

## General Conclusion

In his preface to *Tadabbur-i-Qur'an*, Islahi said that he would discuss the verses of the Qur'an only to clarify their original intention (*asl mudda'a wazeh karne ke liye*, vol. 1, p. 41). Islahi also refers in his preface to the correct meaning of the verses (*sahih mafhum*, ibid) and to their true meaning (*haqiqi mafhum*, ibid, p. 42). Once the context has been established (*mauqa' o mahal ke ma'yyan ho janey ke ba'd*, ibid), the initial understanding (*ibtidai mafhum*, ibid) will emerge from the text (cf. ibid). Besides, in my introduction to this study, I noted that Islahi seeks to discover the original purpose and meaning of important concepts such as: *din*, *namaz*, *hijrah*, *hajj*, *jihad* and *islam* itself.<sup>214</sup>

After completing my study of *Tadabbur-i-Qur'an*, my conclusion is that Islahi has indeed presented the “original intention” and the “correct meaning” of the Qur'an in terms of the victory of the Muslims over the Quraysh. He relates everything in the Qur'an to this “correct meaning”, according to which the mission of the Prophet (*anhazrat sall'aum ke maqaddas mishon*, ibid, p. 476) was to lead the Muslim community to form an Islamic society and government. The Qur'an provided the laws (*shari'ah*) this new society needed. God took away the mandate he had given to the Jews and the Christians and transferred it to the Muslims, who are the “best community” because they promote justice and truth in society. The perfect *din (islam)* has now been conveyed to the Muslims and the Inviolable House of Worship in Mecca has been returned to its rightful custodians.<sup>215</sup>

Islahi's purpose in writing *Tadabbur-i-Qur'an* is to argue that Muslims will once again experience their former success and power by adopting the

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<sup>214</sup> Cf. my general introduction at the beginning of this study.

<sup>215</sup> I think Farid Esack has a very apt comment:

“The pre-eminence of the righteous does not mean a position of a permanently fixed socio-religious superiority for the Muslim community. It was not as if the Muslims as a social entity were superior to the other for such a position would have placed them and their parochial Allah in the same category of others who were denounced in the Qur'an for the crimes of arrogance and desiring to appropriate Allah for a narrow community. There is no reason to suppose that the Qur'anic reprimand to other communities that they cannot base their claims to superiority on the achievements of their forebears, should not be applied to the post-Prophetic Muslim community: ‘That is a community that is bygone; to them belongs what they earned and to you belong what you earn, and you will not be asked about what they had done.’ (Q. 2.134).”  
Esack (2001), p. 110.

action-plan outlined in the Qur'an.<sup>216</sup> Islahi demonstrates from the battle of *Badr* and the battle of *Uhud* that the struggle between truth and falsity is not only a spiritual struggle but involves a political struggle as well. *Tadabbur-i-Qur'an* contains a clear and a strong promise of political supremacy for the Muslims. Islahi's emphasis on the *political* dimension of social reform (*islah*) may have been a reaction to the pre-eminence given to ritual prayer and other forms of piety.

Islahi communicates the message presented in *Tadabbur-i-Qur'an* by adopting the following procedures:

1. He does not depart from the time of revelation – presenting the understanding of those who first read and recited the Qur'an as the model and criterion for subsequent interpretations. He is concerned only about the addressees living at the time of revelation and not about addressees living *after* the time of revelation.
2. He makes no attempt to indicate how the “original understanding” (*ibtidai mahfum*) of the Qur'an relates with the changed circumstances of the present time. In this way, Islahi has undermined the universality of the Qur'an.
3. Islahi's description of the context (*sahih mauqa' o mahal*)<sup>217</sup> is based on his own interpretation of the text because it is drawn entirely from the text of the Surah.<sup>218</sup> Even his references to Arab culture express his own perception.<sup>219</sup>
4. Although Islahi considers the style and the flow of the argument (*ushub, andaz aur mawad istadlal*, vol. 5, p. 439) to be the distinctive mark of each Surah, he draws the meaning of the Surah entirely from its theme (*'umud*), which all the Surahs of a Surah Group share in common.<sup>220</sup> Since everything depends on understanding the theme correctly, the style of a Surah has no significant role in interpretation.

<sup>216</sup> Islahi uses the word *naqsha* to indicate such an action-plan in his discussion of Surah *Al Hud*. Cf. vol. 4, p. 137.

