

# MUFTI MUHAMMAD SHAFI AND TAFSIR MAARIFUL QUR'AN; AN INTRODUCTION & REVIEW

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## ABSTRACT

After the war of independence 1857 the Muslims of India were governed by the British Empire for the period of a century. During this period different movements for the independence for Indian Muslims were raised. Among them there was a movement of Deoband, which was actually an educational movement for survival of Muslim. The renowned scholars of Deoband school of thought presented the literature for the strong ideological training of Muslims, so that they could have implemented the Islamic instructions in their lives. In this connection the contribution of Maulana Mufti Muhammad Shafi were remarkable who devoted his life for preaching the ideology of Islam. He compiled a huge number of books for the betterment in social and moral life of Muslims. He presented the Urdu translation and commentary (Tafseer) of the Holy Qur'an which is a unique commentary. In this article the introduction of Maulana Mufti Muhammad Shafi and the characteristics of his Tafseer Maarif ul Quran are presented.

**Key words:** Mufti Shafi, Urdu Quranic Commentary, Maarif ul Quran, Tafsir in Pakistan

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## INTRODUCTION

At the time when Mufti Muhammad Shafi a great religious research scholar of Indo Pakistan, was teaching at Darul Uloom Deoband, Muslims of the subcontinent were striving for independence from the British Rule. The Muslims were deprived in all fields of life by the Britains and the Hindus. Therefore, the Muslims of subcontinent gathered at a platform formed the All-India Muslim League to campaign for the independent separate Muslim state, Ashraf Ali Thanvi requested all *ulama* and Muslims in general to support this campaign. Mufti Muhammad Shafi, with other scholars including Zafar Ahmad Usmani joined *Jamiat Ulama e Islam*, a council of Islamic scholars formed by Shabbir Ahmad Usmani to campaign for the creation of Pakistan. In 1363 AH (1944) Muhammad Shafi resigned from teaching and issuing fatwas at *Darul Uloom Deoband* in order to devote his time to the movement for the creation of Pakistan. He toured different parts of India, gave speeches, and issued *Fatwas* for this purpose, especially the province of Kyber Pakhtunkhwa Pakistan (the then

N.W.F.P) where Muslims of this province vote of Pakistan through a referendum due to the efforts of these *Ulama*. After great struggle when Pakistan came into being, Shabbir Ahmad Usmani invited his friends, Molana Manzir Ahsan Gilani, Allama Syed Suleman Nadvi and Mufti Muhammad Shafi to Pakistan to draft Islamic constitution of Pakistan. This job was successfully completed within three months by the efforts of these personalities.

Later on in 1367 AH (1948), Muhammad Shafi left his hometown, Deoband and immigrated to Pakistan on the request of his friends. He succeeded to Wali Hassan Tonki as the Grand Mufti of Pakistan from 1948 to 06 October 1976. He founded *Darul Uloom* Karachi in 1370 AH (1950/1951). Mufti Muhammad Shafi a great religious scholar of his time having special interest in *Shari'a*, *Hadith* and *Tafsir*, who spent his whole life for the renaissance of Islamic thoughts, created awareness for the separate Islamic identity among the Muslims of Indo Pakistan. Here I am presenting his brief

biography and introduction of his life time achievement, the compilation of the commentary on the Holy Quran titled as *Maariful Quran*

### FINDINGS

The great Islamic scholar Muhammad Shafi, was born in mid night of 20-21 Shaaban 1314 i.e January 25, 1897 in a town *Deoband* of the district *Saharanpur*, the British India. His Grandfather named him as Mohammad Mubeen, while the name “Muhammad Shafi”, was proposed by Molana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi, a great religious scholar and saint of his times. (Shafi,1384 A.H)

Mufti Mohammad learnt and memorized some initial Chapters of the holy book from Hafiz Mohammad Azim. He learnt basic books of Persian from his father, Math from his uncle

Munshi Manzoor and Arabic from his friend Qari Mohammad Yousuf Mirathi in *Darul Uloom Deoband* where his father was working as teacher. (Rafi,2000)

In 1325 AH (1907/1908) he was formally admitted into *Darul Uloom Deoband* from where he graduated in 1336 AH (1918) at the age of 21. He was taught from the following renowned teachers in *Darul Uloom Deoband*, the British India. (Shafi,1384 A.H)

