

CHAPTER-II

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Tafsir al-Quran of Maulana Abdul Hoque: A background

Tafsir literature and its origin:

Tafsir تفسیر (interpretation) is the Arabic word for exegesis or commentary, usually of the Qur'an. Tawil (تأويل) is a subset of Tafsir and refers to esoteric or mystical interpretation. An author of tafsir is called a mufassir (مفسر) , plural mufassirun (مفسرون).

Muslims regard the most reliable Qur'anic commentary as being contained in the Qur'an itself. In other words, the ways in which certain ayat clarify other ayat are regarded as being the most significant form of commentary. A second form of Qur'anic commentary is how the Prophet interpreted the Qur'an. And his comments on the Qur'an (as well as everything he ever said or did) are recorded in the Hadith collections. After these two forms of commentary, knowledgeable companions and later generations of pious and learned Muslims expressed their views of the meaning of various ayat. It was on this foundation that the science of Qur'anic commentary was built.

The word tafsir is derived from the Arabic root f-S-R which means to explain, to expound, to disclose, to lift the curtain, to make clear, to show the objective, and hence by analogy tafsir is the body of knowledge which aims to make clear the true meaning of the Qur'an, its injunctions and the occasions its revelation. Although tafsir is an Arabic word the process is known before the age of Islam. Jews and Christian used the term in various ways for their translations and commentaries on the Bible in the past.

Another word ta'wil (تأويل) has been also used to denote the interpretation or reclamation of meanings of the Qur'an text. Some scholars believe that tawil is synonymous with tafsir; others have denied and suggest that tafsir refers to the illumination of the external meaning of the Qur'an while ta'wil is the extraction of the hidden meanings.

The word tawil is also used in connection with the understanding of the Qur'an, and therefore, it also deserves attention. The word tawil is derived from the root awwala (أول) meaning to revert, to return or to retrieve. The derived meaning of tawil is to revert to the one out of several possible meanings. In other words if there is a possibility of inferring several meanings of a passage, tawil is to retrieve one out of those meanings. Tawil

is, thus to get back the words or combination of words to their factuality so as to have full comprehension of their meanings.

When applied to the understanding of the Qur'an, tawil is to derive such a meaning of a passage of the Qur'an for which justification is possible. The meaning should be in full agreement with the text and not contrary to the basic teaching of Islam. In other words tawil is to prefer one of the many possible interpretations. Preference is based on ijtihad (research).

According to some scholars tawil is the explanation of the inner (batin) meaning of the Qur'an.

According to the renowned Qur'anic scholars Zamakhshari (d. 539/1144) tawil is derived from the root awala meaning to take care of or to guard. Tawil thus means to place the words at their proper place and to determine their meaning.

It may be noted that 'tawil' is not used as a term.

When the Prophet passed away the source of revelation came to an end one could not ask the Prophet or any one for an authoritative solution to new problems and one could not hope for revelation to come. The believers approached the Qur'an itself for clarification.

In Islamic context, it is defined as understanding and uncovering the will of Allah which has been conveyed by the Qur’anic text, by means of the Arabic language and one’s knowledge.

Abu Hayyan Andulasi (d.445/1053) in his book *Bahrul Muheet* has defined the science of ‘Tafsir’ in the following words:

“Tafsir is a science which discusses the pronunciations of the Qur’anic words, their meanings, provisions and the connotations, laid there in.

According to the definition provided by the renowned Qur’anic scholar, Badruddin Zarkashi (d.792/392) the word ‘Tafsir’ is derived from the root ‘fassara’ meaning to bare open, or expose.

He has offered a short definition of the science of ‘Tafsir’ as follows:

“It is a science through which is known the understanding the Book of Allah revealed on His Prophet and the elucidation of its meaning and extraction of its injunctions and wisdom.”

Minhaj al-Qur’an has defined ‘Tafsir’ as follows

“Tafsir is a science which discusses to the extent of human capability, the divine intention expressed through the words of the Qur’an.”

The eminent Qur’anic scholar Jalaluddin Suyuti (d.911/1505) in *Al-itqan fi ulumil Qur’an* has defined ‘Tafsir’ as follows:

“Tafsir is a science which discusses revelation of the Qur’anic ayaat, their backgrounds, ayaat revealed in Makkah and Medina, ayaat precise and identical, revocatory and revoked, general and particular, conditional and unconditional, concise and elaborate, related to valid and invalid, annunciation and denunciation, order and prohibition, and the lessons and examples.”

Mustafa bin Abdullah known as Haji Khalifah (1018/1609-1067/1657) in his renowned book *kashfuz Zunoon* has defined tafsir as follows:

“Tafsir is a science in which the meanings of the Qur’an are determined in the light of Arabic grammar to the extent of human capability.”

In short, ‘Tafsir’ is a science with the help of the messages revealed on the Prophet is understood, to the human ability. It helps in the

Endeavour's to elucidate the meanings, injunctions and topics of the Qur'an and to reach the divine intention.

The Science of Tafsir basically depends upon the literature of Arabic language. Theology and fundamentals of Jurisprudence etc. The objectives of Tafsir are to identify the meaning of the Holy Qur'an through the Tafsir, and the benefit of Tafsir is to accuratise the injunctions of the Qur'an.

In fact, the science of Tafsir encompasses all the sciences which lead to the understanding of the divine intention contained in the Qur'an. There is complete harmony between the ayaat of the Qur'an, and the ayaat (signs) scattered throughout the universe. For the better understanding of the ayaat of the Qur'an, it is not only necessary but inevitable to have scientific knowledge of the signs in the universe.

All such sciences which help to understand the divine signs can be included in the science of 'Tafsir' which is not narrow but very wide including linguistics, physics and many more.

The word 'Tsafsir' is used only once in the Qur'an:

“And no question does bring to you but we reveal to you the truth and best explanation (thereof)”. (Qur'an 25:33)

Here the word Tafsir is used for explanation.

The derived meanings of ‘Tafsir’ are ‘explanation’ elucidation or clarification. The renowned Grammarian Abu Hayyan Andulasi (d.445/1053) says in *Al-Bahar al muheet*.

‘To bare open the back of the animal used for riding by removing the saddle is called tafsir’. In the act of making bare the sense of elucidation is present. As a term ‘Tafsir’ means explanation and commentary of the Qur’an. Tafsir Comprises various strategies and methods adopted to obtain knowledge which contributes to the proper understanding and acquiring knowledge of the Qur’an.

Tafsir is one of the earliest academic activities of Muslims. According to the Quran, Muhammad was the first person who described the meanings of verses for early Muslims.¹¹ Other early exegetes included a few Companions of Muhammad, like ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib, ‘Abdullah ibn Abbas, ‘Abdullah ibn Umar and Ubayy ibn Ka‘b. Exegesis in those days was confined to the explanation of literary aspects of the verse, the background of its revelation and, occasionally, interpretation of one verse with the help of the other. If the verse was about a historical event, then

11. <http://en.wikipedia.org>

sometimes a few traditions (*hadith*) of Muhammad were narrated to make its meaning clear¹²

Because the Quran is spoken in classical Arabic, many of the later converts to Islam (mostly non-Arabs) did not always understand the Qur'anic Arabic, they did not catch allusions that were clear to early Muslims fluent in Arabic and they were concerned with reconciling apparent conflict of themes in the Qur'an. Commentators erudite in Arabic explained the allusions, and perhaps most importantly, explained which Quranic verses had been revealed early in Muhammad's prophetic career, as being appropriate to the very earliest Muslim community, and which had been revealed later, canceling out or "abrogating" (*nāsikh*) the earlier text (*mansūkh*). Other scholars, however, maintain that no abrogation has taken place in the Qur'an¹³. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has published a 10-volume Urdu commentary on the Quran, with the name *Tafseer e Kabir*.

Esoteric or Sufi interpretation attempts to unveil the inner meanings of the Quran. Sufism moves beyond the apparent (*zahir*) point of the verses and instead relates Quranic verses to the inner or esoteric (*batin*) and metaphysical dimensions of consciousness

12. <http://en.wikipedia.org>

13. Ibid.

and existence¹⁴. According to Sands, esoteric interpretations are more suggestive than declarative; they are 'allusions' (*isharat*) rather than explanations (*tafsir*). They indicate possibilities as much as they demonstrate the insights of each writer¹⁵.

Sufi interpretation, according to Annabel Keeler, also exemplifies the use of the theme of love, as for instance can be seen in Qushayri's interpretation of the Qur'an. The Holy Qur'an 7:143 says:

"When Moses came at the time we appointed, and his Lord spoke to him, he said, 'My Lord, show yourself to me! Let me see you!' He said, 'you shall not see me but look at that mountain, if it remains standing firm you will see me.' When his Lord revealed Himself to the mountain, He made it crumble. Moses fell down unconscious. When he recovered, he said, 'Glory is to you! I repent to you! I am the first to believe!'¹⁶

14 . <http://en.wikipedia.org>

15 . Ibid.

16 . Ibid.

Moses, in 7:143, comes the way of those who are in love, he asks for a vision but his desire is denied, he is made to suffer by being commanded to look at other than the Beloved while the mountain is able to see God. The mountain crumbles and Moses faints at the sight of God's manifestation upon the mountain. In Qushayri's words, Moses came like thousands of men who traveled great distances, and there was nothing left to Moses of Moses. In that state of annihilation from himself, Moses was granted the unveiling of the realities. From the Sufi point of view, God is always the beloved and the wayfarer's longing and suffering lead to realization of the truths.¹⁷

Muhammad Husayn Tabatabaei says that according to the popular explanation among the later exegetes, *ta'wil* indicates the particular meaning a verse is directed towards. The meaning of revelation (*tanzil*), as opposed to *ta'wil*, is clear in its accordance to the obvious meaning of the words as they were revealed. But this explanation has become so widespread that, at present, it has become the primary meaning of *ta'wil*, which originally meant "to return" or "the returning place". In Tabatabaei's view, what has been rightly called *ta'wil*, or hermeneutic interpretation of the

¹⁷ <http://en.wikipedia.org>

Qur'an, is not concerned simply with the denotation of words. Rather, it is concerned with certain truths and realities that transcend the comprehension of the common run of men; yet it is from these truths and realities that the principles of doctrine and the practical injunctions of the Qur'an issue forth. Interpretation is not the meaning of the verse—rather it transpires through that meaning, in a special sort of transpiration. There is a spiritual reality—which is the main objective of ordaining a law, or the basic aim in describing a divine attribute—and then there is an actual significance that a Qur'anic story refers to.

