



Tafheemul Quran
in Colors
Arabic English
Introduction
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Evergreen Islamic Center

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Tafheemul Quran

An Introduction to the understanding of the Quran

Tafheemul Quran is the most prominent exegesis, *tafseer* and explanation of the Quran by Syed Abul Aala Maududi. *Tafheemul Quran* was originally written in Urdu. The English rendering of the Urdu meanings of the Arabic Quran was first done by Muhammad Akbar Muradpuri and Abdul Aziz Kamal. The explanatory portion which is the *Tafseer* of the Quran was translated from Urdu into English by Muhammad Akbar Muradpuri. The Introduction of the *Tafseer* written by Syed Abul Aala

Maududi in Urdu was translated in English by Zafar Ishaq Ansari. The complete *Tafheemul Quran* is a combination of both, the translation of the Quran and the *Tafseer*.

The following steps have been taken to present *Tafheemul Quran* in a new and enhanced format

* The image-based *Tafheemul Quran* has been transformed into text-based high resolution graphic English and Arabic font document. The resulting optimization also allows electronic portability across Computers, Smart Phones and Electronic Book Readers.

* The Arabic text of the entire Quran has been replaced by high resolution font based *Uthmani* Script. Arabic text has also been verified for accuracy.

* In the last decade of 20th century, the hard copy of *Tafheemul Quran* was transformed into editable soft copy text using OCR (Optical Character Recognition Hardware/Software). However, in those days the OCR being primitive, introduced a fairly large number of inaccuracies in the spellings, grammar and punctuation. In many places the words were changed to the extent that the entire sentences did not make any sense. Later on, when Internet became widely available, many Islamic Web sites copied this English part of the *Tafheemul Quran*, added poor quality scanned Arabic and made it available to the readers on line. No effort was made towards any correction. As a result, *Tafheemul Quran* available on almost all the web sites is full of errors.

A major effort has been done here. The entire *Tafheemul Quran* has been reviewed. All spelling, grammar, and

punctuation errors have been corrected. Where necessary, vocabulary and words has been replaced to contemporary English. We hope this brings the entire *Tafheemul Quran* close to an error free document.

* Syed Maududi's translation of the Quran from Arabic into Urdu was based on his unique approach which was not based: 'ayat by ayat'. He took the freedom of translating several ayats together based on a subject, topic or event. This approach, when later, translated from Urdu to English created opportunity for additional work in two areas. First, translating Quranic Arabic into Urdu and then Urdu into English caused loss of the exact Arabic meanings of several words in each Surah as they should have been understood in contemporary English. Second, subdividing the translation of multiple ayats into individual ayats caused a major misalignment of the meanings. An effort has been made to rectify this.

In order to rearrange and bring the closest Quranic Arabic meaning into contemporary English, the English translation of the Arabic Quran has been revised with the help of the following authentic translations. Extreme care has been exercised to ensure that the meanings that Syed Maududi had intended in his original work do not change.

* *The Meaning of the Glorious Quran, An explanatory Translation (Revised)* by Mohammad Marmaduke Pickthall.

* *The Glorious Quran, Translation and Commentary* by Allama Abdullah Yusuf Ali.

* *The Noble Quran in the English Language.* By Muhammad Taqi al-Din al-Hilali and Muhammad Muhsin

Khan.

* *The Quran: The First American Version.* By Thomas B. Irving (Taalim Ali).

* *The Quran with corresponding English Meaning.* Sahih International.

* The PDF, in 114 Surahs files as well as eBook and iBook can be downloaded on Personal Computers, Smart Phones, and Electronic Book Readers and can be permanently stored without the need for reading on line via Internet.

* There are no restrictions. This work is available free of cost. CDs can be made and distributed. Web sites can copy and redistribute without seeking any permission.

* My sources of studies, references, and material collection for this work included Wikipedia, Department of Religious Studies, University of Southern California, Islamicnet and hard copy print (six volumes) of *Tafheemul Quran* translated in English by Muhammad Akbar Muradpuri.

* In the course of several years of effort of transforming and enhancing the *Tafheemul Quran* in the present format, I constantly received help, guidance and encouragement from several of my dear friends and acquaintances. I greatly appreciate Umar Ahmed for providing valuable assistance in reviewing my work, Saeed Malik (Author of a very precious book, *A perspective on the Signs of Al-Quran*) for his advice on numerous topics, and Ilyas Choudhry for helping further elaborate the biological sciences related discussion by the author of *Tafheemul Quran* in the matters of human embryology. May Allah Taala bestow great reward upon Ilyas Chaudry saheb as his

proof reading of Quranic Arabic made my work easy.

* It will be unfair if I do not express my appreciation to my wife Brenda, daughter Sabeena and son Javed. After my full time job in the fast lanes of Silicon Valley, my evenings and weekends, while working on *Tafheemul Quran* and other Quranic related projects, have been mostly absent from their lives. A human being cannot pay back the sacrifices endured by others for a noble cause such as this. May Allah reward them of their patience and understanding.

May Allah Subhanuhu wa ta'ala accept this effort

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And indeed, We have made easy the Quran to understand. Then is there anyone who would take admonition.

وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْآنَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِنْ مُدَكِّرٍ
(الْقَمَر)

Tafheemul Quran

An Introduction

By

Syed Abul Aala Maududi

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

2. This is the Book, no doubt about which. A guidance for those conscious (of Allah).

3. Those who believe in the unseen, and establish prayer, and out of what We have provided for them, they spend.

4. And those who believe in that which has been revealed to you and that which was revealed before you, and of the Here- after they are certain.

5. Those are on guidance from their Lord. And those, they are the successful.

AlBaqarah

ذَلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ ۗ فِيهِ ۗ هُدًى

لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ ۙ

الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَ

مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ ۙ

وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ وَ مَا

أُنزِلَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ ۗ وَ بِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ

يُوقِنُونَ ۙ

أُولَٰئِكَ عَلَىٰ هُدًى مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ ۗ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ

الْمُفْلِحُونَ ۙ

This introduction has been written with two objectives: First to acquaint the reader with certain matters which he should grasp at the very outset so as to achieve a more than superficial understanding of the Holy Book. Second, to clarify those disturbing questions that commonly arise in the mind of the reader during the study of the Quran.

