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The Role of *Ma'riful Quran* in Shaping Contemporary Islamic Thought in Bangladesh: An Analysis of Mufti Mohammad Shofi's Contributions

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Abstract

Aim: This study examines the impact of Mufti Mohammad Shofi's 'Ma'riful Quran' on contemporary Islamic thought in Bangladesh. It aims to analyze the methodology, reception, and influence of Shofi's Tafsir within academic, religious, and social contexts. Methods: This research synthesizes scholarly critiques, educational integration, and societal reception of the 'Ma'riful Quran' through a comprehensive literature review. It also explores Shofi's interpretative approach, sources, and the thematic relevance of his exegesis. Findings: The 'Ma'riful Quran' has significantly influenced Islamic education by integrating traditional scholarship with modern relevance. It has garnered widespread acceptance in Bangladesh, shaping pedagogical practices and fostering a balanced understanding of the Quran. Despite criticisms regarding scholarly rigor and interpretative nuances, Shofi's Tafsir remains a pivotal resource for understanding and applying Quranic teachings in contemporary contexts. Implications: The study underscores the importance of accessible yet scholarly Tafsir works in promoting moderate Islamic discourse and addressing societal challenges. 'Ma'riful Quran' is a model for bridging classical interpretations with contemporary issues, offering practical guidance for Muslims in Bangladesh and beyond. Conclusion: Mufti Mohammad Shofi's 'Ma'riful Quran' exemplifies a significant contribution to Islamic scholarship in Bangladesh. It navigates the complexities of Quranic exegesis while engaging with modern realities. Its impact on education, religious discourse, and societal ethics underscores its enduring relevance in shaping Islamic thought and practice.

Keywords: *Tafsir; Mufti Mohammad Shofi; Bangladesh; Quranic exegesis; Contemporary Islamic thought.*

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Introduction

Background and Significance of Quranic Tafsir in Islamic Scholarship

Quranic Tafsir, the exegesis or commentary on the Quran, holds a place of paramount importance in Islamic scholarship. Tafsir aims to elucidate the meanings of the Quranic verses, providing context, interpretation, and insights into the divine messages. The Quran, the ultimate guidance source for Muslims, requires thorough understanding and interpretation to ensure its teachings are comprehended and applied correctly in various aspects of life. The tradition of Tafsir began during the Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) lifetime, with his companions seeking explanations directly from him. After his passing, this responsibility shifted to his companions and the subsequent generations of Islamic scholars, known as the Salaf, who laid the foundation for classical Tafsir. Over centuries, this field evolved, incorporating linguistic, theological, historical, and philosophical analyses, resulting in a rich corpus of exegetical literature. Tafsir is indispensable for several reasons. It bridges the gap between the text of the Quran and its practical application, addressing linguistic intricacies, contextual nuances, and the intended meanings behind the verses. Furthermore, it helps resolve apparent contradictions, clarifies legal rulings, and offers spiritual and moral guidance. Thus, Tafsir is not merely an academic exercise but a crucial means of connecting the faithful with the divine word, shaping their beliefs, practices, and worldview (Ali, 2017; Faris, 2023; Ismail & Asnawi, 2021; Saleh, 2004; Shah, 2013).

Introduction to 'Ma'riful Quran' and Mufti Mohammad Shofi

'Ma'riful Quran' is a significant work in the realm of Quranic Tafsir, authored by Mufti Mohammad Shofi, a prominent Islamic scholar from Bangladesh. The title 'Ma'riful Quran' translates to "The Wisdom of the Quran," reflecting its aim to uncover the deeper meanings and insights within the Quranic text. Mufti Mohammad Shofi, a revered figure in Bangladeshi Islamic scholarship, has made substantial contributions through his works and teachings. Born in a region where Islamic scholarship has a rich history, Shofi was educated in traditional Islamic sciences and modern academic disciplines, allowing him to bridge classical scholarship with contemporary issues. His approach in 'Ma'riful Quran' is characterized by a blend of traditional exegesis and modern relevance, making the Quran accessible and applicable to today's context. 'Ma'riful Quran' stands out for its comprehensive yet lucid style, addressing the needs of both scholars and laypersons. It delves into linguistic, theological, and jurisprudential aspects while considering contemporary socio-political issues. This has made it a famous and influential Tafsir in Bangladesh.

and beyond, contributing significantly to contemporary Islamic thought and practice (Khatak, 2013; B. A. Wani, 2017).

Purpose and Scope of the Study

This study aims to explore the role of the 'Ma'riful Quran' in shaping contemporary Islamic thought in Bangladesh, focusing on the contributions of Mufti Mohammad Shofi. This involves examining the interpretative methods used in the 'Ma'riful Quran,' its reception and impact among different segments of Bangladeshi society, and its influence on religious education, public discourse, and socio-political dynamics.

The study encompasses a detailed analysis of the 'Ma'riful Quran,' considering its thematic organization, interpretative strategies, and unique features. It also examines Mufti Mohammad Shofi's broader scholarly contributions and influence on Islamic scholarship in Bangladesh. By situating 'Ma'riful Quran' within the context of Bangladeshi Islamic thought, the study aims to highlight its significance in the ongoing discourse on Quranic interpretation and its practical implications for contemporary Muslim life in Bangladesh.

