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## Qur'anic Hermeneutics and its Applications by Fazlur Rahman

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### Abstract

This article seeks to identify the ideas of Fazlur Rahman, a classical thinker who is also ultramodern and advances neo modernism. Muslims are required to have a critical understanding of the Western world. One of his contributions is the Double Movement hermeneutic technique. This technique has distinct properties that can be used to understand legal and social texts. To identify Fazlur Rahman's views, the literature research approach is performed. According to the findings, Rahman emphasized the need of knowing the socio-historical backdrop in the field of law. Rahman was crucial in the development of a more methodical interpretive building. Even though his method is not wholly novel, he made an important contribution by emphasizing socio-historical factors and the Double Movement approach. However, problems and flaws in his technique are still being contested among Muslim academics. This article discusses the benefits and drawbacks of this strategy, presenting a fair picture of Rahman's contribution to ultramodern Islamic thinking.

**Keywords:** Double Movement, Islamic Law, Contribution

### INTRODUCTION

Fazlur Rahman is a Muslim philosopher with great fundamental talents in the Qur'an, tafsir, hadith, kalam, philosophy, logic, and *fiqh* (Yumnah, 2019). The structure of his thought is illustrated in three phases: the first refers to the products of classical Muslim philosophers such as al-Farabi and Ibn Rushd, the second to the thoughts and ideas of Muslim theologians such as al-Ghazali, Ibn Taymiyyah, and Syah Waliyullah, and the third to a reconstruction of the intellectual foundation in the modern era by attempting to combine classical and contemporary ideas (Adawiyah, 2016).

Classical scholars such as al-Ghazali (1111 CE), Ibn Taymiyyah (1328 CE), Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi (1624 CE), and Shah Waliyullah (1762 CE) influenced his intellectual path. Modern intellectuals such as Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1897 CE), Muhammad Abduh (1905 CE), Shibli Numani (1914 CE), Sir Muhammad Iqbal (1938 CE), and Ziya Gokalp (1924 CE)

also influenced him (Rahman, 2020). As a neo modernist figure, he attempted to create a thinking pattern that integrated classical and modern ideas.

Rahman's view of neo modernism may be observed in his beliefs about the importance of Muslims critically and objectively understanding the Western world and its ideas, lest Muslims fail to face the modern world. Muslims must now devise a suitable and logical technique for studying the Qur'an (Mustaqim, 2010). One of the outcomes of his thought regarding the rebirth of his Qur'anic *tasfir* approach, which began in Pakistan around the 1960s. And, after settling in Chicago, he attempted to share his beliefs with the public through essays written in the 1970s. Fazlur Rahman's Hermeneutic Method of al-Qur'an is the prevalent name for this concept. He considers the Qur'an's authenticity to be definitive. Rahman, on the other hand, questions the *mufasir's* knowledge (Mustaqim, 2010).

His hermeneutic technique is distinguished by its dual movement of interpretation, which begins in the present and moves to the time when the Qur'an was revealed before returning to the present (Rahman, 2017). This article will explain the approach in further detail, including its application and examples, as well as its benefits and drawbacks.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study relies on library research, with data sources drawn from books, journals, and papers linked to Fazlur Rahman's ideas. The data was examined using literature review. Research conducted using research literature so that the method used in Research is a literature study. The special characteristics are used as a basis for developing Research knowledge, among others; this research faced directly with data or text presented, or through eyewitnesses in the form of events, researchers only face-to-face directly with the existing sources at library or data is ready to use, as well as data Secondary data used

## ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

### *Profile of Fazlur Rahman*

Rahman is a controversial Muslim thinker, particularly among Pakistanis who are predominantly traditionalists and fundamentalists. In 1966-1967, when he became the director of Pakistan's Islamic research institute, he published a journal in which one of his statements stated that the Qur'an as a whole is the word of God and, in the usual sense, is also entirely the word of Muhammad (Rahman & Amal, 1990).

