

RAḤMATULLĀH KAIRĀNAWĪ (1818-1891) AND
MUNSHĪ MOHAMMAD MEHERULLĀH'S (1861-1907)
METHODOLOGY IN THE STUDY OF CHRISTIANITY:
A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

BY

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the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Usūl-al-Dīn and
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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the contributions of Muslim scholars, Raḥmatullāh Kairānawī and Munshī Mohammad Meherullāh to the study of Christianity and their methodologies, where they formulated different methods and approaches in response to Islam using similarities and differences in their discourses. This study analyses their discussions, exposures, presentations and arguments on Christian beliefs with a special focus on Raḥmatullāh's masterpiece: *Izhār al-Ḥaqq* (Truth Revealed) and Meherullāh's work, *Kshristīo Dharmar Asāratā* (Hollowness of Christianity) and *Radde Kshristān O Dalilul Islam* (Refutation of Christianity and Evidence of Islam), which greatly influenced Muslims in India. In addition, aspects of their lives, socio-political milieu, religious thoughts and scholarships on Christianity are also studied. This study applies the qualitative method for data collection and data analysis. The method is based on library research and textual analysis. A comparative study is also employed, relying on the works of both scholars. Using rational, polemical, comparative and dialogical arguments, the present treatise finds that both scholars explored the falsification, abrogation and fabrication of the Bible and Christianity accordingly. Finally, this study concludes that though some of their views on studying and counter-arguing Christianity are not so familiar in contemporary academia, Raḥmatullāh Kairānawī's and Munshī Mohammad Meherullāh's approaches and methods still offer mutually exclusive, yet dynamic, and engaging comparative theological mechanisms. This study, therefore, submits that appreciation of their approaches would help respond to the challenges in the field of comparative religious activities, both in principle and in the circumstances over space and time.

مُلخَصُ البَحْثِ

تهدف الرسالة إلى فحص إسهامات العالمين المسلمين رحمت الله الكيراناوي ومونشي محمد مهر الله في دراسة النصرانية ومنهجيتها في الدفاع عن الإسلام، حيث إنهما صاغا أساليب وطرق متعددة في هذا المجال، وذلك من خلال بيان أوجه التشابه والاختلاف بين دراستهما. فقامت الدراسة بتحليل آرائهما وأدلتهما وعرضهما، ومناقشتهما في المعتقدات النصرانية، مع التركيز على كتاب "إظهار الحق" لرحمت الله، وكتابي "تحريف الديانة المسيحية" و"رد المسيحية ودليل الإسلام" لمهر الله؛ لما تتمتع بهما هذه الكتب من أثر بالغ لدى مسلمي الهند. كما ناقش البحث بعض الجوانب من سيرتهما، والأبعاد الاجتماعية السياسية والأفكار الدينية، والعلماء المسيحيين في عصرهما. وتوسَّلت البحث المنهج النوعي لجمع البيانات وتحليلها وفق الدراسات المكتبية والتحليلات النصية، والمنهج المقارن للموازنة بين أعمال العالمين. وقد توصَّل الباحث - من ضمن الحجج المنطقية والجدلية والمقارنة والحوارية - إلى أن العالمين اكتشفا تزوير وتحريف وتلفيق الإنجيل والنصرانية. نهائياً اختتمت الدراسة بأنه على الرغم من أن بعض وجهات نظر العالمين في دراسة النصرانية ليست ملائمة في المجال الأكاديمي المعاصر؛ إلا أن أساليب ومنهجية رحمت الله كيراناوي ومونشي محمد مهر الله لا تزال تُقدِّم وسائل حصرية وديناميكية وفي الوقت نفسه آلية غير مقيِّدة للمقارنة في علم الإلهيات، ومن ثم؛ تظهر القيمة العلمية التي تقدمها هذه الإسهامات في مواجهة التحديات التي تظهر في مجال النشاطات الدينية المقارنة من حيث المبدأ والظروف الطارئة وفق الزمان والمكان.

