

## Abdul Majid Daryabadi and Four Mufassirs: A Comparative Study

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### Abstract

In 1967, 'Abdul Majid Daryabadi got the Arabic Scholar Award from the Government of India. In 1975, the Aligarh Muslim University awarded him a Doctorate in Literature. He was a famous writer, critic, Islamic scholar, researcher, journalist, man of letters, man of high moral values, Islamic philosopher and mufassir of the Holy Qur'an in Indian subcontinent in 20<sup>th</sup> century. He worked for the betterment of the Muslim nation. He had a unique style of writing which was expressive and tinged with humor and sarcasm. He died in January 1977. His life and works, especially his contribution to the study of Tafsir enriched our knowledge, developed our ideas and intellectual thoughts. Maulana Daryabadi wrote a famous Tafsir in English first then in Urdu named Tafsir'ul Qura'nil Hakim. In his Tafsir, he quoted from Bible and other religious books compared and established Islam as the best of all. It had been written during the Second World War as great as others in that time and in his contemporary four tafsirs have been written in Indian Sub-Continent. The paper has been focused the comparison Daryabadi's tafsir with other his contemporary four tafsirs in Indian Sub-Continent.

**Keywords:** *Bayan al- Qur'an*, *Ma'arif al- Qur'an* by Mufti Muhammad Shafi', *Ma'arif al- Qur'an* by Mawlana Idris Kandhlui, *Tadabbur al-Qur'an*.

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### INTRODUCTION

'Abdul Majid Daryabadi was a famous Writer, Critic, Scholar, Researcher, Journalist, Man of letters, Man of high moral values, Islamic Philosopher and Mufassir of the Qur'an in Indian Sub-Continent of 20<sup>th</sup> Century. He had worked for the betterment of the Muslim Nation. Throughout his academic career he edited the Urdu weekly "Sidq-e-Jaded", which was acclaimed in the Indo-Pak Subcontinent for its inspiring message and stylistic features. He continued to edit the journal until his death. He had a unique style of writing which was expressive and tinged with humor and sarcasm. In 1967, he got the Arabic Scholar Award from the Government of India. In 1975, the Aligarh Muslim University awarded him a Doctorate in Literature. He died in January 1977. His life and works, especially his contribution to the study of Tafsir enriched our knowledge, developed our ideas and intellectual thoughts. In this reason, it has been realized that such a great personality must be evaluated from the academic point of view. Mawlana devoted his whole life to writing and to the cause of Islam and published scores of books and articles in both English & Urdu, which bring out the excellence of Islam. He wrote an independent Tafsir in English & in Urdu, named; *Tafsir-ul-Qur'a'nil Hakim*. His Tafsir helped us to derive away all the doubts, make intellectual war

against the western critics and criticisms of opponent and find a satisfactory solution of the many questions. Mawlana Daryabadi rendered unmatched services to the country, community and religion and we should benefit from his views and lofty ideals. Therefore, I would like to assess the progress of *tafsir* literature in the sub-Continent during 'Abdul Majid Daryabadi, and then to evaluate four works on the subject, which were composed by famous *mufassirs* of India and Pakistan. Those four works are; i) *Bayan al-Qur'an* by Mawlana Ashraf 'Ali Thanawi, ii) *Ma'arif al-Qur'an* by Mawlana Mufti Muhammad Shafi', iii) *Ma'arif al-Qur'an* by Mawlana Idris Kandhlui and iv) *Tadabbur al-Qur'an* by Mawlana Amin Ahsan Islahi. I tried to explore a comparison above mentioned those *tafsirs* between Daryabadi's *tafsir* briefly.