Method

To achieve the study's purpose, the following research questions and objectives are proposed:

Objectives:

1. **To analyze the interpretative methods used in 'Ma'riful Quran':** This involves examining Shofi's approach to exegesis, including his use of linguistic analysis, theological insights, and jurisprudential reasoning. Understanding these methods will provide insight into how 'Ma'riful Quran' elucidates Quranic verses and addresses complex issues.
2. **To assess the reception and dissemination of 'Ma'riful Quran' in Bangladesh:** This objective focuses on understanding how 'Ma'riful Quran' has been received by different audiences, including scholars, educators, and the general public. It also looks at the channels through which this Tafsir has been disseminated, such as educational institutions, mosques, and media.
3. **To evaluate the impact of the 'Ma'riful Quran' on contemporary Islamic thought and practice in Bangladesh** involves exploring how the 'Ma'riful Quran' has influenced religious education, public discourse, and individual practices. It also examines its role in shaping contemporary Islamic movements and thought leaders in Bangladesh.

4. **To explore the 'Ma'riful Quran's' approach to contemporary socio-political issues:** This objective focuses on how the 'Ma'riful Quran' addresses modern challenges such as secularism, modernity, gender issues, and socio-political conflicts. It aims to understand the relevance and application of Shofi's Tafsir in the contemporary context.
5. **To identify and analyze criticisms and challenges associated with the 'Ma'riful Quran':** This involves examining scholarly critiques of the 'Ma'riful Quran,' addressing concerns related to its methodology, interpretations, and practical implications. Comparing it with other significant Tafsir works will provide a broader perspective on its strengths and limitations.

By addressing these research questions and objectives, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of the 'Ma'riful Quran' in shaping contemporary Islamic thought in Bangladesh and the enduring contributions of Mufti Mohammad Shofi to Islamic scholarship.

Result and Discussion

Historical Context of Quranic Tafsir

Overview of Traditional and Modern Tafsir

The tradition of Tafsir, or Quranic exegesis, began during the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), who was the primary interpreter of the Quran for his companions. The companions (Sahabah) learned directly from the Prophet, understanding the meanings of verses through his explanations and their deep knowledge of the circumstances of revelation (Asbab al-Nuzul) (Wahidi, 1989). After the Prophet's death, this responsibility was carried on by the companions and their followers. Early works like those of Ibn Abbas, a close companion of the Prophet, laid the groundwork for classical Tafsir. These interpretations often combined literal explanations, known as Tafsir bi'l-Ma'thur, with reasoned analysis, or Tafsir bi'l-Ra'y. Over time, scholars such as al-Tabari, al-Qurtubi, and Ibn Kathir produced major Tafsir works. Al-Tabari's comprehensive Tafsir relied heavily on Hadith and early Islamic traditions, while al-Qurtubi focused on deriving legal rulings, and Ibn Kathir incorporated historical context and linguistic precision (Calder, 2005; Lala, 2012).

In the modern era, Tafsir has evolved to address contemporary challenges. Scholars have sought to reconcile traditional Islamic teachings with modern knowledge and issues, such as social justice, political reform, and scientific advancement. Key figures like Sayyid Qutb and his work "Fi Zilal al-Quran" emphasized the Quran's relevance to socio-political reform. At the same time, Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida promoted a rationalist approach,

highlighting the ethical and moral teachings of the Quran. Modern Tafsir continues to develop, employing diverse methodologies and addressing the needs of a global Muslim audience. This modern shift reflects the dynamic relationship between Islamic tradition and the challenges of contemporary society (Ab Rahman et al., 2011; Siregar, 2017).

Development of Tafsir Literature in the Indian Subcontinent

The Indian subcontinent has a rich tradition of Islamic scholarship, including significant contributions to Tafsir literature. The region's historical and cultural diversity has influenced its approach to Quranic exegesis, resulting in unique and varied interpretations (Coruh et al., 2022; Islam, 2017; Kaur, 2013; Nizami, 2004; Saleem, 2021; Uddin, 2000).

Early Contributions: Islamic scholarship in the Indian subcontinent began to flourish during the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughal Empire, with scholars producing works in Arabic and Persian. Early Tafsir works from this period often adhered to classical methodologies, reflecting the influence of prominent Islamic centers such as Baghdad and Cairo.

Notable Scholars and Works: Shah Waliullah Dehlawi, a key figure in South Asian Islamic scholarship, stressed the importance of understanding the Quran within its historical and linguistic context. His work, "Fath al-Rahman," a Persian translation and commentary, aimed to make the Quran accessible to the general public. Similarly, Allama Shabbir Ahmad Usmani is renowned for his Tafsir "Tafsir-e-Usmani," which blends traditional exegesis with contemporary insights, addressing the modern challenges Muslims face. Both scholars contributed significantly to making Quranic interpretations more relevant and understandable for their communities (Hameed, 2024; Hussain & Bari, 2024; Tareen, 2020).

During the British colonial period, they introduced new challenges and opportunities for Islamic scholarship in the subcontinent, with scholars emphasizing the Quran's role in resisting oppression and promoting social justice. During this time, more Tafsir works were produced in local languages, making the Quran accessible to non-Arabic-speaking Muslims. After the partition and the creation of Pakistan and Bangladesh, Islamic scholarship continued to evolve. In Bangladesh, scholars like Mufti Mohammad Shofi made significant contributions to the Tafsir tradition, addressing contemporary issues and the unique socio-political context of the region through their works.

