

Tafsir in the Age of Taba Ta'abeen Methodologies and Salient Features

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We are living in the age when Tafsir (the exegesis of The Holy Quran) is being observed in very developed shape, different trends in Tafsir literature have converted Tafsir into an extensive field of knowledge. The era of Tabi'in (the followers of Sahaba) and the traditions narrated by them are rudimentary form for modern trends of Tafsir. We will discuss in our writing the development of Tafsir in the age of Tabi'in. We will have a bird's eye view on the institutes of this era, eminent scholars of Tafsir and salient features of this stage of development. We will come to know by this article that the age of Tabi'in is a bridge between the age Sahaba and modern trends in Tafsir literature.

1. Introduction

The companions of the Holy Prophet conceived the knowledge from the Holy prophet (S.A.W) with the basic instruction given by the Holy prophet (S.A.W) in his address on his last pilgrimage (Hajj al Wida') that the people who are present should convey my teachings to whom who are not present in this time. According to Ibn Sa'd (1997a:121-122), he said:

ألا ليبلغ الشاهد الغائب

Jamila, Dr (2000:46) is justified to say:

At the eve of Hajj al Wada, the Holy prophet (S.A.W) laid much stress on imparting his knowledge and asked his followers to fulfill this duty.

According to Tirmidhi (NDe: 34) Sahabah has also received an instruction with a tremendous news that the holy Prophet is reported to have said:

نضر الله امرأ سمع مقالتي فوعاها وحفظها وبلغها

May Allah brighten the face of the person who listened me, retained it in his memory and conveyed it (to those who could not listen)

Sahabah well acknowledged to this instruction of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W) and managed to convey all the knowledge they have received from the Holy prophet (S.A.W) to the next generation.

Tabi'in received this knowledge from Sahabah and developed the different Islamic fields of knowledge. We will discuss now the salient features of Tabi'in's methodology of Tafsir

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and some eminent exegetes in the age of Tabi'in. Before discussing the salient features, we will describe the definition of Tabi'in.

2. Definition of Tabi'

Dr. Tahhan while defining the Tabi', said (89:216)

The person who saw any one of the companions (Sahabi) with Iman and died as a Muslim).

3. Salient Features of Tafsir Methodology of Tabi'in

Tabi'in started the development of the field of knowledge of Tafsir based on teachings of Sahabah. Any field of Islamic knowledge cannot be developed without the foundations provided by Sahabah. The salient features of Tafsir methodology of Tabi'in are undoubtedly very bright sketch for the forthcoming methodologies of Tafsir. These features are as under:

- **Kitabi Scholars' Traditions**

As it has been discussed in Tafsir methodology of Sahabah that many of the Sahabah narrated the traditions regarding the narratives described in the Holy Quran from the Kitabi scholar¹. These traditions are called Al Isra'iliat. Many of the Kitabi scholars like 'Abdullah b Salam and Ka'b Ahbar embraced Islam in the age of the holy Prophet and many other scholars embraced Islam after the demise of the Holy Prophet like Wahab b Munabbah and 'Abdul Malik b 'Abdul 'Aziz b Juraij. Tabi'in in general, and the Tabi'in who were keen to learn about the narratives of the holy Quran, in particular, got benefited of the scholarship of these Kitabi scholars and narrated many of the traditions from them. Although the number of Al Isra'iliat was increased, but Tabi'in were careful to the basic principles of accepting such traditions, which Sahabah considered in this regard.

- **Institutes of Tafsir education**

The second salient feature of this age is that different institutes (Madaris) for the education of Tafsir been established in different vicinities of Islamic state. These institutes were established by Sahabah to educate the Tabi'in. The details of these institutes are as under:

¹ See paper: Tafsir In The Age Of Sahabah- Methodologies and Salient Feature Al Qalam 2/13

S.no	Name of the City/Country	Name of Teacher/ Sahabi	Names of the Students/Tabi'in
1	Makkah Mukarramah	'Abdullah b 'Abbas	Jubair, Mujahid, 'Ikrimah, Tawus b Kaisan, 'Ata b AbiRabah
2	Madinah Munawwarrah	Ubai b Ka'b	Abu Al 'Aliah, Muhammad b Ka'bQarzi, Zaid b Aslam
3	'Iraq	'Abdullah b Mas'ud	'Alqamah b Qais, Masruq, Aswad b Yazid, Murrah Al Hamadani 'Amir Al S'bi, Hasan Basri, Qatadah

With the help of above-mentioned institutes, the field of knowledge of Tafsir extended from Makkah Mukarramah and Madinah Munawwarrah to 'Iraq. These institutes played immense role in developing the Tafsir methodologies.

