qari" and "Sharh al Jazariyyah" and Qari Abdul Rahman Panipati (d. 1324 A.H)'s "Al tuhfa al Nazariyyah" were written at that time. <sup>19</sup>

Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanwi's "Tajweed al Qur'an" and "Jamal al Qur'an" are also very valuable additions to the art of beautification of Qur'anic recitation .

He also wrote a book titled: "Wujuh al Mathani ma'a Taujeeh al Kalimaat wa al Ma'ani", debating seven reading of the Holy Qur'an, their various interpretations, focusing various grammatical and morphological details. Qur'anic indexes and tabulations :

A notable book on this topic is that of Muhammad Saeed Jaunpuri's "Nujum al Qur'an" which provides a complete index to all Qur'anic words and phrases .

The late Dr. Muhammad Hamidullah added a valuable writing to this art by compiling a magnanimous encyclopedic work under the title "Al Qur'an fe kul al Lisaan ."

- Mufradaat and Lughaat al Qur'an :

The scholars of the Subcontinent compiled many memorable works in this regard aswell. Large number of Qur'anic dictioneries includes Persian, English and Urdu meanings of Qur'anic words. Some of these titles are comprised of many volumes .

Some recent important works are: "Lisaan al Qur'an" by Muhammad Hanif Nadawi and Muhammad Ishaq Bhatti. Abdul Rasheed Na'umani also added a book to this discipline titled "Lughaat al Qur'an". Dr. Ghulam Jailani Barq wrote a book "Mu'jam al Qu'an ."

In the field of Mufradaat and Luhgaat al Qur'an, a self styled and self acclaimed as "Ahl e Qur'an" Tafsir School has been very famous. This sect is considered as an expansion of oriental scholarship,



who paved the way for the adversity of denial of authenticity of Hadith. This propensity was further fashioned by the followers and preachers of the school by explicitly renouncement of the validation of Sunnah as a part of Islamic Jurisdiction. People like Abdullah Chakralwi, Allama Aslam Jerajpuri, and Ghulam Ahmad Pervez (d.1985) are the pioneer of this cult in the subcontinent who tried to present a peerless approach to the study of Qur'an focusing merely on Qur'an and its linguistics. 20 His books "Lughaat al Qur'an" and "Mafhoom al Qur'an" mainly deal with the description of the meanings of different Qur'anic words and phrases in a broader sense and a wider paradigm. According to him, the main task of compilation of Arabic linguistic tradition was carried out in the reign of Abbasids and by that time manifold non Arabic factors were actively influencing the original Arabic meanings and usage of its expression which consequently played an essential role in formation and reformation of original meanings of various Qur'anic expressions. He emphasized the need of understanding Qur'anic meanings in the light of their usage and convention according to the primeval Arabic language. Moreover he believes that a proper understanding of Qur'anic expressions can only be achieved after a profound comprehension of its utilization in the entire Qur'an, in different contexts and denotations. For instance he believes that the words "Salah" is essentially derived from the root "Saad, Laam, Yaa" which literally means "to follow", this meaning can be well observed in the ritualistic prayers where it is obligatory to follow the divine commandments. He further adds by saying that after a deeper contemplation on Qur'anic usage of this particular, it can be apprehended where the expression "Salah" refers to "the establishment of ritualistic prayers" and where it stands for "the establishment of an ideal Qur'anic society".21

- Ahkaam al Qur'an :

The subject of "Ahkaam al Qur'an" deals with the deduction of accredited codes from Qur'anic injunctions hence emphasizing the various aspects of human life and their legal study in a Qur'anic connotation. The Qur'anic scholars of the Subcontinent brought forth a notable scholarship in this avenue as well. Keeping in view the specific historical and geopolitical circumstance the Muslim scholars in the Subcontinent showed a remarkable tendency and inclination towards Islamic Jurisprudence. The legendary Tafsir literature on this topic representing the Hanafi School comprises of Sheikh Ahmad Janupuri's "Al Tafseerat al Ahmadiyyah", Qazi Sanaullah PaniPati's "Al Tafsir al Mazhari" and Syed Amir Ali's "Mawahib al Rahman". Another significant work in this regards, produced by Ahal Al Hadith school includes Nawwab Siddiq Hassan Khan Qannuji's "Nayl al Maraam fe Tafsir Aayaat al Ahkaam" and Syed Ahmad Hassan al Dehlawi's "Tafsir Aayaat al ahkaam min kalaam Rabb Al Anaam". Moreover, Mullah Jeewan Hanafi (d.1130 A.H) wrote a book under the title "Al tafsiraat al Ahmadiyyah fe bayan al Aayaat al shari'ah". Maulana Umar Ahmad Usmani son of Maulana Zafar Ahmad Usmani also contributed to this science by writing a book titled "Fiqh al Qur'an" in five volumes .

