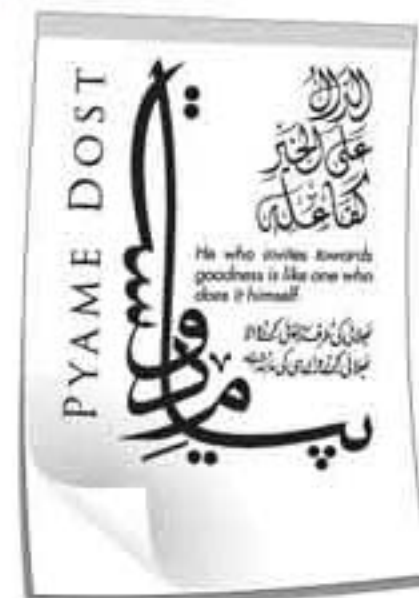




READ AND LET OTHERS READ



The Five Conditions of Benefiting from The Quran

In the Light of
Quran & Sunnah

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

The Quran is the means to acquire Eeman (faith), but there are certain prerequisites for reciting the Quran for this purpose.

1. Ikhlas (Purity of Intention)

The first prerequisite is the purity of intention i.e. one should read the Quran with the sole purpose of acquiring guidance. If the purpose of reading it is other than for guidance, not only will we be deprived of its benefits and blessings, but there is a danger that we will be distanced even further from the Quran. If a person reads the Quran to be known as a scholar of the Quran or that he has certain views and he wants to use the Quran to simply strengthen his argument when presenting them to others, it is possible that his intention will to some extent be realized. However, by doing so, he will close the door of understanding the Quran upon himself.

Allah has revealed the Quran for it to be a source of guidance and has inspired in each person the desire to seek guidance. If this is what motivates him to turn to the Quran, he will benefit from it in proportion to his efforts, Allah's guidance and bestowal of ability to do so. So blessed is the Quran that if a person turns to it so that he can use it for any other purpose, he will find that he will be able to achieve that very purpose. It is because of this special quality of the Quran that Allah has explained it in the manner below:

"By it He causes many to stray and many He leads into the right path."
(2:26)

After stating this principle, Allah has made it clear in next ayah that He misguides only those who are defiantly disobedient i.e. those who are slaves to their own desires and seek misguidance through even guidance. To such people Allah grants the very thing that they seek; but as for those people who approach the Quran for guidance with purity of intention and resolve, the Quran immediately reaches out to them and takes them into its fold and training.

2. To Consider the Quran as a Superior Scripture

Secondly, one should consider it as a superior scripture, understand its importance and recognize what is due to it. If a person is convinced of the Quran's greatness and importance he will be able to put in the effort that is required to fully understand its truth and depth. This conviction is an absolute requirement in order to benefit from its treasures of wisdom. The Quran has a miraculous record of being able to change the paradigm of people to an extent that no other book has been able to achieve.

A person can fulfill the demands of understanding it only if he keeps its greatness and importance in mind. If it is known that a lot of gold

had been found on a certain plot of land at some time in the past and by digging again there is a chance of finding more, then according to the expected benefits, commensurate efforts are made. However if it is known that at maximum, there is only coal or limestone to be found there, no one will want to waste their time. So a person expends only as much effort as his expectation of benefits to be reaped from it.

This advice is necessary because many people consider the Quran as merely a source for deducing what is permissible and what is forbidden. Since now the commands of fiqh (Islamic legal rulings) have been compiled separately, they feel that its only importance now is that of sacred relic. In fact some scholars who stress on the purification of the soul consider it to be merely a script and to them, the mysteries and realities of hidden knowledge are acquired through divine inspiration. Many people think of it as only a collection of good advices and they do not expect from it any deep wisdom or a higher philosophy. Many consider it a source of easing the agonies of death or a book to be read for benefiting the deceased, whilst others think of it as a charm to ward off difficulties and calamities. It is impossible for Muslims who are under such misconceptions to understand the purpose for which the Quran was revealed and to derive full benefit from it. The example of such people who wish to use it for their relatively less noble purposes is that of a person who has been given a cannon but who instead of using it to demolish the walls of the enemy's fortress thinks it a tool to exterminate mosquitoes and starts using it for this lowly purpose.