APPROVAL PAGE

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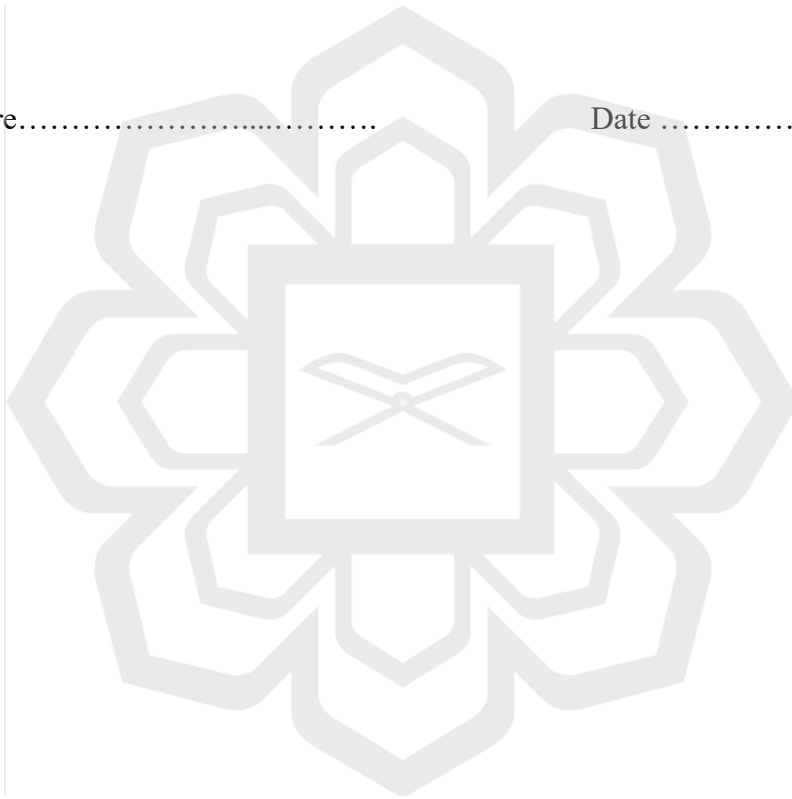
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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigation, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

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METHODOLOGY IN THE STUDY OF CHRISTIANITY: A
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To my two eyes, my dear parents; Abba (father) and ma (mother),

LATE FORHAD HOSSAIN

the full of inspiration with knowledge and wisdom in my life

Who returned to the Almighty Allah on 16 June 2013

May Allah rest his soul in peace and success.

&

KAMARUN NESSA

The great teacher of my life who brought me up into existence from nothing

*Both helped me to see the world, trained me how to love and live, guided me on what
is right and wrong, taught me the meaning of life and inspired me to seek the true and
noble knowledge*

"My Lord! bestow on them Your Mercy as they brought me up (when I was) small."

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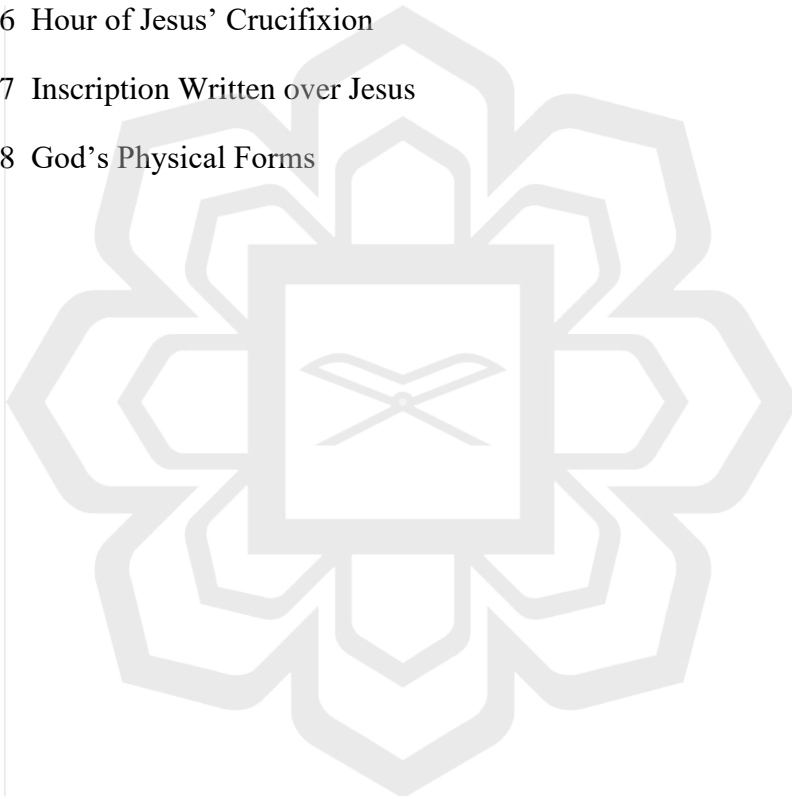
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BC	Bengali Calendar
BCM	Baptist Christian Missionary
BMC	Baptist Missionary Society
CMC	Church Missionary Society
HGR	Higher Grade of Reader
LMS	London Missionary Society
MLS	Mohamedan Literary Society
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
pbuh	peace be upon him

