Al-Biqāʿī and Iṣlāḥī: A Comparative Study of *Tafsīr* Methodology

Israr Ahmad Khan*

Abstract: It is recognized by scholars that there is a system of coherence in the Qurʾān and that each and every verse, large and small, constitutes an integral unit of the Qurʾān. There are only two complete tafsīr (exigesis) of the Qurʾān based on the principle of coherence. One is in Arabic and the other is in Urdu. A comparative analysis of the two works shows that the coherence found in the Arabic exegesis was in its formative phase and that it was developed to its full form in the Urdu exigesis. The coherence in the Qurʾān found in the two exigesis deserves closer analysis as it may assist the rebuilding of the grand edifice of Islamic thought and life.

One of the methods of interpreting the Qurʾānic *āyāt* (verses) is known as *naẓm al-Qurʾān* (coherence in the Qurʾān). According to this method, the Qurʾān is considered an integral whole and all its verses in each chapter (*sūrah*) are coherent and cohesive.[1] Only two scholars have used this method in their interpretation of the entire Qurʾān: Abū al-Ḥasan Ibrāhīm ibn ʿUmar Burhān al-Dīn al-Biqāʿī and Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī. The former's exegesis (*tafsīr*) is in Arabic and the latter is in Urdu. This study attempts a comparative analysis of these two works and identifies the methods they have used to help understand the Qurʾān better.

The Two Scholars

Ibrāhīm al-Biqāʿī was born in Khirbatu Ruḥā in the district of Biqāʿ in Syria in 809 A.H.[2] At the age of twelve he lost all his family

* Dr. Israr Ahmad Khan is Associate Professor, Department of Qurʾān and Sunnah Studies, International Islamic University Malaysia. E-mail: israr@iiu.edu.my

members who were killed by a rival tribe. He then moved to Damascus along with his maternal grandfather, his guardian. He studied in various seminaries under wellknown scholars in Damascus, Cairo, Alexandria and Dimyāt. Thereafter, he settled in Damascus and devoted his time and energy to teaching, debating and writing books in the fields of *tafsīr*, *fiqh* (jurisprudence) and *tasawwuf* (mysticism). His *Naẓm al-Durar Fī Tanāsub al-āyāt wa al-Suwar* has been hailed as outstanding.[3] He died in 885 A.H. and was buried in the outskirt of Damascus.

Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī was born in 1903 C.E. in Azamgarh in Uttar Pradesh, India. He graduated from a highly prestigious Islamic university, Madrasah al-Iṣlāḥ, in 1922 C.E. and gained expertise in such fields as *tasfīr*, *ḥadīth*, *fiqh*, Islamic philosophy, logic and Arabic language. Having served as a journalist for three years, Iṣlāḥī joined, in 1925 C.E., his *alma mater* as a lecturer and continued serving it until 1943 C.E. when he joined the Islamic movement in India led by the well-known Islamic revivalist, Sayyid Abūl A'lā Mawdūdī. He migrated to Pakistan in 1947 and continued serving the cause of Islam for which he suffered imprisonment for a while.[4] He wrote many books on *da'wah* and Islamic life. His magnum opus, however, is *Tadabbur al-Qur'ān*.[5] He died in 1997 C.E. in Lahore, Pakistan. His surname Iṣlāḥī is derived from the name of his university Iṣlāḥ.

Objectives of *Tafsīr*

Qur'ānic interpretations are undertaken for a variety of reasons. Generally, they are intended to convey the messages of the revealed Book in the simplest way possible. Some interpretations, however, reflect juridical or sectarian outlooks. Few *tafsīr* works are purely polemical. Al-Biqā'ī states three objectives of his *tafsīr*: communication of the Qur'ānic messages, i.e., propagation of Islam; intellectual contribution in the field of *tafsīr* so as to receive the blessings of the Prophet (SAS) as was the case with 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abbās;[6] and, substitution of the *tafsīr* work of 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar al-Baidāwī (d. 685 A.H.). Most probably, al-Biqā'ī did not agree with al-Baidāwī's *tafsīr* which is basically an abridgement of al-Zamakhsharī's *Tafsīr al-Kashshāf.* Al-Biqā'ī perhaps felt that a better and more beneficial *tafsīr* was needed.

Iṣlāḥī, it appears from the introduction to his work, wrote his *tafsīr* for the *'ulamā'* who are responsible to lead the people aright. He observed that the chief factor causing dissension among the Muslims is, what he calls, non-conciliatory approaches in the interpretation of the Qur'ān. He believes that most of the *fiqhī* controversies and emergence of different religious camps among the Muslims were due to different interpretations of Qur'ānic messages. Apparently, he wished his *tafsīr* to serve as a criterion to ascertain the validity or otherwise of a *tafsīrī* opinion. He earnestly felt that his work might bring various factions of the Muslims together and ultimately restore the unity of the Muslim ummah.[7]

Methodology of *Tafsīr*

Al-Biqā'ī begins the interpretation of every *sūrah,* with the exception of *sūrat al-Taubah,* first, with *Basmalah* and its meaning.[8] Second, he provides an explanation of the aim (*maqsūd*) of the *sūrah.* Interestingly, although the *basmalah* occurs in every *sūrah,* al-Biqā'ī presents a different interpretation of it in different *sūrahs.* Through this novel interpretation, he shows the link between this beginning and the messages of the *sūrah.* For instance, *basmalah* in *sūrat al-Fātiḥah* is explained as:

> Allah is the name to which submit the hearts at a time when the minds stand bewildered, get devoted to it, and dispense with every thing else. *Al-Raḥmān* refers to the mercy encompassing all that which the Sustainer sustains (*al-rubūbiyyah*). *Al-Raḥīm* signifies special grace for those with whom the God is pleased.[9]

In *sūrat al-Baqarah* it reads:

> Allah here means the entity Who, despite being hidden, becomes obvious through the clear indications of the right path. *Al-Raḥmān* is the One Who pours out His mercy on all of His creations by producing the description of the path. *Al-Raḥīm* is He Who confers prosperity upon those deserving His love.[10]

In *sūrah Āli 'Imrān* it is:

> Allah is alone and unique possessing perfection. *Al-Raḥmān* is He Whose mercy extends to every object of His creation, and Who makes the path to deliverance absolutely clear for the responsible creations. *Al-Raḥīm* is the One Who selects the

upholders of *tawḥīd* for His love and chooses them to extol His glory and sanctify Him."

Third, al-Biqā'ī explains how the *sūrah* is related to its preceding *sūrah* and sheds light on the wisdom of the particular place of the *sūrah* in *the* Qur'ānic order of *sūrahs*. Thence he proceeds to the point of interpreting the statements in the *sūrah*. He explains at length each and every single word leaving nothing outside the domain of *tafsīr*.