- *Allam Mohammad Anwar Shah Kashmiri*(died: 1352 AH)
- *Azizur Rahman Usmani*  
(died: 1347 AH)
- *Mohammad Qasim Nanotvi*  
(died: 1347 AH)
- *Shabbir Ahmad Usmani*  
(died: 1369 AH)
- *Syed Mian Asghar Hussain*  
(died: 1364 AH)
- *Aizaz Ali*  
(died: 1374 AH)
- *Rasool Khan*  
(died: 1391AH)

- *Mohammad Ibrahim Balyavi*  
(died: 1383 AH) (Rafi,2000)

In 1336 AH (1917/1918) or 1337 AH (1918/19) he was appointed as a teacher of the primary classes at *Darul Uloom Deoband*, though he quickly reached a position of teaching higher classes. He had an attraction in *Fiqh* and *Fatawa*, so he frequently assisted Mufti Azizu'r-Rahman Usmani, the grand *Mufti* of *Darul Ifta* (the *Fartwa* department of *Darul Uloom Deoband*). Therefore, keeping in view his ability in this field, Muhammad Shafi was appointed to the position of Grand *Mufti* of *Darul Uloom Deoband* in 1350 AH (1932). He held this position until 1354 AH (1935/36), and again from 1359 AH (1940/1941) to (1362AH 1943). (Shafi,1384 A.H)

While holding this position, it is estimated that number of *fatwas* that he issued was ranged from 26,000 to over 40,000. Some of Muhammad Shafi's *fatwas* have been published in eight large volumes titled as *Imdad al-Muftin*, while the majority remained unpublished.

(Rafi,2000)

After Partition when he immigrated to Pakistan he founded *Darul Uloom Karachi* in June 1951 and become the first president of this institute. Being head of this Institute, he also established the department of *Ifta* over here. He was succeeded by his grandson Mohammad Rafi Usmani being president of this institute after his sad demise in 1976.(Akbar,1999)

Mohammad Shafi not only worked for Islamic theology but also actively participated in the national politics for the purpose to frame the constitution in light of the teachings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the Holy Qur'an for the newly established Islamic state Pakistan. Therefore he actively participated to pass the first Objective Resolution in light of Islamic principles from the National Assembly of Pakistan. (Shafi,1384 A.H)

Keeping in view his services, he was selected as member of the first Islamic Studies Board (ISB) in 1949. This Board worked for four years. The main objective of the board was to draft Islamic Constitution of Pakistan. He was also selected as Member of the Law Commission of Pakistan in 1950. He was appointed as President (*Ameer*) of the Central Executive Committee of the *Jamiat Ulama Islam* Pakistan for three years after the sad demise of Shabbir Ahmad Usmani. (Akbar, 1987)

He wrote around one hundred books explaining the Quran and interpreting Islamic *Sharia* and Laws. His best-known and most widely translated work is the *Ma'ariful Qur'an* ("The Wisdom of the Qur'an"), which he finished in Urdu language in four years before his death. This is a remarkable and unique a commentary on the entire Quran in its own style and presentation discussing latest issues prevailing in the society. It was initially started as a series of weekly lectures of selected portions from the Holy Qur'an on Radio Pakistan that ran for twelve years. (Shafi, 1982)

Muhammad Shafi died on 10 Shawwal 1396 AH (6 October 1976) at the age of eighty three years in Karachi. (Taqqi, N.D)

### **Tafsir Ma'ariful Quran;**

The first ever effort in the subcontinent for understanding the Qur'an was made by Shah Wali Ullah Dehlvi by translating the Holy Qur'an into Persian language. Although he faced great difficulties in this regard and resisted by the Orthodox. However, later on it was proved that this translation played an important role in attracting the masses towards understanding of the Qur'an. Keeping in view the important role of the Shah Wali Ullah's translation, Shah Abdul Aziz and Shah Rafiuddin encouraged translating the Holy Book into Urdu language. These basic efforts provided the opportunity understand the

meanings of the Holy Book in their own language and therefore other intellectuals were encouraged to not only simply translate the Holy Book but they wrote detailed commentary of the Holy Book in Arabic, Persian and Urdu languages as well. In these intellectual efforts Tafsir *Ma'ariful Qur'an* by Mufti Mohammad Shafi is a very important Tafsir (commentary) of the Qur'an in Urdu language discussing present day's problems and issues faced in the modern era of Science & Technology.

