Characteristics of the Qur'anic Interpretations in the Urdu Language: from Shāh Walī Allāh to Maudūdī

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Characteristics of the Qur'anic Interpretations in the Urdu Language: From Shāh Walī Allāh to Maudūdī*

SUNAGA Emiko**

Abstract

This paper is part of a tafsīr (Qur'anic Interpretation) study in South Asia. The Qur'an, regarded as the word of God, needed tafsīr in order to be understood clearly and fully so that its commandments could be implemented with the conviction that the will of God had been done. In South Asia, there are a number of tafsīr, translated and written by local Muslims in different languages such as Urdu, Hindi, Bengali, Panjabi, Gujarati, etc. In this paper, the situation of tafsīr in South Asia and meaning of tafsīr will be examined. Further, through Saiyid Abū al-A'lā Maudūdī's Tafsīr *Tafhīm al-Qur'ān*, the cause and value of numerous tafsīr will be analysed.

Keywords: Tafsīr, Qur'anic Interpretation, Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī, Saiyid Abū al-A'lā Maudūdī, *Tafhīm al-Qur'ān*.

1. Introduction

1.1. What is *Tafsīr*?

The primary purpose of this paper is to illustrate the tafsīr in South Asia. For this purpose, the discussion on tafsīr in the print media will be presented. This will enable us to become aware of how people understood the Qur'an and their connections to the origin of the Qur'an.

A tafsīr is an interpretation, or exegesis, of the Muslim Holy Book, the Qur'an, or

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sometimes it is just a translation of the Qur'an. It includes a great amount of information related to the Qur'an, the meaning of difficult Arabic terms and descriptions of the situations when the Qur'anic verses were revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. Throughout the history of Islam, religious scholars and authors have composed new tafsīrs across regions, languages, and ages.

The Qur'an, regarded as the word of God, required tafsīr because followers needed to understand the Book clearly and fully so they could follow its commandments with the conviction that they had done the will of God. In this paper, tafsīr is the main resource both as religious books and social literature through which an analysis can be made on the thinking of various historical periods.

1.2. Classical Tafsīr

From a historical point of view, classical tafsīrs are those that were produced prior to the 19th century. The first comprehensive tafsīr in the Muslim world was Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī's (839–923) *Jāmi'al-bayān 'an ta'wīl āy al-Qur'ān*. In addition to this, the following works are well distributed to the world as classical tafsīr: (1) Abū al-Qāsim Maḥmūd ibn 'Umar al-Zamakhsharī's (1075–1144) *al-Kashshāf 'an ḥaqā'iq al-tanzīl wa-'uyūn al-aqāwīl fī wujūh al-ta'wīl*, (2) Fakhr al-Dīn Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn 'Umar al-Rāzī's (1149–1209) *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, (3) Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Anṣārī al-Khazrajī al-Andalusī al-Qurṭubī's (d1272) *al-Jāmi' li-aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, (4) 'Imād al-Dīn Ismā'īl ibn 'Umar ibn Kathīr al-Dimashqī's (1300? –1373) *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'aẓīm*, (5) Jalāl al-Dīn Abū al-Faḍl 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Bakr al-Khuḍayrī al-Suyūṭī (1445–1505) and Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad Maḥallī's (1389–1459) *Tafsīr al-jalālayn*, (6) Muḥammad ibn 'Alī al-Shawkānī's (1760–1834) *Fatḥ al-qadīr: al-jāmi' bayna fannay al-riwāyah wa-dirāyah min 'ilm al-Tafsīr*. These tafsīrs were all written in Arabic, the platform through which 'ulamās could discuss theology or ḥadīth.

1.3. Modern Tafsīr

The modern tafsīr tradition began in the 19th century. Modern tafsīrs are considered to reflect the views of their authors and not the classical views; included in this modern tradition is the tafsīr of Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā (1865–1935), 'Alī Jawharī al-Ṭanṭāwī (1870–1940) or Sayyid Quṭb (1906–1966) of Egypt, 'Abd al-Ḥamīd ibn Bādīs (1889–1940) of Algeria, or Saiyid Abū al-A'lā Maudūdī (1903–1979) of Pakistan.

It is obvious that print media played an important role in reflecting the thoughts and

culture after the 19th century. The introduction of lithographic printing resulted in a change in scholars' writing styles and the manner in which knowledge was transmitted. The 'ulamā not only became scholars but also distributors of information. Their role as transmitters and interpreters of Islam to their societies has come to be challenged, if not supplanted, by scholars from outside the madrasa world [Robinson 2008: 55]. With this change, tafsīrs began to be printed in large quantities and became popular among the masses.