Unique Book

We are accustomed to reading books that present information, ideas and arguments systematically and coherently. So when we embark on the study of the Quran, we expect that this book too will revolve around a definite

subject, that the subject matter of the book will be clearly defined at the beginning and will then be neatly divided into sections and chapters, after which discussion will proceed in a logical sequence. We likewise expect a separate and systematic arrangement of instruction and guidance for each of the various aspects of human life. However, as soon as we open the Quran, we encounter a hitherto completely unfamiliar genre of literature. We notice that it embodies precepts of belief and conduct, moral directives, legal prescriptions, exhortations and admonition, censure and condemnation of evildoers, warning to the deniers of the truth, good tidings and words of consolation and good cheer to those who have suffered for the sake of God, arguments and corroborative evidence in support of its basic message, allusions to anecdotes from the past and the signs of God visible in the universe. Moreover, these myriad subjects alternate without any apparent system; quite unlike the books to which we are accustomed. The Quran deals with the same subject over and over again, each time couched in a different phraseology. The reader also encounters abrupt transitions between one subject matter and another. Audience and speaker constantly change as the message is directed now to one and then to another group of people. There is no trace of the familiar divisions into chapters and sections. Likewise, the treatment of different subjects is unique. If an historical subject is raised, the narrative does not follow the pattern familiar in historical accounts. In the discussion of philosophical or metaphysical questions, we miss the familiar expressions and terminology of formal

logic and philosophy. Cultural and political matters, or questions pertaining to man's social and economic life, are discussed in a way very different from that usual in work of social sciences. Juristic principles and legal injunctions are elucidated, but quite differently from the manner of conventional works. When we come across an ethical instruction, we find its form entirely differs from anything to be found elsewhere in the literature of ethics. The reader may find all this so foreign to his notion of what a book should be that he may become so confused as to feel that the Quran is a piece of disorganized, incoherent and unsystematic writing, comprising nothing but a disjointed conglomeration of comments of varying lengths put together arbitrarily. Hostile critics use this as a basis for their criticism, while those more favorably inclined resort to far-fetched explanations, or else conclude that the Quran consists of unrelated pieces, thus making it amenable to all kinds of interpretations, even interpretations quite opposed to the intent of God Who revealed the Book.

What kind of book is the Quran? In what manner was it revealed? What underlies its arrangement? What is its subject? What is its true purpose? What is the central theme to which its multifarious topics are intrinsically related? What kind of reasoning and style does it adopt in elucidating its central theme? If we could obtain clear, lucid answers to these and other related questions, we might avoid some dangerous pitfalls, thus making it easier to reflect upon and to grasp the meaning and purpose of the Quranic verses. If we begin studying the Quran in the

expectation of reading a book on religion, we shall find it hard, since our notions of religion and of a book are naturally circumscribed by our range of experience. We need, therefore, to be told in advance that this Book is unique in the manner of its composition, in its theme and its contents and arrangement. We should be forewarned that the concept of a book that we have formed from our previous readings is likely to be a hindering, rather than a help, towards a deep understanding of the Quran. We should realize that as a first step towards understanding it we must divest our minds of all preconceived notions.

Divine Guidance

The student of the Quran should grasp, from the outset, the fundamental claims that the Quran makes for itself. Whether one ultimately decides to believe in the Quran or not, one must recognize the fundamental statements made by the Quran and by the man to whom it was revealed, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) to be the starting point of one's study.

These claims are: The Lord of creation, the Creator and Sovereign of the entire universe, created man on earth (which is merely a part of His boundless realm). He also endowed man with understanding, with the ability to distinguish between the good and evil, with the freedom of choice and volition, and with the power to exercise his latent potentialities. In short, God bestowed upon man a kind of autonomy and appointed him His vicegerent on earth. Although man enjoys this status, God made it abundantly plain to him that He alone is man's Lord and Sovereign,

even as He is the Lord and Sovereign of the whole universe. Man was told that he was not entitled to consider himself independent and that only God entitled to claim absolute obedience, service and worship. It was also made clear to man that life in this world, for which he has been placed and invested with a certain honor and authority, was in fact a temporary term, and was meant to test him; that after the end of this earthly life man must return to God, Who will judge him on the basis of his performance, declaring who has succeeded and who has failed. The right way for man is to regard God as his only Sovereign and the only object of his worship and adoration, to follow the guidance revealed by God, to act in this world with the consciousness that earthly life is merely a period of trial, and to keep his eyes fixed on the ultimate objective, a success in God's final judgment. Every other way is wrong. It was also explained to man that if he chose to adopt the right way of life and in this choice he was free, he would enjoy peace and contentment in this world and be assigned, on his return to God, the Abode of eternal bliss and happiness known as Paradise. Should man follow any other way, although he was free to do so, he would experience the evil effects of corruption and disorder in the life of this world and be consigned to eternal grief and torment when he crossed the borders of the present world and arrived in the Hereafter. Having explained all this, the Lord of the Universe placed man on earth and communicated to Adam and Eve, the first human beings to live on earth, the guidance which they and their offspring were required to follow. These first human

beings were not born in a state of ignorance and darkness. On the contrary, they began their life in the broad daylight of divine Guidance. They had intimate knowledge of reality and the Law which they were to follow was communicated to them. Their way of life consisted of obedience to God (i.e. total submission) and they taught their children to live in obedience to Him (i.e. to live as those who submit to God).

In the course of time, however, men gradually deviated from this true way of life and began to follow various erroneous ways. They allowed true guidance to be lost through heedlessness and negligence and sometimes, even deliberately, distorted it out of evil perversity. They associated God with a number of beings, human and non-human, real as well as imaginary, and adored them as deities. They adulterated the God-given knowledge of reality (*al-ilm* in the Quranic terminology) with all kinds of fanciful ideas, superstitions and philosophical concepts, thereby giving birth to innumerable religions. They disregarded or distorted the sound and equitable principles of individual morality and of collective conduct (*Shariah* in Quranic terminology) and made their own laws in accordance with their base desires and prejudices. As a result, the world became filled with wrong and injustice. It was inconsistent with the limited autonomy conferred upon man by God that He should exercise His overwhelming power and compel man to righteousness. It was also inconsistent with the fact that God had granted a term to the human species in which to show their worth, that He should afflict men with catastrophic destruction as soon as

they showed signs of rebellion.

Moreover, God had undertaken from the beginning of creation that true guidance would be made available to man throughout the term granted to him and that this guidance would be available in a manner consistent with man's autonomy. To fulfill this self assumed responsibility, God chose to appoint those human beings whose faith in Him was outstanding and who followed the way pleasing to Him. God chose these people to be His envoys. He had His messages communicated to them, honored them with an intimate knowledge of reality, provided them with the true laws of life and entrusted them with the task of recalling man to the original path from which he had strayed (These men were the Prophets and Messengers of God). These Prophets were sent to different people in different lands and over a period of time covering thousands and thousands of years. They all had the same religion; the one originally revealed to man as the right way for him. All of them followed the same guidance; those principles of morality and collective life prescribed for man at the very outset of his existence. All these Prophets had the same mission; to call man to this true religion and subsequently to organize all those who accepted this message into a community (*ummah*) which would be bound by the Law of God, which would strive to establish its observance and would seek to prevent its violation.

All the Prophets discharged their mission creditably in their own time. However, there were always many who refused to accept their guidance. On the other hand, those

who did accept it became a submitting community (That is, a group of people committed to the true guidance of God as revealed to His Prophets). The community with total submission to the commandment of one God is referred to as a Muslim community. Here the word Muslim is not used in the sense of the followers of the last Messenger of God, Muhammad (peace be upon him), but in the wider sense, meaning all those who, at various periods, committed themselves to live in submission to God. However, over a period of time, this community of those who had submitted to the will and commands of God gradually degenerated causing the Divine Guidance to be lost, distorted or adulterated.

At last the Lord of the Universe sent Muhammad (peace be upon him) to Arabia and entrusted him with the same mission that He had entrusted to the earlier Prophets. This last Messenger of God addressed the followers of the earlier Prophets (who had by this time deviated from their original teachings) as well as the rest of humanity. The mission of each Prophet was to call men to the right way of life, to communicate God's true guidance afresh and to organize into one community all who responded to his mission and accepted the guidance vouchsafed to him. Such a community was to be dedicated to the two-fold task of molding its own life in accordance with God's guidance and striving for the reform of the world. The Quran is the Book which embodies this mission and guidance, as revealed by God to Muhammad (peace be upon him).

