



Sayyid Mawdudi's Tafsir and Modern Challenges

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Abstract

Sayyid Abū al-A'la Mawdūdī (1903-1979) lived at a time when Islam was attacked from many corners of the world, from Western scholars, orientalist, modern scholars, Muslim apologists, anti-Hadīth movement and so on. The Western scholars do not regard the Qur'ān to be divine words. To them, Muhammad, peace be upon him (PBUH), had just copied the Qur'ān from biblical texts. They only regard the Bible to be the divine words. Some modern scholars submitted to the limited ability of rationality and rejected many Qur'ānic issues which are based on supernatural sources and the miracles of the Prophet. Anti-Hadīth scholars rejected the authenticity and the validity of the Prophetic traditions. To them, only Qur'ān is considered as the primary source of Islam and nothing else. Sayyid Mawdūdī dealt with all these challenges strongly and many other anti-Islamic and anti-Qur'ānic forces. This study follows textual analysis based on the Qur'ān, and the Tafhīm al-Qur'ān, the famous tafsīr of Mawdūdī and his other related writings. The study concluded that a reader should not get biased by preconceived notions while reading the Qur'ān. Rather he should keep his heart and mind open in dealing with the Qur'ānic issues and principles. It will open the doors of divine guidance for all sound-minded people.

Keywords: Sayyid Mawdūdī, Tafhīm al-Qur'ān, Challenges, Orientalists, Anti-Hadīth Movement, Modernists.

تفسير السيد المودودي وتحديات حديثة

ملخص البحث

عاش السيد أبو الأعلى المودودي (١٩٠٣-١٩٧٩) في عصرٍ تعرّض الإسلام للهجوم من أنحاء مختلفة للعالم، من العلماء الغربيين، والمستشرقين، والعلماء الحديثين، والمسلمين المعتدلين، وحركة منكري السنة النبوية وما إلى ذلك. إن العلماء الغربيين لا يقبلون القرآن الكريم كلاماً منزلاً من عند الله. فهم يدّعون بأن محمداً -صلى الله عليه وسلم- قد نسخ ولصق النصوص القرآنية من النصوص التوراتية. وهم يعتبرون الكتاب المقدس فقط منزلاً من عند الله عز وجل. ومن العلماء الحديثين من أخذوا بأرائهم العقلانية المحددة ورفضوا بعض القضايا القرآنية التي تعتمد على خوارق العادات ومعجزات الرسل. ويوجد هناك بعض الرجال من أنكر السنة النبوية وحجّيتها، ويدّعون بأن القرآن الكريم وحده المصدر الأساسي للإسلام، لا غير. إن الأستاذ المودودي واجه كل هذه التحديات وما شابهها بقوة وحزم. هذه الدراسة تعتمد على منهج تحليل النصوص بناء على القرآن الكريم وتفهم القرآن -التفسير الشهير للأستاذ المودودي- وكتابه الأخرى. وقد وصلت الدراسة إلى نتائج، منها أنه لا ينبغي لقارئ القرآن الكريم أن ينجاز إلى الأفكار المسبقة في ذهنه، بل يجب أن يفتح قلبه وعقله في التعامل مع قضايا القرآن وأصوله. وبذلك تفتح أبواب الهداية والإرشاد لكل من له عقل سليم معتدل.

كلمات مفتاحية: السيد المودودي، تفسير القرآن، التحديات، المستشرقون، منكرو الحديث، الحديثون.

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1. Introduction

Sayyid Abū al-A'ī Mawdūdī (1903-1979), a Pakistani prominent scholar, is regarded to be one of the most influential Islamic reformers in the 20th Century. *Tafhīm al-Qur'ān* is the magnum opus of his writings, in which he accumulated the summary of his life-long experience and knowledge that he earned through his career in Islamic Movement. Sayyid Mawdūdī started writing his *Tafsīr* in February 1942 and completed it after almost 30 years in 1972. (Āyeen magazine, 1972).

He has presented the Qur'ān as a Book of guidance for human being and as a guidebook for the modern Islamic movement to implement practically in all aspects of human life. This *Tafsīr* has made a far-reaching impact on contemporary Islamic thought in the world in general, and in the Sub-continent in particular. (Ahmad, Khurshid, et al. 1979).