According to Shia beliefs, those who are firmly rooted in knowledge like the Prophet and the imams know the secrets of the Qur'an. According to Tabatabaei, the statement "none knows its interpretation except Allah"¹⁸ remains valid, without any opposing or qualifying clause. Therefore, so far as this verse is concerned, the knowledge of the Qur'an's interpretation is reserved for God. But Tabatabaei uses other verses and concludes that those who are

18 . <http://en.wikipedia.org>

purified by God know the interpretation of the Qur'an to a certain extent.¹⁹

According to Tabatabaei, there are acceptable and unacceptable esoteric interpretations. Acceptable *ta'wil* refers to the meaning of a verse beyond its literal meaning; rather the implicit meaning, which ultimately is known only to Allah and can't be comprehended directly through human thought alone. The verses in question here refer to the human qualities of coming, going, sitting, satisfaction, anger and sorrow, which are apparently attributed to Allah. Unacceptable *ta'wil* is where one "transfers" the apparent meaning of a verse to a different meaning by means of a proof; this method is not without obvious inconsistencies. Although this unacceptable *ta'wil* has gained considerable acceptance, it is incorrect and cannot be applied to the Qur'anic verses. The correct interpretation is that reality a verse refers to. It is found in all verses, the decisive and the ambiguous alike; it is not a sort of a meaning of the word; it is a fact that is too sublime for words. God has dressed them with words to bring them a bit nearer to our minds; in this respect they are like proverbs that are

19. <http://en.wikipedia.org>

used to create a picture in the mind, and thus help the hearer to clearly grasp the intended idea.

One of the notable authors of esoteric interpretation prior to the 12th century is Sulami (d. 1021 C. E) without whose work the majority of very early Sufi commentaries would not have been preserved. Sulami's major commentary is a book named *haqaiq al-tafsir* ("Truths of Exegesis") which is a compilation of commentaries of earlier Sufis. From the 11th century onwards several other works appear, including commentaries by Qushayri (d. 1074), Daylami (d. 1193), Shirazi (d. 1209) and Suhrawardi (d. 1234). These works include material from Sulami's books plus the author's contributions. Many works are written in Persian such as the works of Maybudi (d. 1135) *kashf al-asrar* ("the unveiling of the secrets").²⁰ Rumi (d. 1273) wrote a vast amount of mystical poetry in his book *Mathnawi*. Rumi makes heavy use of the Qur'an in his poetry, a feature that is sometimes omitted in translations of Rumi's work. A large number of Qur'anic passages can be found in *Mathnawi*, which some consider a kind of Sufi interpretation of the Qur'an. Rumi's book is not exceptional for containing citations from and elaboration on the Qur'an, however,

20. <http://en.wikipedia.org>

Rumi does mention Qur'an more frequently.²¹ Simnani (d. 1336) wrote two influential works of esoteric exegesis on the Qur'an. He reconciled notions of God's manifestation through and in the physical world with the sentiments of Sunni Islam²² Comprehensive Sufi commentaries appear in 18th century such as the work of Ismail Hakki Bursevi (d. 1725). His work *ruh al-Bayan* (the Spirit of Elucidation) is a voluminous exegesis. Written in Arabic, it combines the author's own ideas with those of his predecessor (notably Ibn Arabi and Ghazali), all woven together in *Hafiz*, a Persian poetry form.²³

Unlike the Salafis and Zahiri, Shias and Sufis as well as some other Muslim philosophers believe the meaning of the Qur'an is not restricted to the literal aspect.²⁴ For them it is an essential idea that the Qur'an also has inward aspects. Henry Corbin narrates a *hadith* that goes back to Muhammad:

"The Qur'an possesses an external appearance and a hidden depth, an exoteric meaning and an esoteric meaning. This exoteric

²¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org>

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

meaning in turn conceals an esoteric meaning (this depth possesses a depth, after the image of the celestial Spheres, which are enclosed within each other). So it goes on for seven esoteric meanings (seven depths of hidden depth)."

According to this view, it has also become evident that the inner meaning of the Qur'an does not eradicate or invalidate its outward meaning. Rather, it is like the soul, which gives life to the body. Corbin considers the Qur'an to play a part in Islamic philosophy, because gnosiology itself goes hand in hand with prophetology.

Commentaries dealing with the *zahir* (outward aspects) of the text are called *tafsir*, and hermeneutic and esoteric commentaries dealing with the *batin* are called *ta'wil* ("interpretation" or "explanation"), which involves taking the text back to its beginning. Commentators with an esoteric slant believe that the ultimate meaning of the Quran is known only to God. In contrast, Qur'anic literalism, followed by Salafis and Zahiris, is the belief that the Qur'an should only be taken at its apparent meaning.

Growth and development of Tafsir literature:

The first examples of Tafsir can be traced back to Prophet Muhammad. During his prophethood, as the Qur'an was revealed to him, he recited the verses to his companions, usually explaining their meanings to teach them. It must be noted that this is one of the prophet's responsibility. Element of the prophet's explanations are:

- Clarifying verses whose intents are not understood
- Indication of names, places, times etc. Which have not been mentioned in the verse
- Restriction of meanings which have been given as absolute
- Reconciling expressions which seem contradictory

Although scholars including ibn Taymiyyah claim that the prophet has commented on the whole of the Qur'an, other including Ghazali cite the limited amount of narratives, thus indicating that he has commented only on apporion of the Qur'an. These interpretation have not been collected independently in a book, rather, they have been recorded in hadith books, under the topic of tafsir, along with other narrations of the prophet.

After the death of Muhammad, his companies, the Sahabah, undertook the task of interpretation, thus starting a new age in tafsir. Most of the Sahabah, including Abu Bakar refrained from commenting with

their personal views, and only narrated comments by Muhammad. Others including ibn Abbas used their own knowledge from the Arabic language to interpret the Qur'an. At this stage, the Qur'an was still not fully interpreted, and commentaries were not separated from the hadith collection nor written separately, mainly due to other occupation such as the collection of the Qur'an.

By the time of next generations ensuing the Sahabah, the tabi'in scholars started using a wide range of sources for tafsir. The whole of the Qur'an is interpreted, and narrations are separated from tafsir into separate books and literature. Grammatical explanations and historical data are preserved within these books; personal opinions are recorded, whether accepted or rejected.

It is no surprise to discover that the science of tafsir started during the lifetime of the prophet (SAS) himself. In fact, one of the primary roles of the Prophet (SAS), as shall be expounded on later was to interpret the Qur'an. Allah says,

وَأَنزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نَزَلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

“And we have sent down to you [O' Muhammad (SAS)]

The Remembrance, so that you may clearly explain to

Mankind what has been revealed to them, and so that they

May have thought” (16:44)

The science of tafsir during the prophet’s (SAS) life was a relatively easy matter. This was so for a number of factors. Firstly, the Companions were witnessing the revelation of the Qur’an, and the circumstances during which it was revealed. They were aware of the reason behind the revelation of a verse (asbaab an-nuzool) and as such did not need to search for this knowledge as later interpreters would have to. Secondly, the Arabic of the companions was the Arabic of the Qur’an, as the Qur’an was revealed in their dialect. Therefore the Arabic of the Qur’an was, in general, understood by them without any difficulties. Lastly, and most importantly, the Prophet (SAS) was alive, and the Qur’an was still being revealed, so even if there were any difficulties in understanding any verse, they could turn to the prophet (SAS) for an explanation. An example quoted earlier is with regards to the verse,

الذين آمنوا ولم يلبسوا إيمانهم بظلم

“Those who believe and do not mix their belief with

Injustice....” (6:82)

The Companions asked, “O Messenger of Allah! Who amongst us does not do injustice (to his soul)?” The Prophet (SAS) replied, “Have you not read the statement of Luqmaan,

إِنَّ الشِّرْكَ لَظُلْمٌ عَظِيمٌ

“Verily, shirk is a great injustice.”(31:13)

In other words, the Prophet (SAS) informed them that the injustice referred to in this verse was shirks, or the association of partners with Allah.

The Companions were careful that they understood every single verse in the Qur'an properly. Abu 'Abd ar-Rahmaan as-Sulamee (d. 75 A.H.) reported that whenever the people who taught them the Qur'an, like 'Uthman ibn 'Affan, 'Abdullaah ibn Mas'ood, and others. Learnt ten verses of the Qur'an, they would not proceed further until they had understood whatever ideas and regulations those verses contained. They used to say, “We learnt the Qur'an, and studied its ideas and injunctions all together. This narration shows that the Companions were eager to understand Qur'an, so much so that they would not memorize any verses until they had already understood what they knew.

The role of the Prophet (SAS), and quantity of the Qur'an that he interpreted, will be elaborated upon in the next section.

After the death of the Prophet (SAS), the science of tafsir took on a more systematic approach. Thus it can be considered that the first two mufassirs were actually the Companions. The sources that the Companions used for tafsir were the Qur'an, the statements of the prophet (SAS), the principles of Arabic grammar and rhetoric, their own personal reasoning (ijtihad), and Judeo-Christian customs that was prevalent at the time of the revelation of the Qur'an. These sources will be discussed in greater detail in the following section.

