

**CHAPTER III**  
**THE CHARACTERISTIC OF ABDULLAH**  
**YUSUF ALI 'S METHODS OF QUR'ANIC**  
**COMMENTARY**

A long time, after passing over studies from many perspectives (religious-scientific, history, politic and social) a question arouses; is Islam a stumbling block of progress of the society which lives under control of philosophical state when this religion wants to do significant attitudes as demand to socio-cultural life style which supports the advance, and in realizing conformity between Islamic doctrines and life orientation and its founder? Or in other word, do Islam and cultural life in modern civilization confront in the two different poles and thus could not be matched?

The various scientific traditions in Islam world have attempted to answer it theoretically. Specifically, the orientation comes as the consequence of well intended movement- in certain territory whose amount of its citizens grows rapidly, that is India- since decades. This movement tends to be theoretical instead of being eclectic in two different majors. Ignaz Goldziher rates that it is the main

cause of paradoxical meaning and essence of Islam as the absence of Islamic mobilization to modern paradigm. Ethical value is finally determined to temporal-relative cases, while duties are obligated through the truth of stabled *syari'ah* (religious legitimacy).<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the Indian reformers such as Sayyid Amir Ali (1849-1928)<sup>2</sup>, Ahmad Khan<sup>3</sup>, Iqbal (1876-1938)<sup>4</sup>, etc voiced the change.

Sayyid Ahmad Khan viewed that the cause of Muslim backwardness in India is their reluctant to follow the world

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<sup>1</sup> Ignaz Goldziher, *Madzhab Tafsir; Dari Aliran Klasik Hingga Modern*, translate: Alaika Salamullah, et.al, (Yogyakarta: eLSAQ Press, 2003) p: 380

<sup>2</sup> Sayyid Amir Ali is the founding father of National Mohammedan Association which was the association for Indian Muslim unity and was aimed to defend the interest of Muslim and to train them the politics. Sayyid Amir Ali is also considered as a loyal reformist to the crown. Sayyid Ali argued that the cause of Muslim backwardness is their argument that the possibility of *ijtihad* has been closed.

<sup>3</sup> Ahmad Khan is the founding father of MAOC (Mohammedan Anglo Oriental College) in Aligarh. His thought mostly supported the crown and therefore he is considered reformist whose loyalty is high to the crown. His action is not more but to raise the status of Islam and make education as the problem solving of declining easily reached.

<sup>4</sup> Hazrat Allama Sir Dr. Muhammad Iqbal was a Persian and Urdu poet, philosopher and politician whose vision of an independent state for the Muslims of British India was to inspire the creation of Pakistan. He voiced the dynamical thought. For him, Islam backwardness is influenced by the *zuhd* teaching in mysticism. Therefore, he suggested coming back to *ijtihad* because *ijtihad* is still needed. It is different from other reformists; Iqbal thought that Western culture must not be the main reference because for him, western civilization is much influenced by materialism which tends to leaving religious teaching. One thing should be taken by Muslim is science and technology.

development. Classical civilization is gone and comes the new one in the West. The basic of this new civilization is science and technology which are assumed as the main basic of Western progress and power.<sup>5</sup> He saw the necessity of British culture and western civilization for Indian Islamic society. His wonderfulness to English culture made him give his loyalty to empire.<sup>6</sup> Besides, there were many other reformists who shown their loyal attitudes to England. This close relationship then influenced the development of Islamic thought in India.

In the discourse of Indian Islamic thought, there were various religious characteristics in concerning with some preferences to critical analysis of The Qur'an which causes methodological segmentation of this study. In 1911 A.D. Mirza Abu al-Fadhl wrote a journal "Allah Abad"- a Qur'anic text with English translation and was arranged following its times of revelation (*tartîb zamani*). It was a big step as objective and liberal perspective in studying The Qur'an. It is clear that related matter to this study is the preference shown in modern exegesis school towards the

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<sup>5</sup> Harun Nasution, *Pembaharuan dalam Islam; Sejarah pemikiran dan Gerakan* (Jakarta: PT. Bulan Bintang, 2003) p: 160

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p: 165

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sacred and authentic Qur'an. Still in the perspective of modern thought, maintaining the holy of The Qur'an is important to keep it free from changes.<sup>7</sup>

The Indian modernity movement claimed themselves specifically as a cultural movement emerged from the reflections of coming thought as an adaptation of Islam world to Europe. Thus, the reformation they voiced about is being influenced by western culture, while religious understanding ranks the second position and has less priority.<sup>8</sup>

Above those all, coming several new names as agents of social change. And Abdullah Yusuf Ali<sup>9</sup> is noted as one of those who struggling the new model of religious understanding through the works. His phenomenal work, *The Holy Qur'an, Text, Translation and Commentary* rated the best rank in the society goes towards modernity. The works of Yusuf Ali are considered well for its contributions to combine the two opposite poles, a good combination of culture and Islam.

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<sup>7</sup> Ignaz Goldziher, *op. cit.*, p: 390-391

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p: 392

<sup>9</sup> Later will be called Yusuf Ali or Ali.

## A. Biography of Abdullah Yusuf Ali

### a. Life of Childhood

Yusuf Ali was born on April 4, 1872 in Surat, Gujarat, West India.<sup>10</sup> He is the second son of Yusufali Allahbuksh,<sup>11</sup> who spent his young age to gain religious education and was then able to memorize The Qur'an. He was in between the ages of four and five that he first learned to read Qur'an Arabic words, to revel in its rhythm and music, and wonder at its meaning. A dim recollection of the *hatm* ceremony that closed that stage really began his spiritual awakening that has gone on ever since.<sup>12</sup>

When he was little boy, his revered father taught him Arabic, told him those all world's thoughts, all the world's most beautiful language and literatures are but vehicles for that ineffable message which comes to the heart in race

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<sup>10</sup> M.A. Sherif, *Jiwa Yang Resah; Biografi Yusuf Ali Penerjemah dan Penafsir al-Qur'an Paling Otoritatif dalam Bahasa Inggris*, translate: Rahmani Astuti ( Bandung,: Mizan, 1997) p: 18. Other source shows that Abdullah Yusuf Ali was born at 14<sup>th</sup> of April 1872 in Bombay, India. See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abdullah\\_Yusuf\\_Ali](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abdullah_Yusuf_Ali) (retrieved on Tuesday, January 12, 2010)

<sup>11</sup> Yusufali Allahbuksh is an official of police force in the residence of Surat, when he retired in 1885, he was titled Khan Bahadur, an appreciation from Raj to Muslims for their merits to society. He died on July, 1891. M.A. Sherif, *op. cit.*, p: 19

<sup>12</sup> Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'an; Text, Translation and Commentary* (New Delhi: Goodword Books, 2008), p: iii.

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moments of ecstasy.<sup>13</sup> He is good English and Arabic speaker and thus, he studied English literature and visited some European universities to study. Yet, he told that despite he had explored western lands, western manners, and the depths of western thought and western learning to an extent that has rarely fallen to the lot of an Eastern mortal. But he had never lost touch with his Eastern heritage.<sup>14</sup>

#### **b. Educational Background**

Yusuf Ali was obsessed with titles. His father, Yusufali Allahbuksh, a Bohra from Surat in Gujarat, had abandoned the traditional occupation of the Bohras -- business -- and gone instead into the police force. On retirement, he was given the title of Khan Bahadur. True to form, the young Yusuf Ali incorporated this honorary title given to his father into his own name. The British seemed to be charitable, at least to those who pledged unquestioning loyalty to them, to allow such an indiscretion to pass.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*

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Yusuf Ali used the name Abdullah ibn Khan Bahadur Yusuf Ali while applying to register at Cambridge University in 1891, the Lincoln Inn in London as well as when applying for the ICS (Indian Civil Service). The Indian Office administrator responsible for processing ICS applications deemed the double-barrelled surname in order and Abdullah ibn Khan Bahadur Yusuf Ali came about. Yusuf Ali used various names such as “Abdullah Khan Bahadur Yusuf-Ali”, a not common title for mentioning his father’s title instead of family’s title. Other names he often used were “Abdullah ibn Khan Bahadur Yusuf Ali”, “Abdullah KB ibn Yusuf Ali” and “A.I.K.B. Yusuf Ali”.<sup>16</sup>

The young Yusuf Ali studied in the *Anjuman e-Islam* in Bombay, and continued to Wilson School (a seminary school of Scotland).<sup>17</sup> When he was 15 year old, he registered the Wilson College which affiliated to University of Bombay. He got good achievement in Wilson School and got the best mark for Bombay resident, and then he got the title of BA from University of Bombay in 1891 because of his best in the lecture of ancient Greek literature. He received the

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<sup>16</sup> M.A. Sherif, *op. cit.*, p: 19

<sup>17</sup> Wilson School was established by John Wilson, a credible linguist and historian of west India, he translated the Bible into Maratsi language.

