

Mawdudi's Methodology in the Interpretation of Tafhim al-Qur'an

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Introduction

Methodologies of *Mufassirūn* differ from each other in interpreting the holy Qur'ān and they established various schools of *tafsīr*. The early Muslim scholars gave the emphasis on the interpretation of the Qur'ān by the Qur'ān, if the explanation was not available in it, then by *hadīth* of the prophet Mohammad (SAW), if the explanation was not available in it, then by the narratives of the companions of the prophet, if the explanation was not available in them, then by al-Ijtihād (individual opinion), which all are considered as '*tafsīr al-m'athūr*'. Sayyid Mawdudi as a Muslim *Mufassir* was not an exceptional from the above. He used the same methods in interpreting the Qur'ān. If the Qur'ānic verses were not available, then by *Ahādīth* of the prophet Mohammad (SAW), if the Qur'ānic verses and *Ahādīth* are not available, then by the lives of the companions of the prophet, if the above three are not available, then by al-Ijtihād. Besides these, Mawdudi interpreted the Qur'ān by modern knowledge, Israiliyyat narratives and views of the early as well as modern Muslim scholars such as views of *al-fiqh and al-fuqah'ā*, historical references, scientific explanation and opinions of other *Mufassirūn*. His methodologies of the interpretation of the Qur'ān can be divided into two: Methodologies used by the early Muslim scholars such as *tafsīr al-Qur'ān* by the Qur'ān, by *Hadīth*, *Ijtihād* and the life of the companions of the prophet and modern knowledge and other sources

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used by him as methods in interpreting the Qur'ān. The best methodology for the interpretation of the Qur'ān is to interpret the Qur'ān by the Qur'ān, which is the authentic. The Qur'ān says: (We have sent down to you a book explaining all things, a guide, a mercy and glad tidings to Muslims¹), (Here is a plain statement to men, a guidance and instruction to those who fear Allah (SWT)²) and (We sent down the book to you for the express purpose, that you should make clear to them things in which they differ, and that it should be a guide and a mercy to those who believe³).

1. Qur'ānic Interpretation by the Qur'ān

Sayyid Abul `Ala Mawdudi has used the traditional methodologies as well as his own views in interpreting the Qur'ānic verses. He emphasized on *tafsīr al-Qur'ān bil Qur'ān* in order to maintain the original ideas and views made by the early Muslim scholars. His style of the interpretation of the Qur'ān by the Qur'ān was to provide the various supportive Qur'ānic verses for the same issue according to the context of that verse. His own views based on the Qur'ānic verses on a particular issue were in full conformity with the Qur'ān. His caution was to avoid the contradiction and negation between two verses. One could see it easily through out his tafsīr. Some examples are cited as follow:

Man cannot be a messenger

The Qur'ān says:

(People said: You are no more than men like us, and the Merciful Allah (SWT) has sent down nothing, you are only telling a lie⁴).

Sayyid Mawdudi commented by providing many similar Qur'ānic verses on the issue of "Man couldn't be a messenger", which has been claimed falsely by the Jews and Maccan people⁵. The false allegation of Maccan people was that Mohammad (SAW) as a human

couldn't be a messenger of Allah (SWT). The Qur'ān refutes this erroneous notion of Maccan's people, which was not any new kind of ignorance but before the prophet Mohammad (SAW), the ignorant people also had the same views about their prophets like the Jews and

¹ [16:89].

² [3:138].

³ [16:64].

⁴ [36:15]

⁵ In Surah, 14:10-11, 17:95, 21:3, 7-8, 23:24, 33-34, 25:7, 20, 54:24 & 64:5-6.

Christians. The Qur'ān says:

(They say: What sort of a messenger he is that he eats food and moves about in the streets¹) and (All the messengers whom we sent before you also ate food and moved about in the streets²).

The people of prophet Nuh had rejected his prophethood saying that this person is not more than a human being like you in order to obtain superiority over you³. The nations of `Ad and Thamūd rejected the prophethood of the prophet Hūd and prophet Sālih saying that what kind of prophets are they who drink and eat like you. If you follow them, you will indeed be the loser⁴. The people of every prophet made the same notion of ignorance, which prevented them to accept the true guidance in every age and caused the downfall of every nation⁵. The message of the Qur'ān was a kind of warning for the Maccan people, not to refused and turned away from the guidance of the prophet Mohammad (SAW) like the previous people. They then will face the same consequence and a painful torment will be waiting for them in life after death. The Qur'ān argued that are all prophets immortal or are they survive without foods and drinks? Their arguments obviously are, 'sending an angel as a prophet for human' an irrational and unwise. The angel would not be able to settle and handle human activities and problems⁶. Therefore, there is no reason why a sensible person should reject the genuineness of the prophethood of Mohammad (SAW), who brought the full evidence⁷. Mawdudi argued on the Qur'ānic verse that two things could determine the genuineness of prophethood. Firstly, whatever the prophets are saying are perfectly reasonable and their own character are also pure; secondly, no one can prove that they are calling the people to this faith on account of a selfish motive or interest behind his struggle of preaching or asking any reward from any one⁸.

¹ [25:7].

² [25:20].

³ [23:24].

⁴ [23:33-34]

⁵ [14:10-11]

⁶ [64:5-6, 17:95, 21-7-8, 17:95, 36:21, 25:20]

⁷ Mawdudi, *Tafhīm al-Quran*, (Lahore, Islamic publications LTD, 1994), vol 4, p.p. 46-48.