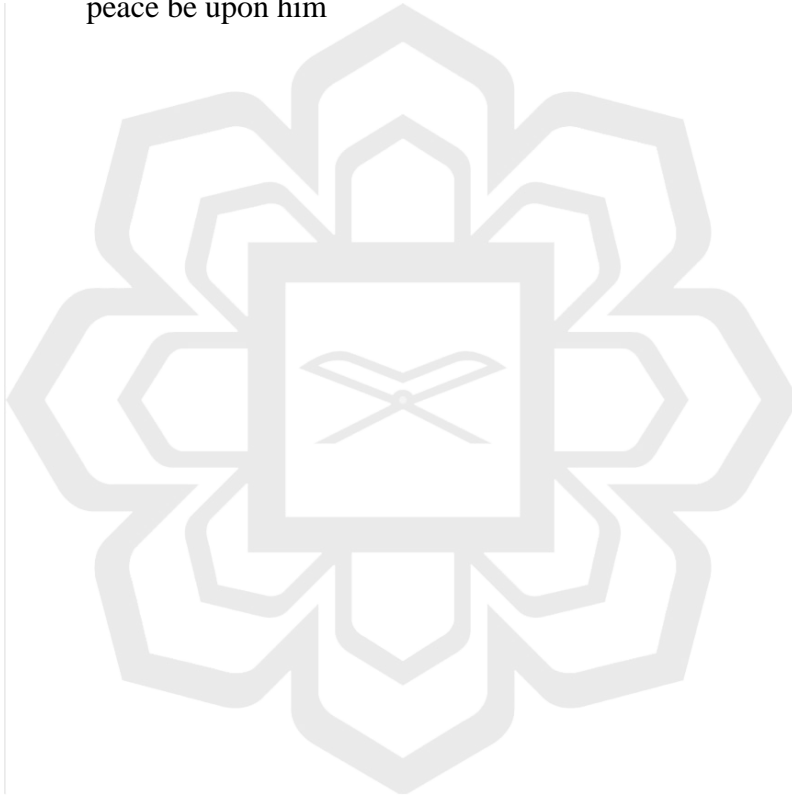


TABLE OF TRANSLITERATION

Table of the system of transliteration of Arabic words and names used by the
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ء	'	خ	kh	ش	Sh	غ	Gh	ن	N
ب	B	د	D	ص	ṣ	ف	F	هـ	H
ت	T	ذ	dh	ض	ḍ	ق	Q	و	W
ث	Th	ر	r	ط	ṭ	ك	K	ي	Y
ج	J	ز	z	ظ	ẓ	ل	L		
ح	ḥ	س	s	ع	ʿ	م	M		

Short Vowels	
ـَ	a
ـِ	i
ـُ	u

Long Vowels	
ا + ـَ	ā
ي + ـِ	ī
و + ـُ	ū

BENGALI transliteration SCHEME

(According to ALA-LC- American Library Association and the Library of Congress-
Bengali Romanization table for non-Roman scripts, 2017 edition)

Vowels and Diphthongs

Bengali Term	Transliteration	Bengali Term	Transliteration
A	a	F	r
Av	ā	G	E
B	i	H	ai
C	ī	I	O
D	u	J	au
E	ū		

Consonants

Bengali Term	Transliteration	Bengali Term	Transliteration
K	ka	c	pa
L	kha	d	pha
M	ga	e	ba
N	gha	F	bha
O	ng	g	ma
P	ca	h	ya
Q	cha	i	ra
R	Ja	j	la
S	Jha	n	ha
T	ña	k	śa
U	ta	l	sha
V	tha	m	sa
W	da	o	ra
X	dha	p	rha
Y	na	q	ya
Z	ta	r	ṭa
͇	tha	s	ṃ
͈	da	t	ḥ
a	dha	u	ñ, ṁ
b	na		