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scholarship to continue his study in St John's College Cambridge by the main concentration is law. By September 1891, he arrived in England and began his long struggle. His great interest to literature brought him to be a member of Royal Society of Arts and Royal Society of Literature.<sup>18</sup>

### c. Political Career

A peculiar product of the era of British raj, Yusuf Ali was a *pukka* sahib par excellence. For him loyalty to the crown was of paramount importance. Religion was a personal matter.<sup>19</sup> It should, therefore, come as no surprise to learn that he married an English woman in a church in England. That the woman should prove unfaithful despite giving birth to four of his children, perhaps best epitomizes the relationship between the empire and India<sup>20</sup>.

Yusuf Ali's life crossed the lives of other eminent personalities that loomed so large on the Indian scene later:

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<sup>18</sup> M.A. Sherif, *op. cit.*, p: 41

<sup>19</sup> Abdullah Yusuf Ali delivering the message of Qur'an as individual hopeful message not as guidance for government nor societal regulation. Note 580.

<sup>20</sup> Abdullah Yusuf Ali married a Christian, Teresa Mary Shalders. The marriage was held at 18<sup>th</sup> of September, 1900 in St Peter church, Bournemouth and was led by Canon Henry Slater. Teresa was 27 year old, a year younger than Yusuf Ali. His sons are Edris, Asghar Bloy, Alban Hyder and a daughter, Leila Teresa. M.A. Sherif, *op. cit.*, p: 33

Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Ameer Ali, Muhammad Iqbal, Muhammad Ali Jauhar, Fazl-e-Husain, Sikandar Hayat Khan Etc. Of these, he found much in common with the last two. Both these men -- and their families -- were the recipients of British largesse and therefore, inimical to the interests of the Muslims in India. They represented the interests of the landed aristocracy which had been rewarded for its services to the raj.<sup>21</sup> Abdullah Yusuf Ali's penchant for titles notwithstanding, it was his obsessive loyalty to the crown that set him apart from many of his contemporaries. While he got along well with Iqbal, their views were diametrically opposite.<sup>22</sup> There was a political big gap between Yusuf Ali and Iqbal, yet, both of them keeping good relationship. And so was between Yusuf Ali and Jinnah. The gap must be because of their different view of Allahabad resolution, declared by Iqbal in 1930 as the demand of founding a Muslim state whether "inside or outside" the empire. Yusuf Ali through his special loyalty to the crown surely refused the demand,

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<sup>21</sup> This parasitical class is still active in the affairs of Pakistan, reducing it to penury

<sup>22</sup> Iqbal saw Islam as a global religion and the Muslims of India as a distinct community who could get nothing either from the British or the Hindus. For Yusuf Ali religion was a matter for personal salvation. The 'Indian nation' in which both Hindus and Muslims lived amicably, pledging loyalty to the crown, was how he viewed things in life.

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saying that the evolution of Indian British culture is dominated by British ideas live behind protests of those who rebel and fight against what they identify as strange idea.<sup>23</sup>

Yusuf Ali was much inspired by Sayyid Ahmed Khan.<sup>24</sup> He tried to emulate him, at least in so far as loyalty to the empire was concerned, to the fullest. Their opinion to drum up India is almost the same that is by keeping in touch with British culture. Abdullah Yusuf Ali's education at the best British institutions, admission to the bar as well as selection in the ICS all reinforced his loyalty to Britain. He was an unabashed spokesman and ambassador for the crown all his life. Yet the wily British used him and then discarded him. His greatest disappointment came when he found that the British had reneged on their pledge to the Arabs in Palestine. He suffered their insults and arrogance willingly, something the likes of Jinnah and Iqbal would never have put up with. One can only surmise that his total devotion to everything British blinded him to the reality of life.

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<sup>23</sup> M.A. Sherif, *op. cit.*, p:101

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p: 36, the comprehensive writing of Sayyid Ahmed Khan's thought see Harun Nasution, *op. cit.*, p: 158-166

#### **d. A Mess Life**

Equally shocking is the contrast in his public and private lives. He was known to charm public gat herrings. His reputation was not confined to India or Britain alone. It quickly crossed the Atlantic and he found himself in Canada in the autumn/winter of 1938 after his translation was published both in UK and in the US. He officially opened the first mosque in Canada in Edmonton in December 1938. It was Yusuf Ali who named it Al-Rashid Mosque, perhaps after his son. He left a very favorable impression with all that he came in contact with yet his private life was a total failure. He was a loner in private life. The face of public charm appeared to be an attempt to hide the deeper failure at the personal level.

His first wife proved unfaithful and left him for another man.<sup>25</sup> Yusuf Ali could not see that infidelity was, and remains an acceptable way of life in the west. His children, too, abandoned and resented him. He was too engrossed in public life currying the favors of the raj to pay much attention to the family. Despite his intense loyalty to

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<sup>25</sup> He is Obed Thorne. The demand of divorce was convened in the court of family division on June and the decision obtained on January 1912. M.A. Sheriff, *op. cit.*, p: 44

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the British, they were glad to see his back when he wanted to retire from the ICS.

The second wife, Gertrude Anne Mawbey or Masuma<sup>26</sup> left him and married another man. Their single son, Rasyid lived far from his father, and Abdullah Yusuf Ali himself lived alone until he was found by police lying outside the steps of a house in Westminster on December 9, 1953. He was a pathetic wreck, disoriented and confused. The police brought him to local hospital and placed him in an old folks' home in Dove house Street, Chelsea. Day by day, his condition was worse. He got sick and died in St Stephen's hospital in Fulham on the following day, December, 10 1953. He was buried in Brookwood Cemetery in Surrey. It is nearby Marmaduke Pickthall's resting place.<sup>27</sup>

## **B. The Skates of Abdullah Yusuf Ali's Work**

### **1. The Background of Writing**

There are several purposes behind the writing of *The Holy Qur'an, Text, Translation and Commentary*, those are:

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<sup>26</sup> She is the daughter of Thomas Mawbey, a judge of Derby and entrepreneur of printing office. Having married in 1920, Abdullah Yusuf Ali was 47 year-old.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p: 148-150

*First*, there are many mischiefs done by translations of non Muslims and anti Muslims writers. From them is Marraci<sup>28</sup> who had produced in 1689 a Latin version of The Qur'an with the Arabic text and quotations from various Arabic commentaries, carefully selected and garbled, so as to give the worst possible impression of Islam in Europe. Marraci was a learned man, and there is no pretence about the object he had in view. , viz., to discredit Islam by showing of quotations from muslims authorities.<sup>29</sup> The first English translation by A. Roes was but a translation of Du Ryer of 1647, and was published a few years after Du Ryer's. George Sale's translation (1734) was based on Maracci's Latin version, and even his notes and his preliminary discourse are based mainly on Marraci. Considering that Marraci's object was to discredit Islam in the eyes of Europe, it is remarkable that Sale's translation should be looked upon as a standard translation in the English speaking world, and should pass through edition after edition, being even included in the series called the Chandos Classics and receiving the

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<sup>28</sup> He is a confessor to Pope innocent XI, his work is dedicated to the Holy Roman Emperor Leopold I and he introduces it by an introductory volume containing what he calls a "Refutation of the Qur'an".

<sup>29</sup> Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *op. cit.*,p: xiii

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benediction of Sir. E. Denison Ross. The Rev. J. M. Rodwell arranged the *sûrah* in a rough chronological order. His translation was first published in 1861. Though he tries to render the idiom fairly, his notes show the main of a Christian clergyman, who was more concerned to “show up” the Book than to appreciate or expound its beauties. Prof. E. H. Palmer’s translation (first published in 1876) suffers from the idea that The Qur’an ought to be translated into colloquial language. He failed to realise the beauty and grandeur of style in the original Arabic. To him that style was “rude and rugged”; his translation may justifiably be called careless and slipshod<sup>30</sup>. This amount of mischief then led Abdullah Yusuf Ali to straighten the mistakes and to show the glory of The Qur’an.

*Second*, this writing is to help people even the least bit further in understanding its meaning, or appreciating its beauty, or catching something of the grandeur of the original.

In his preface to first edition, Yusuf Ali said:

It is duty of every muslim, man, woman, or child, to read The Qur’an and understand it according to his own capacity. If any one of us attains to some knowledge or understanding of it by study, and the test of life, both outward and inward, it is his duty,

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p: xiv.

according to his capacity, to instruct others and share with them the joy and peace which result from contact with the spiritual world. The Qur'an-indeed every religious book-has to be read, not only with the tongue, voice and eyes, but with the best light that our intellect can supply, and even more, with the truest and purest light which our heart and conscience can give us. It is in this spirit that I would have my readers approach The Qur'an.<sup>31</sup>

He translated the noble words of The Qur'an for himself and tried to apply to his experience repeatedly. The service of The Qur'an has been the pride and the privilege of many Muslims. He felt that with such life-experience as had fallen to his lot, his service to The Qur'an should be to present it in a fitting garb in English. He had cherished that ambition in his mind for more than forty years. He collected books and materials for it. He visited places, undertaken journeys, taken notes, sought the society of men, and tried to explore their thoughts and hearts, in order to equip himself for the task. Sometimes, he considered it too stupendous for him, the double task of understanding the original, and reproducing its nobility, its beauty, its poetry, its grandeur and its sweet practical reasonable application to everyday experience.