General Theme

If we remember these basic facts about the Quran, it becomes easy to grasp its true subject, its central theme and the objective it seeks to achieve. Insofar as it seeks to explain the ultimate causes of man's success or failure the subject of the Book is MAN.

Its central theme is that concepts relating to God, the universe and man, which have emanated from man's own limited knowledge run counter to reality. The same applies to concepts which have been either woven by man's intellectual fancies or which have evolved through man's obsession with animal desires. The ways of life which rest on these false foundations are both contrary to reality and ruinous for man. The essence of true knowledge is that which God revealed to man when He appointed him as His vicegerent. Hence, the way of life which is in accordance with reality and conducive to human good is that which we have characterized above as the right way. The real object of the Book is to call people to this right way and to illuminate God's true guidance, which has often been lost either through man's negligence and heedlessness or distorted by his wicked perversity.

If we study the Quran with these facts in mind it is bound to strike us that the Quran does not deviate one iota from its main subject, its central theme and its basic objective. All the various themes occurring in the Quran are related to the central theme; just as beads of different color may be strung together to form a necklace. The Quran speaks of the structure of the heavens and the earth and of man, refers to the signs of reality in the various phenomena of the

universe, relates anecdotes of bygone nations, criticizes the beliefs, morals and deeds of different people, elucidates supernatural truths and discusses many other things besides. All this the Quran does, not in order to provide instruction in physics, history, philosophy or any other particular branch of knowledge, but rather to remove the misconceptions people have about reality and to make that reality manifest to them. It emphasizes that the various ways men follow, which are not in conformity with reality, are essentially false, and full of harmful consequences for mankind. It calls on men to shun all such ways and to follow instead the way which both conforms to reality and yields best practical results. This is why the Quran mentions everything only to the extent and in the manner necessary for the purposes it seeks to serve. The Quran confines itself to essentials thereby omitting any irrelevant details. Thus, all its contents consistently revolve around this call.

Background

Likewise, it is not possible fully to appreciate either the style of Quran, the order underlying the arrangement of its verses or the diversity of the subjects treated in it, without fully understanding the manner in which it was revealed. The Quran, as we have noted earlier, is not a book in the conventional sense of the term. Allah did not compose and entrust it in one piece to Muhammad (peace be upon him) so that he could spread its message and call people to adopt an attitude to life consonant with its teachings. Nor is the Quran one of those books which discusses their subjects and main themes in the conventional manner. Its arrangement

differs from that of ordinary books, and its style is correspondingly different.

Makkan Surahs

The nature of this Book is that Allah chose a man in Makkah to serve as His Messenger and gave him the task to preach His message, starting in his own city (Makkah) and with his own tribe (Quraish). At this initial stage, instructions were confined to what was necessary at this particular juncture of the mission. Three themes in particular stand out: Directives were given to the Prophet (peace be upon him) on how he should prepare for his great mission and how he should begin working for the fulfillment of his task. A fundamental knowledge of reality was furnished and misconceptions commonly held by people in that regard, misconceptions which gave rise to wrong orientation in life were removed. People were exhorted to adopt the right attitude towards life.

Moreover, the Quran also elucidated those fundamental principles which, if followed, lead to man's success and happiness. In keeping with the character of the mission at this stage the early revelations generally consisted of short verses, couched in language of uncommon grace and power, and clothed in a literary style suited to the taste and the temperament of the people to whom they were originally addressed, and whose hearts they were meant to penetrate. The rhythm, melody and vitality of these verses drew rapt attention, as such was their stylistic grace and charm that people began to recite them involuntarily. The local color of these early messages is conspicuous, for while the truths

they contained were universal, the arguments and illustrations used to elucidate them were drawn from the immediate environment familiar to the first listeners. Allusions were made to their history and traditions and to the visible traces of the past which had crept into the beliefs, and into the moral and social life of Arabia. All this was calculated to enhance the appeal the message held for its immediate audience. This early stage lasted for four or five years, during which period the following reactions to the Prophet's message manifested themselves: A few people responded to the call and agreed to join the ummah (community) committed, of its own volition, to submit to the Will of Allah. Many people reacted with hostility, either from ignorance or egotism, or because of chauvinistic attachment to the way of life of their forefathers. The call of the Prophet (peace be upon him), however, did not remain confined to Makkah or the Quraish. It began to meet with favorable response beyond the borders of that city and among other tribes.

The next stage of the mission was marked by hard, vigorous struggle between the Islamic movement and the age old ignorance (*Jahiliyah* - all those world-views and ways of life which are based on the rejection or disregard of the heavenly guidance which is communicated to mankind through the Prophets and Messengers of Allah; the attitude of treating human life - either wholly or partially - as independent of the directives revealed by Allah) of Arabia. Not only were the Makkans and the Quraish bent upon preserving their inherited way of life, they were also firmly

resolved to suppress the new movement by force. They stopped at nothing in the pursuit of this objective. They resorted to false propaganda; they spread doubt and suspicion and used subtle, malicious insinuations to sow distrust in people's minds. They tried to prevent people from listening to the message of the Prophet (peace be upon him). They perpetrated savage cruelties on those who embraced Islam. They subjected them to economic and social boycott, and persecuted them to such an extent that on two occasions a number of them were forced to leave home and emigrate to Abyssinia, and finally they had to emigrate *en masse* to Al-Madinah.

In spite of this strong and growing resistance and opposition, the Islamic movement continued to spread. There was hardly a family left in Makkah, one of whose members at least had not embraced Islam. Indeed, the violence and bitterness of the enemies of Islam was due to the fact that their own kith and kin - brothers, nephews, sons, daughters, sisters, brothers-in-law and so on - had not only embraced Islam, but were even ready to sacrifice their lives for its sake. Their resistance, therefore, brought them into conflict with their own nearest and dearest. Moreover, those who had forsaken the age old ignorance of Arabia included many who were outstanding members of their society. After embracing Islam, they became so remarkable for their moral uprightness, their veracity and their purity of character that the world could hardly fail to notice the superiority of the message which was attracting people of such qualities.

During the Prophet's (peace be upon him) long and arduous struggle, Allah continued to inspire him with revelations possessing at once the smooth, natural flow of a river, the violent force of a flood and the overpowering effect of a fierce fire. These messages instructed the believers in their basic duties, inculcated in them a sense of community and belonging, exhorted them to piety, moral excellence and purity of character, taught them how to preach the true faith, sustained their spirit by promises of success and Paradise in the Hereafter, aroused them to struggle in the cause of Allah with patience, fortitude and high spirits, and filled their hearts with such zeal and enthusiasm that they were prepared to endure every sacrifice, brave every hardship and face every adversity.

