

Book Review

21st Century Quranic Studies in English: A Bibliography by Sajid Shaffi,
Viva Books, New Delhi, 2018

The recent time has witnessed an increased interest in the Quranic studies in English especially in the Muslim academic world which indeed is commendable. Gone are the days when Western non-Muslim scholarship dominated the field of Quranic studies; scholars were compelled to refer to the non-Muslim European works as they considerably contributed in one way or the other to the subject. However, Western scholarship in the Quranic studies is not free from misinterpretation, misinformation, and inaccurate representation of this divinely revealed book—the Quran. On the other hand, being the main source of Islam the Qur'an has been central to the Muslim faith. The traditional Muslim scholarship of Qur'an has been marvelous. Muslims have been contributing mainly in Arabic, Persian, and Urdu. Interestingly, the trend is now shifting towards English language round the globe. As such, in the Indian sub-continent, a few institutions, centers, and scholars have taken and showing deep interest in the Quranic studies in English. *Khaliq Ahmad Nizami (KAN) Centre for Quranic Studies* at the Aligarh Muslim University (India) is perhaps the only centre that has taken up the task to enrich the field and to train the young scholars in the Quranic Studies with special focus on modern trends. The present book under review is a good example in the line. Sajid Shaffi, a young and dynamic author of the book, in association with the said centre has attempted to compile a bibliography on the contributions to the Quranic Studies in English in the 21st century.

The bibliography lists as many as 2000 entries of diverse topics on Quranic studies in English written during 2000-2016 in various forms: translations of the Qur'an; books; book chapters; journal articles; theses; and reviews. The book is divided into five parts, and each part, except part I, has been thematically arranged under different headings and subheadings. The diversity in themes and variety of topics selected here are worth to mention: theology/metaphysics; the Qur'an and Prophet Muhammad ; history of the collection and codex of the Qur'an; art of the Qur'an recitation; the Qur'an translations and translators; interpreting the Qur'an; Quranic vocabulary; Quranic Arabic language and literature; law in the Qur'an context; sufism in the Quranic context; comparative religions/scriptures in the

Quranic context; art and architecture in the Qur'an context; science in the Qur'an context; contemporary issues in the Qur'an context; Orientalist approach and Muslim responses (pp. xiii-xiv).

Part I (pp. 3-6) lists 45 translations of the Qur'an in English including a few non-Muslims translations: Orientalists and Qadyani. The list clearly reveals a telling example of increasing Muslim interest and intense activity in the Quranic field in the 21st century. Some of the Muslim translations which have left indelible marks in the Quranic studies are: M.A.S. Abdul Haleem's *The Qur'an: A New Translation* (2004); Ahmad Zaki Hammad's *The Glorious Qur'an: A Modern-Phrased Interpretation in English* (2007); Tarif Khalidi's *The Qur'an: A New Translation* (2008); Saheeh International *The Qur'an: English Meanings and Notes* (2011); and Mustafa Khattab's *The Clear Qur'an: A Thematic English Translation of the Message of the Final Revelation* (2016). The outstanding feature of the selected translations is their reader friendly approach presented in simple and good English. The list also features one Qadyani translation, *The Holy Qur'an: Arabic Text and English Translation* (2005) by Abdul Mannan Omar, Amatul Rahman and Omar.

Part II (pp. 9-41) presents books written on various subjects of the Qur'an. This section features some interesting and valuable recent works on the Qur'an such as Bruce B. Lawrence's *The Qur'an in English: A Biography* (2017); Abdur Raheem Kidwai's *21st Century English Translations of the Qur'an: A Critical Guide* (2017); Ali Suleiman Ali's *A Brief Introduction to Quranic Exegesis* (2017); Muhammad Abdel Haleem's *Exploring the Qur'an: Context and Impact* (2017); Nabila Mustafa's *Inimitability of Quranic Discourse* (2017); Andrew Rippin's ed., *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to the Qur'an* (2017); and Nicolai Sinai's *The Qur'an: A Historical: Critical Introduction* (2017). From the list, one would be thrilled on seeing that almost all the latest and important contributions published until 2017 have found their place in the bibliography. However, this part, in contrast, to part I, reveals that non-Muslim interest in the Qur'anic studies is still one of their main fields of study as they continue to produce many important and valuable works in the 21st century.

Part III (pp. 43-176), the longest part of the book, lists a rich number of articles on the Qur'an. The articles have been categorized into a diversity of themes and topics that speaks the author's astuteness, and keen understanding of the subject. A reader would be fascinated on seeing that utmost care has been taken while categorizing the entries especially under "the Qur'an translations and Translators"; "modern interpretations"; and "contemporary issues in

the Quranic context” subheadings. Journal articles such as “On the Dichotomy Between the Muhkam and Mutashbih”; “Conceptual and Textual Chaining in Quranic Discourse” ; “Cultural Aspects in Qur'an Translation”; “The Qur'an Limits of Translatability” and other articles by Hussein Abdul-Rouf (p. 64); “Presenting the Gracious Qur'an” by Ahmad Zaki Hammad (p. 68); and “Abdullah Yusuf Ali and Muhammad Asad: Two Approaches to the Qur'an” by Muzaffar Iqbal (ibid) have also find their places in the book. Moreover, articles under contemporary issues in the Qur'an context are worth to note.

Part IV (pp. 179-196) marks the book reviews on the Quranic Studies. Three scholars’ reviews are worth to mention. There are more than 50 book reviews by Abdur Raheem Kidwai—one of the towering and influential contemporary Muslim scholars on Quranic Studies in India. Two other scholars whose reviews dominate the section are Murad Wilfred Hofmann, and Abdur Rashid Siddiqui.

Part V (pp. 199-208) details the theses on the Qur'an. From this section, it is evident that a considerable research has been done on various areas of the Qur'an. However, there are countless hidden treasures of knowledge, wisdom, and guidance in the Qur'an that need to be explored and pondered upon. Moreover, modern times have posed serious challenges before the Muslims; to respond to these challenges Muslim scholars try to seek answers first from this Divine book.

The theses present in this section delve on diverse topics ranging from theology to science; literature to philosophy; knowledge to hermeneutics; comparative studies to exegeses, to name a few. The author has attempted to let know the readers about the modern trends in the ongoing research on the Qur'an.

At the end, Shaffi has provided a list of reference works, list of selected journals and an index that makes the book more reader friendly.

Overall, the bibliography provides rich information on the recent Quranic studies in English at one place. The thematic arrangement and categorization into headings and sub-headings would definitely attract its readers. It is a very handy tool for all those interested in the Quranic studies especially for the English knowing people. Equally important, an indispensable source for the beginners who want to pursue research in Quranic studies. The section-wise bibliography presented in the book covers almost all important and emerging trends in the field. Moreover, the book provides valuable clues towards important areas

wherein an in-depth and good research is lacking within Quranic Studies. In addition, the bibliography provides an eagles view into the Muslim interest in their overall contribution and research in the Quranic studies. My admiration of the book does not restrict me to point any shortcomings that can be leveled against the book. One of the technical drawbacks is the lack of transliteration of the Arabic terms/names appeared in the book. In short, the author deserves great appreciation in bringing such a unique and timely contribution. K.A.N Centre for Qur'an Studies, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh also deserves admiration for their efforts towards overall contribution to the Quranic studies.

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