*Third*, the main reason of his works is his mission to

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p: iii

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unite western and eastern culture. His tendency to western culture really affected his idealism, including his reason in writing *The Holy Qur'an, Text, Translation and Commentary*. M.A. Sherif said that this project is his purpose to focus on polarization between East and West.<sup>32</sup> Eastern literature has the Great Book (The Qur'an), and Yusuf Ali offered this Eastern best tradition to the West. Hence, he tried all efforts to translate it into English which he wished to be the language of Islam.<sup>33</sup> His creative motivation is not only a will to serve society, but also a will to make Muslims be good citizens for empire.<sup>34</sup>

*Fourth*, this project is his solace from his life sufferings. A man's life is subject to inner storm far more devastating than those in physical world around him are. In such a storm - he said, in a bitter anguish of a personal sorrow that nearly unseated his reason and made life seem meaningless, a new hope was born out of systematic pursuit of his long cherished project. Watered by tears, his

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<sup>32</sup> M.A. Sherif, *op. cit.*, p: 174

<sup>33</sup> Yusuf Ali told that English is appropriate to Indian education. He said that every regional language is influenced by English literature. Upon those all, English is communicating media among provinces and the world outside. Indeed, the usage of English is the best bound united all Indian nation, provinces and communities. Otherwise, Indian federation is only a dream. M.A. Sherif, *op. cit.*, p: 102-103

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p: 187

manuscript began to grow in depth and earnestness if not in bulk. Yusuf Ali, precisely found his spiritual soul was awakened. He found peace within the process of writing.

Yusuf Ali, through his *Holy Qur'an, Text, Translation and Commentary* would like to serve the beauty and the significance of The Qur'an. This work, however, is valuable for Muslims, the footnotes provided here are to explain the meaning of verses. Some of them are helpful, but some others seem odd if not careful.

## **2. The Book System of Writing**

Since its first publication, *The Holy Qur'an, Text, Translation and Commentary* as the work of Abdullah Yusuf Ali has passed times of changing and reprinting. The changes often found in the edition published by Amana, IFTA, and Saudi Arabia as well. The changes generally are not principle therefore do not change the essence of this work.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Modern editions of his work remain in print, but with modifications such as "God" altered to "Allah" and with controversial modifications of the opinions that Ali expressed in footnotes and of short historical articles that were included with the original text. For instance, Ali's liberal views on credit and interest do not appear in some editions, as they are considered to run contrary to some schools of Islamic economic thought. Those publishers also omitted the explanation of the martyrdom of imam Hasan and Husein. But. It is lucky that his work which was published by Amana Corp, Brentwood, Maryland, USA did not omit

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The main reference used by the writer in arranging this thesis is *The Holy Qur'an, Text, Translation and Commentary*, already printed in India, by Goodword Books in 2008. This edition gives no changes as others do because it basically refers to the editions printed in Cairo and Beirut which are the same with the original work firstly printed in Lahore. The writing systematic of his work is below:

**a) Cover**

The cover of this book consists of title and publisher, "*The Holy Qur'an, Text, Translation and Commentary by Abdullah Yusuf Ali*" published by Goodword Book.

**b) Content**

Inside this book are:

- Preface to First edition, 1934, speaks more about his childhood and life, background of writing, process of bookmaking, and the goal he wanted to achieve in translating and commenting The Qur'an into English. He also explained the systematic system of

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and change anypart of it as well. See his work, *The Holy Qur'an, Text, Translation and Commentary* published by Amana Corp in Maryland,USA, 1983.

writing and a little bit of methods he applied in his translation and commentary.

- Preface to third edition. Inside is gratituton to his colleagues.
- Commentaries on The Qur'an. This part is his view about commentary and its development. Besides, he outlined the methods he applied and previous works of commentary he referred.
- Translation of The Qur'an is Yusuf Ali's explanation of Qur'anic translations. There, he drew critics to improper translations which are assumed not careful.
- Useful works of reference. It is a list of additional books he used as references.
- Transliteration of Arabic words and names is his style of writing Arabic words in Latin letter forms.
- Abbreviation Used. It is explanation of abbreviated letters he applied in his work.
- Punctuation marks in the Arabic text, an explanation of the importance of punctuation.

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- Divisions of The Qur'an, the way Yusuf Ali divided each part of The Qur'an.
  - Table of content
  - Text, Translation and Commentary of The Holy Qur'an

*1. Text*

In writing the text of The Qur'an, Yusuf Ali referred to the general approved *mushaf*. The text in English (translation) is displayed differently in parallel columns with the Arabic text. Each of *sûrah* and verse are well numbered. The numbering system is following the system used in Cairo which is considered representative of Arabic world. In his preface to first edition he mentioned that he used roman number to indicate the *sûrah*, and common number to indicate the verse. Example: ii. 25 means: the second *sûrah* (*al-Baqarah*) and the 25<sup>th</sup>

verse.<sup>36</sup> This number is written in the top of passage. He also maintained the use of letter of '*ain (rukû)*' to indicate the text division as generally used in Arabic texts. Only, the new of his work is his division of particular *rukû*', the long *rukû*' will then divided into the more specific division called "sub-division of *rukû*'" which characterized by the use of bold and larger font in the beginning of English translation.<sup>37</sup>

## 2. *Translation*

In the text of translation, Yusuf Ali numbered the word which supposed needs additional explanations. The explanations then written in footnote

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<sup>36</sup> In *The Holy Qur'an* already printed by Goodword Books, this kind of numbering used in commentary, not in the text as in other editions. In concerning with numbering text, this edition does not apply as the example above. *Sûrah* is written by common number and letter and is placed in the top of passage. Example: *Sûrah* 2: al-Baqarah.

<sup>37</sup> As the example is his division to Q.S. al-Imran. He divided that surah into 20 parts. The second part of those are divided into two, the first part 10-13 speaks about people of the book and 14-20 speaks about believers.

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which are commentary for the verses as well.

### 3. *Commentary*

Yusuf Ali did not explain the verses in detail, he simply analyzed the verses which are assumed need additional explanations in his footnote.<sup>38</sup> There are about 6310 footnotes provided for explaining the messages of The Qur'an. Inside, Yusuf Ali used various kinds of abbreviations to make explanation clearer. Most of abbreviations ask reader to refer (by themselves) to notes he mentioned. Words/sentences which are particularly different from others will be written in italic words.

The difference between commentary of Yusuf Ali and others' is that Yusuf

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<sup>38</sup> Ali made the notes as short as possible consistently with the object he had in view, viz., to give to English reader, scholar as well as general reader, a fairly complete but concise view of what he understood to be the meaning of the text. To discuss theological controversies or enter into polemical arguments he considered outside his scope. He also didn't devote much space to grammatical or philological notes.

Ali's is preceded by a poetry speaks about the content of upcoming verses. He also inserted poetry inside the *sûrah*. And to start talking the content of each *sûrah*, he gave a little explanation about the general content in "introduction".

### c) Closing

As the closing of his work are:

- Conclusion; is a poetry persuades people to worship God and His messenger and to hold strongly The Holy Qur'an.
- L'envoi, is closing preface from Yusuf Ali.
- Index

### 3. Translation of The Qur'an

The Qur'an has been translated into most of languages of Asia and Europe and into some of African ones. Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the translations were normally made without removing from the Arabic. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the first English version made by muslims appear. Many versions by orthodox muslims including Picktall, 1930,

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Bilingual; 1938, 1976, A.Yusuf Ali; 1934, Dawood; 1956 and by the Ahmadiya.<sup>39</sup>.

*The Holy Qur'an, Text, Translation and Commentary* is the result of Abdullah Yusuf Ali's attempt to serve The Qur'an with the deepest hearth. In the process of translating the text, Yusuf Ali passed over the phases. The phases are not merely removing the original words to English, but involving analytical process before expressing it into the English. Here, it is seen that there is a kind of restructuring process of translation before expressing it in the most appropriate sense.

In the process of translation, Abdullah Yusuf Ali honestly recognized that he found many difficulties. Those difficulties are clearly stated as *First*, Arabic words in the text have acquired other meanings than those which were understood by the apostle and his companions. All living language undergoes such transformation.

*Second*, the former commentators formulated different meanings of vocabularies of The Qur'an. The Latter sometimes forget the achievement already achieved by their predecessors. Despite those meanings are not always

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<sup>39</sup> *The Excyclopedia of islam; New Edition Vol: V Prepared by A number of Leading Orientalist*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986) p: 439-442.

appropriate with the spirit of the verses, yet, Abdullah Yusuf Ali attempted to classify those notions critically.

