

**CHAPTER III**

**BIOGRAPHY AND PHENOMENAL WORKS OF ABDULLAH  
YUSUF ALI THE HOLY QUR'AN: TEXT, TRANSLATION  
AND COMMENTARY**

**A. The Life of Abdullah Yusuf Ali**

The Holly Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary is one of the monumental works of its century. This work was written by Abdullah Yusuf Ali, an Indian scholar. To know what and who Abdullah Yusuf Ali and his work can be described as follows:

1. Childhood to adulthood

Abdullah Yusuf Ali (1872-1953) was a cleric in the 20th century. Born in Surat, Bombay on April 4, 1872 in the textile city of Gujarat in West India where there is the Bohra Dawudi community. Bohra Dawudi is a Shia Islamic community engaged in religious and social fields, in Indonesia this community is located in Surabaya<sup>67</sup>. His father Yusuf Ali Allahbuksh or also known as Khan Bahadur Yusuf Ali was a member of the police force, while his mother died when he was a baby and he grew up without the love of a religious person, his attention to his son's education was great, which was first taught to Abdullah Yusuf Ali is reading the Qur'an. After being able to read the Al-Qur'an, as a sign of gratitude

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<sup>67</sup>Savira Novel Yamani, "Komunitas Jamaat Dawoodi Bohra: Studi Deskriptif Eksistensi Kelompok Religi Etnis India yang Tinggal di Surabaya," *Skripsi* (Surabaya: Fakultas Ilmu Sosial dan Politik Universitas Erlangga, 2011), 23.

he held a large-scale event. Through this event, his father wanted to instill in his son the importance and greatness of the Al-Qur'an. Abdullah Yusuf Ali died at the age of eighty-one on December 10, 1953 of a heart attack and he had no relatives or family to accompany him.

Children's education in the family certainly requires the help of parents, they are the first place for children to learn. Schools are equally important for children to shape human personalities, but education outside of school certainly cannot be underestimated. The environment outside of school and post-school has a greater and more natural influence. It can be said that the environment outside of school or post-school is a place for children to actualize the teachings they get at school. Education has a great influence on life and achievements. Education in schools will more or less determine a person's achievement and position in the future. And it seems Abdullah Yusuf Ali is aware of the importance of education.<sup>68</sup>Here Abdullah Yusuf Ali's father had plans to send him to school in Bombay.

Abdullah Yusuf Ali studied at Anjuman el-Islam (1881) when he was nine years old. After that he continued his education at Wilsoris School (1884-1887), Wilsoris School Bombay (1887-1891). Furthermore, Abdullah Yusuf Ali continued his education under the British government, he entered St. John University Cambridge law studies program. Abdullah Yusuf Ali greatly values his

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<sup>68</sup>Sulaiman Ibrahim, Telaah The Holy Qur-an Karya Abdullah Yusuf Ali Jurnal Hunafa vol 7 no 1 April 2010. 4.

time in learning so it is not surprising that it shaped his personality, character and thoughts. As a Cambridge student. He lived it with joy and sorrow. During these three years, he has made him a real student in the sense that during that time Abdullah Yusuf Ali has made an insatiable passion and desire to seek knowledge.

In addition to the religious education that his parents taught him since childhood, Abdullah Yusuf Ali also likes to study culture, including general philosophy and language, not only that Abdullah Yusuf Ali also mastered Greek and Ancient Greek Literature, but also Latin.

## 2. Career and Intellectual Activity

After studying at the university level, Abdullah Yusuf Ali traveled to major cities in Europe, and then lived in London. In the capital city of England, he lived long enough, he knew a lot and properly understood Western culture and philosophy. Abdullah Yusuf Ali was also elected a member of the Royal Society of Arts and the Royal Society by Literature.

