

Hadhrat Ibn Mas'ood (Radhiyallahoh anho) said, "If you seek knowledge, you should meditate on the meanings of the Qur'an, because it embodies the history of former as well as of latter times." It is, however, essential to observe the pre-requisites for interpreting the Qur'an. An unbecoming present-day fashion is that even those who possess little or no knowledge of Arabic vocabulary offer their personal opinion on the basis of vernacular translations of the Qur'an. Specialists have laid down that any one attempting a commentary of the Holy Qur'an should be well versed in fifteen subjects. These, as briefly given below, will show that it is not possible for everybody to understand the underlying significance and real meanings of the Holy Qur'an.

(1) *Lughat*, i.e., philology of language, which helps in understanding the appropriate meanings of words. Mujahid (Rahmatullah alaih) says, "one who believes in Allah and the Day of Judgement should not open his lips in respect of the Qur'an, unless he is thoroughly conversant with the philology of the Arabic language. Quite often an Arabic word has several meanings. A person may be knowing only one or two of them, though in a given context the actual meaning may be quite different."

(2) *Nahw*, i.e., syntax, a branch of grammar, which helps in understanding the relation of a sentence with another and also of I'raab (vowel sounds) of the letters of a word. A change in I'raab often means a change in the meaning.

(3) *Sarf*, i.e., etymology, a branch of grammar, which helps in knowing the root words and conjugations. The meaning of a word changes with the change in the root and with a change in its conjugation.

Ibn Faris (Rahmatullah alaih) says, "One who loses the knowledge of etymology loses a great deal." 'Allamah Zamakhshari (Rahmatullah alaih) mentions that, when a certain person set to translate the ayat—

يَوْمَ نَدْعُوا كُلَّ اُنَاسٍ بِمَا كَانُوا

On the day that We shall call each and every people after their leader,

he ignorantly rendered it thus: "On the day that We shall call each people after their mothers." He supposed that the singular Arabic word 'imam' (leader) was the plural of the Arabic word 'ummi' (mother). If he had been conversant with etymology, he would have known that the plural of 'ummi' is not 'imam'.

(4) *Ishliqaq*, i.e., derivatives. It is necessary to have the knowledge of derivatives and their root words, because if a word has been derived from two different root words, it will have two different meanings, e.g., the word 'maseeh' is derivable from 'masah' which means to touch or to move wet hands over, and also from 'masahah' which means measurement.

(5) *Ilmul Ma'ani*, i.e., knowledge of semantics, because phrase constructions are understood from their meanings.

(6) *Ilmul Bayaan*, i.e., knowledge of figures of speech, like similes and metaphors, due to which expressions or shades of meaning or similes and metaphors become known.

(7) *Ilmul Badee'*, i.e., knowledge of rhetoric, the knowledge which reveals the beauty of language and its implications.

The last three are the branches of *Ilmul Balaaghah* (knowledge of oratory), and are considered very important subjects, which a commentator should master, because the Glorious Qur'an is a perfect miracle and its amazing constructions can only be understood after mastering these subjects.

(8) *Ilmul Qiraa'ah*, i.e., knowledge of the art of pronunciation, because different methods of recitation sometimes convey different meanings, and sometimes one meaning is to be preferred over the other.

(9) *Ilmul Aqa'id*, i.e., knowledge of the fundamentals of faith. This is necessary to explain certain analogies. The literal meaning of certain ayat referring to Almighty Allah is not the correct one. For example, the analogy in the ayat—

بِأَلَلهِ لَوْ أَنَّ إِلَهُيهِمْ

(The hand of Allah is over their hands)

will have to be explained because Allah has no physical hands.

(10) *Usoolul Fiqh* i.e., Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence. These are necessary for reasoning out and finding arguments in the basic support of statements.

(11) *Asbaabun Nuzool*, i.e., the particular circumstances which caused revelation. The meaning of an ayat will be better understood if we know how and when it had been revealed. Sometimes the true meaning of an ayat is understood only if we know the circumstances in which the ayat had been revealed.

(12) *An Naasikh wal Mansookh*, i.e., knowledge of commandments that have subsequently been abrogated or changed, so that abrogated commandments may be distinguished from the standing ones.

(13) *Ilmul Fiqh*, i.e., knowledge of Islamic Jurisprudence, because it is only through this knowledge that we arrive at a complete understanding of general principles.

(14) Knowledge of such ahadith that happen to be commentary on certain brief verses of the Qur'an.

(15) The last but most important is the *Wahbi ilm*, or the gifted understanding, bestowed by Almighty Allah upon His selected ones, as is referred in the hadith—

مَنْ عَمِلَ بِمَا عَلَّمَ وَرَزَّاهُ اللَّهُ عِلْمَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ

Whosoever acts upon what he knows, Almighty Allah bestows upon him the knowledge of things not known to him.

It is this special understanding that was implied in the reply of Hadhrat 'Ali (Karramallahau wajhah) (may Allah

be kind to him) when he was asked by the people if he had received from Rasullullah (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) any special knowledge or instructions which were not received by others. Hadhrat Ali (Radhiyallahu anho) said, "I swear by Him Who made the Paradise and created life that I possess nothing special, except the clear understanding which Almighty Allah bestows upon a person in respect of the Qur'an."

