

Syed Qutb's Method of Interpretation: A Research Review in the Light of Fi Zilal Al-Quran

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KEY WORDS

*Fi Zilal-ul-Quran,
Method of Interpretation,
Literary Interpretation,
Dynamic Interpretation,
Psychological
Interpretation
Sayyid Qutb,*

ABSTRACT

This research paper presents an analytical review of the distinctive method of interpretation of Sayyid Qutb Shaheed's commentary "Fi Zilal-ul-Quran". Unlike traditional interpretations that focus on jurisprudential, grammatical and historical aspects, Sayyid Qutb adopted a unique literary, psychological and dynamic method. His main aim was to present the Quran as a living and dynamic book, which the reader could directly experience. The main features of his method are, first, the literary and narrative method, in which he highlighted the imagery of the Quran, the music of words and the emotional impact. Second, the psychological and educational method, where he discusses the human soul and its qualities. Third, the collective and cultural method, in which the verses are seen in the context of societies and moral values. Fourth, the dynamic and practical method, where he draws lessons for action and development from each verse. This paper argues that Sayyid Qutb's method of interpretation is a meaningful attempt to adapt the Quran to the modern era, which has profoundly influenced the later Islamic exegetical tradition. His method is especially useful for those who seek to understand and apply the Quran to their lives rather than simply reading it.

Tafsir Fi Zilal Al-Quran

Fi Zilal Al-Quran is a beautiful and valuable work written by Syed Qutb Shaheed Sayyid. The commentary is different from traditional interpretations in many ways, as explained below.

1. Reason for its Compilation

From the very beginning, Syed Qutb Shaheed had the desire to present the beauty and elegance of the entire Quran because the author acknowledged that the clearest way to interpret the Quran beautifully is through illustration and depiction, and the entire Quran should be presented accordingly. This passion of Syed Sahib came to light in Fi Zilal Al-Quran.

2. Time of compilation

Syed Sahib had begun this commentary before his imprisonment in 1954 and completed it in prison.

3. Volumes

Syed Qutb Shaheed's greatest achievement is his commentary on the Quran, which has been published in 8 volumes under the title Fi Zilal Al-Quran.

4. Style

This is not a commentary in the literal sense, nor has it been written in the style of the first method of commentary. Rather, it is a collection of thoughts and impressions that came to the author during his study. However, the author has presented these impressions in such a way that the ocean of invitation, reform, warning, reminder, and light of wisdom contained within each letter of the Quran has been reflected on the pages of paper.

5. Translations

Tafsir fi Zilal al-Qur'an holds a fundamental, specific, and unique place among all

commentaries written in Arabic. Its translation into many languages of the world is still ongoing, as ten of its chapters have become popular in Persian under the name "Dursayyah al-Qur'an" (Qutb, 1980, p. 34), and it has also been translated into Urdu.

6. Commentary Features

If we should describe something about the features of this commentary, it can be said to have the following features.

a) High Literary Style

The high literary style of Syed Qutb Shaheed in this commentary makes him unique and distinguished from all the ancient and modern commentators. Whenever the author raises his pen on a subject, be it religious, jurisprudential, political or social, the flowers of literature are felt to be falling, and the impact of the words draws the heart.

b) Excellence in Literary and Artistic Virtues

Syed Qutb Shaheed, in the above-mentioned commentary, along with explaining the literary and beautiful styles of the Quranic verses, also discussed their harmonious melody and rhythm and explained their relationship with the subject verse. As Syed Sahib has commented on Surah Ad-Dhuhi, he writes that

"This Surah, in terms of its subject, its style of interpretation, its scenes, its meaning and its melody, is a breeze of compassion and mercy, a message of love and a hand that comforts! It removes the pain of suffering and pain, blows winds of mercy, contentment and hope and pours certainty, reassurance and coolness into the hearts!"

This entire Surah is purely for the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)! The entire Surah is a whisper and

message from your Lord to you! It contains comfort, comfort and reassurance for you! The entire Surah is a breeze of mercy, a dew of love, a gift of closeness and a source of comfort and mercy for the troubled and weary soul and the sad and troubled heart! " (Qutb, 1984, pp. 184–187)

c) Utilization of Famous and Renowned Commentaries

The author has also utilized previous famous commentaries in this commentary and has presented the information derived from them in such a scholarly manner that this commentary is not a collection of literary articles but has become an encyclopaedia of information.

d) Unique Style of Linking Verses

Syed Qutb Shaheed has adopted a specific method in his commentary, which is that he first explained the introduction of the Surah, then discussed its subject and finally connected it in the initial articles. In this way, unity and structure has been created in the entire Surah and the miracle of the Book of Destination has become even more evident. As Syed Sahib writes in the opening words of Surah Al-Baqarah,

"In the shortest words and limited lines, three different and contrasting pictures of human beings have been drawn. Each of these pictures is a living example of the great multitude of human beings - a picture that is both basic and profound, and its role is repeated in every time and place. Even humanity of every era cannot go beyond the scope of these three pictures. In these short sentences and concise lines, these pictures are completely clear, bright, alive and dynamic. Their signs and impressions are highlighted; their qualities are unique and distinguished.

