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Exploring the Farahi School's Exegetical Methodology: A Critical Analysis and Theological Implications

Over the past century, a novel school of Islamic scholarship, commonly referred to as the Farahi school of thought, has emerged and evolved. This intellectual tradition can be traced to Hamiduddin Farahi (d. 1930) and his disciple Amin Ahsan Islahi (d. 1997), subsequently developed by their student Javed Ahmad Ghamidi (b. 1952). Extant research on this school of thought has been notably limited in scope, predominantly focusing on divergences in conclusions rather than comprehensively examining the underlying methodology. The sole methodological aspect that has received substantial scholarly attention is their theory of Qur'anic coherence. While this concept is indeed fundamental to their approach, their methodology encompasses a broader range of nuanced features that extend their exegetical framework beyond merely perceiving the Qur'an as a coherent text.

This paper presents the findings of a comprehensive analysis of the methodologies employed by scholars of the Farahi school in deriving Islamic rules and concepts, with particular emphasis on their approach to Qur'anic exegesis. Following a concise historical overview and a brief exposition of their theory of Qur'anic coherence, the paper presents and critically evaluates several distinctive or instrumental features of the Farahi school's methodology. To elucidate the practical application of these features in exegetical analysis, relevant examples from their scholarly writings and interviews are incorporated.

The objective of this paper extends beyond merely introducing a school of thought in Qur'anic exegesis; it seeks to offer a rigorous critical discussion of the employed methodology, drawing comparisons where appropriate with other exegetical methodologies prevalent among Shia and Sunni scholars. The discussion further explores the exegetical and theological implications of the Farahi school of thought. This exploration encompasses not only their officially articulated positions but also potential interpretations and theological views that may lend support to some modern perspectives on Islam and religion, including those that scholars within this school do not even remotely endorse or acknowledge.



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Dr Farhad Shafti holds a PhD in Islamic Studies from the School of Divinity at the University of Edinburgh and has completed intermediate-level seminary studies in Tehran. His doctoral research focused on contemporary intra-religious approaches to the Qur'an, particularly the works of Hamiduddin Farahi, Amin Ahsan Islahi, and their students, with an emphasis on Qur'anic coherence and interpreting the Qur'an through the Qur'an itself.

His English writings are featured on the website 'Exploring Islam', including the article "*The True Meaning of Universality of the Qur'an*," where he presents a Qur'anic argument for religious pluralism. His Persian writings and lectures—available online, in magazines, and via his Telegram channel—primarily explore religious pluralism, spirituality, ethics, Qur'anic coherence, and the Qur'an's relevance today.

Recent Persian works include "*The Qur'an, Exclusivist or Pluralist*," "*A Simple and Difficult Question about Religion and Spirituality*," and "*Bringing Spring to the Fall of Spirituality*." His latest lectures and dialogues include "*Rethinking the Concept of The Divine*," "*Towards the Unpainted Image*," and the podcast series "*Not Far From the Tree*."

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