Introduction to 'Ma'riful Quran' within the Broader Context of Islamic Exegesis

'Ma'riful Quran' by Mufti Mohammad Shofi is a significant work in modern Tafsir literature, particularly within the Indian subcontinent and Bangladesh. This Tafsir stands out for its comprehensive approach, merging traditional exegesis with contemporary relevance. Mufti Shofi, influenced by his classical Islamic education and exposure to modern academic thought, sought to create a Tafsir that addresses modern Muslims' spiritual, moral, and intellectual needs. His primary motivation was to make the Quran accessible to a broad audience, bridging the gap between classical scholarship and the challenges of contemporary life.

The Tafsir employs various methodologies, such as linguistic analysis, where Shofi clarifies complex Quranic terms and phrases, enhancing the reader's understanding. He also emphasizes contextual interpretation by focusing on Asbab al-Nuzul (circumstances of revelation) to explain the meaning behind specific verses. Additionally, Shofi incorporates jurisprudential insights from Fiqh (Islamic law) and addresses modern issues like secularism, gender equality, and socio-political challenges through a Quranic lens. 'Ma'riful Quran' has been widely received, especially in Bangladesh, for its clarity, depth, and relevance, and it continues to play a pivotal role in Islamic education and public discourse. Its focus on contemporary issues and accessibility sets it apart from classical Tafsir, making it an essential resource for the modern Muslim community (*Comprehensive Maariful Quran Tafseer English*, 2024; D. B. Wani, 2017).

Mufti Mohammad Shofi: Life and Scholarship

Biography of Mufti Mohammad Shofi

Mufti Mohammad Shofi was born in the early 20th century in what is now India, a region with a rich history of Islamic scholarship and cultural diversity. He grew up in a religious family, greatly influencing his early education and spiritual development. From a young age, Shofi showed a keen interest in Islamic studies, dedicating himself to memorizing the Quran and studying Hadith, Fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), and other foundational Islamic sciences. Throughout his life, Mufti Shofi was known for his deep piety, humility, and commitment to serving the Muslim community. He gained a reputation as a respected scholar and teacher whose insights into the Quran and Islamic law were highly valued. His dedication to Islamic scholarship was matched by his concern for his community's social and spiritual welfare, which inspired many to seek his guidance and mentorship. Mufti Shofi's contributions to Islamic thought and scholarship were significant, particularly in Bangladesh, where he played a

crucial role in religious education and disseminating Islamic knowledge. He passed away in the late 20th century, leaving behind a legacy of scholarly works and a profound impact on the Islamic intellectual tradition in Bangladesh.

Educational Background and Influences

Mufti Mohammad Shofi's educational journey began with traditional Islamic schooling, where he excelled in memorizing the Quran and studying Arabic. His early education was rooted in the classical Islamic curriculum, which included the study of Tafsir (Quranic exegesis), Hadith (Prophetic traditions), Fiqh, and other essential Islamic sciences. This foundation gave him a deep understanding of the Quran and Sunnah, which would later inform his scholarly work. Seeking to further his education, Mufti Shofi traveled to renowned centers of Islamic learning. He studied under some of the most distinguished scholars of his time, who influenced his approach to Islamic scholarship. His teachers included experts in various fields of Islamic studies, and they imparted to him a rigorous and methodical approach to the interpretation and application of Islamic teachings. One of the most significant influences on Mufti Shofi was the reformist movement in Islamic thought, which emphasized the need to reinterpret Islamic teachings in light of contemporary challenges. This movement encouraged scholars to engage critically with traditional sources while addressing modern socio-political issues. Mufti Shofi embraced this approach, evident in his Tafsir and other works, where he sought to make Islamic teachings relevant to the contemporary context. In addition to his formal education, Mufti Shofi was an avid reader and kept abreast of developments in both Islamic and Western thought. His extensive reading and intellectual curiosity allowed him to engage with various ideas and incorporate diverse perspectives into his scholarship. This intellectual openness and adaptability were critical factors in his ability to produce works that resonated with modern audiences.

Major Works and Contributions to Islamic Scholarship

Mufti Mohammad Shofi's scholarly contributions are diverse and impactful, spanning several key areas of Islamic thought. Among his most notable works is '*Ma'riful Quran*,' a comprehensive Tafsir that has profoundly influenced contemporary Islamic scholarship in Bangladesh and beyond.

Ma'riful Quran: *Ma'riful Quran* is arguably Mufti Shofi's magnum opus. This Tafsir is renowned for its clarity, depth, and relevance to contemporary issues. It combines traditional exegesis with modern insights, making the Quran accessible to a broad audience. Shofi's approach in '*Ma'riful Quran*' is characterized by several key features:

Mufti Mohammad Shofi's Tafsir delves into the linguistic nuances of the Quran, explaining complex terms and emphasizing the importance of understanding the context of revelation (Asbab al-Nuzul). His work also provides detailed theological and jurisprudential insights, drawing from classical sources and contemporary interpretations. Additionally, the 'Ma'riful Quran' addresses modern challenges such as secularism, gender issues, and socio-political conflicts, offering practical guidance for Muslims navigating the complexities of the modern world. Shofi's approach ensures that the Quran remains relevant and accessible to contemporary readers while rooted in traditional scholarship. 'Ma'riful Quran' has significantly influenced Bangladesh's Islamic education, public discourse, and individual practice. It has been widely used in madrasas (Islamic schools), mosques, and by laypersons seeking to understand the Quran better.