⁸ *Ibid*, [36:21], vol. 4, p. 49.

The Creation of the Universe, the purposes of its creation and its reality

The Qur'ān says:

(It is He who created the heavens and the earth in all truth¹).

Mawdudi referred to many similar Quranic verses in order to prove Allah (SWT) as the creator of the universe. He also interpreted the purposes of the creation of the universe, which has been mentioned at other places in the Qur'ān². The heavens and the earth have been created truly and purposely, not merely for the fun or toy of a child. In fact, this world is a very serious affair and its creation has great wisdom and grand purpose behind it. It must, therefore, come to an end at its unchangeable appointed time and all creations will be accountable to Allah (SWT) on the Day of Judgment³. The whole universe is on the basis of the truth and reality. Its essence is based on just, wise and manifested laws and there is no room for prejudice and injustice. Temporary success of a person should not prevent him from His guidance. At the last reckoning, people shall see that all efforts made for worldly success would be failure. Allah (SWT) has created the universe in His own right is ruling over it by His own capacity. In fact, no one has any right to rule here and no one can extend one's rule even for a second beyond the limit allowed by the real ruler⁴. Wise people think deeply about the purpose of the creation of the universe and submit them to their Lord and appeal that "Our Lord! You did not create all these creations for naught. In support of the above discussion, he mentions six Quranic verses, which also provide the same meanings. The Quran says: (We did not create the heavens and the earth for sport and all that is in between⁵). In another verse, (Do you then think that we had created you in jest and without purpose and that you would not be brought back to us for accounts⁶).

The Comprehensive Meaning of *Imān and Islām*.

The Qur'ān says:

¹ [6:73]

² Please see, 3:191, 21:16, 23:115, 46:3, 38:27 & 44:38.

³ Please see, 3:191, 21:16.

⁴ Ibid, vol. I, p.123-124.

⁵ [21:16]

⁶ [23:115]

(The desert Arabs say, 'we believe', Say, 'ye, have no faith, but you only say, 'we have submitted our wills to Allah (SWT), 'for not yet has faith entered your hearts¹).

Mawdudi interpreted the words '*Imān*' and '*Islām*' based on the Qur'ānic verses and refuted the wrong idea of some Muslim scholars who said that both terms are opposite words. *Imān* means a sincere belief and *Islam* means accepting *Islām* verbally without true faith. This is wrong perception. He does not understand both terms as contradictory in the Qur'ān. His study of the Qur'ān shows that *Islām* is the name of true faith, which Allah (SWT) has sent down for mankind and it comprehends the faith and obedience both. Muslim is the one who believes with a sincere heart and obeys all commands of Allah (SWT) practically. In the support of the above, he mentions twelve Qur'ānic verses² and another seven verses in elsewhere. After studying all verses, no one can understand the word '*Islām*' or '*Muslim*', which implies a person who does not believe sincerely but has accepted Islam only outwardly³. Similarly, this is also wrong to accept one meaning of *Imān* as mentioned the above because the word '*Imān*' is the sense of believing sincerely and outward affirmation of the faith. Mumin is a person might have entered the Muslim community with verbal profession. No matter whether, the person is a true believer or with a weak faith. He concluded that *Imān* and *Islām* are not contradictory words but interchangeable for more than one meanings. It is by word, must be reflected through the action of the person. In the support of this, he has mentioned seven Qur'ānic verses⁴.

2. Qur'ānic Interpretation by *Ahādīth*

Sayyid Mawdudi used the authentic hadith to interpret the Qur'ān and criticized the anti-hadīth scholars. The similar *ahādīth* were referred to explain a particular issue from numerous companions through many chains of narrations. No one could raise question about

¹ [49:14]

² Ibid, vol, 5, p.p. 120-122, please see, [3:85, 3:102, 3:67, 3:156, 4:136, 8:27, 9:38, 6:14, 5:3, 3:20, 5:44, 2:132]

³ Ibid, vol. 5, p. 121.

⁴ Ibid, vol. 5, p. 122, please see, [3:156, 4:136, 5:54, 6:20-27, 9:38, 57:28 and 61:2].

its authenticity. His arguments and criticisms were based on the revelation and reasoning. He tried his best to interpret the Qur'an through authentic *Ahādīth* of the prophet Mohammad (SAW). Arguing that without *Ahādīth*, it is impossible to understand the objectives of the Qur'an. The Qur'an says:

(We have sent down unto you the message (the Qur'an) that you may explain clearly to men what is sent for them and they may think¹).

His authentic *Ahādīth* has been provided from the reliable books of *Ahādīth* such *Sahīh al-Bukhāri*, *Sahīh Muslim*, *Musnad Ahmad*, *Tirmidhi*, *Nasāi*, *Malik Muatta* and other authentic sources. He said: "I have tried my best to interpret the Quran through authentic *ahādīth* of the prophet. For they could not be detached from one another. No one should ever think that the Quran could ever be explained without help of Hadīth. The understanding of the Quranic 'ayāt solely depend on the ahādīth of the prophet"².

Some examples are cited here

The Issue of Spying and *Ghībah* (backbiting)

The Qur'an says:

[O ye who believe! Avoid suspicion as much as possible for suspicion in some cases is a sin. And spy not on each other; nor speak ill of each other behind their backs. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother Nay ye would abhor it. But fear Allah; for Allah is Off returning, Most Merciful].

