

## **Fazlur Rahman's Concept of Thought "Islam and Modernity"**

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### **Abstract**

Islamic education has an important position in internalizing religious values in society in a country. From here it is important that the development of Islamic education in maintaining the balance of physical and spiritual education. In its journey, Islamic education experienced a fairly rapid development. Many figures contributed their thoughts to the world of education, especially Islamic education. One of the most phenomenal figures in Islamic education and modernity is fazlur rahman. This research aims to explore the concept of educational thought fazlur rahman, especially about Islam and Modernity. Rahman's thoughts emphasize in his work entitled Ismal and Modernity, will absolutely require the synthesis of material in the teachings of the Qur'an. Without this effort, it will be able to result in the application of Qur'an verses separately and individually which can result in misdirection. According to fazlur rahman, to convert and recite the Qur'an, a study of historical aspects is needed by providing a presentation of problems in the present in the contest where the Qur'an is revealed.

Keywords: Fazlur Rahman, Islam, Modernity.

### **Introduction**

Education is one of the efforts carried out with the aim of humanizing humans. Education also occupies the most important position in all countries to educate the life of the nation and score superior generations. We can note that the back and forth as a nation is largely determined by the quality and development of education in it. One of the areas of education developed in various countries is Islamic education.

Islamic education occupies the main position to instill religious values in the community in a country. This is what makes Islamic education important to be developed to maintain a balance between physical and spiritual, individual and community, intellectual and emotional, as well as the world and the afterlife. Thus, a balance will be achieved in humans in social life. To achieve this goal, leaders, education experts, and policy makers strive to advance Islamic education, including previous philosophers.

One of the philosophers in Islamic education who played an active role in the advancement of Islamic education was Fazlur Rahman. Fazlur Rahman was a Muslim cleric who placed himself in the ranks of neomodernists, a philosopher who began his struggle in Islamic educational thought in contemporary times. His football began from the academic anxiety he experienced, this anxiety was even felt by many Muslims in his time, namely the closing of the ijthihad door. This has implications for stagnation in the world of Islamic education. Fazlur rahman was an outstanding intellectual among Muslims (Kurdi, 2010).

As one of the leaders of Islam reformers, Fazlur Rahman has an overview of the history of education. He also took part in seeing the failure of the use of the Qur'an and circumcision by some Muslims. Starting from here, criticism of the traditionalization of science in Islamic history he echoed with his neomodernity style of thought. According to Fazlur Rahman, the two sources of Islamic teachings are more likely to be read on the mufasir version only or textual. From here the Qur'an and sunah according to him failed to be placed as

one of the authentic sources in the development of practical or theoretical thinking for guidance in life (Mulkhan, 2000).

From the above view, Fazlur Rahman emphasized the importance of ethics quoted from the Qur'an and circumcision to serve as a foundation in developing thought and practice in education. He also participated in formatting the goals, strategies, methods, and curriculum of Islamic education that is up to date adjusting to the times. Fazlur Rahman's ability to combine old things (traditions) and forms in the present (modern) is what makes a bright spot of Fazlur Rahman's ability. This ability he has makes Fazlur Rahman quite easy in providing explanations related to the field of education. Fazlur Rahman also outlined the importance of intellectual jihad or it can be said also with intellectual effort, including the intellectual elements of both things, namely the past and the present. This can also be referred to as *ijtihad* which means trying to understand the meaning that existed in a text in the past, which has a rule, and changing the rule by expanding and limiting or modifying it in such a way that a new situation can be covered in it with a new solution (Rahman, 1992).

Based on the background that has been described above, this paper seeks to provide an overview of the figures of Fazlur Rahman from biography to the concept of Fazlur Rahman's thought about Islam and modernity, especially in the world of education.

## **Results and Discussion**

### ***Biography of Fazlur Rahman***

Fazlur Rahman is one of the Islamic thinkers who was born on September 21, 1919. Fazlur Rahman was born in Hazara, Hazara itself was an area that existed before the breakup of India. Hazaras are part of Pakistan. Fazlur Rahman was born and raised in a Hanafi family. From here the forerunner of Fazlur Rahman became a rationalist in thinking, although Fazlur Rahman guided all his thoughts to the Qur'an and sunnah.

Fazlur Rahman was born into a poor family, but had obedience to religious teachings. At the age of 10 years Fazlur Rahman already had an advantage in the Quran. Although he grew up in a traditionally minded family environment, Fazlur Rahman did not have a traditional opinion that generally rejected modern thought. In fact, his father also had the belief that Islam should be guided to modernity as a challenge and perfection. Fazlur Rahman's father is a graduate of India's top high school Darul Ulum Deoband. Although Fazlur Rahman did not teach there like his father, he has mastered the Dares Nijami curriculum which is the flagship curriculum at the institution because of private study with his father. This is what makes Fazlur Rahman's background complete in practicing traditional Islam with a focus on the study of kalam, hadith, fikih, tafsir, philosophy, and mantiq.

