

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES OF SHAYKH  
AMINUL ISLAM IN DEALING WITH THE QUR'AN:  
AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF HIS TAFSIR "*TAFSIR-E-  
NURUL QUR'AN*"

BY

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## ABSTRACT

Shaykh Aminul Islam's magnum opus writing, "*Tafsir-e-Nurul Qur'an*" is regarded as one of the most comprehensive Qur'anic interpretation for Bengali speaking people. It is one of the most widely read *tafsir* in Bangladesh as Shaykh Aminul Islam directed his attention towards the message of the Qur'an based on the contemporary issues and the different perceptions of the people. The unique characteristics of this *tafsir* is based on *Tafsir al-Mawdu'i* or thematic interpretation of the Qur'an. The main purpose of this study is to expose the personality of Shaykh Aminul Islam to the readers, to present his monumental *tafsir* of the Qur'an and evaluate its fundamental features. The research adopted textual, descriptive and critical analysis to present the scenario of the *tafsir* literatures in Bangladesh, evaluate the stand of Shaykh Aminul Islam in the existing literatures. The study objectively evaluates the position of *Tafsir-e-Nurul Qur'an* in the context of both traditional and modern *tafsir*. This research appreciates, acknowledges and sometimes critically examines the viewpoints of Shaykh Aminul Islam in his *tafsir*. The research revolves around Shaykh Aminul Islam's *tafsir*, his writings on various issues, traditional and modern *tafsir* and the fundamental sources of Islam. The study reached some conclusions that deserve attention. Shaykh Aminul Islam's writings played important role in shaping the character and values of youths in Bangladesh. He followed a thematic approach in explaining the Qur'an. His interpretation remained objective without being biased for any sect or group. He followed a traditional cum rational approach in his interpretation. His inclination towards *sufi's* trend is also noticeable so much that sometimes he accepts their views without sound judgment. However, Shaykh Aminul Islam's overall contributions to the *tafsir* and literature in Bengali are truly remarkable.

## خلاصة البحث

يعتبر "تفسير نور القرآن" للشيخ محمد أمين الإسلام من أفضل التفاسير للقرآن الكريم للناطقين باللغة البنغالية. وهو تفسير شامل ومتوازن في دراسة القرآن. إن هذا التفسير من أكثر التفاسير تداولاً على نطاق واسع في بنغلاديش لأن الشيخ أمين الإسلام وجّه اهتمامه إلى رسالة القرآن على أساس القضايا المعاصرة والمفاهيم المختلفة للشعب. إن السمة الفريدة لهذا التفسير تستند إلى التفسير الموضوعي للقرآن. والهدف الرئيسي من هذه الدراسة هو الكشف عن شخصية الشيخ أمين الإسلام للقراء في جميع أنحاء العالم، وتقديم تفسيره الكبير للقرآن الكريم وتقييم ميزاته الأساسية. اعتمد البحث التحليل النصي والوصفي والنقدي لعرض مواقف المفسرين البنغلاديشيين في مؤلفاتهم، وتقييم منزلة الشيخ أمين الإسلام من بينهم في تفسيره. تقيّم الدراسة موضوعياً موقف تفسير نور القرآن في سياق التفسير التقليدي والحديث. إن هذا البحث يقدر ويقرّ ويقيم أحياناً وجهات نظر أمين الإسلام في تفسيره. يدور البحث حول تفسير أمين الإسلام، وكتابه في مختلف القضايا، والتفسير التقليدي والحديث، والمصادر الأساسية للإسلام. توصلت الدراسة إلى بعض النتائج الهامة كالاتي: رسمت كتابات أمين الإسلام دوراً مهماً في تشكيل شخصية وقيم الشباب في بنغلاديش. اتبع نهجاً موضوعياً في تفسير القرآن. ظل تفسيره موضوعياً دون أن يكون متحيزاً لأي طائفة أو جماعة. لقد اتبع نهجاً عقلائياً تقليدياً في تفسيره. إن ميله إلى الاتجاه الصوفي ملحوظ أيضاً لدرجة أنه يقبل أحياناً آرائهم دون أوجه وآراء سليمة. ومع ذلك، فإن مساهمات الشيخ أمين الإسلام الشاملة في آداب التفسير باللغة البنغالية رائعة بلا ريب.

