

DIVINE MERCY (RAḤMAH) IN MODERN ISLAMIC SCHOLARSHIP: A STUDY OF SHAYKH AL-SHA'RĀWĪ'S EXEGETICAL APPROACH

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Abstract: *This study examines the concept of Divine Mercy (rahmah) in modern Islamic scholarship through the Qur'ānic exegesis of Shaykh Muḥammad Mutawallī al-Sha'rāwī (d. 1998), one of the most influential contemporary Muslim exegetes. It situates al-Sha'rāwī's understanding of rahmah within the broader classical and modern tafsīr tradition, demonstrating its continued relevance for contemporary Muslim thought and practice. The study highlights al-Sha'rāwī's portrayal of Divine Mercy as a foundational principle governing creation, sustenance, guidance, forgiveness, and salvation, and as the raison d'être of a balanced cosmic order. Mercy is presented not merely as a theological attribute but as a dynamic ethical force that prevents moral decay and heals psychological and social disintegration, thereby fostering spiritual equilibrium and social harmony. Central to this framework is the Prophethood of Muḥammad ﷺ, depicted as the apex of Divine Mercy and a universal source of compassion extending across all generations and realms of existence. The study further demonstrates that al-Sha'rāwī articulates mercy through an integrated anthropocosmic perspective, linking God, humanity, and the universe within a practical, value-oriented worldview. Ultimately, this mercy-centered exegetical model offers a holistic and contextually relevant framework for addressing contemporary ethical, spiritual, and societal challenges in the modern Muslim world.*

Keyword: Divine Mercy, Al-Sha'rāwī, Teachings, Current Context, Contextualization

1. INTRODUCTION

The doctrine of Divine Mercy (*al-Raḥmah al-Ilāhiyyah*) stands at the heart of Islamic theology, ethics, and spirituality, constituting one of the most profound and pervasive themes in the Qur'an and the Sunnah. The Qur'an begins with the invocation *Bismillāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm* ("In the name of God, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful"), setting the tone for an entire worldview centered upon the mercy of God as the foundation of His relationship with creation. This notion of Divine Mercy transcends theological abstraction; it shapes the moral consciousness, spiritual aspirations, and social interactions of Muslims throughout history. It defines the believer's perception of God as not only transcendent and just but also infinitely compassionate and forgiving. Classical scholars, including al-Ghazālī, Ibn Taymiyyah, and al-Rāzī, have discussed mercy as a divine attribute that governs both the cosmic order and human salvation. However, in the modern age marked by moral disorientation, existential anxiety, and sociopolitical turbulence, there is a renewed need to reinterpret and recontextualize this foundational doctrine in ways that address contemporary

challenges. In this regard, Shaykh Muḥammad Mutawallī al-Sha'rāwī (1911-1998)¹ emerges as one of the most influential modern exegetes and preachers in the Arab and wider Muslim world. Renowned for his eloquence, humility, and profound spiritual insight, al-Sha'rāwī devoted his life to making the Qur'an accessible to the ordinary believer. His televised tafsīr sessions, sermons, and writings reached millions, transforming the public understanding of Islamic concepts through a synthesis of traditional scholarship and contemporary reflection. Among the key theological themes in his work is the doctrine of Divine Mercy, which he presents not merely as an abstract dogma but as a living, dynamic principle manifest in all aspects of existence. Through his explanations, al-Sha'rāwī sought to remind Muslims that mercy is the ultimate expression of God's lordship (*rubūbiyyah*) and the essential means by which humanity can rediscover faith, hope, and moral balance.

The scholarly literature in Islam speaks about Divine Mercy at the larger extent. There are several measurements pontificated in traditional approaches to that of the work in the recent perspective. To understand contemporary context of notion 'mercy,' in Islam contributed by Muḥammad Matwalī al-Sha'rāwī (1911-1998) is imperative to be analysed. We divided this paper into sections to explore the subject matter. After preliminarily remarks, in the first part we analysed the teachings of Al-Sha'rāwī concerning the manifestation of Divine Mercy. This portion is charged with the study of his interpretation projecting the concept of mercy regarding different walks of human life and cosmic order.

The present research paper aims to Contextualize the Doctrine of Divine Mercy in Islam by Shaykh al-Sha'rāwī, a Study in Contemporary Context, to explore how al-Sha'rāwī rearticulates this classical doctrine within the intellectual, spiritual, and social realities of the modern Muslim world. It seeks to analyze his understanding of mercy as both a divine attribute and a transformative ethical principle that can address the crises of modernity, such as alienation from faith, erosion of moral values, and the rise of materialism. While the classical tradition expounds mercy in theological and metaphysical terms, al-Sha'rāwī emphasizes its experiential and practical dimensions, inviting believers to internalize mercy as a guiding force in their relationship with God, themselves, and society. His approach demonstrates that mercy is not only a divine quality to be believed in but also a moral ideal to be embodied and a theological truth to be lived.

In contextualizing al-Sha'rāwī's doctrine of Divine Mercy, the study engaged interrelated dimensions. First, to examine the *Qur'anic foundation* of mercy as interpreted by al-Sha'rāwī in his *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī* focusing his exegetical method, linguistic interpretations, and theological insights concerning verses that emphasize God's compassion, forgiveness, and providence. Second, to explore the *ethical and spiritual implications* of Divine Mercy in al-Sha'rāwī's thought, how he connects mercy to the believer's daily conduct, repentance, and interpersonal relations. Third, the study to situate his interpretation within the *contemporary intellectual context*, highlighting how al-

