

# Textual Authority and Modern Urdū Exegetical Interpretations: A Case Study of Q.4:34

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## Abstract

As a result of modernity and the emergence of gender studies, Islamic texts that discuss women and their status in Islam's broader world-view have been revisited and re-interpreted.

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Traditional modes of interpretations and cosmologies have been questioned and re-interpretations have been attempted. Modern subcontinental *tafsīr* literature has also experienced the impact of modernity, which in turn has led to the production of exegetical trends of a diverse and competing nature. Against this backdrop, this article takes up Q.4:34 as a case study because it is one of the most contested of these texts. The article critically evaluates some of the most significant and impactful Urdū exegetical trends in the literature of the modern subcontinent and analyze their methods and conclusions in relation to Q.4:34. This analysis provides us with a greater appreciate of the dynamics of textual authority, text reception and exegetes' role in the process of meaning making. The article deliberates upon an important yet unexplored modern subcontinent exegetical trends, and attempts to fill the gap in context of Q.4:34.

**Keywords:** subcontinental *tafsīr*, *al-qawwāmūn*, *nushūz*, wife-beating

## Introduction

Urdū exegetical literature, which emerged in the twentieth century on the subcontinent, abounds with the exegetical diversities. At the same time, it also presents a tremendous amount of unity. This exegetical diversity owes its origin to different contexts like school affiliations, religious polemics, personal leanings, target groups, the encounter with modernity etc. One of the most important themes of this exegetical endeavour pertains to the treatment meted out to women/wives in relation to men/husbands. In this context, this article aims to critically study the interpretations of the Q.4:34. For this purpose we have selected key exegetical contributions which have been instrumental in framing public opinion on the subcontinent to date. Some of the major exegetes include: Mawlānā Abū al-Kalām Āzād (d.1958), Muftī Muḥammad Shafī (d.1976), Mawlānā Mawdūdī (d. 1979), Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāhī (d.1997), and Mawlānā Khālid Saif Allāh Raḥmānī (b.1956). The reasons for selecting

these exegetes are that they represent different exegetical schools, impact popular opinion, and are continuously being published. The main target-group for all these exegetical works are the general public. However, it is important to note that the basic idea behind the democratization of exegetical productions such as these in the modern subcontinent is not to lift the general public up to the level of high scholarship, but rather to help the public orientate their thinking and values along Islamic religious lines. These works also help to spread, and reinforce the orientations of particular schools. Thus, religious polemics within subcontinental Islam is one of the reasons for the rich exegetical heritage from the past to present. We now turn to the contested verse, and then consider its competing interpreters and interpretations. Q.4:34 reads:

Men are the protectors and maintainers (*al-qawwāmūn*) of the women, because Allah has made one of them to excel the other (*bi-mā faḍḍala Allāh baʿdahum ʿalā baʿḍ*), and because they spend from their means. Therefore, the righteous women are devoutly obedient, and guard in the husband's absence what Allah orders them to guard. As to those women on whose part you see ill-conduct, admonish them (*fa-ʿiẓūhunna*), refuse to share their beds (*wa-hjurūhunna fī al-maḍājiʿ*), beat them (*wa-ḍribūhunna*); but if they obey you, seek not against them means. Surely, Allah is Ever Most High, Most Great.<sup>1</sup>

### Mawlānā Abū al-Kalām Āzād: *Tarjumān al-Qurʾān*

Born in 1888 in Mecca to a highly traditional family, Āzād completed his religious education under the strict eye of his father. After returning to India this precocious child born with an inquisitive, sometimes rebellious, spirit moved beyond his family-imparted religious education, and began to intellectually wrestle with the ideas of Sir Sayyid Aḥmad Khān (d.1898) during his childhood years until 1910. As he grew older, he continued his exploration of Islam's intellectual heritage. Āzād's journalistic endeavour in the form of *al-Balāgh*, and *al-Hilāl* boosted his profile enormously within the socio-religious and political horizons of

colonial India. His tempestuous political career in British colonial India did not hamper his writing, or his discussion of religious topics, which he considered pivotal to his wider thought. Āzād's exegetical writings, particularly *Tarjumān al-Qur'ān*,<sup>2</sup> are particularly conspicuous among the subcontinental exegetical annals from the first-half of the twentieth century.<sup>3</sup> It is interesting to note that, unlike other commentaries analysed here, we have found that publication of *Tarjumān al-Qur'ān* has diminished somewhat. The reasons behind this decline seems to be related to his ideological position, which have both admirers and critics, and the misreading of the theme Unity of Religion in the *Tarjumān al-Qur'ān*. This needs further research.

As this is not the place to address Āzād's exegetical work in full, or to critically re-asses its reception, here we restrict ourselves to discussing his distinct and radical interpretation of Q.4:34. Āzād briefly contextualizes the verse in relation to the preceding verse, and argues that the Qur'ān stood against the notion that women do not have fully-fledged personalities of their own. He states that it is both men and women together who create a complete life. Regarding the hierarchical cosmology which the verse being studied here conveys, Āzād qualifies men/husbands as the source of economical sustenance for women/wives, and this hierarchy is established by Allah. Thus, proceeds Āzād, the authority/family headship is naturally held by men/husbands. Quick to sense the disheartening impact this verse may have upon women/wives, Āzād states that women should not feel disheartened that they are not like men, and notes they do not have any share in men's work. Consequently, women must have a firm faith that all roads of activity (*'amal*), and divine grace (*faḍīlat*) are equally open to both genders, writes Āzād. In accordance with the verse, Āzād qualifies that pious women are those who are obedient, and guard the interests of their husbands. Again, in conformity with the subsequent verse Āzād states that if discord emerges between a couple, then elders and betters from among the family should be the ones to redress the balance.<sup>4</sup>

This is Āzād's interpretation of Q.4:34. Additionally however, our study of his *Tarjumān* has led us to some distinct findings which are also of consequence for the verse under discussion. When we consider