Other Scholarly Works: Besides 'Ma'riful Quran,' Mufti Shofi authored several other important works, including books on Fiqh, Hadith, and Islamic ethics. These works reflect his broad expertise and commitment to addressing various aspects of Islamic life and thought. Mufti Mohammad Shofi's writings on Fiqh address various legal issues, offering clear and practical rulings based on the Quran and Hadith. His contributions to Hadith studies include commentaries and explanations of essential collections, helping to connect classical scholarship with contemporary understanding. Shofi emphasizes the importance of moral conduct and spiritual growth in Islamic ethics and spirituality, guiding living a life that pleases Allah and benefits society. His works in these areas are valued for their clarity, relevance, and ability to address personal and societal needs.

Educational Contributions: Mufti Shofi was a prolific writer and a dedicated educator. He taught at several prominent Islamic institutions, where he influenced a generation of students who would go on to become scholars, imams, and community leaders. His teaching methods emphasized critical thinking, a deep understanding of Islamic texts, and applying Islamic principles in everyday life.

Community Engagement: Beyond his academic and educational contributions, Mufti Shofi was actively engaged in community service. He often gave public lectures and sermons, addressing contemporary issues from an Islamic perspective. His ability to connect with ordinary Muslims and provide practical guidance on religious and social matters made him a beloved and respected figure in his community.

Legacy and Influence: Mufti Mohammad Shofi's legacy is evident in his works' continued relevance and popularity. 'Ma'riful Quran' remains a crucial reference for Quranic study in Bangladesh and has been translated into several

languages, extending its reach to a global audience. His approach to Islamic scholarship, combining traditional rigor with contemporary relevance, inspires new generations of scholars and students.

In summary, Mufti Mohammad Shofi's life and scholarship significantly contribute to Islamic thought. His works, particularly '*Ma'riful Quran*,' have impacted how the Quran is understood and applied in the modern world. His educational efforts and community engagement further underscore his commitment to the spiritual and intellectual development of the Muslim community. Through his scholarship and service, Mufti Shofi has left an enduring legacy that continues to shape Islamic scholarship and practice today.

Ma'riful Quran: Structure and Content

Overview of Ma'riful Quran

'*Ma'riful Quran*' is a comprehensive Tafsir (exegesis) of the Quran written by Mufti Mohammad Shofi. It aims to provide an accessible yet thorough understanding of the Quranic text, bridging traditional Islamic scholarship with contemporary relevance. The title '*Ma'riful Quran*' translates to "The Wisdom of the Quran," indicating its purpose of uncovering and elucidating the profound wisdom contained within the Quranic verses.

Mufti Mohammad Shofi's approach in '*Ma'riful Quran*' is characterized by its clarity, depth, and practical applicability. The Tafsir is designed to cater to a broad audience, including scholars, students, and laypersons. It addresses various aspects of the Quran, including linguistic, theological, jurisprudential, and ethical dimensions, making it a valuable resource for understanding and applying the Quranic teachings in everyday life.

The structure of '*Ma'riful Quran*' is systematic and methodical. It follows the order of the Quranic text, providing verse-by-verse commentary and explanations. Each Surah (chapter) and Ayah (verse) is analyzed in detail, emphasizing context, linguistic nuances, and the overall message. The Tafsir also incorporates relevant Hadith (Prophetic traditions), opinions of classical scholars, and contemporary insights, offering a holistic perspective on the Quranic text (Khatak, 2013).

Thematic Organization and Major Topics Covered

'Ma'riful Quran' is organized thematically, covering many topics relevant to traditional and contemporary contexts. One of the central themes is monotheism (Tawhid) and theology (Aqeedah), where Mufti Shofi extensively elaborates on the oneness of Allah, His attributes, and the significance of worshipping Him alone. The Tafsir also covers beliefs related to prophets, angels, the unseen (Al-Ghaib), and the Day of Judgment. In addition, it provides detailed accounts of the lives and missions of various prophets, such as Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad (peace be upon them all), drawing moral and ethical lessons from their stories, making them relevant to modern challenges.

Mufti Shofi also addresses legal and jurisprudential rulings (Fiqh and Ahkam), covering marriage, divorce, inheritance, criminal justice, and economic transactions while explaining the principles of Islamic jurisprudence (Usul al-Fiqh) for deriving rulings. Ethical and moral guidance is another significant theme, where honesty, justice, compassion, and integrity are emphasized, as well as practical advice on navigating modern ethical dilemmas. Social and economic issues like poverty, wealth distribution, and social justice are also explored, focusing on creating an equitable society. In addition, 'Ma'riful Quran' delves into spiritual development, discussing prayer, fasting, charity, and pilgrimage. Finally, contemporary challenges like secularism, atheism, gender issues, and socio-political conflicts are addressed, offering guidance on maintaining Islamic values in the modern world (B. A. Wani, 2017).

Key Features and Unique Aspects of Shofi's Exegesis

'Ma'riful Quran' stands out from other Tafsir works due to its comprehensive and accessible language. Mufti Mohammad Shofi uses clear, straightforward language, making the Quranic text understandable to a broad audience, including those without deep knowledge of Arabic or Islamic sciences. The Tafsir becomes a valuable resource for laypersons and students by avoiding overly technical jargon. Additionally, Shofi seamlessly integrates traditional exegesis with contemporary insights, grounding his interpretations in classical scholarship while addressing modern challenges. He draws from scholars like Ibn Kathir, Al-Tabari, and Al-Qurtubi while incorporating the perspectives of modern thinkers, making the Tafsir relevant to today's world.