After several Pakistanis rejected Rahman in 1970, he relocated to Chicago and became a professor of Islamic studies at the University of Chicago. He acquired intellectual independence there and lasted till his death in 1988. At the start of his time in Chicago, he created a dialectic of the growth of renewal in the Islamic world, which he divided into four phases (Rahman & Amal, 1990):

1. Pre-modernist revivalism that flourished in Arabia, India, and Africa in the 18th and 19th centuries. Its traits include concern for the socio-moral growth of Muslims, a return to the original Islam, and a desire to avoid interaction with the West.
2. Classical Modernism arose in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Its qualities include a willingness to practice wide *ijtihad* in areas like as the link between reason and revelation, social change, particularly in education and women's rights, as well as political reform and constitutional systems of governance that accept Western philosophy.
3. Neorevivalism is a movement that promotes democracy and contemporary Islamic education while rejecting Western ideas.
4. Neomodernism is a modern movement that objectively develops a critical attitude toward the West and the history of Islam itself. This is where Rahman established himself as a spokesman.

This neomodernist concept eventually gave birth to a new approach for understanding the Qur'an, which created the distinction between neomodernism and traditional modern movements (Zuhdi, 2017). He went on to suggest that his system may prevent the spread of arbitrary and irrational *ijtihad* (Rahman & Amal, 1990). Furthermore, he stated that the motivation for developing this methodology is that some mufasirs do not explain fairly about the methods and ways of interpreting the Qur'an because there is a general error in understanding the main points of the Qur'an's cohesiveness, and there are also mufasirs who cling to verses atomistically, and this practice is intertwined in the fields of law, theology, and Sufism (Rahman & Amal, 1990).

Rahman provides two frameworks for Qur'anic interpretation: the theme technique and the Double Movement hermeneutic method. Double Movement is commonly employed in legal verses, but it is not always relevant in other contexts, such as when describing the notion of god, angels, devils, and others. Rahman employs theme methodologies with the logical synthesis analysis concept while examining metaphysical poems (Zulaiha, 2017), Rahman tends to neglect the chronology of the revelation of the verse in this interpretation, where the verses are interpreted via the intertextual technique and then the logical link is explored (Rahman, 1980).

This article will examine Rahman's hermeneutical processes in understanding the Qur'an concerning legal and social verses, namely the need of using a socio-historical perspective and dual theory.

a. Socio-historical approach

The first step in interpreting the Qur'an is to look back to its *asbab al-nuzul* aspect, which disclosed the history behind the Qur'anic verse. The idea is to figure out what verse is being disclosed and why. Rahman devised this idea in order to discover the universality of the Qur'an, which is frequently overlooked (Rahman, 2007).

Rahman shot the socioeconomic situations that happened when the Qur'an was revealed after learning the history. The purpose is to comprehend that the growth of Qur'anic interpretation is elastic, so that the Qur'an may be received at any time and in any place. From this, it appears that the Qur'an's universality and flexibility will always be preserved (Rahman, 2007).

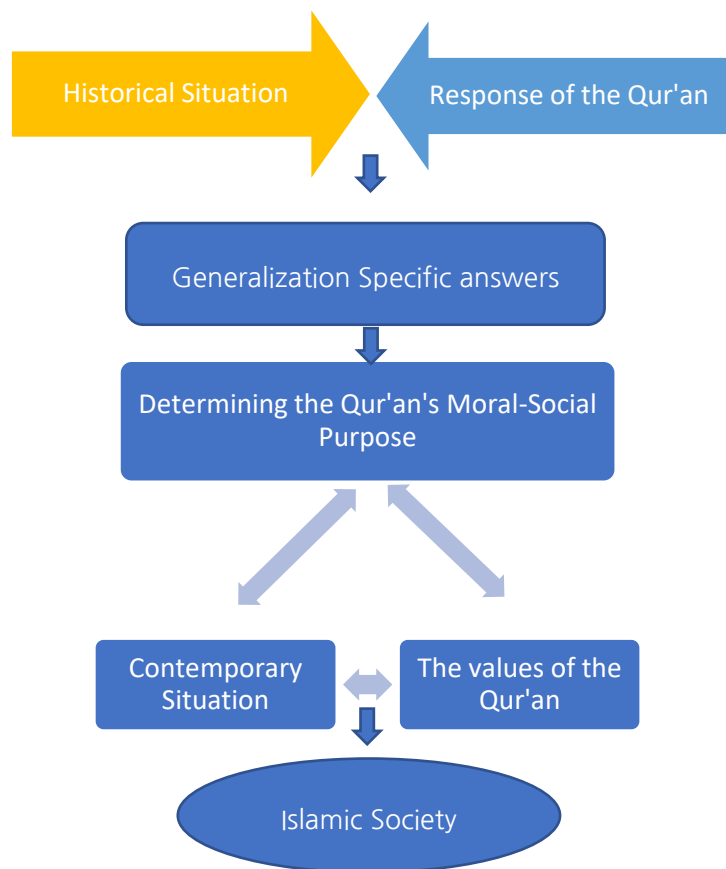
b. Double Movement Approach

The second stage is to recognize the significance of differentiating between specific legal and moral goals, which is known as twofold movement theory. The particular legal is a legally specified law, but the moral ideal is the primary moral aim prescribed by the Qur'an. This moral ideal should be implemented rather than the specific legal because the moral ideal is universal (*sholihun likulli zaman wa makan*), elastic, and flexible, whereas the specific legal is special (Rahman, 2007).