#### *Bayan al- Qur'an* by Mawlana Ashraf 'Ali Thanawi (1863-1943AC)

Mawlana Ashraf 'Ali Thanawi was born on 5 Rabi'us Sani in 1280 AH/ August 19 in 1863AC in the village of Thana Bhawan within the Muzaffarnagar, the district of Uttar Pradesh, India. His first name was 'Abdul Ghani, then he was named Ashraf 'Aliby Hafiz Ghulam Murtaza Panipati, a maternal relative. He belonged to the Shaykhzada community, and his family was well respected and held a high position in Thana

Bhawan. His father's named 'Abdul Haq was a wealthy landowner, devout Muslim, and respected person. He lost his mother at a tender age and was brought up by his father in an affluent background. Ashraf 'Ali Thanawi's lineage can be traced back to the second Caliph of Islam, 'Umar ibn al-Khattab (τ) [1]. He was a prolific author. His literary contributions are in the order of eight hundred to one thousand in number, including sermons, discussions, discourses, treatises, and books. Sayyid Sulaiman Nadawi said, "Hadrat Mawlana Ashraf 'Ali Thanawi was a translator and exegete (*mufassir*) of the Qur'an, he explained its injunctions and wisdoms. He removed doubts and answered the questions pertaining to it." He was on his own a torch of guidance, a lamp of the path and an embodiment of a number of external and spiritual excellences. There was a need for diverse and numerous biographies to be written about him and every aspect of his life to be brought to light. He wrote a number of books in every field of Islam, whether it be *tafsir* or *tasawwuf*, *fiqh* or *tajwid* and argued, using mainly verses of the Qur'an, that political rule is only a means of instituting Islam in people's lives and not the purpose of life itself. All his works total more than a thousand. All modern political notions that contradict the Qur'an and Hadith would have to be forsaken, and the "pure" political thought reflected in Qur'anic sources should guide Muslims in organizing and structuring their governments. Mawlana Thanawi spent his entire life-serving din in every field. It is for this reason that he has been given the titles '*Hakim al-Ummat*' and '*Mujaddid al-Millat*'. Perhaps very few Muslims do not possess his two famous books at their homes, named "*Bihisti Ziwar*" and "*Munajat-i Maqbul*". In addition, his *tafsir* "*Bayan al-Qur'an*" is unparalleled. It is his great achievement and a unique work. He has translated the Qur'an in lucid Urdu to understand easily and perfectly. Daryabadi followed him, while he was translating the Holy Qur'an. He was a politically sound person, spiritual person, the most famous Islamic scholar and a spiritual guide to true Islam. Daryabadi said, "He was unparalleled and exceptional person in the Indian Subcontinent [2]."

### His Death

After blessing the earth for 83 years with his presence, Mawlana Ashraf 'Ali Thanawi was died in Thana Bhawan on 16 Rajab 1362AH/July 20, 1943AC [3]. His funeral prayer (*Salat al-Janajah*) was led by his nephew (son of his sister) Mawlana Zufar Ahmad 'Uthmani (1310AH/1892AC-1394AH/1974AC), and he was buried in the graveyard of '*Ishq-i Bajan*' of Thana Bhawan.

### Bayan al- Qur'an

It is a *Sufi* based *tafsir* written in lucid Urdu, accessible to all and unparalleled. He has written this *tafsir* in the time of great *fitnah* (Deviation from the right path). He has tried to keep the Muslims to right track on the right way. In that time the most of the exegetes had been changed from the right meaning and the right aim of the Qur'an, those were called personal opinion (تفسير بالرائ). So, he has saved the Muslims from the religious problem of Apostasy to write this *tafsir*, named "*Bayan al-Qur'an*" to understand the right meaning and the right aim of the Qur'an. Through this *tafsir*, he has established the right meaning and the right purpose of the Qur'an in the light of *Hadith* and the interpretation of the previous famous *Mufasssirun* (سلف صالحين), he followed them, they how to exegete the Qur'an. In this reason, this *tafsir* was the best of others, because he has tried to solve the problem of the right meaning and the right aim of the Holy Qur'an. It was very much helpful, benefited and savior from converting Muslims to Apostasy or disbelieve. He has translated the Qur'an with lucid Urdu literature and interpreted the verses of the Holy Qur'an to solve the contemporary western problems [4]. Therefore, this *tafsir* is a savior of the Muslims in Indian sub-continent in the light of the right believe and culture.

