

## Contemporary Interpretation Methodology: Comparative Study of the Thought of Fazlur Rahman and Sahiron Syamsuddin

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**Abstract.** This article discusses Contemporary Interpretation Methodology (Comparative Study of the Thoughts of Fazlur Rahman and Sahiron Syamsuddin). The background is related to contemporary interpretations that exist in today's society. The aim is to provide an explanation of the comparison of two contemporary figures, namely Fazlur Rahman and Sahiron Syamsuddin. By using library research methods. This research was carried out by researching and analyzing based on library sources. The discussion is explained descriptively (outlining the sources obtained and then analyzed). The books used are secondary sources enriched from various other literary sources. The results of the research concluded that Fazlur Rahman with his theory of double movement. And Sahiron Syamsuddin with the ma'na cum maghza theory.

**Keywords:** Interpretation Methodology; Double Movement; Ma'na Cum Maghza

### Introduction

The modern method of interpretation is one of the many methods of interpretation. The scholars who interpret the Qur'an were born. As an interpretation method, this method in principle has similarities and does not deviate from the rules of salaf interpretation. Both methods, both modern and classical, are both prophesied about the content of the Qur'an according to a certain period (Sudianto, 2017, Eni, 2017). The Qur'an was revealed as a revelation to the Prophet Muhammad PBUH. Gabriel as the angel intermediary who brought the leaflets. Coming from Arabia full of privileges. This holy book contains various kinds of information about monotheism, sharia and the rules of muamalah in general. horizontally with other beings and vertically with the Creator. Despite this, God SWT does not contain a detailed review of the various studies in question. Therefore, there are a lot of words in the Qur'an that must be interpreted. In addition, there are many editorial languages of the Qur'an, consisting of short sentences that are full of comprehensive meaning (Saihu, 2020, Firdausiyah, 2019). Not only sentences, but there are many in the Qur'an. There are simple pronunciations that combine different meanings. Therefore, the need for an interpretation of the Qur'an is important.

The existence of the Qur'an among Muslims is based on their strong desire to study and deepen its teachings and its beautiful aspects have given birth to several fields of Islamic science and research methods. The appearance in the field of knowledge began from the compilation of Arabic grammar by Abu al-'Aswad ad-Du'aliy to the emergence of works in the field of uşul al-fiqh from the intelligence of Imam as-Shafī. This process continues to this day thanks to various

techniques for interpreting the Qur'an.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, many Islamic scholars have difficulty studying it in different departments. Their curiosity about the content of the Qur'an was the impetus for him to conduct a relevant investigation separately. Because the Qur'an tells about problems related to life activities and problems related to it are separate from the area of research, so the main messages are difficult to convey precisely but by referring to scientific results in the field of Qur'anic studies. Among the modern interpretations today are Fazlur Rahman with the *Double Movement* theory and Sahiron Syamsuddin with the *Ma'na Maghza* theory.

The purpose of this study is to study the thoughts of two contemporary figures, namely Fazlur Rahman and Sahiron Syamsuddin about the Qur'an. What are your views? Do they have any common views? And what are the differences in their views? This paper uses a library research method with the primary source of the author's book, namely *Hermeneutics and the Development of the Qur'an*. And other sources are in the form of journals, articles, and others.

## Discussion

### Biography Fazlur Rahman

Fazlur Rahman was born in Hazara (present-day Pakistan) on September 21, 1919. Rahman, who died in Chicago on July 26, 1988,<sup>2</sup> was a highly respected figure in the Islamic thought renewal movement of the 20th century. His reformist thinking uses an innovative approach with a focus on the problem of interpretation of the Qur'an. The interpretation of the Qur'an is focused on the ethico-legal content of the Qur'an.

Hazara, his birthplace, is known for its impressive reputation when it comes to Islamic education. His father was named Mawlana Shihab al-Din, a scholar who had studied at Deoband Seminary in India.<sup>3</sup> With the direction of learning from his father, Rahman received religious education which included Tafsir, Hadith, Law and Theology, and Philosophy. Accompanied by his father, Rahman managed to master the *darse-Nizami*, which is a major part of the curriculum provided by the classical educational institution Dar al-'Ulum. After that, the individual studied at the Punjab University in Lahore and managed to obtain bachelor's and master's degrees. Not satisfied with his master's education, the individual chose to go to Oxford to pursue his studies in a doctoral program and write a thesis on Ibn Sina's Philosophy. After completing his studies, Rahman moved to Durham University (UK) to teach Persian Philosophy and Islam in the period 1950-1958. He left the United Kingdom and moved to Canada to occupy the position of Assistant Professor in Islamic Studies at McGill University in Montreal for a period of three years.<sup>4</sup>