In interpreting an *āyah*, al-Biqā'ī highlights the relationship between the current and its preceding *āyah*. In his interpretation he uses the Qur'ānic *āyāt* to explain a point. He uses *aḥādīth* extensively. He often quotes at length historical accounts and other information from biblical sources. His *ijtihād* occupies more space than other sources. Wherever possible, he brings in the opinion of 'Alī ibn Aḥmad al-Harāllīyy (d.637 A.H.), a sixth century Syrian scholar, and refers to the approach of Abū Ja'far Aḥmad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Gharnāṭī (d.692 A.H.), a scholar of the Qur'ān in Islamic Spain during seventh century A.H., in the beginning of each *sūrah* to specify its link with the previous *sūrah*. He says: "I have benefited extensively in this book from the *tafsīr* of al-Harāllīyy."[12] Occasionally, he cites the views of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d.606A.H.) but very briefly and very rarely. Sometimes he would discuss the linguistic dimension of a word or phrase but avoid linguistic debates.

Iṣlāḥī begins his *tafsīr* of each *sūrah* with an introduction to its central theme (*'amūd*), its apparent connection with the previous *sūrah*, and a summary of its subject matter. This style is found only in the works of Sayyid Mawdūdī (d.1979 C.E.) and Sayyid Quṭb (d.1966 C.E.). Iṣlāḥī's scheme of interpretation has two main components: linguistic and technical explanation of each and every word in an *āyah* and elaboration of the message of the *āyah*. He uses, as he explains, two sources: internal tools and external aids. Internal tools consist of the classical Qur'ānic language, the Qur'ān itself, and the coherence in the Qur'ānic statements. External aids comprise authentic *aḥādīth*, historical background of revelation, previous *tafsīr* works particularly of ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d.310 A.H.), Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, and Maḥmūd ibn 'Umar al-Zamakhsharī (d.538 A.H.), Judeo-Christian scriptures, and 'Arab history.[13] Iṣlāḥī has, to a great extent, followed the principles of coherence in the

Qurʾān laid down by his teacher, a well-known Indian *mufassir* (exegete), ʿAbdul Ḥamīd al-Farāhī (d.1930 C.E.). Iṣlāḥī's *tafsīr* is based on the principle of *"tafsīr* of the Qurʾān by the Qurʾān." Thus, he explains an *āyah* by referring to another *āyah* or *āyāt*. In adopting this approach, Iṣlāḥī comes very close to Ibn Kathīr (d.774 A.H.).[14]

It is essential to note that the companions of the Prophet (SAS) and those who followed them have used the Qurʾān, the *sunnah* and *ḥadīth*, their own *ijtihād* as well as Judeo-Christian sources in their interpretations of the Qurʾān. Al-Biqāʿī and Iṣlāḥī have used the same sources as their predecessors. The approaches adopted by the two scholars make their *tafsīr* works deserving to be placed in the category of *al-tafsīr al-māthūr*.

Naẓm al-*Qurʾān*

Both al-Biqāʿī and Iṣlāḥī rightly believe that the statements of the Qurʾān are coherent and cohesive though these verses were revealed over a long period of about 23 years. Incoherence is considered an elocutionary defect. If the Qurʾān is composed of non-cohesive discourse, it certainly would not have produced the effect it has so far done on people's minds. Al-Biqāʿī is of the view that incongruity in the parts of the Qurʾān would cause aversion to the divine message and would prevent people from accepting the truth. It would also make the believers doubt the inimitability of the Qurʾān and ultimately lose their faith.[15] Iṣlāḥī could not understand how the Qurʾān could be considered inimitable yet devoid of any coherence with no linkages between chapters and verses. He says: "It is surprising as to how such an untenable notion got developed in the minds about the great Book, which, friends and foes acknowledge, stirred the world, transformed minds and hearts, laid a new foundation for thought and life and provided for the humanity a new light."[16]

Al-Biqāʿī stresses that the relationship between the discipline of *Munāsibāt al-Qurʾān* (coherence in the Qurʾān) and the *tafsīr* is like that between the rhetoric and the syntax. To him, this knowledge is the secret of eloquence helping one to reach the true meaning of a statement.[17] According to Iṣlāḥī, the only way to access the knowledge and wisdom of the Qurʾān is through *naẓm al-Qurʾān*; one who reads the Qurʾān without its guidance cannot get anything

except a few isolated rulings and some solitary instructions.[18] Two examples of the application of *naẓm al-Qur'ān* are given below.

In *sūrat al-Baqarah, āyāt* 30-39 describe in a way the creation of Adam and the reaction of angels and *iblīs* to the elevated status granted to the first man. However, *āyāt* 21-29 of the same *sūrah* is about the need for mankind to submit to their Sustainer, and a reminder of His limitless bounties bestowed on them. Apparently, there is no link between the two sections of the same *sūrah*. Al-Biqā'ī shows the link by saying that *āyāt* 21-29 is an injunction to worship Allah (SWT) alone because He has created earth and the heavens for them in general and *āyāt* 30-39 are specifically about the creation of Adam with knowledge and the position of vicegerency as a great bounty of Allah (SWT) to mankind.[19]

Iṣlāḥī, however, links the two sections differently. His explanation is long but it can be summarised as follows: In the first section the children of Ismā'īl have been invited to the message of Prophet Muḥammad (SAS), and warned against the tricks of Jews. And in the second section through the story of Adam's creation and the reaction and approach of angels and *iblīs* to the position given to him, it has been shown that the antagonistic attitude of the Jews and Arabs toward the Prophet (SAS) is very akin to the arrogance of *iblīs*, and the welcoming approach of those who embraced Islam is very much like the submission of angels to the command of Allah.[20]

The second example is from *sūrat al-Nisā'* where *āyāt* 1-14 deal with five different subject matters: the first *āyah* reminds mankind of *taqwā*, the second *āyah* commands the believers to be just and fair in handling the orphans' property, the third and the fourth *āyāt* are about polygamy, the following two *āyāt* go back to the issue concerning the orphans, and the remaining *āyāt* 7-14 explain the Islamic law of inheritance. Is there any coherence among these apparently unrelated issues? Al-Biqā'ī and Iṣlāḥī have identified almost similar connections among these *āyāt* to prove that the Qur'ān is cohesive. To them, all the *āyāt* are concerned with social reform in an environment dominated by centuries old Arab traditions, which were mostly unjust and chauvinistic. Allah (SWT), therefore, began by enjoining the people to cultivate God-consciousness and to be just and fair in their dealings with each other. This is followed by

His exhortation to society to do justice while interacting with the orphans, the less fortunate members of the society. Permission for polygamy and distribution of property (inheritance laws) fairly according to the divine law are some of the ways to ensure justice for all, including the orphans, in a society.[21]