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Although the term “comparative religion” was coined and developed in the 19th century by F. Max Muller, the study of other religions had greatly been ventured earlier by Muslim scholars during the early centuries of Islam. As a matter of fact, the contribution of Muslims in this specialization “has been rightly acclaimed as one of the great contributions of modern civilization to mankind’s intellectual progress”.¹ Eric J. Sharpe claimed that comparative religion did not develop during the Judaeo-Christian period. Sharpe blamed their religious exclusive attitudes and intolerance in matters of religion.² Interestingly, Sharpe made an explicit acknowledgement to Muslim scholars who were pioneers in the study of religion as it is stated by him that “the honour of writing the first history of religion in world literature seems in fact belongs to the Muslim Shahrastānī”.³

Thus, the study of religions is a legacy of these Muslim scholars such as al-Jahīz (d. 869), al-Tabarī (d. 923), al-Bīrūnī (d. 1051), Ibn Ḥazm (d. 1066), al-Shahrastānī (d. 1085), Ibn Taymīyah (d. 1328), Rahmatullāh Kairānawī (d. 1891), Munshī Meherullāh (d. 1907), al-Fārūqī (d. 1986), and many other monumental scholars who significantly contributed to this field. Each of them was familiar and had their own way and approach to studying religion. They were intelligent and extraordinary genius of their time who showed mastery and great understanding, notable presence and contributions; making

¹ Bruce B. Lawrence, *Shahrastānī on the Indian Religions*, (Mouton: Mouton & Co., 1976), 5.

² Eric J. Sharpe, *Comparative Religion: A History*, (London: Duckworth, 1975), 11.

³ *Ibid*, 7.

them unparalleled figures in research. These scholars had adopted various methodologies based on their own observations of other religions. In their study of other religions, they were rational, free from any doubt, extensive and insightful in exploring the truth. Their distinctive methods and approaches formulated a different branch in the early phase of the history of comparative religious study to achieve authentic, scientific and objective study in the field. Their ideas, opinions, understanding and scholarship in the study of religions influenced the writings of Western and other Muslim scholars.

The modern scholars of religions especially Westerners explore new dimensions in this area using the following methodologies: philosophical,⁴ anthropological,⁵ sociological,⁶ psychological⁷ and phenomenological,⁸ claimed as scientific and objective. However, these methodologies have failed to study religions holistically.⁹

This research attempts to study the methodologies of two prolific scholars, Raḥmatullāh Kairānawī (1818-1891) and Munshī Mohammad Meherullāh (1861-

⁴ Philosophical approach of religion implies to the study of philosophical nature, meaning and aspects of and ethical functions of religion. See Dominic Corrywright and Peggy Morgan, *Get Set for Religious Studies*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 64.

⁵ Anthropological approach of religion is related to the functions of culture and human beings in religion rather than the explanation of religion. According to the anthropologists, three features must be applied in observation the religion in culture: First, fieldwork is required for researchers where they live and build a long term relationship with religious communities. Secondly, Scholars pursue their study through local perspectives of religious communities. Finally, the study of scholars must focus on the social domains. See John R. Bowen, *Religions in Practice: An approach to the Anthropology of Religion*, (Boston: Pearson Education Inc, 4th ed., 2008), 5.

⁶ The sociological approach in the study of religion concerns “on the interaction between religion and society” because “human experience and religion are shaped by various kinds of social forces”. See Carl Olson, *Theory and Method in the Study of Religion: A Selection of Critical Reading*, (Belmont, CA: Thomson Wardsworth, 2003), 209.

⁷ Psychology is delineated as the study of mind and its behavior. Psychology of Religion focuses on the behavior of the mind, its consciousness and association with religious phenomena. The psychology of religion, hence, attempts to explain religion by focusing on the mind, perception, experience, and consciousness of the religious individual. See Hillary Rodrigues and John S. Harding, *Introduction to the Study of Religion*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 83.

⁸ The literally mean of ‘Phenomenology’ is ‘reflection on that which appears’. Phenomenological approach in the study of religion refers to understand the full account of insiders’, the believers’ and the belongers’ understanding of their traditions and religions in their own terms from the point of view of those whose religions they are. See Corrywright, Dominic and Morgan, Peggy, 55-56.