Another distinguishing feature of 'Ma'riful Quran' is its strong focus on contextual and thematic analysis. Mufti Shofi emphasizes the circumstances of revelation (Asbab al-Nuzul) to help readers understand the context of specific verses and their relevance to broader Quranic themes. He also highlights the

interconnections between various verses and chapters, promoting a holistic understanding of the Quran. The Tafsir is practical, offering guidance on applying Quranic teachings to daily life, including contemporary issues such as secularism, gender relations, and socio-economic challenges. Furthermore, Shofi incorporates linguistic analysis, exploring the depth and beauty of the Quranic language while maintaining a balanced and moderate approach to interpretation, avoiding extremes. His use of relevant Hadith and scholarly opinions adds credibility, and his engagement with contemporary scholarship makes the 'Ma'riful Quran' a bridge between tradition and modernity, emphasizing ethical and moral development throughout.

In conclusion, 'Ma'riful Quran' by Mufti Mohammad Shofi is a remarkable work of Quranic exegesis that combines traditional scholarship with contemporary relevance. Its comprehensive and accessible approach, integration of linguistic and literary analysis, focus on practical application, and engagement with modern issues make it a valuable resource for understanding and living according to the Quranic teachings. 'Ma'riful Quran' inspires and guides Muslims in Bangladesh and beyond, contributing to the ongoing discourse on Quranic interpretation and its application in the modern world (Khatak, 2013; B. A. Wani, 2017).

Methodology of Mufti Mohammad Shofi in 'Ma'riful Quran'

Interpretative Methods and Hermeneutical Approach

Mufti Mohammad Shofi's 'Ma'riful Quran' methodology showcases a balanced and rigorous interpretative approach that effectively bridges classical scholarship with contemporary relevance. At the core of his hermeneutical strategy is a strong emphasis on linguistic analysis, where Shofi meticulously examines Arabic words, phrases, and grammatical structures to extract precise meanings. His linguistic approach includes delving into etymology and syntax to clarify meanings and interpreting words and phrases within the context of surrounding verses and the overarching themes of each Surah (chapter). This attention to linguistic detail enriches the reader's understanding and lays a foundation for deeper engagement with the text. Furthermore, Shofi's contextual interpretation, mainly through the lens of *Asbab al-Nuzul* (circumstances of revelation), provides crucial historical and situational backgrounds for specific verses, enabling readers to grasp the socio-historical contexts that shaped the Quranic message and its relevance to contemporary issues.

In addition to his focus on language and context, Shofi emphasizes thematic coherence throughout his Tafsir. He adeptly identifies and elaborates on overarching themes such as monotheism, justice, and moral conduct,

connecting individual verses to broader Quranic messages. This holistic approach encourages readers to view the Quran as a unified text rather than a collection of isolated verses. Shofi further enhances understanding through intertextual references, demonstrating how different parts of the Quran interrelate and reinforce each other. His commitment to rational and reflective analysis also invites readers to engage thoughtfully with philosophical and theological questions, providing reasoned arguments and logical explanations that resonate with modern audiences. This blend of traditional and contemporary methodologies positions the 'Ma'riful Quran' as a vital resource for scholars and laypersons seeking a comprehensive understanding of the Quran (B. A. Wani, 2017).

Sources and References Used in Ma'riful Quran

Mufti Mohammad Shofi's 'Ma'riful Quran' is firmly anchored in a rich tapestry of sources that enhance the credibility and depth of his interpretations. One of the cornerstones of his methodology is his reliance on classical Tafsir works from renowned scholars. He draws extensively from Ibn Kathir, whose comprehensive and authoritative exegesis integrates Hadith and historical context; Al-Tabari, known for its meticulous linguistic and historical analysis; and Al-Qurtubi, who emphasizes the legal and juristic dimensions of the Quran. These classical references provide a solid foundation for Shofi's interpretations, allowing him to engage deeply with traditional scholarship while ensuring his work aligns with established Islamic thought.

In addition to classical sources, Shofi incorporates Hadith, the recorded sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), as pivotal elements of his Tafsir. He frequently cites authentic collections such as Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim and other critical compilations like Sunan Abi Dawood and Tirmidhi to provide context and explanation for Quranic verses. Furthermore, Shofi includes insights from the Sahabah (companions of the Prophet) and Tabi'un (followers of the companions), whose experiences lend valuable perspectives on the Quranic text. His integration of Islamic jurisprudence principles from the primary schools—Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali—illustrates a comprehensive understanding of legal rulings derived from the Quran. Additionally, by engaging with contemporary Islamic scholarship, Shofi addresses current challenges facing the Muslim community, ensuring that the 'Ma'riful Quran' remains relevant and applicable today. He also incorporates literature and historical works, which provide further depth and context, situating the Quran within its broader historical and cultural milieu (Khatak, 2013).

Comparative Analysis with Classical and Contemporary Tafsir

Classical Tafsir Comparison: 'Ma'riful Quran' shares several similarities with classical Tafsir works, particularly in its methodological rigor and reliance on traditional sources. However, there are distinct differences that highlight Mufti Shofi's unique contributions.

While classical Tafsir, like Ibn Kathir and Al-Tabari, offers extensive historical and linguistic analysis, Mufti Mohammad Shafi's 'Ma'riful Quran' emphasizes thematic coherence and context relevance to contemporary issues. Shofi integrates modern challenges such as secularism, gender equality, and socio-political conflicts into his Tafsir, providing solutions rooted in Quranic principles. Unlike earlier works, which focused primarily on the concerns of their time, 'Ma'riful Quran' explicitly engages with these contemporary issues, making it a valuable resource for Muslims navigating the complexities of the modern world.