Another important enterprise on the topic was initiated under the auspices of Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanwi for the deduction of various injunctions in the light of Qur'anic rulings. This seventeen volume scholarship titled "Akhaam al Qur'an" was compiled by a committee of renowned scholars including Maulana Zafar Ahmad Usmani, Maulana Mufti Jameel Ahmad Thanwi, Maulana Mufti Muhammad Shafi, and Maulana Idrees Kandhalwi and lately by Mufti Abdul Shukoor Tirmidhi. Various sub entries and issues in this book are extensively lengthened to full fledged debates.<sup>22</sup>

- Tabaqaat al Mufasssireen :

The topic of "Tabaqaat al Mufasssireen" features a compendium of biographical information about noteworthy scholars of Tafsir. Some important works of Urdu dealing with this topic include "Nail al Saaireen fe Tabaqaat al Mufasssirin" by Maulana Muhammad Tahir Panjperi, "Hindustani Mufasssirin aur unki Arabi Tafseerain" by Dr. Salim Qidwai, Dr. Rasheed Ahmad Jalandhari's "Ilm e Tafsir aur Mufasssirin" and Qazi Zahid al Hussaini's "Tazkirat al Mufasssirin ."

**Qur'anic coherence and concordance (Al Nazm al Qur'ani)** A number of scholars also produced a unique concurrent trend of writing about "Qur'anic coherence and concordance/integration" in the Subcontinent .

For instance, Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanwi, in his book titled "Sabq al Ghayath fe Nasq al Aayaat" explained the coherence of Qur'anic verses in a very skilful and lucid way .

Maulana Hamiduddin Farahi being a pioneer laid down the notion of coherence in Qur'anic verse in "Dalail al nizam" which was further adopted and skillfully carried out by his eminent disciple, Maulana Amin Ahsan Islahi (d.1997) in his Magnum Opus Tafsir "Tadabbur al Qur'an."

In the preface of his tafsir Maulana Eslahi explained the basics and principles of his unique approach to the understanding of the Qur'an. The author aims to emphasize the need of knowing a proper knowledge of the organizational structure of the Qur'an as the most important key to its understanding. Various Surahs and verses and their placement has a deeper and far rooted connection with the structure of the Qur'an which results in the highest level of rhetoric and eloquence and a perfect in argumentation.<sup>23</sup>

The idea of organization structure of the Qur'an emphasizing its core significance as a fundamental tool to Qur'anic understanding as found in the teachings of his mentor; Maulana Farahi.<sup>24</sup>

According to him, each Surah acts as an independent unit and contains a basic subject or a theme. He further believes every surah has a pair, all the suwar of the Qur'an are divided into seven groups. And every group has a main subject or theme.<sup>25</sup> A relatively new work in this regard is Dr. Ubaidullah Fahd Falahi's "Qur'an e Kareem mein Namz o Munasibat."

Land, people and geography of the Holy Qur'an :

Maulana Abdul Majid Darya Abadi's "Arz e Qur'an" or "Geography of Qur'an" briefly deals in research containing a categorical detail on Qur'anic countries, cities and other sites in an alphabetical order. "A'alaam al Qur'an" or "Qur'anic personalities" is another book written by the same author.

Regarding the land, people and geography found in the Holy Qur'an, Syed Suleman Nadawi's two volumed "Arz e Qur'an" and Maulana Hifz ur Rehman Suharwi's four volumed "Qasas al Qur'an" are rated highly esteemed on this topic.

Mushkilaat al Qur'an :

Maulana Anwar Shah Kashmiri (d.1352 A.H) wrote an eloquent piece of writing under the title 'Mushkilaat al Qur'an' on ambiguous verses of the Holy Qur'an.

Various other discourses of Ulum al Qur'an :

The scholars of the Subcontinent presented valuable pieces of research on various miscellaneous topics of Ulum al Qur'an as well.