3. The Resolve to Change Oneself According to the Quran:

For truly benefiting from the Quran, the third important prerequisite is that a person should have a firm resolve to change himself both externally and internally according to the demands of the Quran. When a person studies it in-depth, beyond a superficial reading, at every step of the way he realises that the demands of the Quran are very different from his own desires. He sees that his concepts and points of view, dealings and relationships, both outward and inward are very far removed from the standards prescribed by the Quran.

Having realized this contradiction, the seeker of truth decides that irrespective of the consequences he will mould himself according to the demands of the Quran. He is then willing to make all kinds of sacrifices and undergo difficulties to achieve his goal. But the person who lacks the resolve and determination and who does not have the genuine desire to recognise and seek the truth does not dare to cross

the divide which he finds between himself and the Quran. He feels that if he tries to mould his beliefs and actions according to the Quran he will have to have an ideological and practical rebirth and he is afraid that his surroundings will become alien to him. He realises that if he uses the standards of halaal (permissible) and haraam (prohibited) laid down in the Quran to evaluate his own means of livelihood, he may be deprived of the comforts that he is presently enjoying and may have to struggle for even his basic needs.

Not everyone has the determination and the ability to take on these challenges and only the courageous can traverse this path. The ones who are not so courageous and consistent, change their direction in the very beginning itself. In fact, some shortsighted type of people who are not desirous of eliminating their inadequacies set off in pursuit of their desires saying that the Quran is correct, but it is very difficult to tread on its prescribed path. They prefer to walk on the path of their desires. Those who want to hide their hypocrisy with the garb of Eeman follow their desires on different pretexts. Some use the excuse of helplessness to make the prohibited permissible for themselves, whilst many use all kinds of excuses to conceal falsehood with righteousness. Some use the excuse of needing to conform to present day requirements and issues whilst others try to affect the kind of changes in the Quran, like those made by the Jews in the Torah. Many accept the parts of the Quran that are in accordance with their desires and ignore the parts that run counter to their desires.

As all these paths are the wiles of Satan, irrespective of whichever of these paths a person chooses, it will take him towards the pit of destruction. The only way to success and prosperity is to resolve to mould oneself according to the Quran and be ready to make all kinds of sacrifices that such a decision entails. For a while Allah tests a person's resolve and if he proves himself to be steadfast in the face of these adversities, then the paths of good fortune start opening up for him. If one door closes, then Allah opens another door for him. The Quran points it out in these words:

"And those who strive in Our (Cause) We will certainly guide them to Our Paths: for verily Allah is with those who do right." (29:69)

4. Pondering and Reflecting

Allah says in Quran:

"Here is a Book which We have sent down unto you full of blessings that they may meditate on its Signs and that men of understanding may receive admonition." (38:29)

By merely performing tilawah (recitation) and to treat the Quran like a sacred relic and not give any attention to its meaning is not the

best way to read the Quran. This was the way adopted by people who started thinking of it as a source of blessing only instead of thinking of it as a book of guidance, a way to get to know Allah and a treasure of knowledge and wisdom. Now its only connection with life's situations is that it is used to ease the agonies of death and for benefiting the deceased. Instead of being a guide in the ups and downs of life, its use now is to recite it before initiating acts of disobedience to God so that through its blessings it will make what is wrong into what is right! We seek refuge with Allah from this.

This is not the way to use the Quran. There is no other book in the world that emphasises as much as this book, that its real benefit is only achieved when it is read with full understanding, concentration and reflection. It is also an undeniable reality that this is the only book that is always read with heedlessness. When a person reads any ordinary reading material he tries to concentrate and understand it, but the strange thing with the Quran is that we insulate our hearts and minds before reading it in case the meaning of some of its words should touch our intelligence and feelings.