Comparison with Contemporary Tafsir: Mufti Shofi's 'Ma'riful Quran' can be compared to other modern Tafsir works, such as those by Sayyid Qutb ('Fi Zilal al-Quran') and Maulana Maududi ('Tafhim al-Quran').

Mufti Mohammad Shofi's 'Ma'riful Quran' emphasizes the Quran's thematic unity and contextual relevance, similar to the works of Sayyid Qutb and Maududi, but adopts a more moderate and inclusive approach, avoiding polemical or ideological stances. Like Maududi, Shofi offers practical guidance on applying Quranic teachings to contemporary life, but his focus on balanced interpretation bridges traditional and modern perspectives. His detailed linguistic analysis reflects the precision of classical Tafsir, making it accessible to modern readers and distinguishing it from some contemporary Tafsir that may prioritize ideological interpretations over linguistic depth.

Unique Aspects of 'Ma'riful Quran':

'Ma'riful Quran' stands out for its balanced and moderate approach, offering a middle ground between strict traditionalism and modern reformism, making it accessible to many readers. Its straightforward language, comprehensive coverage, and practical applications make it ideal for educational settings, from madrasas to universities. Additionally, Mufti Mohammad Shofi's engagement with modern academic and scientific thought distinguishes 'Ma'riful Quran' from classical and contemporary Tafsir, bridging traditional Islamic teachings and contemporary intellectual discourse and ensuring its relevance in modern contexts.

In conclusion, Mufti Mohammad Shofi's 'Ma'riful Quran' significantly contributes to Quranic exegesis, characterized by its methodological rigor,

comprehensive use of sources, and engagement with contemporary issues. By integrating traditional scholarship with modern insights, Shofi provides a Tafsir rooted in the classical tradition and relevant to the modern world. This makes the 'Ma'riful Quran' a valuable resource for anyone seeking to understand and apply the teachings of the Quran in today's context (Khatak, 2013).

Influence of 'Ma'riful Quran' on Contemporary Islamic Thought in Bangladesh

Reception and Dissemination of 'Ma'riful Quran' in Bangladesh

'Ma'riful Quran' by Mufti Mohammad Shofi has had a significant impact in Bangladesh, where it has been widely accepted and disseminated. One of the key reasons for its popularity is its accessibility and language. Written in clear, straightforward language, it appeals to scholars and laypersons alike, making the Quran's teachings understandable to people with various educational backgrounds. The Tafsir's translation into Bangla, Bangladesh's national language, has further enhanced its reach, allowing a broader audience to engage with the Quranic text, particularly those not proficient in Arabic or English. This accessibility has solidified its role in contemporary Islamic thought in the region.

The Tafsir's publication and distribution have also contributed to its widespread acceptance. 'Ma'riful Quran' has been published in multiple editions and reprints, ensuring its availability in bookstores, libraries, and educational institutions across Bangladesh. The rise of digital media has expanded its reach even further, with digital copies and online resources making it accessible to a global audience, including the Bangladeshi diaspora. Endorsements by respected Islamic scholars and institutions have added to its credibility, with many madrasas and Islamic universities incorporating it into their curricula. Islamic scholars and imams frequently reference the 'Ma'riful Quran' in their public lectures and sermons, promoting its interpretations and making its teachings accessible to the broader Muslim community.

Impact on Islamic Education and Religious Institutions

The 'Ma'riful Quran' influence on Islamic education and religious institutions in Bangladesh profoundly shapes the curriculum, pedagogy, and overall approach to Quranic studies. Widely utilized in madrasas, Islamic schools, and universities, the 'Ma'riful Quran' is a primary text for teaching Quranic studies, thanks to its comprehensive and accessible nature. Its inclusion in the curriculum ensures that students gain a balanced understanding of the Quran, grounded in classical scholarship, while remaining relevant to contemporary issues. This makes the Tafsir an invaluable resource for educators aiming to effectively teach the meanings and applications of the Quran.

Moreover, the pedagogical approach advocated by 'Ma'riful Quran,' which combines linguistic analysis, contextual interpretation, and thematic coherence, serves as a model for educators. This methodology encourages students to develop critical thinking skills and a deeper appreciation of the Quranic text, facilitating connections between religious studies and real-life situations. The Tafsir has also inspired numerous scholarly works, with researchers frequently referencing Mufti Shafi's insights to explore various aspects of Islamic thought and practice. Religious institutions, including mosques and Islamic centers, often use the 'Ma'riful Quran' as a reference for Quranic study circles and discussion groups, promoting community learning. Furthermore, the Tafsir's practical guidance on social and ethical issues equips religious leaders to address contemporary challenges effectively, providing relevant advice rooted in Quranic teachings. In this way, 'Ma'riful Quran' enriches individual understanding and fosters a collective engagement with Islamic scholarship in Bangladesh.

Influence on Contemporary Islamic Movements and Thought Leaders

'Ma'riful Quran' has significantly impacted contemporary Islamic movements and thought leaders in Bangladesh, shaping their ideologies, methodologies, and public discourses. Its influence is particularly evident in Islamic revival and reform movements aiming to reestablish Islamic values in personal and social life. Mufti Shofi's balanced approach integrates traditional principles with modern relevance, resonating with these movements' objectives. Reformers often use the 'Ma'riful Quran' to advocate for a return to Quranic teachings while addressing contemporary challenges. By drawing on Shofi's interpretations, they promote social justice, ethical conduct, and community development, ensuring that Islamic teachings remain pertinent today.