Later, Ayyub Khan, who later served as President of Pakistan, sought a reformist scholar with a liberal orientation to lead the Islamic Research Institute he had founded. In the context of Rahman's language, he is mandated to "advise the government on religious policies in accordance with Islamic principles...". According to Rahman, it is important to interpret these Islamic principles in accordance with the shifting context of the modern world. The institute chaired by Rahman was given the responsibility to support the modernization programs carried out by Ayyub

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<sup>1</sup> Ahmad Sudianto, "Metode Tafsir Kontemporer," *Literatur for Social Impact and Cultural Studies* 4, no. 251–256 (2020).

<sup>2</sup> Umma Farida, *Contemporary Qur'an Interpretation Thoughts and Methods*, 2007.

<sup>3</sup> Badruzzaman M Yunus, Muhammad Rizaldi Syahputra, and Asep Sufian Sya'roni, "Getting to Know Manhaj Tafsir Fazrul Rahman," *Journal of Faith and Spirituality* 1, no. 2 (2021): 132–38.

<sup>4</sup> Rudy Irawan, "Contextual Methods of Qur'an Interpretation from the Perspective of Fazlur Rahman," *Journal of Qur'an and Al-Hadith Studies* 13, no. 2 (2019): 171–94.

Khan. This event became an important momentum in the development of Rahman's career. With great enthusiasm, he was seen accepting an "ambitious" project offer from Ayyub Khan, so he chose to leave his established and secure academic career in Canada.

Pakistan is a region where the majority of the population adheres to Islam, but since the beginning of the country's formation, there has been a split between traditional Islam embraced by the majority of society and modernist Islam adopted by the intellectual and secular elites. Motivated by political considerations, Ayyub Khan believes that it is important to carry out a modernization process that still respects and considers traditional values. According to experience in traditional and Western education, Rahman was considered suitable for the program. Referring to an invitation from Ayyub Khan, Rahman returned to Pakistan and served as a visiting professor and later became the Director of the Institute founded by Ayyub Khan (1961 – 1968).<sup>5</sup> In this position, Rahman actively carried out religious teaching to the younger generation using an analytical approach. He also frequently advises and recommends on issues that are developing in Pakistan, such as family law reform, bank interest, zakat, and similar topics. His ideas met with a lot of resistance from traditional Muslims.

Rahman's idealistic views are closely related to political issues in Pakistan. In Pakistan's heated political situation and with strong resistance from traditional circles to the idea of reform, Rahman faces a very complex challenge. Rahman is considered the main competitor of Maulana Yusuf Binnauri, a figure of the Deoband School of Medicine from Pakistan. Binnauri, like his predecessor Anwar Syah Kasmiri, is a follower of the main ideology of the Deoband school which is theological and normative. He represents the clerics who meticulously control the interpretation of Islam. Figures like Rahman, who is considered not a cleric, are considered to be a threat to religious understanding and practice in Pakistan. The threat that threatened his life and the life of his family forced Rahman to leave Pakistan. He restarted his career in academia by returning to America. There, he earned a professorship in Islamic thought at the University of Chicago from 1968 until the end of his life in 1988.

### **Metodologi Penafsiran Double Movement**

Rahman criticized that the classical interpretation method tends to interpret the Qur'an separately and piecemeal, which causes the problems faced to be unsolved, but instead raises new problems. Rahman bases his hermeneutic construction on the conception that what is sought and applied from the Qur'an in the midst of human life is not in the content of its literal meaning but rather in the conception of its worldview (*weltanschauung*). Regarding his thinking in understanding the Qur'an, Fazlur Rahman has a methodology for understanding the Qur'an known as the Double Movement theory. Double movement is an interpretation method that contains 2 (two) movements, the first movement departs from the current situation to the situation when the Qur'an is revealed and the second movement goes back again, namely from the situation of the Qur'an time is revealed to the present, which will presuppose the progressivity of revelation.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Abid Rohmanu, "Fazlur Rahman and the Double Movement Interpretation Theory," 2004.

<sup>6</sup> Femy Putri Nursyifa et al., "Criticism of Fazlur Rahman's Al-Qur'an Hermeneutics," *Journal of 'Ulum Al-Qur'an and Tafsir Studies* 2, no. 1 (2023): 4–10.