Sayyid Mawdūdī lived at a critical stage of history for Islam and Muslims. Most of the Muslim countries were under direct or indirect subjugation of the West. Even after independence they suffered from a huge dominance of Western culture. Islamic culture was vehemently attacked both by the Orientalists and Muslim secularists. The Orientalists 'properly' brainwashed the modern secular Muslims so much so that the latter felt ashamed to be attached with Islamic culture and heritage. Even the educational institutions which were established by the Muslim leaders predominantly for the Muslims became the beacon of Western culture and thought. Islam and the Qur'ān were very much alien to them than the Western concepts and ideologies.

Mawdudi fought in all fronts single-handedly at first, and later with the whole strength of *Jamā'at-i-Islāmī*. He had to fight against the Orientalists, who frequently distorted the image of Islam and its creeds; the anti-*Ḥadīth* movement who tried to disregard the whole heritage of the *Ḥadīth* of the Prophet; the heresies of Qādiyānis who stood against the finality of Prophethood; the Western concepts of dialectic materialism, secularism, capitalism, communism, separation of religion and state, nationalism and imperialism and so on. Even some people in Pakistan stood to propagate "Islamic Socialism"!!?

No one could deny the fact that the service and contribution made by Sayyid Mawdūdī in the 20th Century to deter the influx of Western culture and anti-Islamic tendencies was undoubtedly unparalleled. Qādiyānis were so annoyed and cornered by his forceful writings that even they led him kiss the gallows for writing just a 'Pamphlet' to protect the finality of Prophethood. He was so firm in his stand that he declined any offer of apology to the authority, and he rather preferred to meet Allah, his Generous Lord, with a clean heart and the service that he made to preserve Islam and its teachings.

Tafhīm al-Qur'ān, as the magnum opus of his writings, must have enough dealings with the modern challenges that he encountered at his time. We shall just highlight some of them to draw a brief picture in the succeeding pages.

2. Orientalists and The Qur'ān

The Orientalists tried their best to dislodge the Qur'ān from its divine origin and to declare that it is the creation of Muhammad's (PBUH) own mind and that he had utilized Jewish and Christian sources to form this Qur'ān. Their target is very clear. Once they could shake the faith of the Muslims with regards to the Qur'ān, they would automatically be disowned in the fold of Islam. He who does not firmly believe in the divine origin of the Qur'ān, he detaches himself from the fold of Islam.

The Orientalists pointed out some events of the Qur'ān, which have somehow similarities in contents with the Biblical text; and exploring that they thought it was

enough proof to declare that the Qur'ān is made using the Biblical texts. Sometimes they even dared to attribute 'ignorance' to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), when they found some differences in the Qur'ān and the Biblical texts. If any event is not found in the Bible or Biblical traditions, and yet the Qur'ān mentions it – the Orientalists feel that they have all the rights to create confusions and doubts in the mind of the readers about the authenticity of those issues. For, the Qur'ān is not reliable to them to depend solely upon. If any contradiction appears between the Qur'ān and their texts, their all efforts are paid to prove the superiority and reliability of their texts and to disregard the texts of the Qur'ān.⁽¹⁾

Tafhīm al-Qur'ān deals with all such modern heresies and challenges abundantly. Numerous pages are devoted for this purpose. The rational and profound stand of Mawdūdī against all those accusations of the Orientalists is vividly seen and appreciated by most of the readers. He established this fact that the Qur'ān is not the duplicate of what other Biblical texts contain – the Qur'ān in fact cleans and purifies all divine Books from the corruption and adulteration that its own followers made to it and presents a pure and unadulterated picture of many of the past events that contained in the earlier Scriptures as well.