The two examples may be considered as representative samples of the way the two scholars have tried to show the coherence in the Qurʾān. Al-Biqāʿī is not always as specific and elaborate in his reference to the link between various verses in one *surah* as is found in the works of Iṣlāḥī. Nevertheless, they have successfully shown the linkage. Why do most well-acclaimed *mufassirūn* avoid the exercise of establishing a link between *āyāt* and chapters in the Qurʾān? To al-Biqāʿī, an understanding of the relationship among *āyāt* is a very delicate and difficult task that require wading deep into the depth of the Qurʾān, a task not undertaken by most exegetes. Iṣlāḥī says it differently. "The task of identifying the coherence in the Qurʾān is possible only through a comprehensive intellectual struggle ... and serious deliberation (*tadabbur*). [It] calls for the devotion of whole life to the study of the Qurʾān, it is not enough to read it a few times to get to the gem."[22]

Central Theme of Chapters (*Suwar*)

Al-Biqāʿī suggests that an understanding of the central theme of a *surah* helps one find the relationship among its verses.[23] Iṣlāḥī is certain that every *surah* comprises one main subject matter around which all the statements of the *surah* revolve.[24] As such, both the scholars began their deliberation on every *surah* with a clear explanation of its central theme. They also point out that the recognition of the central thesis of *surahs,* particularly long ones, is possible only through serious thinking and careful analysis of each verse of the *surah.* The two scholars, however, did not always agree on the central themes of the *surahs.*

The central theme of *surat al-Baqarah,* to al-Biqāʿī, is the substantiation of the fact that the revealed words lead one aright; and confirmation that the greatest truth to which this *surah* guides is faith in the unseen, which ultimately leads to the faith in the Day of Resurrection and Judgment.[25] To Iṣlāḥī, the central subject of this *surah* is an invitation to the true faith with special emphasis on the

belief in the prophethood. To him, this *surah* is the detailed description of what was put forward in the previous *surah*.[26] Thus, the two scholars apparently differ from each other in their identification of the central theme of *surat al-Baqarah*. In reality, the difference is not substantial as they refer to the same Islamic faith varying in their emphasis on one part or the other.

The difference between the two scholars comes out clearly in *surah Āli ʿImrān*. Referring to its central theme, al-Biqāʿī states that it accommodates several objectives: 1) confirmation of the unity of God, 2) information about the futility of the worldly prosperity and well being in the life hereafter, 3) extension of glad tidings of the blissful life in the hereafter to the sincere believers, and 4) description of the qualities of the God-conscious including faith, supplication, patience, honesty, devotion, charity and seeking Allah's forgiveness.[27] Iṣlāḥī says that the central theme of *surah al-Baqarah* and that of *surah Āli ʿImrān* is common, that is, substantiation of the position of the last Prophet (SAS) for the people in general and for the Jews in particular. He further says that this *surah* highlights the truth of Islam and invites mankind to accept the Islamic system of life and the governance of Allah (SWT).[28]

It is possible to see once again the difference between the two scholars in tracing the main theme of the third *surah* of the Qurʿān. It seems that al-Biqāʿī missed the fine difference between the main theme and the gist of the issues discussed in the *surah*. As for Iṣlāḥī, his finding may be rephrased: "The central theme of the third *surah* is the validation of the Islamic scheme and system of life delivered by the last Prophet (SAS)."

The two scholars agree on the central theme, for example, of *Sūrat al-Aʿrāf, al-Anfāl* and *al-Taubah*. These sūrahs have the same central theme: grim warning of serious consequences to the enemies for their hostility to the message of the Prophet (SAS),[29] enjoining the believers to organize themselves against the enemies and unite on the basis of *taqwā*, fraternity, cooperation and obedience to Allah (SWT) and His Apostle (SAS),[30] and an ultimatum to the disbelievers, hypocrites and the Jews.[31] There are other *surahs* where the two scholars have agreed on one and the same central theme, even though they expressed their findings in different terms and styles.

Wisdom Behind the Arrangement of Chapters

Al-Biqā‘ī subscribes to the view of al-Ḥarālliyy (d.637A.H.) that the existing arrangement of the chapters is the contribution of the companions of the Prophet (SAS) and that the arrangement is meaningful.[32] Iṣlāḥī maintains that the present order of the *surahs* is divinely executed. The same order was followed by the Prophet (SAS) in rehearsing the Qur’ān to Archangel Gabriel and was, in turn, followed by the companions in their reading particularly in the month of *Ramaḍān*. The same order was maintained in the copies of the Qur’ān sent by ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān to various provinces of the caliphate. As such, "this arrangement cannot be devoid of wisdom."[33]

One of the wisdom is the linkages among chapters of the Qur’ān. Al-Biqā‘ī relies extensively on the famous work of al-Gharnātī.[34] Iṣlāḥī appears quite original in this endeavor. Yet, the two concur with each other barring the differences in expression. Al-Buqā’ī is concise whereas Iṣlāḥī is much more elaborate. For instance, al-Biqā‘ī expresses the links between *surah Āli ‘Imrān* and *al-Nisā’* as follows: "Cardinal virtues, as is clear from the ethics, are four: knowledge, fortitude, justice and chastity. *Āli ‘Imrān* invites to knowledge and fortitude and *al-Nisā’* to the remaining virtues of justice and chastity along with the casual references to the other two, if the situation demands."[35] Iṣlāḥī explains it better: "The matter with which *Āli ‘Imrān* ends is the subject with which *al-Nisā’* begins. Thus, the conclusion in the former and the opening in the latter have assumed a position of chain of a link. In the last *āyah* of *Āli ‘Imrān* Muslims have been advised to remain steadfast, get united, face the enemies with patience, and be conscious of God; and *al-Nisā’* begins with the same exhortation—be conscious of God— and proceeds with the advice, in detail, of all that are necessary for maintaining unity and endurance."[36] Evidently, the two statements are similar in terms of the message though the wordings are different.

Likewise, the link between *surat al-Naḥl* and *al-Isrā’* is explained by al-Biqā‘ī as follows:

> The objective of *al-Naḥl* was the exoneration of Allah from any defects including rashness and description of His perfection because He is all-powerful, and it ended with the praise of Ibrāhīm and his followers indicating to the miraculous divine

help to those sincere to Allah, despite their material and numerical weaknesses, against His enemies, despite their being strong materially as well as numerically, as well as with the exhortation to them to be patient and benevolent. And *sūrat al-Isrā* ' begins with a reference to the transcendental power of Allah, which is the closing statement of the previous *sūrah*.[37]

Iṣlāḥī maintains his explicatory approach:

The difference between the two is that of brevity and elaboration. The matters, which have been mentioned briefly in *sūrat al-Naḥl* have occurred in *sūrat al-Isrā* ' with too much clarity. In the former the non-believers and the Jews have both been invited to the message as well as warned but the warning and invitation to the Jews are in symbolic manner, whereas in the latter the Jews have been told very clearly in the light of their own history that the concept of 'chosen people' is but overweening...The Qur'ānic invitation to a simple and natural system of life - observance of justice, generosity, equitable dealing with the relatives and abstinence from abomination, vulgarity and aggression - has been made in a brief manner in the former, but in detail in the latter. *Hijrah* has been mentioned in the former very briefly but in the latter with all the necessary details.[38]

Here, one can see that al-Biqā'ī is ambiguous whereas Iṣlāḥī is very explicit in his reference to the relationship between the chapters concerned.