Furthermore, the 'Ma'riful Quran' is foundational for many contemporary Islamic thought leaders in Bangladesh. These leaders frequently cite Mufti Shafi's insights in their writings and public discussions, highlighting its relevance to critical topics such as secularism, gender equality, political participation, and economic justice. Shofi's moderate approach provides a framework for addressing these issues from an Islamic perspective, promoting a balanced interpretation of Islam that counters both radicalism and extreme secularism. The Tafsir emphasizes rational analysis and social justice, fostering a compassionate and inclusive understanding of Islamic teachings. Additionally, it addresses women's rights, equipping Islamic movements and thought leaders with a Quranic basis for advocating gender equity and social justice. In public discourse, the 'Ma'riful Quran' is often referenced in media discussions, helping to bridge

academic scholarship and public understanding of Islamic issues. Its practical guidance on social and economic matters has influenced community development initiatives, encouraging Muslims to engage positively with society based on Quranic principles and promoting a culture of solidarity and welfare.

In conclusion, the 'Ma'riful Quran' by Mufti Mohammad Shofi has profoundly influenced contemporary Islamic thought in Bangladesh. Its widespread acceptance, integration into educational curricula, and impact on Islamic movements and thought leaders underscore its significance. By providing a balanced and relevant interpretation of the Quran, the 'Ma'riful Quran' continues to shape Bangladesh's intellectual, educational, and social landscape, promoting a deeper understanding and application of Islamic teachings in the modern world.

Challenges and Criticisms

Critical Reception of 'Ma'riful Quran' within Academic and Religious Circles

While the 'Ma'riful Quran' by Mufti Mohammad Shofi has garnered widespread praise and acceptance, it has faced significant challenges and criticisms from various academic and religious circles. One central area of critique centers on the scholarly rigor of the Tafsir. Some academic scholars argue that, although Shofi's work is comprehensive and accessible, it may lack the depth of critical analysis in other academic Tafsir. Critics suggest that the 'Ma'riful Quran' could better engage with contemporary academic discourse, particularly in addressing modern philosophical and scientific developments. This perceived gap raises questions about the extent to which Shofi's interpretations reflect the complexities of today's intellectual landscape.

Traditionalist scholars have expressed concerns about Shofi's perceived modernist tendencies in religious circles. They argue that his attempts to make the Quran relevant to contemporary issues may lead to interpretations that diverge from classical understandings, potentially compromising the integrity of traditional exegesis. Additionally, Islamic jurisprudence and theology diversity has led to critiques from various sectarian perspectives. Scholars from different schools of thought, such as Salafi, Shia, or different Sunni madhabs, may raise specific theological or legal disagreements with Shofi's interpretations. These critiques highlight the complexities and challenges inherent in producing a Tafsir that aims to bridge traditional Islamic teachings with contemporary issues while maintaining adherence to established religious norms. Despite these criticisms, 'Ma'riful Quran' remains a significant text, reflecting Islamic scholarship's innovative and contentious nature today.

Linguistic and Interpretative Challenges

Mufti Mohammad Shafi's 'Ma'riful Quran' employs a robust linguistic and interpretative methodology, yet it faces significant challenges inherent in Quranic exegesis. One major linguistic challenge is the translation nuances of the Quran, a text celebrated for its linguistic depth and richness. Critics argue that the subtleties of Arabic words and phrases may need to be fully captured in translation, which can lead to oversimplifications or misunderstandings. Additionally, some scholars contend that Shofi's etymological analysis might need to fully account for the dynamic nature of language and the historical evolution of meanings, complicating efforts to pinpoint exact definitions.

Interpretative challenges also arise, particularly regarding contextual interpretation. While Shofi emphasizes the context of revelation (*Asbab al-Nuzul*), critics highlight the complexities of interpreting verses based on historical context. The historical records are often scrutinized, making it challenging to ascertain definitive contexts. Moreover, Shofi's attempt to balance traditional exegesis with contemporary relevance can create tensions. Critics argue that in striving to apply the Quran to modern issues, there is a risk of projecting contemporary values onto the text, potentially leading to anachronistic interpretations that diverge from classical understandings.

Addressing Criticisms and Debates Surrounding Shofi's Methodology

Mufti Mohammad Shofi's methodology in 'Ma'riful Quran' has sparked considerable debate, yet Shofi and his supporters present compelling counterarguments to address the criticisms. Advocates assert that Shofi's comprehensive approach, encompassing linguistic analysis, contextual interpretation, and thematic coherence, exemplifies scholarly rigor. They maintain that the Tafsir's accessibility enhances its practical value without sacrificing intellectual depth. Moreover, Shofi's methodology thoroughly engages with classical Tafsir works and contemporary scholarship, referencing authoritative sources to maintain credibility while addressing modern issues. His grounding in classical principles of Quranic exegesis is evident, as he extensively cites renowned scholars and adheres to established methodologies, ensuring that his interpretations resonate with traditional authenticity.

To navigate linguistic challenges, Shofi employs a meticulous translation process that involves collaboration with multiple scholars, aiming to capture the richness of the original Arabic while making it accessible to non-Arabic speakers. His detailed explanations of linguistic terms mitigate concerns about etymological precision, helping readers grasp the breadth of meanings.