## **APPROVAL PAGE**

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## DECLARATION

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AMINUL ISLAM IN DEALING WITH THE QUR'AN:  
AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF  
HIS TAFSIR “*TAFSIR-E-NURUL QUR'AN*”**

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*This thesis is dedicated to my beloved late parents for laying the foundations of  
what I turned out to be in life.*

*O Allah! Forgive them and let them get shelter in Your Rahmah and Paradise*

*Ameen Ya Arhamar-Rahimin.....*

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## TRANSLITERATION TABLE

b = ب	z = ز	f = ف
t = ت	s = س	q = ق
th = ث	sh = ش	k = ك
j = ج	Î = ص	l = ل
Í = ح	Ì = ض	m = م
kh = خ	Ï = ط	n = ن
d = د	ẓ = ظ	w = و
dh = ذ	‘ = ع	h = هـ
r = ر	gh = غ	y = ي

Short:            a = ' ;      I = , ;      u = '

Long:            ā = ا ;      ī = ي ;      ū = و

Diphthong: ay = اي ; aw = او

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Islam is a universal religion that covers all aspects of human life. Allah (SWT) revealed the glorious Qur'an as the ultimate Book of guidance and light for humankind. It provides a comprehensive message for humanity and emphasizes that the main purpose of human life is to seek the pleasure of Allah (SWT) through devotion and dedication for His religious causes. The Qur'an invites mankind to understand, learn its messages properly and apply them in their lives. The message of holy Qur'an can only be grasped by deep reflection of the verses of the Qur'an. For this cause, attempts on interpretation had led to the emergence of numerous exegetical works in Arabic and other languages.

Shaykh Aminul Islam (writer of *Tafsir-e-Nurul Qur'an*) felt a dire need for rendering his effort to write an easy tafsir to guide the common people towards understanding the Qur'an particularly in Bengali Language. He was also well-known among the Muslims and non-Muslims by his noble character, attitude, behavior throughout Bangladesh as a Mufassir al- Qur'an. Another of his outstanding contribution was in delivering his *Tafsir* during various mass-gatherings which helped the people to change their attitude to a great extent, and encourage them to study the Qur'an not for mere blessings, but also to understand it better in implementing it in their own socio-political life.<sup>1</sup> His tafsir provided a balanced

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<sup>1</sup> Mahmudul Hasan, 273-309. Mahmudul Hasan mentioned in his book the statement of Mawlana Mufti Noor Uddin that "Mawlana Mufti Noor Uddin who was an Imam of Baitul Mukarram National Masjid and he summarized the attitude and character of Shaykh Aminul Islam that when Noor Uddin was

approach between tradition and reason by attempting to convince the readers through sound reasoning. It manages to dispel any doubts and confusions that might arise in the minds of modern educated readers. His Qur'anic commentaries are impactful and understandable for various types of people, whether educated or non-educated. Therefore, this tafsir can be considered as a *Tafsir Haraki* (Dynamic Tafsir) <sup>2</sup>, *Ijtimai* (Social) <sup>3</sup> and *Islahi* (reforming) as it combined modern thinking with heritage Tafsir.

Shaykh Aminul Islam (1932-2007)<sup>4</sup> was one of the most influential and significant reformists in Bangladesh. He had spent much of his life trying to cause positive impacts in transforming the life and character of his fellow Muslims in Bangladesh into an Islamic way of life by spreading Islam, teaching the Qur'an, delivering Islamic sermons, establishing Islamic institutions<sup>5</sup> and writing articles as well as books. In addition, he was not a member of any political or Islamic

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delivering his Islamic sermon in masjid on 26-01-1988 and there he mentioned that Shaykh Aminul Islam called the people to the straight path particularly to read the Qur'an, to understand it and to implement its teachings in their life. Mufti Noor Uddin also mentioned some Shaykh Aminul Islam's Islamic mass gatherings that wherein how the people have been changing their lifestyle and attitudes day by day by influencing his Islamic lectures. Mufti Noor Uddin mentioned some lectures of Shaykh which have been delivered on different days such as 28-02-1989 (In the field of Hafezia Madrasah, Manikganj, 22-08-1993 (Shantinagar Aminbag Masjid, Dhaka), 01-09-1989 (Lalbag Shahi Masjid, Dhaka), 06-06-1991 (Kalutula Masjid, Banglabazar, Dhaka), 22-09-1991 (Eastern Housing Complex, Dhaka) and so forth."