2.1 The Qur'ān and Yūsuf's story

In the story of Prophet Yūsuf [Joseph], peace be upon him, the Lady of 'Azīz [or Potiphar in Talmudic expression] tempted him; but Yūsuf remained pure and clean. He was never overcome by the lady's temptations. She was almost mad after him. Once she used her utmost effort to convince him and called him in her private room, and shutting the door tempted him to have an extramarital affair, Yūsuf ran towards the door, and she followed him and caught his shirt and torn part of it. There they both saw 'Azīz entering the house and the lady put all the blames on Yūsuf. A relative of the lady, who accompanied 'Azīz to his house, testified intelligently in the case. Allah

Subhānahu wa Ta'ālā (SWT) quoted his testimony in the eternal Book al- Qur'ān as follows:

﴿إِنْ كَانَ قِيصُهُ قَدْ مِّنْ قَبْلِ فَصَدَقَتْ وَهُوَ مِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ وَإِنْ كَانَ قِيصُهُ قَدْ مِّنْ دُونِ فَكَذَبَتْ وَهُوَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ﴾

If the shirt of Yūsuf is rent from the front, the woman speaks the truth and he is a liar. And if his shirt is rent from the back, she speaks a lie and he is truthful. (Yusuf 12: 26-27).

His testimony had convinced 'Azīz that Yūsuf was innocent, and it was the lady who tempted him. Mawdūdī quotes from the Bible to show the difference between the Qur'ānic and Biblical reports. The Bible reports the following:

And she caught him by his garment saying, 'Lie with me': and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out. And it came to pass, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand, and was fled forth, that she called unto the men of her house, and spoke unto them, saying, See, he hath brought in an Hebrew unto us to mock us; he came in unto me to lie with me, and I cried with a loud voice: And it came to pass, when he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled, and got him out. And she laid up his garment by her, until his lord came home... And it came to pass, when his master heard the story his wife told him, saying, "This is how your slave treated me," he burned with anger. And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound. (The Bible, Genesis 39: 12-16; Mawdudi, 1992, 2/395-396).

The clumsy manner of the above version, as Mawdūdī explains, is obvious. It appears from this that Prophet Yūsuf's garment was so shaped that the whole of it fell into her hands when she tugged it. Then he ran away all naked, leaving it with her, as if to supply her with a clear proof of his own guilt.

This was the report of the Bible. Talmud adds that hearing the blame of the wife, Potiphar [or 'Azīz in the Qur'ānic term] whipped the lad severely and brought him before the Judges, where after investigating the cloth the innocence of Yūsuf was proved. On this, Mawdudi comments:

Obviously, this version is also faulty, for it cannot be imagined that a person of such a high rank would himself take the case to a court that his own slave had tried to assault his wife criminally. (Mawdudi, 1992, 2/395-396).

He then concludes by saying:

Incidentally, this Qur'ānic version of the story is a clear proof of the fact that it has not copied stories from the Israelite traditions as the pseudo-Orientalists allege, but has, on the other hand, corrected them and told the real facts to the world. (Mawdudi, 1992, 2/396).

2.2 Moses and Khidr

The Qur'ān mentions the story of Moses' meeting with a wise person⁽²⁾ at the confluence of two seas or rivers and his stay with him to learn knowledge from him, until he became fed up after seeing the apparent non-justifiable acts that the wise man continued to commit and Moses always opposed to it. (Mawdudi, 1992, vol. 3, pp. 34-42).

This story is not available in the Biblical texts, but Talmud relates a similar story not from Moses, but from Rabbi Jochanan, the son of Levi, with the Prophet 'Ilyās [Elijah], who according to Talmudic reports was raised alive and turned to angels and was assigned the administration of the world. (Polano, H., 2017, pp. 313-316).

The Orientalists tried to find out the sources of this story that Muhammad, peace be upon him, has used in forming this noble story and indicated to three possible tales that may have been used by Muhammad. Sayyid Mawdūdī took notice of it and commented that the Orientalists have, as usual, tried to make a "research" into the "sources" of this story and have pointed out that "The Kuranic story may be traced back to three main sources: (1) The Gilgamesh Epic, (2) The Alexander Romance and (3) The Jewish Legend of Elijah and Rabbi Joshua ben Levi." (Wensinck, 1913-1936).