Ibn Abid Dunyaa (Rahmatullah alaihi) says that the knowledge of the Holy Qur'an and that which can be derived out of it are as vast as a boundless ocean.

The branches of knowledge described above are like tools, i.e. essential pre-requisite for a commentator. A commentary written by a person who is not thoroughly acquainted with these branches of knowledge will be based on his personal opinion, which is prohibited. The Sahabah (Companions of the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) already had Arabic language as their mother-tongue, and they reached the depth of the rest of the knowledge by means of their illuminating contact that they had with Rasullullah (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam).

Allamah Suyuti says that those who think that it is beyond the capacity of a man to acquire Wahbi ilm, or gifted understanding, are not right. To get this knowledge from Allah, one should adopt the means to this end, e.g., acting upon the knowledge that one has acquired, and disinclination towards the world.

It is stated in 'Keemiyaa-e-Sa'adat' that three persons are not blessed with complete understanding of the Qur'an. First, one who is not well versed in Arabic, secondly, one who persists in committing a major sin or indulges in act of religious innovation, because these actions blacken his heart, which in turn prevents him from understanding the Qur'an. Thirdly, one who is a rationalist, even in the matter of faith, and feels embarrassed when he reads an ayat of the Qur'an which he is not able to fully rationalize.

اللَّهُمَّ احْفَظْنَا مِنْهُمْ

May Allah protect us from all such sins and evils.

HADITH 9

(٩) عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَمْرٍو رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ يُقَالُ لِمَنْ أَحْبَبَ الْقُرْآنَ إِفْرًا وَازْتِيقَ وَرُئِلَ كَمَا كُنْتَ تُرِئِلُ فِي الدُّنْيَا فَإِنَّ مَنَازِلَكَ عِنْدَ ابْنِ آدَمَ تَفْرَأُهَا (رواه أحمد والترمذي وأبو داود والبيهقي وابن ماجه وابن حبان في صحيحه)

Hadhrat 'Abdullah ibn Amr (Radhiyallahu anho) reports that Rasulullah (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) said: "On the Day of Judgement, it will be said to the Man devoted to the Qur'an, 'Go on reciting the Qur'an and continue ascending the storeys of Jannat (Paradise) and recite in the slow manner you had been reading in worldly life; your final abode will be where you reach at the time of the last ayat of your recitation.'"

"The man of Qur'an" apparently means a hafiz. Mulla 'Ali Qari has explained it fully that this honour is reserved for a hafiz, and that this hadith does not apply to one who reads by looking into the Holy Book. First, because the words "Man of Qur'an" point towards a hafiz and secondly there is a tradition in Musnad Ahmad -

حَتَّى يَفْرَأَ حِفْظًا مَعَهُ

Till he reads of whatever Qur'an is with him.

This word more clearly refers to a hafiz, although a reader who remains very often engaged in reciting the Qur'an may also be implied.

It is written in 'Mirqaat' that this hadith does not apply to a reader who is accursed by the Qur'an. This is with reference to the hadith that there are many readers of the Qur'an who read the Qur'an but the Qur'an invokes curses upon them. Therefore, the reading of Qur'an by a person who does not adhere to the correct tenets does not constitute an argument that he is acceptable to Allah. Many Ahadith of this type relate to the Khawarij (a sect who were opposed to Hadhrat 'Ali (Radhiyallahu anho)).

In this commentary, Shah Abdul Aziz (Rahmatullah alaihi) has written that 'tarteel' literally means reading with good and clear pronunciation, while according to Islamic principles it means reading in accordance with certain rules as follows:

- (1) The letters of the alphabets should be correctly uttered to ensure their correct pronunciation so that ' (ط)' is not read as ' (ث)' and ' (ص)' and so on.
- (2) Stopping correctly at the pauses, so that the joining or finishing of the verses may not take place at inappropriate places.
- (3) The correct pronunciation of the vowel sounds.
- (4) Raising the voice slightly so that the words of Qur'an uttered by the mouth may reach the ears and thus influence the heart.
- (5) Setting the sound in a way that it may become full of pathos and may affect the heart quickly, because a pathetic voice influences the heart at once, moves and strengthens the soul more affectively.

The physicians are of the opinion that if a medicine is required to affect the heart quickly, it should be given a sweet smell by means of a perfume, for the heart is sensitive to sweet smell and if the medicine is required to affect the liver, it should be sweetened with sugar because the liver likes sweet things. Therefore, if a perfume is used at the time of recitation, it will have a better influence on the heart.

- (6) Tashdeed (تَشْدِيدُ) (doubling of letters) and madd (مَدُّ) (prolongation of letters) should be fully pronounced because this reveals the grandeur of the Qur'an and adds to its effectiveness.
- (7) As stated earlier, the reader's heart should respond to the ayat indicating mercy of Allah or chastisement by Him.

The above-mentioned seven rules constitute the correct way of reciting the Qur'an, which is called tarteel, and the sole object of all this is to reach the correct understanding and grasp of the deeper meaning of the Holy Qur'an.

Hadhrat Umm-e-Salamah (Radhiyallahu anha) was once asked by someone as to how Rasulullah (Sallallahu alaihe wasallam) used to recite Qur'an. She said, "In a way that all vowel sounds were clear and the pronunciation of each letter was distinct." It is desirable to recite the Qur'an with propriety even if one may not understand the meaning. Ibn Abbas (Radhiyallahu anho) said that he preferred