### Ma'arif al- Qur'an by Mufti Muh}ammad Shafi' (1897-1976AC)

Mufti Muh}ammad Shafi' Ibn Yasin al-Dawband was born at mid night on the 21 of Sha'ban in the year 1314AH/January 1897AC [5] in the city of Bada Bhaiya, Uttar Pradesh, India [6]. He grew up in the embrace of knowledge and genesis, for he was devoted to acquiring knowledge from the great 'Ulama [7] from a young age, (1902-1918AC) and he maintained the companionship of the agnostics early on in his life. After having read the noble Qur'an, he was admitted at Dar al-'Ulum Dawband in 1325AH., which is the greatest religious seminary propagating the precious Islamic Sciences in India and renewing therein their lights, which were almost extinguished due to Western Imperialism. He was admitted into this Dar al-'Ulum while he was still in the prime of his youth, and he remained for a period of ten years occupied in his studies, constant in acquiring the sciences from the learned 'Ulama whose reputations were carried by riders to all corners and sides of India. His knowledge was vast and profound and he possessed excellent

<sup>4</sup> Tirmidhi, 'Abd al-Shakur, *Ashraf al-Ma'arif*, Kutub Khanah Jamili, Lahore:2001, p. 45-126.

<sup>5</sup> 'Uthmani, Muhammad Rafi', *Hayat-i Mufti-i 'A'zam*, *Al-Balag*, monthly, Karachi: Dar al-'Ishaat, 1399AH, p.85.

<sup>6</sup> 'Ashiq 'Ilahi al-Mujahiri al-Biruni, al-'Anaqid al-Galiyah min al-Asanid al-'Aliyah, Dar al-kutub al-'Arab), Byrut: 1412AH), p. 77

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, Anwar Shah Kashmiri, Mawlana Sabbir Ahmad al-Uthmani, Mawlana Ibrahim al-Balbari and Hakim al-Ummat 'Ashraf 'Ali Thanwi.

<sup>1</sup> Daryabadi, Abdul Majid, *Mu'asirin*, p. 16.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*,

ability in almost all the current scholastic disciplines. He is an author of many religious books; a stock of very useful books on *Tafsir*, *Hadith*, *Fiqh* and polemics has emanated from his pen. All his big and small books total up to nearly one hundred fifty. Hundreds of his pupils and disciples are rendering religious services, besides the subcontinent, in various foreign countries. Initially he vowed allegiance to Hadrat Shykhul Hind after the latter is demise, he resorted to Hadrat Thanawi and obtained khilafah from him. Simultaneously with the work of teaching religious sciences and writing books on them, throughout his life he remained occupied in spiritual beneficence also. He completed his studies in the year 1325AH and because he was from the advanced students in the period of his studies, the teachers of the Dar al-'Ulum selected him as teacher in there. He began teaching in the year 1336 A.H. and very soon, his teaching came to be highly regarded amongst the students in all the Indian lands. He remained teaching Hadith, Qur'anic exegesis, jurisprudence and other well-known religious sciences for a period of 26 years. In Pakistan, Mufti Muhammad Shafi' was held the position of the Chief Mufti and he was also the founder of Dar al-'Ulum Karachi, an institute of Islamic Sciences in Pakistan. Because, there was no religious institute catering for the teaching of the Islamic sciences and propagating them as was required and there was an intense need for this after the independence of Pakistan. In order to nurture, the new generation with the instilment of religious values in all areas of life, and open their minds to a beautiful Islamic Ideals, as they are those from whom it is hoped they will carry the burdens of this Ummah in the future [8].

#### His Death

He was died on 16 Dhu al-Qa'dat 1383AH/March 1976AC at the age of 79.