Mawdudi interpreted the words '*Ghībah*' and 'Spying' with some legal rulings according to Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Daud, Tirmidhi, Nasai and Musnad Ahmad. He defined: (*Al-Ghibah* is saying on the back of a person some thing, which would hurt him if he came to know of it³). Both are in Islām the social ill and immoral acts, which must be cured in order to be a committed and sincere person in the Islamic society. Mawdudi argued based on hadīth that if the defect

¹ [16:44, see also 16:64 & 43:63].

² Noor Mohammad Osmani, *Mawdudi's Tafhīm al-Qur'an and Islamic Da'wah: A Methodological Study* (Unpublished thesis 2002, Kulliyah of IRKHS, IIUM, 2002), p.117-118.

³ Mawdudi, *Tafhim al-Qur'an* (Lahore, Islamic Publications LIMIT, 1994), p. 108-109.

were talked in his presence, it would be *Ghībah* otherwise it would be slandering. He provided ten authentic *Ahādīth* in order to explain the issue of backbiting. He quoted a report of similar content from Malik Muatta to define the word *Ghībah*.

“When a person asked the prophet Mohammad (SAW), What is Ghībah? He replied that it is talking of your brother in a way irksome to him. The person asked him, even if it is true, he replied that if what you said was false, it would then be a calumny¹”

Based on the *Ahādīth*, he concluded that speaking the ill of a person behind him is strictly prohibited in Islam. If what is spoken is true, it is *Ghībah*. Any form of it is prohibited in Islam. Whether, it is done by expressing words or reference or allusion. Likewise, in lifetime of the person or after his death. If backbiting is false, it is calumny. If it is meant to make two persons quarrel, it is slander. In the Islamic society, he argued that it is incumbent on every Muslim to refute a false allegation against a person in the presence or absence of his brother and advise him, not to tell his ill behind his brother back without religious need². He continued that every Muslim must conceal the secret of his brother as Allah has concealed the secret of his servant. A Muslim must not attack the honor of his brother as Allah has honored the children of Adam on earth. Two companions of the prophet were backbiting about a dead person, who had been stoned to death for committing adultery. When prophet heard it on his way back and saw a dead ass, he stopped and asked them to eat the meat of dead ass. He told them: “A little before this you were attacking the honor of your brother that was much more worse than eating this dead ass³”.

It is absolutely forbidden but from these *Ahādīth*, the Jurists and traditionalists deduced some principles, which allow a Muslim to express the ill of another person according to the necessity, permitted by the Shari`ah. Some examples are as follow:

Complaining by a victimized person against the oppressor to save him from the injustice

¹ Abu Daud, *Kitāb al-Hudūd*, no: 3843

² Mawdudi, vol. 5, p. 109

³ Abu Daud, *Kitāb al-Hudūd*, no: 3843.

The purpose of it is to remove the ill from the evildoers.

a. To state the facts of a case before a legal expert for the purpose of seeking a religious or legal ruling regarding an unlawful act committed by a person.

b. To make aware of his brother about the weaknesses and shortcomings of others for the purpose of safeguarding his brother. It is an obligatory to apprise his brother so; he then is not deceived because of ignorance.

c. To criticize the evils of the people who is spreading evils, sins and corrupting the people's mind.

d. To use nicknames for the people who are well known by names in the society¹.

The issue of spying, discussed in details by Mawdudi on six authentic *Ahādīth* of the prophet, is prohibited. This prohibition of spying is not only applicable to the individuals but also to the Islamic government. The Shari`ah does not require for the government to establish a system of spying in order to enquire too curiously into the people's secret evils and then punish them. But the force may apply against the evildoers who openly manifest the sins in the society. To him, this is not the proper way to rectify them from doing evils but education, preaching, counseling, collective training of the people and trying to create a pure social environment may help to do so. Prophet said:

“When the ruler starts searching for the causes of suspicions among the people he corrupts them”².

The exception according to hadith is in the special cases and situations in which spying is actually needed. For instance, according to Mawdudi, if the conduct of a person shows some signs of corruption and the comprehension is about to commit a crime, the government can investigate in his affairs. If some body sends a proposal of marriage in the house of a person or intends to do business, he can investigate or enquire the situations for his satisfaction.

¹ Ibid, vol. 5, p. 111, please also see; *Fath al-Bari*, vol. 10, p. 362.

² Ibid, quoted by Mawdudi from Abu Daud without mentioning the details. Vol. 5, p. 108.

Universal Brotherhood.

The Qur'ān says:

(O Mankind, We created you from one man and one woman, and then divided you into nations and tribes so that you may recognize one another. Indeed the most honorable among you in the sight of Allah is he who is the most pious of you. Surely, Allah is the most Knowing, All Wise¹).

Based on the above verse, Mawdudi discussed the issue of the universal brotherhood according to the various authentic *Ahādīth* in order to safeguard and unite the humanity from making distinction on the basis of color, language, country, nationality and the family affinity. He argued that prophet explained this issue details in his addresses and traditions. After conquering Macca, he said:

“Thank Allah who removed from you the blemish of ignorance and its arrogance. O people men are divided into classes: The pious and righteous, who are honorable in the sight of Allah, and sinful and vicious, who are contemptible in the sight of Allah, whereas all men and women are the children of Adam and Adam had been created by the command of Allah from clay”².