1.4. Tafsīr Study

Although tafsīrs have a long history in context to Muslim society, tafsīr studies, even in European countries, appeared only since the 1960s. This study encompasses a wider spectrum of concerns and requires a broader methodology; it includes literature, comparative study, religious study, textual scholarship, history, religious thought, etc. From the end of the 20th century, the trend of research has moved from Qur'an studies to tafsīr studies.

Commentary on the Qur'an is used to more clearly understand the Holy Book; however, for the researcher, it can reveal the thoughts of the generation in which it was written. The contents of the modern tafsīr can be suited to meet the demands of the current age or region; in other words, tafsīr, paired with its religious thought processes, reflects the generation, society, politics and philosophical thoughts of the time in which it was written. As such, tafsīr studies are one of the primary means of examining the history of Islamic thought and should be analysed in order to study said history [Kosugi 1994: 92-93, 98].

Although the tafsīr can be used to understand social thought, there have been few academic studies devoted to tafsīr. Until recently, there have been no well-developed lists or comprehensive surveys compiled for those in South Asia, a geographical area far from the centre of the Arab world. The lack of research within this field is the most notable problem in this regard.

2. Study of Tafsīr in South Asia and its Problems

Similar to other non-Arabic regions, South Asian Muslims used oral communication to disseminate the teachings of the Holy Qur'an until the end of the 18th century [Khan 1997: 48]. The first translation was produced in South Asia, written in Persian—not the vernacular of India—and included Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī (1703–1762) in Delhi. His son, Shāh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Dihlawī (1735–1815), translated his father's Persian tafsīr

into Urdu, which is the earliest version of a complete Urdu tafsīr. Due to the colonisation of the area, a system of grammar was established; printing presses and publishers were located in big cities, and education and infrastructure were developed. This new system of distributing books and knowledge to other places made it easier to publish and share versions of tafsīr and did not require people to travel. After Shāh ‘Abd al-Qādir’s translation, particularly from the early-20th century onwards, there have been many tafsīrs written in Urdu and other South Asian languages.

2.1. Lists of Tafsīr

Only a few studies of the Qur’an have been conducted in South Asia, and there are no documented lists of tafsīrs. A prominent scholar in this field, Mofakhkhar Hussain Khan, prepared a classification system for library science [Khan 1993, 1996, 1997, 2001].

From 1955 to the 1960s, some students from Punjab University created a bibliographic survey on the translation of the Qur’an into South Asian languages and submitted them as academic thesis. In addition, in India, Deoband’s Dār al-‘ulūm madrassa school undertook a similar project in 1960s; however, both these studies did not provide satisfactory results [Khan 1993: 103]. The Deoband project was criticized for the poor quality of the survey’s contents and its lack of academic evidence because the survey pulled materials from secondary or tertiary sources, local journals, or personal libraries [Khan 1993: 103-104].

In 1984, a scholar from the subcontinent, Saleha Abdul Hakim Sharfuddin, published *Qur’ān-e Ḥakīm ki Urdū Tarajim*—a study of tafsīr translations into Urdu up till 1967. In this book, Sharfuddin divides the materials into three time-periods: (1) manuscripts up till and through the 18th century, (2) material printed in the 19th century and (3) materials from 1900 to 1967. Each group must be further divided into complete or unfinished versions or those intentionally only partially translated. However, Khan has reservations regarding Sharfuddin’s work because she relied on secondary sources, and her classification was not adequate [Khan 1993: 106].

Two years after Sharfuddin’s work, in 1986, the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) published the *World Bibliography of Translations of the Meanings of the Holy Qur’an*. This bibliography is the first comprehensive list that encompasses the 2,672 printed translations in 65 languages. In the Urdu language, it includes 300 completed tafsīrs and 470 incomplete works; however, this number has not been satisfactorily verified, and worse, there are a number of minor mistakes [Auchterlonie 1988: 135-136].

2.2. Lack of Tafsīr Lists

As discussed above, there are countless tafsīrs in South Asia. Then, why are there no adequate lists of Holy Book translations in South Asia? Scholars have not addressed this academic situation. Two reasons might account for this situation of print media in South Asia:

First, as aforementioned, print media developed rapidly after colonisation, as it also did in South Asia. As the prominent scholar Robinson pointed out, the British built a subcontinental railway system that made it easy to transport printed materials, which made publishers the centre of scientific and religious knowledge [Robinson 1993: 242-244]. On the other hand, the lack of copyrights led to pirated copies of certain works. Even before a copyright had expired—often just after the original had been published—photocopies or pirated editions, which were frequently perfect copies of the original, were 'published' by small publishers. These pirated versions are misleading, as accurate information regarding the original title or the name of the author is not provided.