Mawdudi then commented on their ill intentions by saying: "This is because these malicious "scholars" decide beforehand that their "scientific research" must lead to the conclusion that the Qur'ān is not a revealed book: therefore they have, anyhow or other, to produce a proof that whatever Muhammad (PBUH) has presented as

Revelation, has been plagiarized from such and such "sources". In this they brazen facedly use "facts" and "quotations" so cunningly and cleverly as to achieve their mean end and one begins to have nausea at their "research". If that is research what these bigoted forgers make, then one is compelled to curse their "knowledge and research". (Mawdudi, 1992, 3/34-35).

He discloses the nature of the research by the Orientalists saying that if any student asks them the following questions the reality of their position would be uncovered, and all their arguments would be shattered. He poses the following questions to them:

- (1) What proof have you got to make the claim that the Qur'ān has based a certain statement on the contents of a couple of ancient books? Obviously, it will not be "research" to build this claim on the scant basis that a certain statement made in the Qur'ān is similar to the one found in these books.
- (2) Do you possess any knowledge that at the time of the revelation of the Qur'ān there was a library at Makkah from which the Prophet collected material for the Qur'ān? Do you have any proof that Muhammad (PBUH) had arranged many translators to translate all those books into Arabic for his use? If it is not so, and your allegation is simply based on a couple of journeys which the Prophet made outside Arabia, a question arises: How many books did the Prophet copy or commit to memory during these trade journeys before his Prophethood? And how is it that even a day before he claimed to be a Prophet, no sign at all was displayed in his conversation that he had gathered such information as was revealed in the Qur'ān afterwards?
- (3) How is it then that the contemporary disbelievers of Makkah and the Jews and the Christians, who like you, were always in search of such a proof, could not put forward even a single instance of plagiarism? In the light of these facts one may ask, "Why the contemporaries of the Prophet failed in their research and how the opponents of Islam succeeded

in their attempt today after the passage of more than a thousand years?"

- (4) The last and the most important question is: Does it not show that it is bigotry and malice that has misled the opponents of Islam to discard the possibility that the Qur'an may be a revealed book of Allah and to concentrate all their efforts to prove that it is not so at all? The fact that its stories are similar to those contained in the former books, could be considered equally in this light that the Qur'an was a revealed book and was relating them in order to correct those errors that had crept into them during the passage of time. Why should their research be confined to prove that those books are the real source of the stories of the Qur'an and not to consider the other possibility that the Qur'an itself was a revealed book? (Mawdudi, 1992, 3/34-35).

An impartial reader who will consider these questions will inevitably arrive at the conclusion that the "research" which the Orientalists have presented in the name of "knowledge" is not worth any serious consideration. These orientalists simply tried their best to misrepresent the truth and stand with the falsehood as long as supports their hidden objectives to falsify the origin of the Qur'an. Their endeavor does not prove anything except confusing the corrupt minds.

3. Rationalists Transgression in The Qur'an

Some modern scholars tried to present a rational interpretation of the Qur'an. In doing so, they have rejected all supernatural issues and the miracles of the Prophets and have presented them in distorted shape which have no relation at all with the Qur'an. Besides they also tried to mince some matters that are criticized by the Western Orientalists and non-Muslim intelligentsia, like the issue of *Jihād* [holy war] and *Jizyah*⁽³⁾ etc.

Sayyid Mawdudi has always been very much bold to those rationalists who attempted to manipulate Qur'anic *āyāt* and interpret them in a way that is totally alien to the Qur'an and Islamic Belief. He asked those scholars to declare directly if they do not really want to

believe them. It is sheer hypocrisy to declare as Muslims and yet not believing in what the Qur'an mentions in unequivocal terms. He also condemned those apologist scholars who adopted apologetic stance *vis a vis* to the Western culture and heritage. He believed in presenting Islam in its pristine and original form which we could see in all his writings including *Tafhīm al-Qur'an*.

The modernists presented apologetics for many issues. They tried to defend Islamic beliefs sometimes with a good intention and presented explanations that do not conform at all to Islamic creeds. *Jizyah* is one of such notions that led the modernists to difficult situations by the Western scholars. Mawdudi is against those scholars who tried to present defensive statements in such issues. He says in unequivocal terms:

This is "*Jizyah*" [a security tax of non-Muslim citizen living in Islamic lands] of which the Muslims have been feeling apologetic during the last two centuries of their degeneration and there are still some people who continue to apologize for it. But the Way of Allah is straight and clear and does not stand in need of any apology to the rebels against Allah. Instead of offering apologies on behalf of Islam for the measure that guarantees security of life, property and faith to those who choose to live under its protection, the Muslims should feel proud of such a humane law as that of *Jizyah*. (Mawdudi, 1992, 2/188).