There were many among the Companions who were well known for their knowledge of the interpretation of the Qur'an. As-Suyuti wrote,

“There are ten who were famous for their knowledge of ‘tafsir among the Companions: the four Khulafaa, ‘Alee ibn Abi Taalib has the most narrations amongst them; as for the other three, their reports are very rare to find, since they died relatively earlier. In other words, the tafsir narrations of Abu Bakr, ‘Umar and ‘Uthman are not as common due to the fact that they were not compiled because of their relativity early death. Also, during their time, there was no great need to interpret much of the Qur'an, as the companions were many and wide spread. During later

times, however, such as during the Caliphate of ‘Ali, the need to interpret the Qur’an was much greater than before.”

There were others besides these ten companions who were known for their knowledge of tafsir, such as Anas ibn Maalik, Abu Hurayrah, Jaabir ibn ‘Abdillaah and ‘Aa’ishah, except that they were not in the same category as the whom as-Suyuti mentioned.

The most knowledgeable companions with regards to the interpretation of the Qur’an are considered to be Ibn ‘Abbaas. ‘Abdullaah ibn ‘Umar said, “Ibn ‘Abbaas is the most knowledgeable of this ummah concerning the revelation given to Muhammad (SAS). This is due to the fact that the Prophet (SAS) himself prayed for Ibn ‘Abbaas, for he (SAS) said, “O Allah! Give him the knowledge of the Book, and of Wisdom!” and in another narration, “O Allah! Give him the knowledge of the religion and interpretation. He used to accompany the prophet (SAS) during his youth, as he was his (SAS) cousin.

Ibn ‘Abbaas was held in great esteem by the Companions, despite his age (he was only thirteen when the Prophet (SAS) passed away). Umar used to let Ibn ‘Abbas enter into the meetings of the older Companions, so some of them complained, “Why is it that you let him enter, even though we have sons the same age as him (whom you do not allow to

enter)? “Umar answered, “Since he is the most knowledgeable of you! “So he called them one day, to prove to them this statement, and he asked them, “What do you think of the verse,

إذا جاء نصر الله والفتح

“When the help of Allah comes, and the Conquest”? (110:1)

Some of them did not reply, while others said, “We have been commanded to thank Allah and ask for His forgiveness whenever we are helped and aided to victory.” Umar asked Ibn ‘Abbas, “And do you think the same also, O’ Ibn ‘Abbas?” He answered, “No!” ‘Umar asked, “Then what do you say.” He replied, “This is an indication to the Prophet (SAS) from Allah that his life is about to end. The verse means, “When the help of Allah comes, and the Conquest then this is a sign of your approaching death, therefore,

فسبح بحمد ربك واستغفره ۞ إنه كان توابا

“Glorify the Praises of your Lord, and ask for Forgiveness, for verily He is ever-accepting repentance! (110:3)

‘Umar said, “I don’t know any other meaning to this except what you have said!”

The narrations of Ibn ‘Abbas, along with those of Abdullaah ibn Mas’ood, ‘Ali ibn Abi Taalib, and Ubay ibn Ka’ab, are the most numerous narrations from Companions that are to be found in tafsir literature. Each one of them established centres of learning during their lifetimes, and left many students among the Successors after their deaths.

The Companions did not leave narrations concerning every single verse in the Qur’an. This is because the people of their time understood much of what the Qur’an discussed, and only where the possibility for misinterpretation or ignorance existed did the Companions give their own interpretation of the relevant verse. Such interpretation typically consisted of explaining a verse in clearer words, or explaining a verse in clearer words, or explaining a particular Phrase or word with pre-Islamic poetry. Another characteristic of this time is the relatively trivial differences in tafsir, as compared to later generations.

After the generation of the Companions, the students of the Companions took over the responsibility of explaining the Qur’an. The Successors used the same sources to interpret the Qur’an that the Companions did, except that they added to the list of sources the interpretations of the companions. They understood that an interpretation given by the Companions of the Prophet (SAS) could not be compared to an interpretation of any person after them. Therefore, the sources for

interpreting the Qur'an during this generation were: the Qur'an, the statements of the Prophet (SAS) that the Companions had informed them of, the Companions personal reasoning (ijtihad) of the verse, the Arabic language, their own personal reasoning (ijtihad), and Judaea- Christian tradition.

After the death of the Prophet (SAS), the Companions spread out to different Muslim cities in order to teach people the religion of Islam. Each one taught many Successors, most of whom became scholars in their own right in due time.

Historically, three primary learning centers were established in the Muslim empire: Makkah, Madeenah and Koofah. Each of these areas became leading centers of the world.

After the period of the Successors, the stage of the actual compilation and writing of tafsir began. The most important works were by scholars of hadith, who, as part of their narrations and works of hadith, also had sections on tafsir. Therefore, during this stage, the narrations of tafsir were considered a branch of hadith literature. Some of the scholars of this period that were known for their tafsir narrations include Yazeed ibn Haaron as-Sulamee (d. 117 A.H.), Sufyaan al-Thawri (d.161 A.H.), Sufyaan ibn 'Uyaynah (d 198 A.H.), Wakee' ibn al-Jaraah (d 197 A.H.),

Shu'bah ibn al-Hajjaaj (d 160 A.H.), Aadam ibn Abee Iyaas (d 220 A.H.), and 'Abd ibn Humayd (d 249 A.H.). None of their works have survived intact until the present day.

The next stage in the history of tafsir saw the separation of tafsir literature from hadith, and the emergence of independent works solely on tafsir. Another stride during this stage was that every verse was discussed, so that tafsir was not only limited to those, these tafsirs encompassed all the verses in the Qur'an.

In attempting to answer who the first person to write a comprehensive tafsir of the Qur'an was the researcher is faced with a rather significant impediment: a lack of almost all manuscripts written during the first century of the hijrah. However, there are a number of references in later works to such manuscripts, and among the earliest works referenced is that of Sa'eed ibn Jubayr (d 95 A.H.). Most likely, this work was not a complete tafsir of the Qur'an, but rather composed of narrations from the previous generations. An interesting narration in the Fihrist of Ibn Nadeem (d. 438 A.H.) reads as follows:

'Umar ibn Bukayr, one of the students of al-Farraa, was with the governor Hasan ibn sahl. He wrote to al-Farraa: "The governor sometimes questions me concerning (the tafsir of) a verse in the Qur'an, but I am

unable to respond to him. Therefore, if you think it suitable to compile something with regards to the Qur'an, or write a book concerning this, I can return to this book (whenever he asks me)' al-Farraa said to his students, 'Gather together so that I may dictate to you a book on the Qur'an and he told Muadh to recite Surah al-Fatihah, so that he may interpret it, until the whole book (i.e. the Qur'an) was finished. The narrator of the story, Abu al-'Abbaas, said, 'No one before him ever did anything like it, and I don't think that anyone can add to what he wrote!'

Al-Farraa died in the year 207 A.H., and thus we can say that this is definitely one of the earliest works of this nature. Ibn Maajah (d. 273), of Sunan fame, also wrote a tafsir of the Qur'an, but again this was limited to narrations from the previous generations.

One of the greatest classics available is without a doubt the monumental tafsir of the Qur'an by Muhammad ibn Jareer at-Tabaree (d. 310 A.H.). This tafsir, although heavily based on narrations, also discusses the grammatical analysis of the verse, the various qiraaat and their significance on the meaning of the verse, and, on occasion, Ibn Jareer's personal reasoning (ijtihad) on various aspects of the verse. In many ways, this can be considered to be the first tafsir to attempt to cover every aspect of a verse. Other tafsir followed quickly; in particular the

tafsir of Aboo Shaykh ibn Hibbaan (d. 369 A.H.), al-Haakim (d. 405 A.H.) and Abu Bakr ibn Mardawayh (d. 410).

This era also saw the beginning of the specialization in tafsir, with tafsir being written, for example, with greater emphasis on the grammatical analysis and interpretation of the Qur'an. Greater emphasis was also placed on personal reasoning (ijtihad), and tafsirs written solely for the defence of sectarian views (such as the tafsir of the Mu'tazilah), and even for the defence of one's fiqh madh-hab (such as the tafsir of the Hanafis, Shaafi'ees and Malikis) appeared. Another aspect that started during this era was the deletion of the isnad from tafsir narrations, and this led to the increasement of weak and fabricated reports in tafsir literature.

Official version of the Qur'an made in the first half of Uthman's caliphate (24-35 A.H/644-655 A.D.) had neither vowel-points nor dots. The version was an attempt to render null and void other versions of the scripture prevalent amongst the Arabs by fixing its context and word forms. The Compilers of the version did not bother about the inflexions and dots, most probably, as they sought to make the version a guide to the companions, who alone taught to correct recitation of the Qur'an to the common people with the help of the memorized suras, and already knew which letter had which inflexion and which dot. But

lack of the two gave rise to erroneous reading by the companions of those parts of the scripture which they had not memorized under the supervision of the Prophet or by the ordinary Arabs and non-Arab Muslims, who studied suras without first learning them from companion teachers. The two shortcomings of the official versions, which seriously hampered its study and understanding, were removed in the Umayyad period. Abul-Aswad al-Du'ali, the reputed originator of syntax (d.69/688), introduced a form of vowel-points at the instance of the Governor of Iraq, Ziyad ibn Abih (d.53 or 55/672 or 674), a man of sound command of Arabic, who detected grammatical irregularities and who was shocked by the rising tempo of mistakes in the recitation of the Qur'an. The dots were put over three decades later by yahya b.yamur (d.109/727), a man of remarkable proficiency in Arabic and secretary to al-Hajjaj, another Governor of Iraq, (75-95/694-713).

The Tafsir made all-round progress in the Umayyad period while in the preceding one, difficult or technical words and expressions of certain popular and commonly memorized-chapters of the Qur'an had been elucidated, the cementation activity in the Umayyad period comprehended the whole book; context of those

texts of the Qur'an, which were revealed under the spell of particular events and situations, was furnished on a far greater scale than before, allusions to ancient religions and peoples, left untouched or incomplete in the preceding period, were tackled and attempt by a section of commentators was made to explain the metaphorical, inconsistent or confusing expressions, left unheeded in the preceding period.