Mawdudi draw the attention of mankind to live together with unity, coexistence and brotherly according to three cordial truths. Firstly, the origin of all-humans is one and the whole species have sprung from one man and one woman. In the process of creation, there is no basis whatever for the divisions and distinctions in which humans involve themselves with their false notions. Secondly, In spite of being one in origin, it is natural that man is divided into nations and tribes but he could combine a family, a brotherhood, a tribe and a nation in order to produce a common way of life in cooperating each other in the affairs of the world. Even though, due to satanic ignorance made a means of boasting and hatred, which led mankind to every type of injustice and tyranny. Thirdly, the basis of superiority and excellence should be based on moral excellence between man and man. Because the process of the creation is one, the creator is one, the

¹ [49:13].

² Bukhari and Tirmidhi, *Kitab Tafsir al-Qur'ān*, no. 3193.

substance of the creation is one, and they are descended from the one source.

Therefore, there is no rational ground on the account of which one person may be regarded as superior to others. The real difference between man and man makes his Allah-consciousness, avoiding evils and following the way of piety and righteousness. Such a man whether he belongs to any race, any nation or any country is valuable and worthy on account of his personal merit in the sight of Allah. On the occasion of the farewell pilgrimage, prophet said:

“O people beware: your Allah is One. No Arab has any superiority over a non-Arab, and non-Arab any superiority over an Arab, and no white one has superiority over a black one, no black one any superiority over a white one, except on the basis of al-Taḳwa. The most honorable among you is the one who is the most pious and righteous in the sight of Allah”.

These teachings of *Ahādīsh* according to him have not confined to words only but Islam has established a universal brotherhood of the believers particularly, which do not allow any distinction on the basis of colors, languages, races, country and nationality. Islām makes human society free from the concept of high and low, clean and unclean, and rich and poor in order to acknowledge the basic human rights. Such system can assure humanity the success of the worldly life as well as life after death. Islam is the only religion, which has welded and combined innumerable races and communities scattered in all corners of the earth into one universal ummah¹.

Despite these issues, Mawdudi quoted many *Ahādīth* in order to handle various issues of the Qur’ān for the clarification. Such as the issue of the finality of the prophethood, he added an appendix of hadith at the end of Surah al-Ahzab. He produced 14 *Ahādīth* in order to strengthen the stand of the issue through the consensus of the companions and the Muslim scholars. He then presents his rational arguments for rational people whether there is a need of prophethood today for humanity or not. He also produced many *Ahādīth* to explain

¹ Mawdudi, Tafhīm, vol. 5, p.p. 118-119.

the issue of Salat towards understanding its various wordings from companions of the prophet. It is fact that Mawdudi could be compared with the traditionalist Mufassir but we could not align him with them because he also used other modern sources including his rationality to suit the needs of the contemporary rational man.

3. Qur'anic Interpretation by al-Ijtihad

Sayyid Mawdudi used his intellect and reason towards understanding and interpreting the Qur'anic verses. He considered human intellect as the main source of *al-Ijtihād* after the divine sources. His interpretation of the Qur'ān is wonderful contribution in order to make balance between *riwāāah* (narration) and *al-'aql* (reasoning). His *Ijtihād* did not deviate him from the original messages of the Qur'ān as the Divine guidance of Allah (SWT). His criticism was against people who emphasized on reasoning only and ignored the revelation as well as against people who claimed that the door of Ijtihād is already closed. Our job is to follow the interpretation of the Qur'ān made by the early Muslim scholars. His Ijtihād was not only about religious and theological issues but also the contemporary non-Islamic ideologies such as secularism, nationalism, communism, qadianism, western democracy and orient list's interpretation of the Qur'ān. The purpose of his rationalistic approach was to understand the real message of the Qur'ān and relate to the humanity. Some examples are cited as follow:

Qadianism and the finality of prophethood

Sayyid Mawdudi provided the lexical meaning of *Khatm Nubuwwah* (the finality of prophethood), sayings of the prophet Mohammad (SAW), consensus of his companions and consensus of not less than 21 Muslim great scholars from the earliest century until the latest century about the finality of prophethood. He refuted the claim of Ghulam Ahmad Qadiani's false prophethood by the use of his rationalistic arguments as well as other traditional sources¹. Ghulam Ahmad claimed himself as a prophet and many people follow him. Mawdudi argued that prophethood is a natural inborn quality, not

¹ Mawdudi, vol. 4, p.p. 158-178.

a acquired quality by making himself worthy of it through worship or righteous acts. It is not a prize, which might be awarded for rendering some services. The selected people had been appointed with prophethood by the will of Allah (SWT) in order to fulfill the specific need of humanity. The full account and record of the prophetic guidance of Islam are still available in its entirety and in such pure and original form. The perfectness of Islam and hadith until now do not require a new prophet. The divine revelation was not sent only to the prophet of Allah (SWT) for the sake of reformation in the world but to convey the divine message and the message of humanity to establish justice on earth and to cleanse the impurity and corruption¹. He argued that if a person rejects the finality of prophethood after providing all authentic evidences, the division is inevitable among humans, the unnecessary involvement in the conflict of beliefs and actions in the society and preventing for being one integrated ummah forever. All divine sources and reasoning demand that the door of prophethood should now remain closed and sealed forever and ever².

