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AN IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS OF ZAMAKSHARIY'S
"AL-KASHSHOF" COMMENTARY

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Annotation: *This article provides information about Zamakhshariy's famous work – the "Al-Kashshof" commentary. It also highlights the importance of this commentary in the study of the Qur'an, its differences from other commentaries, and its scholarly significance.*

Key words: *Islam, tafsir, spirituality, philosophy, wisdom, science, knowledge, poetry, eloquence, literature.*

Abul Qosim Mahmud ibn Umar ibn Muhammad ibn Umar al-Khwarazmi az-Zamakhshariy was a great scholar who made a significant contribution to Islamic science through his unparalleled works in tafsir, linguistics, and philosophy. All of his works, which are part of his scientific legacy, are considered some of the most esteemed books in their respective fields. In particular, his tafsir book titled "Al-Kashshaf" (derived from the verb "kashf", meaning "to uncover") has become one of the primary sources for scholars who seek to understand the Quran. The full title of the "Al-Kashshaf" tafsir is "الكشاف عن حقائق غوامض التنزيل وعيون الاقاويل في وجوه التأويل" (Al-Kashshaf an Haqiq G'ovamizit Tanzil va Uyunil Aqoviyli fi Vujuhit Ta'vil), which translates to "The Unveiler of the Real Meanings of the Difficult Verses of the Quran and the Sources of Interpretations in the Faces of Exegesis". What distinguishes this tafsir from others is that it does not provide a complete interpretation for every verse; rather, it offers explanations only for those that require interpretation.

The Iraqi historian Ibn Khallikan described "Al-Kashshof" as follows: "Al-Kashshof is the exegesis of the noble Quran, and before it, no tafsir similar to this was written" [1]. There is debate regarding whether this work was written in the spirit of Mu'tazila. According to the information recorded by Ibn Khallikan, "When Az-Zamakhshariy wrote the book "Al-Kashshof", he began its introduction with the phrase, "Praise be to Allah, the Creator of the Quran". It was then said to him that no one would be interested in the book if he finished it in such a manner. So, he (Zamakhshariy) changed the sentence at the beginning of the introduction to, "Praise be to Allah, the Revealer of the Quran". The word "create" has a different meaning in Arabic. There has been much debate about this. I have seen many copies of "Al-Kashshof" that say, "Praise be to Allah, the Revealer of the Quran". These were altered by people themselves, not by the author's correction" [1].

Zamakhshariy is known as a representative of the Mu'tazila school. In this tafsir, his views related to the school, including the emphasis on free will, justice, and philosophical





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analyses of Allah's wisdom, are reflected. This approach has also attracted the attention of his critics, yet it demonstrates that he introduced a new methodology in the science of tafsir. "Al-Kashshof" not only explains the verses of the Qur'an but also analyzes the events, individuals, and spiritual values within it. Particularly, his method of explaining the connections between the verses distinguishes him from other tafsirs.

Zamakhshariy, in his tafsir, was able to reveal the beauty of the Arabic language of the Qur'an, and through his work "Kashshof", he further proved that the Qur'an is a great miracle. The English Orientalist H.A. Gibb wrote in his work "Arabic Literature": "Zamakhshariy is primarily known for his tafsir. Even as centuries have passed, this tafsir continues to be reprinted and still retains its significance" [2]. A number of factors, including the numerous commentaries and footnotes written on the "Kashshof" tafsir, its translation into various foreign languages, and its repeated publication in several countries, all serve as evidence of its truly great scholarly value.

The Egyptian researcher Mustafa as-Sowi al-Juvayniy conducted in-depth scientific research on Zamakhshariy's "Al-Kashshof" and described the scholar's attitude towards reason as follows: "Reason is the method Zamakhshariy uses for tafsir, with which he controls the texts (Qur'an and hadith). He does not settle for the apparent meanings (surface) of the Qur'an" [3]. In Zamakhshariy's view, Allah has presented two paths for a person to lead a suitable life, develop as a righteous individual, and attain goodness. The first path is through knowledge, which involves acquiring wisdom by reading, learning, and seeking knowledge. The second path is through religion, which entails living according to the guidelines revealed through divine revelation. In essence, these two concepts are inherently interconnected and can be interpreted as two guides leading to the same destination.

Although the work "Al-Kashshof" is written in accordance with the Mu'tazili doctrine, the miraculous nature of the Qur'an, its poetic beauty, and its high level of eloquence are revealed by the author in a unique manner. The main reason for this is Zamakhshariy's profound knowledge of various fields, particularly his mastery of the Arabic language's charm, poetry, eloquence, rhetoric, grammar, and literature. As noted by F. Rahmon, "In substantiating his views, Az-Zamakhshariy employs various techniques, especially rational orientation, analysis of Qur'anic variants, excerpts from the life of our Prophet, parables, elucidation of the meanings of certain words, and other syntactical methods" [4]. In this regard, Zamakhshariy emphasized the unique and profound essence of the Qur'an, stressing that truly understanding it surpasses the knowledge of other scientific disciplines. He pointed out that in order to genuinely grasp the teachings and truths of the Qur'an, it is necessary to focus on the specific sciences related to the Qur'an itself.

German Orientalist Karl Brockelmann wrote that there are nearly a hundred manuscripts of "Al-Kashshof" in various manuscript collections around the world, and more than twenty commentaries and annotations have been written on the work. This indicates the great fame of Az-Zamakhshariy's work. Students at the world-renowned Al-





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Azhar University in Cairo also study the Qur'an based on Az-Zamakhshariy's "Al-Kashshof". Several manuscript copies of "Al-Kashshof" are preserved in libraries, including the library of the religious oversight of Muslims in Central Asia and Kazakhstan, located in Tashkent [5]. The manuscript copy of the "Kashshof" work, handwritten by the author himself in 1134, is currently preserved in the Tehran Library [6]. Additionally, in the manuscript collection of the Abu Rayhan Beruni Institute of Oriental Studies at the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan, there are 14 manuscript copies of the "Kashshof" work. However, none of them are complete copies.

In conclusion, Zamakhshariy's "Al-Kashshof" commentary is a significant work in the history of Qur'anic exegesis, holding great importance not only in religious terms but also in scholarly ones. The author's work remains an invaluable source for understanding the linguistic beauty and spiritual depth of the Qur'an. Even today, this commentary continues to serve as a strong foundation for those interested in studying the Qur'an.

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