- **Different Types of Exegesis**

The exegetes in the age of Sahabah explained the Holy Quran in different ways and manners. The three above-mentioned teachers of Tafsir have the methodology of teaching of Tafsir different from each other's. 'Abdullah b 'Abbas was the expert of driving delicate meanings from the words which are to some extent hidden in the words of the Holy Quran. Ubai b Ka'b was very keen to accurate and correct pronunciation along with the principles of the recitation of the Holy Quran. 'Abdullah b Mas'ud focused the logical and juristic eliciting from the verses of the Holy Quran. Tabi'in selected the teachers according their own curiosity. Resultantly the difference of teaching methodology been observed in the Tafsir methodology of Tabi'in. The students who benefited by the institute of 'Abdullah b 'Abbas, explained the words of the holy Quran, while the students of Ubai's institute were the experts of the principles of reciting of the Holy Quran in this era. Hasan Basri and Qatadah were the students of 'Abdullah b Mas'ud. Basri created philosophical methodology in Tafsir and Qatadah got recognition as juristic exegetes.

- **Difference of Opinions**

As we discussed in Tafsir methodology of Sahabah, that Sahabah, although worked with deliberations, but they were very careful in explanation of the Holy Quran based on their opinion and tried their best to keep themselves limited to the saying of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W). The result of this phenomenon was that their Tafsir was less difference because in the life of the Holy Prophet, when they face any problem in understanding the Holy Quran, they all refer back to the Holy Prophet (S.A.W), while in era of Tabi'in

there are different personalities to be referred. Due to different resource persons, the difference of opinions appeared. Despite of different of opinions, the main object and actual point of view was the same. For example while explaining the verse of Surah Al-Fatihah (1:5) اهدنا الصراط المستقيم some scholars said that Sirat Mustaqim means to follow the Holy Quran, while some other scholars said it means to follow the Sunnah of The Holy Prophet and some others gave the opinion that it means to follow the both of Quran and Sunnah.

- **Tafsir Separate Field of Knowledge**

Tafsir was not a separate field of Knowledge in the age of Sahabah but it was a part of Hadith. In the era of Tabi'in, Tafsir started becoming a separate field of knowledge as we find that the alumnae of the above-mentioned institutes narrated the traditions regarding the Tafsir only.

- **Exegeses of Entire Holy Qur0n**

In the age of Sahabah exegetes of entire Holy Quran were not evident except 'Abdullah b 'Abbas, while in this era this trend came into being. The alumnae of the Tafsir institutes found such students who compiled and transmitted the traditions of their respective teachers about the explanation of entire Quran. According to research of Dawudi (NDa:110) Isma'il b 'Abdurrahman Al Sudai and Dawud b Abi Al Hind compiled the Tafsir of entire Quran.

4. Sources of Tafsir

The sources of Tafsir in the age of Tabi'in were similar to the sources of the era of Sahabah.²

5. Exegetes in Tabi'in

After discussing the salient features of Tafsir methodology of Tabi'in, we will describe some of the well-known exegetes of this era.

- **'Alqamah b Qais Al Nkha'I (D: 61 or 62 A.H/680 or 681 A.D)**

'Alqamah b Qais Al Nkha'I was born in the life of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W), but he could not see him. He was the senior most Tabi'i. Hafiz Dhahabi (NDa :48) started the names of Tabi'in by his name. He was the student of Hadrat Abu Bakr,

² For details See paper: Tafsir In The Age Of Sahabah- Methodologies and Salient Feature Al Qalam 2/13

Hadrat 'Umar, Hadrat 'Ali, Sa'ad b AbiWaqas and was the special student of 'Abdullah b Mas'ud. According to Dhahabi (Ibid) Ibn Mas'ud said, Alqamah knows and reads everything what I know, and what I read. According to Ibn Hajar (NDg:277) 'Alqamah is reliable and trustworthy in the view of all critics of narrators. According to Ibn Hajar (Ibid) he died in 61A.H/680 A.D while other historians say that he died in 62 A.H. (Jazri,1932a:516).