#### Ma'arif al- Qur'an

*Ma'arif al-Qur'an*, this is a valuable exegesis of the Noble Qur'an which has compiled by Mufti Muhammad Shafi' in Urdu language in 8 large volumes. In it, he has commented on the meanings of the Noble Qur'an in an easy and pleasant format. He has addressed under every verse those issues of current life which can be extracted from it, in such a way that it elucidates to the reader that the Noble Qur'an carries an eternal message for every man and every time, and it guides him in complex affairs of life to that in which is goodness and righteousness and uprightness. Indeed this exegesis, in this respect, comprises of rare academic investigations created by the modern age. More than forty thousand copies of it have been printed. There is no mosque and no school in the Indian subcontinent in which the meanings of the noble Qur'an are taught except this exegesis is one of the most

important sources from which the teacher draws inspiration from in preparing for his lectures. In the Urdu language, such an exegesis does not exist, in its simple phrasing, subtle meaning and immense benefit. This exegesis was translated into a number of languages like Bengali, and Persian. It is a detailed and comprehensive commentary of the Holy Qur'an written in Urdu, and has been translated into English and Arabic. The author is the father of Mufti Taqi Uthmani, who was the chief Justice of Pakistan and a prolific writer and author of numerous Islamic books. "*Ma'arif al-Qur'an*" is published and completed in eight volumes, and it addresses many modern issues. It is a Sufi based and modern exegesis of the Qur'an. He tried his best to answer the different questions of the readers. This *tafsir* is acceptable and recommended to all. It is widely published and circulated in Indo-Pak subcontinent. It is more authentic and details. It is written on the method of *Tafsir bi al-Mathur* (تفسير بالمأثور).

#### Ma'arif al- Qur'an by Mawlana Idris Kandhlawi (1899-1974AC)

Mawlana Idris Kandhlawi [9] was a prolific writer, a successful Mufassir-i Qur'an and an author of many Islamic books in different field of Islam. He was born on 20 August in 1899 AC/ 12 Rabi'u al-thani 1317 AH at Bhupal, Uttar Pradesh, India. In the preface of his *tafsir*, he said, "Bhupal is my place of birth and Kandhla is my motherland". He was called with the name of his motherland Kandhla. So, his title is Kandhlawi. His ancestry on the paternal side is traced back to the Companion of the Prophet (p) and the first caliph Hadrat Abu Bakr Siddiq (r). He took the Qur'an in his heart in his early age. Than his father Hafiz Muhammad Isma'il Kandhluwi (d. 1942AC) took him to Thanah Bhun and get admitted him at Madrasah Ashrafiyah, established by Mawlana Ashraf 'Ali Thanawi. He had learned primary education of Dars-i Nizami (درس نظامی) from Mawlana Ashraf 'Ali Thanawi and Mawlavi 'Abdullah. After completing the primary education he was taken to Saharanpur for higher education and get admitted at the Madrasah, named Majahir al-'Ulum. He completed his higher education successfully at the age of 19. Then he admitted at Dar al-'Ulum Dywband for completing Dawrah-i Hadith second time. he completed his education in 1338AH/ 1921AC.

<sup>9</sup>Kandhla is a city and a municipal board in Prabudh Nagar District in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. It has been famous for its religious services as prominent of scholars and spiritual personalities of their time born there. Their services are well known around the world and need not much introduction. It is the only town where both "Jum'a Masjid and Laxmi Narayana Mondir" are adjacent to each other. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/kandhla>, accessed: 8/8/2016

<sup>8</sup>Siddiqui, Dr. Saiful Islam, *Mufti Muhammad Shafi' o Tar Rachonaboli*, I.F.Pottrica, Vol. 3:47 I.F.B.:2008A.D., p. 41-50.