*Third*, Classical Arabic has a vocabulary in which the meaning of each root-word is so comprehensive that it is difficult to interpret it in a modern analytical language word for word, or by the use of the same word in all places where the original word occurs in the text. A striking example is furnished by the word *shabr*, on ii.45 and ii. 153. Even though one particular shade of meaning may be predominant in any particular passage, the others are latent.

*Fourth*, an opposite error sometimes arises because in certain matters the rich vocabulary of The Qur'an distinguishes between things and ideas of certain kind by special words, for which there is only one general word in English. For example, words of '*afa*, *safaha* and *ghafara* which only can be translated as "to forgive".

*Fifth*, God's purpose is eternal, and His plan is perfect, but man's intelligence is limited at its very best. In the same individual it grows and declines according to the strength of his powers and the width of his experience.

Thus, he tried all efforts to present an English translation. In the process, Abdullah Yusuf Ali did not make English as a mere substitution of one word for another, but he

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attempted to explore the meaning and looking for the appropriate words to the verses to reflect the rhythm, music and exalted tone of the original language to English.

The translation of Yusuf Ali is a kind of *al-tarjamah al-tafsiriyah*<sup>40</sup> as not mere changing word by word, but changing the ordinary text by the best words following the possible meaning that can be derived from the original text. The same word in Arabic term will be possibly translated different because Yusuf Ali wanted to contextualize the verse.<sup>41</sup> Such as in translating the “*wajh*”, in Q.S. al-Baqarah: 112 as “Self”, Q.S. al-Baqarah: 115 as “The Presence” and 144,149 and 150, 177 as its original meaning “face”, Q.S. al-Insan: 9 as “The Sake”, Q.S. al-Imran: 72 as

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<sup>40</sup> Manna' Qattan defines that *tarjamah tafsiriyah* is a kind of translation by taking the closest meaning to the text, easy and strong; done by fullest heart, honest and carefulness. *Tarjamah tafsiriyah* means explaining text by another word. This translation is different from *tarjamah maknawiyah*, because *tarjamah maknawiyah* means as if that translator has taken the meaning of Qur'an through its aspects and move it into strange words. Manna' Qattan, *Mabâhis fi 'Ulûm al-Qur'an*, p: 316-317

<sup>41</sup> Every language expression, including text refers to certain thing. As every single system of sign, language has also its reference function. What is referred by text is image of the world inside our idea. We deal the message with a part of our thought, feeling, and idea of many things which are exist and possibly exist. This part is called message context. Content of the message through a way is related to the context. It means a message will be understood only if it is able to be placed in a context. Jan Van Luxemburg, et. al, *Pengantar Ilmu Sastra*, translator: Dick Hartoko (Jakarta: PT. Gramedia, 1992) p: 91c

“The End”, as “True Nature and Shape” as in Q.S. al-Maidah: 111. However, “*wajh*” is literally known as “face”.

The other example is the word “*jahîm*” already written in Q.S. Al-Muthaffifin: 16 which is translated as “fire of hell”, in Q.S. Al-Taubah: 113 is translated as “fire”, Q.S. Al-Nazi’at: 36 as “Hell-Fire” and Q.S. al-Baqarah: 119 as “Blazing fire”.

Abdullah Yusuf Ali also made various interpretation of ‘*Rabb*’, sometimes he translated it as “Lord” such as in Q.S. al-Baqarah: 26, 30, 37, etc and as “Guardian-Lord” as in Q.S. al-Baqarah: 21, Q.S. al-Nisa’:1, and “God” as in Q.S. al-Imran: 124. However, “Lord” is the most used in Abdullah Yusuf Ali’s translation as the pronoun of ‘*Rabb*’.

In some cases, he used not common applicative vocabulary (in the sense of daily vocabulary which is widely used in the society). As the example is his translation of “*samâ*” and “*jannah*”, in Q.S. al-Baqarah:19, “*samâ*” is translated as sky, but in Q.S. al-Baqarah:22,107,144, 164, and in many other verses, it is translated as “heaven” which in Arabic literally system is “*jannah*”, while the word “*jannah*” is often translated as “garden” as in Q.S. al-Baqarah: 214, 266, al-Imran:136, 185, 198, as “paradise” as in Q.S. al-

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Baqarah: 111, and as its common word “heaven” as in Q.S. al-Imran 142.

One should be deeply understood is that Abdullah Yusuf Ali used the combination of Modern and Old English style. Stuart Robertson said in his *Development of Modern English* that the old style of English such as “loveth” for “loves”, “knewth” for “knows”, “hath” for “has”, etc are common in poet and religious writing. It is allowed in those kinds of writing and is death for others.<sup>42</sup>

#### **4. Methods of Commentary**

“*The Holy Qur’an, Text, Translation and Commentary*” is a monumental translation and commentary which is widely used in Europe and placed the best rank in the period.

Abdullah Yusuf Ali’s masterpiece is quite different from others in term of its model and language style. A very poetic romance is provided in his commentary. Yusuf Ali

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<sup>42</sup> Stuart Robertson, *The Development of Modern English Second Edition* (USA: Prentice Hall Inc, 1954) p: 304

himself has implicitly described the methods he applied in viewing the text of The Qur'an.<sup>43</sup> The methods are below:

**a) Literary Analysis**

Despite his work does not give sufficient place to the study of philology,<sup>44</sup> but still he tried to expose the word's meaning. Abdullah Yusuf Ali did not want to fall into rigid idioms and words. He wanted to expand the scope of idiom, so that he could find the large meaning of The Qur'an.<sup>45</sup> Like as when he translated *wajh* in Q.S. al-Baqarah: 112 and 115, both of these verses use the word "wajh", nevertheless they have different meaning. The "wajh" in Q.S. al-Baqarah: 112 means "self" "whether" "wajh" in 115 means *the presence*. *Wajh* is literally "face", but it may imply: (1) countenance of favour,<sup>46</sup> (2) honour, glory, presence,<sup>47</sup> (3) cause, sake,<sup>48</sup>(4) the first

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<sup>43</sup> Yusuf Ali has (at a glance) described his method of translation and commentary in his preface and his explanations.

<sup>44</sup> He said: "...*Nor have I devoted much space to grammatical or philological notes. On these points I consider that the labour of vast body our learned men in the past have left little new to say now. There is usually not much controversy, and I have accepted their conclusions without setting the reasons for them*". *Ibid.*, p: v.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p: x.

<sup>46</sup> Q.S. al-Qadr: 20.

<sup>47</sup> Q.S. al-Baqarah: 115, Q.S. al-Rahman:27, Q.S. Ya-Sin: 9

<sup>48</sup> Q.S. al-Imran: 72

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part, the Beginning,<sup>49</sup> (5) nature, inner being, essence, self. From those, Ali took a conclusion that the face expresses the personality or the whole inner self of man. He simply explained the semantic aspect of the text, telling the meaning sense, synonym, and antonym of important words. Yet, *nahwu*, *sharaf*, *balaghah*, and other language rules are not deeply discussed. The coming example speaks about the similar words used in The Qur'an, see Q.S. al-Baqarah: 109, about different use of 'afa, safaha dan ghaffara. He said in his footnote:

Three words are used in The Qur'an, with a meaning skin to "forgive" but each with different shade of meaning. 'Afa (here translated "forgive") means to forget, to obliterate from one's mind. Safaha (here translated "overlook") means to turn away from, to ignore, to treat a matter as if it did not affect one. Ghaffara (which does not occur in this verse) means to cover up something, as God does to our sins with His grace: this word is particularly appropriate in God's attribute of Ghaffar, the One who forgives again and again.<sup>50</sup>

Analyzing more the explanation above, the writer notes that Abdullah Yusuf Ali only exposed the meaning of the words, in term of its meaning, synonym and antonym, he tried to explore its wider meaning and he did

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<sup>49</sup> Q.S. al-Maidah: 108, Q.S. al-Qasas: 88

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p:47, note: 110

not want to only interpret it literally as what it originally means, but expanding all its possible meanings. Only, sometimes, he will expand the study to get the significance of verse and often he left the explanation without gaining any significance.

By considering that poetry, history, parables, etc, as symbols contain meaningful meanings, Yusuf Ali has begun to apply semiotic approach to gain the significance of symbols. As he interpreted Q.S. al-Imran: 28, said that light and darkness are viewed as symbols of (a) knowledge and ignorance, (b) happiness and misery, (c) spiritual insight and spiritual blindness. Or when he said that fish is the symbol of secular knowledge in Q.S. al-Kahfi: 61. Beside semantic and semiotic approach, Yusuf Ali also applied phonetic approach in view the text especially for *muqatta'at* letters.