Āzād's interpretation of Q.2:228 in relationship with Q.4:34, we find that Āzād offers some radical understanding when he is compared to those whom he admired within the *tafsīr* genre. Indeed, he seems reluctant to accept all the exegetical material which cement the authority of husbands over wives. The text of Q.2:228 states, amongst other things, that men (husbands) have an advantage/*daraja* over women (wives). This *daraja* should be understood in context of men being *al-qawwāmūn*, and *al-qawwāmūn* itself should be understood in context of economic sustenance/maintenance of wives by their husbands, and this economic sustenance is subject to socio-economic changes. If sometimes the economic-administrative reins happen to be in the hands of women/wives, then in this situation, writes Āzād, men/husbands loses the distinctiveness of being *al-qawwāmūn* in relation to women/wives. And wives can become the head of the family. I have not found any historical precedent wherein the exegete shifts this status of family headship to a wife if a husband fails to take care of her maintenance. Put simply, the office of family headship is subject to socio-economic changes, and consequently family headship can switch to wives, as per Āzād.<sup>5</sup> To give a representative example, this shift is diametrically opposite to the views of the exegete Ibn Kathīr in particular,<sup>6</sup> and indeed Sunnī thought in general. One more pertinent point for Āzād is that men's status of being *al-qawwāmūn* is the *only* distinctive (the urdū word used is *imtiyāz*) quality husbands have over wives. The concept of *al-qawwāmūn* is also qualified more in terms of administrative responsibility, a burden (the word used by Āzād is *buwjuh*), but not in an authoritarian sense. Our stress on Āzād's interpretation of *al-qawwāmūn* being the *only* distinctive quality should be understood in context of his paltry exegesis of the first part of the verse which reads *bi-mā faḍḍala Allāh ba'dahum 'alā ba'd*, ("because Allah has made one of them to excel the other," see above). Here, Āzād neglects all the ḥadīth traditions mentioned by exegetes such as Ibn Kathīr, and others. Āzād does not explain the verb *faḍḍala 'alā* and takes the word verbatim in his translation. The question of engaging the multiple interpretations of the verb *faḍḍala 'alā*, for example, through which exegetes have explored the biological status of women in comparison to men (and concluded that men are superior to women) seems unimportant to Āzād. For Āzād,

*al-qawwāmūn* is mostly rooted in an economic privilege-cum-administrative responsibility, not an ontological status of one (the husband) being higher than the other (the wife). Any discussion of the biological privilege of men over women goes undocumented in the *Tarjumān*.

In his approaching the reference to *nushūz* in the last part of Q.4:34, Āzād faithfully follows and accepts the text as it stands. There are no elaborate discussions of the different disciplinary steps. All we have is one line of explanation and some scanty parenthetical notes. If the wife does not respect the rights of her husband, and shows disobedience, the husband ought to make her understand. If wife does not comply, the husband can use a soft or hard method to bring her back to the straight path,<sup>7</sup> writes Āzād.

- 1 The word *fa-‘izūhunna* (“admonish them,” see translation above) is qualified in terms of softness and love.
- 2 There are no explanatory parentheses to interpret *wa-hjurūhunna fī al-maḍāji*,<sup>8</sup> just a translation, i.e., no bed-sharing.
- 3 The word *wa-ḍribūhunna* is qualified in terms of warning, not harming.

Āzād raises no questions about the text itself. A purely confessional approach is applied. Yet, the exegetical incoherence we find in Āzād’s work is that he does not address the capacity that the husband would have, in terms of this disciplinary right over his wife, if he were to lose his headship of the family to his wife. As mentioned above, for Āzād *al-qawwāmūn* is only a conditional administrative responsibility, yet he does not engage the unanticipated consequences of such an assertion. This is a radical shift, but also an incomplete exegesis, as Āzād does not appreciate the relationship between *al-qawwāmūn* and any disciplinary rights.

Āzād’s qualifying the office of *al-qawwāmūn* specifically in terms of one’s access to economic resources gives him a distinct place as an exegete of the modern Subcontinent. Also, it is significant here to deliberate over Āzād’s relationship with Muḥammad ‘Abduh (d.1905), and Rashīd Riḍā (d.1935) both of whom he admired. Both Āzād and ‘Abduh had the same

understanding of exegesis as the approach to the Qur'ān through the Qur'ān. Their exegetical affinity can be easily gleaned from the introductions to their respective exegeses. Like *Tafsīr al-Manār*,<sup>8</sup> *Tarjumān* is also a public *tafsīr*. Although Āzād had a high regard for 'Abduh, and Riḍā, Āzād even calls 'Abduh a sign of God (*Āyat ilāhī*),<sup>9</sup> he does not appear to be simply a passive recipient of 'Abduh and Riḍā's thought. For instance, unlike *al-Manār*, *Tarjumān* does not explain gendered distinctiveness in Q.4:34 (as in, *bi-mā faḍḍala Allāh ba'dahum 'alā ba'd*) in terms of an ontological privilege of men vis-à-vis women. Similarly, conditioning of *al-qawwāmūn* solely in economic terms distinguishes Āzād's *Tarjumān* from *al-Manār*. Recent work by Hadia Mubarak on the interpretations of Q.4:34, particularly that of *al-Manār*, is also important to consider in this regard.<sup>10</sup>

In contrast to Āzād, it seems pertinent to allude to another legal opinion, as shared on the Shariah council website of Jamā'at-e-Islāmī, India, by Jalāl al-Dīn al-'Umri (d.2022).<sup>11</sup> The petitioner asks that, if husband is not earning, and does not support the maintenance of wife, or he is physically not well and can give no physical protection to her, does he still hold the status of *qawwām*? In response, Jalāl al-Dīn al-'Umri writes that the Qur'ān has called man *qawwām* in respect of his *being* (*nawa*). This is for two reasons, writes al-'Umri. One is that men have a God-given privilege (*faḍīliyat*), and superiority over women. This superiority is in terms of body, mind, and knowledge. It is because of this superiority that men have more political, social, and economical responsibilities than women. The second reason for man having the status of *qawwām* is that he spends his own money on his wife. Al-'Umri states that this is a general rule, and cases wherein a woman outclasses a man in terms of mind or body, or a woman is affluent and spends on behalf of her husband, are exceptions. Even in this context, a man still has the status of *qawwām*. Comparing this understanding of *qawwām* – being eternally associated with a man, with that of Āzād we can find some kind of exegetical elasticity in the *Tarjumān al-Qur'ān* in that the office of family headship/*qawwām* is understood more in terms of socio-economic contexts, and not in terms of biology. The wisdom behind men being eternally considered *qawwām*, despite the economic status of some women, is to fend off any serious disagreements, which can be disastrous to the institution

of the family, observes al-‘Umrī. Attributes like *qānitāt* (“devoutly obedient,” see above translation) and *ḥāfiẓāt* reserved for women in Q.4:34 not only establishes the position of women in relation to men, but also strengthens the superiority of the husband over the wife.<sup>12</sup>

## Muftī Muḥammad Shafī‘: *Ma‘ārif al-Qur’ān*

Muftī Muḥammad Shafī‘ (d.1976), an eminent scholar, a product of Dār al-‘Ulūm Deoband, India, who settled in Pakistan after Partition and authored the famous exegetical work, *Ma‘ārif al-Qur’ān*.<sup>13</sup> The reason for selecting Shafī’s *Ma‘ārif* over the much respected *Bayān al-Qur’ān* by his teacher Ashraf ‘Alī Thānvī (d.1943) is that the *Ma‘ārif* is more widely circulated. Consequently, it acts as a vehicle via which Ḥanāfi-Deobandi thought is spread amongst the wider public. Also, as per Shafī‘ himself, the *Bayān al-Qur’ān* is the foundation upon which his *Ma‘ārif* stands. Like Āzād, the intended audience for the *Ma‘ārif* is the wider public. One of the distinct features of the *Ma‘ārif* is that subtle scholarly discussions (*mabāḥis ‘ilmīya*, which according to Shafī‘ himself are beyond the intellectual grasp of the ordinary public) are left aside.<sup>14</sup> This makes the *Ma‘ārif al-Qur’ān* a public *tafsīr*.