<sup>2</sup> School of *Tafsir Haraki* is one of the systematic Quranic interpretation processes called "Madrasah al-Tafsir al-Haraki" that many scholars have moved towards renewal (tajdid) in their interpretation of the Quran at the end of the twentieth century. They directed their attention towards the message of the Quran and became more concerned about contemporary issues as well as the perceptions of the diverse groups of readers. Similarly, Shaykh Aminul Islam has followed the systematic Qur'anic interpretation and concerned about contemporary issues as well as the perceptions of the diverse group of readers.

<sup>3</sup> Shaykh Aminul Islam discussed in his tafsir about social aspect of the Muslim community perspective of Bangladesh such as Allah enjoins the believers to amicably reconcile their mutual differences and conflicts and forbids them from falling into disputes with one another, and warns them if they do not do so they will become weak as a community and their strength will be lost. وَأَصْلِحُوا ذَاتَ بَيْنِكُمْ [Qur'an, 8: 1] "And reconcile your mutual differences." وَلَا تَنَازَعُوا فَتَفْشَلُوا وَتَذْهَبَ رِيحُكُمْ [Qur'an, 8, 46] "And dispute not with one another, then you will lose courage by getting demoralized and your strength." [Tafsir-e-Nurul Qur'an, 9/ 258-259]

<sup>4</sup> Shaykh Aminul Islam was born in 1932 AD and died in 2007 in the District of Comilla, Baghmara. He was a great commentator of Bangladesh and writer of *Tafsir-e-Nurul Qur'an* among the famous and popular commentators in Bangladesh.

<sup>5</sup> Aminbag Masjid, Shantinagar (1993); Basona Hafezia Madrasah, Manikganj (1988); Nobabbari Islamia Madrasah O Hifz Khana (1985); Abdul Hadi Lane Masjid, Dhaka (1976); Bagmara Jame' Masjid (1978); Eastern Housing Complex Masjid (1991); Lalbag Jame'a Qurr'ania Arabia Madrasah (1987) and so forth.

movements. Indeed it is true that, he dedicated his life in studying the Qur'an and spread its teachings to the public.

Shaykh Aminul Islam's major contribution is presenting Islam to the general masses and young generation in authentic and true form. He addressed them through his writings as well as lectures and sermons that he delivered to thousands of people during mass gatherings. His motivational speeches and lectures had certainly impacted in the minds and hearts of people as he used to strongly believe and practise. He addressed their minds, hearts and souls at the same time. Throughout Ramadan, the mass media of Bangladesh would air his lectures and sermons as motivations to the fellow Muslims. He was able to present Islam as a complete code of life which guided people in different aspects of life. His core lessons lie within having a balanced and pure life in this world that would guarantee success in both Here and the Hereafter.<sup>6</sup> His main focus was spreading the messages of the Qur'an. He was inspired to start writing a Tafsir by his mass gatherings and lessons where he addressed thousands of people who listened to him eagerly. He dedicated his time and efforts in writing down the meaning and plain explanation of the Qur'an. He began writing *Tafsir-e-Nurul Qur'an* in 1958, partially published it in 1966, and managed to finish it in 1980.<sup>7</sup> His tafsir was published in 1984. This was indeed a first attempt writing tafsir with a full volume in Bengali, which is according to his true and exact statement, no one did so far.<sup>8</sup> The first part of his tafsir, *Tafsir-e-Nurul Qur'an*, was published in the monthly magazine, "Tarikh e Islam" (History of Islam), in 1987. His tafsir was well-received

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<sup>6</sup> Mohammad Mahmudul Hasan, *Mohammad Aminul Islam - Jibon o sadhona. (Mohammad Aminul Islam: Life and Struggle)*, (Dhaka: An-Nur publication, 2003), 19.

<sup>7</sup> Mahmudul Hasan, 62-64.