As one of linguistics fields, phonology is defined as a sub-discipline of linguistics talks about “language sound”. Specifically, pure phonology talks about function, act, and sound organization as linguistics elements.<sup>51</sup> Dealing with The Qur’an, many scholars have

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<sup>51</sup> Phonology covers phonetics which is a more neutral study towards the sounds as phenomena in physical world and human

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studied the relation between phonology and its coming effects.<sup>52</sup> The effects are two: *first*, phonological effect to aptitude or harmony, *second*, phonological effect to meaning.<sup>53</sup> In the former, there is a harmony in sound. Syihabuddin Qaylubi said that sound harmony in the end of verse is more beautiful than a poem because The Qur'an has various tools so that it does not tiresome.<sup>54</sup> In the later, there are meanings in the sound. Language consists of signs to express something other. In language, sign consists of sound combination which in writing term is removed into visual signs that are letter and punctuation.<sup>55</sup> This effect is what Yusuf Ali wanted to express through his magnum opus. His attempt is shown in his commentary, particularly talks about *muqatta'at*

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physiological, anatomical, neurological, and psychological unsure that ideally make those sounds. One should not start to phonology before having enough understanding of phonetic element background Roger Lass, *Fonology*, translate: Drs. Warsono, et, al (Semarang: IKIP Semarang Press, 1991) p: 1

<sup>52</sup> From those scholars are al-Khalil bin Ahmad, Sibawaih dan Abu al-Fattah 'Usman bin Juniy.

<sup>53</sup> Syihabuddin Qalyubi, *Stilistika al-Qur'an, Pengantar Studi al-Qur'an* (Yogyakarta: Titian Ilahi Press, 1997) p: 39

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p: 40

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p: 43

letters.<sup>56</sup> In interpreting the abbreviated letters (A.L.M) in Q.S. al-Baqarah:1, he said that to the nature of the sounds which the letter represent, a is a breathing and comes from the throat, L is a lingual-palatal-dental sound from the middle of the mouth, and M is a labial or lip-sound, they may be symbolical of the Beginning, Middle and End. Yusuf Ali took A.L.M as the symbol of those *sûrah* that deal with the beginning, the middle and the end of man's spiritual history,-the origin, the present position, and the things to come in the Last Days (eschatology, to use a theological term). Further, Yusuf Ali took A.L as the symbol of the first two, and M-of the last. In the present group of *sûrah* there is hardly any eschatological matter, and therefore the absence of M is understandable, the symbol standing for such matter. In its place comes R, which is phonetically allied to L. L is produced by the impact of the tongue to the front of the palate, and R to the middle of the palate. And many language the letter L and R are interchangeable; e.g., in Arabic, *al-Rahmân* becomes *ar-Rahmân*, and R in imperfect enunciation becomes L as in Chinese Illations. If L-is a symbol of

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<sup>56</sup> *Muqatta'ât* is one of the names given to the mysterious letters placed at the head of 26 *surah* of the Qur'an.

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present-day things looking to the future, R is a symbol of present-day things looking within i.e., into the interior of the organization of the *ummat*. And this symbolism fits in with the subject-matter of the *sûrah* in question.<sup>57</sup>

**b) Matters of Report and Matters of Judgment**

As other exegetes, Yusuf Ali also drew a distinction between matters of report (*manqûlat*) and matters of judgment (*ma'qûlat*). *Manqûlat* is fixed matters already established by proposition from The Qur'an and Hadits, includes verses of law considerably *muhkamât*. He said: “*The distinction drawn by commentators between matters of report (manqûlât) and matters of judgement (ma'qûlât) is sound one and I heartily accept it*”.<sup>58</sup> Further Ali explained that he would like to extend the scope of the *ma'qûlât* far beyond questions of idiom and meaning. In the former (*manqûlat*), the issues are : what actually happened and what was actually said, or how were certain things done?, in the latter *ma'qûlât* the issues are: what is the bearing of this truth on our lives, or what illustration

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<sup>57</sup> Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *op. cit.*, p: 17, 481

<sup>58</sup> Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *op. cit.*, p: xi

helps us best to grasp this, or what is the wisdom we can extract from this?.

For Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *manqûlât* is receiving something following its existence, while *ma'qûlât* is thinkable matter.<sup>59</sup> However, in spite of being aware of *riwâyah* as supporting tool of commentary, Abdullah Yusuf Ali in the application rarely used it to analyze the verses. Less of using *riwâyah* means less of using *asbâb al-nuzûl* in exploring the meaning of the text.

For the case of occasion of revelation, Yusuf Ali noted that those events should not be the main discuss because The Qur'an is not revealed for only an occasion, but it is guidance for all time. In his explanation about commentary he said:

As to particular occasions on which particular verses were revealed, the information is interesting and valuable from a historical point of view, and our older writers have collected ample material for it. But to lay too much stress on it today puts the picture out of all perspectives. The Qur'an was not revealed for a particular occasion only, but for all time. The particular occasion is now past; our chief interest

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<sup>59</sup> Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *Al-Qur'an, Terjemah dan Tafsirnya*, terj: Ali Audah (Jakarta: Pustaka Firdaus, 1993) p: xvii

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now is to see how it can guide us in our present lives.<sup>60</sup>

In different sheet he said:

It will be found that every verse revealed for a particular occasion has also general meaning. The particular occasion and the particular people concerned have passed away, but the general meaning and its application remain true for all time. What we are concerned about now, in the fourteenth century of the Hijra, is: what guidance can we draw for ourselves from the message of God.<sup>61</sup>

Thus, Yusuf Ali did not explain the *asbâb al-nuzûl* sufficiently. He rarely described the reason of revelation. Once, he explained the verse by its occasion of revelation is Q.S. al-Nisa': 105<sup>62</sup> and Q.S. al-Tahrim: 1. Abdullah Yusuf Ali, if the writer may say, almost never mentioned the occasions of revelation except a little for verses talk about war.

Otherwise, he gave the general reason (macro), the general situation when the verse revealed. Thus, the socio-culture of Arabian at that time is quite important. Therefore, Yusuf Ali mostly referred the historical information from the *Sîrah Nabawi*.

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<sup>60</sup> Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *op. cit.*, p: x-xi.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p: v.

<sup>62</sup> This verse reminds Muslim to be careful of miring trick as done by Tu'mah ibn Ubayriq, a Jewish who stole the uniform of war and was defended by Muslims for his confession as Muslim.

In viewing the verse about law, Abdullah Yusuf Ali would also refer to the history as he commented to Q.S. al-Baqarah: 219 about gambling, by drawing the similarity to what occurred in the past (the situation of society when the verse was revealed), that the form most familiar to the Arabs was gambling by casting lots by means of arrows, on the principle of lottery,<sup>63</sup> Abdullah Yusuf Ali said that dice and wagering are prohibited because they are rightly held to be within the definition of gambling. In comparing with those, insurance is not gambling when conducted on business principle, because the basis for calculation is statistics on a large scale from which mere chance is eliminated.<sup>64</sup>

Less of quotation of particular occasion of revelation indicates that he was less in referring to the traditions. Indeed, the writer rarely gets them used as the explanation of the Qur'an.

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<sup>63</sup> The arrows were marked and served the same purpose as a modern lottery tickets. Something, e.g., the carcase of slaughtered animal, was divided into unequal parts. The marked arrows were drawn from a bag. Some were blank and those who drew them got nothing. Others indicated prizes, which were big or small, whether you got a big share or a small share, or nothing, depended on pure luck, unless there was fraud also on the part of some persons concerned

<sup>64</sup> Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *op. cit.*, p: 86, Note: 241

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c) **Commentary on *Muhkâmât* and *Mutasyâbihât* Verse**

Broadly, the verses of The Qur'an according to Yusuf Ali, may be divided into two portions, not given separately, but intermingled; viz. (1) the nucleus or foundation of the book, literally "the mother of the book" and (2) the part which is figurative, metaphorical or allegorical. It is a very fascinating to take up the later, and exercise our ingenuity about its inner meaning, but its refers to such profound spiritual matters that human language is inadequate to it, and to though people of wisdom may get some light from it, no one should be dogmatic, as the final meaning, is known to God alone.

The commentators usually use the *al-naql (riwâyah)* to understand the verses "of established meaning" (*muhkamât*) to refer to the categorical orders of the *syarî'ah* (the law), which are plain to everyone's understanding. But perhaps the meaning is wider: "the mother of the book" must include the very foundation on which all law rest, the essence of God's message, as distinguished from the various illustrative parables, allegories, and ordinance. In a sense, the whole of Qur'an has both "established meaning" and "allegorical meaning". The division is not between the verses, but

between the meanings to be attached to them. Each verse is but a sign or symbol; what it represents is something immediately applicable, and something eternal and independent of time and space. Here, Yusuf Ali placed it on a par with Plato's theory of "Forms of Ideas". The wise man will understand that there is an "essence" and illustrative clothing given to the essence, throughout the Book.<sup>65</sup>

1) **Commentary on *Muhkamât* Verses**

In concerning with *muhkamât* verses, particularly related to verses of law, his humanity soul is seen in his way of seeing The Qur'an. Although he approved in his preface to first edition that he won't widely talk about the law because he has explained it in his separate work "Anglo-Muhammadan-Law", he would explain the law by side with its reason of decision.