2.3. Question

Although the compilation of an accurate bibliography is important for academic progress, this paper focuses on the implication of this situation. In other words, there is the question of why so many tafsīrs are in demand in the subcontinent. What has changed as a result of these writings? What does it mean that so many tafsīrs have been written and shared in South Asia? In order to answer these questions, I will consolidate the tafsīrs in the next section.

3. Outline of Tafsīr in South Asia

In this section, I present the entire picture of tafsīrs in South Asia.

3.1. History

In South Asia, Tafsīr had two stages in its history. At the beginning, in 1606[1], the earliest Persian tafsīr in South Asia was written by Ma<u>kh</u>dūm Nūḥ (d.1590). In 1738, Shāh Walī

[1] One of the earliest Urdu tafsīrs was prepared by Murādullāh Anṣārī; however, this commentary was a partial one. It was a tafsīr only on the 30th juz of the Qur'an [Khan 1997: 34]. Moreover, it did not have any literal translation of the verses of the Qur'an. Not much is known about this tafsīr [Khan 1996: 226].

Allāh al-Dihlawī, an ‘ulamā, wrote another Persian tafsīr. These tafsīrs were written for ‘ulamās who could understand Arabic and Persian, and who could discuss them in Arabic, the same as scholars in Arabic countries[2]. Persian served as the *lingua franca* of the elite and erudite [Khan 1996: 225]. This stage was just the platform that helped disseminate the tafsīr from the Arab world into South Asia.

The second stage began in the late 18th century; at this time, local people began demanding the transmission of knowledge in their local languages. In 1790, the first complete Urdu tafsīr was translated by Shāh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Dihlawī, as mentioned above. This was the watershed in the history of knowledge in South Asia. In 1867, Maulawī ‘Abd al-Ghaffūr Khān’s Urdu tafsīr was published[3]. In addition, Deputy Nazīr Aḥmad (1836–1912), who was one of the first Urdu novelists, wrote Urdu tafsīrs in 1899; *Bihishtī Zewar*’s Ashraf ‘Alī Thānawī (1863–1943) wrote a 12-volume Urdu tafsīr in 1908[4]. In 1930, ‘Abdullāh Yūsuf ‘Alī (1872–1953) from Lahore published a world famous English translation. In addition, other prominent scholars wrote tafsīrs in Urdu; these included Abū al-Kalām Āzād (1888–1958) in 1932[5], Saiyid Abū al-A’lā Maudūdī (1903–1979) in 1951 (ended 1972), ‘Abd al-Mājid Daryābādī (1892–1977) in 1952[6], and Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī (1903–1997), who wrote a 9-volume tafsīr in 1961[7].

According to this history line, one aspect has been made clear: During the twentieth century, there were a number of authors who were social activists and political leaders and not Islamic traditional ‘ulamās. This is because several reformist thinkers of the modern period perceived the gap between the Qur’an and the everyday life of the Muslim.

3.2. Structure

Technically, the structure of a tafsīr in Arabic is quite simple. Arabic tafsīrs consist of a

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[2] Even today, Arabic tafsīrs and religious textbooks are translated into vernacular languages, and the *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* is very popular in North India [Robinson 2008: 37].

[3] Khān, Maulawī ‘Abd al-Ghaffūr. 1867. Published from Allahabad in 4-volume [Woolworth 1927: 288].

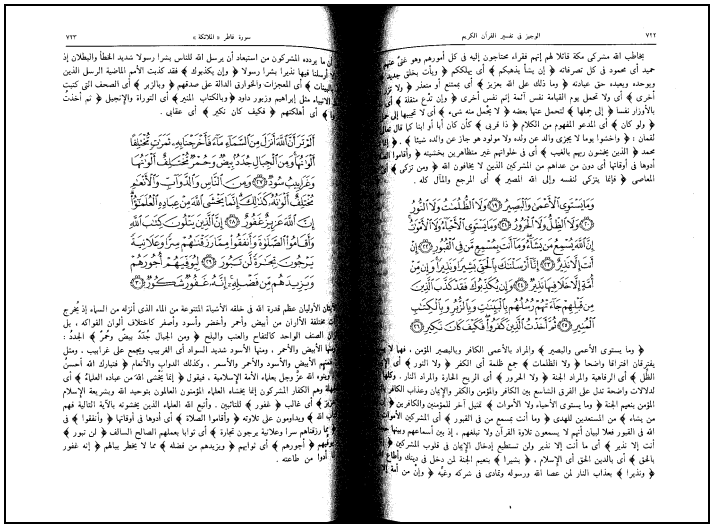
[4] Thānawī, Ashraf ‘Alī. 1908. *Bayān al-Qur’ān*, rev. ed. Karachi: H.M. Sa‘īd Company. He was the prolific writer and revered spiritual guide and the most celebrated early graduate of the Deoband school. His guide for girls the *Bihishtī Zewar* has been widely circulated both in Urdu and in translations into many regional languages.