There are many brief or vague reference in the Qur'an to the Christians, the Jews and some other ancient peoples, their religions, prophets and legends which called for elucidation, but which the Arab companions were not informed enough to 'Abdullah b. Salam (d.43/633) Kab al-ahbar (d.32/652) and Wahab b.

Munabbih (b.110/728), particularly the last mention applied them with fervor. In order to impress their pupils and win popular esteem, they claimed wide knowledge of the religions and history of ancient peoples, including their Own and transmitted a mass of information, bearing directly or indirectly, on the relevant Qur'anic allusions-information which the Arabs, in their ignorance, were unable to verify, but which, in fact, contained a lot of legendary and fake context. The commentators, however,

avidly accepted the information and embellished their Tafsir with it.

Umayyad Tafsir which like the Hadith, the fiqh, post-emigration and Pre-Umayyad history was the nursling of the Traditionists, had three categories: (a) the one attributed to the prophet, (b) the one attributed to the top companions and (c) the one attributed to the tabi'un and tab'tabi'in. A substantial part of the Tafsir attributed to the prophet was far from genuine; it was fabricated by the Traditionalists themselves to sustain their prestige with the common people and admirers and give their views, under the guise of the Tafsir, the sanctity which the world of the prophet alone commanded of the large number of companions, who had been for years associated with the prophet, the following nine only are said to have taken interest in the Tafsir : 'Umar, 'Uthman, 'Ali, Muadh b. Jabal, Ibn Mas'ud, Ubayy b. Ka'b, Zayd b. Thabit, Abu Musa al-Ash'ari and Ibn 'Abbas. Of these, three alone figure as prolific or regular commentators-'Ali, in shi-'ite tafsir and Ibn Masud and Ibn 'Abbas in that of the Sunnites.

As in the case of the tafsir attributed to the prophet, so also in that ascribed to the companions, large-scale fabrication entered

at the hands of the tabi'un commentators, whose elucidation of the words and expressions of Qur'an would carry little weight with their pupils, rivals and co-professionals unless declare to have proceeded from one of the top companions, whose views were held by the whole community of the orthodox traditionists as binding those of the prophet.

Amongst the Tabiun and Tab tabi'in traditionists, several scores are known to have taken active interest in the Tafsir and among them the following occupy a distinguished position:

1. Said b. Zubayr (b.94/712, Kufa)
2. Al-Dahhak b. Muzhim (d.102 or 106/720 or 724, Khurasan)
3. Mujahid b. Jabar (d. 103/721, Mecca)
4. 'Ikrima' (d.104 or 105/721 or 722, Medina)
5. Abu Saleh Badhaa
6. Al-Hussain al-Basri (d.110/728, Basra)
7. Qatada b. Diama (117/735, Basra)
8. Al-Zuhri (Muhammad b. Muslim, d.124/741 Medina)
9. Al-Suddi(Ismail b. Abdul Rahman, d. 127/74, Kufa)
10. Muhammad b. Saib al-Kalbi (d.146/763, Kufa)
11. Al-Amash (Sulayman b. Mihran, d. 148/765, Kufa)

12. Ibn Zurayj (d. 150/767, Mecca)
13. Muqatil b. Sulayman (d.150/767, Khurasan)
14. Muhammad b. Ishaq (d. 150 or 151/767 or 768, Medina)
15. Shuba b. al-Hajjaj (d. 160/776, Basra)

They form the main spring of the Sunnite tafsir and their names, with specimens of their respective commentary, occur very frequently in the monumental tafsir of al-Tabari (d. 310/922).

To the third category belongs a galaxy of Traditionists with literary and dialectic back-ground, who, while accepting the genuine tafsir transmitted on the authority of the prophet and the top companions, explained the Qur'an independently, that is, without masquerading behind a companion, by exercising their own discretion and in the light of their study of Arabic language and literature. Outstanding representative of these category are; al-dahhak b. Muzahim, Muqatil b. Sulayman and Qatada b. Diama.

Objectives of Tafsir Literature:

The branch of Uloom al Qur'an concerned with the 'tafsir' (exegesis) of the Qur'an is the most important and supreme

science. Since the Qur'anic messages are guidance for mankind and are available to all who seek guidance, it is but necessary to understand them. The science which helps in this understanding is therefore, of prime importance. Ilm al- tafsir is certainly the main science surrounded by all the other 'Uloom al-Qur'an (علوم القرآن).

The ultimate purpose of each science is to understand the message of the Qur'an whereas the science of tafsir directly concerned with the main purpose.

The sciences of tafsir aims at knowledge and understanding, concerning the Qur'an, to explain its meanings, extract its legal ruling and grasp its underlying reasons. Tafsir explains the apparent meaning of the Qur'an. The objective of Tafsir is to identify the meaning of the Holy Qur'an through the Tafsir, and the benefit of Tafsir is to accuratise the injunctions of the Qur'an.

- Determining the style of the text and its eloquence
- Defining unknown or otherwise less used words
- The clarification of the meaning of verses
- Extraction of the laws and rulings
- Explaining the underlying thoughts in metaphors and figurative speech

- Reconciling verses that seem contradictory
- Finding out the underlying reasons for parables

4. Different Kinds of Tafsir Literature:

In later years, commentators and Qur'anic scholars formulated various rules of interpretation. Foreign thoughts, knowledge and reasoning were also woven into the fabric of Islamic thought and culture. This amalgamation emerged in several kinds of tafsir and can be divided into two or three groups, i.e., tafsir bil riwaya, by transmission, tafsir bil-ra'y, sound opinion or knowledge and tafsir bil-ishara, by indication.

Tafsir bil-riwaya (also known as Tafsir bil-mathur) includes the interpretation of the Qur'an by Qur'anic verses and use of the explanations of the prophet and his companions. Books of this class of Tafsir include those attributed to Ibn Abi Khatim, Ibn Habban, and that of Imam Suyuti known as Al-Dur al-Mansur, Tafsir by Khatir and al-Shukani may also be included in this group.

Tafsir bil-ray (or Tafsir bil-dirayah) is not based directly on transmission of knowledge from the past, but on reason. Exegesis

is derived through opinion based on reason and Ijtihad or Qiyas. In this area we find tafsir like al-Kashaf by Zamakshari (d.1144).

Tafsir bill-ishara: It goes into the detail of the concepts and ideas associated with the words and verses of the Qur'an. This kind of tafsir is often produced by mystically inclined authors. The most famous are those by al-Razi and al-Khazin.

Ibn Jarir has reported through Muhammad ibn Bashshar Muammal Sufyan and Abul Zanad that Ibn Abbas said. "Tafsir is of four kinds: One which Arabs can know from the language; second which no one can be excused for not knowing; third which only the scholars know; and fourth, which God alone knows.

I) Interpretation of the Qur'an by the Qur'an

Interpretation of the Qur'an with the Qur'an is very common because of the close interrelatedness of the verses of the Qur'an with one another. The Qur'anic verses explain and interpret one another, and therefore constitute the highest level of authenticity. Many verses or words in the Qur'an are explained or further clarified in other verses of the Qur'an. One example of this kind is Tafsir al-Mizan.

The need for an explanation of the ayaat of the Qur'anic text arose quite early. After the Prophet when his living guidance was not available, it became imperative to resort to distilling everything out of the text and consequently resort to an extensive interpretation of them. This branch of tafsir is based on the principle of explaining the meaning of one portion of the Qur'an by the other portions. Many of the questions which arise out of a certain passage have their explanation in other parts of the Qur'an. The interpretation of the Qur'anic ayaat by the Qur'an can be considered as the highest as the most reliable source of tafsir.

It is the foremost duty of a Mufasssir to seek an explanation of an ayah from the Qur'an by referring to another ayah or ayaat of the Qur'an. If still there is any need of further clarification the Mufasssir can refer to other sources.

Muhammad Aslam Jairajpuri says:

“The very first principle for explaining the Qur'an intelligibly is that the elucidation is done with the Qur'an itself: for Allah accepts full responsibility for the interpretation: “Further, it is for us to make it (teaching of the Qur'an) clear. “(Qur'an 75:19)”

According to some scholars if this method is properly exercised there is no need to turn to other sources.

During the lifetime of the prophet even before the entire Qur'an was revealed believers used to ask the Prophet the meaning of certain words or their bearing on problems as they arose, or details of certain narratives. It is quite obvious that the explanation of the Qur'anic ayaat as given by the Prophet is a reliable source of 'tafsir'.

Thus hadith was accepted as the second sources of interpretation of the Qur'an besides the Qur'an.

Next in rank are the explanations offered by companions of the Prophet. For about 40 years after Prophet i.e., up to 50/670 historical traditions containing reports about how the companions (among whom the Qur'an was first revealed) understood it was given great importance.

There is some evidence that in early generation after the prophet the companions were opposed to offering any interpretation of the Qur'an. This attitude gradually changed.

Commentaries which were more or less colored by faiths of old ideas of the new converts appeared in large number.

The Qur'anic scholar Sabuni in his book Tibyan has classified tafsir into three groups:

1. Tafsir bil-riwayah or tafsir ma'thur (traditional commentary).
2. Tafsir bil-ray' (rational commentary) is also called tafsir bil-dirayah (by knowledge)
3. Tafsir bil-lshara (by indication or signs)

Traditional Commentary

1. As in the case of all reports, according to the science of riwayah (ulum al- hadith) (علوم الحديث), the interpretations available through a chain of authentic transmission and traced back to a sound are to be accepted as importance and reliable sources of tafsir. Traditional commentary depends entirely on the traditions attributed to the prophet, his companions and the Qur'anic explanations are very limited.

A large number of traditions attributed to the Prophet and also to Ali bin Abu Talib and ibn Abbas are on scrutiny found to be unauthentic.