### Profession & Contribution

He started teaching at the Madrasah (Religious Institution) named Aminiah, Delhi in India. It was established by Mufti Muhammad kifayatullah. After one year he joined at Dar al-'Ulum Dywband as a teacher by the invitation of the head of this institution. He taught there *Hadith*, *Tafsir*, *Fiqh* and *Arabic Literature* (ادب) for 9 years. In 1929 AC, he left Dar al-'Ulum to Hydar'abad. Here he had written a famous book *Al-Ta'liq al-Sabih 'ala Mishkat al-Masabih*. Then he was again invited to Dar al-'Ulum as *Shykh al-Tafsir* (شيخ التفسير), then he accepted the offer and returned to Dywband in 1939AC with monthly salary 70 rupees only, but he got two hundred rupees monthly at Hydar'abad. In 1949 AC, he thought to travel Pakistan and resigned from Dywband. In that time he was invited as *Shykh al-Hadith* (شيخ الحديث) by Dar al-'Ulum, Hathhazari, Chittagong, Bangladesh. But he had decided to go to Bhawalpur, Pakistan. On 25 December, in 1949 AC, he took over at Jami'ah 'abbasiyah, Bhawalpur, Pakistan as a head of the institution. After 2 years, in 1951AC, he was invited to join Jami'ah Ashrafiyah as a head of *Hadith* and he joined on 16 August, in 1951 AC and continued teaching *Hadith* and served the Muslims till his death [10].

### His Death

He was died on 28 July in 1974AC/ 8 Rajab in 1394AH in the time of Fajr prayer before the sun rises.

### Ma'arif al-Qur'an

The name of this *tafsir* is as same as the *tafsir* of Mufti Muhammad Shafi'. However, the both of these are different in characteristics and in the method of interpretation. This is the *tafsir* written by two authors as like as *Tafsir Jalalain*; written by Mawlana Jalal Uddin Mahalli and his potential pupil Mawlana Jalal Uddin Suyuti. Mawlana Idris Kandhulwi had started to write this *tafsir* in 1382AH/1962AC, but upto his death (1394AH/1974AC) he could not finish this *tafsir*, he completed from Surah Fatihah to Surah Saffat. After the completion of surah Saffat he died in 1974AC [11]. Later from Surah Sat (ص) to Surah Nas, end of the Holy Qur'an has been written by his potential pupil Mawlana Muhammad Malik Kandhalwi. He has followed the method of Mawlana Idris Kandhalwi. It is an interpretation followed by the elderly previous famous *tafsir* and in the light of Sahih *Hadith*. It is a bank of knowledge of previous Mufassirin and instructions of Sahaba and Tabi'in and their practicing life.

### Tadabbur al-Qur'an by Mawlana Amin Ahsan Islahi (1904–1997AC)

Amin Ahsan Islahi was an Indian and Pakistani exegete of the Qur'an, who became famous

<sup>10</sup> Kandhluwi, Mawlana Idris, *Ma'ariful Qur'an*, Delhi: Farid Book Dipu Privet. Ltd., 2001, Vol. 1,2,3. p. 3.

<sup>11</sup> Kandhluwi, *Ibid.*, p. 6.

for his Urdu exegeses of Qur'an, Tadabbur-e-Qur'an. It is an exegesis that he based on Hamiduddin Farahi's (1863-1930AC) idea of thematic and structural coherence in the Qur'an. He was born in 1904AC at Bamhur, a small village in Azamgarh, Uttar Pradesh, India [12]. After graduating from Madrasah al-Islah in Azamgarh in 1922AC, then he entered the field of journalism. First he worked as an associated editor in "Khunch" a children magazine. Then he edited a newspaper "Madinah" at Bijawr and also remained associated with "Sach", a newspaper taken out by Abdul Majid Daryabadi.

### Inspiration from Hamiduddin Farahi

It was sometime in 1925AC, when Farahi offered Islahi to come and study the Qur'an with him. Islahi abandoned his journalistic career to benefit from this opportunity. It was in this forming period of his life in which he learnt from Farahi the principles of direct deliberation on the Book of Allah. During this time, he also taught the Qur'an and Arabic literature at that Madrasah (religious school).