Thus, the first movement from the present situation to the time of the Qur'an was revealed to consist of two steps of work. First, understanding the meaning or meaning of a statement by examining the historical situation where the Qur'anic statement is the answer. Second, generalize the specific answers and state them as statements that have a general moral-social purpose that can be filtered from specific texts in a socio-historical background and logical proportions.<sup>7</sup> The second movement is from the time when the Qur'an was revealed (after discovering general principles) back to the present. These general teachings must be established in a concrete socio-historical context today. For this reason, it is necessary to carefully study the current situation and analyze its elements so that the situation can be assessed and changed to the extent necessary and new priorities are set in order to implement the values of the Qur'an in a new way. This second movement will also serve as a correction of the results of the understanding and interpretation carried out in the first movement.

The essence of Rahman's idea above is to put the entire ethical vision of the Qur'an into general principles and then apply those general principles to specific cases that arise in contemporary situations.<sup>8</sup> The advantage of Rahman's ideas is that they are very open to acceptance and provide a basis for solutions to certain problems. The problem areas are endless, especially if you see a small area in the text. To understand and apply the above methods, you need the following understanding and knowledge: First, a proper understanding of the Qur'an in its context requires knowledge of not only the Arabic language but also the culture of the Arab countries of the time of the Prophet. Second, to understand the background of the descent of the Qur'an called *Asbabun nuzul*, and third, there is an earlier hadith that contains treatises on how people understood the commands and statements of the Qur'an when it was first revealed. Time to reveal After understanding the three, it is time to understand the meaning of the Qur'an based on the evidence of previous interpretations and the nature of recent developments.

Rahman acknowledged that the socio-historical approach is: Understanding the above revelation raises an important theological question, namely the question of the permanence of God's Word and Law. According to his words, the eternal existence of God's Word is acceptable. Regarding the existence of written law, in relation to the social system, God's law is defined separately from the moral and legal systems. It is impossible to understand all aspects using binary theory. This concept can only be used if the text is found in the Qur'an or Sunnah and the social and historical context is known. On the other hand, this concept cannot be used if the background is unknown, only the text is visible, or the text is not visible at all. This is reinforced by his view that Rahman himself said that the ability to understand the Qur'an with the dual movement method is a true form of *qiyā*. As is known, *qiyā* can be carried out if the new legal case is in accordance with the published *nash*.

### **Biography Sahiran Siamsuddin**

Sahiron Syamsudin, who was born in Cirebon on August 11, 1968, is known as a scholar from the area who has given birth to several other scholars. Currently, he lives in Krapyak Kulon Rt. 07 Number At the address 212, Panggungharjo, Sewon, Bantul Yogyakarta, we established the Baitul Hikmah Islamic Boarding School.<sup>9</sup> He previously obtained his pesantren education background in

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<sup>7</sup> Yunus, Syahputra, and Sya'roni, "Getting to Know Manhaj Tafsir Fazrul Rahman."

<sup>8</sup> Farida, *Contemporary Qur'anic Thoughts and Methods of Interpretation*.

<sup>9</sup> Sahiron Syamsuddin, "Interpretation Methods with the Ma'na--Maghza Approach," 2017, 51–58.

several locations, including at the Raudlatu al-Talibin Babakan Ciwaringin Cirebon Islamic Boarding School from 1981 to 1987, along with the formal secondary education he underwent at MTs Negeri Babakan Ciwaringin (1981-1984) and MAN Babakan Ciwaringin (1984-1987).

Education at the university level began at IAIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta with a focus on the Islamic law department, and lasted from 1987 to 1993. His education and ministry continue to this day in the field of Islamic studies with more emphasis on the exegesis of the holy book of the Qur'an. He underwent second-level studies at McGill Canada, and managed to obtain a Master of Arts degree (1998) with the writing of a thesis entitled Analysis of Bint al-Shati's method of interpreting the Qur'an. The doctoral degree at Bamberg University was obtained in the period 2001-2006, while the postdoctoral degree at the University of Frankfurt, Germany was completed in July 2010.<sup>10</sup> After returning to Indonesia, he immediately became involved in academic activities at several universities and central institutions for the study of the Quran. In the division of responsibilities, he has served as rector at UNSIQ Wonosobo and STIQ An-Nur Ngrukem. Currently, Sahiron serves as a professor and serves as Vice Chancellor at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta.