¹. Muhammad Mutawalli Sha'rāwī (1329–1419 AH/ d. 1998) was a renowned religious scholar and a former Minister of Endowments in Egypt. This approach enabled him to reach a wide audience of Muslims across various parts of the Arab world. Some people also referred to him with the title "*Imam al-Du'at*" (Leader of the Preachers). He is widely recognized as a distinguished exegete of the Qur'an. Al-Sha'rawi began his career as a teacher at the Azhar institutes in Tanta, Alexandria, and Zagazig. In 1950, he was sent to Saudi Arabia, where he taught at King Abdulaziz University in Jeddah. Later, he served in several administrative and academic positions, including Deputy of the Azhar Institute in Tanta (1960), Director of Islamic Da'wah at the Ministry of Endowments (1961), Inspector of Arabic Sciences at Al-Azhar (1962), and Head of the Azhar Mission in Algeria (1966). In 1976, he was appointed as Egypt's Minister of Endowments and Azhar Affairs, later becoming a member of the Islamic Research Academy (1980) and the Shura Council. Despite being offered the position of Grand Sheikh of Al-Azhar and other high-ranking posts, he declined, dedicating himself entirely to Islamic preaching and scholarship.

Al-Sha'rawi authored over sixty works covering Qur'anic exegesis, Hadith, jurisprudence, creed, Sufism, and Islamic thought. His famous works include *Tafsīr al-Sha'rawi*, *The Miracle of the Qur'an*, *Secrets of Bismillah al-Rahman al-Rahim*, *The Parables of the Qur'an*, and *Al-Isra' wal-Mi'raj*. His contributions were widely acknowledged by contemporary scholars around the world.

Sha'rāwī's teachings respond to modern philosophical trends and social issues, including secularism, despair, and moral relativism.

The significance of this research lies in its attempt to bridge the gap between classical Islamic theology and modern religious thought. Although numerous works have explored the theme of Divine Mercy from Qur'anic, theological, or Sufi perspectives, few have examined how this doctrine is revived and reinterpreted in the modern period through the lens of influential scholars like Shaykh al-Sha'rāwī. His hermeneutical approach represents a living continuity of the Islamic intellectual tradition rooted in the Qur'an and Sunnah yet responsive to the intellectual and emotional needs of contemporary Muslims. By recontextualizing mercy as both a divine attribute and a human virtue, al-Sha'rāwī offers a holistic vision of Islam that reconciles faith with compassion, law with spirituality, and justice with love.

Furthermore, the study underscores that understanding Divine Mercy through al-Sha'rāwī's perspective has profound implications for interfaith dialogue, ethical reform, and social cohesion. In an age often characterized by religious misunderstanding, extremism, and moral polarization, his teachings remind believers that mercy is the essence of God's message to humanity. As he often emphasized, every divine command even those involving discipline or justice emanates from God's mercy. Thus, the believer's task is to perceive and embody this mercy in thought, speech, and action.

Ultimately, this paper argues that Shaykh al-Sha'rāwī's discourse on Divine Mercy represents a vital intellectual and spiritual contribution to contemporary Islamic thought. It not only reaffirms the centrality of mercy in the Qur'anic worldview but also redefines its relevance for the challenges of the modern age. By studying his interpretation, the research seeks to demonstrate that the doctrine of Divine Mercy, when properly understood, provides a comprehensive theological framework for renewal one that fosters compassion, balance, and hope in an increasingly fragmented world. Through this exploration, the paper aspires to contribute to a deeper appreciation of how Islamic theology, when contextualized thoughtfully, continues to illuminate the human condition in every age.

2. FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPT

The Arabic word *rahmah* (mercy), may be understood focusing on the fundamental elaborations taking into account different aspects before further study. We may visit the scholar's opinions for literal understanding and estimation of the word mercy (*rahmah*). The word *rahmah* consists of meanings like the delicacy, subtlety, and kindness (*Riqqah wal ta'ttuf*), forgiveness (*Maghifrah*), sustenance and provision (*Rizq*), succor (*Ghayth*), benevolence and philanthropy (*Ihsān*), heart leniency (*Riqat ul-Qalb*), and compassion. All these aspects are the expression of mercy.² In this discussion, Ibn Manzūr (d.1311) indicated various aspects and phases of the word (*rahmah*) quoting the number of references from the Qur'ān.

*"In Qur'ān 'rahmah' represents the all-encompassing divine concern for humanity, reflected, for example, in divine revelation (Muḥammad (PBUH) is called 'a [reflection of] mercy for the worlds.) and the kindness that ought to characterize human conduct."*³

"The word *rahmah* render as mercy, clemency, lenity leniency, compassion, pity, sympathy graciousness and kindness. It also includes the meanings of womb, uterus, kinship and relationship,"⁴ while, Ḍaif highlighted the derivative of *rahmah*' and said it includes request for mercy, women and

². Muḥammad bin Mukarram Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-'Arab* (Beirut: Dār al-Ṣādir, 2011), 12: 230.

³. John .L. Esposito, *The Oxford dictionary of Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 259-260.

⁴. Dr Rohi Baalbaki, *Al-Mawrid (A Modern Arabic-English Dictionary)* Beirut: Dar El-Ilm lilmaalayin, 2006), 580.

fetus development and is sustaining in the mother womb.⁵ This definition highlights the relation of God and man towards each other.