### Tadabbur al-Qur'an

After leaving the Jama'at-e-Islami, he finally got the chance to achieve his goal of writing a commentary of the Qur'an. He also launched a monthly journal *Mithaq* in which portions of this commentary, Tadabbur-e-Qur'an were published. In 1961, he established a small study circle *Halqa-e-Tadabbur-e-Qur'an* for the college students to whom he taught Arabic language and literature, the Qur'an and Sahih Muslim. In 1965, a tragic incident brought an end to the journal as well as to the study circle. Islahi's eldest son Abu Salih died in a plane crash. However, work on the commentary continued. In 1970-71AC, Islahi fell severely ill and had to discontinue all his intellectual pursuits. Later, he recovered quite miraculously. In 1972AC, he shifted to a countryside village near Shykhupura, where he continued to work on the commentary till 1979AC, when he shifted back to Lahore. It was on the 29th of Ramadan 1400AH/August 12, 1980AC that he finished his work on Tadabbur-e-Qur'an that took twenty-three years to complete. He started to write this *tafsir* during 1958AC to 1980AC [13]. It is a miracle that the Holy Qur'an revealed within 23 years of the Prophet's life and Islahi has written this *tafsir* within 23 years [14]. He said that it was fixed from Almighty Allah [15]. It was published 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> edition by Faran Foundation, Lahore in 1982AC and in 1985AC. But 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of this *tafsir*

<sup>12</sup> Islahi, Dr. Sharfuddin, Dhikr-i Farahi, Lahore: Dar al-Tadhkir, 2002, pp. 566-575.

<sup>13</sup> Islahi, Amin Ahsan, *Tadabbur-i Qur'an*, Delhi: Taj Company, 2001, Vol. I, p. 7.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p.8.

published by Matkadh Anzuman-i Khuddamul Islam, Lahore partly in the time of 1967AC to 1973AC [<sup>16</sup>].

In 1981 Islahi founded the *Idara-e-Tadabbur-e-Qur'an wa Hadith*, and appointed his close pupil Khalid Masud as first Nazim of the Idarah. Now it is working under the supervision of Abdullah Ghulam Ahmad in Lahore, Pakistan. It remained the centre of all his intellectual activities until his death on 15 December in 1997AC. A quarterly journal Tadabbur was taken out in 1981AC as its organ. Khalid Masud was appointed its first editor and in charge till his death on October in 2003AC. He gave weekly lectures on the text of the Qur'an. Later, he took up deep study on the principles of *Hadith* and began teaching the al-Muwatta of Imam Malik in weekly sittings to a close circle of students and associates. After completing al-Muwatta, he also taught some portions of Imam Bukhari's Sahih Bukhari>. Many of these lectures have been transcribed and published in the Tadabbur. Khalid Masud played a major role in converting his speeches and lectures into publication for benefits of the Islamic scholars and public [<sup>17</sup>].

#### **His Death**

He was died on 15 December in 1997 AC.

#### **CONCLUSION**

'Abdul Majid Daryabadi highlighted modern concept in his Tafsir, *Tafsir-ul-Qur'a'nil Hakim*. It is also a classical one. He tried to give answers to the problems of the modern ages in the light of the famous previous Tafsirs. His Tafsir represents as an admirable venture into comparative religion, based on a thoroughly critical study of the Bible in particular, as also other major world faiths, Anthropology and History in general. He cogently demonstrated how the Qur'an stands out above other Scripture, which have been tampered with down the ages. It is a unique Tafsir in that time and till now, because it is beneficial for those students and readers who seek knowledge in comparative religion.

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Muntasir, Mir, *Coherence in the Qur'an: A Study of Islahi's Concept of Nazam in Tadabbur-i Qur'an*, Washington: American Trust Publications', 1986, p. 10.