

Understand Quran in Taraveeh

Moulana Maududi's Commentry (Tafseer) Serialized for Ramadan



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In the name of Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful.

Note

Taraveeh is one of the most important non-obligatory prayers performed during the holy month of Ramadan. A part of Quran is recited each night during the Taraveeh and the whole Quran is completed in a pre-specified duration.

Listening to Quran even without understanding is a religious duty and an act of piety blessed by Allah. But understanding the contents and concepts of the verses and context in which they were revealed, elevates a human being to a higher spiritual plain.

A large part of Quran is a guide on how to conduct your day to day affairs: Caring for your parents, giving charity, being fair in personal and professional dealings etc. For a Muslim each Ramadan and every Taraveeh is an opportunity to re-evaluate life in the light of Quran.

Quran is divided into thirty parts. About one and a quarter of this division are recited in the first fifteen nights during Taraveeh in Ramadan. About one part is read until the 26th night of Ramadan. On the 27th night Quran recitation is completed by reading the last half of the thirtieth part as it contains several suras. The commentary of Quran is organized in a similar pattern here, so that the each night's recitation is reviewed on the preceding day.

Taraveeh: First Night

Surah Al-Fathiha:

In the name of Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful.

Name

This Surah is named Al Fatihah because of its subject-matter. Fatihah is that which opens a subject or a book or any other thing. In other words, Al-Fatihah is a sort of preface.

Period of Revelation

It is one of the very earliest Revelations to the Holy Prophet. As a matter of fact, we learn from authentic Traditions that it was the first complete Surah which was revealed to Muhammed (Allah's peace be upon him). Before this, only a few miscellaneous verses were revealed which form parts of Alaq, Muzzammil, Muddathir, etc.

Theme

This Surah is in fact a prayer which Allah has taught to all those who want to make a study of His book. It has been placed at the very beginning of the book to teach this lesson to the reader: if you sincerely want to benefit from the Quran, you should offer this prayer to the Lord of the Universe.

This preface is meant to create a strong desire in the heart of the reader to seek guidance from the Lord of the Universe, Who alone can grant it. Thus Al Fatihah indirectly teaches that the best thing for a man is to pray for guidance to the straight path, to study the Quran with the mental attitude of a seeker- after-truth and to recognize the fact that the Lord of the Universe is the source of all knowledge. He should, therefore, begin the study of the Quran with a prayer to him for guidance.

From this theme, it becomes clear that the real relation between Al Fatihah and the Quran is not that of an introduction to a book but that of a prayer and its answer. Al Fatihah is the prayer from the servant and the Quran is the answer from the Master to his prayer. The servant prays to Allah to show him guidance and the Master places the whole of the Quran before him in answer to his prayer, as if to say, "This is the Guidance you begged from Me."

Surah Al-Baqara:

In the name of Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful.

Name

Why the name Al-Baqarah?

Al-Baqarah (the Cow) has been so named from the story of the Cow occurring in this Surah (vv. 67-73). It has not, however, been used as a title to indicate the subject of the Surah. It will, therefore, be as wrong to

translate the name Al-Baqarah into "The Cow" or "The Heifer" as to translate any English name, say Baker, Rice, Wolf etc., into their equivalents in other languages or vice versa, because this would imply that the Surah dealt with the subject of "The Cow". Many more Surahs of the Quran have been named in the same way because no comprehensive words exist in Arabic (in spite of its' richness) to denote the wide scope of the subject discussed in them. As a matter of fact all human languages suffer from the same limitation.

Sequence

Though it is a Madani Surah, it follows naturally a Makki Surah Al-Fatihah, which ended with the prayer: "Show us the straight way". It begins with the answer to that prayer, "This is the Book (that) . . .is guidance. . ."

The greater part of Al-Baqarah was revealed during the first two years of the Holy Prophet's life at Al-Madinah. The smaller part which was revealed at a later period has been included in this Surah because its contents are closely related to those dealt with in this Surah. For instance, the verses prohibiting interest were revealed during the last period of the Holy prophet's life but have been inserted in this Surah. For the same reason, the last verses (284-286) of this Surah which were revealed at Makkah before the migration of the Holy Prophet to Al-Madinah have also been included in it.