Even the longest sentences and the widest lines cannot describe these vast, immediate, unified, coherent and harmonious glimpses. These are the pictures of the pious, the disbelievers and the hypocrites. " (Qutb, 1952/1372 AH, pp. 14–15)

Then, after discussing the Surah in detail, the author writes at the end that

"The Messenger has believed in the guidance that has been revealed to him from his Lord, and those who believe in this Messenger have also accepted this guidance with their hearts. All of them believe in Allah and His angels and His books and His messengers, and their statement is: "We do not distinguish between the messengers of Allah. We have heard and obeyed. Our Lord! We seek forgiveness from You, and to You we must return. " (Qutb, 1984, pp. 45–46)

e) A Moderate Stance in Relation to Scientific Innovation

The Quran is the word of Allah, and this beautiful and magnificent universe is His creation. Contradiction between the two is impossible. In this sense, the progress of science and the evolution of scientific theories cannot be against the verses of the Quran. But for the changing theories of science, the intellectual environment of experiments is not such that the truth of the verses of the Quran can be tested on it.

Scholars and commentators seem to be prone to exaggeration and deviation in relation to the Quranic stance in relation to sciences and arts. One section is engaged in interpretation and explanation, unconcerned with the demands of the modern environment, while the other section is bent on proving every new theory from the Quran. This game of exaggeration and deviation is still going on in

the Islamic world, but Sayyid Qutb is free from this defect. In his commentary on verse 189 of Surah Al-Baqarah, the author writes. (Qutb, 1984, pp. 40–41)

The author writes in his explanation of this verse that the question was asked about the different phases of the moon, but the answer given was that these are the benefits of people and the times of Hajj. All the affairs of the world are carried out through these dates. Here, the answer does not discuss the movement of the moon and its role, etc., because the purpose of the Quran is to create a single nation on this earth.

f) Complete Avoidance of Israeli Ideas

Sayyid Qutb Shaheed has refused to accept all those baseless traditions in his commentary that contradict the teachings of the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and Islam. For example, while interpreting verse 2 of Surah Al-Nashrah, "And We have set before you and your protection," some commentators have taken the meaning to mean that before the Prophethood, in the days of ignorance, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) had committed some faults that were very difficult for him to bear.

And by revealing this verse, Allah reassured him that We have forgiven him those faults. This interpretation is clearly wrong and goes against the Quranic concept of the infallibility of the prophets.

While Syed Qutb Shaheed has written in his commentary on this verse that here the Quran is saying that We have removed from you your burden which was a burden for your backs, until it was breaking under the weight of the burden, thus opening your chest! So I have granted you the success of this

invitation! I have made the invitation to the truth easy for you. (Qutb, 1952/1372 AH)

g) The Necessity of Order and Connection

Some commentators have raised various objections regarding the connection and system of the Quranic verses, such as someone said that there is no planned unity in the Surahs of the Quran, so in some places the Prophet and the Companions of the Prophet are discussed, in some places the story of past nations is repeated. Similarly, neither one Surah has any connection with another Surah, nor is there any correlation between the different verses of a Surah. (Falahī & 'Umrī, 1998, p. 137)

Syed Qutb Shaheed has not only declared all these thoughts as invalid but has also tried to highlight the mutual unity and connection of the verses very beautifully in his commentary.

a) Revolutionary Commentary

The Quran itself is a book of revolution. It is not just a book of ideas and thoughts. Therefore, to understand this book, it is necessary for a person to become a soldier of the battle of Islam and go through all the stages of this struggle that the Holy Prophet went through.

The author of the above commentary was himself a revolutionary figure who had gone through different stages of Islam. Therefore, he has integrated all these experiences, trials, sufferings, different levels of faith and action and the inevitable stages of the Islamic revolution in his commentary. Islam is a complete system of life and the only solution to all human problems. The author has presented this idea in his commentary in a very eloquent and literary manner. Among the many features, the greatest quality of *Fi Zilah Al-Quran* is that it takes the reader

along through all the stages of the Islamic revolution.

b) Familiarity with Modern Theories

The author of the commentary, along with having knowledge of ancient religions, was also fully familiar with modern theories. While interpreting the verses of the Quran, he would criticize both ancient and modern theories and expose their helplessness and status quo so that the young Muslims could recognize the value and worth of Islam. For example, in the commentary of Surah Al-Asr, Syed Sahib, while discussing this, says that in the eyes of Allah, man is honourable and respectable, and by believing in this theory, the very essence of man becomes high and honourable in His eyes.