From studying these basic sciences, Fazlur Rahman continued his education to Punjab University in Lahore. Here Fazlur Rahman obtained an award and graduated with an MA degree. In 1946 Fazlur Rahman continued his education to Oxford University by preparing dissertation research on Ibn Sina psychology with a supervisor or under the supervision of Prof. Simon Van Den Berg and this is where Fazlur Rahman earned his Ph.D degree academically. Fazlur Rahman's research was a touch of criticism in the passage of An-Najj, belonging to a prominent Muslim philosopher in the 7th century. After graduating from Oxford University Fazlur Rahman began teaching Islamic philosophy and Persian at Durham University in Canada from 1950 to 1958. Fazlur Rahman then went on to become Associate Professor in Islamic Studies at the Institute of Islamic Studies McGill University Canada in Montreal. Fazlur Rahman served as Associate Professor of Philosophy.

In 1960, Fazlur Rahman returned to Pakistan. Four years later, in August 1964, he was appointed director of Islamic research, having previously served as a staff member at the institute. In addition, in 1964 he also gained the mandate as a member of the ideological advisory council in the Government of Pakistan. It was from here that Fazlur Rahman's efforts as a modern thinker met with strong opposition from traditional-fundamentalist scholars at the time.

Fazlur Rahman's controversial thoughts culminated in two chapters of his monumental work *Islam* (1966) which had been translated into Urdu and published in 1967 in the Urdu journal of the Islamic research institute, *Fikru Nazr*. Fazlur Rahman's most controversial statement of his time in his book was "That the Qur'an as a whole is the kalam of Allah and if interpreted as usual also the whole is the statement of Muhammad", from this point Fazlur Rahman is considered one of the people who deny the Qur'an. On September 5, 1986, Fazlur Rahman resigned from his position as director of the Islamic research institute, which was directly approved by Ayub Khan.

From here we can see some faculties that can provide an explanation of the controversy and some opposition clans on Fazlur Rahman in Pakistan, as well as his withdrawal from Islamic research institutions in Pakistan. Pakistan's fundamentalist and traditional clerics and the fiercely loyal dissidents of Fazlur Rahman are unlikely to be able to apologize for Fazlur Rahman's sin, for obtaining an Islamic education in the west and having close ties to the west. For this reason, they never gave their blessing to the appointment of Fazlur Rahman as director of Islamic research institutions in Pakistan. For fundamentalists, the position is the exclusive privilege of a traditionally educated alim. On the other hand, other ideas expressed by Fazlur Rahman are not common, because they always corner their circles, namely fundamentalists and traditionalists in Pakistan. The controversy caused by the thought of Fazlur Rahman in addition to has caused displeasure of certain governments that view Fazlur Rahman as a political ulcer, thus in fact causing a cumulative effect of displeasure to Fazlur Rahman. From here the author seeks to know and describe the thoughts of Fazlur Rahman figures about Islam and modernity.

### ***The Concept of Islamic Modernity according to Fazlur Rahman***

Departing from the restlessness of a Fazlur Rahman that is also felt by the majority of Muslims, namely the situation where Muslims close tightly the door of *ijtihad*, thus appearing stagnation or stagnation in intellectuals that is markedly getting worse. Conditions like this by Fazlur Rahman are felt to be very not conducive to making Islam as one of the religions that are on the wave of changing times that are increasingly dynamic. For example, the closing of the door of *ijtihad* is considered Fazlur Rahman as the cause of the death of intellectual creativity of Muslims who used to be Muslims grow so extraordinary in the early history of Muslims. This, eventually turned into a series of doctrines that are rigid and difficult to provide answers to the problems of the people in the situation of the development of the times or commonly known as modernity.

The closing of the door of *ijtihad* is what logically leads to *taqlid*, which is a term that can be interpreted as the acceptance of a doctrine as a whole without finding the origin of its source. In enacting the source of Islamic teachings in this case the Qur'an and the prophet's circumcision, Muslims tend to develop a rigid attitude through ahistorical, literalistic and atomistic approaches. It is this situation that causes various reactions in Islamic reformers to carry out "rescue" measures on Islamic teachings that are increasingly fragile by history. However, as Fazlur Rahman testified, those in carrying out modernity in general applying methods in dealing with legal issues are still supported by an ad hoc and disaggregated approach. The closing of the door of *ijtihad* is what logically leads to *taqlid*, which is a term that can be interpreted as the acceptance of a doctrine as a whole without finding the origin of its source. In enacting the source of Islamic teachings in this case the Qur'an and the prophet's circumcision, Muslims tend to develop a rigid attitude

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The ad hoc term Fazlur rahman states that the pressures that come from modern ideas and the forces of social change, together with the influence of colonial governments in Muslim countries, create a situation where the adoption of certain modern western thoughts and their institutions is defended desperately by some of you Muslims and often by giving quranic quotations (Rahman: 1985)

In conditions of sluggish progress like this, Fazlur Rahman offered a series of systematic and comprehensive methodologies, especially those related to excavations on sources of Islamic religious teachings, namely the Quran and sunnah. For example, what Fazlur Rahman offered in hadith studies is that by relying on a historical approach that has given enlightenment to the direction of modernization of islamic teachings that are more paradigmatic.