Moreover, Al-Jurjānī (d.816AH) commented that mercy is the willpower to convey and deliver what is worthy, good (towards moral par-excellence).⁶ We came to that the “*Various dimensions of mercy may cause to enhance sympathetic ties among the humanity for harmonic social structure. Allah Almighty likes to provide human beings fortification in front of calamities by His Mercy.*”⁷ It has also been expressed that “one may observe multidimensional aspects of mercy and its practical phases from creation to that of ultimate apex for human uplifting.”⁸ After the examination of multiple views of scholars regarding the fundamental concept of mercy, it is extracted:

*“The term mercy includes clemency, leniency, generosity, philanthropy, benevolence, compassion and love where the tenderness and sympathy as well as safeguard and protection are important characteristics epistemologically that may have those who have been blessed with the gift of mercy. All these elaborations are important attributes towards living scenario of society either partially or on approaching maximum demands of human thought linked with mostly transcendental and metaphysical aspects of attitude and behaviour projecting peaceful persona leaving impact upon society.”*⁹

This is an evidence that Islamic teachings regarding mercy incorporates multiple dimensions of human life as well as anthropocosmic realm. It projects Allah, Man and Universe relationship

Al-Sha‘rāwī compared grace (*faḍal*) with the concept of mercy (*rahmah*). Grace and bounty is to give more than deserving limit and mercy is a bestowal of potential towards repentance. Allah Almighty wants to make us aware that if there was no mercy and forgiveness than Banī Isrā‘īl (Children of Ya‘qūb (Jacob) would once again return to their covenant and way of action.¹⁰

In brief, *rahmah* in Islam embodies multifaceted dimensions, kindness, forgiveness, compassion, sustenance, and protection, extending from divine revelation to human interaction. Classical scholars highlighted its linguistic, spiritual, and social aspects, illustrating mercy as a bond between Allah, humanity, and creation. Distinct from grace, mercy ensures human repentance and upliftment. Thus, Islamic teachings on *rahmah* offer a comprehensive framework for nurturing moral excellence and fostering harmonious, compassionate societies rooted in divine concern.

3. AL-SHA‘RĀWĪ (1911-1998) EXPOSITION OF DIVINE MERCY

Teachings of Shaykh al-Sha‘rāwī (1911-1998) projects manifold dimensions of mercy in the communal life. He addressed the social evils and advised human beings to act up the right path saturated with the Islamic concept of compassion.

According to Al-Sha‘rāwī, The words *Rahmah* (mercy), *Rahman* (the Most Merciful), and *Rahim* (the Especially Merciful) are all derived from the root *rahm*, which literally means the mother’s womb. This is the place where the fetus is nourished without effort or strength of its own. In this state of weakness, everything required for its growth and development is provided freely, as pure sustenance from Allah, without toil or compensation. The example of a mother’s compassion for her

⁵. Dr Shawqī Daif, Al-Mu‘jam al-Wasīṭ ed. 4th (Cairo: Maktabah al-Shurūq al-Dawlīyyah, 2008), 247.

⁶. Alī bin Muḥammad bin Alī al-Zain al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī, *Al-Ta‘rīfāt*, (Beirut: Dār al-Kutab al-Ilmiyyah, 2010), 95.

⁷. Ashfaq, Muhammad. (2020). "Qur’ānic Concept of Divine Mercy Projected through the Pairs of Divine Attributes: A Criterion for Social Amelioration," *Al-Milal Journal of Religion and Thought* 2 no. 1 (2020): 57-80.

⁸. Ashfaq, Muhammad & Dr M.A Al-Azhari (2019). "A Religio-Legal Discourse of Mercy for Justice: A Qur’ānic Response to the Western Critics," *JRS* 2 no. 1 : 67-102. DOI: 10.33195/uochjrs-v3i11552019

⁹. Mr. Muḥammad Ashfaq & Dr. Manzoor Aḥmad Al-Azhari, “The Qur’ānic Concept of Divine Mercy and its Impact upon Human Attitude and Behaviour: A Religio-Social Discourse,” *Al-Aijaz Research Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities* 3, no.2 (2019): 193-203.

¹⁰. Al-Sha‘rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha‘rāwī*, 213.

child illustrates this meaning: she forgives his mistakes due to her love, and her heart rejoices when he returns to her. Such maternal mercy is only a reflection of Allah's infinite mercy toward His creation. He explained the distinction between Allah's attribute of *Rahman* in this world and *Rahim* in the Hereafter. In the world, Allah's mercy encompasses all creation, believers and disbelievers alike by granting them life, sustenance, and forgiveness without immediate punishment for sins. However, in the Hereafter, His mercy will be exclusive to the believers, while disbelievers will be deprived of it. The concept of exaggeration (*mubalagha*) lies in the vastness, abundance, and permanence of divine blessings general in this world but far greater, everlasting, and believer-specific in the Hereafter.¹¹ This discussion is divided into further sub-titles to grasp al-Sha'rāwīan education in this regard.

3.1 Universality in the Concept of Mercy

The concept means that *rubūbiyyah* (Lordship) is defined more by mercy than harshness; Allah's nurturing, sustaining, and guiding qualities overwhelmingly express compassion rather than severity or punishment. Allah, exalted is He, is the Lord of both the believer and the disbeliever, for He has summoned them all into existence. Thus, He grants them blessings out of His mercy, not because they deserve them. The sun rises upon both the believer and the disbeliever—it does not withhold its rays from the disbeliever and give them only to the believer. Rain falls upon those who worship Allah and upon those who worship idols besides Him. The air is breathed by one who says *lā ilāha illa Allāh* (there is no god but Allah) and by one who does not.

All blessings that come from Allah's Lordship are for all His creation in this world, and this is mercy. Allah is the Lord of all those who obey Him and those who disobey Him. This too is mercy. Allah accepts repentance, and that is mercy. Allah's mercy expressed in His Lordship over His creation: He grants respite to the sinner and opens the doors of repentance to all who turn to Him. Indeed, Allah has made His mercy precede His wrath, and this mercy demands gratitude.¹² Similarly, at another place in volume 8, of his Tafsir, it is expressed that (due to) Allah's mercy: He grants people opportunities for life, and this comes from the gifts of *rubūbiyyah* (Lordship). The gifts of Lordship are for all of His creation, believers and disbelievers, the obedient and the disobedient alike. All the blessings of the universe are from the Lordship of Allah.