### Metodologi Penafsiran Ma'na Maghza

The *Ma'na maghza* is a relatively new way of interpreting the text of the Qur'an (Habibi, 2019, 110) and is also part of the object of interpretation of meaning that falls under the category of hermeneutics (Robikah, 2020, 45). The term ma'na--maghza consists of three words: Arabic ma'na (meaning) and maghza (significance), and Latin (with) (Parninsih & Alwi HS, 2020, 105). The purpose of this approach is to find meanings that apply to the current context by referring to their meanings (Fadilah, 2019, 12). Indeed, Setiawan found that the method of interpretation of which magza affects the deconstruction of Islamic law contained in the Qur'an and affects the epistemological structure of Islam (Setiawan, 2016b, 220). In short, the theory of which kam magza is a theory of interpretation that brings together the reading of literal meaning (*al-ma'na al-asli*) with the main message (*al-magza*) (Syachrofi, 2018, 236).

The hermeneutic approach of ma'na--maghza is the latest theory in the discussion of Indonesian Muslim scholars. This theory was born from the elaboration of several previous hermeneutic concepts and theories, with an emphasis on the literal meaning relationship of the text. The ma'na--maghza approach is a method used to explore and reconstruct the meaning and main message of history. This method aims to find meaning (ma'na) and main message/significance (maghza) that may have been intended by the author of the text or understood by a historical audience. Furthermore, this method also develops the significance of the text so that it can be applied in the context of the present and the present. Therefore, there are three main aspects that an interpreter must strive for, namely (1) meaning related to history (*al-ma'na al-tarikhi*), (2) the importance of historical phenomena (*al-maghza al-tarikhi*), and (3) the importance of dynamic phenomena (*al-maghza al-mutabarrik*) in the context of interpreting the text of the Qur'an.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Mustahidin Malula, "Ma'na maghza as a method in the contextualization of musykil hadith (An analysis of the thought and application of Sahiron Syamsuddin's Hermeneutics)," *Citra Sains* XV (2019): 29–38.

<sup>11</sup> Sahiron Syamsuddin, *Hermeneutics and Development of Ulumul Qur'an* (Yogyakarta: Pesantren Nawesea Press, 2017).

### Similarities of Double Movement and Ma'na Maghza Approaches

First, both use hermeneutic scientific studies. The use of this study method is a new trend in modern interpretation of the Qur'an. This branch of science exists to help interpret the text of the Qur'an to keep it up-to-date. It means a balance for the text, the poet (author) and the reader (audience). The presence of this scholar in the discussion of the interpretation of the Qur'an is still the focus of a major debate to this day. There are three possible answers to the application of this doctrine to the interpretation of the Qur'an. The first response is to accept it completely. The argument is that methodological proposals, such as interpretive works created in the classical era, are considered no longer able to answer contemporary problems. The main reason for the methodological anticipation and interpretation is the many crises, irregularities, and limitations in certain schools.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, a fresh breeze is needed through hermeneutics, so that the text does not die and the spirit of the text itself is maintained.

The second response is to reject it entirely. His counterarguments revolve around classical methodologies that are much more effective than hermeneutics. Additionally, hermeneutics was originally used to interpret the Bible, which is fundamentally different from the Qur'an in terms of its nature, history, and authenticity.<sup>13</sup> The third response received part of the concept. His argument revolves around hermeneutics similar to Tawil in classical Islamic disciplines. In addition, there are many species in this discipline. So not all hermeneutics is a wrong discipline. The important thing during this use is to help clarify the words of Allah SWT. It doesn't matter in the Qur'an.

Second, similarity in terms of methodology. Simply put, both proposals revolve around two main components. The first component, these two proposals, requires going as deeply as possible into the horizon of the text (the Qur'an) and in accordance with the grammar of the language and the historicity of the text itself (the setting of the place and the reason for its disclosure).<sup>14</sup> The goal is to be able to comprehensively see the message/meaning in the text (reading the ratio with Fazlur Rahman and maghza Sahiron Syamsuddin). The second component after entering the horizon of the text is to extract the message/meaning contained in the text and apply it to contemporary reality to respond to social problems.

### The Difference Between the Double Movement and Ma'na Maghza Approaches

In addition to some similarities, the two proposals also have some differences that can at least be known through these works. First, meaning. In this double movement, as in Sahiron Syamsuddin's notes, there is something that can be said to be forgotten by Fazlur Rahman, namely the importance of its own explanation. In simple terms, meaning is the main message of a text, which in this case is the Qur'an. In this case, Sahiron Syamsuddin questioned the meaning of Fazlur Rahman as understood in the time of the Prophet. or if the text is reinterpreted.