<sup>8</sup> Shaykh Aminul Islam, *Tafsir-e-Nurul Qur'an*, (Dhaka: Al-Balagh Publication), (Part: 30, 1984), 21.



by the readers and gradually managed to acquire more publications in subsequent issues.<sup>9</sup>

*Tafsir-e-Nurul Qur'an* (1984)<sup>10</sup> is Shaykh Aminul Islam's greatest achievement throughout his career. In his tafsir, he mostly remained traditional in nature, rational in approach and motivational in addressing issues. He often narrated stories related to Qur'anic *ayat*, explained links and relations of one *ayat* and *surah* with the other *ayat* and *surah*. He attempted to abstain from Isra'iliyyat. However, he failed to do so as can be seen in the various stories in his Tafsir . He encouraged people to read the Qur'an, understand its meaning and apply in their daily lives.<sup>11</sup> As the *Tafsir-e-Nurul Qur'an* is the first comprehensive Tafsir of the Qur'an in Bengali, it is necessary to conduct scholarly studies on his life and thought, and his famous tafsir. Studies need to be done in order to explore its methodology as well as his ideas on the Qur'an. This is to critically analyze whether or not his methodology and understanding of the Qur'an is in agreement with the Shari'ah.

## 1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The Holy Qurán was revealed for all mankind. They are commanded to follow its guidance irrespective of their cultural and linguistic background throughout the world. People in Bangladesh approach the guidance of the Holy Qurán through the translations and *tafsirs* (interpretations and commentaries) in Bengali language. Although there are a number of translations of the Holy Qurán and its *tafsir* in Bengali, there is only one comprehensive *tafsir* entitled *Tafsir-e-Nurul Qur'an*,

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<sup>9</sup> Mahmudul Hasan, 48-49.

<sup>10</sup> *Tafsir-e-Nurul Qur'an* is a comprehensive tafsir of the Qur'an by Shaykh Aminul Islam in Bengali Language. It has been published in 1984 by Al-Balagh Publication, Dhaka.

<sup>11</sup> Mahmudul Hasan, 261-272. (Shaykh Aminul Islam called the people to the straight path particularly to read the Qur'an, to understand it and to implement its teachings in their life. Mahmudul Hasan stated in details in his book with some Qur'anic verses which Shaykh Aminul Islam has used.

written by Shaykh Aminul Islam which significantly impacted the Muslim society in Bangladesh. Shaykh Aminul Islam's personality played major roles in popularizing his *Tafsir*; his popularity as a famous religious scholar made his tafsir acceptable to the public. It is a comprehensive tafsir that deserves many academic researches. However, it was found that no academic research was done on this tafsir except some books on his life and thoughts as well as articles on his contributions. His tafsir deserves to be widely known not only within the Bangladeshi society but also globally. Bangladeshi Muslims are deeply attached with the Qur'an and its commentaries including the tafsir of Shaykh Aminul Islam. His tafsir includes some positive and negative issues, which deserves thorough academic writings.

Hence, the researcher decided to have a deeper study of this widely read tafsir for all Bengali speaking people throughout the globe, and present its distinctive unique features and some critical issues so that a balanced approach maybe maintained towards this monumental *tafsir* work.

### **1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This research aims to answer the following questions:

1. Who was Shaykh Aminul Islam and what are his contributions?
2. What is the socio-political milieu of society that inspired him to write *Tafsir-e-Nurul Qur'an*?
3. What are the methodologies adopted by Shaykh Aminul Islam in his Tafsir?
4. What are the major features of his Tafsir that managed to draw the attention of the readers?

5. What are the positive and negative aspects of his *tafsir*?

#### **1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The study would aspire to reach the following objectives:

1. To introduce the life of Shaykh Aminul Islam and his outstanding contributions.
2. To explore the socio-political milieu of society that inspired him to write his monumental tafsir.
3. To analyze his methodologies adopted in his magnum opus tafsir, *Tafsir-e-Nurul Qur'an*.
4. To explore the major features in his tafsir.
5. To evaluate the positive and negative aspects of his tafsir.

#### **1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The main objective of this research is to present Shaykh Aminul Islam and his magnum opus book, *Tafsir-e-Nurul Qur'an*, to the world. The research also aims to explore underlying features in this tafsir, which made it popular among the people in Bangladesh. Hence, Shaykh Aminul Islam will be duly recognized throughout the world. Its importance lies in the significance of the Qur'anic guidance for mankind.