Allah's gifts do not distinguish between believer and disbeliever. The earth does not produce crops for the obedient and withhold them from the sinner; the sun does not shine and spread its warmth for the believer while denying it to the disbeliever. All material blessings of the universe are from the Lordship of Allah for His entire creation.¹³ He Says:

نحن قسمنا بينهم الأمور الحياتية، لكنكم تريدون تقسيم رحمة الله، وفرق بين الرحمة في الرسالات وبين امتداد الحياة بالآقوات والمال؛ لأن هذه عطاءات ربوبية. لكن الرحمة هي عطاءات ألوهية، انكم تميزتهم في دنياكم بالمال والبنين والبساتين لا لخصوصية فيكم ولكن لأن نظام الكون كله إنما يحتاج إلى مواهب متكاملة لا إلى مواهب متكررة.¹⁴

"We have distributed among them the affairs of worldly life, yet you seek to divide the mercy of Allah. There is a clear distinction between mercy as manifested in divine messages and the extension of life through sustenance and wealth, for these are gifts of Lordship (rubūbiyyah). Mercy, however, is a manifestation of Divinity (ulūhiyyah). You have been distinguished in this world with wealth, children, and gardens not due to any special merit in you, but because the order of the universe requires complementary talents, not repetitive ones."

So, the doctrine of *rubūbiyyah* as articulated by Shaykh al-Sha'rāwī underscores that Allah's Lordship is fundamentally grounded in mercy rather than severity. Divine sustenance, life, and

¹¹. Muḥammad Matwallī al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī* (Egypt: Dār al-Akhbār al-Yawm, 1998), 1: 48-49.

¹². Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī*, 1: 54.

¹³. Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī*, 8: 5074.

¹⁴. Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī*, 1: 2366.

material provisions are granted universally to all creation believers and disbelievers alike as expressions of Allah's nurturing care, not as rewards based on merit. This universal distribution reflects the wisdom of a cosmic order that requires diversity and complementarity, not uniformity. True mercy, however, finds its highest expression in *ulūhiyyah*, through guidance, revelation, and repentance. Allah's mercy precedes His wrath, calling humanity toward gratitude, moral responsibility, and conscious return to Him.

3.2 Divine Mercy as the Ontological Foundation

Shaykh Muḥammad Matwallī al-Sha'rāwī (d.1998) stated in Tafsīr Sūrah al-Fātiḥah that the Divine Attribute of Mercy is more lenient as compared to the Attribute of *Rabūbiyyah*. Allah Almighty is the Lord of the believer and the unbeliever. He is the one who summoned them all to exist. Therefore, it gives them blessings of mercy... Not what they deserve ... The sun shines on the believer and the unbeliever. The existential aspect of them is because of Divine Mercy ... not due to what they deserve...The sun does not conceal its rays from the infidel and give it to the believer only, and the rain descends on those who worship God and on those who worship not. And the air breathes it from the one who said: *There is no God but Allah*, and He who did not say it. All the blessings, the gift of Allah Almighty as well as to create them and also to accept repentance is by dint of Mercy. So, in Sūrah al-Fātiḥah al-Sha'rāwī mentions (*al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm*) meaning the mercy of Lord in His Lordliness (*Rabūbiyyah*) to create. It is an ontological aspect of creature by virtue of Divine Mercy.¹⁵ Furthermore, al-Sha'rāwī guides us to wake up and understand the wisdom behind the rulings of God. Both pairs of Divine Attributes, stated in the verses are corresponding to the wrongdoer (as He is *shadīd al-'lqāb i.e. severe in punishment*) while towards pious (He is *Ghafūr al-Raḥīm*). He shows His Beauty (*jamāl*) as well as His Majesty (*jalāl*).¹⁶

We may state considering al-Sha'rāwī interpretation in relation to the Qur'ānic verse (2:37) that Allah Almighty estimated the negligence of his creation and enacted for them sources of repentance with three stages. One out of them is to do in accordance with mercy... as if there is no mercy then there is no chance of forgiveness leaving defaulter 'no way to amend', it may cause to spread disorder leaving bad impacts on the social life.¹⁷ Al-Sha'rāwī view may strengthen the view of Anderw Fiala, that justice and forgiveness (mercy) relationship is well-regarded, and:

*"thus we arrived at an a priori that if a wrongdoer does not deserve forgiveness, then forgiveness becomes paradoxical."*¹⁸

The couple *al-Ra'ūf al-Raḥīm* may be visited in different exegetical literature for example Muhammad Matwalī al-Sha'rāwī added that both attributes have different dimensions but commonly known as one, whereas the attribute of *al-Ra'ūf* removes pain, he added that mercy increases benefits and also enhances what one has been bestowed. Furthermore, he made it easy to grasp and said that one may defend stone prior to that of capturing apple when both are thrown to him. He quoted the legal maxim '*removal of evil is prior to that of gaining welfares*' in this context.¹⁹

¹⁵. Shaykh Muhammad Matwallī al-Sha'rāwī, *Asma Allah al-Ḥusnah*, 68-69, 90.

¹⁶. Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī*, 7: 3921.

¹⁷. Muhammad Matwalī Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī*, (Egypt: Islamic Research Academy al-Azhar, 1991), 2843.

¹⁸. Anderw Fiala, *Justice*, "Forgiveness and Care: A Pragmatic Balance," *Ethical Perspectives* 17, no. 4 (2010): 568-569. Doi: 10.2143/EP.17.4.2059847

¹⁹. Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī*, 6091.