Like Āzād, Shafī‘ quotes part of Q.2:228 to provide a context for his discussion of Q.4:34. Shafī‘ states that this verse signifies the resemblance/equality (the word used is *mamāthilat*) of rights between men and women. Shafī‘ adds that it is not necessary that these rights be identical however. Illustrating this point, Shafī‘ states that if a woman is duty-bound to do something, then in comparison a man is equally duty-bound to carry out the complementary act. For example, if women are duty-bound to look after household issues and raising children, then men are duty-bound to address their needs through their earning. Furthermore, Shafī‘ mentions one distinct quality that gives man a special privilege – *daraja* – over women as alluded to in the last part of verse Q.2:228. This brief treatment of Q.2:228, by Shafī‘, contextualizes Q.4:34.<sup>15</sup> Here, *daraja* is qualified in terms male ascendancy (*tafawwuq*), and sovereignty (*ḥakmīyat*). In this context Shafī‘, cites a precedent from ‘Abd Allāh bin ‘Abbās, which states that since men have a *daraja* over women, they



(men) should show greater forbearance to women if they err, and men should also tolerate with patience any kind of violation of their rights by their wives.

Unlike Āzād, Shafī<sup>c</sup> spends significant time explaining Q.4:34, and he appears more coherent than Āzād. First of all, Shafī<sup>c</sup> addresses the lexical meaning of the word *qawwām* as signifying someone who is responsible for any institution or any kind of work. A *ḥākim*, in other words, meaning that man is a *ḥākim* over a woman. Since every institution stands in need of a head whose judgement marks the final word over any disagreements, the family as an institution, is also no exception to the principle. God has chosen man over woman as the *ḥākim* because of man's greater potential for knowledge and action.<sup>16</sup> Being a *ḥākim* (a word not used by Āzād) is man's distinct and eternal quality. Shafī<sup>c</sup> adds that the man-as-*ḥākim* does not have absolute authority, which is constrained by the authority of shari'a. Man is not free to abide by his whims, as there are checks and balances which elevate the fragile genus (*ṣinif nāzūk*, i.e., woman) to a respectable position vis-à-vis the man/husband. Verses Q.4:19, and Q.2:233 restrict the absolute authority of the husband as the *ḥākim/qawwām*. According to Shafī<sup>c</sup>, these verses give importance to female voices (wives), and simultaneously direct husbands to include them in any family-related issue.<sup>17</sup>

Accepting the possibility that wives may become disheartened as a result of their husbands' privileged positions, and commenting upon its divine wisdom, Shafī<sup>c</sup> stresses that being *qawwām* is a God-bestowed (*wahbī*) quality, and is not earned. In his explanation of *faḍḍala Allāh* in Q.4:34, Shafī<sup>c</sup> states that there is divine wisdom behind making one superior to another. Similarly, if husband is qualified in terms of being *al-qawwām* a wife must not be disheartened as this distinction comes purely from God. A husband is simply bestowed with it; he has not earned it. Commenting upon the wording of this God-bestowed (*wahbī*), distinct quality, i.e., *ba'ḍahum 'alā ba'ḍ*, Shafī<sup>c</sup> writes that this Arabic expression alludes to the fact that both man and women are a part of each other.<sup>18</sup> For Shafī<sup>c</sup>, this connection helps to generate love, not animosity. Regarding the maintenance element of the verse, Shafī<sup>c</sup> states that this verse also alludes to another principle in life that woman, due

to her creation (*kilqat*) and nature (*fiṭrat*) cannot earn her own livelihood. For this reason, God has made man responsible for her maintenance. By contrast, she is made an agent of procreation, and looks after the children and household tasks. However, this should not lead one to think that making a wife subordinate to her husband, in terms of maintenance (*naḥqāt*), denigrates her. Rather, it should be understood as a division of labour within the family.<sup>19</sup> Those women who accept men as *al-qawwāmūn* are qualified in terms of being *ṣāliḥāt* (righteous), *qānitāt* (obedient), and *ḥafīzāt* (those who guard). These qualifications intend to praise, not denigrate, writes Shafiʿ. Indeed, ḥādīth qualify women with such attributes with praise and admiration.<sup>20</sup> In his discussion of the *nushūz* element of Q.4:34, which Shafiʿ defines in terms of a disobedient wife and her reform (*iṣlāḥ*):

- 1 *Fa-ʿiẓūhunna*: This means making a wife understand with care/gentleness
- 2 *Wa-hjurūhunna fī al-maḍājiʿ*: This does not mean to leave her alone in a house, for this will hurt her more, and will only increase animosity. It only means not to share the same bed as a symbol of displeasure.
- 3 *Wa-ḍribūhunna*: If these two reformatory measures fail, then a husband can beat their wife lightly. The beating should not hurt her, her body should not receive any kind of bruises, and her bones should not break. Face beating is strictly prohibited.

Shafiʿ states that the first two reformatory punishments are noble (*sharīfāna*) in character, and prophets/noble men have acted upon them. But the third, *Wa-ḍribūhunna*, is allowed only in extreme conditions under duress. He cites a ḥadīth stating that *good men will never beat women. Prophets never did it*, writes Shafiʿ.<sup>21</sup> Restrictions like these dilute the literal-cum-legal functioning of the term *wa-ḍribūhunna*. Here it is quite evident that, for Shafiʿ, hitting a wife is a quite reprehensible action, and is in fact discouraged by the example of all the prophets. If the relationship between a couple becomes strained, either because of a wife's fault or because of a husband's unjustified injustice, then elders from both sides must step in and try to redress the balance.

Here, it is significant to compare Shafi'ī's interpretation with his contemporary exegete, namely Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir b. 'Āshūr (d.1973), who served as Grand Mufti of Tunisia. His exegetical work, *al-Taḥrīr wa-l-Tanwīr*<sup>22</sup> has a distinct place in modern exegetical literature because of its stress on philology. In fact, this stress on philology is a common emphasis shared by both Ibn 'Āshūr and Mufti Shafi'ī. Like Ibn 'Āshūr, Mufti Shafi'ī categorically states that philology stands as the first piece of important work to be done by exegetes. For Shafi'ī, philology is the key to understanding the Qur'ān, and, at the same time, he laments the diminished attention that philology receives during his time.<sup>23</sup> But, unlike Ibn 'Āshūr who rigorously engages in philological analysis while interpreting Q.4:34, especially regarding the disciplinary steps,<sup>24</sup> Shafi'ī does not get involved in these same philological dynamics. For Shafi'ī, the three disciplinary steps are to be exercised by the husband alone, and external legal authorities can not intrude upon the husband's jurisdiction (which Ibn 'Āshūr allows for). By contrast, it should be noted that Shafi'ī does not discuss the possibility of external legal authorities' intervention in the application of the three disciplinary steps. For him, *al-qawwāmūn* signifies husbands, and disciplinary steps are to be exercised by husbands alone.