[5] Abū al-Kalām Āzād, called Mawlānā Āzād, is an Urdu journalist and stylist, Islamic thinker. He was born in Mecca. In 1912 Āzād, through his widely influential weekly journal *Al-hilāl* (the Crescent), set out first to revive among the Muslims of India the nation’s problems, and second to move them to political revolt.

[6] Daryābādī, ‘Abd al-Mājid. 1908. *al-Qur’ān al-Ḥakīm ma‘a Tarjamah-o Tafsīr*. Lahore: Tāj Company.

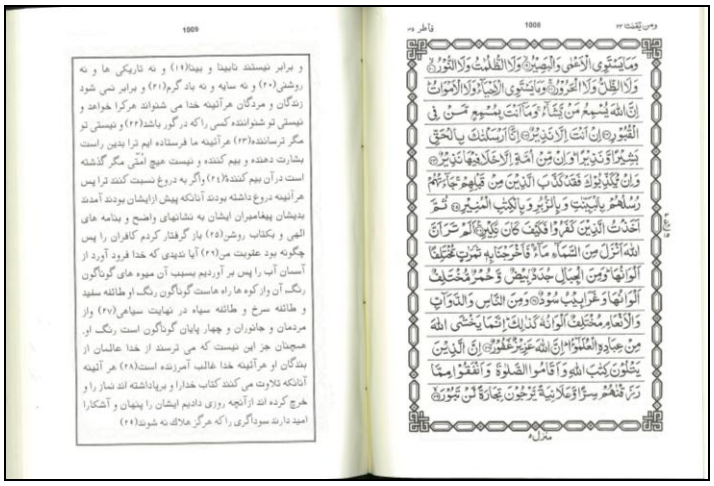
[7] Iṣlāḥīin, Amīn Aḥsan. 1961. *Tadabbur-i Qur’ān*. Lahore: Fārān Foundation. This is the most successful attempt of naẓm (order or coherence)-based interpretation. The sūrahs in their received arrangement are believed to possess naẓm, and this naẓm is regarded as hermeneutically significant.

few āyas (verses) of the Qur’an on the top of the page, and the interpretations of these verses are found below the verses (See Picture 1).

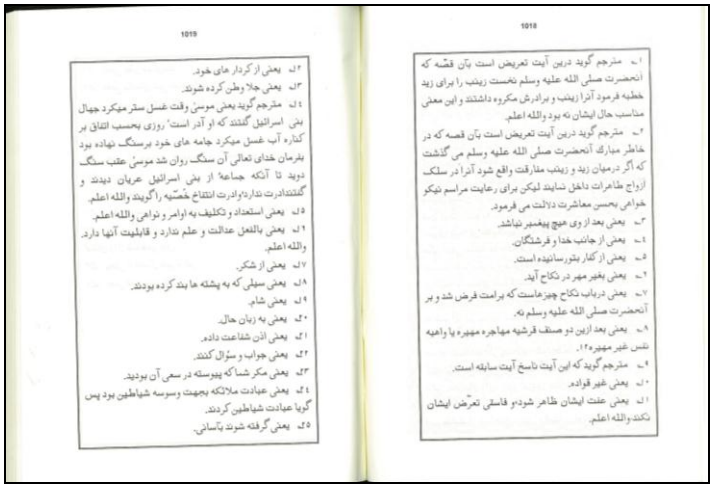


Picture 1: Example of an Arabic tafsīr, *Al-Wajīn* by Dr. Shawqī Ḍayf[8]. p.722. The new verse start from the middle part, and on the below is comments on the verses. Both are in Arabic. The all Pictures in this paper, as the case may be, show the same verse of Qur’an; surah Fāṭir Q35:24.

In the case of early Persian tafsīrs, such as those of Walī Allāh, below the Qur’an verses are their straightforward translations, followed by a third part, which contains the interpretation of the verses (See Picture 2 and 3).