Interpretation of the Qur'ān by the Qur'ān

Most of the subject matters the Qur'ān deals with appear to have occurred repeatedly. On different occasions the nature of the subject-narration is different. The repeated Qur'ānic statements, according to the situation, are general and particular, implicit and explicit, ambiguous and unambiguous, brief and elaborate, in principle and in practical form, symbolic and illustrative. This situation indicates that the Qur'ān itself is helpful in explaining its *āyāt*. It is this very reason that the *'ulamā* ' are unanimous over the fact that the best *tafsīr* of the Qur'ān is by the Qur'ān itself.[39]

Al-Biqā'ī does not seem to be very particular about this principle. First, he has quoted the Qur'ān very rarely in his interpretation of Qur'ānic *āyāt*. Second, most of the Qur'ānic *āyāt* he quoted are

basically parts of quotations from other scholars particularly al-
Ḥaralliyy and al-Gharnātī. Finally, he, at times, quoted the *āyāt*
simply to strengthen his own idea and not the message of an *āyah*
concerned.

For example, while explaining *al-Ḍuḥā*: 2 (By the night when it
grows still and dark), he refers to a philosophical and mystic idea
and considers necessary to support it by citing an *āyah* from some
other *sūrah*:

> The occurrences in the universe are like those in the man. His
> soul is pure light and his natural urges represent deep darkness,
> his heart is light surrounded by the darkness of the self, which
> is combined with the light of the heart; if the desire of the self
> dominates the luminance of the heart, the entire being of the
> man turns dark; if the luminance of the heart dominates the
> darkness of the self, the man becomes brilliant; if the soul
> dominates the instincts, the man transcends the level of angels;
> if the instincts dominate the soul, he goes even below the rank
> of animals as Allah says in *al-Aʿrāf*: 179 "They are like cattle—
> nay, more misguided: for they are heedless."[40]

Clearly, *āyah* 179 of *al-Aʿrāf* is used to support the view of al-Biqāʿī
concerning something not directly related to the main theme.

Iṣlāḥī is different and makes extensive use of Qurʾānic *āyāt* in his
work of *tafsīr*. He explains that he "relied on the Qurʾānic instances
not only for tracing the link between *āyāt* and to interpret them but
also for resolving most of the problems pertaining to the Qurʾānic
diction and phraseology." This is done for the simple reason that
"the Qurʾān is the most authentic source not only for unfolding the
meaning of its messages but for the solution of its literary and
philological problems."[41] Thus, for instance, Iṣlāḥī begins his
interpretation of "*bismillāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīm*" (In the name of
Allah, the most beneficent, the most merciful) by referring to its
historical position in the light of Qurʾānic *āyāt*, 11:41 and 27:30.
These *āyāt* show that this phrase was also used during the time of
earlier prophets including Noah and Sulaimān.[42] This information
has not been referred to by any other *mufassir* before Iṣlāḥī.

The beauty of interpreting an *āyah* with the help of other related
āyāt is that it removes all ambiguities concerning the *āyah* under

consideration and gives a complete picture of the message. For instance, Iṣlāḥi agrees with other scholars that the *āyah* 204 in *al-Baqarah* refers to hypocrites but, unlike others, he interprets it in the light of some *āyāt* from *sūrat al-Munāfiqūn*, which clearly describes the characteristic features of the hypocrites in Madinah.[43] This method of interpretation helps clarify the meaning of the *āyah* without causing any confusion whatsoever.

Interpretation of the Qurʾān by *Aḥādīth*

Another tool used to interpret the Qurʾān are the traditions of Prophet Muḥammad (SAS) who symbolized the Qurʾān and is the role model for all Muslims to emulate. Al-Biqāʿī, in explaining an *āyah,* relies extensively upon prophetic traditions. He does not seem to care much about the authenticity of the reports he cites in his interpretation. At times he does refer to the nature of certain traditions by quoting opinions of *muḥaddithūn.*

In general, however, al-Biqāʿī seems to be concerned with the import of a quoted tradition rather than with its authenticity. Some of his cited *aḥādīth* are *ṣaḥīḥ* (highly authentic), others are *ḥasan* (fairly acceptable) or *ḍaʿīf* (weak) or even *maudūʿ* (fabricated). Inclusion of weak and fabricated traditions in *tafsīr* tends to mar the soundness of his work. The latest edition of his *tafsīr* contains footnotes in which the editor has clarified the nature of the traditions quoted by al-Biqāʿī.[44] Thus, the first *ḥadīth* cited in *sūrat al-Baqarah* reads: "Ibn Masʿūd reports that the Prophet (SAS) said: The previous Books used to be revealed in one single category based on one single form of character and the Qurʾān was revealed in seven categories representing seven kinds of areas: prohibition, command, lawful, unlawful, precise, illustrative, and parables; hence, consider its lawful matters lawful, avoid what it has declared unlawful, act upon its commands, keep away from its prohibitions, derive lesson from its parables, translate its precise instructions into practice and believe in its illustrative statements."[45] This *ḥadīth*, according to the editor, is weak.

Al-Biqāʿī does not see any problem in citing a tradition from an invalid source. He quotes from al-Thaʿlabī (d.427A.H.) a report on the authority of Anas for which the editor "could not find it authenticated in any source, and al-Thaʿlabī is not considered a

reliable source; its text is quite strange."[46] In other words, this is a fabricated tradition and hence rejected. Likewise, al-Biqā'ī cites the tradition through Anas ibn Mālik in his interpretation of the *āyah* 58:12 which was clearly identified by Ibn al-Jauzī (d.597A.H.) as fabricated.[47]

Iṣlāḥī, on the other hand, is extremely careful in citing the traditions to interpret Qur'ānic *āyāt*. In interpreting such Qur'ānic terms as *ṣalāt, zakāt, ṣawm*, and others, to quote Iṣlāḥī, "I have interpreted them entirely in the light of continuous traditions as the right to interpret the Qur'ānic and *sharī'ah* terms is vested in the hands of the receiver of the revelation, Prophet Muḥammad (SAS) alone."[48] To him, "the noblest and the most sacred source" for *tafsīr* is the anthology of *ḥadīth* and *athar.*" This is the reason why Iṣlāḥī, in his own words, "availed myself as much as possible of the entire collection of *ḥadīth*."[49] It is conceivable that al-Biqā'ī did not have the same opportunity like that of Iṣlāḥī to access the entire collection of *ḥadīth* and benefit from it.