*Ma'ārifu'l-Qur'ān* is tafsir (commentary) of the Qur'an comprising on eight-volumes by eminent religious scholar, Mufti Mohammad Shafi (1897–1976) which is the most prominent work of its author.

### **DISCUSSION**

*Ma'ariful Qur'an*; Compilation background

Regarding compilation's background of *Ma'ariful Qur'an*, Mufti Muhammad Shafi wrote in his forwarding note that he never thought himself able to write tafsir of the Qur'an being very difficult and technical job. However the origin of *Ma'ariful Qur'an* refers back to the third of Shawwal 1373 A.H. (the 2nd of July 1954) when I was invited to deliver weekly lectures on the Radio Pakistan to explain selected verses of the Holy Qur'an to the general audience. This invitation was accepted with the condition that no any remuneration for this service will be accepted and that my lectures would be broadcast without any sensor /interference by the editing authorities. The permanent title of this weekly programme was "*Ma'ariful-Qur'an*" (The Wisdom of the Holy Qur'an) and it was broadcast every Friday morning on the network of Radio Pakistan. This series of lectures continued for ten years up to the month of June 1964 whereby the new authorities stopped this programme due

to change in the policy of the Radio Pakistan. This series of lectures contained a detailed commentary on selected verses from the beginning of the Holy Qur'an up to the *Surah Ibrahim*. This weekly programme of Radio Pakistan was warmly welcomed by the Muslims throughout the world and used to be listened to by thousands of Muslims, not only in Pakistan and India but also in Western and African countries. After the programme was discontinued, requests were started pouring from all over the world to transfer these series of lectures in a form of book and to complete the remaining part of the Qur'an in the shape of a regular commentary. Therefore keeping in view these requests, these lectures were revised with addition of those verses which were not included in the original lectures. The project was started in 1383 A.H. (1964) and completed the commentary of *Surah al-Fatihah* in its revised form and started the revision of *Surah al-Baqarah*. However, project was suspended for the time being due to the involvements in other numerous activities, and remained unattended during the next five years.

In *Shawwal* 1388 (1969) the project was restarted while the author suffered from a number of diseases which made him restricted to his bed. It was during this ailment that he again started this work while on bed and completed *Surah al-Baqarah* in the same condition. Since then he devoted himself to the "*Ma'ariful-Qur'an*". Despite a large number of obstacles in his way, he never surrendered to any of them and continued his work with a miraculous speed until he accomplished the work in eight volumes (comprising about seven thousand pages) within five years only. (Taqi, N.D)

#### Presentation & Style

The work consists of eight volumes. A detailed introduction, included at the

beginning of the first volume, focuses on some of the basic issues of the Quran. Notable among them are the *Wahy*, the modes of descent, the chronology of the revelation of the Quran, the first revealed verses (ayah), Meccan and Medinan verses, the preservation of the Quran, the printing of the Quran, the sources of *Tafsir*, Arabic language etc. The work adopts a simple narrative style: first, several verses are provided in the original Arabic with their literal translation in Urdu; it is then followed by subject-wise discussion on almost every important issue. Here we are presenting some important features of *Ma'ariful Qur'an*. (Shafi, 1982)

1. Rather to translate Qur'an again by himself, the author depended and borrowed the translation for his *Tafsir* from Mahmood Ul Hassan Deobandi and Ashraf Ali Thanvi as both the authors already done this job with great care and responsibility.
2. The abstract of Chapters is taken from the *Tafsir Bayan al Qur'an* with some additions by himself.
3. Under the title *Marif o Masa'il, Ma'ariful Qur'an* not only includes the discussions and analysis of the Quran found in the authentic sources of *Tafsir*, it also tries to answer the contemporary questions and issues in a logical and scholarly manner, which is rather absent in other traditional *Tafsirs*. (Abdul Ali, 2001)
4. The author tried his best to discuss emerging issues of the new era of Science & Technology and presented their possible solutions in light of Qur'an and Sunah. For Example; Transplantation of blood from one person to another to save life, use of various Allopathic Medicines, Family Planning,