⁹ Siti Nurleha Bt Saffie, *Methodology of Al-Bīrūnī (973-1051) and Al-Fārūqī (1921-1986) in the Study of Religions: A Comparative Analysis*, (Master Thesis” International Islamic University Malaysia, 2012), 2.

1907), in the study of Christianity. Raḥmatullāh Kairānawī was from India. He was the most influential and renowned figure in dialogues and Muslim-Christian debates in his century. He took part in debates against Christian missionaries and wrote some polemical works to defend Islam from the beginning of the 1850s. The immense influence of Kairānawī spread out across Muslim countries in the publication of his master piece ‘*Izhar al-Ḥaqq*’¹⁰ based on reliable and authentic sources.

On the other hand, self-educated and insomnia of the Bengal Muslim society Munshī Mohammad Meherullāh was a great orator, scholar and social reformer. He tried to protect Islam against Christian missionary activities which helped Bengal Muslims to save their religion during the British rule of the Indian subcontinent. The missionaries extensively showed their mastery in the study of religion, especially in presenting Christianity in the 19th century to the people of Indian subcontinent. This study will use comparative and analytical methods to evaluate Christianity as delivered by Raḥmatullāh Kairānawī and Munshī Mohammad Meherullāh, focusing on their works and observations on Christianity and the methodologies used.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Indian subcontinent¹¹ is known for its history in promoting multi-cultural and multi-religious harmony resulting in peaceful coexistence. However, the activities of Christian missionaries during the British rule created tensions between Christian and Muslim communities. Christians who became rulers patronized the missionaries’ activities. They started to criticize Islam, Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) and Muslim

¹⁰ ‘*Izhar al-Ḥaqq*’ is a reliable and objective study written by Raḥmatullāh Kairānawī. This informative book consists of six chapters with an important preamble to encounter Christian missionary Pfander’s book *Mīzān al-Ḥaqq*, based on the doubts of the authenticity of the Holy Qur’ān and Islām.

¹¹ The present India, Pakistan and Bangladesh were Indian subcontinent before its partition during 1947.

traditions.¹² This caused both communities to be involved in religious debates and eventually produced literatures in defence of their respective religions.

Many Indian Muslim scholars such as Jawad Sabath, Maūlānā Abdullah Khan-i-Samān, Raḥmatullāh Kairānawī (1818-1891), Dr. Wazir Khan, Maūlānā Qāsīm Nanutovi (1833-1880) and Muhammad Ali Mongiri (d.1928) of Northern India and Munshī Mohammad Meherullāh (1861-1907), Maūlānā Riyād al-Dīn Aḥmad and Munshī Sheikh Zamiruddīn (1870-1930) of East Bengal applied defensive and offensive methods in order to defend Islam. Many of them such as Maūlānā Md. Monirujjāmān (1875-1950) and Maūlānā Md. Akrām Khān (1868-1969) studied and conducted research on other religions from academic and intellectual perspectives in educational institutions.¹³ They applied a well-designed methodology for religious study as an influential part of human life. They explored the constructive ideas of individual and collective identities based on some specific methodologies.

However, there is no specific research on the methodology adopted by the Muslim scholars in their apologetic works. Indeed, the Muslim scholars had adopted the following methodologies: descriptive,¹⁴ critical-analytical,¹⁵ polemical,¹⁶

¹² Md. Abdur Rahman Anwari, The Role of Muslim and Christian Scholars of British India in the Comparative Study of Religion, *The Islamic University Studies* (Part A), Vol. 17, No. 1, (December 2013), 24.

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ It means a plain description about someone or something. Oxford Advance American Dictionary for Learners of English, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 402. This method does not critically evaluate but the collected data and information from different sources on the beliefs and practices of various religions are simply described.

¹⁵ Critical is to express an opinion when you think something is wrong or questioned, (Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners (New Edition), (Oxford: Macmillan Publishers Limited, 2007, 350,) while analytical to use a logical method of thinking about something in order to understand it, especially by looking into all the parts separately. (Oxford Advance American Dictionary, 47). This method focuses on the experimental and textual study of religions. Almost all the Muslim scholars used analytical and critical approach to study other religious texts, scriptures and historicities thereto that helped them to unearth the real pictures of the studied religions.