<sup>217</sup> Cf. Surah *Al Ahzab*, vol. 6, p. 216. Islahi says the correct meaning of a verse depends on how one determines the context (cf. vol. 1, p. 42). For the use of *qarina*, cf. Surah *Ta Ha*, vol. 5, pp. 29-33.

<sup>218</sup> For example, Islahi explains the harsh punishment meted out to the sorcerers of Pharaoh's court who became believers according to verse 71 of Surah *Ta Ha* (cf. vol. 5, p. 66) according to his own understanding of ideological and political factors that he says were operating in that period of history. Islahi also provides an interpretation of verses 28-29 of Surah *Al Ahzab* concerning the wives of the Prophet based on his own understanding of the context (*in ayat ka pas manzar*, vol. 6, pp. 215-219).

<sup>219</sup> Cf. for example, the references to Arab customs in Islahi's discussion of Surah *Al Anbiya*, vol. 5, p. 163 and in his discussion of verses 19-21 of Surah *Al Muminun*, vol. 5, p. 307 do not provide external evidence.

<sup>220</sup> *Jis tarah har surah ka ek ma'yyan 'umud hai isi tarah har grup ka bhi ek jami' 'umud hai jo pure grup par hawi hai*, vol. 9, p. 9.

5. In the preface, Islahi hints at the contribution that the reader makes when he refers to the disposition of heart that the reader should have (*parhne wale ka zahin baidar ho*, vol. 1, p. 42).<sup>221</sup> But Islahi is not critical of his own assumptions and the limited perceptions that he brings to the interpretation of the Qur'an. Moreover, by determining the theme ('*umud*) of the Surah Groups in advance, Islahi eliminates the contribution of each subsequent reader of the Qur'an.
6. Islahi formulates the theme ('*umud*) of a Surah Group in a few words. However, a short phrase to express what several Surahs have in common reduces the Surah to a one-dimensional perspective. This approach loses the multi-dimensional quality of each Surah conveyed by means of its style of expression.
7. Islahi argues that the Qur'an is coherent (*nazm al quran*) because he finds a common theme connecting all the Surahs. Islahi's argument depends on the literal application of certain words to the deposition (*ma'zul*) of the Jews and the Christians and the victory (*ghalbah*) of the Muslims in Mecca.
8. Since he does not offer criteria to distinguish the literal from the metaphorical use of language, Islahi is able to apply the narratives and the parables of the Qur'an to any specific agents in history that illustrate the particular message he wishes to convey. But metaphorical language cannot be restricted in this way.
9. Islahi makes constant use of ideas like *sunnat-i-ilahi*, *itmam-i-hujjat* and other concepts such as consolation (*tasalli*) for the Prophet (peace be upon him) and reward and punishment (*jaza o saza*) because such abstract concepts provide a synthesis of the historical narratives and so contribute to *nazm al quran*. Islahi uses such ideas as umbrella concepts to bring diverse aspects of the Qur'an together under one coherent theme ('*umud*).
10. Islahi does not respect the principles of Biblical exegesis but approaches the former Scriptures with the same principles of interpretation that he uses for the Qur'an. The result is that he often finds inexplicable contradictions between the Qur'an and the Bible.
11. Finally, the Qur'an as the Word of Allah is definitely absolute and certain (*qat'i*). But this quality of *qat'i* should be distinguished from

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<sup>221</sup> In a similar vein, Islahi frequently refers to the right disposition of heart in the believer. In his discussion of Surah *Al Furqan*, Islahi says the Qur'an directs our attention to the abundant signs that exist in the world around us (*itni nishaniyan maujud hain*, vol. 5, p. 475). However, as was said in reference to history, these signs will profit only those who have the right disposition of heart (*jin ke andar suchne samajhne aur 'ibrat o nasihat hasil karne ka iradah paya jata ho*, *ibid*). I have discussed "The Natural Disposition of the Human Heart" in my discussion of Surah *Al Hud* in Chapter Three.

all human efforts at understanding (*zanni*) the Word. Since our attempts to understand the Qur'an are based on human effort, all these human efforts must fall under the category of *zanni*. For example, the search for the theme (*'umud*) of each Surah requires a capacity for sustained reflection (*tadabbur*). Similarly, all (and not just some) of the principles of interpretation that Islahi uses in his commentary should be called *zanni*. There seems to be no sound basis for the distinction between the internal and the external principles of interpretation that Islahi makes in his Preface to *Tadabbur-i-Qur'an*.