Al-Sha'rāwī extracted that “*Repelling banes is better than securing benefits*” and *al-Ra'ūf* is the removal of what are the afflictions and hardships and *al-Raḥīm* is the one who brings benefits and improvement due to His Mercy.²⁰

”لَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ عَزِيزٌ عَلَيْهِ مَا عَنِتُّمْ حَرِيصٌ عَلَيْكُمْ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ“

(9:128)

Al-Qushayrī demarcated between two times mentioning the word *al-lḥsān* in the verse. One is for Lord and the other is for devotee. God is to assistance and the devotee is to servitude, Lord is to friendship (*walāʾ*) and man is to sincerity and loyalty (*wafā*). Then he changed the direction saying, that man is to worship and obedience and the Lord is to acceptance and man is to serfdom while Allah is the bounteous and benefactor.²¹ Here, Al-Sha'rāwī interpreting this verse (55:60) along with citation of mystical reference that *al-lḥsān* is the mutual link either from Allah to His devotee or from devotee to his Lord as God bestows benevolence first, therefore it is necessary for His servant to return towards the act of charity and benevolence. Furthermore, again in return servant will get more and more rewards from Allah) and it may be a continuous link between the devotee and his Lord.²²

Furthermore, al-Sha'rāwī added about subject matter that Divinity (*rubūbiyyah*) does not have harshness as much as it has mercy...He is the One who summoned them all (things) toward existence (*wujūd*) based on compassion (*rahmah*). God is the Lord of all who obeyed Him or who obeyed Him not. This is Divine Mercy, which functions behind His Lordship.²³ Moreover, “when Allah Almighty gives us this knowledge as a mercy to our intellects, it enables us to understand that when the spirits return to the bodies, the bodies which they had lived in will be restored in such a manner that each is distinct from all other bodies which have existed from the time of Adam to the end of the world.”²⁴

In light of the foregoing discussion, Shaykh Muḥammad Matwallī al-Sha'rāwī's exegetical insights reveal that Divine Mercy (*rahmah*) constitutes the foundational principle underlying Allah's *rubūbiyyah*. Creation, sustenance, forgiveness, and the opportunity for repentance are not granted on the basis of human merit but flow from Allah's compassionate will. By distinguishing between mercy as a universal ontological gift and mercy as moral and salvific guidance, al-Sha'rāwī harmonizes justice with forgiveness and severity with compassion. His interpretation affirms that Divine attributes operate in balance *jamāl* and *jalāl*, removal of harm and bestowal of benefit thereby preserving social order, moral responsibility, and hope. Ultimately, al-Sha'rāwī presents mercy as the driving force that sustains existence, nurtures repentance, and connects humanity continuously with its Lord.

3.3 Mercy addressing the Foundation of Social Order

We may quote al-Sha'rāwī here who said in this regard that it is worth nothing that one who is jealous of concerning the gift and rewards of any other, (he is actually) addressing the bestowal of Divine Mercy.²⁵ It may be called as an act of confrontation against Divine Well. This verse indicates Divine guidance as Divine Mercy, where social evil envy and jealousy have been addressed. Anyone

²⁰. Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī*, pdf p. 3796.

²¹. 'Abd al-Karīm ibn Hūzān Abū al-Qāsim Al-Qushayrī, *Laṭā'if al-Ishārāt* (Beirut Lebanon: Dār al-Ilmiyyah, 1971), 3:280-281.

²². Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī*, pdf p. 7374.

²³. Shaykh Muḥammad Matwallī Al-Sha'rāwī, *Asmā' Allah al-Ḥusnah*, 68-69, 90. One may also visit *Tafsīr Al-Sha'rāwī*, pdf p. 10.

²⁴. Al-Sha'rāwī, Muḥammad Matwallī. (200I). *The End of the World*. London: Dar Al Taqwa Ltd. P.75

²⁵. Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī*, pdf p. 505.

who is blessed with goodness should be considered as God's blessing, paying him tribute and respect instead of resentment and jealousy with one who bears goodness.

Prophet Lūṭ ('Alayī 'l-Salām) addressed the people for correction of their bad sexual behaviour in society. When they ignored the Da'wah of Lūṭ ('Alayī 'l-Salām), as a result, rain of stones was showered upon them. Declaring this happening as a sign, the verse (26:175) has been repeated another time with a different context for the lesson of humanity. Al-Sha'rāwī remarked exegetically regarding the previous verse (26:174) as:

"Since rain is one of the causes of goodness and a sign of mercy, as water descends from the sky and revives the earth after its death. But here, God described this rain as it is not rain of goodness and mercy, but rather a rain of torment and resentment."²⁶

This pair (*al-'Azīz al-Raḥīm*) shows dignity, overwhelming and omnipotence of the God of Islam. Al-Sha'rāwī added that *al-'Azīz* is dominant one not recessive, Mighty and the Omnipotent and not subdued under any control.²⁷ He explained:

إذن فالحق سبحانه وتعالى أراد أن يشيع في الناس الرحمة والمودة. وأن يشيع في الناس التعاطف. إنه الحق سبحانه صاحب كل النعمة أراد أن يشيع في الناس أن يعرف كل صاحب نعمة في الدنيا أنه يجب عليه أن تكون نعمته متعدية إلى غيره، فإن رآها المحروم علم أنه مستفيد منها، فإذا كان مستفيداً منها فإنه لن ينظر إليها بحقد، ولا أن ينظر إليها بحسد، ولا يتمنى أن تزول لأن أمرها عائد إليه. ولكن إذا كان السائد هو أن يريد صاحب النعمة في الدنيا أن يأخذ بالاستحواذ على كل عائد نعمته، ولا يراعي حق الله في مهمة النعمة، ولا تتعدى هذه النعمة إلى غيره، فالمحروم عندما يرى ذلك يتمنى أن تزول النعمة عن صاحبها وينظر إليها بحسد. ويشيع الحقد ومعه الضغينة، ويجد الفساد فرصة كاملة للشيوخ في المجتمع كله.²⁸

Thus, the Truth, exalted is He, intended for mercy and affection to be spread among people, and for compassion to prevail among them. He, the Lord of all blessings, willed that every person who possesses a favor in this world should recognize that their blessing is meant to extend to others. If those deprived of it see this, they understand that they too may benefit from it, and in turn, they will neither feel envy nor resentment, nor wish for the blessing to disappear, since its provision ultimately affects them as well. However, if it becomes customary for the possessor of worldly blessings to hoard all that comes from their favor, neglecting the rights of Allah in the use of that blessing, and preventing it from benefiting others, then the deprived, upon witnessing this, may wish for the blessing to be removed from its owner and regard it with envy. In this way, hatred spreads along with malice, providing corruption a full opportunity to permeate throughout society.