Using narratives of the prophet to interpret the Qur'an. In this approach the most important external aids used are the collected oral traditions upon which Muslim scholars based Islamic history and law. The Qur'an states that the prophet is responsible for explanation and guidance. While some narratives are of revelation origin. Narratives used for tafsir, and in general, must be of authentic origin (Hadith terminology). Narratives of such origin are considered requisite for tafsir.

In the circumstances one has to be careful in the matter of traditional tafsir and it is necessary to make a fresh attempt to reach a better understanding. The celebrated exegete ibn Jarir al Tabari (d.310/927) has included weak traditions in his tafsir which can be regarded as an encyclopedia of traditional commentary.

Tafsir of ibn 'Atiyya (d. 542/1147) is one of the traditional commentaries. Jalaluddin Suyuti's *Dur al manthur fit tafsir bil mathur* can be considered the best representative of traditional commentaries.

There are two main methods and one prohibited method of commenting on the Qur'an:

It is the act of commenting on the Qur'an using traditional sources. This classical tafsir method is agreed upon by all scholars, and is the most used method throughout history, partly because other methods have been criticized;

The Qur'an states that it is made easy to understand so no one is allowed to divert its literal meaning.

The Prophet has condemned those who interpret the Qur'an from their own point of view.

Most companies of the Prophet have refrained from presenting their own ideas.

Sahaba and Tabi'iun

The Sahabah, or companies of Muhammad, also interpreted and taught the Qur'an. If nothing is found in the Qur'an or the Hadith, the commentator has recourse to what the Sahabah reported about various. These are generally considered above personal opinion, because these people grew up with everyday interaction; and they were very knowledgeable in both Arabic literature and Islamic thought.

Arabic literature

The classical Arabic poetry and the text of the Qur'an are two resources which can be used as foundational reference in ascertaining the meaning and signification of the remaining literal and figurative diction of the Qur'an and its style of expression. Using Arabic poetry for defining words is a long used practice, in fact there are nearly no scholars who hasn't used this source.

Isra'iliyat (Jewish legends)

Some traditions termed as 'Israiliyat' i.e., of 'Jewish origin' have found their way in the collections of traditions. These are mostly based on Talmudic literature. Scholars of ilm al hadith have identified them and warned the scholars to be cautious as far these traditions are concerned. Some exegetes have however, based their explanations on such material. Traditions of Jewish origin have been used very little by the companions but more by the tabi'een and still more by succeeding generations.

There are some traditions of Jewish origin (Isra'iliyat), which are authentic and to be true because the Qur'an confirmed them or because they were found to be correct as per the test prescribed by ibn al hadith. Some of them are false because the

Qur'an rejected them or because they were found to be false or doubtful as per the test prescribed by ilm al- hadith.

There is a general repugnance against the traditional used of 'Israiliyat' (Jewish legends) when expounding Qur'anic narratives. This repugnance has become more prominent in recent times.

Muhammad Abduhu goes further than most of his contemporaries and claims the right to reject any tradition that does not confirm to the understanding of the Qur'an, whether a 'tradition' is one of the 'israiliyat' or not.

Isra'iliyat is the body of narratives originating from Judeo-Christian traditions, rather than from other well-accepted sources. The Isra'iliyat are mostly non-biblical explanatory stories and traditions (Hebrew: Midrashim) giving extra information or interpretation about events or individuals recorded in the Hebrew Scriptures. Scholars starting with the Sahabah have studied narrative accounts of other Abrahamic religions to further explain and clarify verses, especially parables, in the Qur'an. While some may be accurate, these narratives are not subject to hadith authenticity criteria, and are generally not favored for use. It is

considered a major weakness in tafsir, as these narratives are not compatible with Islamic thought.

Rational Commentary:

Some outstanding companions continued their study of the Qur'an according to their intellectual capacities. They considered that the use of reason in studying the Qur'an was essential. The approach of rational commentators was not a reaction to the rigid attitude of the traditionalist. It was a result of internal forces of growth in the Muslim society. Zamakhshari's tafsir is a purely rational commentary. Interpretations which diverged from the obvious meaning of the Qur'anic text and had arbitrary character were severely criticized. However, some scholars argued that when reason exceeds its own limitations and try to interpret the Qur'an on its (reason's) own terms, and then the Qur'an is relegated into a secondary place.

“Such interpretations which probably sometimes diverged markedly from the obvious meaning of the text and had an arbitrary character were severely attacked as arbitrary opinion (tafsir bil-ra'y).” Thus whatever views some scholars have wanted

to project and advocates have at times, taken the form of Qur'anic commentaries.

This kind of tafsir is not based directly on riwayat (transmission) by the predecessors, but on the use of knowledge and reason. The process of applying knowledge and reason is termed as 'ijtihad'. Tafsir bil-ray is to be differentiated from interpretation based on mere opinion. Tafsir based on personal opinion has been condemned as there is a tradition which warns against this method. It is termed as tafsir 'madhmum' (blame worthy). Tafsir bil-ray based on authentic sources of tafsir was approved by the Prophet. It is termed as tafsir Mahmud (praiseworthy). There is a tradition in support of this method.

Although tafsir bil-ray (if based on knowledge and reason and if it is in full agreement with the sources of tafsir) is considered as tafsir Mahmud. The companions of the Prophet and the 'tabi'een was reluctant to offer their explanations based on mere opinion.

The use of reason and mind (ijtihad) to form an opinion-oriented tafsir. This method is not interpretation by mere opinion, which is prohibited, but rather opinions must be based on the main

sources, Its most distinctive feature is the inclusion of the opinions of the commentator, thus forming an objective view on Qur'anic verses. Some important examples include Anwar al-Tanzil by al-Baidawi and Irshad al-Aql as-Salim by Abu Sa'ud al-Hanafi. Some parameters used by these scholars are:

Literary elements of the Arabic language, including morphology, eloquence, and syntax are an integral part of tafsir, as they constitute the basic of understanding and interpretation. Arabic has a systemic way of shaping words (morphology) so one can know the meaning by knowing the root and form the word was coined from. If any word can be given a meaning that is with the rules of grammar, Qur'anic text can be interpreted that way.

Scholars may choose to interpret verses according to:

1. Their historical context. This is particularly important to interpret verses according to how the Qur'an was revealed, when and under which circumstances. Much commentary was dedicated to history. The early tafsir are considered to be some of the best sources for Islamic history. (Asbab al-nuzul).

2. Their place of revelation, whether it was revealed in Mecca or Medina. This classification is important because

generally, Meccan verses tend to have a legislative nature, whether it is theological foundations or basic faith principles. On the other hand, Medinian verses constitute rules of worship and social regulations.

Verses may be interpreted to preserve the general goals of shariah (maqasid), which is simply to bring happiness to a person in this life and hereafter. That way, any interpretation that threatens to compromise the preservation of religion, life, lineage, intellect or property may be discarded or ruled otherwise in order to secure these goals.

This includes understanding and interpreting the Qur'an while taking into account the cultural and social environment to which it has been revealed; or according to the scholars own time. This is an integral part of the University of the Qur'an. Scholars usually do not favor to confine verses to a single time interval, but rather interpret according to the needs of their time.

Muslims believe that it is prohibited to perform Qur'anic interpretation using solely one's own opinion. This, they base on an authenticated hadith of Muhammad which states that it is

prohibited; “He who says (something) concerning the Qur’an without knowledge, he has taken his seat of fire.”

Tafsir bil-ishara:

Some Sufis and mystically inclined authors have attempted the Qur’an, beyond its apparent meanings. They concern themselves with meanings attached to the ayaat are not visible to anyone. They proclaim that Allah has opened their heart and bestowed signs to them by they are guided. The attitude of the Sufi commentators is that the ayaat of the Qur’an, apart from having obvious meanings, in addition have deep meanings discernible only by those who are inspired. According to them harmony between the normal understanding of the Qur’anic ayaat and their hidden meaning is possible. Saying of the Sufis on the meaning of the Qur’anic ayaat do not constitute tafsir, Many Qur’anic scholars including Ashraf Ali Thanwi subscribe to this view.

According to al- Aqa’id by al- Nasafi: the ayaat of the Qur’an should be taken in their obvious meaning. To reject the obvious meaning in favor of an interpretation, as is done by the ‘batiniya’ is a heresy. According to Denffer “Tafsir bil-ishara is

not a matter of science and scientific principles, which may be acquired it from the view point of general acceptability and said it is based on mere opinion.”

It is to be noted that the belief of the Sufis are reflected in their commentaries. The main belief being about the person of the Prophet Strange deological discussions such as ‘haqiqat a Muhammadia’ and ‘al Ruh al Muhammadi’ were introduced. As observed by Rashid Ahmed Jullandari:*

“The personality of Prophet Muhammad (S) as sufi literature by the Qur’an is no more of an inspired human being. But in later day he appears in Sufi literature with the same Jesus in Christian literature. As far as Jili’s portrayal in his book al- Insan al kamil is concerned, he (Muhammad) is at the centre of the University. Tustari’s tafsir seems to have been Jili’s source.

Sahl al Tustari (d.283/896) was perhaps the first Sufi whose observations (malfudhat) concerning interpretation of the Qur’an were compiled as commentary by one of his disciples. This tafsir is very small in size. The method adopted by Tustari is different from other commentators. He chooses a few ayaat from every Surah and shows their spiritual significance.

The great Sufi scholar ibn 'Arabi were influenced by Tustari who in turn was affected by the teaching of the Christian and the Shiias.

Abd-al Rahman al Sulami (d.412/1021) was a Sufi writer. His tafsir, *Haqa'iq al- tafsir* is not an original work. He compiled the sayings of the sufis. For example he included the sayings of al-Hallaj and of Jafar al Sadiq in his tafsir. According to ibn Taimiya a large number of the sayings of Ja'far al Sadiq quoted by Sulami are not authentic. This tafsir therefore was a target of criticism by scholars who alleged that al Sulami fabricated traditions.