- (*Zabt e Wiladat*) Raza'at of newly born babies, prey by bullet etc. (Taqqi,N.D)
5. The author rather to criticize past work discussed *Fiqhi* Problems in general on various issues of the modern days and gave their possible solutions in light of Qur'an and Sunah. Such matters are mostly referred from *Ahkam al-Quran, Tafsir Al Qurtubi, Ibne Arabi, Tafsirat Ahmadia, Rooh Al Maani, Bayan al Quar'an*.
  6. The author mostly depended on the work already made by the prominent scholars in the past. In this regard author frequently referred following sources during his commentary.
  7. In the introduction of Ma'ariful Qur'an, the author has mentioned the sources he has taken help from in compiling this voluminous work. Some of them are:

| Name of Work Referred  | Author   | Died on (AH) |
|--|--|--------------|
| <i>Tafsir Ibn e Jarir</i>  | Allama Abu Jafar Muhammad ibn Jarir Tabari                     | 310          |
| <i>Ahkam al-Quran</i>  | Imam Abubakar Jassais Razi                                     | 370          |
| <i>Tafsir al-Kabir</i>   | Imam Fakhruddin Razi   | 606          |
| <i>Tafsir Al Qurtubi, (Al Jam e Al Aqhkam Alqur'an)</i>                  | Abu Abdullah Mohammad bin Ahmad bin Abi Bakar Farah Al Qurtabi | 671          |
| <i>Tafsir al-Bahr al-Muhit</i>   | Abu Hayan Gharnati Undlasi                                     | 754          |
| <i>Tafsir Ibn e Kathir</i>   | Hafiz Imadud Din Abu Alfida Ismail bin Kathir                  | 774          |
| <i>Tafsir Al Dur al- Manthur</i>   | Jalaluddin Al-Suyuti   | 910          |
| <i>Tafsir e Mazhari</i>  | Qazi Sanaullah Pani Pati                                       | 1265         |
| <i>Rooh al Ma'ani ( Tafsir Al Qur'an Ail Azeem wa Asba'a Al Mas'ani)</i> | Mohammad A'aloosi  |              |
| <i>Al Quran Al Kareem (Translation)</i>                                  | Mahmood ul Hassan  | 1339         |
| <i>Bayan Al Qur'an</i>   | Asraf Ali Thanvi   | 1362         |

(Taqqi,2002)

The simple narrative technique is repeated again and again until the end to make it more understandable by the

common person. Below is the list of volumes and their contents:

| Volumes | Contents of volumes                |
|---------|------------------------------------|
| 1       | Sura Al-Fatiha and sura Al-Baqara  |
| 2       | from sura Al-Imran to sura An-Nisa |
| 3 – 4   | from sura Al-Anfal to sura Hud     |
| 5       | from sura Yusuf to sura Al-Kahf    |
| 6 - 7   | from sura Luqman to sura Al-Ahqaf  |
| 8       | from sura Muhammad to Surat al-Nas |

### TRANSLATIONS

Keeping in view the importance and usefulness of Tafsir Maariful Quran, it has been translated into English and Bengali languages. The detail is as under:

Keeping in view the importance of Tafsir Maariful Quran, it has been translated into English by Prof. Muhammad Hasan Askari and Prof. Muhammad Shamim, and revised by Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani. It has been published from Karachi (Shafi,N.D, P: XV, XVI)

The complete eight volumes of Tafsir Maariful Quran have been translated into Bengali by Maulana Muhiuddin Khan and published from Dhaka by Islamic Foundation Bangladesh (Shafi,N.D, P: XIII.).

### CONCLUSION

Keeping in view above, it is concluded that it is a matter of great pride for Mufti Muhammad Shafi that he is the scholar who rather to criticize the other sects, presented all his work in very simple, unique and versatile manner with authentic justifications, from Quran and Sunnah that other sects even though having difference of opinion in various issues, still considering him very honest and responsible scholar for the way he concluded the issues sensitive in nature (due to which Muslim Umah divided into various sects) with authentic evidence purely in light of Quran and Sunnah, in easy and logical way and can understand that what the Almighty Allah is demanding from the mankind for their own betterment of this and the eternal world. This is a commendable service of Mohammad Shafi for the Muslim Umah.

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