At the same time, those either bent on opposition, or who had deviated from the right way, or who had immersed themselves in frivolity and wickedness, were warned by having their attentions called to the tragic ends of nations with whose fates they were familiar. They were asked to draw lessons from the ruins of those localities through which they passed every day in the course of their wanderings. Evidence for the unity of Allah and for the existence of after-life was pointed to in signs visible to their own eyes and within the range of their ordinary experience. The weaknesses inherent in polytheisms, the vanity of man's ambition to become independent even of Allah, the folly of denying the after-life, the perversity of blind adherence to the ways of one's ancestors regardless of right or wrong, were all fully elucidated with the help of

arguments cogent enough to penetrate the minds and hearts of audience. Moreover, every misgiving was removed, a reasonable answer was provided to every objection, all confusion and perplexity was cleared up, and ignorance was besieged from all sides till its irrationality was totally exposed. Along with all this went the warning of the wrath of Allah. The people were reminded of the horrors of the doomsday and the tormenting punishment of the Hell. They were also censured for their moral corruption, for their erroneous ways of life, for their clinging to the ways of ignorance, for their opposition to truth and their persecution of the believers.

Furthermore, these messages enunciated those fundamental principles of morality and collective life on which all sound and healthy civilizations enjoying Allah's approval had always rested. This stage was unfolded in several phases. In each phase, the preaching of the message assumed ever wider proportions, as the struggle for the cause of Islam and opposition to it became increasingly intense and severe, and as the believers encountered people of varying outlooks and beliefs. All these factors had the effect of increasing the variety of the topics in the messages revealed during this period. Such, in brief, was the situation forming the background to the Makkan Surahs of the Quran.

Madani Surahs

For thirteen years the Islamic movement strived in Makkah. It then obtained, in Al-Madinah, a haven of refuge in which to concentrate its followers and its strength. The

Prophet's (peace be upon him) movement now entered in its third stage. During this stage, circumstances changed drastically. The Muslim community succeeded in establishing a full-fledged state; its creation was followed by prolonged armed conflicts with the representatives of the ancient ignorance of Arabia. The community also encountered followers of the former Prophets, i.e. Jews and Christians.

An additional problem was that hypocrites began to join the fold of Muslim community; their machinations needed to be resisted. After a severe struggle, lasting ten years, the Islamic movement reached a high point of achievement when the entire Arabian peninsula came under its sway and the door was opened to the world-wide preaching and reform. This stage, like the preceding one, passed through various phases each of which had its peculiar problems and demands. It was in the context of these problems that Allah continued to reveal messages to the Prophet (peace be upon him). At times these messages were couched in the form of fiery speeches; at other times they were characterized by the grandeur and stateliness of majestic proclamations and ordinances. At times they had the air of instructions from a teacher; at others, the style of preaching of a reformer. These messages explained how a healthy society, state and civilization could be established and the principles on which the various aspects of human life should be based. They also dealt with matters directly related to the specific problems facing Muslims. For example, how should they deal with hypocrites (who were harming the Muslims and the Muslim

community from within) and with the non-Muslims who were living under the care of the Muslim society? How should they relate to the People of the Book? What treatment should be meted out to those with whom the Muslims were at war, and how should they deal with those with whom they were bound by treaties and agreements? How should the believers, as a community, prepare to discharge their obligations as vicegerents of the Lord of Universe?

Through the Quran the Muslims were guided in questions like these, were instructed and trained, made aware of their weaknesses, urged to risk their lives and property for the cause of Allah, taught the code of morality they should observe in all circumstances of life - in times of victory and defeat, ease and distress, prosperity and adversity, peace and security, peril and danger. In short, they were being trained to serve as the successors of the mission of the Prophet (peace be upon him), with the task of carrying on the message of Islam and bringing about the reform in human life. The Quran also addressed itself to those outside the fold of Islam, to the People of the Book, the hypocrites, the unbelievers, the polytheists. Each group was addressed according to its own particular circumstances and attitudes. Sometimes the Quran invited them to the true faith with tenderness and delicacy; on other occasions, it rebuked and severely admonished them. It also warned them against, and threatened them with punishment from Allah. It attempted to make them take heed by drawing their attention to instructive historical events. In short, people

were left with no valid reason for refusing the call of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

Such, briefly, is the background of the Madani Surahs of the Quran. It is now clear to us that the revelation of the Quran began and went hand in hand with the preaching of the message. This message passed through many stages and met with diverse situations from the very beginning and throughout a period of twenty three years. The different parts of the Quran were revealed step by step according to the multifarious, changing needs and requirements of the Islamic movement during these stages. It therefore, could not possibly possess the kind of coherence and systematic sequence expected of doctoral dissertation.

Moreover, the various fragments of the Quran which were revealed in harmony with the growth of Islamic movement were not published in the form of written treatises, but were spread orally. Their style, therefore, bore an oratorical flavor rather than the characteristics of literary composition. Furthermore, these orations were delivered by one whose task meant he had to appeal simultaneously to the mind, to the heart and emotions, to the people of different mental levels and dispositions. He had to revolutionize people's thinking, to arouse in them a storm of noble emotions in support of his cause, to persuade his companions and inspire them with devotion and zeal, and with the desire to improve and reform their lives. He had to raise their morale and steel their determination, turn enemies into friends and opponents into admirers, disarm those out to oppose his message and show their position to

be morally untenable. In short, he had to do everything necessary to carry out his movement through to a successful conclusion. Orations revealed in conformity with the requirement of a message and movement will inevitably have a style different from that of a professional lecture. This explains the repetitions we encounter in the Quran. The interests of a message and a movement demand that during a particular stage emphasis should be placed only on those subjects which are appropriate at that stage, to the exclusion of matters pertaining to later stages.

As a result, certain subjects may require continual emphasis for months or even years. On the other hand, content repetition in the same manner becomes exhausting. Whenever a subject is repeated, it should therefore be expressed in different phraseology, in new forms and with stylistic variations so as to ensure that the ideas and beliefs being put over find their way into the hearts of the people. At the same time, it was essential that the fundamental beliefs and principles on which the whole movement was based should always be kept fresh in people's minds; a necessity which dictated that they should always be repeated continuously through all stages of the movement. For this reason, certain basic Islamic concepts about the unity of Allah and His Attributes, about the Hereafter, about man's accountability and about reward and punishment, about prophethood and belief in revealed scriptures, about basic moral attributes such as piety, patience, trust in Allah and so on, recur throughout the Quran. If these ideas had lost their hold on the minds of the

people, the Islamic movement could not have moved forward in its true spirit. If we reflect on this, it also becomes evident why the Prophet (peace be upon him) did not arrange the Quran in the sequence that it was revealed.

Order

As we noted, the context in which the Quran was revealed in the course of twenty three years was the mission and the movement of the Prophet (peace be upon him); the revelations correspond to the various stages of this mission and movement.