Killing any living being is prohibited

(And you should not kill any living being whom Allah (SWT) has forbidden to kill except by right³).

Mawdudi considered this universal declaration as a basic principle of the sanctity of human life, interpreted it based on the Quranic verses and *Hadith*. He categorized five types of cases as law full in Islam to take a life of the one. Three cases are from the Quranic point of views and two from the hadith. The five cases are as follow:

- i. The one who is proved guilty of the intentional murder of another person
- ii. The one who opposes Islam and obstructs its establishment so as to leave no other alternative that to fight with him.
- iii. The one who spreads disorder within the Islamic territory or exerts to overthrow the established Islamic government.

¹ Ibid, p.178

² Mawdudi, vol. 4, p. 180.

³ [6:151]

- iv. The one who, in spite of being married, is proved guilty of adultery
- v. The one who becomes an apostate and deserts the Islamic community

Mawdudi commented that these five cases are only lawful cases in Islam to take a human life and there is no other situation besides these in which human life may be taken. It can be a Muslim or a *Zimmi* or an unbeliever¹.

Covenant and its implication

(And you should fulfill your covenant with Allah (SWT)²).

Sayyid Mawdudi classified three types of covenant with Allah (SWT).

1. Solemn agreement, which man makes with Allah (SWT).
2. Solemn pledge which he makes with another man in the name of Allah (SWT)
3. The natural compact that comes into force as soon as one is born in the human society on Allah (SWT)'s earth.

The first two types are intentional and optional, referred to the rights to Allah (SWT) and to man. Fulfilling his obligation towards Allah (SWT), who gives his life with extraordinary physical and mental faculties and furnished the earth for his habitation and provided nourishment and limitless resources. The third one is a moral obligation of a man, which is natural right, contains the right to mother who gives birth and nourishes him. The right to father who brings him up and the right to the society that affords him many kinds of facilities and opportunities. All these are in born natural rights for man. This covenant has been ingrained by nature in each and every particle of his body, which itself owes its very existence to this covenant³.

¹ Ibid, vol. 1, p.170

² [6:152]

³ Mawdudi, *Tafhīm al-Quran*, Islamic Publication, Lahore, vol. 1, p.171, Q6:171.

Killing daughters by the people of Arabs before Islam is as the guilty of shirk.

Killing daughters alive in Islam during the period of ignorance by Arabs was as shirk, referred to the Quranic verse, (And likewise those whom the Mushrik believe to have a share in Allah's godhead have made the killing of their own children seem fear to them¹). Mawdudi argued that here they were guilty of shirk because they accepted others besides Allah as lawgivers and made them besides Him as Judges for deciding the lawful and unlawful about their lick and worldly affairs. According to Islam if any one accepts any law made by any one other than Allah is considered as he makes partnership with Him. Anyhow the killer of alive children is the guilty of shirk because the people of Arabs made such ignorant law or culture.

Furthermore, Mawdudi discussed three objectives and some impacts as regards the killing of their children.

They killed their daughters in order to avoid the disgrace of having a son-in-law or they feared lest they should fall into the hands of the enemy during the clannish wars or they should become a means of disgrace for them in any other way. They killed their daughters for economic reasons. They feared lest the burden of their nourishment should become unbearable for them. They sacrificed their children at the altar of their gods to please them. The Killing of daughters hardens the heart so much that the culprit becomes utterly pitiless and loses all the tender qualities of humanity. It also causes the destruction of human race, which reduces the population of one's own nation. It also prevents the birth of its future supporters and builders of its civilization and heir of its heritage.

This inhuman cruelty to innocent daughters destroys all the chances of success in their worldly life and life after death.

The Meaning of al-Jihād

Mawdudi explained the meaning of the word 'Jihad' according to his own understanding. Jihad means 'to exert one's utmost for the achievement of an object. It is not a synonym of for 'holy war' but has a far wider meaning that this. It covers every kind of effort. Mujahid is

¹ Mawdudi, *Tafhīm al-Qur'ān*, vol. 1, note :107, verse 2:137, p. 155.

the one who always struggles to achieve his goal as well as to propagate it conveying to others with his tongue, pen, papers, heart and body. He spends all his efforts and resources for its achievement and fights against all those forces that oppose it. In achieving the pleasure of Allah, he does not hesitate to put even every moment of his life in danger. The struggle and fight of such a person will be technically Jihad. A Muslim, however, is required to do all this in the way of Allah alone under certain moral restrictions for establishing the way prescribed by Him and for elevating His word above all. There should be no other object than this before performing Jihad. It is certain that the Jihad of a Muslim does not refer to the general war of extermination against infidels¹.

Mawdudi's Methodologies in Interpretation of the Qur'ān by Using Modern Knowledge and the Biblical Sources.

Qur'ānic Interpretation by the use of Israiliyyat Narratives

Sayyid Mawdudi accepted partially the narratives of Israiliyyat through the proper investigation. He was neither among those who rejected totally nor those who accepted all its reports without proper investigation. The Qur'ānic verses are to him as the original source while the Israiliyyat narratives are secondary source as supportive in order to show the similarities between the Qur'ān and Bible. Many issues have been narrated in the Qur'ān are similar of the Bible such as prophet Dawud, prophet Solaiman, prophet Isaiah, prophet Jeremiah, prophet Ezekiel and prophet Jesus etc. They killed many prophets of Allah such as the prophet Elijah, Hanani, Micaiah, Zechariah, Jeremiah, John the Baptist and Jesus. The purposes of quoting the narratives of Israiliyyat are:

- a. To explain certain issues of the Qur'ān in order to support and strengthen them.
- b. To compare between the Qur'ānic and Biblical narratives.
- c. To prove the Qur'ān as not a duplicate of the Christian and Hebrew Bibles as some Jews and Christians claim without studying the Qur'ān.