The example is an allowance to not fast for they who are getting illness or having a journey. As in Q.S. al-Baqarah: 184, for him, illness and journey must not be interpreted in an elastic sense; they must be such as to cause real pain or suffering if the fast were observed. For journeys, a minimum standard of three marches is

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<sup>65</sup> His commentary of Q.S. al-Imran: 7, *Ibid.*,p: 123, note: 347,

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prescribed by some commentators; others make it more precise by naming a distance of 16 *farsah*, equivalent to 48 miles. A journey of 8 or 9 miles on foot is more tiring than a similar one by bullock cart. There are various degrees of fatigue in riding a given riding a given distance on horseback or by camel or in comfortable train or motorcar or by steamer, aeroplane or airship. According to Yusuf Ali, the standard must depend on the relative resources of the traveller. Here, such a difference occurred between Yusuf Ali and others. Yusuf Ali determined the law of each case according to circumstances.<sup>66</sup> His flexibility and humanity are shown here. He did not strictly rivet on the rigid legal maxim decided by the majority of *fuqohâ'*, despite in several cases, he produced the same and several others the different. It commonly happened in scientific study.

Once again he came to make the difference to others is about women who do a shameful attitude, Q.S. al-Nisa': 15. Most commentators understand this verse to refer to adultery or fornication. In that case they consider that the punishment was altered to 100 stripes by the Q.S.

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<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p: 72, note: 190

al-Nur: 2. But Yusuf Ali thought that it refers to unnatural crime between women, analogous to unnatural crime between men in Q.S. al-Nisa': 16 because *first*; no punishment is specified there for the men, as would be the case where a man was involved in the crime. Second, the word *al-lâtî*, is used for the parties to the crime. Third, the punishment is indefinite. For Ali, the shame is most shameful, and should be unknown in a well-regulated society, the maximum punishment would of course be imprisonment for life. Thus, to protect the honour of women, stricter evidence is required four instead of usual two witnesses.<sup>67</sup>

From the examples above, the writer takes the conclusion that Yusuf Ali was not a clumsy man. He was open minded and humanist. It's proven in the way he understood the text. He would try to outline the law through its significance to human life. Abdullah Yusuf Ali was also open-minded to the case of gender justice. He many shouted the human right either for male or female. Even he bravely voiced to oppose the unchanged idea of scholars, exactly about the division of inheritance written in Q.S. al-Nisa': 11, Abdullah Yusuf Ali stated:

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<sup>67</sup> Q.S. al-Nisa: 15, *Ibid.*, p: 183-184, note: 523-525

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“Generally, but not always, the male takes a share double that of a female in his own category”. The sentence “but not always” indicates that for Yusuf Ali, it is possible to male and female have the same right. Female is able to get the same or even more than male.

2) **Commentary on *Mutasyâbihât* Verses**

Then, the previous explanation has told that each verse is but a sign or symbol, whether the verse is “established meaning” or “allegorical meaning”. Those all are to understand. And below is Yusuf Ali’s explanation of Q.S. al-Baqarah: 1, as the example of his commentary towards *mutasyâbihât* verses:

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Among the conjectures there are two plausible theories. One is that initial represents an attribute of God. Among the attributes is not difficult to select three that will fit in with these letters. Another theory, favoured by Baidhawi, is that these letters are initial, the final and the middle ( or again the initial) letter of three names: Allah, Jibril and Muhammad- the source of revelation, the heavenly messenger who brought it, and the human messenger through whom it was promulgated in human speech...if look to the nature of the sound which the letters represent, A is the breathing and comes from the throat, L is a lingual-palatal-dental sound from the middle of the mouth, and M is labial or lip-sound. Can we not take

them as symbolical of the Beginning, Middle and End? If so, are they not appropriate to the *surah* which treats specifically of Life, Growth, and Death-the Beginning and the End? In the New Testament of Greek scripture, the first and the last letters of the Greek alphabet, Alpha and Omega, are symbolical of Beginning and the End, and give on of the titles of God: "I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending, saith the Lord, which is and which was and which is to come, the almighty." (Rev.1.8) the symbolism of the three things is better with tree letters.<sup>68</sup>

The verse above is a kind of *muqatta'ât*<sup>69</sup> words which many *muffassir* assumed that it is only God knows the meaning. Yusuf Ali sounded rather different with others, he admitted that each particular letter has a mystic meaning, but the whole book is record for all time. It must necessarily contain truths that only gradually unfold themselves to humanity. Even parables and tales of mystic meaning employ symbolism. There are many teachings behind those symbols, those all are to be understood by people. Yet, despite people asked to believe that the certain initials have a meaning, it only to draw upon faith, not to do any violence to reason.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p: 17, note: 25

<sup>69</sup> *Muqatta'at* is also known as *fawatihussuwar*. It will be explained in different point.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p: 118.

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**d) Other Religion's Sources**

In accordance with the previous stories, Yusuf Ali used Jewish and Christian sources.<sup>71</sup> The use of others' scripture could be found in most of his commentary especially what relate to the story of people of the book. Despite Yusuf Ali has told that taking the stories from other religion's scripture is only for illustration, but it precisely shows that Yusuf Ali (under his unconsciousness) has fairly agreed the truth of those sources. It must be the result of his education in Free Church of Scotland and Wilson College. His familiarity with John Wilson<sup>72</sup> who is the founder of the school had affected his mode of thought. Only a few of his commentaries about people of the book (using the source of their religion) is followed by the explanations. The rest, he left many footnotes without giving any comments. The writer takes the story of Musa in Q.S. al-Baqarah: 55 as example:

We had hitherto instances from the Jewish traditional *Taurat* (for Pentateuch). Now, we have some

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<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p: xviii

<sup>72</sup> Wilson is the founder of Wilson School. He is a capable linguist, historian in West India and translator of Bible into Maratsi language. M.A. Sherif, *op.cit.*, p: 23

instances from Jewish traditions in the Talmud, or body exposition in the Jewish theological schools. They are based on the Jewish scriptures, but add many marvellous details and homilies. As to seeing God, we have in Exod. xxxiii. 20: And he said, “Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me and live” the punishment for insisting on seeing God was therefore death. But those who rejected faith were forgiven and yet they were ungrateful.<sup>73</sup>

From the story above, the writer notes that Yusuf Ali tended to adopt the story from Jewish sources, the absence of explanation of how muslim should act to those narrations makes the commentary odd. By this, as if he corrected the story, it is not merely illustration as he demonstrated before, even it is data adoption. It precisely seems that Yusuf Ali wanted to match the two sources (the present Taurat and The Qur’an).

Other example is his commentary about *manna wa salwa*, in Q.S. al-Baqarah: 57.

In Exod. xvi. 14 it is described as “a small round thing, as small as the boar frost on the ground. “It usually rooted if left over till next day; it melted in the hot sun; the amount necessary for each man was about an Omer, a Hebrew measure of capacity equal to about 2 ½ quarts. This is the Hebrew account, probably distorted by traditional exaggeration. The actual manna found to this day in the Sinai region is

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<sup>73</sup> Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *op. cit.*, p: 30. Note: 70

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a gummy saccharine secretion found on species of Tamarisk. It is produce by the puncture of a species of insect like the cochineal, just as is produced by the puncture of the la insect on certain trees in India. As to quails, large flights from them are driven by winds in the Eastern Mediterranean in certain seasons of the year, as was witnessed during the Great War of 1914-1918 by many Indian officers who campaigned between Egypt and Palestine.<sup>74</sup>

There are various interpretations of *mannâ* and *salwâ*, for this case.

Yusuf Ali referring to the Jewish traditions as well saw that *mannâ* and *salwâ* were two kinds of food sent down to people as lucky. Interpreting difficult word with their scriptures (other religion's scripture), as far as it does not relate to matter of belief is fine. One more example to be clearer is his view about *tabut*, already written in Q.S. al-Baqarah: 248:

*Ark of the Covenant; Tâbût*; a chest of acacia wood covered and lined with pure gold, about 5ftx3ftx3ft see Exod. xxv: 10-22. It was to contain "the testimony of God" or the Ten Commandments engraved on stone with relics of Moses and Aaron. Its Gold lid was to be the "Mercy Seat" with two cherubim of beaten gold, with wings outstretched. This was a sacred possession to Israel. It was lost to the enemy in the early part of Samuel's ministry; see

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<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*,p: 31. Note: 71

n. 78 to 278: when it came back, it remained in a village for twenty years, and was apparently taken to the capital when kingship was instituted. It was become the symbol of unity and authority.<sup>75</sup>

Analyzing those three examples, the writer draws a conclusion that in commenting the verses speak about people of the books, Yusuf Ali referred to the source of Jewish and Christian. Sometimes he criticized their belief but even often adopted their doctrines at all.