Considering current context al-Sha'rāwī stated regarding the verse (16:7), that no doubt modern sources of transportation are more rapid and faster, which results in rest of cattle, but these tired the man for whom God created the whole universe to provide him relief and comfort. One knows that a man driving his car focusing to accelerate it without considering its maintenance throwing behind a cloud of toxic smoke that hurts other humanity. The driver has a different position as compared to the people who feel smoke behind him. But, beware well, that your Lord Almighty neither overlooks nor sleeps (and He is watching your all activities). Imagine how you treat yourself and your children. Before driving your cars and speeding it up it is necessary to pave the roads so that raised dust may not approach the faces of the community harming their breathing against what we have learned and trained ethically.²⁹

If we apply the judgements of the Qur'an to our souls, we will have this mercy, for the human being is a body, values, meanings and morals. These meanings in humans are called psychology, so he may be healthy in structure and body, but he is faint of the soul. Therefore, we find among the specialties of psychiatry, and every patient does not find an organic cause for his illness, which they

²⁶. Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī*, pdf p. 6651.

²⁷. Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī*, pdf p. 6626, 6689.

²⁸. Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī* (pdf p. 764), 2:1192.

²⁹. Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī*, 6659.

diagnose as a mental illness.³⁰ Moreover, Mercy is in the way of God. If we adhere to it, we will be safe from harm, whether material or moral.³¹

This discussion highlights Shaykh al-Sha'rāwī's emphasis on the social and moral dimensions of Divine Mercy (*rahmah*). Blessings from Allah are meant to be shared, fostering compassion, empathy, and harmony within society. When individuals hoard their blessings and ignore their ethical responsibility, envy and resentment arise among the deprived, creating fertile ground for social corruption and malice. Al-Sha'rāwī's exegesis demonstrates that Divine guidance encourages the circulation of goodness, viewing others' blessings as extensions of God's mercy rather than sources of rivalry. Thus, societal well-being depends not only on the abundance of blessings but on their ethical distribution and the cultivation of mutual respect.

3.4 Mercy as Wisdom and Dynamic Force for Social Reform

Shaykh al-Sha'rāwī (1911-1998) expressed interpreting this verse that parent wants to obtain benefits in this world due to generation and cool for their eyes. But Allah Almighty knows that this son will put his parents into distress, and will bring them towards sins and bad deeds, and drag them to torment. The perfect mercy may bestow them in exchange for a son, what is better in this world and the world Hereafter.³² Therefore in order to get Divine Mercy one should stand steadfast and never lose his confidence. Hopefully, he would be blessed with His mercy in any shape. Shaykh says, 'The path of righteous ones is mercy and respect of the others.'³³

Al-Sha'rāwī elaborated various dimensions of mercy. He said mercy (*rahmah*) has been taken from the word '*al-rahām*' a place in the mother womb for fetus where provision is provided. Pointing to the origin then he guided to remember divine mercy raising hand of supplication before the holy court of Allah. Call Him as '*Yā Rabbi Rahmatik... lā tughlaq abwāba Rahmah abada*, then her referred Hadīth Qudsī, "I am Ar-Rahmān (The Most Merciful). I created kinship ties (*ar-rahām*), and I assigned them a name from My own Name. Whoever maintains these ties, I maintain a connection with them; and whoever severs them, I sever my connection with them."³⁴

Al-Sha'rāwīan thought also presents mutual relation of mercy and Imān indicating positive values to be practiced in the society. He condemned that when from one's heart leave Imān off then mercy (*al-rahmah*) also depart from human's heart and limbs. This removal of Imān opens one hands toward theft and unlawful act. As a result, human eyes inclined to visit what is unlawful *ḥarām* and foot leads one to wine and theft. In this way, heart becomes too dead that person could not provide a loaf of bread to one who is in the mouth of death due to hunger.

While Interpreting Qur'ānic verse (2:74), he said that Allah Almighty reminded that flowing of water from stone is mercy, when Moses (A.S) hit the stone with the stick, the spring exploded from it. Mercy result in softness of stone to produce water. While those whose hearts become harden are deprived from mercy.³⁵

Al-Sha'rāwī commented regarding the other humanity and even a disbeliever/unbeliever lives on the earth due to divine Mercy. All blessing of life and fundamental sources to sustain he gets is an expression of Divine Mercy. A believer bestowed satisfaction (*iṭmīnān*) in addition to the other blessing and bounties. And satisfaction is a great bestowal of God.³⁶ He quoted, "If a believer were to know the punishment (in Hell) none would have the audacity to aspire for Paradise (but he would

³⁰. Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī*, 7037.

³¹. Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī*, 7039.

³². Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī*, 5460.

³³. Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī*, 3662.

³⁴. Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī*, pdf, 6, 48.

³⁵. Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī*, pdf, 230.