Unlike other *mufassirūn,* including al-Biqā'ī, Iṣlāḥī does not quote the tradition in verbatim. He prefers to present the information from the tradition in his own words and resorts to direct quotation only if it is absolutely essential. Thus, in his interpretation of the *āyah* 101 in *sūrat al-Nisā'* concerning the shortening of prayers, he says that it was the practice of the Prophet (SAS) and his companions to shorten the prayers by half except for *maghrib* (after sunset) and *fajr* (at dawn) prayers. While shortening of the prayers was permitted initially for the duration of the war, it can be extended to other situations including travelling. The Prophet (SAS) has permitted the shortening of prayers during traveling period; he practiced it "and the companions followed him."[50] Thus, Iṣlāḥī has used the *sunnah* and *ḥadīth* to justify his understanding of the verse without directly quoting the tradition.

He has not used a weak or inauthentic report in his work. In explaining an *āyah* on the basis of traditions, Iṣlāḥī blends the information in the report with his explanation of the *āyah* in such a way that the explanation emerges as an integral whole. Any attempts to exclude *ḥadīth* from his interpretation would distort the idea he presented. Thus, in explaining *āyah* 1 of *sūrat al-Mujādalah* (Allah has indeed heard the statement of the woman who pleads with you

concerning her husband and carries her complaint to Allah...), he provides the names of the lady as reported in the tradition, Khaulah bt. Thaʿlabah, and her husband ʿAws ibn Ṣāmit al-Anṣārī. In the narration, once the husband said to his wife out of anger: "You are henceforth to me like my mother's back." This statement tantamounts to pronouncing divorce in the pre-Islamic period. Perplexed and frustrated, the lady brought the matter to the Prophet (SAS) for a solution. With no revelation at hand, the Prophet (SAS) delayed giving a clear answer and the lady had to remind him over and over again.[51]

Likewise, in his interpretation of *āyah* 11 of *sūrat al-Jumuʿah*, Iṣlāḥī refers to an incident as reported in the tradition. According to reports, people left the mosque leaving the Prophet (SAS) on the pulpit to greet the caravan loaded with much needed commercial goods. "Apparently, people decided to delay the prayer and were not aware of the significance of the Friday sermon. This turned out to be a blessing in disguise since this incident resulted in a revelation, for the first time, concerning the Friday sermon and the position of the Prophet (SAS)."[52]

The two examples show that Amin Iṣlāḥī has used the traditions to explain the Qurʾānic statements and not his own ideas. The tradition is well blended with the explanation. This is unlike the work of al-Biqāʿī where the traditions stand apart from the explanation, disjointed and, at times, redundant.

Utilization of Judeo-Christian Sources

Judeo-Christian literature particularly *Taurāt* and *Injīl* have been used by almost all the generations of scholars to shed more light on certain *āyāt* of the Qurʾān. Al-Biqāʿī and Iṣlāḥī belong to the same group and have used the biblical sources for the purpose of explaining the Qurʾān.

Al-Biqāʿī has quoted from Judaic as well as Christian literature extensively. He uses this source to fill in the gap in certain historical accounts narrated by the Qurʾān. However, he uses it to provide information on matters not of importance and at times of no relevance. Thus, after explaining *āyāt* 60-61 of *sūrat al-Baqarah*, al-Biqāʿī provides a historical account of the Jews wandering in the

desert and giving detailed information on cities, people and the way thousands of them perished. This 14-page historical documentation was of no relevance to the subject matter at hand.

Similarly, in explaining *āyāt* 126-132 of *sūrat al-Baqarah* that refer to Ibrāhīm's sincerity of commitment to the cause of Islam, al-Biqā'ī brings in information about Ibrāhīm's birth, genealogy, marriage, encounters with the people, departure from his native land, travels, experiences during journey, settling in Palestine and his devotion to Allah etc., with all the details covering five pages. The *āyāt* did not warrant all this information. In explaining *āyah* 253 of *al-Baqarah*, al-Biqā'ī went to the extent of putting a separate sub-heading: "Mention of His Clear Proofs, Wisdom and Signs as Available in *Injīl*."[53]

Iṣlāḥī quotes the biblical sources very carefully and only in places where it may be quite useful for the readers. For example, while elaborating *āyah* 40 of *al-Baqarah* (O children of Israel...fulfil your covenant with Me as I fulfil My covenant with you), Iṣlāḥī interprets the covenant to mean the entire *sharī'ah* "as the *sharī'ah* in reality constitutes a covenant between Allah and His servants." He, however, argues that the verse was referring to a specific covenant, as mentioned in *Taurāt,* with the children of Israel about Prophet Muḥammad (SAS). To substantiate his argument he quotes from the Old Testament a paragraph, which contains the prophesy about the raising of the Last prophet from among the brothers of Jews.[54] Likewise, in the interpretation of *āyah* 124 of *al-Baqarah,* Iṣlāḥī quotes some verses from the Old Testament very briefly to show how Allah (SWT) had blessed Ibrāhīm with innumerable bounties in the form of worldly prosperity such as children.[55] He is consistent throughout his work in borrowing from previous scriptures. He cites from them only when it is absolutely necessary and that, too, in the form of very short quotations.

The Semantic Dimension of *Tafsīr*

The main task of a *mufassir* is to select and determine the most appropriate meaning from among the various probable meanings of Qur'ānic words. It is a very delicate responsibility as a wrong or inaccurate selection of the meaning of a word is bound to distort the message of the divine word.

Al-Biqāʿī, at times, discusses the semantic aspect of the words with his vast knowledge of Arabic. The *sūrahs* such as *Yūsuf, al-Ra 'd, Ibrāhīm, al-Ḥijr, al-Naḥl, al-Isrā ʾ*, and *al-Kahf* can be cited as examples. In these chapters, he provides lengthy information on various roots of his selected words. For instance, in *sūrah Yūsuf* he has selected fifteen words like *sawwalat* (misled, 12:18), *wa sharawhu* (and they sold him,12:20) etc., and presented etymology or inflection of words (*ʿilm al-ṣarf*). After completing his explanation of a verse, al-Biqāʿī gives as much detail of different roots and forms of the selected word as possible. The selected words from *sūrah Yūsuf* do not appear difficult or confusing enough to necessitate lengthy explanation of their linguistic fundamentals.

At times al-Biqāʿī takes a lot of space to refer to the basic forms and variants of one single word. He consumed seven pages to explain the words *ta ʿburūn* (12:43) and *bālu* (12:50) and the information is entirely detached from the main body of *tafsīr*. This discussion is of great value in the discipline of Arabic morphology but not in *tafsīr*. Generally, when a *mufassir* makes a semantic discussion of a word or phrase, he tries to justify his selection of the meaning of the word. This is not the case with al-Biqāʿī. This may be due to the fact that his tafsīr work emanated from his *tafsīr* classes and the lengthy semantic dimension is the result of questions raised after the lecture.

