FINDINGS

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Topic: Concept of Political Authority (Ulu Al-Amr): Text, Context and Interpretation by Prominent Modern Indo-Pak Exegetes.

The purpose of this study has been to examine the Qur'ānic conception of *ulū al-amr* in the prominent Indo-Pak exegesis. The study deliberates over some pre-modern discourses surrounding *ulū al-amr* and compares it with Indo-Pak exegetes in the same genre. The primary objective of this comparison is to dwell on the implications of the evolutionary transformations that emerged thereof, and to investigate the convergence and divergence which reflect in their understanding of *ulū al-amr*. This is to fathom the diversity/divergence in the interpretation of *ulū al-amr* as a result of the exegetes' engagement. These scholars were chosen because they are widely read in Indo-Pak Muslim circles and appeared in some kind of revivalist backdrop. Besides, these works have also been greatly influential on later Muslim scholars. Lastly, narrowing the scope of analysis to these selected exegeses has allowed the discussion to be developed in greater depth. A diachronic survey of premodern and modern exegetical works and political treatises has given rise to several noteworthy conclusions, which have been summarised in the following discussion.

The study found that *ulū al-amr* is *locus classicus* to the Muslim understanding of leadership, although its exact conations remain contested, negotiated and promoted in the exegetical literature. For instance, among premodern exegesis (classical and medieval) three definitions of *ulū al-amr* remained popular:

     (i)   *ashāb Muhammad*(ﷺ)/People around the Prophet (ﷺ);
     (ii)   *al-'ulamā* (the learned scholars); and
     (iii)   *umarā, wulāt* and *salātīn*/ military commanders and political leaders.

A closer look, however, reveals some differences. Take for illustration, "People around the Prophet (ﷺ)," Suddī and Muqātil refer it to Khālid b. Walīd and Ammār b. Yasir, while Ibn Abbās refers it to 'Abd Allah b. Hudhāfah. On the other hand, Ikrimah specifies more narrowly *ulū al-amr* to the first two Rāshidūn Caliphs; Abū Bakr al-Siddīq, 'Umar b. Khattāb, while others hold that it includes all the Rāshidūn Caliphs (Abū Bakr al-Siddīq, 'Umar b. Khattāb, 'Uthmān b. 'Affān, and 'Alī b. Abī Tālib). A generalization includes all *ashāb Surya* /the Companions who took part in the battles during Prophetic times and a more generalization glosses it to all the *ashāb Muhammad* (ﷺ) because they were the most qualified people in terms of virtues, understanding and piety.

The second group of scholars like Mujāhid, Dahhāk and others; are those who understand *ulū al-amr* as *al-'ulamā* (the learned scholars). They use different expressions and sometimes different terms attributed to the same individual. Mujāhid,

for example, is reported to use the term *uli'l-fiqh* (those who possess an understanding) in one report; however, in another report, he says *ulū'l-fiqh wa'l-'ilm* (those who possess an understanding and knowledge). Other expressions used include *ahl al- fiqh wa'l-dīn* (those who possess an understanding of religion and reason), *al-fūqahā wa'l- 'ulamā* (the jurists' scholars) and *ulamā* (the scholars). This term was understood, in the premodern exegesis, to refer only to "Companions of Prophet (ﷺ)"; "people who possess knowledge and discernment" and "military commanders and political authorities." To put it another way, *ulū al-amr* was referred in the broadest possible sense to people possessing political and moral authority based on sound knowledge of religious and legal principles and more narrowly to specific individuals who were appointed to the position of military leaders by the Prophet (ﷺ) himself.

In modern twentieth-century Indo-Pak exegetical literature, analogous to premodern, the exact connotations of the *ulū al-amr* remain contested. One influential view is that *ulū al-amr* refers to military commanders, rulers, governors and the all the three fundamental organs of a modern state; judiciary, legislature and executive. Among them Azād and Mawdūdī were strong proponents of this view. For instance, Azād asserts that *ulū al-amr* are *salātīn* and *hukkām*. For him, the *ulamā* and *fūqahā* can't be categorised as *ulū al-amr*. Whilst, Mawdūdī in his Qur'ānic exegesis includes "the intellectual" apart from "the political leaders of the community." Mawdūdī in his political monograph glosses *ulū al-amr* to all "those who will run the Islamic state" which includes the organs of the state: a) executive, b) legislature and c) judiciary. The *'ulamā* have the legislative power to re-discovered or re-interpret the law within the boundaries of Sharī'a. However, Mawdūdī didn't entertain them based on their knowledge but on their political position. A 'rival' understands this Qur'ānic characterization as referring to the religious authorities. As Usmānī glosses *ulū al-amr* as Muslim jurists (*fūqahā*). For him, however, the application of *ulū al-amr* takes two forms. First, it can be done by "using force, coercion and oppression" that is foreseeable by the *'umarā* and *hukkām*. While as, the second form of obedience to *ulū al-amr* comes from "reliance and trust," and that stands reposed in revered *fūqahā* only. The evidence of this has been visible in the lives of Muslims in general in all ages were the general body, by their own free will and choice, decided by the authority of *ulamā* as the mandatory mode of action in all religious matters. For Usmānī, therefore, the application of *ulū al-amr* to ʿ*ulamā* and *fūqahā* is correct as well.

The third view sought to reconcile these two views by counting both the political-military leadership and the religious authorities among *ulū al-amr*. Usmānī and Kilānī were the proponents of this position. For example, Usmānī, who appeared to support either views that glosses *ulū al-amr* as *ulamā* and *fūqahā* as well as *'umarā* and *hukkām* arguing that "the system of command is inevitably connected with these two." For him, ʿ*ulamā* and *fūqahā* are the succeeding deputies of the Prophet (ﷺ) and the proper regulation of religion is in their hands. Similarly, Kilānī identifies *ulū al-amr* as the *hukkām* (political authorities) as well as the ʿ*ulamā* and *fūqahā* (well-learned scholars and jurists).