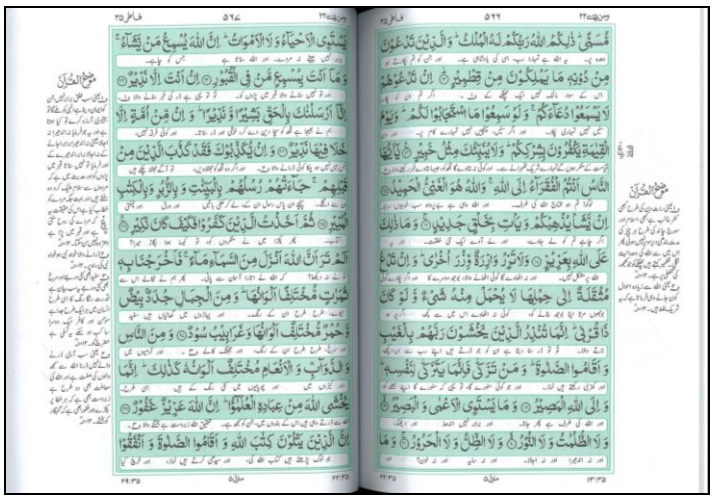


[8] Dr. Shawqī Ḍayf (1910-2005) was a professor in history of Arabic literature and renowned journalist. He has written books such as *al-Adab al-ʻArabī fī Miṣr min al-fatḥ al-Islāmī ilā nihāyat al-ʻaṣr al-Ayyūbī*, *Tārīkh al-adab al-ʻArabī* and *Taḥrīfāt al-ʻĀmmīya li-l-Fuṣḥā fī al-Qawāʻid wa al-Binyāt wa al-Ḥurūf wa al-Ḥarakāt.*

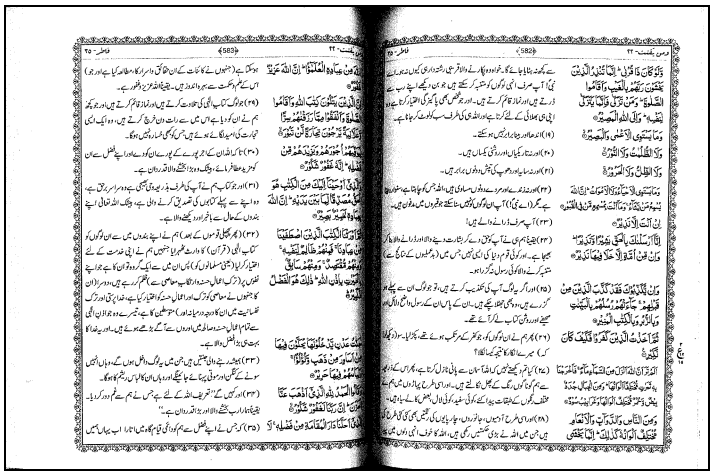


Pictures 2 & 3: Example of a Persian tafsīr, *al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* by Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī in the 18th century. pp. 1008-1009, 1018-1019. Picture 2, above, is the Qur'an verses (right) and their direct Persian translation (left). Below, Picture 3 is brief comments on the verses. In this tafsīr, comments are mostly limited to linguistic paraphrasing.

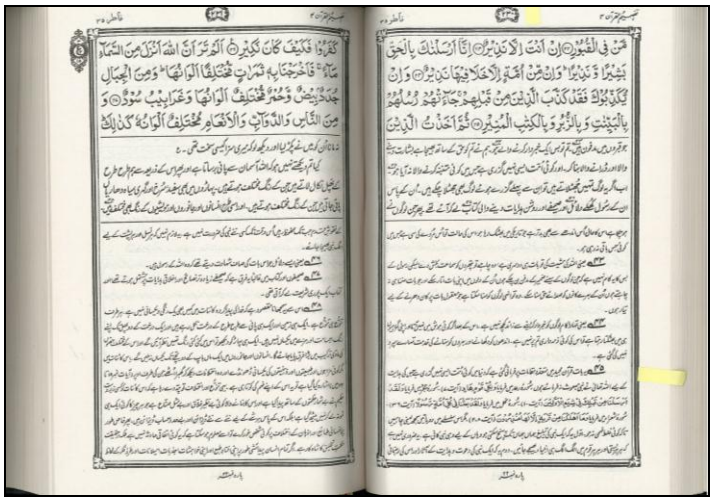
However, in the non-Arabic tafsīrs, translations between verses and interpretations are required. In the Urdu tafsīr, below the Qur'an verses are straightforward translations of those verses followed by a third part, which contains the interpretation of the verses. Urdu speakers needed an explanation of the original Arabic language itself, which Arabic speakers naturally would not need (see Pictures 4, 5, & 6).