¹ Ibid, vol. 1, note: 234, verse, 2:218, p. 161.

d. To clarify the accusations against the prophet made by the Christians and Jews in order to correct their false notions and allegations.

The Issue of Moral degeneration of Bani Israel and killing and torturing their prophets

(By and by, they became so degraded that disgrace and humiliation, misery and wretchedness were stamped upon them and they incurred Allah's wrath. That was because they began to reject the revelation of Allah and kill His messengers without any just cause; that was the consequence of their disobedience and their persistent transgression against the law¹).

The Qur'an in the above verse describes the most shameful chapter of the history of the Israelites and declares that they fully deserved the curses and condemnation of Allah. They chose their worst offenders against law and morality from among themselves and made them their chiefs and leaders and finally sent their prophets and pious men to the gallows. In support of the Qur'anic statements 'kill His messengers without just cause', he provided eight quotations from the *Israiliyyat* narratives. According to the Biblical sources, they tortured, imprisoned and killed many prophets such as the prophet Elijah, Hanani, Micaiah, Zechariah, Jeremiah, John the Baptist and Jesus².

Quoting the torturing and putting their prophets in prison, he said:

“Prophet Jeremiah began to bewail and warn his people of their degeneration and its evil consequences. He lamented and cried, mend your ways otherwise you will meet with a far worse doom than Samaria. In the answer to this the Jews cursed him, beat him and imprisoned him. They accused him of treachery against the nation and shouted 'you are deserting to the Chaldeans'. He was arrested and flogged and confined in the dungeon cells. Then they put him under

¹ [2:61].

² Please see; 2 Chronicles, verses, 16:1-10, 1 king, 22:26-27, 2 Chronicles, 24:20-21, Jeremiah, 15:10, 18:20-23; 20:1-18, Mathew, 23:37, Mark, 6:17-29.

ground cistern, lowering down him with ropes so that he would sink in the mud and die on the spot from starvation¹".

Quoting the killing of John the Baptist, he says:

"When John the Baptist raised his voice against the immoralities, which were being openly practiced in the court of Herod, king of Judah, he was arrested and put him in prison. Then at the request of his girl friend Herodias, the king asked a guard to bring his head. The man went and beheaded him in the prison and brought it on a dish to be presented to fulfill her desire. Thus the prophet was killed without any cause²".

Comparing the issues between the Quranic and Biblical narratives.

Mawdudi compared the story of the Quran with the Biblical narratives in order to show that which one is more authentic and befitting to the status of the prophets. He found contradictions between the statements of the Qur'ān and the narratives of Israiliyyat. Some issues of the Qur'ān are speckled with the biblical narratives such as the noble story of prophet Yusuf, searching the Lord of the universe by prophet Ibrahim and the story of the birth of the prophet Yahya and his father's prayer. The Qur'ān says:

(The king said; bring him to me. But when the royal envoy came to him; Joseph said, go back to your lord and ask him to enquire about the matter of the women who cut their hands. Indeed my lord has full knowledge of their cunning³)

Mawdudi quoted various statements from the biblical narratives in order to differentiate between the Qur'ānic and biblical verses. Because the Qur'ān mentions that prophet Joseph declined to quit the prison till his characters was cleared. While the Bible and the Talmūd did not mention this most important part of the story. He found the contradictory narratives of the Bible and the Talmūd with the Qur'ān. According to the Bible:

"Then pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the danger and he shared himself and changed his

¹ Jeremiah, 15:10, 20:23-20 from Mawdudi, *Tafhīm al-Qur'ān*, vol. 5.

² Mawdudi, vol. 1, p. 82-83, and also see Mark, 6: 17-29.

³ [12:51]

raiment, and came in unto pharaoh”

The Talmūd depicts even a more degrading picture of event. It says, “The king ordered that Joseph should be brought before him. But he commanded his officer to be careful not to frighten. Last thought fear he should be unable to interpret correctly. The king was seated upon his throne and the glare and glitter of the Jewels, which ornamented the throne, dazzled and astonished the eyes of Joseph. Mawdudi commented on the above statement, that the degrading picture depicted in the Qur’ān would convince very unbiased critic. That the one in the Qur’ān is worthy of a prophet of Allah (SWT). Moreover, the picture in Talmūd is open to a grave objection. He raised a question that had prophet Joseph behaved like a frightened and cringing had who was so dazzled by the glitter and glare of the jewels of the ground, how was it that the king and the countries. Were so impressed by him that they declared. All this shows that by that time prophet Joseph had proved his moral and mental superiority and otherwise, they would have never raised him to the highest rank in such a civilized and advance country as Egypt¹.

Mududi argued that prophet Joseph demanded an enquiry into the matter not because he himself had any doubt of his innocence, but he was perfectly confident of this, by saying of my lord has full knowledge of my innocence and of their cunning. His demand was to clarify his innocence publicly and investigate the reason, why I had been sent to prison, I would not go before the public with any blemish or blot on my reputation .his intention was to prove that he was innocent victim of the injustice of the of the chiefs and noble of the country, who had cast me into prison .In order to cover up the guilt of their own ladies².