Abu Hamid Ghazali emphasized the role of reason in the understanding of the Qur'an. Later, however, when Sufi commentary was severely criticized by the Qur'anic scholars, Ghazali came to the rescue of the Sufi commentators and supported symbolic commentary. He opined that the meaning of the Qur'an came to the rescue of the Sufi commentators and supported symbolic commentary. He opined that the meaning of the Qur'an is revealed only to the elect and therefore, the symbolic interpretation of an ayaat which occurs to the mind of the sufis should not be rejected. According to him the ultimate

ideal should be to keep a balance between the two aspects of the ayaat; the out ward (obvious) and the inward.

Tafsir ‘Ilmi (Scientific exegesis)

A commentator’s main concern is to help his readers to understand the Qur’an as the contemporaries of the Prophet understood it in the days when the Qur’an was revealed.

The need was felt to develop scientific instruments whereby to control the progress of the science of Qur’anic commentary (ilm al tafsir).

In the 2nd/8th century itself the principle was recognized that the knowledge of Arabic language and the Arabic idioms of the time of the Prophet were necessary for a proper understanding of the Qur’an. Acceptance of this principle gave rise to intensive cultivation of Arabic Grammar lexicography and ‘Arabic literature.

Tafsir which seeks to draw all possible fields of human knowledge into the interpretation of the Qur’an is termed as scientific exegesis.

This branch of exegesis should be differentiated from another approach in which scholars seek all sciences in the Qur'anic text for examples. Ibn Abi al Fadhi al Mursi (1147/1257) finds in the Qur'an, astronomy, medicine, weaving, so inning, seafaring, agriculture, pearl-diving etc.

The commentary of Tantawi Jawhari (d.1359/1940) is an apt example of such motivated approach. He interpreted almost every passage of the Qur'an to prove that scientific facts which were discovered in the modern time existed in the Qur'anic text. He has proceeded so far that his commentary might be as a manual for the general public on biology and other sciences.

Modern commentaries:

Modern commentaries are written for another public than the 'classical' ones, but they are still very much traditional in content and form.

Renowned Tafsir writers.

Muhammad Rashid Rida (b. september 23, 1865/ d. August 22, 1935) was a reformer, the most important disciple of Muhammad Abduh and of Jamal al Din Al-Afghani, an early radical Islamist, and the inspiration for Hassan al-Banna and

Sayyid Qutb, founder and leader, respectively, of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Life of Muhammad Rashid Rida:

Rida was born in the small village of al-Qalamun about 5 KM from Tripoli, then in the Syrian province of the Ottoman Empire and now in Lebanon. He was supposedly descended from a very pious family of outstanding Muslim Ulema, as well-versed in Islamic knowledge. Many of his family were called sheikhs.

Rida started his education at a Kuttab (traditional Qur'anic School) in his village where he learned the Qur'an, Arabic writing, and elements of arithmetic. After graduating, he was sent to the Rushdiyya National' Primary School in Tripoli. There he studied Arabic grammar, math, and the basics of geography, Islamic Brilief, Islamic rituals, and Turkish. He left the school after a year, because most of the teaching was in Turkish. He then studied at the National Islamic school (al-Madrasa al-Wataniyya al-Islamiyya) in Tripoli, founded by Shaykh Husayn al-Jisr. There he was taught both traditional Muslim theology and at least some "secular" content such as European languages and mathematics and philosophy. He was exposed to the writings of Muhammad

Abduh and Jamal al-Din Al-Afghani in the short-lived pan-Islamic anti-colonialist journal *al-Urwa al-wuthqa* (the firmest bond) which Abduh and al-Afghani published in Paris in 1884. In 1894, Abduh visited Tripoli briefly and Rida was his constant companion. In 1897 he moved to Cairo to work with Muhammad Abduh. In 1898, they launched *al Manar*, which may have been Rida's idea- a journal of Islamic reform. *Al Manar* supposedly comprised "Quranic commentary"²⁵ but it also included political articles and propaganda that had relation to religious subjects. Rida died in 1905 en route to Suez.

Ideology of Muhammad Rashid Rida

Rida's philosophy evidently represented a transition from the modernist, rational, liberal and reformist tradition represented by Muhammad Abduh and Jamal al-Din Al-Afghani to the radical, violent, reactionnary, racist and Muslim supremacist philosophy of Hassan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb.

Following the death of 'Abduh's in 1905, Rida came to be regarded as the leading disciple of Abduh and exponent of Islamic reform, after he published an extensive biography of Abdu. He

25 .Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim World Thompson Gale,2004, p.597

also continued the Tafsir (Commentary) of the Qur'an begun by Abdu. Most of Rida's energies were focused on publication of al-Manar. However, he also wrote at length, both in Al-Manar and various books.

Despite extensive actual departures from Abduh, Rida's were viewed as a legitimate continuation of 'Abduh's thought, and a pathway for reinvigorating Islam and demonstrating its compatibility with modernity.

In common with Abduh and Afghani, Rida blamed Muslim decline on the Ulema (Muslim authorities), excesses of some Sufi sects which were opposed to political involvement (apparently he joined the Naqshbandi Sufi) and taqlid (imitation of previous jurists), and abandonment of what he considered the original Islamic writ. Like them, he called himself a Salafi, in the sense that he wanted to return to "first principles" as he saw them, and reinterpret Islam according to reason and first principles. He was convinced that the "correct" Islam lay not in the pronouncement of the Ulema of al-Azhar and other prestigious places, but rather in the rulings of village elders and notables such as his own family.

But Rida diverged from Abduh and Afghani in very significant ways. During and following World War I, he opposed the breakup of the Ottoman Empire because he correctly foresaw that it would mean the end of the Caliphate, and he likewise opposed the British sponsored Pan-arab movement of Feisal, especially when it was defeated in Damascus.

Rida's version of Ittihad unity-called for a Caliphate as Maududi had. Rida was profoundly affected by the dissolution of the Caliphate by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. He believed that the abolition was part of a conspiracy by the west to sow disunity among Muslims and weaken them. He cited Lord Cromer as stating the unity Muslims was a challenge and a source of resistance to the forces of the Christian countries and that it had to be watched carefully.

Rida's caliphate would be a collection of states, with a supreme Mujtahid to rule as an expert on matters of religion, with the consensus of a Shura council. As Bassam Tibi points out and as others have pointed out there was no Caliphate in the time of Muhammad, and the Caliphate as such is not contradiction between the supposed return to "first principles" on the one hand, and the insistence on a Caliphate or Islamic rule on the other.

Rida identified many defective Muslim traditions with “Israiliyyah”- traditions that were supposedly inserted into Islam by converted Jews and that were therefore suspect. Both from his early life history, in which he abandoned a Turkish school for an Arabic languages one, and from his writing, it is apparent that Rida advocated Arab supremacy within the Islamic world. In his Fatwa against the translation of the Qur’an, he argued that parts of the Qur’an were untranslatable, and that only Arabic speakers could fully comprehend it. Translations of portions of the Qur’an could be made for those who required it for ritual purpose. However, a translation would produce a variant meaning. He explained:

The Qur’an prohibited taqlid [imitative reasoning] in religion and denounced the imitators. Deriving [the ruling of] religion from the translation of the Qur’an is an imitation of its translator, so it is a deviation from the guidance of the Qur’an and is not in accordance with it. In theory; at least, Rida’s philosophy was liberal. He pleaded for Ijtihad (innovation). He stressed that Islam is based on reason and claimed that the Islamic Sharia is founded on the basis of Ijtihad. Without Ijtihad, in his view, Islam could not adapt and could not be eternal religion. Thus, anyone

who is opposed to Ijtihad is undermining the basis of Islam and of Sharia.”What a heinous crime is being committed, then, by these ignorant persons who call themselves the Ulema of Islam,” he wrote. The call for perpetual and free Ijtihad could hardly sit well with Sunni Ulema who believe that the gates of Ijtihad are closed, and especially not with traditional Salafi theologians.

In apparent contradistinction to those who view Islam as prescribing a whole way of life to the smallest details, Muhammad Rashid Rida claimed that Islam gave liberty to order the affairs of everyday life. Islam requires that issues should be settled by consultation; the restrictions on Ijtihad placed by the Ulema are not warranted, according to him.¹⁶

Rida must have been among the first to become aware of Zionism and warn of the dangers of Zionism as he saw them. In 1898, he wrote in *Al Manar*.

Apathetic people lift up your heads and see what is happening. Consider what people and nations are doing...Does it please you that the newspapers around the globe are reporting that the impoverished of the most miserable. The Jews whom all governments are expelling from their countries, have so mastered

knowledge and civilization that they to your country, colonize it and transform its masters into wage laborers and its affluent men into paupers...Ponder this problem (Zionism) and make it the subject of your conversations, to ascertain if it is just or unjust, true or false. If it is clear that you have neglected to defend the right of your fatherland and the interests of your nation and your religious community, ponder and study, debate and examine the matter. It is a worthier subject for consideration than focusing on shortcomings, spreading slander and insulting the innocent. It is more worthy of discussion than ridiculing and accusing your Muslim brothers. (Rida, Muhammad Rashid. *Khabar wa itibar* (News and Views) *al-Manar* (April 9, 1898), p, 108)

Works by Muhammad Rashid Rida

1. Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Hakim known as Tafsir al-Manar (Continuation of the commentary on the Qur'an begun by 'Abduh. Rida continued up to surah Yusuf XII. Verse 100)

2. Al-Tafsir al-Mukhtasar al-Mufid (Intended as a summary of the Tafsir, begun by Rida and published by Muhammad Ahmed Kan'an and Zuhayr al-Shawish as *Muhktasar Tafsir*, 3 vols, Beirut-Damascus, 1984)

3. Al-Manar Journal (the first volume was published in 1315A.H. [1998], the second section of the last volume (volume 35) was published and distributed after his death on 29th Rabi' II, 1354/1935)

4. Tarikh al-Ustad al-Imam al-Shaykh Muhammad "Abduh (A biography of his teacher published in three volumes)

5. Nida'lil Jins al-Latif or Huquq al-Mar'ah fi al-Islam)" A call to the Fair Sex" or "Women's Rights in Islam").

6. Al-Wahy al-Muhammadi (Rational and historical proofs that the Qur'an is a Revelation).

7. Tarjamat al-Qur'an wa ma fiha min Mafasid wa Munafat al-Islam.²⁶

8. Al Naqd Dhikra al-Mawlid al-Nabawi²⁷

9. Al-Wahda al-Islamiyya ([Islamic Unity]. Most of his work was first published under the title Muhawarat al-Muslih wa al-Muqallid ["Debates between the Reformer and the Imitator"])

26 . Matba'atal-Manar, Cairo. 1344/1926.