Picture 4: Example of an Urdu first tafsīr, *al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm* by Shāh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Dihlawī in 1790. pp. 566-567. On the above are the Qur'an verses, and on the below are their direct Urdu translation. The brief comments on the verses are on the margin.



Picture 5: Example of an Urdu tafsīr, *Tarjumān al-Qur'ān* by Abū al-Kalām Āzād in 1932. pp. 582-583. It has verses on the right, an Urdu translation on the left side. Āzād's countless writings and speeches all refer to a few fundamental attitudes and options sponsored by his tafsīr. However, he annotated Urdu rendering of sūrahs 1-23, and especially in his commentary on the opening verses of the Qur'an.



Picture 6: Example of an Urdu tafsīr, *Tafhīm al-Qur'ān* by Saiyid Abū al-A'lā Maudūdī in 1972. pp. 230-231. A typical page of this book is divided into three portions. It has verses at the top, a translation in the middle, and an interpretation at the bottom. It is thus possible to read the translation uninterruptedly. Occasionally, extended quotations are set off from the main text, even given in smaller print. Each volume has a detailed analytical index of subjects treated in the notes [Mir 1985: 234].

Thus, the structure of a tafsīr is evident from the above pictures and description. Thus, the Urdu tafsīr becomes more complex than the Arabic one. It shows the structure of the

languages in which it is written, which is related to the structure of the religious thought. As we have seen, many languages are layered, as if in a pie.

3.3. Languages

One of the most notable characteristics of Islam in South Asia is the multiethnic or multicultural nature of the societies. Muslims in the subcontinent speak Urdu, Bengali, Punjabi, and many vernacular languages. The Qur'an has been translated into at least 23 languages in South Asia: Assamese, Baluchi, Bengali, Brahui, Divehi, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Nepali, Oriya, Punjabi, Pashto, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Sinhalese, Siraiki, Tamil, Telugu, and Urdu [Khan 2001].

At the same time, the meaning of 'non-Arabic tafsīrs' should be considered. In the same manner that Indonesian, Iranian, and Turkish Muslims have dissimilar inclinations, so do South Asian Muslims. For example, al-Ṭabarī claimed that their tafsīrs have three aspects, and although only God knew them, Prophet Muhammad could explain them. In addition, those who know Arabic could understand them [Sawai 2011]. As is evident, the Qur'an is written for Arabic-speaking people or societies. In other words, it is difficult for non-Arabic people to understand the Qur'an and there are sizeable barriers of language, which cannot be easily overcome through a simple translation.

Translations should be categorised according to three aspects: vernacular language, religious language, and *lingua franca*. Arabic and Persian are religious languages, which are featured at the top of the language pyramid. Punjabi, Bengali and many other vernacular languages are spoken by those in the lowest stratum in society; as such, vernacular languages are dissociated from religious languages. Although it is also a vernacular language, Urdu is the *lingua franca*, and as such it is a pipeline that connects the bottom layers to the top.

In addition, the structure of Urdu tafsīrs, which was shown above, reflect these three aspects as well: The Qur'an versed as religious language, the Urdu translation as *lingua franca*, and the interpretation as vernacular language. In this situation, Urdu is the key language in understanding the Muslims in South Asia.

4. Survey of the Tafsīr of Maudūdī

In the previous section, we acknowledged the history, structure, and language of tafsīrs. In this section, we discuss the meaning of the tafsīr, with a particular focus on Maudūdī's

tafsīr.

4.1. Life of Maudūdī

In 1903, Saiyid Abū al-A'lā Maudūdī was born in Aurangabad in South India. His father was a descendent of the line of saints known as Chishti. Maudūdī received his early education in traditional, Islamic subjects at home; he first worked as a journalist along with his elder brother. Maudūdī learned English of his own volition during his early twenties. Through his study of the language, he gained some knowledge of Western thought. Around 1924, he began to suspect that continued cooperation with the Hindus was not in the best interest of the Muslims. His interpretation of Islam formed the foundation for contemporary Islamic, revivalist thought [Nasr 1994: 98]. In 1933, he took over the direction and editorship of an Urdu Journal, *Tarjumān al-Qur'ān*, published in Hyderabad, South India, and then subsequently in Pakistan.

4.2. Evaluation on Maudūdī

Maudūdī must be evaluated both as an Islamic political activist and as a religious thinker.