It is appropriate to add here another exegesis of Q.4:34 by one of the leading living Ḥanāfi-Deobandī *fiqh* scholars Mawlānā Khālid Saif Allāh Raḥmānī (b.1956). He has produced a significant amount of legal works, including a two volume exegesis of the Qur'ān, his *Āsān Tafṣīr Qur'ān Majīd*.<sup>25</sup> Like Shafi'ī, he takes man as the head of the family (*sadr-i-khāndān*). The reasons behind this headship are the same as for Shafi'ī in his *Ma'ārif*. One, *faḍl Allāh*, is natural. The word used by Raḥmānī is *ṭab'ī*. As noted above, Shafi'ī and Thānvī use the term *wahbī*, meaning God-given, bestowed without any intention or efforts on the part of the man/husband. For Raḥmānī, the natural/*ṭab'ī* qualities due to which the man/husband has the capacity to head a family are greater physical power, and having more mental and psychological potential as compared with the woman/wife.<sup>26</sup> Raḥmānī, unlike Āzād and Shafi'ī, also includes Biblical references to support his view that the man is a *ḥākim* over the woman, and she is admonished to stay obedient to her husband.<sup>27</sup> For Raḥmānī,

another reason for the man/husband being the head of the family is economical, i.e., the husband must ensure the maintenance of his wife, and this injunction is permanent. To Raḥmānī, these are the two reasons that determine that the man is the head of the family, which should be understood in terms of the man/husband's responsibility towards the family. Raḥmānī criticises the Western concept of equality, wherein no one is taken as a head of family, and both are accepted on an equal footing. According to him, this approach is disastrous to the family as an institution, and has had a deleterious impact upon society at large.<sup>28</sup>

Raḥmānī defines *nushūz* in terms of disobedience (the Urdū word used is *nafarmānī*), and transgression. He also touched upon examples of *nushūz* in his voluminous legal work *Qāmūs al-Fiqh*. For example, he states that when the wife goes out of the house without the consent of her husband this is considered to be *nushūz*. Likewise, not accepting her husband's request to share a bed is tantamount to *nushūz*. Even talking to strangers without her husband's consent amounts to *nushūz*.<sup>29</sup> In the case of a strained relationship between a couple, one should not move straight to divorce, but rather should take a three-step reformatory (*iṣlāḥī*) approach to address differences. In essence, these steps stand for reform and reconciliation (*iṣlāḥ* and *mufāhamat*), not coercion and intimidation. In Raḥmānī's interpretation:

- 1 *Fa-ʿizūhunna* means admonition with love and tenderness.
- 2 *Wa-hjurūhunna fī al-maḍājiʿ* means the avoidance of bed-sharing for some days while sharing the same room. The man is not allowed to force his wife to leave the home, and go to her father's house.<sup>30</sup> If the *nāshīza*/disobedient wife leaves home of her own accord, then the husband is not legally bound to provide for her maintenance.<sup>31</sup>
- 3 *Wa-ḍribūhunna* means that, if the above two reformatory approaches do not bear fruit, then the husband is allowed to beat his wife, though it is discouraged. Since divorce is one of the most abhorred actions in the social structure of Islam, it allows for restricted wife-beating in order to keep the family and overall social fabric of society intact. Restricted wife-beating means not harming her skin, beating must not lead to bruises, and it must not humiliate the wife. In other

words, beating itself should not be the goal. It should help to make her understand that she is doing *nushūz*. If these three-steps fail, and relationship becomes bitter, then the elders of both families should step in.<sup>32</sup>

Interestingly, Raḥmānī makes a bold statement by saying that *beating one's wife is not a good thing as the messenger of Allah declares it the most reprehensible thing to do*.<sup>33</sup> It is pertinent to note here that this emancipatory statement must not lead one to consider Raḥmānī as someone who privileges their own understanding over the text of the Qur'ān, especially with regard to the meaning of the word *ḍarb* (beating). But, Raḥmānī should be seen as one who utilizes the nuances of Islamic intellectual heritage to reach a certain conclusion. This is an approach which we can observe above in the work of Muftī Shafī', and also Ibn 'Āshūr, as discussed by Hadia Mubarak. One common feature among Āzād's, Shafī's, and Raḥmānī's work is that they all ignore recourse to medical science with regard to highlighting any differences between men and women in terms of psychological or physical features and potentials. The text of the verse is definitive for them.

### Sayyid Abū al-a'la al-Mawdūdī (d.1979) and *Tafhīm al-Qur'ān*<sup>34</sup>

Mawdūdī is a distinct thinker in the modern Islamic world, and his writings have a visible impact to this day.<sup>35</sup> His *Tafhīm al-Qur'ān* remains a very popular exegetical work. Mawdūdī defines the Qur'ān in terms of *da'wat* (call) and *tahrik* (movement), not just a text to be read in an armchair.<sup>36</sup> Mawdūdī's works became widely circulated and earned both him and his party the Jamā'at-e-Islāmī both admirers and critics. In fact, the Deobandī School has a range of opinions about him and his party.<sup>37</sup> Here, we will focus on Mawdūdī's treatment of Q.4:34. For Mawdūdī, *qawwām* means an administrator/guardian/supervisor of any individual, office, or institution. The *faḍīlat* should not be defined in terms of honour, respect, and nobility of men with regards to women. *Faḍl Allāh* means that man is by nature (*ṭabī'ī*) bestowed with some qualities, which are present in woman either in a lesser degree or not at all, making her

unsuited to head the family as an institution. The second reason for men being *qawwāmūn* is due to their maintenance of their wives, and it is taken as such. There is no further deliberation here by Mawdūdī. Wifely attributes like *ṣāliḥāt*, *qānitāt* and *ḥāfiẓāt* are explained with reference to a ḥadīth, which states that the best wife is one whom when you see her your heart is pleased; when you order her, she obeys, and behind you she guards your property and her own honour. For Mawdūdī, the wife's obedience is limited inasmuch as no right of God can be violated in her obedience to her husband. In the case of supererogatory (*nawāfil*) acts of worship, a husband may prevent his wife from performing them, and if she were to continue to carry out supererogatory forms of worship then they would not be accepted by God.<sup>38</sup>

Mawdūdī translates *nushūz* as recalcitrance (*sarkashī*), and the three-steps of disciplinary actions is accepted and is to be followed in a prescriptive sense. Mawdūdī too explains this disciplinary action in terms of reform (*iṣlāḥ*). He writes that whenever the Prophet allowed someone to beat the wife, the Prophet did so reluctantly, with a heavy heart, and with a sense of displeasure.<sup>39</sup> Yet, *there are some women who cannot be made right without beating*, writes Mawdūdī.<sup>40</sup> In those cases, the Prophet prohibited slapping, unkind beating, and beating with anything that could leave bruises. Mawdūdī here is terse in his exegesis, and is less comprehensive than Shafī' in his treatment of the verse. In his discussion of men's status as *qawwāmūn*, Mawdūdī is not interested in any insights from modern medical science regarding the mental or physical abilities of the two sexes. Like Shafī', Thānvī and Raḥmānī, for Mawdūdī *faḍl Allah* is simply bestowed. The text has the ultimate authority.