Learning a few Arabic words and then deducing new meanings or interpreting the Quran on one's own is not what is meant by reflection. There is a treasure trove of authentic tafaseer (exegesis and explanation) done by the best minds of the Muslim Ummah and this effort has been going on for centuries. To not use these and study the Quran on the basis of one's own interpretation is exactly like a person who leaves all the scientific discoveries of the past centuries and starts his own study of the universe. When studying the Quran, one should draw on the existing knowledge from the available treasure of tafaseer and Prophetic traditions and ponder and reflect only in the light of these.

5. To Deliver Oneself to Allah

To derive true and full benefit from the Quran, the fifth condition is that a person should not get disheartened when he faces difficulties and adversities in the path of the Quran or allow them to disillusion him. Instead of objections and resistance, he should address his problems and concerns to Allah and seek His help and guidance.

Sometimes, a person may experience intellectual and practical difficulties in understanding some aspects of the Quran and when he cannot perceive the answers to his questions, it creates doubts regarding religion or it becomes difficult to act upon a particular command. The best and tried way for a person to eliminate these difficulties is to present them to his Lord and seek His help. Along with this he should constantly supplicate to Allah for His continued

support and continue to reflect on the Quran. If a person has memorised the Quran or part of it, he should read it at a slow and measured pace in the night prayer and In Sha Allah all his concerns will be answered. When this happens, the doors of action and wisdom that will open up to him are those which cannot open in any other way. It is also recommended to make the following supplication which our Prophet (SAW) has instructed us to make in order to distance us from our grief and anxieties.

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي عَبْدُكَ وَابْنُ عَبْدِكَ وَابْنُ أَمَتِكَ نَاصِيَتِي
بِيَدِكَ مَاضٍ فِي حُكْمِكَ عَدْلٌ فِي قَضَائِكَ أَسْأَلُكَ بِكُلِّ
اسْمٍ هُوَ لَكَ سَمَّيْتَ بِهِ نَفْسَكَ أَوْ أَنْزَلْتَهُ فِي كِتَابِكَ
أَوْ عَلَّمْتَهُ أَحَدًا مِنْ خَلْقِكَ أَوْ اسْتَأْثَرْتَ بِهِ فِي عِلْمِ
الْغَيْبِ عِنْدَكَ أَنْ تَجْعَلَ الْقُرْآنَ الْعَظِيمَ رَبِّيعَ قَلْبِي
وَنُورَ صَدْرِي وَجَلَاءَ حُزْنِي وَذَهَابَ هَوْنِي وَغَيْثِي .

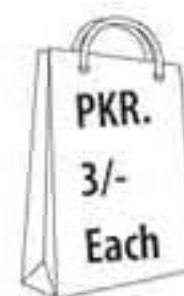
(مسند احمد ۱/ ۳۹۱)

"O Allah, I am your servant, son of your maid-servant, my forelock is in your hand, Your command over me is forever executed and Your decree over me is just. I ask You by every name belonging to You which You named Yourself with, or revealed in Your Book, or You taught to any of Your creation, or You have preserved in the knowledge of the unseen with You, that You make the Quran the life of my heart and the light of my breast, and a departure for my sorrow and a release for my anxiety."

(Ahmad)

By simply meeting these conditions a person should not expect that he will fully understand the Quran. Achieving this goal is totally dependent on Allah bestowing His guidance and inspiration and He is the One who can open doors for us and guide us in our difficulties. Hence the heart of the seeker of the Quran should always be submissive to Allah, always grateful for whatever he gets and expectant for whatever he does not get. He should neither be puffed up with pride nor get despondent and last but not least, he should definitely not consider the Quran a means to increase his business or fame.

May Allah bestow upon us the guidance and ability to act upon the knowledge we have acquired. Aameen



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