First, he was valued as a political activist of the Islamic party. As stated previously, he was a founder of Jamā'at-e Islāmī (JI) in Lahore. In addition, Maudūdī was the first Amīr (leader) of this party, which was the first Islamic Party in the world. The Jamā'at-e Islāmī aimed to be a religious political movement that promoted Islamic values and practices. Within this Islamist group, there were two aspects of his study: One was to review the group's political activities to determine if their 'religious party' could become a 'national party' [Jahan 1972; Metcalf 2007]. He was not only the leader but also the main ideologist and tactician[9]. Maudūdī was arrested several times, and the JI was banned by Ayub Khan soon after his coup in 1958. Advocates of Islamic revivalism and an Islamic state were increasingly forced to retreat [Nasr 1994: 116]. In 1962, when government permission was granted for political parties to resume activities, Maudūdī's group was the first to actively enter the field with a list of charges against the revolutionary regime. This opposition to government policies was the principal factor in his being arrested [Ahmad 1970: 21].

Although the JI was sustained primarily by the sale of its printed works, a large part of its

[9] In general, the party leadership was highly personal, with Maulānā Maudūdī dominating the party [Jahan 1994: 133].

income came from the sale of Maudūdī's works[10]; therefore, few research activities have focused on only their printed materials [Kagaya 1973: 172; Robinson 1993: 248-249; Jackson 2011: 78].

These studies have been conducted in the field of political science, such as those of Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr and Sayed Riaz Ahmad. Maudūdī's role as political leader has been assimilated as policy or approval level of his party [Siddīqī 2006; Aziz 2007].

Another of his contributions is usually linked with Islamic revivalism or his status as a religious ideologue. Scholars claim that his contribution to religious thought in the Islamic world shows that he should be treated as a religious person and that his writing was intended to be religious [Adams 1966]. His thought, such as the theory of the Islamic state in *First Principles of the Islamic State* (1967), the theory of Jihad in *al-Jihād fī al-Islām* (1927), the feminist theory in *Pardah* (1939), Islamic basic book *Towards understanding Islam* (1960) have been cited not only in Islamic countries but in Western countries as well [Jackson 2011: 47].

These contributions to religious consciousness led him to be considered a religious thinker throughout the Islamic world [McDonough 1984]. There are a number of studies not only in South Asia but also in the Arab world ['Imārah 1986] and Southeast Asia [Badri 2003; Ushama and Noor 2006].

4.3. Contents of Tafsīr

Maudūdī's *Tafhīm al-Qur'ān* is a famous tafsīr in South Asia; at the same time, it is the representative work of his life. It is well appreciated in South Asia and all over the Islamic world. Just after it was published, a pirated version was also printed. One could say that his aim was achieved to some extent because many copies of the *Tafhīm al-Qur'ān* were printed. In order to avoid being confused with these imitations, Maudūdī and his publisher autographed every copy printed [Adams 1988: 307].

There are a number of translations of *Tafhīm al-Qur'ān* into Arabic, Persian, Pashto, and many other languages. An English translation of *Tafhīm al-Qur'ān* was published around 1960. The well-known version was simplified and rearranged by the editor [Adams 1988:

[10] 'Maududi's Islamic understanding, which appeals to many educated Muslims throughout the world—in particular, those educated in the modern sciences—is entirely a product of print culture. … furthermore, its message is spread by print. The young Muslim fundamentalist gets much of his Islamic knowledge from books which will often be read without a teacher' [Robinson 1993: 248-249].

308], and the translation was compiled from sources that some consider inadequate [Khan1993: 116-117].

Tafhīm al-Qur'ān has been reprinted 53 times and 368,999 copies of it have been published till 2010. He began to write in February 1942 [Maudūdī 2010a: 12]; the first volume was published in 1951, and last volume in 1972. This six-volume Urdu tafsīr has 4,238 pages, 32 maps, and 12 pictures.

Table 1: Contents of *Tafhīm al-Qur'ān*

Vol.	Published Year	Pages	First-run Printing	Publisher	Contents
1	1951	663	5,000	Maktabah-e Ta'amīr-e Insāniyat	Preface, Introduction, 1. Al Fatiha ~ 6. Al Anaam, index
2	1954	714	3,500	Maktabah-e Ta'amīr-e Insāniyat	7. Al Aaraf ~ 17. Bani Israil, index
3	1962	821	3,000	Maktabah-e Ta'amīr-e Insāniyat	18. Al Kahf ~ 30. Ar Rum, index
4	1966	684	4,000	Maktabah-e Ta'amīr-e Insāniyat	31. Luqman ~ 46. Al Ahqaf, index
5	1971	632	3,000	Idārah-yi Tarjumān al-Qur'ān[11]	47. Muhammad ~ 65. At Talaq, index, proof mark
6	1972	659	7,000	Idārah-yi Tarjumān al-Qur'ān	Editor's Preface, 66. At Tahrim ~ 114. An Nas, index, proof mark

Source: [Hāshmī 1999: 630-642, Maudūdī 2010a, 2010b, 2010c, 2010d, 2010e, 2010f].