Historical Background

In order to understand the meaning of this Surah, we should know its historical background:

At Makkah the Quran generally addressed the mushrik Quraish who were ignorant of Islam, but at Al- Madinah it was also concerned with the Jews who were acquainted with the creed of the Unity of Allah, Prophet-hood, Revelation, the Hereafter and angels. They also professed to believe in the

law which was revealed by Allah to their Prophet Moses (Allah's peace be upon him), and in principle, their way was the same (Islam) that was being taught by Prophet Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him). But they had strayed away from it during the centuries of degeneration and had adopted many un-Islamic creeds, rites and customs of which there was no mention and for which there was no sanction in the Torah. Not only this : they had tampered with the Torah by inserting their own explanations and interpretations into its text. They had distorted even that part of the Word of God which had remained intact in their Scriptures and taken out of it the real spirit of true religion and were now clinging to a lifeless frame of rituals. Consequently their beliefs, their morals and their conduct had gone to the lowest depths of degeneration. The pity is that they were not only satisfied with their condition but loved to cling to it. Besides this, they had no intention or inclination to accept any kind of reform. So they became bitter enemies of those who came to teach them the Right Way and did their worst to defeat every such effort. Though they were originally Muslims, they had swerved from the real Islam and made innovations and alterations in it and had fallen victims to hair splitting and sectarianism. They had forgotten and forsaken Allah and begun to serve mammon. So much so that they had even given up their original name "Muslim" and adopted the name "Jew" instead, and made religion the sole monopoly of the children of Israel.

This was their religious condition when the Holy Prophet went to Al-Madinah and invited the Jews to the true religion. That is why more than one third of this Surah has been addressed to the children of Israel. A critical review of their history, their moral degeneration and their religious perversions has been made; side by side with this the high standard of morality and the fundamental principles of the pure religion have been put forward in order to bring out clearly the nature of the degeneration of the community of a prophet when it goes astray and to draw clear lines of demarcation between real piety and formalism, and the essentials and non-essentials of the true religion.

At Makkah Islam was mainly concerned with the propagation of its fundamental principles and the moral training of its followers. But after the

migration of the Holy Prophet to Al-Madinah, where Muslims had come to settle from all over Arabia and where a tiny Islamic State had been set up with the help of the Ansar (local supporters), naturally the Quran had to turn its attention to the social, cultural, economic, political and legal problems as well. This accounts for the difference between the themes of the surahs revealed at Makkah and those at Al-Madinah. Accordingly about half of this Surah deals with those principles and regulations which are essential for the integration and solidarity of a community and for the solution of its problems.

After the migration to Al-Madinah, the struggle between Islam and un-Islam had also entered a new phase. Before this the Believers, who propagated Islam among their own clans and tribes, had to face its opponents at their own risk. But the conditions had changed at Al-Madinah, where Muslims from all parts of Arabia had come and settled as one community, and had established an independent city state. Here it became a struggle for the survival of the Community itself, for the whole of non- Muslim Arabia was bent upon and united in crushing it totally. Hence the following instructions, upon which depended not only its success but its very survival, were revealed in this Surah:

1. The Community should work with the utmost zeal to propagate its ideology and win over to its side the greatest possible number of people.
2. It should so expose its opponents as to leave no room for doubt in the mind of any sensible person that they were adhering to an absolutely wrong position.
3. It should infuse in its members (the majority of whom were homeless and indigent and surrounded on all sides by enemies) that courage and fortitude which is so indispensable to their very existence in the adverse circumstances in which they were struggling and to prepare them to face these boldly.
4. It should also keep them ready and prepared to meet any armed menace, which might come from any side to suppress and crush their ideology, and to oppose it tooth and nail without minding the overwhelming numerical strength and the material resources of its enemies

5. It should also create in them that courage which is needed for the eradication of evil ways and for the establishment of the Islamic Way instead.

That is why Allah has revealed in this Surah such instructions as may help achieve all the above mentioned objects.

