

THE GLORIOUS QUR'AN

From Revelation To Recitation & Beyond

SOURCES OF TAFSEER

THE TABIUN - EARLY SCHOLARS

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FOURTH SOURCE: THE EXPLANATIONS OF THE TABI'EN

After the death of the Prophet ﷺ the companions spread out to different Muslim cities. Each one taught the meanings of the Quran to many Tabi'een (companions of the companions), who later became scholars in their own right. Since they learnt the Qur'an Shareef from the Sahabah ﷺ, the importance of their explanatory statements hold much merit. They understood that the exegesis directly from the companions. Hence, the Mufasssireen have taken them as the fourth source of Tafseer. Their explanations are sometimes based primarily on what they learnt from the Sahabah ﷺ but at times they offer their own reflections. Therefore, many Mufasssireen do not consider their statements as strongly as those of the Sahabah ﷺ. The fact, however, is that these statements are of great value while determining the correct meaning of a verse of the Qur'an Shareef. *(Meanings of the Noble Qur'an – Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmaani Sabib)*

SOME OF THE FAMOUS COMMENTATORS WERE:

Qatadah

He was born blind, yet his memory was so brilliant that he himself had said, “I never asked a teacher to report a tradition a second time, and my ears never heard a thing which my heart did not memorise.” He said: There is no verse of the Qur'an about which I had not learnt something (narration or report) already.”

Imam Ahmad (Rahimahullah) said:”Qatadah is a great scholar of Tafseer.”

In addition, he also had great knowledge of Arabic language, literature, history and genealogy. He died of plague in the city of Wasit, in 118 AH.

Murrah Al-Hamdani

He lived the times of the Prophet ﷺ but could not meet him. He received much knowledge from Hazrat Abdullah bin Mas'ud ﷺ. Thus, we find a large number of narrations from Hazrat Abdullah bin Mas'ud ﷺ recorded in his Tafseer. He is said to offer between five to six hundred raka'at daily. Hafiz Zahabi

writes:”He had an insight in exegesis.”He died about 90 AH.

Of the commentators from among the tabi'un (early scholars) one distinguishes three groups, according to their origin and area of activity:

- Those from Makkah Mukarramah
- Those from Madina Munawwarah
- Those from Iraq

The Makkan Group

According to many scholars, this group of commentators from among the Tabi'un are the most knowledgeable in Tafseer, because they learnt about it from Hazrat Abdullah bin Abbas ؓ. They are many in number, and among the best known out of many others are Mujahid (104 AH), Tawoos (106 AH) and 'Ikrima (107 AH), Ata ibn Rabah (114 AH).

Mujahid

Mujahid, the best known among them, is reported to have studied through the Qur'an thrice with Hazrat Abdullah bin Abbas ؓ. He had the opportunity to have asked him about the 'when' and 'how' of each verse that had been revealed. He was the favourite student of Hazrat Abdullah bin Mas'ud ؓ.

Qatadah said about him: Mujahid is the greatest of the living of exegetes.

It is said that a collection of his exegesis is still safe in the Khadiviyah Library of Egypt.

Although Mujahid is among the Tabi'in yet the companions used to respect him. He has himself stated:

“I remained in the company of Ibn Umar ؓ and I wanted to serve him, but he served me.”

Sayyiduna ibn Umar ؓ once held the stirrup of his horse and said, “How I wish that my son Salim and my slave Nafi' had a memory like you.”

He died in the year 103 AH while he was in prostration.

Saeed bin Jubayr

He is known for his dedication and piety. Very frequently he used to weep during Salah at night so much that it resulted in a weak vision. On the desire of caliph Abdul Malik bin Marwan he had written an exegesis of the Quran, which the caliph kept in safe custody in the royal treasury.

The Madinan Group

The Tabi'un from Madina had many companions as their teachers, among the best-known being Ubay bin Ka'b. The following are some of the well-known Qur'an exegetes among them: Abu-l 'Alliya al-Riyahl (90 AH), Muhammad bin Ka'b al-Qarzi (117/118 AH), and Zaid bin Aslam (130/136 AH).

The Iraq Group

There were also many Mufasssirun among the Tabi'un in Iraq. Their principal teacher was Ibn Mas'ud. Their main centers were Basra and Kufa. The best known among them are: Alqamah bin Qais (61 AH), Masruq bin al-'Ajda' (63 AH), Aswad bin Yazid (74 AH), Ibrahim al-Nakha'i. (95 AH), Amir bin Shabi (109 AH), Hasan al-Basri (110 AH), Qatada As-Sadoosee (117 AH).

After these generations, people who were proficient in the Islamic sciences would write exegesis and limit it to specific topics. The grammarians considered the most important subject to be grammatical states, and the many facets of the Arabic language. They relayed the rules of grammar, their foundational principles and the differences in grammar.

Some scholars, were only concerned with looking at the stories in the Qur'an, and the people of the past generations. Other scholars wrote from a perspective of Fiqh.

Other scholars wrote from the perspective of logic, philosophy, wisdoms, and the like.



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