According to Dhahabi (Ibid) 'Alqamah was the most outstanding student of Ibn Mas'ud's institute. He was benefitted by his traditions of Tafsir and Fiqh.

• **Masruq b Ajd' Al Hamdani (d:62 or 63 A.H/681 or682 A.D)**

Masruq was also the sparkling student of Ibn Mas'ud.

He got Hadith knowledge from Hadrat 'Umar, 'Uthman, 'Ali, Mu'adh b jabal, Ubai B ka'b and 'Ayesha Siddiqā. He narrated the traditions from Ibn Mas'ud especially on Tafsir and sciences of the holy Quran. According Hanbali (1989a:71) and Ibn Sa'ad (NDf:84) he died in 63 A.H/681 A.D.

• **Aswad b Yazid Al Nakha'I (D:74 A.H/ 693 A.D)**

Aswad was the student of Abu Bakr, 'Omar, Hudhaifah, Bilal, 'Ayesha Abu MusaAsh'ri and 'Abdullah b Mas'ud.(R.A). His students like his brother 'Aburrahman b Yazid, his son 'Abdurrahman b Aswad, Ibrahim Nakha'I and Abu Bardah b Abi Musa were eminent scholars. All critics in the narrators of Hadith like Ahmad b Hanbal, Yahya b Ma'in and Ibn Sa'ad considered him reliable and trustworthy. He extended the Tafsir knowledge of Ibn Mas'ud to the next generation.

• **Murrah Al Tayeb b Sharahil Al Hamdani (D: 76 A.H/695 A.D)**

Murrah b Sharahil was known as Murrah Al khair and Murrah Al Tayeb due to his piety, good behavior to others and devotion. He was also the student of Abu Bakr, 'Omar, 'Ali, Abu Zar, Huzaifah and Ibn Mas'ud (R.A). He was the teacher of many of the traditionists and exegetes of the age of Tabi'in. Ibn Ma'in and Ibn Hibban have considered him reliable trustworthy. According to HafizDahabi (NDa:67) he has compact hold on exegesis of the holy Quran. According to Ibn Hajar (1325j:88,89), he died in 76 A.H while according to HafizDhahabi (Ibid), he died in 90 A.H/708 A.D. The other scholars like

Dhahabi(1983a:121) and Dawudi (NDb:317) says that Murrah was died in 76 A.H/695 A.D. They consider him as one of the immense exegetes of Kufa.

- **Jubair b Nufair B Malik (D: 80 A.H/699 A.D)**

Jubair was one of senior Tabi'in. He was born before the demise of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W) but embraced Islam after his demise so he was considered a Sahabi. Renowned traditionists and exegetes among Sahabah were his teachers. He was one of the sparkling students of 'Abdullah b 'Abbas's institute. According to HafizDhahabi (NDa:52) he died in 80 A.H/699 A.D.

- **Rufai' b Mehran Abu Al 'Aliyah (D:90 A.H/708 A.D)**

Rufai' embraced Islam in the era of Abu Bakr Siddique (R.A). He was the student of 'Abdullah b Mas'ud and 'Abdullah b 'Abbas. According to HafizDhahabi (NDa:62), Abu Darda said that Rufai' was the most prominent scholar after Sahabah of exegesis of the Holy Quran . According to Ibn Hajar (1325d: 284), he died in 93 A.H while according to Ibn Sa'ad (NDg:117) the year his demise is 90 A.H. Rabi' b Anas Al Bakri has narrated his traditions concerning Tafsir. (Dawudi,NDa:188).

- **Sa'id b Juabair b Hisham (D:95 A.H/710 A.D)**

Juabair was the student of 'Abdullah b Mas'ud and Zaid b Thabit in Quran and Tafsir. He was expert of Quranic Sciences along with the principles of recitation of the Holy Quran.

According to critics of narrators of Hadith like Ibn Hajar (1325d:11-13) and HafizDhahabi (NDa:76,77) Ibn Jubair was authentic traditionist. He died when he was 49 years old in 95 A.H/710 A.D).