¹⁶ It involves strong arguments for or against something, often in opposition to the opinion of others. (Oxford Advance American Dictionary, 1131). Polemical method refers to the arguments on controversial matter in refuting or attacking one's opinion or doctrine. In applying this method in religion, the polemic must be knowledgeable on religious scriptures, texts and history. Among Muslim scholars, many of them are found to follow this method in the study of religion.

comparative,¹⁷ debates and dialogues¹⁸ as well as contextual¹⁹ aspects of religion under study. They introduced their own methodologies to understand other religions.

This research explores the methodologies applied by two prominent figures, Raḥmatullah Kairānawī and Munshī Mohammad Meherullāh in the study of Christianity based on their works. *Izhar al-Ḥaqq*²⁰ is recognized as a reliable and objective study authored by Rāḥmātullāh Kairānawī. This book consists of six chapters with an important preamble to encounter Christian missionary Karl Gottlieb Pfander's book *Mizān al-Ḥaqq*, based on the doubts about the authenticity of the Holy Qur'ān and Islam. The major works of Munshī Mohammad Meherullāh in the study of Christianity are *Kshristiō Dharmar Asāratā*²¹ (Hollowness of the Christianity) (1892-1893), *Radde Kshristān O Dalilul Islām*²² (Refutation of Christianity and Evidence of Islam) (1895) and *Jawāb al-Naṣārā*²³ (Replies to the Christians) (1898). These three books of Munshī Mohammad Meherullāh are the masterpieces in the study of Christianity. However, the

¹⁷ It is connected with studying things to find out how similar or different they are (Oxford Advance American Dictionary, 296); concerned with comparing two or more things. (Macmillan English Dictionary 296). Comparative method requires comparing between two or more than two selected matters from various religious perspectives. In this The researchers depend on the understanding of religious scriptures, texts, historical context and the works done by others religious scholars.

¹⁸ Debate is an argumentative discussion in which people or groups state different opinions about a subject (Macmillan English Dictionary, 380); or an arguments on discussion expressing different opinions. (Oxford Advance American Dictionary, 382). This is the earliest method what started during Prophet (SAW) with the delegates of other religions. This method is encouraged in the Holy Quran (Sura an-Nahl: 125) in order to solve the problems remaining in individual or group of individuals. This dialogue and debate is a way to develop tolerance and mutual understanding through wisdom rather than force.

¹⁹ Contextual is connected with a particular context. (Oxford Advance American Dictionary, 321). This is the most reliable method in understanding the theoretical aspects of other religions from the ancient period. In contextual method, religious texts and scriptures are regarded the most reliable and authoritative sources for references.

²⁰ Raḥmatullāh Kairanawī, *Izhar al-Ḥaqq*, Annotated by Dr. Muḥammad Aḥmad Muḥammad Abdul Qādir Khalīl Malkāwī, (Riyadh: Ar-Riyāsa al-Āmma li-Adārā al-buḥūthul 'alamiyah al-iftāh al-dawāh al-irshād, 1989).

²¹ This book was published on 13 March, 1887 from Jessore. It was composed to present superiority of Islamic thoughts against Christian Missionary activities.

²² *Radde Kshristān O Dalilul Islām* (Refutation of Christianity and Evidence of Islam) was published in 1895, presents the study of comparative religion. Munshī Meherullāh compares various issues of Islam and Christianity within fifteen chapters.

²³ *Jawāb al-Naṣārā* (Replies to the Christian) was written by Munshī Mohammad Meherullāh on the basis of some critical question of Christian priest by the helping of Sheikh Zamiruddin .

study will also find similarities and differences of both scholars' methodological discourses on Christianity.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. Who are Raḥmatullāh Kairānawī and Munshī Mohammad Meherullāh?
2. What are their views in the study of Christianity?
3. What are the methodologies of Raḥmatullāh Kairānawī and Munshī Mohammad Meherullāh in the study of Christianity?
4. What are the similarities and differences between their methods in the study of Christianity?

1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study intends to achieve the following objectives:

1. To study Raḥmatullāh Kairānawī's and Munshī Mohammad Meherullāh's lives, works and contributions.
2. To discuss their views in the study of Christianity.
3. To explore and analyse their methodologies in the study of Christianity.
4. To compare and contrast the methods of Raḥmatullāh Kairānawī and Munshī Mohammad Meherullāh in the study of Christianity.