Now, it is evident that when the Prophet's (peace be upon him) mission was completed, the chronological sequence of the various parts of the Quran - revealed in accordance with the growth of the Prophet's (peace be upon him) mission - could in no way be suitable to the changed situation. What was now required was a different sequence in tune with the changed context resulting from the completion of the mission. Initially, the Prophet's (peace be upon him) message was addressed to people totally ignorant of Islam. Their instruction had to start with the most elementary things. After the mission had reached to a successful completion, the Quran acquired a compelling relevance for those who had decided to believe in the Prophet (peace be upon him). By virtue of that belief they had become a new religious community - the Muslim *ummah*. Not only that, they had been made responsible for carrying on the Prophet's (peace be upon him) mission, which he had bequeathed to them, in a perfect form, both on conceptual and practical levels. It was no longer

necessary for Quranic verses to be arranged in chronological sequence. In the changed context, it had become necessary for the bearers of the mission of the Prophet (peace be upon him) to be informed of their duties and of the true principles and laws governing their lives. They also had to be warned against corruptions which had appeared among the followers of earlier Prophets. All this was necessary in order to equip the Muslims to go out and offer the light of Divine Guidance to the world steeped in darkness. It would be foreign to the very nature of Quran to group together in one place all verses relating to specific subject; the nature of the Quran requires that the reader should find teachings revealed during the Madani period interspersed with those of the Makkan period, and vice versa. It requires the juxtaposition of early discourses with instructions from the later period of the life of the Prophet (peace be upon him). This blending of the teachings from different periods helps to provide an overall view and an integrated perspective of Islam, and acts as a safeguard against lop-sidedness.

Furthermore, a chronological arrangement of the Quran would have been meaningful to the later generations only if it had been supplemented with explanatory notes and these had to be treated as inseparable appendices to the Quran. This would have been quite contrary to Allah's purpose in revealing the Quran; the main purpose of its revelation was that all human beings, children and young people, old men and women, town and country dwellers, laymen and scholars should be able to refer to the Divine Guidance

available to them in composite form and providentially secured against adulteration. This was necessary to enable people of every level of intelligence and understanding to know what Allah required of them. This purpose would have been defeated had the reader been obliged solemnly to recite detailed historical notes and explanatory comments along with the Book of Allah. Those who object to the present arrangement of the Quran appear to be suffering from a misapprehension as to its true purpose. They sometimes almost seem under the illusion that it was revealed merely for the benefit of students of history and sociology.

Compilation

The present arrangement of the Quran is not the work of later generations, but was made by the Prophet (peace be upon him) under Allah's directions. Whenever a Surah was revealed, the Prophet (peace be upon him) summoned his scribes, to whom he carefully dictated its contents, and instructed them where to place it in relation to the other Suras. The Prophet (peace be upon him) followed the same order of Suras and verses when reciting during ritual Prayer as on other occasions, and his companions followed the same practice in memorizing the Quran. It is therefore a historical fact that the collection of the Quran came to an end on the very day that its revelation ceased. The One who was responsible for its revelation was also the One who fixed its arrangement.

The one whose heart was the receptacle of the Quran was also responsible for arranging its sequence. This was far too

important and too delicate a matter for anyone else to become involved in. Since Prayers were obligatory for the Muslims from the very outset of the Prophet's (peace be upon him) mission, (It should be noted that while five daily Prayers were made obligatory several years after the Prophet (peace be upon him) was commissioned, Prayers were obligatory from the very outset; not a single moment elapsed when Prayers, as such, were not obligatory in Islam) and the recitation of the Quran was an obligatory part of the Prayers, Muslims were committing the Quran to memory while its revelation was continued.

Thus, as soon as a fragment of the Quran was revealed, it was memorized by some of the companions. Hence the preservation of the Quran was not solely dependent on its verses being inscribed on palm leaves, pieces of bone, leather and scraps of parchment - the material used by the Prophet's (peace be upon him) scribes for writing down Quranic verses. Instead those verses came to be inscribed upon scores, then hundreds, then thousands, then hundreds of thousands of human hearts, soon after they had been revealed, so that no scope was left for any devil to alter so much as one word of them. When, after the death of Prophet (peace be upon him), the storm of apostasy convulsed Arabia and the companions had to plunge into bloody battles to suppress it, many companions who had memorized the Quran suffered martyrdom. This led Umar to plead that the Quran ought to be preserved in writing, as well as orally. He therefore impressed the urgency upon Abu Bakr. After slight hesitation, the later agreed and

entrusted the task to Zayd ibn Thabit al-ansari, who had worked as a scribe of the Prophet (peace be upon him). (For an account of the early history of the Quran see Subhi-al salih, *Mabahith fi Ulum al-Quran*, Beriut, 1977, pp. 65 ff Ed). The procedure decided upon was to try and collect all written pieces of the Quran left behind by the Prophet, as well as those in the possession of the companions. (There are authentic traditions to the effect that several companions had committed the entire Quran, or many parts of it, to writing during the lifetime of the Prophet. Especially mentioned in this connection are the following companions of the Prophet: Uthman, Ali, Abd Allah bin Masud, Abd Allah bin Amr al Aas, Salim themawla of Hudhayfah, Muaudh bin Jabal, Ubbay bin Kaab, and Abu Zayd Qays bin al-Sakan.) When all this had been done, assistance was sought from those who had memorized the Quran. No verse was incorporated into the Quranic codex unless all three sources were found to be in complete agreement, and every criterion of verification had been satisfied. Thus an authentic version of the Quran was prepared. It was kept in the custody of Hafsah (a wife of the Holy Prophet) and people were permitted to make copies of it and also to use it as the standard of comparison when rectifying the mistakes they might have made in writing down the Quran.

Difference of Dialects

In different parts of Arabia and among its numerous tribes there existed a diversity of dialects. The Quran was revealed in the language spoken by the Quraish of Makkah.

Nevertheless, in the beginning, people of other areas and other tribes were permitted to recite it according to their own dialects and idioms, since it facilitated its recitation without affecting its substantive meaning. In course of time, in the wake of the conquest of a sizeable part of the world outside of the Arabian peninsula, a large number of non-Arabs entered the fold of Islam. These developments affected the Arabic idiom and it was feared that the continuing use of various dialects in the recitation of the Quran might give rise to grave problems. It was possible, for instance, that someone hearing the Quran in unfamiliar dialect might pick a fight with the reciter, thinking that the latter was deliberately distorting the Word of Allah. It was also possible that such differences might gradually lead to the tampering of the Quran itself. It was also not inconceivable that the hybridization of the Arabic language, due to the intermixture between the Arabs and non-Arabs, might lead people to introduce modifications into the Quranic text, thus imparting the grace of the Speech of Allah. As a result of such considerations, and after consultations with the companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him), Uthman decided that copies of the standard edition of the Quran, prepared earlier at the order of Abu Bakr, should be published, and that publication of the Quranic text in any other dialect or idiom should be proscribed. The Quran that we possess today corresponds exactly to the edition which was prepared on the orders of Abu Bakr and copies of which were officially sent, on the orders of Uthman, to various cities and provinces. Several

copies of this original edition of Quran still exist today.

Anyone who entertains any doubt as to the authenticity of the Quran can satisfy himself by obtaining a copy of the Quran from any bookseller, say in West Africa, and then have a hafiz (memorizer of the Quran) recite it from memory, compare the two, and then compare these with the copies of the Quran published through the centuries since the time of Uthman. If he detects any discrepancy, even in single letter or syllable, he should inform the whole world of his great discovery! Not even the most skeptical person has a reason to doubt the Quran as we know today is identical with the Quran which Muhammad (peace be upon him) set before the world; this is an unquestionable, objective, historical fact, and there is nothing in human history on which the evidence is so overwhelmingly strong and conclusive. To doubt the authenticity of the Quran is like doubting the existence of Roman empire, the Mughals of India, or Napoleon! To doubt historical facts like these is a sign of stark ignorance, not a mark of erudition and scholarship.