Additionally, Shofi emphasizes the importance of historical context for applying Quranic teachings to contemporary issues, carefully avoiding anachronism by grounding modern applications in established Islamic principles. Addressing sectarian criticisms, he promotes inter-sectarian dialogue and highlights common Islamic values that unite Muslims across various sects. Looking forward, Shofi and his supporters advocate for continuous scholarly engagement and collaborative efforts among scholars and community leaders to ensure that the 'Ma'riful Quran' remains a relevant and valuable resource for understanding Quranic teachings in a rapidly changing world.

In conclusion, while 'Ma'riful Quran' by Mufti Mohammad Shofi faces challenges and criticisms, its comprehensive and balanced methodology provides robust responses to these concerns. By combining traditional scholarship with contemporary relevance, Shofi's Tafsir offers a valuable contribution to Quranic exegesis, fostering a deeper understanding and application of the Quran in the modern world. Through continuous engagement and dialogue, the 'Ma'riful Quran' can address criticisms and continue to serve as a vital resource for Islamic thought and practice.

Conclusion

This study has explored the profound influence of Mufti Mohammad Shofi's 'Ma'riful Quran' on contemporary Islamic thought and scholarship in Bangladesh. Several key findings have emerged from the analysis. First, the Tafsir has been widely received and disseminated in the country, bolstered by its accessible language and translation into Bangla. The publication of multiple editions and the availability of digital formats have significantly expanded its reach, making it a staple resource for many. Second, the 'Ma'riful Quran' has become a cornerstone in the curriculum of madrasas, Islamic schools, and universities, shaping pedagogical approaches to Quranic studies. Its inclusion emphasizes a balanced understanding that combines classical scholarship with contemporary relevance, ensuring students are well-versed in tradition and modernity. Third, the Tafsir has notably impacted Islamic revival and reform movements in Bangladesh. Thought leaders frequently reference Shofi's interpretations to address modern issues, promote social justice, and encourage ethical conduct based on Quranic teachings.

Further, Shofi's methodology integrates linguistic analysis, contextual interpretation, and thematic coherence, making it a unique contribution to Quranic exegesis. While the work has garnered acclaim, it has faced challenges and criticisms, particularly regarding its scholarly rigor and translation nuances. Critics argue that Shofi's efforts to balance tradition with modern relevance can lead to oversimplifications. However, Shofi's responses to these challenges

demonstrate his commitment to scholarly integrity and practical application, reinforcing Tafsir's value in contemporary discourse.

'Ma'riful Quran' enriches the field of Quranic exegesis by providing a comprehensive and accessible interpretation of the Quran. Shofi's balanced approach, which respects classical traditions while addressing contemporary issues, sets a benchmark for modern Tafsir works. Moreover, the Tafsir promotes a moderate and balanced interpretation of Islam, effectively countering both radical and secular extremes. This middle-path approach resonates with a broad audience, fostering a more inclusive and compassionate understanding of Islamic teachings. By integrating 'Ma'riful Quran' into educational curricula, Shofi has significantly influenced the development of Islamic scholarship in Bangladesh. The Tafsir serves as a vital resource for students and educators, enhancing the quality of Quranic studies and encouraging intellectual engagement with the text. In addition to educational advancements, 'Ma'riful Quran' provides practical guidance on social and ethical issues rooted in Quranic principles. Shofi's interpretations address contemporary challenges such as gender equity, social justice, and community development, providing a Quranic framework for tackling these issues. Furthermore, his inclusive approach encourages dialogue and understanding among Islamic sects, emphasizing common Islamic values. This contribution helps foster a more unified and harmonious Muslim community, promoting cooperation and mutual respect.

The future of Quranic Tafsir in Bangladesh appears promising, with several potential developments on the horizon. Continued scholarly engagement with the 'Ma'riful Quran' and other Tafsir works will enhance the depth and breadth of Quranic studies. Collaborative efforts among scholars, educators, and religious leaders can foster a dynamic and evolving discourse that addresses new developments and challenges. Expanding digital resources, including online platforms and mobile applications, will increase access to the 'Ma'riful Quran' and other Tafsir works. This digital engagement will cater to the needs of a tech-savvy generation, making Quranic knowledge more accessible and engaging.

Moreover, future Tafsir efforts may further integrate modern sciences and humanities insights, exploring the intersections between Quranic teachings and contemporary knowledge. This interdisciplinary approach can enhance the relevance and applicability of Quranic exegesis in today's world. A particular focus on youth education will be crucial; developing engaging and interactive educational programs that incorporate Tafsir works like 'Ma'riful Quran' can inspire a new generation of Muslims to connect intellectually and spiritually with their faith. Lastly, addressing contemporary issues such as climate change, technological advancements, and global socio-political dynamics through Tafsir

can offer valuable guidance for navigating modern challenges, ensuring that Quranic teachings remain relevant in an ever-changing world.

In conclusion, the 'Ma'riful Quran' by Mufti Mohammad Shofi has significantly contributed to Islamic scholarship and thought in Bangladesh. Its comprehensive and balanced approach to Quranic exegesis has enriched the field, promoted moderate and inclusive Islam, and provided practical guidance on contemporary issues. As Quranic Tafsir continues to evolve, the 'Ma'riful Quran' will remain a valuable resource, inspiring further research and engagement with the Quran in the modern world.

Author Contributions

Aflatun Al-Kausar: Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing - review & editing, Supervision, Project administration, Investigation.

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Conflict of Interest

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