It is important to distinguish between the explanation of this form of meaning, which also explains that literal meaning has the characteristics of monotheism, singularity, objectivity, and static-historical. At the same time, the meaning of the meaning of the text is dynamic, plural,

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<sup>12</sup> Sudianto, "Contemporary Interpretation Methods."

<sup>13</sup> Muhammad Labib Syauqi, "Hermeneutics of Fazlur Rahman's Double Movement and Its Significance to the Contextual Interpretation of the Qur'an," *Journal of Ushuluddin Studies and Philosophy* 18, no. 2 (2022): 189–215.

<sup>14</sup> Syauqi.

subjective – sometimes intersubjective and historical-dynamic.<sup>15</sup> Second, Fazlur Rahman uses the meaning obtained in the ratio of feet only as a foundation; it is no longer considered the core message of the Quran. On the other hand, Sahiron Syamsuddin believes that literal and historical meanings are important things to pay attention to.<sup>16</sup> Third, is the goal. In this regard, we see that the twin movements of Fazlur Rahman are only directed at the interpretation of the Qur'an in the field of legal verses (verses related to law).<sup>17</sup> At the same time, Fazlur Rahman uses synthetic and chronological methods in other matters such as divinity. While Ma'na Maghza has the opposite purpose. It can be used in all verses of the Qur'an except al-letter Al-Muqatta'a.

### Analysis of Causes of Similarities and Differences

*Ma'na Maghza* is the result of several combinations of the thoughts of previous modern commentators. In his writing, Sahiron said that such an approach was indeed the simplification and development of the ideas of Fazlur Rahman, Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd and Muhammad al-Talbi. The *Ma'na Maghza* approach is an approach in which a person researches or reconstructs the main historical goals and messages, namely the meaning (*ma'na*) and the main message/importance (*maghza*) that the author of the text or the reader of history may mean to understand it and then develop the meaning of the text in the current context.<sup>18</sup> Together there are three important things that the interpreter must pay attention to, namely (1) historical meaning (*al-ma'na al-tarikhi*), (2) historical phenomenal meaning (*al-maghza al-tarikhi*) and (3) dynamic phenomenal meaning (*al-maghza al-mutaharrrik*) for the context in which the Qur'anic text is interpreted.<sup>19</sup>

To answer some criticisms of Rahman's goal hermeneutic theory conveyed by Ibrahim, including Moosa and Wael B. Hallaq, that the theory of dual motion does not provide detailed steps to determine the ideal moral meaning or its intention to be contextualized. Sahiron Syamsuddin prepared the steps that can be followed in the application of the *Ma'na Maghza* theory. The *Ma'na Maghza* theory clearly accommodates the concept of dual movements proposed by Rahman.<sup>20</sup> In this theory, a mufassir must pay attention to the ratio legis or *maghza* of a verse. To find this, the steps in this theory use the device of the Ulūmul Qur'ān, which Rahman himself did not elaborate.

### Conclusion

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that the double movement theory is an interpretation method that contains 2 (two) movements, the first movement departs from the current situation to the situation when the Qur'an is revealed and the second movement goes back again, namely from the situation of the Qur'an time is revealed to the present, which will presuppose the progressivity of revelation. Meanwhile, ma'na--maghza is a method used to

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<sup>15</sup> Syauqi.

<sup>16</sup> Syauqi.

<sup>17</sup> Nursyifa et al., "Criticism of Fazlur Rahman's Al-Qur'an Hermeneutics."

<sup>18</sup> Umi Wasilatul Firdausiyah, "Urgensi Ma'na-Cum-Maghza Di Era Kontemporer: Studi Penafsiran Sahiron Syamsuddin Atas Q 5: 51," *Contemporary Qur'an* 1, no. 1 (2021).

<sup>19</sup> Sahiron Syamsuddin, *Hermeneutics and the Development of the Qur'an*.

<sup>20</sup> Syauqi, "Hermeneutics of Fazlur Rahman's Double Movement and Its Significance to the Contextual Interpretation of the Qur'an."

excavate and reconstruct the meaning and main message of history. This method aims to find meaning (ma'na) and main message/significance (maghza) that may have been intended by the author of the text or understood by a historical audience. Furthermore, this method also develops the significance of the text so that it can be applied in the context of the present and the present. Ma'na Maghza is the result of several combinations of thoughts of previous modern commentators, one of which is Fazlur Rahman. However, the theory produced by Sahiron Syamsuddin is more complex.

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