The first stage in the Double Movement is to pay attention to the micro and macro steps that occurred when the Qur'an was revealed. The micro context refers to a specific circumstance that occurred in the Prophet's environment when the Qur'an was revealed, whereas the macro context refers to a situation that occurred on a larger scale pertaining to society, religion, and Arab traditions of the time, particularly in Makkah and its surrounds. This is where you may get particular legal generalizations and moral principles (Rahman, 2007).

The second purpose of the Double Movement is to instill moral values in contemporary society. This trend stems from commonplace *pandangan* to specialized *pandangan* that is being redesigned and implemented in the present. Artinya yang harus diterapkan dalam sosio-historis konteks sekarang, apabila mengadakan kajian yang sama terhadap situasi sekarang (Rahman, 2007).

### Structure of Double Movement Fazlur Rahman



(Sources: Author)

### Interpretation of Surah al-Rum 39 and Ali Imran 130 on Bank Interest and Usury

وَمَا آتَيْتُمْ مِنْ رَبًّا لِيَرْبُوًّا فِي أَمْوَالِ النَّاسِ فَلَا يَرْبُوًّا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَمَا آتَيْتُمْ مِنْ زَكَاةٍ تُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَ اللَّهِ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُضْعِفُونَ

“Whatever you lend out in usury to gain value through other people’s wealth will not increase in God’s eyes, but whatever you give in charity, in your desire for God’s approval, will earn multiple rewards.”

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَأْكُلُوا الرِّبَا أَضْعَافًا مُضَاعَفَةً وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

*“O you who have believed, do not consume usury, doubled and multiplied, but fear Allah that you may be successful.”*

Historically, the Arabian Peninsula in the sixth century was a developed trading area with unethical economic practices and exploitation, such as reducing the scales (al-Muthoffifin verses 1-3) and usury (Ali Imran verse 130) to create a gap between the rich and the poor. According to the chronology, the earliest verse revealed addressing usury is al-Rum verse 39. According to Rahman, this passage was revealed in the fourth or fifth year following the prophet Muhammad's appointment as the Apostle in 615 AD (Mustaqim, 2010).

Usury and zakat are sharply contrasted in the passage. This passage also emphasizes that the disclosed feature of usury is usury that increases. According to Rahman, the ban of usury must be viewed in the context of the period, namely communal groupings whose economies were devastated, causing them to become victims of exploitation. In this stanza, the moral goal is the prohibition of exploitation of the helpless. As a result, as long as the bank does not take multiples, it can be justified (Mustaqim, 2010).

### *Interpretation of Surah al-Nisa verse 3 on Polygamy*

وَأِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا تُقْسِطُوا فِي الْيَتَامَىٰ فَانكِحُوا مَا طَابَ لَكُمْ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ مَثَلًا وَثَلَاثَ وَرُبْعَ فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا فَوَاحِدَةً أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ  
أَيْمَانُكُمْ ذَٰلِكَ أَدْنَىٰ أَلَّا تَعُولُوا<sup>٥</sup>

*“And if you fear that you will not deal justly with the orphan girls, then marry those that please you of [other] women, two or three or four. But if you fear that you will not be just, then [marry only] one or those your right hand possesses. That is more suitable that you may not incline [to injustice].”*

Rahman's focus on polygamy at the time was owing to Pakistani intellectuals in general who thought that having more than one wife was permissible in Islam. In his opinion, it is equal to lowering the Qur'anic desires, because the Qur'an does not support the habit of having multiple spouses. This may be observed from the Qur'an's intention to improve the dignity of women, and the position of women who are number two will be even greater if polygamy is still practiced (Rahman, 2007).