It is also important to mention here that Mawdūdī, being a prolific writer, produced some books which add to his exegetical thought as discussed here. In particular, his books *Ḥuqūq al-Zawjayn* and *Pardah* are relevant. In his *Ḥuqūq* he translates *qawwām* in terms of being a sustainer, provider, *ḥākim* (governor), *muḥāfiẓ* (guardian), administrator, head, and protector. Mawdūdī raises the question as to why man was made a *qawwām* over woman, and states that this is not a question of law, but of sociology (*falsafa ijtimā'*). Mawdūdī is categorical in stating his view that nations who consider both sexes to be equal to one another suffer

dreadfully. Mawḍūdī writes that Islam complies with human beings' natural attributes, and consequently assigns the role of *qawwām* to one, and of *muṭīʿ* (the obedient wife) to the other.<sup>41</sup> Thus, for Mawḍūdī *faḍl Allāh* is a natural fact (*fīṭrī ḥaqīqat*) that gives a special *daraja* (2:228) to men. In this way, Islam accepts the biological and psychological difference between the two sexes while assigning compatible roles to both of them.<sup>42</sup> For men, being *qawwām* necessitates their having certain powers (*ikhtiyārāt*), with some conditions. These powers include: counselling (*naṣīḥat*), admonition (*tadīb*), and punishment (*taʿzīr*). In this regard, Mawḍūdī writes that a man may resort to these steps if he finds his wife not obedient or violating his rights. The second reformatory step, *wa-hjurūhunna fī al-maḍājiʿ* means avoiding intercourse. The time-limit for this period of non-intercourse relationship is four months. After that, if the wife is still in a state of *nushūz*, the husband will be under a legal obligation to dissolve the marriage. Here, Mawḍūdī criticises the explanation of *wa-hjurūhunna fī al-maḍājiʿ* given by Imām Sufyān al-Thawrī (d.778), who understands the term *hijir* as meaning "to tie." The *hijār* is the rope one uses to tie a camel. On the basis of this philological argument, Thawrī states that when a wife fails to heed a husband's counselling then she must be tied up in the home. Mawḍūdī dismisses this argument, and states that this goes against the Qurʾān.<sup>43</sup> With regard to the last reformatory step, *wa-ḍribūhunna*, which should be used in extreme cases, Mawḍūdī's understanding is similar to Shafīʿ and Raḥmānī both of whom reference the same *ḥadīth* as an exegetical source.<sup>44</sup> The other significant power is the right to divorce. Here, Mawḍūdī connects this right to the husband's provision of maintenance to his wife.

### Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī and *Tadabbur-i-Qurʾan*

Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī's (d.1997) contribution to Islamic thought particularly in the field of *tafsīr* have earned him a reputation as an important scholar and authority in the field of Qurʾānic studies. The influence of his teacher ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd al-Farāhī (d.1930), was also instrumental in shaping his approach toward the Qurʾān, and Islam at large. His voluminous exegetical work, *Tadabbur-i-Qurʾān*<sup>45</sup> continues to earn a respectable readership, not

only among the wider public, but also among scholars. At the same time, his work has also received significant criticism despite his popularity.

İslāhī likens the family to a state, which is in need of a head for its establishment and continuity. For İslāhī, headship is accorded to the man because of two reasons stated in the Qurʾān. The first argument (*dalīl*) is that God has bestowed man with a distinctness/*faḍīliyat*. In some regards man has a definite superiority (*tafawwuq*) over woman which, therefore, qualifies him to the role of headship of the family. Attributes like guardianship (*muḥāfiẓat*), and defence (*mudāfaʿ*) or the ability to earn a living are more apparent in men rather than women. İslāhī opines that this distinctiveness (*faḍīliyat*) is not overall (*kullī*), but only in the respect that it justifies men being *al-qawwāmūn*. By contrast, İslāhī says that women have certain attributes that make them better suited to home-making and looking after children. For these reasons, writes İslāhī, there is a some ambiguity (*ibhām*) in the text (i.e., *faḍḍala Allāh baʿdahum ʿalā baʿḍ*) inasmuch as both sexes have a distinctiveness in relation to each other.<sup>46</sup>

İslāhī defines *nushūz* in terms of recalcitrance and resistance of wife against her husband. Minor actions like heedlessness, or expressing an opinion or taste are not considered *nushūz*. Yet, any step on the part of the wife that challenges the husband's authority as *qawwām*,<sup>47</sup> and which could disturb a family structure is considered to be *nushūz*. And, if such a situation arises wherein wife does carry out an act of *nushūz*, then the husband has the right to recourse to the three disciplinary steps in a gradual manner as the text of the Qurʾān suggests.

- 1 *Fa-ʿizūhunna* also means admonition for İslāhī. Though he notes that there is room for interpretation as the root *wa-ʿa-za* includes other meanings like reprimand or rebuke (*zajir*, *tawbīkh*).
- 2 *Wa-hjurūhunna fī al-maḍājiʿ* means no bed-sharing.
- 3 *Wa-ḍribūhunna* means that, if the above two approaches fail, then İslāhī accepts the beating of the wife. This is, of course, qualified by a ḥadīth that includes that such disciplining must be non-injurious (*ghayr mubārriḥ*).<sup>48</sup>

Like Ibn ʿĀshūr, İslāhī adopts a philological approach. However, unlike Ibn ʿĀshūr İslāhī does not discuss any changes in who the text is



addressing in Q.4:34. Iṣlāhī's hermeneutical heir, Jawaīd Aḥmad Ghāmdī (b.1952), also considers the family a mini-state and attributes man's status as *qawwām* due to his biological makeup, and his provision of maintenance.<sup>49</sup> Regarding *Nushūz* and reformatory three-step approach Ghāmdī has no different opinion than his teacher. Other scholars of the Iṣlāhī School such as Sulṭān Aḥmad Iṣlāhī (d.2016) have referenced Q.4:34 to discuss the etiquette of intercourse and positioning. Sulṭān Aḥmad Iṣlāhī stated that Q.4:34 demands that a man should be on top of a woman during intercourse. He also quotes other texts to cement his opinion.<sup>50</sup>

## Textual Authority and Exegetes' Role in its Interpretation

In the Muslim intellectual heritage, exegetes' engagement with the text has always been considered more than simply an interpretative endeavour (which is itself a diverse and complex business), but also a work closely related to the exegete's own belief system. It is in this context that the issue of textual authority, and exegetes' role in its interpretation becomes important. An exegete's particular epistemic stance vis-à-vis the text may lead him/her to a diametrically different conclusion when compared to another who has a different approach. Not only does this enrich the exegetical discourse, but it can also give rise to serious rifts within contending schools of thought. It is with this point in mind that we will critically reassess the exegetes/writers discussed above.