- **Al Hasan Al Basri (110 A.H/727 A.D)**

Hasan Basri was famous exegetes in the period of Tabi'in. He was the student of Ibn Mas'ud's institute. According to Ibn Sa'ad (NDg:157), Hasan Basri was very much reliable and trustworthy scholar of his age he was very sound in the knowledge Hadith and Tafsir.

- **Qatadah b Di'amah b Qatadah Al Basri (D:117 A.H/735 A.D)**

Qatadah was expert of Arabic language, Arab History Arab and races but his entity as an exegetes was very popular.

Ibn Khalakan has narrated an anecdote (1297b:179) that somebody recited a verse from the Holy Quran in the presence of

Abu 'Amr and narrated its explanation from Qatadah. Abu 'Amr said after Qatadah's opinion there is no need of any other opinion.

- **Mujahid b Jabr (D:102 A.H/720 A.D)**

Mujahid was the student of 'Abdullah b 'Abbas and Ibn Mas'ud. He was the best inherit of the knowledge of 'Abdullah b 'Abbas. According to Dawudi (NDb:306) Mujahid completed the Holy Quran three times in the presence of 'Abdullah b 'Abbas in the descriptive manner that he stops on every verse asks Ibn 'Abbas its explanation and motive of revelation.

- **Isma'il b 'Abdurrahman Al Sudai (D: 127A.H/744 A.D)**

Isma'il was also student of 'Abdullah b 'Abbas. He used to teach the explanation of the Holy Quran in Jame' Mosque Kufa. According to the opinion of the critics of narrators Isma'il is not trustworthy except in the traditions regarding Tafsir.

- **Dawud b Abi Al Hind (D:139 A.H/746 A.D)**

Dawudi describes (NDa:174) that Dawud has compiled a book of Tafsir.

- **'Ata b Abi Muslim Abu 'Uthman Al Khurasani (D:135 A.H/752 A.D)**

One of junior Tabi'in. Narrated the traditions of 'Abdullah b 'Abbas indirectly.

- **Zaid b Aslam Al 'Udwi Al Misri (D:136 A.H/753 A.D)**

Ziad was also a junior Tabi'i. He was the student of 'Abdullah b 'Umar. According to Ibn Hajar (1325g:212) in the opinion of Ya'qub b Shaibah, Zaid was great exegetes and jurist. According to Hafiz Dhahabi (NDa:137) his son 'Abdurrahman b Zaid narrated his traditions of Tafsir.

- **'Ali b Talha Salim (D 143 A.H/760 A.D)**

'Ali was the student of 'Abdullah b 'Abbas. He wrote the Tafsir traditions of 'Abdullah b 'Abbas and compiled a booklet. Imam Bukhari in book Al Jame' and Ibn Jarir in his book of Tafsir narrated Tafsir traditions from this booklet. This booklet was available in a library of Egypt. Ibn Hajar said (1325a:93):

In Egypt there is a booklet consists of the Tafsir traditions of 'Ali b Abi Talha. If somebody has to travel to Egypt only for this booklet, he has to do so.

Conclusion

In this chapter we discussed the methodologies of Sahabah and Tabi'in. We may conclude the above discussion as follows:

- We talked about the methodologies of the people who saw any one of one of Sahabah and called Tabi'in. In this discussion, we observed some common points between the Tafsir Methodology of Sahabah while some uncommon features showing the development of the methodology of Tafsir in the era of Tabi'in.
- The sources of Tafsir in the methodologies of Sahabah and Tabi'in are about the same but the sources have been extended in the age of Tabi'in.
- Our discussion described that Tafsir was not a separate field of knowledge in the age of Sahabah, while it has a significant presence in the era of Tabi'in.
- Sahabah commentated the Holy Quran in different methodologies, the Tabi'I student of Sahabah adopted his educator's methodology, and afterwards different methodologies of Tafsir came into being based on this tendency.
- In the era of Tabi'in some institutes of Tafsir were established and a large number of scholars of been primed by these esteemed institutes.
- The tendency of compiling the Tafsir of entire Quran started in the age of Tabi'in.
- Undoubtedly the era of Sahabah is base while the era of Tabi'in is a bridge for contemporary methodologies of Tafsir.
- Only the commentary which is based on the teachings of Sahabah and Tabi'in may be called a Tafsir.

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