The Qur'anic phrase allowing males to be polygamous up to four times should be read in its broad ethical context, namely executing justice. According to Rahman, this demand is a metaphor for men's inability to execute justice or treat their women equitably (Rahman, 2007).

To fully comprehend it, it is crucial to trace the socio-historical context in which the polygamy verse comes in connection to orphan females (al-Nisa verse 2). Previously, the Qur'an firmly banned guardians from devouring orphans' possessions, as witnessed in al-An'am verse 152, al-Isra' verse 34 (Makkah phase), and al-Baqarah 220, 6, 10, and 127 (Madinah phase). After emphasizing the importance of avoiding consuming orphans' possessions, the Qur'an enables guardians to marry up to four of them. But, according to Rahman, there is one concept that many academics overlook: al-Qur'an surat al-Nisa verses 129 and 3. These lines suggest that husbands find it difficult to be fair to their spouses. In accordance with the Clause (Saeed, 2006) Fairness should be prioritized over the specific language allowing polygamy.

So the Qur'an's fundamental message does not support polygamy; rather, it mandates the inverse, namely monogamy. That is the moral ideal that the Qur'an wishes to promote (Rahman, 2007). Rahman stated that the moral ideal of the Qur'an should compromise with the reality of 7th century Arab culture, when polygamy was thoroughly ingrained, so that it could not be revoked instantly, for fear of harming the moral goal itself (Rahman, 2007).

### *Interpretation of Surat Al-Baqarah 62 and al-Maidah 69 on Religious Pluralism*

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالنَّصَارَى وَالصَّابِئِينَ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

*“Indeed, those who believed and those who were Jews or Christians or Sabeans [before Prophet Muhammad] – those [among them] who believed in Allah and the Last Day and did righteousness – will have their reward with their Lord, and no fear will there be concerning them, nor will they grieve.”*

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالصَّابِئُونَ وَالنَّصَارَى مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

*“Indeed, those who have believed [in Prophet Muhammad] and those [before Him] who were Jews or Sabeans or Christians – those [among them] who believed in Allah and the Last Day and did righteousness – no fear will there be concerning them, nor will they grieve.”*

The above two verses are about religious plurality. According to him, it is *sunnatullah* and Muslims should be inclusive in religion and reject exclusivism. He cites the Qur'an as proof that when Jews and Christians say that only they get guidance and will go to paradise, the Qur'an responds emphatically that guidance and salvation belong to Allah (Mustaqim, 2010).

Rahman separates the scholars' interpretations into two types: the Jews, Christians, and shabiin in the passage who have converted to Islam, and the Jews, Christians, and shabiin who were devout before the Prophet Muhammad. Rahman, on the other hand, believes that believers, Jews, Christians, and Shabiin who believe in God, the Last Day, and do well will be saved (Rahman, 1980). The statement is inclusive in the sense that wisdom and salvation are available to all peoples, nations, and religions (Mustaqim, 2010).

### ***Bank Interest and Usury Interpretation, Polygamy, and Religious Pluralism***

The Qur'an was properly revealed by Allah to the prophet Muhammad by the angel Gabriel, and it comprises of 114 letters, 6234 verses, and 30 Juz. It comprises instructions that are essentially separated into two categories: verses connected to *uluhiyyah* worship and verses related to *muamalah* worship. Islam had several changes and problems following the death of the Prophet Muhammad. These difficulties began with the companions' and other Muslims' troubles with day-to-day issues. Previously, when the prophet Muhammad Saw was still alive, the companions could openly ask him about their difficulties. However, following the prophet Muhammad Saw's death, the companions have been restless since there is no longer somebody to guide them through all their troubles.

The issues of the companions were always handled when they were submitted to the prophet Muhammad because the prophet Muhammad Saw always got advice from Allah SWT, either directly or indirectly. Some companions said that if a problem was not explicitly mentioned by the Qur'an or hadith, then the companions were prohibited from guessing or making their own laws (interpreting), while others tried to do *ijtihad* or interpret the Qur'an based on the Qur'an and hadith.

Given the various difficulties that are not specifically addressed by the Qur'an or the traditions of the prophet Muhammad Saw, the necessity for interpretation of the Qur'an is unavoidable over time. There were several companions who were experts in interpretation including Abu Bakr al-Shidiq ibn Quhafah, 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, Uthman ibn Affan, Ali ibn



abi Talib, Ibn Abbas, Ubay ibn Ka'ab, Ibnu Mas'ud, Zaid ibn Tsabit, Abu Musa al-Ash'ari, Abdullah ibn Zubair, Ibn 'Amr ibn Ash and Siti 'Aisha and others (Al-Qattan, 2004).