Iṣlāḥī seems to be essentially different from al-Biqāʿī in this matter. He appears to be very sensitive and careful about the semantic aspect. In the introduction to his *tafsīr* work, Iṣlāḥī remarks that the language of the Qurʾān is Arabic and is inimitable in terms of eloquence and rhetorical style. Furthermore, the Arabic in use in contemporary times is very much different from the Qurʾānic Arabic in style, diction, idioms, and phraseology. The Qurʾānic Arabic is unlike the language used by Ḥarīrī and Mutanabbī but that of classical poets like Imruʾ al-Qais, Zuhair, ʿAmr ibn Kulthūm, and Labīd and of the orators such as Qass ibn Sāʿadah. Understanding the miraculous style of the Qurʾān, therefore, requires developing a "taste and ability to understand the beauty and deficiencies of *jāhilī* period's poets and orators."[56]

Iṣlāḥī divides his *tafsīr* of every *sūrah* into various sections, one of which is captioned "Examination of Words and Explanation of

āyāt." In this section, he states the meaning of relatively difficult words in a very smooth, simple and brief manner. He justifies his preference for a particular meaning of a word sometimes by referring to the Qurʾān and, at other times, by referring to the literature of the *jāhilī* period and Arabic lexicon particularly from *Lisān al-ʿArab*. This can be illustrated with the help of a few examples.

Iṣlāḥī selected five words (*qaryah, sujjadan, al-bāb, ḥiṭṭatun, muḥsinīn*) from *āyah* 58 of *sūrat al-Baqarah* and explains them semantically. Three examples would suffice to show Iṣlāḥī's style. 1) *Sujjadan*: The original meaning of *sajdah* is 'bowing the head'. It has various levels, the sublime form of *sajdah* is prostration as is done in the prayer (*ṣalāt*). ʿAmr ibn Kulthūm has used *sujjadan* to mean prostration in his well-known couplet: "When a child of ours reaches the weaning period, mighty tyrants fall in prostration to him." But the context in the *āyah* indicates its meaning as "bowing the head." 2) *Al-Bāb*: To some it means "the gate of the town"; others interpret it to mean "the door of the tent." Iṣlāḥī prefers the second opinion as it is more akin to the Jewish psyche. 3) *Ḥiṭṭatun*: This single word constitutes a complete sentence and is derived from "*ḥaṭṭa,*" which means "to sweep." *Ḥiṭṭatun*, therefore, has occurred in the sense of sweeping the sins. It is probable that this word in Hebrew language was also used in the sense of "*istighfār*" (asking for forgiveness) and "*tawbah*" (repentance). In Arabic it has the same meaning. Al-Zamakhshari refers to its meaning as "we ask for your forgiveness."[57]

Fiqhī Debates

The Qurʾānic *āyāt*, as is known, have direct bearings upon Islamic legal system. The *mufassirūn* have invariably commented upon these *āyāt* and their implications. Al-Biqāʿī appears to be an exception to this general trend. He has almost totally avoided discussing on the legal implications of the *āyāt* and prefers to be silent on controversial *fiqhī* juristic matters. Occasionally, he would show preference for one ruling or the other by quoting other scholars particularly al-Ḥarāllīyy. Iṣlāḥī, on the contrary, enters into the debate on *fiqhī* matters in brief and takes a decisive stand on the issue. He defends his decision by rational arguments as well as by drawing upon the points of view of traditional scholars.

While explaining *āyāt* 28 of *al-Baqarah* (And the divorced women shall undergo a waiting period of three *Qurū'*). Iṣlāḥī and al-Biqā'ī stop at the word *Qurū'* and provide an explanation for the term. Al-Biqā'ī prefers al Harāllīyy's stand on this matter. To quote:

> Al Harāllīyy says that *Qurū'* is the plural of *Qar'*, which is an intervening period between the menstruation and the purity.... One who interprets this word as the period of purity is more appropriate than the one who puts it as menstruation."[58] Iṣlāḥī goes a little deeper. He explains that "*Qurū'* is the plural of *Qar'* and has been used to mean either menstruation or purity. "Our preference is that its original import is menstruation but because of its necessary association with purity it is also used to refer to the period of purity....The problem mentioned here in the *āyah* and the context in which it has been mentioned both prove that the meaning of *Qurū'* is menstruation. The wisdom behind the waiting period, as is clear from the *āyah* itself, is the confirmation on whether the woman is pregnant or not. That a woman is pregnant is determined through the menses and by the period of purity. That is why it is more appropriate to interpret this word as menses than to take it as purity.[59]

A second example would make the point clear. *Āyāt* 1-3 of *sūrat al-Ṭalāq* exhort the believers to space the three pronouncements of divorce. Scholars disagree on this issue. Al-Biqā'ī explains his view in these words:

> This is the divorce according to the *sunnah* of the Prophet (SAS), while any other way is *bid'ah* (innovation). The divorce during menses period causes the waiting period to be long because it remains uncalculated. It should be pronounced during the purity period, during which sexual intercourse has not been performed. If the conjugal relationship was practiced and it resulted in the wife becoming pregnant, the waiting period would become longer....The divorce for the waiting period is to minimize the burden on the woman, as the religion makes the life easy. It indicates that the waiting period is for vigilance and the pronouncement of divorce during menstruation is forbidden because the prescription of something is proscription of the otherwise. And this is clear from the tradition according to which 'Abd Allah ibn 'Umar divorced his wife during her menses period, when the Prophet (SAS) was informed, he became angry and ordered Ibn 'Umar to retract his divorce until her

period was over and allowed him thereafter to retain her or divorce her before sexual intimacy.[60]

Iṣlāḥī takes a different stand and informs the readers that there are differences of opinion on pronouncing three divorces in one sitting. Some scholars consider three pronouncements in one sitting as constituting only one pronouncement. To the adherents of Ḥanafī school, it constitutes three and the divorce becomes irrevocable. The husband, however, has committed a sin in the eyes of Allah (SWT) by neglecting the divine commandment of spacing the three pronouncements. Iṣlāḥī finds the two approaches deficient and needs to be corrected since "marriage" and "divorce" are of great significance in sharīʿah. To Iṣlāḥī:

> the *Hanafites'* view, as far as the *sharīʿah* is concerned, seems to be more reasonable as they consider three divorces as three divorces and not one. But, there is a flaw in this opinion. If the person having disrespectful attitude toward the Qurʾānic injunction is not disciplined or punished and is declared only sinful in the eyes of Allah, people may not be expected to honour the Qurʾānic commands. Thus, while the divorce becomes irrevocable, it is necessary to punish the husband so as to deter the people intending to apply wrong manner of divorce.[61]

Controversial Issues

There are many issues in the Qurʾān which the *mufassirūn* have interpreted differently. Some of these disputed matters are: abbreviated letters (*Ḥurūf al-muqaṭṭaʿāt*), illustrative phrases (*mutashābihāt*), abrogating and abrogated rulings (*al-āyāt al-nāsikhah wa al-mansūkhah*), punishment for adultery, the Qurʾān's revelation in the night of power, and sorcery. Al-Biqāʿī and Iṣlāḥī have also given their views on these matters.