3.1 Rationalizing the Miracles of Prophets

The rationalists faced terrible difficulties in presenting a rational interpretation of the miracles mentioned in the Qur'an. They do not want to believe in the Stick of Moses turning into a huge Snake all of a sudden; likewise, they faced difficulties in adopting the miracle of 'Ibrāhīm [Abraham], peace be upon him, in the form of cooling the Fire. Sulaymān's miracle of comprehending the speech of the ants lead them to terrible problems and his rule over the *jinn*s and the Birds and commanding them to perform the job of his mission are beyond their comprehension. The rationalists interpreted, rather distorted, them to suit their own whims and caprices. Addressing those

rationalists who could not believe in the miracles of Sulaymān [Solomon], peace be upon him, Mawdūdī says in clear terms:

If a person does not want to believe in something stated in the Qur'ān, he should frankly say that he does not believe in it. But it would be moral cowardice and intellectual dishonesty if one should force the clear words of the Qur'ān to give the meaning that he wants them to give, and tell the world that he believes in what the Qur'ān says, whereas he does not, in fact, believe in it but believes in his own distorted meaning. (Mawdudi, 1992, 3/562-563).

3.2 Decisive question in Miracles

Mawdūdī asked some decisive questions to those who tried to rationalize or limit the miracles of the Prophets within the Laws of Nature that if Allah really controls the Universe after creating it or He just has resigned completely after setting it to certain laws and rules? He says:

The decisive question about miracles is whether Allah suspended His activities after starting the system of the universe according to certain laws, and now cannot interfere in any way whatever with the working of that system. Or, whether He keeps the reins of His kingdom in His own hands and enforces His commands every moment in this kingdom and He has full powers to make any change, partial or complete, in shaping things and the course of events, as and when He wills.

Those who believe in the first alternative cannot believe in the miracles for it goes against their conception of Allah and His universe, but the most proper course for such people is to deny the Divine Revelation of the Qur'ān instead of writing any commentary on it so as to refute the Qur'ānic conception of Allah and prove their own. On the other hand, if one is convinced by the arguments of the Qur'ān and accepts the second alternative he would readily understand and believe in the miracles.

It is quite obvious that if one believes that a serpent can come into being only through a biological process and it is not possible for Allah to create it in any other way, then such a one should consider it false that a

staff was changed into a serpent and again into the staff. On the contrary, if one believes that lifeless matter can come to life by the command of Allah, Who has the power to give any kind of life to anything He wills, he will readily believe that the staff was changed into a serpent just as he believes that a live cobra comes out of lifeless eggs. To such a person, there will be nothing extraordinary, just because the staff was changed into a serpent only thrice and a cobra comes out of an egg repeatedly. (Mawdudi, 1992, 2/65-66).

In the miracle of Ibrāhīm, peace be upon him, Allah (SWT) honored His *Khalīl* [i.e. close friend] by cooling down the Fire for him, which was a clear manifestation of Allah's Power and truthfulness of the Prophethood of Ibrāhīm. Yet some people try to bound this great miracle within the natural laws and present a different interpretation totally alien to Islam and its belief. They do it perhaps to convince those who say that Islam is superstitious as it confirms the supernatural issues mentioned in the Qur'ān. Sayyid Mawdūdī addressed them in the following terms:

If some people present such strange interpretation of the Qur'ān because to them Allah was not allowed to go against the set of laws and rules that have been fixed by Him. If the case is so, why do they need then to believe in Allah? If they do it to convince the modern rational people of the age who do not like to believe in the miracles; we ask him: O the slave of God! Who gave you the responsibility to convince every single individual in any way you can, even if that is in the expense of sacrificing the basic tenets of Islam? If one does not believe in the Qur'ān as it is, let him be in his own state of affairs, and do not try to mutilate the *āyāt* of the Qur'ān to suit to his own perception. It is not propagation of Islam *per se* but is the sheer distortion of the Qur'ānic teachings. (Mawdudi, 1992, 3/169).