In everyday life, Abdullah Yusuf Ali interacted a lot with other religious leaders, with cardinals and bishops<sup>69</sup>, and others to add insight into the life of religious people. Therefore, the opportunity to study various translations of their holy books is very good, so it can be said that Abdullah Yusuf Ali has memorized

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<sup>69</sup> A cardinal is a senior official in the Roman Catholic Church who is under the authority of the Pope and is appointed directly by the Pope as a member of the Council of Cardinals I. While the Bishop comes from the Arabic *Usqf* which is derived from the Greek *Episkopus* which means bishop of the church or it can be said that the bishop is the leader of the local church. See in Rufus Panjaitan "What is the Difference between Pope, Bishop and Cardinal, Have you ever read or watched the story of the Borgia family" in <https://id.quora.com/> accessed on December 30, 2021

a lot of them. In addition, the desire that never stops in studying and deepening the Al-Qur'an and everything related to it. Abdullah Yusuf Ali has spent a long time studying the Al-Qur'an and matters related to it, including studying the interpretation of the Al-Qur'an, both classical and modern, written in both Western and Eastern languages. What he has learned he understands well, besides that he already understands Arabic which will later become a provision for translating and interpreting the Al-Qur'an. Abdullah Yusuf Ali is also known as a person who loves literature, especially Persian literature and classical English literature.

On his return to India he settled in Lahore, where he was given the post of Dean of the Islamic College. Since then he started translating and interpreting the Al-Qur'an into English, namely *The Holy Qur'an, Text, Translation and Commentary* which later became his standard work. Abdullah Yusuf Ali's love for English things also influences his works, Abdullah Yusuf Ali is also known to have an interest in various fields of thought, from literature, law to education and religion. The following are the published works of Abdullah Yusuf Ali:

- 1) "Kehidupan Warga Negara di India" *Imperial and Asiatic Quarterly Review* (January-April 1906).
- 2) Orientalisme Goethe, *The Contemporary Review* (Agustus 1906).
- 3) *The Indian Mohammedans* (1907)
- 4) *Life and Labour of the People of India* (London: John Murray, 1907 then reprinted in Lahore in 1977).
- 5) *Mestrovic and Serbian Sculpture* (1916)

- 6) *Anglo Muhammadan Law*, oleh R.K Wilson and 5th edition by Absullah Yusuf Ali (Kalkutta: Thacker dan Spink, 1921).
- 7) *Muslim Education Ideals*, (Lahore: Muslim Outlook, 1923)
- 8) *The Making of India; a Brief History*, (London: Black, 1923)
- 9) *Islam as A World Force* (1926)
- 10) *India and Europe* (1926)
- 11) *The Fundamental of Islam*, diterbitkan dalam *Sufi Quarterly* (Jenewa, 1929).
- 12) *Personality of Muhammad*, (Pamphlet Islam Progresif, 1929).
- 13) *Religious Polity Of Islam*, (Pamphlet Islam Progresif, 1929).
- 14) *Medieval India* (1932)<sup>70</sup>
- 15) *The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary* (1934)
- 16) *Life and Literature* (1936)
- 17) *Religion and Social Equality* (1936)
- 18) *Islamic History its Scope and Content* (1936)
- 19) *The Message of Islam* (1940)

## **B. The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary**

One of Abdullah Yusuf Ali's best-known works is *The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary*. In the form of a book of translation and interpretation of the Qur'an in the 20th century. This work was first published in

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<sup>70</sup>Sulaiman Ibrahim, "Telaah The Holy Qur-an Karya Abdullah Yusuf Ali" *Jurnal Hunafa* Vol.7, No. 1, April 2010, 8.

India from 1934 to 1937 regularly. Abdullah Yusuf Ali tried to combine the West and the East in terms of personal, social and even religious life. A thought that is complicated and full of challenges he wants to embody in life, be it a thought or a personality (action).

### 1. Writing Background

Abdullah Yusuf Ali's remarks in his work, he said that although he had explored the Western world, the Western way of life and Western education and rarely touched or stepped into the East. He never left the legacy of the East, with many joys and sorrows in his life he believed in one thing, namely the Al-Qur'an. He believes in the Al-Qur'an as a support in living life.