There are numerous studies of this tafsīr. Khan pointed out that Maudūdī is the aggregate of the tafsīr lineage in South Asia, regarding its contents and genealogy of South Asian Muslim tradition [Khan 1993: 103-104]. The famous tafsīr studies scholar Mir Mustansir pointed out that this is the most readable Urdu tafsīr and is the first bestseller of an Urdu tafsīr [Mir 1985: 234-235]. In addition, Mir pointed out three specific features [Mir 1985: 236-238]. First, the translation is expository. Second, Qur'anic idioms and idiomatic expressions are translated into equivalent Urdu idioms and not retained in the original Arabic. Third, the translation combines several meanings or shades of meaning that a word might have. To a certain extent, these features could be considered as defects.

[11] From this volume, Idārah-yi Tarjumān al-Qur'ān began publishing *Tafhīm al-Qur'ān*. From around 1982, Idārah-yi Tarjumān al-Qur'ān began to undertake the additional print of the first four volumes [Hāshmī 1999: 633-638].

4.4. Purpose of *Tafhīm al-Qur'ān*

Thus far, Maudūdī's life, his character and a brief introduction to the *Tafhīm al-Qur'ān*'s have been discussed. In this section, let us briefly examine the tafsīr. Maudūdī himself explained the purpose of his writing in the preface:

> The present work (his tafsīr) is neither directed at scholars and researchers, nor is it aimed at assisting those who, having mastered the Arabic language and the Islamic religious sciences, now wish to embark upon a thorough and elaborate study of the Qur'an. Such people already have plenty of material at their disposal. Instead it is intended for the lay reader, the average educated person, who is not well-versed in Arabic and so is unable to make full use of the vast treasures to be found in classical works on the Qur'an [Maudūdī 2010a: 5-7].
>
> Consideration of these shortcomings has led me to attempt what I would prefer to call an explanatory or interpretative exposition, rather than a literal translation, in other words, I have not tried to render the Arabic text of the Qur'an into another language. Instead I have tried to express in my own words, and as faithfully as possible, the meaning conveyed to me by the Qur'anic passages and the concerned, I have tried to ensure that this translation does not make of the force and candour of the 'Clear Arabic' of the Qur'an [Maudūdī 2010a: 10-11].

Maudūdī explained here that his principal aim in writing was to provide an explanation of the Qur'an to the young educated Muslim, not to the academics, which is quite different from classical tafsīrs that were written and read by 'ulamās. He intended to write his tafsīr for the people who do not understand Arabic.

However, the origin of this work is based on Maudūdī's background, for he aspired to use Islam to solve the problems of South Asian Muslims. In addition, his eagerness was matched with the consciousness of South Asian Muslims; for this reason, *Tafhīm al-Qur'ān* is called the crystal of his religious thought.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, I have analysed the tafsīr of South Asia. A tafsīr is not merely a religious guidebook; it also reflects the issues or common sense of the people within a society.

Correspondingly, through the use of astute, reliable research, we can recognize how people understood the Qur'an at that time and their connection to the origin of the Qur'an.

In the previous section, the role of tafsīrs in the Muslim society has been clarified in order to explore the potential for tafsīrs in South Asian Muslim studies. We found that there is a substantial lineage of Urdu tafsīrs, from Shāh Walī Allāh to Maudūdī. Specifically, this lineage led to Maudūdī; in other words, Maudūdī shaped South Asian Islam. These tafsīrs were produced and circulated via the publishing system, which is the centre of the South Asian Muslim network. In addition, there were two changes in tafsīr literature as a result of its spread. One was a change in targeted readers, from Muslims 'ulamās to non-educated Muslims. Another change was the content, from Islamic universal issues to South Asian or Pakistani local issues.

In other words, Maudūdī showed that even non-educated South Asian Muslims could understand the Holy Qur'an through the easy Urdu language. As a result, Urdu became a religious language itself, and it could be become the basement of South Asian Muslims through which they could share Islamic knowledge.

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