Abbreviated letters: Twenty-nine *sūrahs* of the Qurʾān begin with disjointed letters. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī has described twenty-one different interpretations of these letters.[62] Al-Biqāʿī presents different interpretation for all the fourteen combinations.[63] Brevity of space necessitates discussing only a few of them. The combination *Alif Lām Mīm*, he says, constitutes a challenge to the Arabs that they cannot produce a book like the Qurʾān, which is a revelation from

Allah but composed of the same alphabet they use in their daily speeches.[64] The letters *Ḥā Mīm* are the abbreviation of *Ḥikmatu Muḥammad* (the divine wisdom in raising the last Prophet Muḥammad).[65] One letter beginning of *sūrah Qāf* (50) is *Qāf*, which refers to the all-pervading knowledge and power of Allah.[66]

Iṣlāḥī believes that the use of disjointed letters was not unknown to the ʿArabs of the pre-Qurʾānic period, who, at times, applied this method to refer to a certain name of place, thing or animal in their poems. He has also quoted the view of his teacher al-Farāhī on the matter. To al-Farāhī, these abbreviated letters represent certain meaning as well as things such as *Alif* represents cow, *Ba* house, *Jīm* camel, and *Mīm* the wave of water. The ground for making this suggestion is that the twenty-nine letters of Arabic alphabet are derived from Hebrew (*ʿIbrānī*) language, in which the letters had not only the sound when pronounced but also forms when written just like the Chinese language, which has both the sound and form in its characters. Iṣlāḥī marvels at this research of his teacher but seems not to be supportive of this idea. He is of the opinion that these abbreviated letters serve as the Qurʾānic name of the *sūrah* in which these form the opening. To him these letters when used in the beginning of a *sūrah* represent a complete and meaningful sentence. For instance, in the beginning of *al-Baqarah* the combination of abbreviated letters *Alif Lām Mīm* signifies *Hādhihī Alif Lām Mīm* (this is the *Alif Lām Mīm* chapter). He is consistent in talking about the abbreviated letters. He presents two strong arguments to corroborate his understanding of these letters: 1) There are *aḥādīth* suggesting these letters as the names of *sūrahs;* 2) Certain *sūrahs* are until now referred to by these letters as their names such as *Ṭā hā, Yā Sīn, Qāf, Nūn* etc. As for the significance of these characters, he finds it very difficult to say anything in a definite manner.[67]

Mutashābihāt: The Qurʾān itself has categorically divided its statements into two groups, *muḥkamāt* (clear and precise) and *mutashābihāt* (illustrative).[68] For the former there is no problem as to its nature and meaning but the scholars do not agree upon one meaning for the latter. Al-Biqāʿī takes the help of al-Ḥarāllīyy and agrees that *mutashābihāt* "signifies comparison between two objects in their outward dimension due to a similarity between them in terms of their hidden traits." The *mutashābihāt* verses deal with Allah

(SWT), His manifestations, His power, etc., which are beyond human perception: "The description of these facts are made through a reference to something, which the man knows. *Al-muḥkam* is for practice and the *mutashābih* is for highlighting the man's inability and meant only for faith."[69] Iṣlāḥī. apparently agrees with al-Biqāʿī. He says, "*mutashābihāt* are those *āyāt* in which the Qurʾān mentions the form of comparison and illustration of those things which lie beyond our knowledge and perception.... These belong to the unseen world.... These matters are related to the attributes of Allah, His acts, and phenomena of the life hereafter."[70]

Punishment For Adultery: Like most of his predecessors, al-Biqāʿī interprets *āyah* 2 of *al-Nūr* (As for the adulteress and the adulterer, flog each of them with a hundred stripes) to mean the punishment to be meted out to unmarried offenders. This is based upon a *ḥadīth*, which differentiates between married and unmarried offenders, and prescribes the death penalty for the former and flogging for the latter.[71] Iṣlāḥī contradicts this general perception. Instead, he argues that the verse is applicable to all kinds of adulterers. He agrees that the Prophet (SAS) prescribed death penalty to some adulterers but finds its basis in *āyah* 33 of *al-Māʾidah* (The punishment of those who wage war against Allah and His Messenger, and endeavor to spread corruption on earth is execution, crucifixion, or the cutting off of hands and feet from opposite sides, or exile from the land). He believes that the people who had been executed for an offence of adultery during the time of the Prophet (SAS) had been charged with the offence of *fasād fi al-ard* (corruption on the earth).[72]

Sorcery: The last two chapters of the Qurʾān, *al-Falaq* (113) and *al-Nās* (114), form invocation to Allah (SWT) to seek His protection from many evil things including sorcery. While explaining the two *sūrahs*, most of the *mufassirūn* describes an incident wherein the Prophet (SAS) was subjected to sorcery by a Jew.[73] Al-Biqāʿī seems to have subscribed to the idea that the Prophet (SAS) had been mentally affected by the enemy's sorcery.[74] Iṣlāḥī rejects this by arguing that all the prophets including the Last one were infallible, hence no magical tricks could have had its negative impact on the Prophet (SAS). He considers the traditions describing this incident weak and unreliable.[75]

Conclusion

Al-Biqāʿī and Iṣlāḥī represent a unique school of *tafsīr*. The former is the first representative of that school and the latter furthered the cause of *naẓm al-Qur ʾān* reshaping the theory and making its picture crystal clear. It seems that the task accomplished by al-Biqāʿī was in its embryonic stage and was developed to its full form by Iṣlāḥī. The principle of *naẓm al-Qur ʾān* as enunciated and applied by the above two scholars deserves closer analysis as it may assist the mission of rebuilding the grand edifice of Islamic thought and life. Unfortunately, these works are not accessible to those not versed in Arabic and Urdu languages. The method of *naẓm al-Qur ʾān* seems to be a potentially viable way to overcome the controversies and conflicts, hence, its application in *tafsīr* is highly imperative and unavoidable.

Notes

1. See ʿAbdul Ḥamīd Al-Farāhī, *Rasāʾil*, (Sarāi Mīr, India: al-Dāʾirah al-Ḥamīdiyyah, 1991), 21-139.

2. Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍauʿ al-Lāmiʿ li Ahl al-Qarn al-Tāsiʿ*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1992) , 101-111.

3. Burhanuddīn Al-Biqāʿī, *Naẓm al-Durar Fī Tanāsub al-Āyāt wa al-Suwar* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1995). The *Naẓm* is in eight volumes.

4. These biographical details have been collected from the records of Madrasah al-Iṣlāḥī, Sarāi Mīr, India, and from those associated with him in India and Pakistan.

5. Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī, "Muqaddimah" in his *Tadabbur-e-Qurʾān* (Delhi:Taj company), 1997. The *Tadabbur-e-Qurʾān* is in nine volumes.

6. The prophet(SAS)'s blessing to ʿAbd Allah ibn ʿAbbās was: "O Allah bestow upon him the insight into Islam and grant him the ability to interpret the thing."Al-Biqāʿī, *Naẓm al-Durar Fī Tanāsub al-Āyāt wa al-Suwar*, 3-5.

7. Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur-e-Qurʾān*, 21-22.

8. *Basmalah* is the acronym of the invocation: *bismillāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm* (In the name of Allah, the most Gracious, the Dispenser of Grace).

9. Al-Biqāʿī, *Naẓm al-Durar Fī Tanāsub al-Āyāt wa al-Suwar*, vol. 1, 13.

10. Ibid., 24.

11. Ibid., vol. 2, 3.

12. Ibid., vol. 1, 7.

13. Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur-e-Qurʾān*, vol. 1, 14-34.

14. ʿImāduddīn Abū al-Fidāʾ Ismāʿīl ibn Kathīr is a highly respected *mufassir*. His *tafsīr* work '*Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAẓīm*' is an excellent example of *tafsīr* based on the *Qurʾānic āyāt* and authentic traditions.

15. Al-Biqāʿī, *Naẓm al-Durar Fī Tanāsub al-Āyāt wa al-Suwar*, vol. 1, 7.

16. Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur-e-Qurʾān*, vol. 1, 17.

17. Al-Biqāʿī, *Naẓm al-Durar Fī Tanāsub al-Āyāt wa al-Suwar*, vol. 1, 5.

18. Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur-e-Qurʾān*, 20.

19. Al-Biqāʿī, *Naẓm al-Durar Fī Tanāsub al-Āyāt wa al-Suwar*, 87.

20. Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur-e-Qurʾān*, 152-154.

21. Al-Biqāʿī, *Naẓm al-Durar Fī Tanāsub al-Āyāt wa al-Suwar*, vol. 2, 204-225; Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur-e-Qurʾān*, vol. 2, 245-262.

22. Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur-e-Qurʾān*, vol. 1, 22-23.

23. Al-Biqāʿī, *Naẓm al-Durar Fī Tanāsub al-Āyāt wa al-Suwar*, vol. 1, 12.

24. It is evident from his scheme of *tafsīr* of every *sūrah*, which invariably begins with a headline 'central theme of the *sūrah*', in which he discusses the main subject matter of the *sūrah*.

25. Al-Biqāʿī, *Naẓm al-Durar Fī Tanāsub al-Āyāt wa al-Suwar*, vol. 1, 24.

26. Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur-e-Qurʾān*, vol. 1, 75.

27. Al-Biqāʿī, *Naẓm al-Durar Fī Tanāsub al-Āyāt wa al-Suwar*, vol. 2, 3.

28. Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur-e-Qurʾān*, vol. 2, 9.

29. Ibid., vol. 3, 3, 215.

30. Ibid., 181, 419.

31. Ibid., 255, 523.

32. Al-Biqāʿī, *Naẓm al-Durar Fī Tanāsub al-Āyāt wa al-Suwar*, vol. 2, 5.

33. Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur-e-Qurʾān*, vol. 1, 25.

34. Abū Jaʿfar Aḥmad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Gharnāṭī, *Al-Muʿallim Bi al-Burhān Fī Tartīb Suwar al-Qurʾān*..

35. Al-Biqāʿī, *Naẓm al-Durar Fī Tanāsub al-Āyāt wa al-Suwar*, vol. 2, 205.

36. Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur-e-Qurʾān*, vol. 2, 237.

37. Al-Biqāʿī, *Naẓm al-Durar Fī Tanāsub al-Āyāt wa al-Suwar*, vol. 4, 328.

38. Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur-e-Qurʾān*, vol. 4, 469.

39. Al-Suyūṭī, Jalāluddīn ʿAbd al-Rahman, *Al-Itqān Fī ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān*, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 2000), 351.

40. Al-Biqāʿī, *Naẓm al-Durar Fī Tanāsub al-Āyāt wa al-Suwar*, vol. 8, 453.

41. Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur-e-Qurʾān*, vol. 1, 28.

42. Ibid., 45-46.

43. Ibid., 493-495.

44. Al-Biqāʿī, *Naẓm al-Durar Fī Tanāsub al-Āyāt wa al-Suwar*, ed., ʿAbd al-Razzāq Ghālib al-Mehdi (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1995).

45. Ibid., vol. 1, 24-26.

46. Ibid., vol. 7, 175.

47. Ibn al-Jauzī, *Kitāb al-Mauḍūʿāt*, vol. 2, (Beirūt:Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah), 1995, 283-284.

48. Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur-e-Qurʾān*, vol. I, 29.

49. Ibid., 30.

50. Ibid., vol. 2, 369-370.

51. Ibid., vol. 8, 247.

52. Ibid., 387.

53. Ibid., 487-491.

54. Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur-e-Qurʾān*, vol. 1, 177-178.

55. Ibid., 326.

56. Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur-e-Qurʾān*, vol. 1, 14-15.

57. Ibid., 219-20.

58. Al-Biqāʿī, *Naẓm al-Durar Fī Tanāsub al-Āyāt wa al-Suwar*, vol. 1, 428.

59. Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur-e-Qurʾān*, vol. 1, 532.

60. Al-Biqāʿī, *Naẓm al-Durar Fī Tanāsub al-Āyāt wa al-Suwar*, vol. 8, 24.

61. Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur-e-Qurʾān*, vol. 8, 440-441.

62. Al-Rāzī, Fakhr al-Dīn, *Mafātīḥ al-Ghaib*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 1997), 252-253.

63. They are *ṣād, qāf, nūn, ṭā hā, ṭā sīn, yā sīn, hā mīm, alif lām mīm, alif lām rā, ṭā sīn mīm, alif lām rā ṣād, alif lām mīm rā, kāf hā yā ʿain ṣād, hā mīm ʿain sīn qāf.*

64. Al-Biqā'ī, *Naẓm al-Durar Fī Tanāsub al-Āyāt wa al-Suwar*, vol. 1, 33.

65. Ibid., vol. 6, 482.

66. Ibid., vol. 7, 244.

67. Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur-e-Qur'ān*, vol 1, 82-84.

68. The Qur'ān 3: 7 (He it is who has sent down to you the Book; in it are āyāt muḥkamāt, they are the foundation of the Book: others are mutashābihāt).

69. Al-Biqā'ī, *Naẓm al-Durar Fī Tanāsub al-Āyāt wa al-Suwar*, vol. 2, 15-16.

70. Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur-e-Qur'ān*, vol. 2, 25-26.

71. Al-Biqā'ī, *Naẓm al-Durar Fī Tanāsub al-Āyāt wa al-Suwar*, vol. 5, 231.

72. Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur-e-Qur'ān*, vol. 5, 364-374.

73. See for example, Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*, vol. 5 (Beirūt: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 2000), 113-114.

74. Al-Biqā'ī, *Naẓm al-Durar Fī Tanāsub al-Āyāt wa al-Suwar*, vol. 8, 607-610.

75. Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur-e-Qur'ān*, vol. 9, 265-267.