

# THE GLORIOUS QUR'AN

From Revelation To Recitation & Beyond

## *THE SCIENCE OF TAFSEER*

Published By:



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## THE SCIENCE OF TAFSEER

Tafseer is an Arabic word which means “to open” or “to explain”. Technically, the science of Tafseer is a branch of knowledge meant to interpret and explain the verses of Qur'an Shareef. The primary objective of 'Uloomul Qur'an' is to understand and practice on the Qur'an.

It has been the consistent practice of Allah Ta'ala that He never sent a Divine book without a prophet, whose basic objective was to explain the contents of the book and to teach the people how they should mould their lives according to the guidance provided by that Divine book. The Qur'an Shareef itself makes it clear that the major function entrusted to Muhammad ﷺ was “to teach the Book” (see Surah Baqrah (2):129, 151, Surah Aal Imran (3):164, Surah Jumuah (62: 2) and “to explain to the people what is revealed to them.” (See Surah Nahl (16):44)

Accordingly, Rasulallah ﷺ has not only conveyed the words of the Qur'an Shareef accurately, but has also explained to his noble Sahabah ﷺ how to recite it and how to understand its correct meanings.

It is on the basis of the explanations given by Rasulallah ﷺ and his blessed Sahabah ﷺ, who learnt the Qur'an Shareef directly from the Prophet ﷺ, that the Muslim scholars have developed the science of Tafseer as a branch of knowledge, which not only explains the meanings of the Glorious text, but also lays down the principles of its interpretation, so that its true essence is fully preserved and protected against all sorts of distortions.

Apart from this the Qur'an itself commands its readers to ponder over it.

The science of Tafseer has its own fascinating history, which cannot be described in this short introduction. Nevertheless, it will be pertinent here to summarise the basic sources on which this science has placed its reliance while interpreting the Quran Shareef. *(Meanings of the Noble Quran – Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani)*

## TYPES OF TAFSEER

### 1. At Tafsir bil Mathur

The explanations and interpretations of the Qur'an by the Qur'an, Hadith, reports of Sahabah and

sayings of the Tabieen.

## **2. Al Tafsir bil Ma'qul or Bil Rai**

In this Tafseer the commentator relies on his own intellect and reasoning to interpret the Qur'an, based on the nuances of the phrasing of a verse, the various linguistic connotations carried by a word, and other factors. This does not imply that the narrations of the Prophet ﷺ and companions are ignored. Such Tafseer is only valid when it does not contradict the Qur'an and Sunnah.

### **BASIC CONDITIONS OF TAFSEER**

Muslim scholars have laid down certain basic conditions for sound Tafseer. Any Tafseer, which disregards these principles must be viewed with great caution. The most important among these conditions are the following:

The Mufassir must:

- Be sound in belief ('aqida).
- Be of sound comprehension.
- Abstain from the use of mere opinion.
- Begin the Tafseer of the Qur'an with the Qur'an.
- Seek guidance from the words and explanations of the Sunnah. Nothing can match the explanation of the Qur'an by the Qur'an and the explanation of the Qur'an and Sunnah.
- Refer to the reports from the Sahaba رضي الله عنهم.
- Consider the reports from the early scholars.
- Consult the opinions of other eminent scholars.

## TOGETHER WITH THE ABOVE ONE NEEDS TO BE WELL-VERSED IN THE FOLLOWING SCIENCES:

1. **Lughat:** This refers to the philology of the language, which helps understand the appropriate meanings of words
2. **Nahw:** This the syntax, a branch of grammar, which helps to understand the relation of a sentence with another. It also refers to i'rab (vowel sounds) of a word. A change in i'rab often means a change in meaning.
3. **Sarf:** This is etymology, the study of the sources and derivation of words and conjunctions. The meaning of a word is determined by the source and conjugation.
4. **Ishtiqaq:** this refers to the derivatives. It is necessary to have the knowledge of derivatives and their sources, because if a word has been derived from two different sources, it will have two different meanings. E.g. the word masih is derived from masah, which means to touch or to move wet hands over, and also from masaha which means measurement.
5. **Ilm ul Bayan and Ilm al Ma'ani:** This refers to semantics. The meanings of phrase constructions are understood from the knowledge of figures of speech, like similes and metaphors, which express shades of meaning.
6. **Ilm ul Badee':** This refers to the knowledge of rhetoric, which reveals the beauty of a language and its implications.
7. **Ilm ul Qira'ah:** This refers to the knowledge of the art of pronunciation, because different methods of recitation sometimes convey different meanings.
8. **Ilm ul Aqaid:** This refers to the knowledge of the fundamentals of faith. This is necessary to explain certain analogies.
9. **Usul ul Fiqh:** This refers to the knowledge of the principles of Islamic jurisprudence.
10. **Asbabun Nuzool:** This refers to the circumstances of revelation as was mentioned earlier.

**11. Al Nasikh wa al-Mansukh:** Knowledge of commandments that have subsequently been abrogated or changed, so that abrogated commandments may be distinguished from the standing ones.

**12. Ilm ul Fiqh:** This refers to the knowledge of Islamic Jurisprudence. It is only through this knowledge that we arrive at a complete understanding of general principles.

**13. Ilm ul Hadith:** This refers to the knowledge of Hadith especially those that provide commentary on verses of the Quran

**14. Ilm ul Wahabi:** This refers to gifted understanding bestowed by Allah upon his selected ones.

*(Qur'an made Easy – Mufti Afzal Hoosen Elias – Rabimahullah)*





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