c) Guidance from Other Sciences

In his commentary, the author uses Western sciences and their harmless evolutionary stages in the interpretation of the verses of the Quran with great caution and moderation. Syed Sahib has complete faith in the truth of Islam and stops at incomprehensible places because he had sat in the centres of modern sciences and exposed their hollowness and degradation and had returned from there as a believer and a Muslim. Therefore, he has presented the truth of Islam with great certainty by combining these sciences with the Quran.

d) Avoidance of Jurisprudential and Lexical Discussions

The author has avoided jurisprudential disagreements, theological debates and rhetorical and rhetorical point-making because in his opinion, this affects the beauty and elegance of the Quran, and the reader becomes engrossed in these discussions and remains oblivious to the real purpose of the revelation of the Quran. Therefore, the author

has laid special emphasis on the invitation and training aspect. He gives an invitation speech at every appropriate opportunity and tries to highlight all aspects of training. The main purpose of the author is to present the glorious realities of the Islamic society and to embellish today's life with the exemplary events of the Holy Prophet and his companions.

e) Scientific and Informative Commentary

Although Syed Qutb Shaheed complains to the ancient commentators that he could not do justice to the literary commentary of the Quran because there was a lot of commentary in the second century AH, he still missed the opportunity to highlight the artistic beauty of the Quran. Despite this, the author has made use of all these ancient interpretations and instead of falling into interpretive differences, he has interpreted the Quranic verses in such a way that there is room for all interpretations. This also gives an idea of his vastness and breadth.

For example, on the issue of the Ijaz-ul-Quran, he gives importance to Abdul Qahir Harjani and generally considers him superior to all scholars, but at the end he comments on him as follows: "He undoubtedly reached the truth but could not become familiar with it." (Falahī & 'Umrī, 1998, p. 148)

f) Confession of Incompetence and Continuation of Research

When a great researcher and venerable commentator becomes aware of the error of his research and, on the warning of a wise person or because of further research, resorts to his own opinion, on the one hand his research intelligence and scientific honesty come to the fore, and on the other hand his continuous process of research also becomes justified.

Sayyid Qutb Shaheed also seems to refer to his previous opinions at different stages. Sometimes, while interpreting one Surah after another, he clearly shows his previous thoughts, and sometimes, after the first edition, he seems to correct it in the footnotes in the second edition. For example, while interpreting the verse number خَافِظُوا عَلَى الصَّلَوَاتِ of Surah Al-Baqarah, he openly admits his helplessness by explaining the connection of this verse with the previous verse, saying: "I confess that after reaching this point, I kept pondering for six months as to how the verse of prayer came between the verse of divorce. I expected that Allah Almighty would reveal the truth to me during this interval, but I failed. If any of the readers can inform me, I would be grateful." (Qutb, 1952/1372 AH, pp. 84–85)

7. Other Aspects of Interpretation

a) Influence of Farahi's Views

Sayyid Sahib seems closer to Farahi's thought in some research and conclusions, the reason for this is that both have the same method of contemplation and study of the Quran. Because both contemplate the Quran and benefit from interpretations later, both believe in enhancing the beauty and elegance of the Quran with the literature and eloquence of the Quran, both want to present the righteous rationality of Islam by keeping the modern mind in front, which is probably why both seem similar in their conclusions.

For example, in the interpretation of Surah Al-Asr, Maulana Farahi has proven the necessity of the Caliphate and the establishment of the religion, and Syed Qutb has also stated the same thing in other words in his interpretation.

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b) Criticism of Professor Muhammad Abduh

The author strongly disagrees with the way Professor Abduh, Rashid Raza and Abdul Qadir have rationally interpreted the unseen and miracles in the light of modern rationality of the Quran. He has systematically quoted their quotes in the interpretation of Surah Al-Fil and has conducted an analytical study of their views and has criticized the rational and scientific interpretation of the companions of the Phil, including Maulana Farahi. In his opinion, this incident did not occur in a normal manner but in an extraordinary manner.

c) Some Rare Investigations

Some scholars have criticized this interpretation on the grounds that some of its rare investigations deviate from the path of common commentators. For example, in the interpretation of Surah Al-Infitar, Syed Sahib seems to be interpreting the Sufi sect, while some Sufis have considered action to seek Paradise and avoid Hell as hypocrisy and polytheism. This interpretation of thought does not match the principles of Islam. This is why Hazrat Mujaddid Alf Thani (may Allah have mercy on him) has strongly refuted it. He said that who can be more special than the Prophets and Companions? They used to worship God to attain Paradise out of fear of the punishment of Hell. In the Holy Quran itself, Allah Almighty has strongly called for competition to attain Paradise and has repeatedly emphasized the need to avoid Hell.

Conclusion

Sayyid Qutb's method of interpretation is actually a serious and meaningful attempt to adapt the Quran to the modern era, which deeply influenced not only his own time but

also the subsequent Islamic exegetical tradition. His method is especially useful for all those who want to not only read the Quran but also understand, feel and adapt it to their lives.

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