#### e) Using the Latest Information

In delivering his view, Yusuf Ali tried to speak with current language of readers. He said: “*In explaining or illustrating them we shall use such language as is current among the people to whom we speak*”<sup>76</sup>. In understanding the text, Yusuf Ali gave such attention to the reader’s social context.<sup>77</sup> Nevertheless, he did not aim to speak out

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<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p: 99, note: 281

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*,p: xi

<sup>77</sup> He said that: “In the application of spiritual truth to our own times and our own lives, we must use every kind of knowledge, science, and experience which we possess, but we must not obtrude irrelevant matter into our discussions. Let us take simple examples, when we speak of the rising of the sun in the east, we do not go on to reconcile the expression with Copernican system of astronomy. What we mean is as true under the Copernican system as it was under the Ptolemaic system. When we speak of the endless plains of India, we are not put on our defence because the earth is round. Nor will such poetic expressions as

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of irrelevant matters, by means he avoided the theological debates which seems improper to commentary. He also avoided the long-literary explanation which obscures the message of social-moral value.

He contextualized the verses to the current period when he tried to have a dialogue with them. Thus, he inserted some information that may help readers getting more understandings to the messages. Such as when he explained Q.S. al-Baqarah: 62 about the *sabians*. He used the latest researches which revealed a small remnant of a religious community numbering about 2000 souls in Lower Iraq, near Basra.<sup>78</sup>

Or when he explained that measurement of *Jiziyah* for imam syafi'I is one dinar per year, which would be the Arabian gold dinar of the muslim states, equivalent in value to about half a sovereign, or about 5 to 6, 7 rupee. This view at that time is appropriate, but it is not anymore to nowadays situation.<sup>79</sup> Also, when he explained the word " *sufaha* " in Q.S. al-Nisa': 5, he said that the wording is perfectly general and defines principle like

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the seven firmaments raise question to the nature of space in modern astronomy". *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> See *Ibid.*, p: 33, note: 76

<sup>79</sup> Q.S. al-Taubah: 29, *Ibid.*, p: 447, note: 1281

those of Chancery in English Law and the Court of Wards in Indian Law.<sup>80</sup>

f) **Finding Verse Relevancy.**

He stated that The Qur'an is its own best commentary; a careful comparison and collation of passage from The Qur'an removes many difficulties. In some opportunities, Yusuf Ali set out the concordance among verses, as he commented Q.S. al-Baqarah: 8, said: "ومن الناس من يقول أئنا بالله و باليوم الآخر وما هم بمؤمنين" Yusuf Ali told that this verse talks about the hypocrites who said that they believed in God but actually they did not. Their untrue to themselves make their hearths are diseased. As what in Q.S. al-Baqarah: 10,

"ففى قلوبهم مرض فزادهم الله مرضا ولهم عذاب اليم بما كانوا يكذبون" the disease tends to spread, like evil. They are curable, but if they harden their hearths, they soon pass into the category of those who deliberately reject light.<sup>81</sup>

Each of verse does not stand by its own self, it always relate to others. And Ali proved it through his commentary, as in Q.S. al-Baqarah: 28: "*How can you*

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<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p: 179, note: 510

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p: 18, note: 33

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*reject, the faith in God...*”, Ali said that in the preceding verse, God has used various arguments, *first*; He has recalled His Goodness (Q.S. al-Baqarah: 21-22), *second*; resolved doubts (Q.S. al-Baqarah: 23), *third*; plainly set forth the penalty of wrong-doing (Q.S. al-Baqarah: 24), *fourth*; given glad tidings (Q.S. al-Baqarah: 25), *fifth*; shown how misunderstandings arise from a deliberate rejection of the light and breach of the Covenant (ii; 26-27), and for (Q.S. al-Baqarah; 28-29), He pleads with His creatures and appeals to their own subjective feelings, upon those all, will people deliberately reject or obscure or deaden the faculty of faith which has been put into them?.<sup>82</sup>

Or in which Ali translated the word “*Satan*” in Q.S. al-Baqarah: 36, he said:

*Iblis* in ii: 34 is apparently the power of evil, with the root idea of desperateness or rebellion. “*Satan*” in this verse is the power of evil, with the root idea of perversity or enmity. Note the appropriateness of term on each occasion. In addition, “slipping” from the garden denotes the idea of Evil gradually tempting man from a higher to a lower state.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p: 23, note: 46

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p: 25, note: 52

Defining *Iblis* and *satan* in the two verses as power of evil is not without reasons. The similar sense of those terms is derived from the contextual case of such occasions. The writer supposed that Yusuf Ali was observing each event where *iblis/satan* played important role in warping people from the right path. Yusuf Ali likely used verses which relate to *iblis* and *satan* to expose the meaning of terms.

#### **4. Literary Style of The Work**

Each person has his own interest; it will really affect someone's way of thought. And Abdullah Yusuf Ali who has a big attention to literature coloured his works by literary style.

Literature, as a part of art uses language as delivering media. Different from daily language, literary language has its own characteristics because it is a form of *idiosyncratic* in which its vocabularies are result of author individual expression.<sup>84</sup> Russian formalists<sup>85</sup> see that literary language is

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<sup>84</sup> Quoted from John Lyons, *Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics*, London translator: Drs. Aminuddin, Mpd, *Semantik: Pengantar Studi tentang Makna* (Bandung: Sinar Baru Algensindo, 2008) p: 25

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a set of norm deviation, is as linguistic violence; literature is special language contrasted to daily language.<sup>86</sup>

Then, Abdullah Yusuf Ali's interest in Greek history and art inspires his style of work. Poetry and poetic prose are intentionally arranged to reflect the noble language of The Qur'an in English. Appendix and commentary are written in a rhythmic prose as his monumental work which notes the best combination between smart thought and contemplation of The Glorious Qur'an.<sup>87</sup>

His translation is a kind of *tarjamah tafsiriyyah* in sense of using various words; therefore, it does not tend to be rigid and literal. Abdullah Yusuf Ali contextualized the terms and made it appropriate to the verse. It is different from Marmaduke Pichtall who translated The Qur'an literally, so

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<sup>85</sup> Russian formalists as Viktor Shlovsky, Roman Jakobson, Osip Brik came to Russia before revolution of Bolshevik. This movement developed up to twenties, and was stopped by Stalinism. Russian formalism is a type of literary theory and analysis which originated in Moscow and Petograd in the second decade of this century, in connection with *avant-garde* experiments in literature and in reaction against the prevailing emphasis in Russian criticism on the content and social significance of literature. At first, its opponents applied the term formalism derogatorily because of its stress on the formal patterns of sounds, words, and literary devices instead of subject matter and social value of literature. M. H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms the Fifth Edition*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc, p. 235

<sup>86</sup> Terry Eagleton, *Teori Sastra, Sebuah Pengantar*, translate: Harfiyah Widiawati and Evi Setyarini (Yogyakarta: Jalasutra, 2007) p: 6

<sup>87</sup> M.A. Sherif, *op. cit.*, p: 178

that it seems rough and losing the essential beauty of The Qur'an.

Based on periods of English development, the language used by Abdullah Yusuf Ali in his work is categorized in the English modern period. (1500 – the present).<sup>88</sup> Despite he used several ancient words as “*you, ye, thou, and thee*” as pronouns for second person and using some strange verbs such as “*groweth*” for “grows” and “*bringeth*”<sup>89</sup> for “brings”, “*hath*” for “has”, “*wilt*” for “will not”, etc, but this usage of unusual words in modern English is common for English poetry and translation. Using of these stiles of language implies no matter. But factually outside of religious and poetic contexts, the use of those stiles is dead.<sup>90</sup> Even more, English literature in the early of the 20<sup>th</sup> century did not pay attention to particular “poetry language”, rhythm and rhyme formed in a brave, unconventional and experimental form of language.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Stuart Robertson dated the periods of English as: Old English (450-1100), Middle English (1100-1500) and Modern English (1500-the present)., Stuart Robertson, *op. cit.*, p: 36

<sup>89</sup> Archaic or poetic language occasionally substitutes the ending –eth in the third person singular present indicative. *Ibid.*,p: 143

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*,p: 304

<sup>91</sup> Samekto, S.S, *Ikhtisar Sejarah Kesusastraan Inggris* (Jakarta: Daya Widya, 1975) p: 99

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Abdullah Yusuf Ali's commentary is written in poetic prose without any rhyme.<sup>92</sup> Theoretically, his work is sociological or contextual in nature because in the process of creation, Yusuf Ali combined a number of events, situations or conditions, and future aspirations with his past impression (image) that represented his world views, experiences, and norms which came from the society with its uniqueness.<sup>93</sup> And indeed, this work is the evident of Abdullah Yusuf Ali's struggle, his solace of life sufferings, and his future aspirations.

Following the idea of Plato, Yusuf Ali concluded that every poem is nothing but signs or symbols; it represents something free of space and time and immediately applicable (forms of "idea" in the philosophy of Plato). The wise man will understand that there is an "essence" and illustrative clothing given to the essence, throughout the Book,<sup>94</sup> the original form, following "mystical doctrine" of Plato and as what he developed in "republic", even as "names" or essence

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<sup>92</sup> Stuart Robertson even said that good contemporary prose is less bound by the rule of concord, theoretically made rigid since the eighteen century, than is generally realized.