³⁶. Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī*, pdf, 395.

earnestly desire to be rescued from Hell), and if a non-believer were to know what is there with Allah as a mercy. none would have been disappointed in regard to Paradise.”³⁷

He enlarges the concept of mercy in relation to human intention, dealing with each other focusing attitude and behaviour. God of Islam demands to exercise mercy-based actions in human beings. It not a mercy-centered thought to feel sadness for the others who bestowed by Allah. One should not try to harm other damaging what has been given due to mercy. God of Islam wants to spread mercy and affection among people. ³⁸ Interpreting Al-Qur’ān (17: 82), al-Sha’rāwī says in the light of “And We send down from the Qur’ān that which is a healing and a mercy...” (Al-Isrā’: 82) that:

والاثنان يؤديان إلى سلامة المجتمع من الأمراض الاجتماعية التي تُشقى الإنسان ، وهناك سلامة من أول الأمر . وهناك سلامة ليست من أول الأمر . ومن عنده خصلة سيئة - وهي داء - يشفيه منها القرآن ، أما الرحمة فهي ألا يأتي داء ابتداء ، ولذلك فالرحمة ممتدة .³⁹

Both (healing and mercy) contribute to the well-being of society by protecting it from social ailments that cause human suffering. There is well-being that exists from the outset, and there is well-being that comes later. Whoever possesses a bad trait a disease can be cured by the Qur’ān. Mercy, however, prevents the disease from arising in the first place; thus, mercy is continuous, universal, and enduring. al-Sha’rāwī explained:

“وصِفَةُ المغفرة وصِفَةُ الرحمة كل في مطلقها تَكُونُ لله وحده، وهي توبة للجاني ورحمة للمجني عليه. وكلمة (إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ) توضح لنا أنه سبحانه له طلاقة القدرة في أن يغفر وأن يرحم. فإياك أن تقول: إن فلانا لا يستحق المغفرة والرحمة: لأنه سبحانه مالك السماء والأرض، وهو الذي أعطى للبشر ما يستحقون بالحق الذي أوجبه على نفسه، وله طلاقة القدرة في الكون.”⁴⁰

The attribute of forgiveness and the attribute of mercy, in their absolute concept, belong exclusively to Allah. Forgiveness serves as repentance for the offender, while mercy is consolation for the one who has been wronged. The expression, “Indeed, Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful,” makes clear that He, exalted is He, possesses absolute freedom of power to forgive and to show mercy. Therefore, one should never claim that a certain person does not deserve forgiveness or mercy, for Allah is the Owner of the heavens and the earth. He is the One who grants people what they deserve by a right He has decreed upon Himself, and He possesses unrestricted authority over the entire universe.

According to al-Sha’rāwī, “The Qur’ān describes itself as both *healing* (*shifā’*) and *mercy* (*rahmah*), indicating a comprehensive framework for human well-being. Mercy signifies divine protection that prevents the emergence of social and psychological ailments, whereas healing refers to the removal of such maladies once they have occurred. In this sense, the Qur’ān offers both prevention and cure. Adherence to the Qur’ānic methodology safeguards individuals and societies from moral, social, and psychological disorders. Conversely, neglect of this divine guidance leads to the development of such afflictions. However, the return to Qur’ānic principles restores balance and health, affirming the Qur’ān’s enduring capacity to heal individual souls and reform society at large.”⁴¹

His interpretation highlights that *rahmah* is not merely an emotional attribute but a foundational principle governing creation, sustenance, guidance, repentance, and human interaction. Divine Mercy manifests both preventively and curatively: it safeguards individuals and societies from moral, psychological, and social diseases, and it also heals those ailments when human beings deviate from the divine path. Al-Sha’rāwī emphasizes that mercy accompanies *īmān*; when faith weakens, mercy departs from the heart, leading to social evils such as injustice, theft, and moral corruption. Furthermore, he clarifies that Allah’s mercy encompasses believers and non-believers alike through *rubūbiyyah*, granting life, sustenance, and opportunities for repentance,

³⁷ . Sahih Muslim, no. 2755 (Book 50, Hadith 27).

³⁸ . Al-Sha’rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha’rāwī*, pdf, 764.

³⁹ . Al-Sha’rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha’rāwī*, 9: 530.

⁴⁰ . Al-Sha’rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha’rāwī*, 5: 3129.

⁴¹ . Al-Sha’rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha’rāwī*, 6: 3654-55.

while believers are additionally honored with inner tranquility (*iṭmīnān*). His distinction between forgiveness and mercy affirms Allah's absolute authority to pardon and bestow compassion beyond human judgments of merit. By linking mercy with intention, social conduct, and communal harmony, al-Sha'rāwī presents *rahmah* as a dynamic force essential for social cohesion and moral reform. Ultimately, adherence to Qur'ānic guidance ensures the continuity of mercy, fostering justice, compassion, and balance in both individual lives and collective human society.

3.5 Prophet of Islam as the Apex of Divine Mercy

This Qur'ānic speaks about the supreme status of Divine Mercy (*rahmah*) as manifested through prophethood. The objection of the people why the Qur'ān was not revealed to a prominent man of their city (43:31) is answered by Allah, emphasizing that mercy cannot be apportioned or restricted by human perception (43:32). The distribution of worldly provisions among people is distinct from the bestowal of prophetic guidance, which represents the highest form of mercy and spiritual enrichment. The verse (21:75) further demonstrates that entry into Divine mercy through prophethood is a mark of righteousness, ultimately culminating in the finality of Muhammad ﷺ as the Seal of the Prophets. This underscores a key principle in Islamic theology: while material sustenance is temporally distributed, spiritual guidance is a supreme, non-divisible mercy from Allah, situating prophethood as the pinnacle of divine favor and societal guidance. This distinction reinforces the hierarchy between temporal provisions and transcendent mercy, highlighting the ethical and spiritual implications of divine bestowals in human life. The messengers before Muhammad, may God bless him and grant him peace, were mercy to their nations, while Muhammad was a mercy to all of the worlds.⁴² So, the distinction between general mercy for all creation and the special mercy of prophethood, culminating in Muhammad ﷺ, whose message uniquely extends divine mercy to all humanity.