Along with the dynamics that develop, the need for interpretation of the Qur'an becomes increasingly inevitable. At the time of the tabi'in, several interpreters emerged among those who studied with Ibn Abbas (Makah group): Said ibn Jubair, Mujahid, Ikrimah Maula Ibn Abbas, Thawus ibn Kaisan al-Yamani, and 'Atha' ibn Abi Rabbah. Ubay ibn Ka'ab (Medina group), Zaid ibn Aslam, Abu 'Aliyah, and Muhammad ibn Ka'ab al-Qurazi were among those who studied with him. Other students of ibn Mas'ud were Al-Qamah ibn Qais, Masruq, al-Aswad ibn Yazid, Murrâh al-Hazami, 'Amir al-Sha'bi, Hasan al-Bahsri, and Qatadah.

The growth of interpretation thus accelerated in line with the dynamics of science, culture, and the conditions of each location, particularly during the 'Abbasid dynasty, when everyone was allowed to learn as far as possible, until today or until contemporary times. Fazlur Rahman, a reform thinker from Pakistan, is one of the contemporary figures or neomodernism that broadens our views. One of his ideas for Qur'anic interpretation is a socio-historical approach and Double Movement hermeneutics. That is an interpretation in which legal and social texts are interpreted in two stages, namely the socio-historical approach and the Double Movement method.

According to the author, Rahman's interpretation is an attempt to establish a more systematic interpretation structure than its predecessors. Asbab al-nuzul, for example, might be micro or enormous. This notion is not new; Syah Waliyullah al-Dahlawi proposed the phrases asbab al-Nuzul al-Khassah and al-ammah in his work Fauzul Kabir fi Ushul al-Tafsir. Even al-Syatibi stated in al-Muwafaqat that in order to understand the Qur'an, one must first understand the context and conditions under which the Qur'an was revealed, as well as the societal conditions. The notion of the double movement hermeneutic is also related to al-Syatibi's view, which states that basic instructions are universal or definitive, whilst individual instructions are possible and conditional. As a result, generic and universal instructions should take precedence (al-Syatibi, 2004).

A table of instances of Fazlur Rahman's interpretation employing Double Movement is shown below.

No	Theme	Social	Historical	Specific	Moral Idea	Contemporary
1	The Law of Banks and Bank Interest	There are groups of people who are	The revelation of Surah al-Rum	Prohibition of multiple usury	Prohibition of abuse of the weak	May take more as long as it is not excessive

		economically depressed	verse 39 and the revelation of Surah Ali Imran verse 130			
2	Polygamy	Community marriage with many women	(al-Nisa verse 2). surat al-Nisa verses 129 and 3.	Polygamy is limited 4	Be fair	Monogamy
3	Religious Pluralism	Several religions before Islam	Al-Baqarah 62 and al-Maidah 69	Believe in God, the last day and do good	Inclusive in religion	Non-Muslims who believe in God, the last day and do good will get salvation.

Table 1. Fazlur Rohman' Interpretation

Source: (Author)

As for this method, it also has its advantages and disadvantages, as is common in every other method of interpretation. The advantages and disadvantages are as follows:

Advantages		Disadvantages	
a.	Offering the idea of Neomodernism in interpreting the Qur'an.	a.	Limited applicability to legal and social verses
b.	Offers a new theory	b.	His method or product of tafsir is doubted by some Muslim scholars
c.	Prioritising socio-historical aspects both micro and macro.	c.	The method is not perfect, there are shortcomings or not comprehensive in its application
d.	Applying specific legal as well as moral ideals	d.	Sometimes it still seems inconsistent
e.	Its interpretation is in accordance with current conditions		

Table 2. The Advantages and Disadvantages

Source: (Author)

## CONCLUSION

Fazlur Rahman aims to give an essential way for academics to use in reading the Qur'an, proposing two approaches: socio-historical and twofold movement. Fazlur Rahman's opinion on banks and bank interest is fine if it is not doubled. According to Fazlur Rahman's interpretation of the polygamy passage, the Qur'an advocates a type of monogamous marriage.

He interpreted the Quran on religious diversity by stating that non-Muslims who have trust in Allah, the end day, and good acts will be saved by Allah.

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