Sayyid Mawdūdī condemned all such apologetic approaches of the rationalist scholars who felt ashamed to believe in the miracles of the Prophet and supernatural issues. He condemned all their approaches if they are against the clear texts of the Qur'ān and the authentic *Sunnah* of the Prophet (PBUH).

4. *Ḥadīth* Rejectionists and Tafhim Al-Qur'ān

It is undeniable fact that the Qur'ān and *Ḥadīth* should go hand in hand. The Prophet, peace be upon him, was sent by Allah as a Messenger, an Interpreter, a Lawgiver, a Judge, a living example for the people to exemplify the injunctions of the Qur'ān. Sayyid Mawdūdī played active and strong role in establishing the true position of *Sunnah*. He dealt with each and every confusion of *Ḥadīth* rejectionists and unfounded all their claims and accusations.

In the issue of *Mi'rāj* [ascension to heavens] of the Prophet the *Ḥadīth* rejectionists condemned the Prophet's journey to the Heavens as the Qur'ān has only mentioned about the journey of the Prophet to *Bayt al-Maqdis* in Palestine. Sayyid Mawdūdī says:

If it was possible for the Prophet to travel to *Bayt al-Maqdis* and return to Makkah by the limitless Power of Allah in the same night at a time when there was no facility of Airplane, so how could one question about other details that have been mentioned in the *Ḥadīth* of the Prophet? The question whether a thing is possible or not, can arise only in the case of human beings whose powers are after all limited, but such questions cannot be raised where the All-Powerful Allah is concerned. Only such a person who does not believe that Allah is able to do everything can raise objections against this wonderful Journey. (Mawdudi, 1992, 2/588-590).

4.1 '*Ṣalāh*' means prayer or '*Niẓām-i-Rubūbiyyah*'

Some *Ḥadīth* rejectionists also raised doubts about the Prayers and that the *āyāt* on Prayers do not refer to the establishment of Prayers per se, rather it refers to the establishment of "*Niẓām-i-Rubūbiyyah*" [Order of Providence]. He said that the Muslims were commanded to perform the prayer, as in the *āyah* 31 of *Sūrat al-Rūm* (30), at least 9 years before the establishment of Islamic state in Madinah. The Muslims were tortured and persecuted by the non-believers and the polytheists at that time. How were the Muslims then able to establish "*Niẓām-i-Rubūbiyyah*" during that particular time?

In the commentary of *Sūrat al-Rūm* (30) *āyah* 17 and 18, he dealt with the rejectionists of *Ḥadīth* and said:

Let us pause a while here and consider the boldness of the deniers of *Ḥadīth*. They make fun of "offering the Prayer" and say that the Prayer that the Muslims offer today is not at all the thing prescribed by the Qur'ān. They assert that the Qur'ānic injunction to establish the Prayer does not mean the offering of the Prayer but establishing the *Niẓām-i-Rubūbiyyat* (Order of Providence). Ask them: "What is that novel order of Providence which can either be established before the rising of the sun or after the declining of the sun till the early hours of the night? And what is that order of Providence which is required to be established especially on Fridays? And what is that special kind of the order of Providence for establishing which one has first to wash one's face and the hands up to the elbows and the feet up to the ankles and wipe one's head with wet hands, otherwise one will not establish it? And what is this odd thing that if one has touched the women (had conjugal relations with them), one will have to strike one's hands on pure dust and wipe thereby one's face and hands in case one does not find water, for the purpose of establishing this strange 'Order of Providence'? And what is this amazing 'order of Providence' that while on a journey one should establish only half of it? Then, what an odd thing that during a war, half of the soldiers should fall out, carrying their weapons, in order to establish the order of Providence behind the *Imām*, and the other half should stick to their positions and continue fighting the enemy; then, when the first group has performed one *sajdah* behind the *Imām* in its effort to establish the "order of Providence" it should go to relieve the other group, which should fall out and start establishing the "order of Providence" behind the *Imām*!

