

“Catching Lightning in a Bottle”

with Chair of the Department of Qur'anic Exegesis

Mawlana Kamil Zia Uddin

“The Tafsīr department is in a unique position in that it is constantly interacting with Divine speech which means it is constantly interacting with mu‘jizāt (miracles). And the mu‘jizah is at all levels, meaning that even in the ordinary, there is a flash of the extraordinary, whether it be in the way the words are recited, or how they are parsed and eventually understood.”

“Interacting with Divine speech means the possibility of interacting with Divine intent.

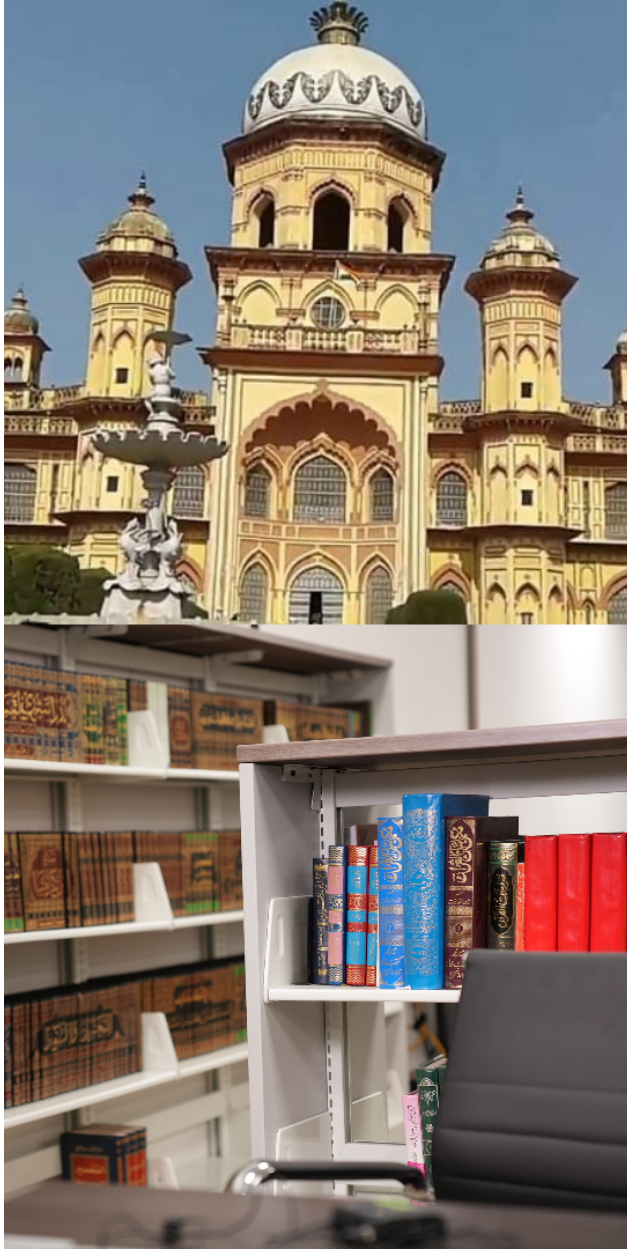
The miraculous meanings of the Qur’ān can be elusive and fleeting but the training and work done in the department is to provide permanence to those meanings. So even though the lightning may be captured in the bottle, the eyes still need to be trained to see lightning.”



Darul Qasim College's academic environment is one that nurtures and facilitates faculty research interests and the development of methodological tools that further scholarly inquiry. Thus, providing curricular and pedagogical space for instructors like Mawlana Kamil to develop courses and curriculums that are shaped by their own scholarly modes of inquiry. The use of Islamic manuscripts is a case in point. Critical inquiry and research in the area of tafsir studies rely on primary source documents that often involve the locating and deciphering of traditional manuscripts.



Mawlana Kamil works closely with manuscript texts that he acquires from different parts of the world. The process of acquiring manuscripts presents many opportunities for both faculty and students. It allows for research collaboration between the college and other institutions and scholars in the field. Students are also exposed to the rigorous research involved in locating, reading, and re-presenting content that has oftentimes been ignored by western academia.



Today's focus is on the recent acquisition of three manuscripts of Mullā Jīwan's (d. 1717) *al-Tafsīrāt al-Aḥmadiyya* from the Raza Library in Rampur.

Mawlana Kamil shares, "it was the first complete juristic exegesis written in the subcontinent." Its author was an Indian jurist and celebrated teacher of the Mughal Emperor Alamgir (d. 1707). "Given he was a teacher of a Mughal emperor, his writings potentially had the capability to practice and influence fiqh at the state level."

“Tafsīr literature has existed in written form in the Indian subcontinent since the 15th century.” However, this particular text has received very little attention and “is in great need of a taḥqīq (scholarly edit). The value of this work is in his representation of his primary sources, some of which we do not have direct access to today, and in his abridgement of those sources, coupled with his unique selection and re-presentation for his audience.”

The Tafsīr Projects Group that is participating in the taḥqīq (scholarly edit) of this text is made up of students in the advanced years of study. Mawlana

Kamil explains:

“They can join the group because they’re on top of their work and they have shown interest and capability to do research beyond their curriculum studies. And so I give them the opportunity to join the group in which they publish papers from the department. I usually add maybe one or two students a year, right now there’s about six or seven in the group.”

The Tafsīr Projects Group showcases the department's engagement in high level academic research, alongside offering opportunities for students to participate under the supervision of faculty members in conducting and observing scholarly inquiry. Mentorship in how to become a researcher in the field is a powerful teaching tool that not only builds confidence, but offers a hands-on approach to the study of Qur'ānic exegesis.





STAY TUNED
FOR PART 4
OF OUR RAMADAN
SERIES

The Anatomy of a Hadith

with Chair of
the Department
of Hadith Studies

Mawlana Bilal Ali Ansari