27. Summary of the Prophet's biography and the foundations of Islam al-Manar 20, 1336/1918.

10. Yusuf al-Islam wa Usul al-Tashri' al- 'Amm²⁸

11. Al-Khilafa WA al-Imama al-'Uzma ("The Caliphate and the Greater Imamate" Cairo Manar Press.)

12. Al-Sunna WA al-Shari'a ("The Prophetic Tradition and Islamic Law")

13. Al-Muslimun WA al-Qibt ("Muslims and the Copts")

14. Al-Wahhabiyyun WA al-Hijaz "The Wahhabites and the Hijaz."

16. Al-Manar WA al-Azhar "Al-Manar and al-Azhar".

Biography of Hafiz Ibn Kathir:

By the Honoured Shaykh 'Abdul-Qadir Al-Arna'ut, may Allah protect him. He is the respected Imam, Abu Al-Fida', Imam Ad-Din Ismail bin 'Umar bin Kathir Al-Busrawi Busraian in origin; Dimashqi in training, learning and residence.

Ibn Kathir was born in the city of Busra in 701 A.H. His father was Friday speakers of the village, but he died while Ibn Kathir was only four years old. Ibn Kathir's brother, Shaykh

28. The Accommodating Spirit of Islam and the Sources of General Jurisprudence, 1928.

Abdul-Wahhab, reared him and taught him until he moved to Damascus in 706 H., when he was five years old.

Ibn Kathir's Teachers

Ibn Kathir studied Fiqh-Islamic Jurisprudence-with Burhan-ud-Din, Ibrahim bin 'Abdur-Rahman Al-Fizari, known as Ibn Al-Firkah (d.729A.H.) Ibn Kathir heard Hadiths from Isa bin Al-Mutim, Ahmed bin Abi Talib, Ibn Ash-Shahnah, (d.730 A.H), Ibn Al -Hajjar (d.730 A.H), and the Hadith narrator of Ash-Sham modern day Syria and surrounding areas; Baha Al-Qasim bin Muzaffar bin 'Asakir (d.723 A.H), and Ibn Ash-Shirdzi, Ishaq bin Yahya Al-Ammuddi, also known as 'Afif ud- Din, the Zahiriyah Shaykh (d.725 A.H), and Muhammad bin Zarrad. He remained with Jamal ud-Din, Yusuf bin Al-Zaki Al-Mizzi (d.724A.H), he benefited from his knowledge and married his daughter. He also read with Shaykh al-Islam, Taqi ud-Din Ahmed bin 'Abdul-Halim bin 'Abdus-Salam bin Taymiyyah bin Uthman bin Qaymaz Adh-Dhahabi, (d.748 A.H.), Abu Musa Al- Qarafai, Abu-Fath Ad-Dabbusi and 'Ali bin' Umar as-Suwani and others who gave him permission to transmit the knowledge he learned with them in Egypt.

In his book, *Al-Mujjam al-Mukhtas*, *Al-Haf iz Adh-Dhaliabi* wrote that Ibn Kathir was, “The Imam, scholars of jurisprudence, skillful scholars of Hadith, renowned Faqih and scholar of Tafsir wrote several beneficial books.”

Further, in *Al-Durar al-Kaminah*, *Al Hafiz Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani* said, “Ibn kathir worked on the subject of the Hadith in the areas of texts and chains of narrators, He had a good memory, his books became popular during his lifetime, and people benefited from them after his death.”

Also the renowned historian *Abu al-Mahasin, Jamal ud-Din Yusuf bin Sayf ud-Din (Ibn Taghri Bardi)*, said in his book, *Al-Manhal As-Safi*, ‘He is the Shaykh, the Imam, the great scholar ‘Imad ud-Din Abu Al-Fida’. He learned extensively and was very active in collecting knowledge and writing. He was excellent in the areas of Fiqh, Tafsir and Hadith. He collected knowledge, authored (books), taught, narrated Hadith and wrote. He had immense knowledge in the fields of Hadith, Tafsir, Fiqh, the Arabic language, and so forth. He gave Fatawa (religious verdicts) and taught until he died (may Allah mercyupon him). He was known for precision and vast knowledge, and as a scholar of history, Hadith and Tafsir. Ibn Haji was one of Ibn Kathir’s

students and he described Ibn Kathir: “He had the best memory of the hadith texts. He also had the most knowledge concerning the narrators and authenticity, his contemporaries and teachers admitted to these qualities. Every time I met gained some benefit from him.”

Also, Ibn Al-Imad Al-hanbalu said in his book, *Shadhardt Adh-Dhahab*, “He is the renowned Hafiz ‘Imad ud-Din, whose memory was excellent, whose forgetfulness was miniscule, whose understanding was adequate, and who had good knowledge in the Arabic language.”

Also, Ibn Habib said about Ibn Kathir, “He heard knowledge and collected it and various books. He brought comfort to the ears with his Fatwas and narrated Hadith and brought benefit to other people. The papers that contained his Fatwas were transmitted to the various (Islamic) provinces, further, he was known for his precision and encompassing knowledge.”

Ibn Kathir’s Books

1. One of the greatest books that Ibn Kathir wrote was his Tafsir of the Noble Qur’an, which is one the best Tafsir that rely

on narrations [of Ahadith, the Tafsir of the Companions, etc.]. The Tafsir was printed many times and several scholars have summarized it.

2. The History Collection known as Al-Bidayah which was printed in 14 volumes under the name Al-Bidayahwan Nihayah, and contained the stories of the Prophets and previous nations, the Prophet's seerah (life story) and Islamic history until his time. He also added a book Al-Fitan, about the Signs of the Last Hour.

3. At-Takmil fi Marifat Ath-Thiqat wa-Du'afa wal Majdhi which Ibn Kathir collected from the books of his two Shaykhs Al-Mizzi and Adh-Dhahabi; Al-Kamal and Mizan Al-Fitl. He added several benefits regarding the subject of Al-Jarh and At-T'adil.

4. Al-Hadi was Sunan fi Ahadith Al-Masdnfd was Sunan which is also known by, Jami 'Al-Masdnfd. In this book, Ibn Kathir collected the narrations of Imams Ahmad bin Hanbal, Al-Bazzar, Abu Ya'la Al-Mawsili, Ibn Abi Shaybah and from the six Collections of Hadith: the Two Sahihs [Al-Bukhari and Muslim] and the Four Sunan [Abu Dawud, At-Tirmidhi, An-Nasa'i and Ibn Majah]. Ibn Kathir divided this book according to areas of Fiqh.

5. Tabaqat Ash-Shafiyah which also contains the virtues of Imam Ash-Shafi. Ibn Kathir wrote references for the Ahadith of Adillat al- Tanbih, from the school of Fiqh.

6. Ibn Kathir began an explanation of Sahih Al-Bukhari, but he did not finish it.

7. He started writing a large volume on the Ahkam (Laws), but finished only up to the Hajj rituals.

8. He summarized al-Bayhaqi's Al-Madkhal. Many of books were not printed.

9. He summarized 'Ulum Al-Hadith, by Abu 'Amr bin

As Salah and called it Mukhtasar 'Ulum Al-Hadith. Shaykh Ahmad Shakir, the Egyptian Muhaddith, printed this book along with commentary on it and called it Al-Ba'th Al-Hathith fi Sharh Mukhtasar 'Ulum Al-Hadith.

10. As-Sifrah an-Nabawiyyah, which is contained in his book Al-Bid'iyah, and both of these books are in print.

11. A research on Jihad called Al-Ijtihad fi Al-Jihad which was printed several times.

Ibn Kathir's Death:

Al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar Al-Asqalani said, "Ibn Kathir lost his sight just before his life ended. He died at Damascus in 774 A.H." May Allah grant mercy upon Ibn Kathir and make him among residents of His Paradise.

Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari:

Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari (838-923)224-310H, was one of the earliest, most prominent and famous Persian historian and exegete of the Qur'an, most famous for his "Tarikh al- Rusul wa al-Muluk", or abbreviated as: "(Tarikh al-Tabari)" and Tafsir al-Tabari.

Biography:

He was born in Amol, Tabaristan (some twenty kilometres south of the Caspian Sea) in the winter of 8387-9. As he memorized the Qur'an at seven, was a qualified religious leader at eight and began to study the Prophetic traditions at nine. He left home to study in A.H. 236-(850-1) when he was twelve. He retained close ties to his home town. He did return at least twice the last time in A.H. 290(903) when his outspokenness caused some uneasiness and led to his quick departure.

He first went to Ray (Rages), where he remained for some five years. A major teacher in Rayy was Abu Abdillah Muhammad ibn Humayd al-Razi already in his seventies. Ibn Humayd had taught in Baghdad and was now retired in his native city. Among other material, ibn Humayd taught Jarir tabari the historical works of Ibn Ishaq, especially al-Sirah, his life of Muhammad. Tabari was thus introduced in youth to pre-Islamic know little about Tabari's other teachers in Rayy.