All these verses of the Qur'ān clearly indicate that to establish the *Ṣalāh* implies the Prayer that the Muslims offer everywhere in the world today. But the deniers of *Ḥadīth* seem to be bent upon changing the Qur'ān instead of changing themselves. The fact is that unless a person becomes wholly fearless of Allah, he cannot dare play with His Word as these people do. Or, only such a person can engage in a pastime like this with respect to the Qur'ān,

who believes it is not Allah's Word, but intends to mislead the Muslims in the name of the Qur'ān. (Mawdudi, 1992, 3/740-741).

Likewise, Sayyid Mawdūdī's stand has always been very much bold and sharp against those who disregarded the authority of the *Ḥadīth* of the Prophet. To deal with their major confusions and objections to the *ḥadīth* of the Prophet, he wrote an invaluable treatise on the 'Constitutional Status of Sunnah of the Prophet'.⁽⁴⁾ (Mawdudi, 2003).

5. Nationalistic Tendencies and Tafhīm Al-Qur'ān

Sayyid Mawdūdī lived in a period of history where nationalistic tendencies were prevalent throughout the world. Muslim countries were no exception. The Arabs and Turks raised the demands for their nations alone. Even the small countries of the Muslim world raised their own racial and tribal cries. Islam rejects and disapproves any claim of Nationalism based on race, color or region.

Allah (SWT) says:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ﴾

O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other (not that you may despise each other). Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full Knowledge and is well-acquainted (with all things). (Al-Ḥujurāt 49:13).

Sayyid Mawdūdī deals with the issue of nationalistic and imperialistic tendencies of the nations in detail. He says: "In this verse the whole of mankind has been addressed to reform it of the great evil that has always been causing universal disruption in the world, that is, the prejudice due to race, color, language, country, and nationality." (Mawdudi, 1992, 5/95-96).

He gave a brief historical background of the nations who have been committing crimes against others and tortured, killed, enslaved and ravaged their

population out of nationalistic and imperialistic cries. They wanted to establish their political hegemony over the world.

This Qur'ānic *āyah* teaches the nations of the whole world three basic and main teachings that they are originated from the very same person, and that their division into tribes and localities is a natural phenomenon by which they could combine and unite to give birth to a common way of life and to cooperate with each other in the affairs of the world. Thirdly, the Qur'ān lays down the basic principles of superiority for one over the other, and that is through moral excellence. Mawdūdī says:

As regards birth, all men are equal, for their Creator is One, their substance of creation is one, and their way of creation is one, and they are descended from the same parents. Moreover, a person's being born in a particular country, nation or clan is just accidental. Therefore, there is no rational ground on account of which one person may be regarded as superior to the other. The real thing that makes a person superior to others is that one should be more God-conscious, a greater avoider of evils and a follower of the way of piety and righteousness. Such a man whether he belongs to any race, any nation and any country, is valuable and worthy on account of his personal merit. And the one who is reverse of him in character is in any case an inferior person whether he is black or white, born in the east or the west. (Mawdudi, 1992, 5/95-96).

He also quoted some *aḥādīth* on the issue. One of them is: "Allah (SWT) does not look at your outward appearances and your possessions, but He observes your hearts and your deeds." (Muslim: 2564, Ahmad: 7827).

Islam did not only teach these lessons, but also put it into real practice. Islam does not allow a distinction on account of color, race, language, country and nationality, which is free from every concept of high and low, clean and unclean, mean and respectable, which admits all human beings with equal rights. Islam is the only religion, which has welded and combined innumerable races and communities scattered in all corners of the earth into one universal *Ummah*.

In the explanation of *Sūrat al-Naml*, he highlights more on the evils of 'Imperialism' in the word of the Queen of Sheba as quoted in the Qur'an. Allah says:

﴿قَالَتْ إِنَّ الْمُلُوكَ إِذَا دَخَلُوا قَرْيَةً أَفْسَدُوهَا وَجَعَلُوا أَعِزَّةَ أَهْلِهَا أَذِلَّةً وَكَذَلِكَ يَفْعَلُونَ﴾

When the Kings enter a land, they ruin it and debase its honorable people, they do just the same. (Sūrat al-Naml, 27: 34)

Mawdūdī explains as follows:

In this one sentence a thorough criticism has been made of imperialism. The kings' invasion of the other countries and the victorious nations' violence against the oppressed nations has never been for the sake of reform and good will. The object has been to control and exploit the means and resources of sustenance granted to the other nation by God and make it so helpless that it should never be able to rise in resistance and demand its share. For this purpose they block up all its means of prosperity, power and honor, crush down all self-respecting elements, instill in its members attitudes of slavery, flattery, treachery and spying against one another, imitation of the conqueror and respect for his civilization, contempt of their own civilization and other such mean qualities of character. Thus, gradually they bring them down to such a low level of character where they may not hesitate even to sell off any of their most sacred objects of heritage and be ready to perform any wretched service on payment. (Mawdudi, 1992, 3/573).

Tafhīm al-Qur'ān plays an important role in uprooting all heresies that were prevalent during the 20th Century. Qādiānism or anti-Finality of Prophethood movement also created hue and cry in Pakistan. Mawdūdī played strong role in uprooting this *fitnah* [heresy], for which he even had to kiss the Gallows, and live in prison for years. He wrote a pamphlet on Qādiānism and a detailed article on "Finality of Prophethood" attached at the end of his *tafsīr* on *Sūrat al-Aḥzāb*. (Mawdudi, 1992, 4/138-169). These were the writings that provided the Muslims of Pakistan the intellectual foundations for their stand and uncovered the real position of Qādiānis and all other new heretics.

6. Conclusion

Sayyid Mawdūdī played active role in dealing with the challenges that were faced by the Muslims in the 21st century. His approach was very clear and straightforward in accepting the Qur'an as the words of God. He condemned all Western and Eastern scholars who stood against it, be it the orientalist or the modernists or anti-*Ḥadīth* people.

His has profound stand against those who tried to find the original sources of the Qur'an from which they falsely claimed that Muhammad (PBUH) has borrowed ideas from them, such as Torah, Injil, Zabūr and Talmud. If such claims were true, Arab people should be the first ones to attack the Prophet with such claims. But being an unlettered noble Prophet of Allah SWT, who never read any book or wrote anything in his lifetime, how could such a claim could be thrown towards him by extremely biased corrupted people?

His dealings with the anti-*Ḥadīth* people were also very strong. Though he himself could not accept a few *aḥādīth* of the Prophet (PBUH) from Bukhari and Muslim, which he found contradicting with the realities and universal facts, he stood beside the *aḥādīth* of the Prophet, and presented strong arguments to defend it against all anti-*Ḥadīth* people. One who reads his writings on the status of the *Sunnah* of the Prophet, would easily be convinced about the authenticity and validity of the *Sunnah* of the Prophet in modern context.

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Endnotes

- ⁽¹⁾ See for example, the story of Moses and the plot of Pharaoh and his Ministry to kill him, and the challenge of a *Mu'min* from the family of Pharaoh to this plot. This important event is missing from the Biblical texts and therefore they doubt to believe the text of the Qur'ān. See *Tafhīm*, vol. 4, Sūrah al-Mu'min (40), note 41, p. 404.
- ⁽²⁾ The authentic traditions in Bukhārī, Muslim and other books report that it was Khidr, peace be upon him. See *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Kitāb al-Ilm, No. 74. *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Kitāb al-Faḍā'il, No. 2380. *Sunan Tirmidhī*, 'Abwāb Tafsīr al-Qur'ān, No. 3150. *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, Kitāb al-Ḥurūf wa al-Qirā'at, No. 3984.
- ⁽³⁾ *Jizyah*: A security tax payable by a non-Muslim citizen of an Islamic state to the state in return of safety of his life, religion, property and dignity. They are not required to pay any other payments like *Zakāh* and do not have to participate in the battles against the enemies. If Islamic state fails to guarantee protection, it is urged to return all taxes that it received from them.
- ⁽⁴⁾ For a detailed account on the Status of *Sunnah*, please see Mawdūdī, *Sunnat ki Āyīnī Haythiat* [Constitutional status of *Sunnah*], (Lahore: Islamic Publications Ltd. 2003, 21st ed.). This book records all major confusions of anti-Ḥadīth movement and dispelled them out.