1.5 RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE

This study focuses on the methodologies adopted by Raḥmatullāh Kairānawī and Munshī Mohammad Meherullāh in the study of Christianity. The findings of this study will add to the scholarship of comparative religion and the contributions of two great

Muslim scholars of Indian subcontinent Raḥmatullāh Kairānawī and Munshī Mohammad Meherullāh in responding Islam against Christian doctrines and activities.

1.6 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This research focuses on Raḥmatullāh Kairānawī's work titled *Izhar al-Ḥaqq* (Truth Revealed). It also focuses on Munshī Mohammad Meherullāh's work in his books: *Kshristīo Dharmar Asāratā* (Hollowness of the Christianity) (1892-1893), *Radde Kshristān O Dalilul Islām* (Refutation of Christianity and Evidence of Islam) (1895) and *Jawāb al- Naṣārā* (Replies to the Christian) (1898). These works were written to maintain the teachings of Islam from the influence of Christian missionary activities.

1.7 METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The research utilizes a qualitative method that concentrates on textual analysis in an attempt to analyse Raḥmatullāh Kairānawī's and Munshī Mohammad Meherullāh's views on methodologies in the study of Christianity. The following dimensions of qualitative method would be the basis of the study.

It is library-based research. It explores the historical description and narration of the discourse of Raḥmatullāh Kairānawī and Munshī Mohammad Meherullāh with special reference to methodological dimension. This will be followed by an analysis and comparative study of the methodologies of both scholars in the study of Christianity.

1.8 LITERATURE REVIEW

A few literatures are selected to cover both scholars: Raḥmātullāh Kairānawī and Munshī Mohammad Meherullāh. They had presented their works, views, perceptions

and contributions in the study of religion separately but not in comprehensive study. A serious study has been approached to present the main work of both scholars.

An article by A. A. Powell entitled “*Maulānā Rahmat Allāh Kairānawī and Muslim-Christian Controversy in India in the Mid-19th Century*”²⁴ discusses the background of Muslim-Christian controversy in India and the role played by prominent Muslim scholars, especially Raḥmātullāh Kairānawī. The author deliberates on the policies of Christian missionaries that provoked Muslim reaction. It also highlights the role of Karl Gottlieb Pfander (1803-1865),²⁵ a missionary who has been regarded the most knowledgeable about Islam among contemporary missionaries. The author discloses that missionary schools with Bible-based curriculum, conversion and adoption of orphans, denounced Islam through presses and publications, changes of government policies in education, coordination between government and missionary activities and their rise at different levels of society which worried the Muslim community.²⁶ He states that Pfander engaged himself in controversies between 1841-1847 but attracted the public attention particularly in 1845-1846 and became well-known through the great debate between him and Raḥmātullāh where Raḥmātullāh refuted the doctrine of the Trinity and corruption of Christian scriptures. Finally, the work demonstrates

²⁴ A. A. Powell, *Maulānā Rahmat Allāh Kairānawī and Muslim-Christian Controversy in India in the Mid-19th Century*, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*. No. 1, (1976), 42-63.

²⁵ Karl Gottlieb Pfander was born in 1803 at Waiblingen, the southwest city of Germany. He studied from 1820 to 1825 at Basel Missionary which influenced greatly so as to have turned out to be a lifetime missionary activist. From 1825 to 1835, he travelled across various countries for missionary purpose and finally he arrived at Kolkata on October 1, 1838 and became a missionary of the Church Missionary Society, Feb. 12, 1840. He was in Agra from 1841 to 1855, in Peshawar from 1855 to 1857, and in Constantinople from 1858 to 1865. He was an outstanding example of Christian missionary to Moslems. See *The Moslem World*, *Karl Gottlieb Pfander*, Vol. XXXI, NO. 3, July, 1941, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/j.1478-1913.1941.tb00929.x>). His successor Bishop Thomas Valpy French who was his associate during big debate at Agra in 1854, nicely comments about Pfander that, “A master of practical, straightforward Christian controversy and far out-topped all the missionaries of his day as the Christian champion against Islam”. See Rev. T. Valpy French, *The old commandment new and true in Christ*, (Seeley, Jackson & Halliday: London, 1869), 415.

²⁶ Powell, *Maulānā Rahmat Allāh*, 47-48.