The study will explore some critical approaches in his tafsir which demand to be clarified and will help many in learning the methods and features adopted in Shaykh Aminul Islam's tafsir. It hopes to encourage the Muslims to better understand the Qur'an which is an ultimate source of inspiration for mankind. This research, according to my knowledge, is the first research on the methodology of tafsir, *Tafsir-e-Nurul Qur'an*. Nobody has proceeded and nothing produced yet.

## **1.6 SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

This research will primarily focus on the writings of Shaykh Aminul Islam and his disciples' writings in order to explore his life, struggle, mission and contributions for the development of knowledge. It will specifically analyze his Tafsir in order to explore his methods applied in writing the Tafsir. Hence, this research aims to objectively analyze his approaches in writing and delivering the commentary of the Qur'an.

## **1.7 METHODS AND PROCEDURES**

This study is based on Library research. Hence, it is qualitative in nature. It depends on textual analysis and criticism. Major approaches employed in this research include:

1. Textual and Descriptive Approach: It is employed to reveal and describe the tafsir literatures in Bangladesh and the position of Aminul Islam therein.
2. Analytical Approach: This approach is used to analyze a collection of materials on tafsir of Shaykh Aminul Islam and compare it with other available tafasir in Bangladesh.
3. Critical and Evaluative Approach: This is adopted to evaluate the tafsir literatures in Bangladesh and critically evaluate the views and ideas of Shaykh Aminul Islam in the commentary of the Qur'an.

## **1.8 LITERATURE REVIEW**

As a prominent Islamic scholar in Bangladesh, there are numerous studies done on Shaykh Aminul Islam, particularly on his biography, thoughts, ideas and

contributions. However, it was found that no research had been done on his tafsir, *Tafsir-e- Nurul Qur'an*. It indeed is a great contribution of Shaykh in the field of tafsir that deserves serious studies. Hence, some of the literatures available on his contribution, life, thought and Qur'anic commentary are the following:

**Kicho Smriti Kicho Kotha<sup>12</sup> [Some memoirs, some words]**

Mawlana Mohammad Abdul Halim (Son in Law of Shaykh Aminul Islam) wrote and published it in Bangladesh on 9th May 2013. This book is a reflection of his personal encounter with Shaykh Aminul Islam, his father-in-law. He wrote the biography of Shaykh which highlighted his contributions in Bangladesh and abroad. His travels to foreign lands for academic and missionary purposes earned him name, fame and also cultural benefit as well as linguistic proficiency. Abdul Halim also highlighted the historical background of the writing process of *Tafsir-e-Nurul Qur'an*. This indeed will help me in obtaining some first-hand information from person of his family (son-in-law); but my focus is on his Tafsir and its methodology, which he rarely touched. Note: This is not how a literature review should be written. Please read some examples online and read on how literature review should be written.

**Bikkhato 100 Ulama-Mashayekher Chattro Jibon<sup>13</sup> [Student life of 100 most prominent scholars of Islam]**

Mufti Mazharul Islam Osman Qasemi wrote this book in March 2009. He wrote this book to introduce the 100 most popular Muslim scholars before the readers as religious idle, who have immensely contributed for the development of Islam and its

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<sup>12</sup> Mohammad Abdul Halim, *Kicho Smriti Kicho Kotha (Some memoirs, some words)*, (Dhaka: An Noor Publications, 2013).

<sup>13</sup> Mufti Mazharul Islam Osman Kasemi, *Bikkhato 100 Ulama-Mashayekher Chattro Jibon (The student life of 100 famous Ulama-Mashayekh)*, (Dhaka: Bird Comprint and Publications, 2009).

heritage in Bangladesh and abroad. Some of the prominent scholars mentioned in the book includes: Imam Abu Hanifa, Imam Ghazali, Shayuthy, Ashraf Ali Thanawi, Shabbir Ahmad Osmani, Aminul Islam and so on. Mufti Mazhar included Shaykh Aminul Islam in his list of 100 most prominent scholars due to his remarkable contributions towards Islamic knowledge and Qur'anic commentary. It is also due to his dedication to the Qur'an and spreading Qur'anic teachings throughout the country made him earn this prestigious position among the prominent scholars of Islam. However, it is the personal view of Muft Mazhar, which will help the researcher in studying Aminul Islam's biography and his contributions.