Universality

It is well known that the Quran claims to be capable of guiding all mankind. Yet the student of the Quran finds it generally addressed to the people of Arabia, who lived in the time of its revelation. Although the Quran occasionally addresses itself to all mankind, its contents are, on the whole, vitally related to the taste and the temperament, the environment and history, and the customs and usages of Arabia. When one notices this, one begins to question why a

Book which seeks to guide all mankind to salvation should assign such importance to certain aspects of a particular people's life, and to the things belonging to a particular age and time. Failure to grasp the real cause of this may lead one to believe that the Book was originally designed to reform the Arabs of the particular age alone, and it is only the people of later times who have forced upon the Book an altogether novel interpretation, proclaiming that its aim is to guide all mankind for all time. Some might say this with no other purpose than to vent their irrational prejudice against Islam. Leaving such people aside, a word may be said to those whose critical comments are motivated by the desire to understand things better. The latter would do well to study the Quran carefully, noting down any places where they find that it has propounded any doctrine or concept, or laid down some rule for practical conduct, relevant for the Arabs alone and exclusively conditioned by the peculiarities of a certain place or time. If, while addressing the people of certain area at a particular period of time, attempting to refute their polytheistic beliefs and adducing arguments in support of its own doctrine of the unity of Allah, the Quran draws upon facts with which those people were familiar, this does not warrant the conclusion that its message is relevant only for that particular people or for that particular period of time. What ought to be considered is whether or not the Quranic statements on refutation of the polytheistic beliefs of the Arabs of those days apply as well to other forms of polytheism in other parts of world. Can the arguments advanced by the Quran in that connection be

used to rectify the beliefs of other polytheists? Is the Quranic line of argument for establishing the unity of Allah, with minor adaptations, valid and persuasive for every age? If the answers are positive, there is no reason why a universal teaching should be dubbed exclusive to a particular people and merely because it happened to be addressed originally to that people and at that particular period of time. No philosophy, ideology or doctrine consists only of mere abstractions and is totally unrelated to the circumstances in which it developed. Even if such an absolute abstraction were possible it would remain confined to the scraps of paper on which it was written and would fail totally to have an impact on human life. Moreover, if one wishes to spread any intellectual, moral and cultural movement on an international scale, it is by no means essential, in fact it is not even useful, for it to start on a global scale. If one wishes to propagate certain ideas, concepts and principles as the right bases for human life, one should begin by propagating them vigorously in the country where the message originates, and to the people whose language, temperament, customs and habits are familiar to its proponents. It will thus be possible to transform the lives of the people into a practical model of the message.

Only then will it be able to attract the attention of other nations, and intelligent people living elsewhere will also try to understand it and to spread it in their own lands. Indeed, what marks out a time-bound and a particularistic national doctrine from an eternal universal one, is the fact that the

former either seek to exalt a people or to claim special privileges for it or else comprises ideas and principles so vitally related to the people's life and tradition as to tender it totally inapplicable to the conditions of other peoples. A universal doctrine, on the other hand, is willing to accord equal rights and status to all, and its principles have an international character in that they are equally applicable to other nations. Likewise, the validity of those doctrines which seek to come to grips merely with questions of a transient and superficial nature is time-bound. If one studies the Quran with these considerations in mind, can one really conclude that it has only a particularistic national character, and that its validity is therefore time-bound?

Complete Code

Those who embark upon a study of Quran often proceed with the assumption that this Book is, as it is commonly believed to be, a detailed code of guidance. However, when they actually read it, they fail to find detailed regulations regarding social, political and economic matters. In fact, they notice that the Quran has not laid down detailed regulations even in respect of such oft repeated subjects as Prayers and Zakah (Purifying alms). The reader finds this somewhat disconcerting and wonders in what sense the Quran can be considered a code of guidance. The uneasiness some people feel about this arises because they forget that Allah did not merely reveal a Book, but that He also designated a Prophet (peace be upon him). Suppose some laymen were to be provided with the bare outlines of a construction plan on the understanding that they would

carry out the construction as they wished. In such a case, it would be reasonable to expect that they should have very elaborate directives as to how the construction should be carried out. Suppose, however, that along with the broad outline of the plan of construction, they were also provided with a competent engineer to supervise the task. In that case, it would be quite unjustifiable to disregard the work of the engineer, on the expectation that detailed directives would form an integral part of the construction plan, and then to complain of imperfection in the plan itself. (This analogy should elucidate the position of the Prophet (peace be upon him) vis-a-vis the Quran, for he clarified and elaborated the Quran, supplementing its broad general principles by giving them precise and detailed forms, and incorporating them into practical life, his own as well as that of his followers.

The Quran, to put it succinctly, is a Book of broad general principles rather than of legal minutiae. The Book's main aim is to expound, clearly and adequately, the intellectual and moral foundations of the Islamic program for life. It seeks to consolidate these by appealing both to man's mind and to his heart. Its method of guidance for practical Islamic life does not consist of laying down minutely detailed laws and regulations. It prefers to outline the basic framework for each aspect of human activity, and to lay down certain guidelines within which man can order his life in keeping with the Will of Allah. The mission of the Prophet was to give practical shape to the Islamic vision of the good life, by offering the world a model of an individual

character and of a human state and society, as living embodiments of the principles of the Quran.

The Quran is strong in the condemnation of those who indulge in schismatic squabbling after the Book of Allah has been revealed, so causing a weakening of faith; (See Quran 98:4, 3:105, 42:14) yet there has been considerable disagreement over the correct interpretation of the Quranic injunctions, not only among the later scholars, but even among the founders of the legal schools and Successors (The word Successors has been used as the equivalent of Tabeun, i.e. those who benefited from the companions of the Prophet). Indeed, disagreement can be traced back even to the times of the companions of the Prophet (The word companions has been used as an equivalent of Sahabah, i.e. those, who in state of belief, enjoyed the companionship of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

One can hardly point to a single Quranic verse of legal import which has received complete unanimity as regards to its interpretation. One is bound to ask whether the Quranic condemnation applies to all who have disagreed in this way. If it does not, then what kind of schism and disagreement does the Quran denounce? This is quite a problem and its ramifications cannot be considered at length here. The reader may rest assured that the Quran is not opposed to differences of opinion within the framework of a general agreement on the fundamentals of Islam and broad unity of Islamic community. In addition it is not opposed to disagreement arising from an earnest endeavor to arrive at the right conclusions on a particular subject;

the only disagreements condemned by the Quran are those arising out of egotism and perversity, leading to mutual strife and hostility.

The two sorts of disagreements are different in character and give rise to different results. The first kind is a stimulus to improvement and the very soul of a healthy society. Differences of this kind are found in every society whose members are endowed with intelligence and reason. Their existence is a sign of life, while their absence serves only to demonstrate that a society is made up not of intelligent men and women but rather of blocks of wood. Disagreements of the second kind, however, are of altogether different character and lead to ruin and destruction of the people among whom they arise. Far from being a sign of health, their emergence is symptomatic of a grave sickness.