The emotional trauma experienced by Abdullah Yusuf Ali due to problems with his wife, Teresa Shalders in 1911 and the hostility of children in 1920. During this situation, Abdullah Yusuf Ali was closer to the Al-Qur'an. The Qur'an is a medicine when you are hurt, a calm when you are restless. In addition, the desire that became his goal to write translations and interpretations in English, he did this as a form of devotion to the Al-Qur'an. And broadly speaking, that is the reason Abdullah Yusuf Ali wrote the book of commentaries. Abdullah Yusuf Ali wrote the interpretation of The Holly Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary.

### 2. Purpose of writing

Abdullah Yusuf Ali deliberately made the book of Tafsir Al-Qur'an: Text, Translation and Tafsir briefly but meaningfully, this is in accordance with

Abdullah Yusuf Ali's purpose in writing this book to make it easier for readers. to accept and understand.<sup>71</sup>

### 3. Systematics of Writing Books

The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary is written in English, this book is not only a translation but also has an interpretation. The translation carried out not only exchanged one word in the Qur'anic language with English, but Abdullah Yusuf Ali translated it using the tafsiriyah or meaningless translation method. In some cases, the verses of the Al-Qur'an can be translated into several words that are appropriate or are considered to represent the meaning. Abdullah Yusuf Ali's style in translating looks poetic, this is certainly influenced because he is a writer, the form or arrangement of lines or stanzas is like free poetry, while Abdullah Yusuf Ali's interpretation is in the form of footnotes or comments on verses has been translated<sup>72</sup>. Abdullah Yusuf Ali in interpreting the Al-Qur'an tries to avoid theological and grammatical debates of the Al-Qur'an.

Abdullah Yusuf Ali includes attachments if the interpretation of the Qur'anic verse requires further review or explanation. He wrote a commentary starting from Surah Al-Fatihah, Al-Baqarah to An-Nas according to the order of the manuscripts, the interpretation of The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and

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<sup>71</sup>Rizky Dimas Pratama, Penafsiran Abdullah Yusuf Ali Tentang Zulkarnain Dalam Kitab The Holy Qur'an : Text, Translationn And Commentary. *Undergraduate Thesis* Fakultas Ushuluddin dan Pemikiran Islam Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta...6

<sup>72</sup> Rizky Dimas Pratama, Abdullah Yusuf Ali's Interpretation of Zulkarnain in The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary. *Thesis* of the Faculty of Ushuluddin and Islamic Thought, State Islamic University of Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta..., 106

Commentary has a spiritual or Sufistic character. After presenting the main problem in general as an introduction, we will explain the actual verse or sura. If the sura is short, he will write a summary of the free poetry interpretation in one or two paragraphs as an introduction, and if the sura is long, he will summarize his interpretation in short paragraphs that adapt to a particular place.<sup>73</sup>

The references used by Abdullah Yusuf Ali during the writing of *The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation, and Commentary* include: *Tafsir al-Thabâri*, *Tafsir al-Kasyâf*, *Tafsir al-Kabîr*, *Anwar al-Tanzil*, *Tafsir Ibn Katsîr*, and *Tafsir al-Manâr*. Meanwhile, non-tafsir supporting references used are *Lisân al-Arab*, *al-Itqân fi Ulûm al-Qur'an*, *Encyclopedia of Islam*, and many more.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup>Misyka Nuri Fatimah, *Dimensi Sufistik Dalam The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary (Studi Analisis Terhadap Huruf Muqaththa'ah dan Ayat-ayat Kosmologi)*..., 155

<sup>74</sup>Fawaidur Ramdhani "Mengenal Abdullah Yusuf Ali dan Tafsir The Holy Qur'an" in <https://tafsiralquran.id/> on 12 Januari 2022.