#### **Ekjon Oshadharon Baba [An Exceptional Father]<sup>14</sup>**

Ayesha Mahjabeen, the daughter of Shaykh Aminul Islam, wrote this biography of her father in 2015. She presented her father as one of the most exceptional fathers in the globe who possessed unique qualities and characteristics that are quite uncommon with other fathers. This undoubtedly is a mark of her love towards her father. Though the book presents subjective image of the Shaykh, it provides some fresh and first-hand information about the personal and family life of Shaykh Aminul Islam. In her book, Ayesha exposed the attitudes and manners of her father, his dealings with family, children as well as friends and visitors. It is similar to her autobiography and personal encounters with her beloved loving father. This book will definitely help the researcher in his search about shaykh Aminul Islam's life, education, mission and contribution.

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<sup>14</sup> Ayesha Mehjabeen, *Ekjon Osadaron Baba (An Exceptional Father)*, (Dhaka; Gawsia Publications, 2015).

**Hazrat Mawlana Mohammad Aminul Islam: Jibon O Shadhona<sup>15</sup> [Mawlana Mohammad Aminul Islam: Life and Struggle]**

In his book, Mohammad Mahmudul Hasan focuses on Aminul Islam's biography depending on the articles, books, publications, works and social activities. The author stated in details the biography of Shaykh Aminul Islam, his life and struggle, primary education, research in Hadiths, founding of madrasahs, achievements, publications, writing tafsir, family life and his lectures in mass gathering in Bangladesh and abroad. This book illustrated in details of the life of Shaykh Amuinul Islam. This book will help the current study in its initial chapter dealing with Shaykh's biography and contributions. The prime focus of the study, which is on his Tafsir, is still not covered by any significant studies. There is a lack of research done on Shaykh Aminul Islam's thought, contributions and his Qur'anic treatise, *Tafsir-e-Nurul Qur'an*. As Abdul Halim puts it, 'There is no one who made any deep or thorough research on his methodology and criticized on his thoughts.'<sup>16</sup>

**Mumarasat al-Tafsir bi al-Lughah al-Bangaliyyah: al-Tarkiz 'ala Tafsir Nurul-Qur'an<sup>17</sup> [Writing Qur'anic Commentary in Bengali: Special reference to Tafsir Nurul Qur'an]**

Muhammad Abul Kalam Azad wrote this treatise and divided it into five chapters. Firstly, he wrote about the sciences of tafsir and its historical background. In the second chapter, he wrote on Qur'anic commentaries in Bengali, in which he included the names of 60 authors who contributed to the Qur'anic translations and

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<sup>15</sup> Mohammad Mahmudul Hasan, *Hazrat Mawlana Mohammad Aminul Islam: Jibon O Shadhona (Mawlana Mohammad Aminul Islam: Life and Struggle)*, (Dhaka: An-Noor Publications, 2003).

<sup>16</sup> Mawlana Mohammad Abdul Halim, *Kicho Smriti Kicho Kotha (Some memoirs, some words)*, (Dhaka: An-Noor Publications, 2013).

<sup>17</sup> Mohammad Abul Kalam Azad, *Mumarasat al-Tafsir bi al-Lughah al-Bangaliyyah: al-Tarkiz 'ala Tafsir Nurul-Qur'an (Writing Qur'anic Commentary in Bengali: Special reference to Tafsir Nurul Qur'an)*, (Dhaka: Dhaka University, 2013).

commentaries into Bengali. In the third chapter, he provided some details on a few Tafsir and translation works. In the fourth chapter, he explained about the life and contributions of Shaykh Aminul Islam. In the final chapter, he provided a brief introduction to the tafsir Nurul Qur'an followed by an overview of the contents of this tafsir without dealing in detail about the methodology of Shaykh in his work, which is the main focus of this dissertation.

As a prominent scholar in his field, Shykh Aminul Islam deserves his outstanding task tafsir, including many books written by himself to be studied more deeply, and his thoughts to be analyzed and scrutinized. Hence, this study would focus on his contributions and methodology adopted in his *tafsir*.