The first kind of disagreement exists only among scholars who are all agreed that it is their duty to obey Allah and His Prophet. They also agree that the Quran and the Sunnah are their main sources of guidance. Thus, when scholarly investigation on some subsidiary question leads two or more scholars to disagree, the disagreement is not upon fundamentals of faith; or when two judges disagree in their judgment, the disagreement is not on questions on which their opinion has been expressed. They do not accuse those who disagree with their opinion of having left the fold of true faith. What each does is rather to proffer his arguments showing that he has done his best to investigate the matter thoroughly. It is then left to the courts (in judicial matters) and to public opinion (if the matter relates

to the community at large) either to prefer whichever opinions seems sounder, or to accept both opinions as equally permissible. Schism occurs when the very fundamentals are made a matter of dispute and controversy. It may also happen that some scholar, mystic, mufti, or leader ponders and weighs in on a question to which Allah and His Messenger have not attached any fundamental importance, exaggerating the significance of the question to such extent that it is transformed into a basic issue of faith. Such people usually go one step further, declaring all those who disagree with their opinion to have forsaken the true faith and set themselves outside the community of true believers. They may go even so far as to organize those who agree with them into a sect, claiming that sect to be identical with the Islamic community, and declaring that everyone who does not belong to it is destined to hell-fire.

Whenever the Quran denounces schismatic disagreements and sectarianism, its aim is to denounce this later kind of disagreement. As for disagreements of the first category, we encounter several examples of these even during the life of the Prophet (peace be upon him). The Prophet (peace be upon him) not only accepted the validity of such disagreements, he even expressed his approval of them. For this kind of disagreement shows that the community is not lacking in capacity for thought, for inquiry and investigation, for grasping or wrestling with the problems it faces. It also shows that the intelligent members of the community are earnestly concerned about their religion and

how to apply its injunctions to practical problems of human life. It shows too that their intellectual capacities operate within the broad framework of their religion, rather than searching beyond its boundaries for solutions to their problems. And it proves that the community is following the golden path of moderation. Such moderation preserves its unity by broad agreement on fundamentals, and at the same time, provide its scholars and thinkers with full freedom of inquiry so that they may achieve fresh insights and new interpretations within the framework of the fundamental principles of Islam.

Suggestions for Study

The Quran is a book to which innumerable people turn for innumerable purposes. It is difficult to offer advice appropriate to all. The readers to whom this work is addressed are those who are concerned to acquire a serious understanding of the Book, and who seek the guidance it has to offer in relation to the various problems of life. For such people we have a few suggestions to make, and we shall offer some explanations in the hope of facilitating their study of Quran.

Anyone who really wants to understand the Quran irrespective of whether or not he believes in it, must divest his mind, as far as possible, of every preconceived notion, bias or prejudice, in order to embark upon his study with an open mind. Anyone who begins to study the Quran with a set of preconceived ideas is likely to read those very ideas into the Book. No Book can be profitably studied with this kind of attitude, let alone the Quran which refuses to open

its treasure-house to such readers.

For those who want only a superficial acquaintance with the doctrines of the Quran, one reading is perhaps sufficient. For those who want to fathom its depths several readings are not enough. These people need to study the Quran over and over again, taking notes of everything that strikes them as significant. Those who are willing to study the Quran in this manner should do so at least twice to begin with, so as to obtain a broad grasp of the system of beliefs and practical prescriptions that it offers. In this preliminary survey, they should try to gain an overall perspective of the Quran and to grasp the basic ideas which it expounds, and the system of life it seeks to build on the basis of these ideas. If, during the course of this study, anything agitates the mind of the reader, he should note down the point concerned and patiently persevere with his study. He is likely to find that, as he proceeds, the difficulties are resolved (when a problem has been solved, it is advisable to note down the solution alongside the problem). Experience suggests that any problem still unsolved after a first reading of the Quran are likely to be resolved by a careful second reading. Only after acquiring a total perspective of the Quran should a more detailed study be attempted. Again the reader is well advised to keep noting down the various aspects of the Quran's teachings. For instance, he should note the human model the Quran extols as praiseworthy, and the model it denounces. It might be helpful to make two columns, one titled as praiseworthy qualities, the other titled as blameworthy qualities, and then

to enter into the respective columns all that is found relevant in the Quran.

To take another instance, the reader might proceed to investigate the Quranic point of view on what is conducive to human success and felicity, as against what leads to man's ultimate failure and perdition. An efficient way to carry out this investigation would be to note under separate headings, such as conducive to success and conducive to failure, any relevant material encountered. In the same way, the reader should take down the notes about the Quranic teachings on the questions of beliefs, morals, man's rights and obligations, family life and collective behavior, economic and political life, law and social organization, war and peace, and so on. Then he should use these various teachings to try to develop an image of the Quranic teachings vis-a-vis each particular aspect of human life. This should be followed by an attempt at integrating these images so that he comes to grasp the total scheme of life envisaged by the Quran.

Moreover, anyone wishing to study in depth the Quranic view-point on any particular problem of life should, first of all, study all the significant strands of human thought concerning the problem. Ancient and modern works on the subject should be studied. Unresolved problems where human thinking seems to have gotten stuck should be noted. The Quran should then be studied with these unresolved problems in mind, with a view to finding the solutions the Quran has to offer. Personal experience again suggests that anyone who studies the Quran in this manner will find his

problems solved with the help of verses which he may have read scores of times without it ever crossing his mind that they could have any relevance to the problems at hand. It should be remembered, nevertheless, that full appreciation of the spirit of the Quran demands practical involvement with the struggle to fulfill its mission. The Quran is neither a book of abstract theories and cold doctrines which the reader can grasp while seated in a cozy armchair, nor is it merely a religious book like other religious books, the secrets of which can be grasped in seminaries and oratories. On the contrary, it is the blueprint and guidebook of a message, of a mission, of a movement. As soon as this Book was revealed, it drove a quiet, kind-hearted man from his isolation and seclusion, and placed him in a battlefield of life to challenge a world that had gone astray. It inspired him to raise his voice against falsehood, and pitted him in a grim struggle against the stand-bearers of unbelief, of disobedience to Allah, of waywardness and error. One after the other, it sought out everyone who had a pure and noble soul, mustering them together under the standard of the Messenger (peace be upon him). It also infuriated all those who by their nature were bent on all mischief and drove them to wage war against the bearers of truth.

This is the Book which inspired and directed the great movement which began with the preaching of a message by an individual, and continued for no fewer than twenty three years, until the Kingdom of Allah was truly established on earth. In this long and heart-rending struggle between the truth and falsehood, this Book unfailingly guided its

followers to the eradication of the latter and the consolidation and enthronement of the former. How then could one expect to get to the heart of Quranic verses, without so much as stepping upon the field of battle between faith and unbelief, between Islam and ignorance? To appreciate the Quran fully one must take it up and launch into the task of calling people to Allah, making it one's guide at every stage. Then, and only then, does one meet the various experiences encountered at the time of its revelation. One experiences the initial rejection of the message of Islam by the city of Makkah, the persistent hostility leading to the quest for a haven of refuge in Abyssinia, and the attempt to win a favorable response from Taaif which led, instead, to cruel persecution of the bearer of the Quranic message. One experiences also the campaigns of Badr, of Uhad, of Hunayn and of Tabuk. One comes face to face with Abu Jahl and Abu Lahab, with hypocrites and Jews, with those who instantly respond to this call as well as those who, lacking clarity of perception and moral strength, were drawn into Islam only at a later stage. This will be an experience different from any so-called mystic experience. I designate it the Quranic mystic experience. One of the characteristics of this experience is that at each stage one almost automatically finds certain Quranic verses to guide one, since they were revealed at similar stage and therefore contain the guidance appropriate to it. A person engaged in this struggle may not grasp all the linguistic and grammatical subtleties, he may also miss certain finer points in the rhetoric and semantics

of the Quran, yet it is impossible for the Quran to fail to reveal its true spirit to him. Again, in keeping with the same principle, a man can neither understand the laws, the moral teachings, and the economic and political principles which the Quran embodies, nor appreciate the full import of the Quranic laws and regulations, unless he tries to implement them in his own life. Hence the individual who fails to translate the Quranic precepts into personal practice will fail to understand the Book. The same must be said of any nation that allows the institutions of its collective life to run contrary to the teachings of Quran.

