



# INTELLECTUAL DISCOURSE

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## Al-Biqā'ī and Iṣlāhī: A Comparative Study of *Tafsīr* Methodology

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**Abstract:** It is recognized by scholars that there is a system of coherence in the Qur'ān and that each and every verse, large and small, constitutes an integral unit of the Qur'ān. There are only two complete *tafsīr* (exegesis) of the Qur'ān based on the principle of coherence. One is in Arabic and the other is in Urdu. A comparative analysis of the two works shows that the coherence found in the Arabic exegesis was in its formative phase and that it was developed to its full form in the Urdu exegesis. The coherence in the Qur'ān found in the two exegesis deserves closer analysis as it may assist the rebuilding of the grand edifice of Islamic thought and life.

One of the methods of interpreting the Qur'ānic *āyāt* (verses) is known as *naẓm al-Qur'ān* (coherence in the Qur'ān). According to this method, the Qur'ān is considered an integral whole and all its verses in each chapter (*sūrah*) are coherent and cohesive.<sup>1</sup> Only two scholars have used this method in their interpretation of the entire Qur'ān: Abū al-Ḥasan Ibrāhīm ibn 'Umar Burhān al-Dīn al-Biqā'ī and Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāhī. The former's exegesis (*tafsīr*) is in Arabic and the latter is in Urdu. This study attempts a comparative analysis of these two works and identifies the methods they have used to help understand the Qur'ān better.

### The Two Scholars

Ibrāhīm al-Biqā'ī was born in Khirbatu Ruḥā in the district of Biqā' in Syria in 809 A.H.<sup>2</sup> At the age of twelve he lost all his family

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