## Text Reception and Meaning Generation

All our exegetes discussed above approach the text of Q.4:34 in a prescriptive sense, rather than for example as a description from the context of the times when the text was being revealed. The verse is there to be obeyed. Most of the above exegetes wrote during the post-colonial period (i.e., in modern times). We also find a complete agreement on the meaning of the text with pre-colonial authorities on the subcontinent, notably Shāh Walī Allāh (d.1762). Walī Allāh also takes the text of Q.4:34 as prescriptive. For him, the husband has the status as *qawwām* of the family due to his natural composition (*bi-l-jibilla*), and his provision of

maintenance (*bi-l-māl*). The three step disciplinary process is equally accepted, also with recourse to *ḥadīth* in which *wa-dribūhunna* is explained in a more restricted sense.<sup>51</sup> Indeed, if we go back to the classical legal commentaries such as the *Aḥkām al-Qurʾān* by al-Jaṣṣāṣ (d.981) we can generally see the same understanding of the verse.<sup>52</sup>

We have also observed the historical continuity in interpreting Q.4:34 on the modern subcontinent. Classical scholars, as well as those who take *ḥadīth* as a genuine source of knowledge give utmost attention to continuity of interpretation. This continuity of interpretation, in modern times, has become a bone of contention. Modern writers, particularly Muslim feminists/womanists, challenge the importance of continuity of interpretation.<sup>53</sup> Amongst the exegetes discussed above, only Āzād considers the text in an elastic sense. He stands alone in his radical, but incoherent understanding. In this context, he appears somewhat independent in his thinking, which has some affinity with modern Muslim feminist hermeneutics. Āzād's stance has a hermeneutical affinity with Ayesha S. Chaudhry's argument for approaching the Qurʾān as a performative text.<sup>54</sup> Taking the text as *performative* means that readers determine/generate the meaning of any Qurʾānic text. I tend to think that since there are clear signs of reader-response theory in such an approach, as well as hints of new historical criticism, some serious work needs to be done on the impact of critical theories on modern Muslim writers who do not follow the Islamic tradition's methodologies strictly. Similarly, when it comes to interpreting the meaning of the advantage/step (*daraja*) in Q.2:288, our exegetes discussed above are unanimous in their defining of *al-qawwāmūn* in terms of *daraja*. This is diametrically opposite to the understanding of exegetes like Sayyid Quṭb, as discussed by Hadia Mubarak, or amina wadud who treats *daraja* as the advantage men have of being able to divorce wives without the intervention of a third party.<sup>55</sup> Even Iṣlāḥī, who takes the coherence (*naẓm*) of the Qurʾānic text as his main hermeneutical approach, considers *al-qawwāmūn* in relation to *daraja*. This whole process of interpretation on the part of our exegetes demonstrates not only their unity, but also the genealogical nature of the exegetical tradition.<sup>56</sup>

Another relevant theme in the context of the reception of the text, which needs to be explored more, is whether a text is contingent or

permanent (*ṣābit*). With regard to Q.4:34 our exegetes are in unison about its permanence. Also, in the process of interpretation both the method used to arrive at a particular meaning, and the meaning itself must not ignore the precedents of the early authorities. This is particularly the case with those injunctions which are definitive in evidence and reportage (*qaṭʿī al-dalāla wa-qaṭʿī al-thubūt*) like Q.4:34. There can be a change in a fatwa, but not in a *sharīʿa* injunction (*ḥukm*). This epistemological-cum-methodological stance is another bone of contention between the Muslim modernists/feminists and traditional scholars.<sup>57</sup> Raḥmānī also touches upon the understanding of the modern day *maqāṣid al-sharīʿa* theory (the higher intentions and purposes of the *sharīʿa*), and critically analyses how some scholars have come to bypass definitive injunctions in order to arrive at a particular meaning couched in terms of public interest (*maṣlaḥa*). He elaborates on this pertinent issue in his bold critique of the book *Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿa* by Najāt Allāh Ṣiddīqī.<sup>58</sup> The leapfrogging of definitive injunctions to arrive at a particular interest is a break with the *sharīʿa* in the name of *maqāṣid al-sharīʿa*.<sup>59</sup>

## Historical Contextualization and Legal Rulings

Understanding the historical context is another pertinent factor that not only helps us to understand the text itself, but also the legal and non-legal functions of a verse. Modern day Muslim feminist scholars use historical contextualization as a hermeneutical tool to determine whether a text is general or specific, or descriptive or prescriptive. In the context of Q.4:34, feminist scholars stress that historical context to determine its meaning.<sup>60</sup> It is in this regard that we should deliberate upon the legal-cum-exegetic principle that reliance is to be placed on the generality of words, and not on the specificity of cause of revelation (*al-ʿibra li-ʿumūm al-laḥẓ lā bi-khuṣūṣ al-sabab*).<sup>61</sup> Muftī Shafīʿ references the occasion of revelation (*sabab al-nuzūl*) of Q.4:34 wherein a lady, namely Ḥabība, came to Muḥammad and complained about her husband who had slapped her. Muḥammad ordered retribution, that was immediately abrogated by Q.4:34 just before Ḥabība and her father were about to leave.<sup>62</sup> Other exegetes like Āzād, Mawdūdī, Raḥmānī, Iṣlāḥī and Ghāmīdī do not mention the *sabab al-nuzūl*

of the verse under discussion. But they all, as we have discussed above, take the verse in a general (*‘āmm*), and prescriptive sense. Given the importance of the verse, it is obvious that these exegetes, like Shafī‘, knew of the specific occasion (*sabab*) of revelation of the verse. Since these commentaries generally had a specific target-group, i.e., the wider public, they are restricted to discussing issues which are important for the public to understand, and act accordingly. The complex legal methodologies such as those that cause a particular verse Q.4:34 to move beyond the specificities of the occasion of revelation to act as a general injunction are not discussed in these commentaries in detail. But, one thing that is clear is that in the interpretation of Q.4:34 in our discussed commentaries, for the authors the aforementioned legal-cum-exegetical principle of reliance being placed on the generality of words (*al-‘ibra li-‘umūm al-lafz*), rather the specificity of the occasion of revelation is at work in the background, although not a single exegete mentions it. Due to this principle, the occasion/*sabab* of revelation does not restrict the interpretation of Q. 4:34 to the socio-economic environs of the Arab society at the time. Given the impact of this principle on exegetical-cum-legal traditions of the Islamic heritage more work needs to be done to better understand its formation and complexities.