Then he went to Baghdad to study from ibn Hanbal, who, however, had recently died. This was in late 241 (late 855 or early 856). Tabari possibly made a pilgrimage prior to his arrival in Baghdad. He left Baghdad probably in 242(856-7) to travel through the southern cities of Basra, Kufah and Wasit. There he met a number of eminent and venerable scholars.

On his return to Baghdad, he took a tutoring position from the vizier Ubaydallah b. Yahya b. Khaqan. This would have been before A.H. 244(858) since the vizier was out of office and in exile from 244 to 248-(858-9 to 862). There is an anecdote told that Tabari had agreed to tutor for ten dinars a month, but his teaching was so effective and the lad's writing so impressive that the teacher was offered a tray of dinars and dirhams. The ever

honourable take more. This is one of a number of stories about him declining gifts or giving of equal or greater amount in return.

In his late twenties he travelled to Syria, Palestine and Egypt. In Beirut he made the highly significant connection of al-Abbas b. Al-Walid b. 'Udhri al-Bayruti (c. 169-270/785-6 to 883-4). Al-Abbas instructed Tabari in the Syrian school's variant readings of the Qur'an and transmitted through his father al-Walid the legal views of al-Awza'i, Beirut's prominent jurist from a century earlier.

Tabari arrived in Egypt in 253 A.H (867), and some time after 256/870 returned to Baghdad, possibly making a pilgrimage on the way. If so, he did not stay long in the Hijaz. Tabari had a private income from his father he was still living and then the inheritance. He took money for teaching. He never took a government or a judicial position.

Personal Characteristics:

He is described as having a dark complexion, large eyes and a long beard. He was tall and slender and his hair and beard remained black until he was very old. He was attentive to his health, avoiding red meat, fats and other unhealthy foods. He was

seldom sick before his last decade when he suffered from bouts of pleurisy when he was ill, he could treat himself to the approval of physicians. He had a sense of humour, through serious subjects he treated seriously. He had studied poetry when young and enjoyed writing, reciting and participating in poetic exchanges. It is said that he was asked in Egypt about al-Tirimmah and was able to recite this seventh century poet's work for Egyptians who had merely heard al-Tirimmah's name.

He was witty and urbane, clean and well mannered. He avoided coarse speech; instead displaying refined eloquence. He had a good grounding in grammar, lexicography and philology. Such were considered essential for Qur'anic commentary. He knew Persian and was acquainted with the origins of various foreign loan words in Arabic from a number of other languages.

Tabari never married. There is a description of his normal day: rising early for prayer, studying till early afternoon, publicly praying the afternoon prayer, reciting Qur'an and teaching Qur'an, and then teaching law. He died in Baghdad on February 17, 923A.D.

Works:

Al-Tabari wrote history, theology and Qur'anic commentary. His legal writings were published first and then continued to appear throughout his life. Next were his commentaries on the Qur'an. Lastly, his history was published. Despite a style that makes it seem he drew largely on oral sources, written material (both published and unpublished) provided him with the bulk of his information. His biographers stress his reverence for scholarship and his keen intent to offer his readers hard fact.

He didn't hesitate to express his independent judgment (ijtihad). He started his assessment as to which of the sources he cited was accurate. This was more understandably an aspect of his theology than of his history. This does not mean he saw himself as innovative. On the contrary, he was very much opposed to religious innovation. The story goes that when he was near death ibn Kamil suggested that he forgive his enemies. He said he was willing to do so, except for the person who had described him as an innovator. In general Tabari's approach was conciliatory and moderate, seeking harmonious agreement between conflicting opinions.

Initially he identified as a Shafi'ite in Fiqh law and Shafi'ites was happy to have him so considered. He later was seen as one establishing his own school. Although he had come to Baghdad in youth to study from Hanbal, he incurred the vehement wrath of the Hanbalites. Tabari's madhhab is usually designated by the name Jariri after his patronymic. However, in the keenly competitive atmosphere of the times, his school failed to endure.

His write extensively; his voluminous corpus containing two main title based History of the Prophets and kings or (Tarikh al-Muluk or Tarikh al- Tabari)

The first of the two large works, are generally known as the Annals (Arabic Tarikh al-Tabari). This is a universal history from the time of Qur'anic Creation to 915 A.D., and is renowned for its detail and accuracy concerning Muslim and Middle Eastern history. Tabari's work is a primary source for the Zanj Revolt.

The commentary on the Qur'an-(Arabic: al-musamma Jami al-bayan fi ta'wil al -Qur'an or Tafsir al-Tabari)

This second great work was the commentary on the Qur'an. (Tafsir al-Tabari), that was marked by the same fullness of detail as the Annals. Abul-Qasim Ibn 'aqil Al-Warraq says: Imam Ibn

Jarir (Rah). Once said to his students: “Are you’ll ready to write down my lesson on the Tafsir (commentary) of the entire Holy Qur’an? They enquired as to how lengthy it would be. “30000 pages”! He replied. They said. “This would take a long time and cannot be completed in one lifetime. He therefore made it concise and kept it to 3000 pages (notes, this was in reference to the old days when they used ink and hard-paper which was a bit long format today). It took him 7 years to finish it from the year 283 till 290.

It is said it’s the most voluminous Athari Tafsir (i.e., based on hadith not intellect) existent today so well-received by the Ummah that it survived to this day intact due to its popularity and widely printed copies available worldwide. Scholars such as Baghdad and Suyuti used it largely. It was used in compiling the Tafsir ibn Kathir which is often referred to as Mukhtassar Tafsir al-Tabari.

Tahdhib al-Athar was begun by Tabari. This was on the traditions transmitted from the companions of Muhammad (SAS). It was not, however, completed.

Tafsir al-Qur'an of Maulana Abdul Hoque in Assamese language:

A Historical Background

The translation and the interpretation of the Holy Quran are done in so many prevailing languages of the world. Among them Latin, French, German, Russian, Italic, Chinese, Japanese, English, Persian, Urdu, Bengali etc. are remarkable languages.

Maulana Syed Muhibul Hoque, an inhabitant of the District of Sibsagar published the translation of the Holy Quran with short notes and Arabic version in 1938-39. He was able to publish first, 2nd and 30th part of the Holy Quran in his file time. Of course, it is unknown how much he could able to translate at last. It was the first effort to translate the Holy Quran in Assamese language. Besides Assamese language he had special mastery in English, Arabic, Persian and Urdu language. It was done with local dialect of Upper Assam. So, it was very much good, pure and easily attractive.

The 2nd effort was to translate the Holy Qur'an into Assamese language done by Aatur Rahman an official of education department, Govt. of Assam. It is known that this

translation was done up to 15 parts. As he was from Kadiani group his translation is not acceptable for all Muslims.

The 3rd effort was to translate the Holy Quran into Assamese language done by late Sader Ali, a retired Superintendent of The Department of Supply, Government of Assam. It is the first and complete translation of the Holy Quran with short notes published in Assamese language. Sader Ali was an eminent literary person in Assamese language. His language is lucid, easy and highly acceptable. But due to lack of knowledge in Arabic language, he translated the Holy Quran into Assamese language from other than Arabic language. So, there are many errors in his translation. Moreover, it is illegal to publish only translation of the Holy Quran without Arabic extract. All learned people are united on this matter.

At the beginning of his translation, the verses of the Holy Quran are differentiated due to not publishing Arabic verse. His translation of the first verse of Surah Fatihah (سورة الفاتحة): “All Praises are to Allah” (الحمد لله). Verse No.2 “Who is the lord of whole universe” (رب العالمين). He has written so. I.e He separated one verse into two verses. But really الحمد لله رب العالمين is the first and one verse. As “Surah Fatihah” (سورة الفاتحة) of the Quran is

comprising of seven verses. To fulfill this he again joining last two verse into one verse. The verse: *غير المغضوب عليهم ولا الضالين*. When he was asked about it, he replied that this matter is not known to me and no learned man informed me about the matter. Of course, he expressed that in next edition he will try to correct it and will included Arabic version.

Recently the translation and interpretation of the Holy Quran of Allamah Maududi is published in Assamese language by Professor Samsul Huda and Majid Ali by the name 'Quran Boodh'.

As Maududi himself has written in the introduction of his Urdu translation

"قرآن کی ایک عبارت پڑھ کر جو مفہوم میری سمجھ میں آتا ہے اور جو اثر میری دل پر مرتب ہوتا ہے اسے میں حتی الامکان صحت کے ساتھ اپنے زبان میں منتقل کر دوں"

(تفہیم القرآن – جلد اول- صفحہ نمبر 10 – مطبوعہ ہے کے آفسیٹ پرنٹرز، نئی دہلی)

'I have published in my own language what has raised in my heart after study directly the Holy Quran.'²⁹ Allah has entrusted only Prophet Mahammad (SAS) the authenticity to interpret the Holy

29. Tafhim al Qur'an, Vol.I, J.K.Offset printers, New Delhi. p.10

Quran and he taught his companions this lesson. We have come to know the true interpretation of the Holy Quran through the companions of the prophet Muhammad (SAS). Neglecting this media nobody has the right to interpret the Holy Quran. But Allama Maududi had endeavored to interpret the Holy Qur'an according to his own view neglecting the aforesaid Media.³⁰

The cause of unavailability of correct, pure and complete translation and interpretation of the Holy Qur'an is done to the paucity of knowledge in both Assamese and Arabic language of Ulemas of Assam. To fulfill this need, the effort of Maulana Abdul Hoque is remarkable and ever memorable. According to him the beginning of this effort was introduced with the translation and interpretation of the Holy Quran published in monthly Magazine 'Quran Jyoti.'³¹

30. Tafsir al- Qur'an, vol. I, Markazul Maarif, Hojai, Feb. 1988/ Oct. 2000 P. 13 (i.e. ৩)

31. Bir Mujahid Maulana Abdul Hoque (Rah) Published by Editorial Committee and

Edited by Maulana Fazlul karim Qasimi, October/2009, P. 90.