<sup>93</sup> Dr. Bustami Subhan, M.S, *A Guide to Literary Criticism* (Yogyakarta: Debut Press, 2003) p: 41

<sup>94</sup> Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *op. cit.*, p: 123, note: 347, see also M.A. Sherif, *op. cit.*,p: 181

and characters of inanimate objects as God taught him about.<sup>95</sup> All things in this phenomenal world are none but a sign. Reality is in its behind, like as a light in the oppositional side of cave, in Plato's theory of "idea".<sup>96</sup>

The result of Yusuf Ali's interest in literature is shown in his attitude of quoting familiar lore such as proverbs and quoting the works of well known people. However, the well known works he quoted from are mostly literatures of western men of letters such as Shakespeare<sup>97</sup>, Tennyson<sup>98</sup>, R. Bridges<sup>99</sup>, Coleridge<sup>100</sup>, John Bunyan<sup>101</sup>, Burns<sup>102</sup>, Carlyle<sup>103</sup>, Dickens<sup>104</sup>, Kipling<sup>105</sup>, Milton<sup>106</sup>, Shelley<sup>107</sup>, Spencer<sup>108</sup>, Wordsworth<sup>109</sup>, Wolfe<sup>110</sup>, etc.

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<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p: 343, note 996

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, Appendix VI, the writing about Plato see note 1584

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, notes:47, 284, 439, 1308, 1662, 1663, 3354, 3866, 3987, 5202, 5919, 6262

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, notes:456, 1021, 2481

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, note 471

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, notes: 4572, 5498

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, note 581

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, Appendix VI and note 181

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, note 1008

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, note 862

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, note 1694

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, note 1343, 1881, 4035, 4203, 4400

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, note 2514, 3196

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, note 3271

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, note 68, 298, 4865

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, note 2352

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Studying more the writing written in his magnum opus, the writer notes that model of literature in which Abdullah Yusuf Ali mostly influenced by is the literature of Victorian development ( $\pm 1850 - \pm 1900$ )<sup>111</sup>. Here, literatures, either poetry or prose were purposed to particular reason that were to improve society moral value, it did not merely describe how life ran in the society but also describe how life should be, a prominent character of the work of Yusuf Ali which focuses in the teaching of moral value. Poems in the period of Victoria sounded questioning, criticizing and being reflective. Social, scientific and religious problems were object of poetry. Thus, the style is able to be learnt and to be beautified consciously. There is not more spontaneous style as the product of temporary emotion. Elements of expression such as rhythm, diction, and melody were noticed, so, there was an advance in poetry writing technique.<sup>112</sup>

Nevertheless, Yusuf Ali as Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936)<sup>113</sup> who grew in the circle of Britain imperialism

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<sup>111</sup> Being called as “the Period of Victoria” because it was the period when Victoria reigned as a queen (1837-1901). It was peaceful period and there were important social changes both in economy and technology. These changes are the aspects of Industrial revolution.

<sup>112</sup> Samekto, S.S, *op. cit.*, p: 78-79

<sup>113</sup> Rudyard Kipling is a poet before World War I, was born in India in the British colonialism. Most of his works are likely Ballads

became imperial man of letter. Both see that imperialism as civilizing force to civilize the native men, but Abdullah Yusuf Ali did not come along with Kipling to say that imperialism is a religion.<sup>114</sup>

### 5. The Sources of Commentary<sup>115</sup>

The names of the most important *Tafsîr*, especially those to which Yusuf Ali had referred from time to time are:

- 1) The monumental work of Abu Ja'far Muhammad Ibn Jarir al-Tabari, d. 310 H. A perfect mine of historical information, as the author was both a historian and a traditionist.
- 2) The *Mufradât*, a dictionary of difficult words and phrases in the Qur'an, by Abu al-Qasim Husain Raghîb of Isfahan, d. 503 H. also explain allusions.
- 3) The *Kasyaf*, by Abu al Qasim Mahmud Zamakhsyari, of Khawarism, d. 538 H. very full in explanation of words and idioms; takes a decidedly rational and ethical view of doctrine.

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giving impression as story. His well known work is "The White Man's Burden".

<sup>114</sup> Samekto, S.S, *op. cit.*,p: 99

<sup>115</sup> Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *op. cit.*,p: xi-xii , xv

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- 4) *Tafsîr Kabîr* by Fakhruddin Muhammad al-Razi, d. 606 H. very comprehensive, strong in interpretations from a sufi or spiritual point of view,
  - 5) *Anwar al-Tanzil* by Qadhi Nashiruddin Abu Sa'id Baidhawi, d. 685 H. Has drawn largely from the *Mufradât*, the *Kasyaf* and the *Tafsir Kabir*, but incorporates a good deal of original matters.
  - 6) The *Tafsir* Abu al-Fida' Ismail ibn Katsir, d. 774 H. voluminous, but has great authority among the 'Ulama'.
  - 7) *Al-Itqân fî 'Ulûm al-Qur'ân*, by Jalaluddin al-Suyuthi, d. 911 H, a comprehensive review of the science of the Qur'an, being an introduction to this mujma' al-Bahrain.
  - 8) *Tafsir Jalalain*, written by two Jalaluddin, one of whom was the author of the *Itqan*, mentioned above, d. 911 H. A concise meritorious commentary, on which again a number of commentaries have been written.
  - 9) Indian Scholars, such as:
    - a) Syaikh Ali ibn Ahmad Mahami (of Mahim, near Bombay), d. 835 H/1432 A.D., author of the *Tafsîr Rahmânî*.

- b) ‘Allama Syamsuddin (of Daulatabad and Delhi), lived during the brilliant reign of Ibrahim Syarqi of Jaunpur (1400-1440 A.D).
  - c) Syah Waliyullah (the famous muhaddith of Delhi) and his two sons Syah ‘Abd al-‘Aziz (d. 1824) and Syah Abd al-Qadir (d. 1826) wrote both translations and commentaries.
  - d) The Urdu commentary of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan of Aligarh (d. 1898), has not met approval of Ulama.
  - e) *Tafsîr Haqqanî*, Maulvi ‘Abd al-Haqq, has passed through several editions, is quite modern in tone and manageable in bulk, and was widely circulated in India.
  - f) The Commentary of Maulvi Abu al-Kalam Azad.
- 10) Syaikh Muhammad Abduh (d. 1323 H/1905 A.D) and his student, Muhammad Rasyid Ridha (*al-Manâr*), Tantawi Jauhari, and Farid Wajdi.
  - 11) The well-known Arabic Dictionary, *Qâmûs*.
  - 12) The well-known Arabic Dictionary, *Lisân al-Arab*.
  - 13) The Concise Arabic-Persian Dictionary, *Surâh*.
  - 14) J. Penrice’s *Dictionary and Glossary of the Koran*.
  - 15) E.W. Lane: *English-Arabic Lexicon*.

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- 16) Noldeke und Schawally: *Geschichte des Qorans*. A German Essay on the Chronology of the Qur'an.
  - 17) *Encyclopedia of Islam*
  - 18) *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 14<sup>th</sup> edition. A great advance on previous editions, as regards the attention it devotes to Arabic learning.
  - 19) Hughes's *Dictionary of Islam*
  - 20) Ibn Hisyam; *Sîrat al-Rasûl*. A fairly detailed life of the Apostle.
  - 21) Maulvi Shibli Nu'mani (d. 1914/ 1334 H); *Sîrah al-Nabî* (an Urdu Life of the Apostle)
  - 22) *Fath al-Rahmân*, an Arabic concordance to the Qur'an, by Faidhullah Bik hasani, printed in Cairo in 1346 H. Full and well arranged and easy to use.
  - 23) A.F. Kirkpatrick, *Divine Library of The Old Testament*.
  - 24) C.E. Hammond, *Outlines of Textual Criticism*.
  - 25) E. Renan, *History of The People of Israel*, 3 Vols.
  - 26) G.F. Moore, *Literature of The Old Testament. And The Bibliography Therein* (Home University Library)
  - 27) Sir. Frederic Kenyon, *The Story of The Bible*, 1936.
  - 28) Joseph Cattani Pasha, *Coup d'oeil sur la cronologie de la nation Egyptienne*, Paris, 1931.

- 29) Sir. W.M. Flinders Petrie, *History of Egypt*, 3 Vols.
- 30) *Cambridge Ancient History*, Vol. I. Chapter IV. (III)
- 31) D.A. Mackenzie, *Egyptian Myth and Legend*.
- 32) A.W. Shorter, *Introduction to Egyptian Religion*, 1931.
- 33) Prof. F. C. Burkitt, on the canon of New Testament. In *Religion*, June, 1934.
- 34) R. Hone, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, London, 1820.
- 35) H. I. Bell and T.C. Skeat, *Fragments of an Unknown Gospel and Other Christian Papyri*, published by The British Museum, 1935.