## Reading Conventional *Tafsīr*

Writing *tafsīr*, for any Muslim exegete, is not just a literary venture but a deep-seated matter of their belief system. The literature discussing how to approach the texts testifies to the degree that Muslim exegetes/jurists were involved in developing a measured methodology to arrive at a particular meaning. Interpretation was never an ivory-tower exercise, but rather was a deed-oriented intellectual activity with ontological underpinnings. Ignoring the subtleties and complexities of conventional exegetical traditions, and disregarding them as atomistic is not a well-considered opinion. Reading conventional *tafsīr* demands that a reader integrate themselves into the overall exegetical approach of any given *tafsīr*. At the same time, he/she must appreciate the genealogical nature of the *tafsīr* tradition. Simply selecting a *tafsīr* of one verse to read in isolation is not appropriate. Our assertion can be made more clear by taking the example

of Q.4:34. Muftī Shafī<sup>c</sup>, as discussed earlier, does not approach the verse independently or in an atomistic sense. His interpretative process is not to focus on Q.4:34 alone. He contextualizes Q.4:34 with Q.2:228, and qualifies it with Q.4:19 and Q.2:233. Throughout this process he regularly references *ḥadīth*, and also draws on classical *tafsīr* works to support his own interpretation. Similarly, Q.4:34 is alluded to in his interpretation of Q.4:128, wherein *nushūz* on the part of husband is mentioned.<sup>63</sup> Likewise, we find in Iṣlāḥī's reading and interpreting the verse in a holistic manner as he also interprets Q.4:34 in relation to Q.2:228. Here, Iṣlāḥī also discusses *nushūz* by the husband,<sup>64</sup> as do Āzād, Maudūdī, and Raḥmānī. Reading closely, we also find that these exegetes were conscious of the legal significance of Q.4:34 in their interpretations of other verses related to family as an institution. Therefore, the onus is on the reader to fully appreciate any authorial intent. At the same time, he/she must also understand the overall working of the *tafsīr* genre, as well as its close relationship with other Islamic knowledge traditions like *fiqh*, *ḥadīth* etc.

## *Ḥadīth* and its Role in the Interpretative Process

All the exegetes and authors discussed above accept the *ḥadīth* in their interpretive-cum-legal capacity. Nevertheless, we do find some distinct understandings that each subcontinent exegete has in their treatment of some *ḥadīth* narrations, which needs to be explored. With regard to Q.4:34, we observe that some of the exegetes reference *ḥadīth* in order to generate interpretations, while others rely on other Qur'ānic verses. Beginning with Āzād, he relies less on *ḥadīth*, and more on the intra-textual method of interpretation. In fact, Āzād does not mention a single *ḥadīth* in his interpretation of Q.4:34. Unlike Āzād, Shafī<sup>c</sup> generates meaning not only via the intra-textual method, but he also references *ḥadīth* narrations as well as exegetical opinions from past commentaries that make his work richer and more complex. For example, while defining pious wives (*al-ṣāliḥāt*) he references the aforementioned *ḥadīth* that reads that the best woman/wife is one whom when you see her you become happy; when you command her, she obeys you; and when you are away, she guards her property and person. Shafī<sup>c</sup> also quotes another

*ḥadīth* praising the obedient wife that says that beasts, angels, fish, and birds pray for her forgiveness. We see an absolutely devotional approach to these *ḥadīth* texts by Shafī<sup>65</sup> and it is evident that he does not restrict these texts, like Q.4:34, to any specific period. Similarly, as discussed above Shafī<sup>65</sup> explains *nushūz* using *ḥadīth* as an interpretative tool. Likewise, *ḥadīth* are important for Raḥmānī, Mawdūdī, and the Iṣlāḥī School.

## Conclusion

In this article, we have examined different exegeses from modern Urdū *tafsīr* literature focusing on their methodologies and interpretations of Q.4:34. We selected a number of influential figures who have had a significant impact on public opinion. In fact, we found that most of these exegetical works were written for the general public as the target-audience. This popularization of exegesis serves a range of purposes like cultivating Islamic values among the public, defending a school of thought, combating the impact of modern philosophies etc. The case study of Q.4:34 led us to some important findings, and we discovered that different epistemic positions impact exegetes' approaches. The case of Mawlānā Āzād helps to understand the point. His exegesis of Q.4:34 in which he advances the idea of family-headship potentially reshuffling as a result of socio-economic changes reveals his exegetical elasticity in comparison to other exegetes. Since the other discussed authors share an epistemic position inasmuch as most of them belong to the Ḥanafī School,<sup>66</sup> we found that they shared interpretative methodologies and conclusions. In this regard we found the *Ma'ārif* to be more complex and legalistic in relation to the Ḥanafī School. We then discussed the principle of text reception and interpretation and compared subcontinental exegetes with some modern feminist voices. We observed that interpretation is not just a question of following the text, but also a matter of one's overall hermeneutical epistemology. We also endeavoured to understand background workings of the exegetical-cum-legal principle that reliance is to be placed on the generality of words, not on the specificity of a cause of revelation. We also noted that *tafsīr* reading is a complex endeavour, particularly its legal content, which should be approached in tandem with other Islamic knowledge traditions like *fiqh*, *ḥadīth*, and philology.

## Endnotes

- 1 The translation is taken from *The Noble Qur'ān*, co-authored by Muḥammad Muḥsin Khān and Muḥammad Taqī al-Dīn al-Ḥilālī, published by Maktaba Darussalam, 1996. The parentheses have not been included.
- 2 Mawlānā Abū al-Kalām Āzād, *Tarjumān al-Qur'ān*, (Islāmī Academy: Pakistan, n.d.).
- 3 For more on Āzād's work see I.H. Douglas, *Abdul Kalam Azad: An Intellectual and Religious Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); Ziya ul-Hasan Faruqi, *Maulana Abul Kalam Azad: Towards Freedom*, (Delhi: B.R Publishing Corporation, 1997); Syeda Saiyidīdīn Hameed, *Islamic Seal on India's Independence: Abul Kalam Azad – A Fresh Look* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); S. Irfan Habib, *Maulana Azad – A Life* (New Delhi: Aleph Book Company, 2023).
- 4 Āzād, *Tarjumān*, vol. 1, p. 410.
- 5 Ibid., vol. 1, p. 351.
- 6 Ḥāfīz ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm* (Cairo: Dar al-Ḥadīth, 2011) pp. 205-207. The works of Walid Saleh, and Younis Mirza should be approached for more exegetical-cum-hermeneutical understandings of Ibn Taymiyya, and Ibn Kathīr.
- 7 Āzād, *Tarjumān*, vol. 1, p. 410.
- 8 Muḥammad 'Abduh and Rashīd Riḍā. *Tafsīr al-Manār*, (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, 1911).
- 9 Āzād, *Al-Hilāl*, no.1, July 1912, (Lucknow: Uttar Pradesh Urdu Academy, 2010).
- 10 Hadia Mubarak, *Rebellious Wives, Neglectful Husbands: Controversies in Modern Qur'anic Commentaries* (Oxford University Press, 2022), pp. 135-138
- 11 Jalāl al-Dīn al-'Umri was JIH President from 2007 till 2019.
- 12 See Jamā'at Islāmī India's recently launched website in which al-'Umri responds to the above-mentioned query <http://www.shariahouncil.net/> Accessed March 21, 2022. For a more detailed understanding of al-'Umri's work, see his *'Awrat awr Islām* (New Delhi: Markazī Maktabah Islāmī Publishers, 2018).
- 13 Muftī Muḥammad Shafī', *al-Qur'ān Ma'ārif*, (Deoband: Kutub Khānā Na'imīya, 2019)
- 14 Ibid., vol. 1, p. 82.
- 15 Shafī', *Ma'ārif*, vol. 2, pp. 446-447.
- 16 Ibid., vol. 2, p. 447.
- 17 Ibid., vol. 2, p. 448.
- 18 Ibid., vol. 2, pp. 448-449. Shafī' writes that this excellence of men over women is in general sense, and there are always exceptions.
- 19 Shafī', *Ma'ārif*, vol. 2, p. 449.
- 20 Ibid., vol. 2, p. 450.