Fazlur rahman affirmed that the Qur'an is not a difficult or mysterious work that requires a person to practice deeply and technically to understand and interpret His commandments, here fazlur rahman also gives an explanation related to the correct procedures in understanding the Qur'an. When studying the Qur'an, one must be in historical study to appreciate its ideas and themes. A person is also required to research and study in the context of his or her historical social background. This not only applies to individual verses, but also applies to the Qur'an as a whole. Without a person having an understanding of the micro and macro elements that are pervasive, according to fazlur rahman then one will have a high probability of misjudging the intentions of the Qur'an, the activity of the prophet, either in Mecca or in Medina.

Fazlur rahman in 1982 emphasized in his work entitled *Islam and Modernity*, it would absolutely require the synthesis of material in the teachings of the Qur'an. Without this effort, it will be able to result in the application of qur'an verses separately and individually which can result in misdirection. According to fazlur rahman, to convert and recite the Qur'an, a study of historical aspects is needed by providing a presentation of problems in the present in the contest where the Qur'an is revealed. As in the statement written by Fazlur Rahman that the process of understanding the Qur'an referred to here consists of a double movement. From the current situation, towards the situation at the time of the qur'an' deposed, then back again at this time.

*In the early stages*, it takes foresight and thoroughness to uncover events during the Time of Rosululloh SAW, then then look for how the event or event was responded to by the Qur'an.

*In the second stage after the Quran response was found*, then the response was sought its ideal moral value and retracted in the current context to be grown in the present. The birth of this method can be seen clearly strongly influenced by Fazlur Rahman's thoughts on the unification of tradition with renewal or commonly we call modernity (Tajdid). It also shows the influence of Emileo Betti's objectivism. In the early stages, the interpretation of the Qur'an is accompanied by micro and macro contexts. Micro context is the cause of the decline of the Qur'an which has an intersection with the descent of a verse. While the macro context is a socio-cultural condition in the Arab environment covering cultural situations, interaction patterns, geography, politics, and other contexts that accompany the decline of the Qur'an.

From this it is realized that the thoughts of Fazlur rahman seem to be influenced by the shah Waliyullah Ad-Dahlawi in his work "Fawz Al-Kabir Fii Ushul At-Tafsir". In this work Shah Waliyullah mentioned that in converting the Qur'an there is a special cause down and because of general descent. Not inferior also with Prof. Amin Abdullah who made the term *Asbab An Nuzul Jadid* with *Asbab An Nuzul Qadim*. These terms

basically have something in common in mentioning the urgency of a socio-cultural context that was once widely forgotten.

In the second movement, which is the stage of attracting moral ideal values in the present, the value of moral ideals is formulated and then sought relevance value in the present. Whether it can contribute to the problem. After relevance, the next stage carried out in carrying out contextualization at this time is to look for the possibility that the ideal values of morals can be buried in the community. In contextualization, the most difficult stage is cultural adjustment, where ideal values are sometimes difficult to accept because they clash with a particular culture. Often the rush to deliver a thinker such as Shahrur must be rejected by certain communities because the results of his thoughts are considered irrelevant by a certain context. It is also experienced by Nasr Hamed that he had to save himself from running to the Netherlands in order to escape the death penalty with compensation for serving at Leiden University.

The ideal value in the Qur'an about a thing cannot help but have to deal with a certain culture. Although the original goal of ideal values was the universal value of the Qur'an about humanity and peace. But often this value is also often considered contrary to human values. E. Betti's statement "that in uncovering a particular idea, one must be able to bring back to the mind that created it, but we do not really know how the mind created it because we cannot be him". From this shows that the truth that man thinks is relative, the absolute truth is only god's (Nawal Hazdiq: 2020).

## **Conclusion**

From the above discussion, it can be concluded that Fazlur Rahman's thoughts on Islam and modernity are strongly influenced by the experience and knowledge he gained during his studies from various teachers. Rahman's thoughts emphasize in his work entitled *Islam and Modernity*, will absolutely require the synthesis of material in the teachings of the Qur'an. Without this effort, it will be able to result in the application of Qur'an verses separately and individually which can result in misdirection. According to Fazlur Rahman, to convert and recite the Qur'an, a study of historical aspects is needed by providing a presentation of problems in the present in the context where the Qur'an is revealed.

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