Moreover on the history of Qur'an Allama Aslam Jairajpuri wrote "Tareekh al Qur'an" and Maulana Manazir Ahsan Gailani wrote "Tadween al Qur'an". Maulana Hamiduddin Farahi wrote a book "Aqassam al Qur'an" which was rendered into Urdu by his worthy student Maulana Amin Ahsan Eslahi. On the important topic of abrogation, Rahmatullah Tariq wrote "Mansookh al Qur'an". Dr. Syed Salman Nadavi brought forward a relatively new discourse by writing "Qur'an Aur Jadeed Science". Allama Shabbir Ahmad Usmani's book "I'jaaz al Qur'an" holds a great significance too.

Metaphysical debates and Qura'nic approaches in the Subcontinent :

In the later centuries of 19th and 20th A.D, the arrival of new modes of knowledge compelled Islamic scholarship to adopt an all new approach in the field of Qur'anic Studies dealing with the compatibility of modern day scientific theories with Qur'anic facts. This scholarly movement not only refreshed the scope of Qur'anic understanding but also revealed many new horizons. Various metaphysical debates like revelation and miracles have been portrayed in a rational and scientific make up to prove the authenticity of the Qur'an.

In this era the Oriental scholarship and missionaries began spitting venom against Islam claiming that all metaphysical Islamic believes and Qura'nic theories are repugnant with the facts of contemporary natural sciences and its recent discoveries.

Following the footsteps of orientalis, a self styled progressive group of Muslim intellectuals also started misinterpreting the Qur'anic text for the propagation of their deviated thoughts. One such example is of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan who brought forth clearly objectionable modes of Tafsir writing in clear opposition with the traditional cult. Though, he earnestly tried to bring religion and Science in harmony but his contributions remained distasteful to main stream Muslim scholars. His opinions about revelation, angels, miracles and other metaphysical facts present a highly deplorable and unaccommodating standpoint. Sir Syed's scholarship could not earn any academic reputation or fame.

Moreover in order to present a mainstream concrete Islamic disposition, many scholars produced a fair number of literary works in response to his writings .

The most prominent books include Maulana Shamsul Haq Afghani's "Ulum al Qur'an" 26 and Maulana Abdul Haq Haqqani's "Al bayaan fe Ulum al Qur'an" and "Muqadima Tafsir e Haqqani" 27 .

In the extensive introduction of his tafsir Maulana Haqqani has discussed various discourses of ulum al Qur'an in length. Fundamental belief of Islam (Monotheism, Prophet hood, believing in Angles, divine scriptures and concept of hereafter etc) have been thoroughly discussed in the light of Qur'anic teachings. Particularly discussing various features of Jibreel (AS) and Satan, Maulana Haqqani evidently proved Sir Syed's notion of considering Satanic and Angelic forces as mere depiction of attributes of evil and good in Adam (AS) respectively, entirely wrong<sup>28</sup>. He strongly opposed the idea that Adam (AS), mentioned in Qur'an denotes the human race rather than being an independent figure<sup>29</sup> .

Rules of reading, studying and understanding the Qur'an :

To derive a proper understanding of the Qur'an from its study, one needs to adopt the correct approach. The scholars of the Subcontinent compiled many memorable works in this regard as well. A unique concurrent writing on this topic is Maulana Syed Abul A'ala Mawdudi's (d.1979 AD) "Four Key concepts of the Qur'an ."

"Four key concepts of the Qur'an :"

Originally written in Urdu, it has been translated into a number of languages including English. Describing the purpose of its writing Sayyid Mawdudi says :

"Whether we like it or not, because the meanings of these four foundational themes (ilah, rabb, din and ibadah) are veiled more than three- fourths of the Qur'anic teachings -rather, its real spirit- has gone obscured, resulting in obvious flaws in people's beliefs and practices. To highlight the Qur'anic nexus and elaborate its real intent, it is important that these primary concepts are fully explained".<sup>30</sup>

This book has gained a great deal of criticism from a number of contemporary Islamic thinkers. For instance according to Maulana Sayyid Abul Hassan Ali al Nadawi and Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, Sayyid Mawdudi's Qur'anic understanding is deeply overshadowed by the political interpretation of these terms. He has monopolized these terms which can result into various fatal consequences involving the divergence of attention from the core concepts of seeking Allah's pleasure and wellbeing in the hereafter to the materialistic norms of prevalent political system.<sup>31</sup>