- 21 Ibid., vol. 2, pp. 451-452.
- 22 Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir Ibn ‘Ashūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa’l-tanwīr* (Tunis: al-Dār al-Tūnisiyya li-l-Nashr, 1984).
- 23 Shafi‘, *Ma‘ārif*, vol. 1, p. 81.
- 24 Hadia Mubarak, “Change Through Continuity: A Case Study of Q. 4:34 in Ibn ‘Ashūr’s al-Taḥrīr wa’l-tanwīr,” *Journal of Qur’anic Studies* 20.1 (2018): 1-27. DOI: 10.3366/jqs.2018.0318
- 25 Mawlānā Khālīd Saif Allāh Raḥmānī, *Āsān Tafsīr Qur’an Majīd*, (Deoband: Kutub Khānā Na‘īmiya, 2015). Raḥmānī is the General Secretary of Islami Fiqh Academy, India, and founder member of All India Muslim Personal Law Board.
- 26 Raḥmānī, *Āsān*, vol. 1, p. 307.
- 27 Here, it is interesting to note that Raḥmānī states that material coming from Judeo-Christian traditions (*Isrā’īliyyāt*) are to be measured against the Qur’ān and if they accord with the Qur’ān then they can be accepted. See *Āsān Tafsīr*, vol. 1, pp. 98-99.
- 28 Raḥmānī, *Āsān*, vol. 1, p.307.
- 29 Khālīd Saif Allāh Raḥmānī, *Qāmūs al-Fiqh*, (Deoband: Kutub Khānā Na‘īmiya, 2007), pp. 196-197.
- 30 *Āsān*, p. 307.
- 31 Raḥmānī, *Qāmūs*, vol. 1, p. 197.
- 32 Raḥmānī, *Āsān*, vol. 1, p. 307.
- 33 Raḥmānī, *Āsān*, vol. 1, p. 307.
- 34 Sayyid Abū’l-a‘lā al-Mawdūdī, *Tafhīm al-Qur’ān*, (Delhi: Markazī Maktabah, 1981)
- 35 On Mawdūdī, and the dynamics of his religious thought see Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, *Mawdūdī and the Making of Islamic Revivalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Irfan Ahmad, *Islamism and Democracy in India: The Transformation of Jamaat-e-Islami* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009); Muḥammad Yusuf, *Mawlānā Mawdūdī par i’tirāḍāt ka ‘ilmī jā’zah* (Delhi: Markazī Maktabah Islāmī Publishers, 2015); Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *Islam in Pakistan: A History*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018).
- 36 Mawdūdī, *Tafhīm*, vol. 1, p. 33.
- 37 See Sa‘īd Aḥmad Pālanpūrī’s (d.2020) commentary, *Raḥmāt Allāh al-wāsi‘a* (UP: Maktabah Hījāz Deoband, 2002) vol. 2, pp. 740-744.
- 38 Mawdūdī, *Tafhīm*, vol. 1, p. 349.
- 39 Ibid., p. 350.
- 40 Ibid., p. 350.
- 41 Sayyid Abū’l-a‘lā al-Mawdūdī, *Ḥuqūq al-Zawjāyṅ*, (New Delhi: Markazī Maktabah Islāmī Publishers, 2004), p. 26.



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- 43 Mawdūdī, *Huqūq*, pp. 38-39.
- 44 Mawdūdī, *Huqūq*, p. 39.
- 45 Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāhī, *Tadabbur-i-Qur'ān*, (Delhi: Tāj Company, 2009).
- 46 Iṣlāhī, *Tadabbur*, vol. 2, p. 291.
- 47 Iṣlāhī translates the word as *sarparast*/patron.
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- 49 Jawaīd Aḥmad Ghāmidī, *al-Bayān*, vol. 1 (n.p.: al-Mawrid Hind Foundation, 2019), p. 487.
- 50 Sulṭān Aḥmad. Jimā' ke Ādāb, *Tahqīqāt-e-islāmī*, (January-March:1990), pp. 60-89.
- 51 Shāh Allāh Walī, *al-Hujjat Allāh al-Bāligha*, vol. 2, (Beirut: Dar Ibn Kathīr, 2020), pp. 420-428.
- 52 Abū Bakr Aḥmad bin 'Alī al-Rāzī al-Jaṣṣāṣ,, *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, vol. 2, (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiya, Beirut, 2013) pp. 236-238.
- 53 Aysha. A Hidayatullah, *Feminist edges of the Qur'an*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014). This is a very serious work which discusses and critiques Muslim feminist discourses. A must read.
- 54 Ayesha S. Chaudhry, *Domestic Violence and the Islamic tradition: Ethics, Law, and the Muslim Discourse on Gender*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).
- 55 amina wadud, *Qur'an and Woman; Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 66-69.
- 56 For an understanding of the genealogical nature of the *tafsīr* tradition, see Walid Saleh, *The Formation of the Classical Tafsīr Tradition; the Qur'an Commentary of the Tha'labi (d.427/1035)*, (Leiden: Brill, 2003) p. 14. Also see his, "Preliminary Remarks on the Historiography of tafsīr in Arabic: A History of the Book Approach," *Journal of Qur'ānic Studies* 12 (2010), pp. 6-40.
- 57 Saif Allāh Raḥmānī, *Muḥḍarāt Usūl Fiqh*, (Deoband: Na'īmiya Book Store, 2020).
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- 59 Saif Allāh Raḥmānī, *Matā' Fikr wa-Naḍr*, (Hyderabad: al-Ma'had al-'ālī, 2015).
- 60 Tak, *Feminist Edges*, pp. 65-78.
- 61 Muḥammad 'Abd al-'Azīm al-Zarqānī, *Manāhil al-Irfān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, (Cairo, Dār al-ḥadīth, 2001), vol.1, pp. 110-121.
- 62 Shafī', *Ma'ārif*, vol. 2, p. 452.
- 63 Shafī', *Ma'ārif*, vol. 2, pp. 626-636.
- 64 Iṣlāhī, *Taddabur*, vol. 2, pp. 397-399.

- 65 Shafiʿ, *Maʿārif*, vol. 2, p. 451.
- 66 Mawdūdī and Iṣlāḥī are not strict in their adherence to the Ḥanafī School. A study exploring how these two writers challenge canonical authorities would be revealing.