Shaykh further says in another words:

“فرحمة الله تعالى بمحمد ليست رحمة خاصة به، بل هي رحمة عامة لجميع العاملين، وهذه منزلة كبيرة عالية.”⁴³

The mercy of Allah Almighty upon Muhammad ﷺ is not a mercy exclusive to him alone, but a universal mercy for all those who strive righteously. This represents a lofty and exalted station.

He further emphasizes that the message of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ constitutes a universal mercy, extending beyond humans to all creation. Islam, as a system, encompasses moral, social, and ecological guidance, ensuring the welfare of every aspect of life. Angels benefit spiritually, as exemplified by Gabriel's reassurance through revelation. Humanity is guided toward ethical conduct, fostering social harmony, justice, and compassion. Even animals and inanimate objects are encompassed, as illustrated through prophetic traditions advocating care for animals, removal of harm from pathways, and environmental consideration. The Qur'ānic verse, (وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ) (21:107), affirms that all injunctions of Islam are grounded in mercy, creating a holistic framework for ethical, social, and ecological well-being. In essence, the prophetic mission exemplifies mercy as both principle and practice, regulating life comprehensively and ensuring that no being human, animal, or otherwise is excluded from divine compassion.⁴⁴

According to al-Sha'rāwī Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is a universal compassion and hope for humanity. The Prophet, described as *Ra'ūf Raḥīm*, wishes for all people to experience the sweetness of faith, not only his contemporaries but also future generations. The account of the angel of the mountains offering to crush the disbelievers illustrates the Prophet's merciful choice: he hoped that some from their descendants would sincerely worship Allah alone, emphasizing guidance over punishment. Qur'ānic verses (Al-Kahf 18:6; Ash-Shu'arā' 26:3-4) reinforce this principle: God desires

⁴². Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī*, 15:9595.

⁴³. Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī*, 15:9019.

⁴⁴. Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī*, 16:9657-58.

willing hearts, not forced submission. The Prophet's mission, therefore, exemplifies mercy and patience, prioritizing free will, moral choice, and spiritual growth. The Qur'ān affirms his dedication to the spiritual well-being of all humans, demonstrating that true divine guidance seeks heartfelt belief, not mere mechanical obedience. This shows the inclusive, compassionate, and enduring nature of Prophetic mercy, aiming at both immediate and future generations. Furthermore, on the Day of Judgment, the Prophet's intercession (*shafā'ah*) exemplifies mercy for all nations, accelerating judgment and sparing them from prolonged terror. His role reassures humanity that divine compassion encompasses both guidance in life and alleviation in the Hereafter. This reinforces the continuous, inclusive, and dynamic nature of Prophetic mercy, linking divine law, human joy, and spiritual protection across time.⁴⁵

Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī presents the Prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ represents the apex of Divine Mercy in its most comprehensive and universal form. The Qur'ānic portrayal of mercy transcends material provision and situates spiritual guidance as the highest divine favor, entrusted solely by Allah to whom He wills. Unlike earlier prophets whose mercy was primarily confined to their respective communities, Muhammad ﷺ was sent as a mercy to all worlds: humans, jinn, animals, and even the broader cosmic order. His message integrates belief, ethics, law, compassion, and ecological responsibility into a unified framework of mercy. As emphasized by al-Sha'rāwī, the Prophet's deep concern for human guidance, his patience with opposition, and his preference for reform over retribution reflect mercy in both principle and practice. This mercy extends beyond worldly life into the Hereafter through his intercession, alleviating fear and hardship for humanity. Thus, Prophetic mercy remains continuous, inclusive, and transformative, offering guidance, hope, and spiritual security for all generations.

4. CONCLUSION

In the light of this paper, we reached at the final remarks as:

1. Divine Mercy (*rahmah*) emerges in al-Sha'rāwī's thought as the central axis of Islamic theology, governing creation, sustenance, guidance, forgiveness, and salvation.
2. Mercy precedes wrath in the Qur'ānic worldview and functions as the ontological foundation of existence rather than a contingent divine response.
3. Al-Sha'rāwī clearly distinguishes between *rubūbiyyah*-based mercy (universal sustenance) and *ulūhiyyah*-based mercy (guidance and revelation).
4. Material provisions are distributed universally, while spiritual guidance represents the highest, non-divisible form of divine mercy.
5. Mercy operates both preventively and curatively: it averts moral and social corruption and heals it when deviation occurs.
6. The Qur'ān functions simultaneously as *shifā'* (healing) and *rahmah* (protective mercy), ensuring holistic well-being.
7. Social harmony depends upon ethical circulation of divine blessings; hoarding negates mercy and generates envy and corruption.
8. Al-Sha'rāwī harmonizes divine justice with forgiveness, affirming that punishment and mercy coexist within divine wisdom.
9. Faith (*īmān*) and mercy are inseparable; erosion of faith leads to the departure of mercy from individual and social life.
10. Prophethood represents the pinnacle of divine mercy, transcending material benefit and transforming moral consciousness.

⁴⁵. Al-Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī*, 3:1884-85.



11. Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ embodies universal mercy, extending compassion to all creation across time and space.
12. Prophetic mercy culminates in intercession in the Hereafter, affirming divine compassion as continuous, inclusive, and salvific.

Recommendations for Further Research

Future studies may comparatively examine al-Sha'rāwī's doctrine of Divine Mercy alongside classical exegetes such as al-Rāzī and Ibn 'Āshūr to highlight methodological continuities and innovations. Research may explore the application of al-Sha'rāwī's mercy-centered ethics in contemporary issues such as environmental responsibility, economic justice, and social inequality.

Further inquiry could analyze Divine Mercy in modern Arabic and Urdu tafāsīr discourse to assess how contemporary scholars address existential and moral crises through Qur'ānic interpretation.

A focused interdisciplinary study may be conducted on the psychological and therapeutic dimensions of mercy (*raḥmah*) in Qur'ānic guidance, engaging modern psychology.

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