Rejection of partnership and lordship by prophet Ibrahim has not been discussed at all in the Bible as well as Talmūd. However, he identified the filthy spots, distorted by them about prophet Ibrahim through comparison between the Qur’ān and Bible and the Talmūd. According to the Talmūd, prophet Ibrahim chose the sun and the stars

¹ Ibid, vol. 2, note:14, p.p. 149-151.

² Ibid, p. 560, note: 55.

as god and worshiped while the Qur'ān provides totally opposite story about him. In another statement, when he said, about the sun. This is my lord and he worshiped it. He then, did the same thing at the same time with the moon¹.

About the story of the birth of prophet Yahya (John the Baptist), there are some different statements between the Quran and the Bible and Luke. Maududi identified some differences and quoted them directly from Luke and compared between them. Firstly,

According to the Qur'ān, prophet Zacharia's wife was barren and prayed to Allah (SWT) to give him a child, while there is no mention of his prayer anywhere in the Bible. Secondly, According to Luke, "John shall be filled with the holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb, while the Qur'ān says we blessed him judgment, while he was yet a child". Thirdly, according to Luke, (And behind thou shall be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season while the Qur'ān mentions it as sign as the silence for three consecutive days). In this regard, Luke considers it as the punishment because the prophet Zechariah was asked to remain dumb till the birth of John.

The Qur'ān refers to the most shameful chapter of the history of the Jews and the Christians and declared that they fully deserved the causes and condemnation of Allah (SWT). The narratives of Israiliyyat strengthen the narration of the Qur'ānic verses on order to prove the authenticity of the history of the Jews and Christians.

Mawdudi rejected the claim made by the Christians and the Jews that the Qur'ān is a duplicate of the Biblical narratives such as the story of the creation of Adam and Eve, the creation of the heavens and the earth and many other issues. He compared between the Qur'ānic verses and the biblical sources about many issues and discovered contradictions with the Quranic narratives. There is no consequence in narrating the issues such as the expulsion of prophet Adam and his wife from Paradise, the role of prophet Ibrahim about idols with his

¹ Ibid, see details in vol. 1, p.560.

nation and the role of his father about his mission, relationship between prophet Yusuf and the lady of Egypt and the story of prophet Solaiman. Mawdudi identified the filthy spots of Israiliyyat narratives in order to cleanse and correct them.

2.The Qur'ānic Interpretation in light of scientific explanation.

The Qur'ān is not a book of science but scientific discoveries may help towards understanding the messages of the Quran more profoundly in the era of science. According to Mawdudi, the Quran and science is not contradictory. Scientific realities are supportive of the Qur'ānic facts in order to understand the reality of the creator of the universe and its purposes. The scientific facts and figures provided by Mawdudi are mentioned in the early tafsir al-Qur'ān. Some examples are cited here.

Creation of the earth and seven heavens

The Qur'ān says: (Allah is He Who created seven heavens and of the earth also their like. His command descends among them, so that you may know that Allah has power over everything, and that Allah's knowledge encompasses all¹).

Mawdudi argued that "seven heavens" in the Quran, do not mean as "seven earths", but the meaning of the earth is the existing earth, which serves all creatures lived on earth as inhabitation, bed and carpet. There are clear indications in the Quran that living creatures are not found only on this earth but also in the heavens². Mawdudi quoted the similar opinions from the early Muslim scholars such Abdullah Ibn Abbas, Allama Alusi, and Ibn Kathir. In supporting the above scientific information, the quotation has been taken from recent astronomical findings as he says:

"It would be interesting to note that lately the Rand Corporation of America has estimated on the basis of their astronomical observations that only in the Galaxy to which our earth belongs, there are about

¹ [65:12]

² Ibid, vol. 5, 65: 12, note: 23, p. 581-582.

600, 000000 (six hundred millions) planets physical conditions of which closely resemble those on the earth, and there is a possibility that they may also be inhabited just as is the earth by living creatures¹.

He provided more examples from scientific realities in order to prove the existence of Allah and to express the purposes of the creation of the universe. He also argued that if a person is not a blind in his eyes, not deaf in his ears, not soundless in his mind, he could clearly perceive the existence of Allah and His oneness. Mawdudi agreed that human knowledge is changeable, it therefore, fact that scientific information may also changeable because scientists provided information about the movement of the sun, the moon and the stars in the sky with unstable opinions i.e. the sun, the moon and the stars are moving around the earth while later they say that the earth is moving around them. Later they discovered that the sun, the moon and the stars are moving around the earth. What does the Quran mention is true and reality thousand years ago? Mawdudi understands the creation of Allah (SWT) as His signs. Such as the alteration of the day and night, the movement of the sun, the moon, stars, comets, planets and other heavenly parts. Man should use his intellect to understand the mysteries of Allah who is the reality in this world as well as life after death. One of the best examples of signs of Allah is the creation of the first man and woman and the development of human creation on earth, which is not contradiction with the experiment of the scientific facts. He referred to the Quranic verse, (Say, Bring forth your argument, if you are telling the truth²).