During this period, a new type of "Muslims," munafiqin (hypocrites), had begun to appear. Though signs of duplicity had been noticed during the last days at Makkah, they took a different shape at Al-Madinah. At Makkah there were some people who professed Islam to be true but were not prepared to abide by the consequences of this profession and to sacrifice their worldly interests and relations and bear the afflictions which inevitably follow the acceptance of this creed. But at Al-Madinah different kinds of munafiqin (hypocrites) began to appear. There were some who had entered the Islamic fold merely to harm it from within. There were others who were surrounded by Muslims and, therefore, had become "Muslims" to safeguard their worldly interests. They, therefore, continued to have relations with the enemies so that if the latter became successful, their interests should remain secure. There were still others who had no strong conviction of the truth of Islam but had embraced it along with their clans. Lastly, there were those who were intellectually convinced of the truth of Islam but did not have enough moral courage to give up their former traditions, superstitions and personal ambitions and live up to the Islamic moral standards and make sacrifice in its way.

At the time of the revelation of Al-Baqarah, all sorts of hypocrites had begun to appear. Allah has, therefore, briefly pointed out their characteristics here. Afterwards when their evil characteristics and mischievous deeds became manifest, Allah sent detailed instructions about them.

Theme: Guidance

This Surah is an invitation to the Divine Guidance and all the stories, incidents etc., revolve round this central theme. As this Surah has

particularly been addressed to the Jews, many historical events have been cited from their own traditions to admonish and advise them that their own good lies in accepting the Guidance revealed to the Holy Prophet. They should, therefore, be the first to accept it because it was basically the same that was revealed to Prophet Moses (Allah's peace be upon him).

Topics and their Interconnection

These introductory verses declare the Quran to be the Book of Guidance: enunciate the articles of the Faith -- belief in Allah, Prophethood and Life-after-death; divide mankind into three main groups with regard to its acceptance or rejection -- Believers, disbelievers and hypocrites. **1 - 20**

Allah invites mankind to accept the Guidance voluntarily and to submit to Him, the Lord and the Creator of the Universe and to believe in the Quran, His Guidance, and in the Life-after-death. **21 - 29**

The story of the appointment of Adam as Allah's Vicegerent on Earth, of his life in the Garden, of his falling a prey to the temptations of Satan, of his repentance and its acceptance, has been related to show to mankind (Adam's offspring), that the only right thing for them is to accept and follow the Guidance. This story also shows that the Guidance of Islam is the same that was given to Adam and that it is the original religion of mankind. **30 - 39**

In this portion invitation to the Guidance has particularly been extended to the children of Israel and their past and present attitude has been criticized to show that the cause of their degradation was their deviation from the Guidance. **40 - 120**

The Jews have been exhorted to follow Prophet Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him) who had come with the same Guidance and who was a descendant and follower of Prophet Abraham whom they highly honored as their ancestor, and professed to follow as a prophet. The story of the

building of the Ka`abah by him has been mentioned because it was going to be made the qiblah of the Muslim Community. **121 - 141**

In this portion, the declaration of the change of qiblah from the Temple (Jerusalem) to the Ka`abah (Makkah) has been made as a symbol of the change of leadership from the children of Israel to the Muslim Community, which has also been fore-warned to guard against those transgressions against the Guidance that had led to the deposition of the Jews. **142 - 152**

In this portion practical measures have been prescribed to enable the Muslims to discharge the heavy responsibilities of the leadership that had been entrusted to them for the promulgation of Guidance. Salat, Fast, Zakat, Haj and Jihad have been prescribed for the moral training of the Ummat. The Believers have been exhorted to obey authority, to be just, to fulfill pledges, to observe treaties, to spend wealth etc., in the way of Allah. Laws, rules and regulations have been laid down for their organization, cohesion and conduct of day-to-day life and for the solution of social, economic, political and international problems; on the other hand, drinking, gambling, lending money on interest etc., have been prohibited to keep the Ummat safe from disintegration. In between these, the basic articles of the Faith have been reiterated at suitable places, for these alone can enable and support one to stick to the Guidance. **153 – 251**