Apart from this book Maulana Syed Abul Hasan Ali al Nadawi's "Muta'ala e Qur'an kay Usul o Mubadi" is also very important on the subject. A clear outline of how the Qur'an should be approached for reflection and study has been given by khurram Murad. His essay on the way to the Qur'an is most commendable. An analysis of few inclusive monumental works of Ulum al Qur'an :

The Muslim scholars of the Subcontinent have produced an incalculable and enriched scholarship on various subjects of Qur'anic studies. Large number of diverse and versatile books on Ulum al Qur'an has been compiled in a stretch. A brief analysis of few monumental works is as following :

Manazil al Irfaan fe ulum al Qur'an by Maulana Muhammad Malik Kandhalvi :

This book is a comprehensive work of ulum al Qur'an in Urdu language. The author of the book is Maulana Muhammad Malik Kandhalvi.<sup>32</sup> Majority of its contents have been derived from the monumental works of ulum al Qur'an including, Al Burhan, Al Itqaan, Al fauz al kabir, Ihyaa ulum al deen, Hujaat Allah al baligha and different tafasir like Al Tabari, Tafsir al kabir and Ruh al Ma'ani.<sup>33</sup> The author has skillfully arranged different Qur'anic discourses in his unique and inimitable style .

Muta'alia e Qur'an by Maulana Hanif Nadawi :

This monumental work is compiled by Maulana Hanif Nadawi, who successfully tried to deal with intellectual and practical aspects of studying the Qur'an. The major contents of the book are as follows :

Qur'anic concept of revelation, Qur'an and earlier divine scriptures, The new Testament and four Gospels, chronological order of Qur'anic chapters, Dynamics of Qur'anic rhetoric, Linguistic features of Qur'an, Miracles of Qur'an, Enigmatic phrases of Qur'an (Abbreviated letters, oaths, clear and ambiguous verses, abrogation etc) .



The marvel of this remarkable work can be traced back in its worthy author who has been blessed with the fortune of seeking benefit from the traditional as well as the contemporary sources and reference materials .

The foundational inspiration has been taken by Shah Waliullah's five key themes which have been further illustrated and expounded with a deeper worldview in order to broaden the horizons of Shah Waliullah's thought hence making it compatible with contemporary trends .

Ulum al Qur'an by Maulana Muhammad Taqi Usmani :

This book is a reflection of Maulana Muhammad Taqi Usmani's deeper Qur'anic contemplation. In the preface of this book his father Mufti Muhammad Shafi wrote :

'Ulum al Qur'an is a vast area of study and thousands of books have been written on its various disciplines still it had always been felt that there is a dearth of a qualitative work which not only covers the issues in a comprehensive way but also uses a contemporary approach to the address various Qur'anic discourses, hence meeting the need of hour. Moreover unfortunately, in later times many of those people who have produced different tafasir of Qur'an, have been observed of lacking in profound Qur'anic understanding therefore it became very necessary to revive the basics and principles of Tafsir through a fresh piece of writing'.<sup>34</sup> Having a firm grip, Maulana Usmani has extensively dealt with these topics. He has sought inspiration from classical as well as contemporary writers and produced a deeper intellectual insight in a unique style .

By presenting the Qur'anic discourses in an all new and modern diction, Maulana has brilliantly responded to the objections made by the Orientalists and those under the influence of Westernization .

Few discourses have been briefly dealt while others are provided with extensive details. The style of writing is fresh and appealing and clearly manifests author's interest in philosophical and oriental disciplines of knowledge .

Muhadraat e Qur'ani by Dr. Mahmood Ahmad Ghazi :

Professor Doctor Mahmood Ahmad Ghazi (1950-2010) was a renowned jurist and scholar of Islamic Studies. He delivered twelve different lectures (khutbāt) on various issues related to the Qur'an, its history and various disciplines of its studies with the sole aim of inculcating the proper understanding which is often missed or lacked particularly by the female Qur'anic teachers. Later, under his own auspices the lectures were transformed into a book. The language of these lectures is obviously not written. It is oral and the style of narration is scholarly and analytical as well as preaching and rhetorical which adds a great deal of effect to its contents. This book serves as a great contribution to the treasure of Ulum al Qur'an. It would be right to say that many traditionally acclaimed concepts and features have been rendered into Urdu for the first time by the late Doctor Ghazai.<sup>35</sup> Many recent debates including the scientific miracles of the Holy Qur'an, various objections made by the orientalists and modern day Qur'anic scholarship have been significantly debated throughout the book .

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