3. Qurānic Interpretation in the light of fiqh and al-fuqaha

Mawdudi interpreted the legal issues according the opinions of Muslim *Fuqah'ā* in supporting the interpretation of the Quranic verses. He as the follower of Hanafi School did not support blindly all fiqhi issues of Hanafi School. His rationalistic approach was to present the real understanding of the Qur'ān, which would be applicable in the contemporary man and society. He used the original

¹ Ibid, vol. 5, p. 582, quoting from Economist, London, 26, July 1969.

² [27:64].

and authentic sources of all four schools with unbiased mind¹. He also reported the Islamic legal rulings from the narratives of the companions of the prophet and the successors of his companions including many individual Islamic scholars. Some examples are cited here:

In [65:1-2],

(O Prophet, when you and the believers divorce women, divorce them for their prescribed waiting periods).

About the number of *Talaq* (divorce), Mawdudi provided firstly the authentic Ahādīth and the narratives of the companions but the legal rulings reported from them in this regards are incomplete conformity with the prophet's injunctions². He provided the detailed opinions of the Islamic Jurists, who argued and discussed the issue of *Talāq* based on *Ahādīth* in the light of the above Quranic verse. Emphasizing on the kinds of *Talāq* and their rulings according to the famous four *maḍāhib* in order to clarify the issue³. Methods of taking wife back after being divorce as an example within the waiting period are discussed according to four schools. Such as if a man pronounces one or two divorces, the divorced wife and the former husband can remarry by mutual consent even if the waiting period has been expired. If a person pronounces a revocable divorce on his wife, can return to her whenever he likes before the expiration of the waiting periods, whether the woman is desirous of this or not⁴.

In this regards, according to Shafei, return can take place only by word, not by conduct. To Maliki, return can be effected both orally and conduct⁵.

¹ He used the following sources of the four schools such as *Hanāfi fiqh: Hidāyah, Fath al-Qadīr, Bada'i al-Sanā'i, al-Jassās, Ahkām al-Qur'ān. Safi'i fiqh: Al-Nawāwi, al-Minhāj with Sharh Mughni al-Muhtāj and Tafsīr al-Kabīr. Maliki fiqh: al-Dusūqi `Ala al-Sharh al-Kabīr, Hedāyat al-Mujāhīd, Ahkām al-Qur'ān by Ibn al-`Arabi. Hanbāli fiqh: Ibn Hazam, Musnad Ahmad, Muatta.*

² Tafhīm, vol. 5, [65:1-2], p.330.

³ For Hanāfi school, *kitāb al-Hidāyah, Fath al-Qadīr, Ahkām al-Quran by al-Jassās and Umdat al-Qari* are used as references. For Shafei school, *Kitāb al-Mughni al-Muhtaj, for Miliki school, Kitāb al-Sharh al-Kabīr and Ahkām al-Quran by Ibn al-`Arai, and for Hanbali, Kitāb al-Insaf fi Rajih al-Khilaf `Ala Madhab Ahmad bin Hanbal.*

⁴ [2:228].

⁵ Mawdudi, Tafhīm al-Quran. vol. 5, p.p. 334-336, note: 2.

Many legal issues have been discussed according to the four schools and other *fuqah'ā* in *Tafhīm al-Qur'ān* such as the responsibilities of the Islamic government about the prisoner of war¹. The position of *Dhimmi* and the rulings of *Jizyah*². The rulings of exchanging prisoners and taking the pledge with the prophet of Allah (SWT) and his successors³. Legality of occupied land from non-Muslims through fighting⁴ and rulings of apostasy⁵.

Some Missing Dimension

In dealing with some references, he referred to the traditional as well as modern sources but the detail information is not available such as the books of Ahādīth and books of Sirah are used and the particulars were not given. In dealing with Israiliyyat narratives, he quoted many statements from the biblical sources and Talmud, which have been manipulated by its followers. However, quoting extensively may mislead from the original message of the Quran. In dealing with other issues, he elaborated them as a reader may think that this is a book of law or fiqh of history.

Conclusion

Sayyid Abul `Ala Mawdudi was a religious reformer in the contemporary world. He wrote tafsir al-Quran from the practical experience during his whole life. Therefore, the methods of writing it must differ with others but it portrays the image of the traditional *tafāsīr* in interpreting the Quranic verses because of using frequently the Quranic verses, Ahādīth of the prophet, the narratives of his companions and the successors of his companions in supporting various issues. He followed sound methodologies strictly in interpreting the Quran with authentic references. He also used modern knowledge and resources in supporting various issues of the Quran in order to relate to the contemporary life of man and society. His thoughtful arguments are moderate and rational in order to practise the teachings of the Quran. He carefully used the Israiliyyat narratives to

¹ See, Tafhīm, vol. 5, note: 5 & 6, p.p. 16-17.

² See, Ibid, p.p. 16-17.

³ Ibid, note: 32, p.p. 66-67.

⁴ Ibid, note:20, p.p. 134-142.

⁵ Ibid, note: 5, p.p. 181-189.

strengthen and support the Quranic issues, at the same time, made differences between the Quran and the Bible. With the above features, there are some minor missing dimensions. Such as some references are not details, in dealing with Israiliyyat; some times he exceeded the limits, which may detract from the real message of the Quran even though he was aware of that. Some contemporary issues are discussed extensive details. One would feel that he is not within the shade of the Quran. However, His tafsir is in the contemporary world undoubtedly a guidebook for the humanity today in order to establish justice and unite the humanity living together with coexistence and peace.

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