It is not intended here to survey all the questions that may arise in the mind of a student of Quran. Many questions relate to the specific Surahs or verses, and are explained in the notes to these in various commentaries. This introduction confines itself to basic questions related to the understanding of the Quran as a whole.

A Brief Life History of Syed Abul Aala Maududi

Syed Abul Aala Maududi (September 25, 1903 - September 22, 1979), also known as Molana (Maulana) or Shaikh Syed Abul Aala Maududi, was a Sunni Pakistani journalist, theologian, Muslim-revivalist leader and political philosopher, and a major 20th century Islamic thinker. He was also a prominent political figure in his home country (Pakistan). He was also the founder of Jamaat-e-Islami the Islamic revivalist party.

Early life

Syed Maududi was one of the descendants of Khwaja Qutb ad-din Maudud al-Chishti, a notable of the *Chishtiyya Tariqa*. Muinuddin al-Chishti of Ajmer (Rahmatullahi Alayh) was Qutb ad-din's khaleefa, one of those who were ordered and given permission by him to guide the people who wanted to learn.

Syed Abul Aala Maududi was born on September 25, 1903 (Rajab 3, 1321 A.H.) in Aurangabad, then part of the princely state of Hyderabad (presently Maharashtra), India. Syed Abul Aala Maududi was born to Maulana Ahmad Hasan, a lawyer by profession. Syed Abul Aala Maududi was the youngest of his three brothers. His father descended from the Chishti line of saints; in fact his last name was derived from the first member of the Chishti Silsilah i.e. Khawajah Syed Qutb ul-Din Maudood Chishti (d. 527 AH). At an early age, Syed Maududi was given home education. He received religious nurturing at the hands of his father and from a variety of teachers employed by him. He soon moved on to formal education and completed his secondary education from Madrasah Furqaniyah. For his undergraduate studies he joined Darul Uloom, Hyderabad (India). His undergraduate studies, however, were disrupted by the illness and death of his father, and he completed his studies outside of the regular educational institutions. His instruction included very little of the subject matter of a modern school, such as Western education. He reportedly translated Qasim Amin's *The New Woman* into Urdu at the age of 14 and about 3500 pages

from *Asfar*, a work of the mystical Persian thinker Mulla Sadra.

Journalistic career

After the interruption of his formal education, Syed Maududi turned to journalism in order to make his living. In 1918, he was already contributing to a leading Urdu newspaper, and in 1920, at the age of 17, he was appointed editor of *Taj*, which was being published from Jabalpure (now Madhya Pradesh). Late in 1920, Maududi went to Delhi and first assumed the editorship of the newspaper *Muslim* (1921-23), and later of *al-Jamiyat* (1925-28), both of which were the organs of the *Jamiyat-i Ulama-i Hind*, an organization of Muslim religious scholars. According to Israr Ahmad he worked for sometime at Darul Islam, an Islamic research academy.

In 1941, Syed Maududi founded *Jamaat-e-Islami* (JI) in British India as a religious political movement to promote Islamic values and practices. After the Partition of India, JI was redefined in 1947 to support an Islamic State in Pakistan. JI is currently the oldest religious party in Pakistan. With the Partition of India, JI split into several groups. The organization headed by Syed Maududi is now known as *Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan*. Also existing are *Jamaat-e-Islami Hind*, *Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami*, and autonomous groups in Indian Kashmir, and Sri Lanka.

Syed Maududi was elected *Jamaat's* first Ameer (President) and remained so until 1972 when he withdrew from the responsibility for reasons of health.

Political Struggle

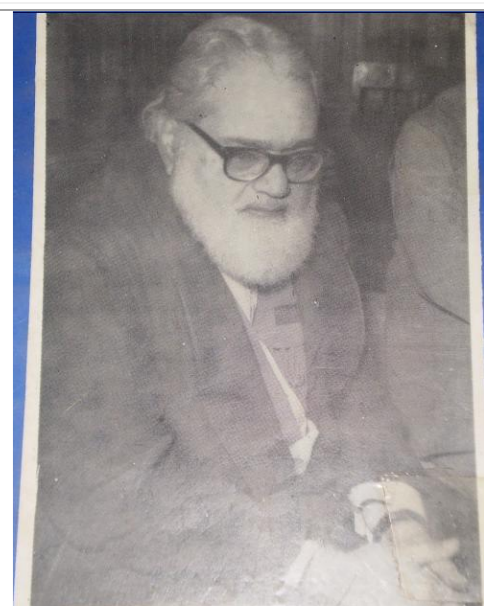
In the beginning of the struggle for the state of Pakistan, Syed Maududi and his party were against the idea of creating a separate state of Pakistan. He did criticize other leaders of the Muslim league for wanting Pakistan to be a state for Muslims and not an Islamic state. After realizing that India was going to be partitioned and Pakistan created, he began to support the idea. Syed Maududi moved to Pakistan in 1947 and worked to turn it into an Islamic state, resulting in frequent arrests and long periods of incarceration. In 1953, he and the JI led a campaign against the Ahmadiyya community in Pakistan resulting in selective declaration of martial law. He was arrested by the military deployment, which included Rahimuddin Khan, and sentenced to death on the charge of writing a seditious pamphlet about the Ahmadiyya issue. He turned down the opportunity to file a petition for mercy, expressing a preference for death rather than seeking clemency. Strong public pressure ultimately convinced the government to commute his death sentence to life imprisonment. Eventually, his sentence was annulled.

Syed Maududi wrote over 120 books and pamphlets and made over a 1000 speeches and press statements. His magnum opus is the *translation* and *Tafseer* of the Quran known as *Tafhimul Quran* in which he intended to give the Quran a practical contemporary interpretation. It became widely read throughout the subcontinent and has been translated into several languages around the globe.

Last Days

In April 1979, Syed Maududi's long-time kidney ailment worsened and by then he also had heart problems. He went to the United States for treatment and was hospitalized in Buffalo, New York, where his second son worked as a physician. During his hospitalization, he remained intellectually active. Following a few surgical operations, he died on September 22, 1979, at the age of 76. His funeral was held in Buffalo, but he was buried in an unmarked grave at his residence in Ichhra, Lahore after a very large funeral procession through the city.

May Allah shower His Mercy upon him



Syed Abul Aala Maududi



Main entrance of the House of Syed Abul Aala Maududi 4-A, Zaildar Park, Ichhra, Lahore



Grave of Syed Abul Aala Maududi

