

Glimpses at the Essence of the Qur'an

Qur'an is a word of Allah SWT and it will be alive till the end of times. It has an essence and spirit which when taken properly, has the potential to change the world. This is what happened with the companions of the Prophet SAW and early Muslims; they perceived Qur'an as a living breathing message from Allah SWT and molded their lives in its essence, and the result was a spiritual feat for the world.

Qur'an is so much more than laws and commands of dos and don'ts. Allah SWT sent Qur'an with profound essence. The more we analyze it the more we realize its depth. In order to truly benefit from the Qur'an, we need to know its essence and know how to read it. Here I will reiterate the ten elements from the essence of Qur'an that a venerable scholar has compiled.

1. To get to know Allah *Jalla Jalalahu*, the Creator of the heavens and the earth.
2. To know oneself; by getting to know the relationship between one's own self and the Creator and His expectations from His slaves.
3. To know the message of Islam and its purpose.
4. To know Islam—God's chosen way of life, and how to live according to its teachings.
5. Stories of messengers and Prophets in order to take them as role models and imitate them.
6. To introduce us to the kingdom of Allah and His *Sunnah* (way of doing things) in His kingdom. This allows us to know if the kingdom of Allah will bear witness to our actions on the Day of Judgment or be a witness against us.
7. To introduce us to the unseen creation of Allah including the *jinns* and angels; their roles, numbers, and abilities. It is in essence a manifestation of the powers of Allah and is referred to as *Iman bil ghaib* or faith in the unseen.
8. To know the journey and to warn us against the hardships and enemies waiting for us along the way such as *Shaytaan*, our *nafs* (desires and

- temptations), love of this world, fear of the unseen, weaknesses of our souls etc. Once we know about them, we can equip ourselves to deal with them properly.
9. To relay the importance of the Love of Allah and the rights of the brotherhood among Muslims— quintessential quality of believers, which we as a nation are deprived of today.
 10. The outcome of the journey of life and the two destinations—*jannah* or *jahannam*. If we spend our lives according to the message of Islam the reward is *Jannah*, if not then the destination is *jahannam*. One third of the Qur'an is dedicated to the description and delights of *jannah* and the horrors of *jahannam*.

Implications of the Knowledge

Once we know the essence of Qur'an and the purpose of its revelation, it has to have implications. We are not living during the time of the revelation of the Qur'an which came down to address situations as they arose; neither do we have Prophet SAW to chart out for us our course of action. But this knowledge is preserved and the preserver of this knowledge Allah SWT knew that we will be here at this time and face the circumstances that we are facing. Since Allah SWT sent the Qur'an till the end of times, we need to believe that it is just as applicable to us today as it was to the companions of the Prophet SAW.

Relating to Qur'an and making it relevant to ourselves is a very individual and personal struggle. Qur'an holds all our situations and personalities; it teaches us how to behave as a mother, a father, a child, as a wealthy person, as a poor individual, a sinner, a knowledgeable person, when faced with an accident or sickness, or someone who has been appointed in charge of a task or other people.

Pre-Requisites of Living the Qur'an

- The first prerequisite of personalizing the Qur'an is absolute humbleness and humility to Allah SWT. The more we are poor to Allah and realize that we don't know anything and need Him SWT and His message to guide us, the more our vision will change and we will get an in-depth understanding of the Qur'an.
- The second prerequisite is acquisition of authentic knowledge and understanding of the Qur'an from early scholars and submitting to it instead of relying on our own personal and often corrupted understanding.

Once we realize the essence of the Qur'an we can't help saying *Alhamdulillah* for the *Iman, salah* and the bounty of *dhikrullah* (remembrance of Allah). Qur'an is a cure for the hearts as Allah SWT tells us:

يَتَأْتِيهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَاءَتْكُمْ مَوْعِظَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَشِفَاءٌ لِّمَا فِي الصُّدُورِ
 وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٥٧﴾

O mankind, there has to come to you instruction from your Lord and healing for what is in the breasts and guidance and mercy for the believers. (10:57)

Once the hearts are cured, *salah*—the source of communication with the Lord— will be less distracted and more meaningful, thus elevating the spiritual status and level of a believer.

Qur'an teaches us to thank Allah SWT and to realize His unlimited bounties on us. We, as humans, tend to be ungrateful and forgetful; therefore Allah SWT is reminding us to be watchful of such mistakes since bounties of the Lord are increased for the slave when he is grateful for what he has:

وَإِذْ تَأَذَّنَ رَبُّكُمْ لَئِن شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ وَلَئِن كَفَرْتُمْ إِنَّ عَذَابِي لَشَدِيدٌ ﴿٧﴾

And [remember] when your Lord proclaimed, 'If you are grateful, I will surely increase you [in favor]; but if you deny, indeed, My punishment is severe.' (14:7)

فَاذْكُرُونِي أَذْكَرُكُمْ وَأَشْكُرُوا إِلَيَّ وَلَا تَكْفُرُونِ ﴿١٥٢﴾

So remember Me; I will remember you. And be grateful to Me and do not deny Me. (2: 152)

Humans are emotional beings and tend to reach extreme of fear or happiness, often swaying from the middle course of action. Allah SWT has given scenarios and promises in the Qur'an that curb these extremities by providing hope and announcing punishments. Prophet SAW affirmed one of these promises of Allah SWT of mercy and forgiveness for His slaves in the following *ahadeeth*:

"There is no day on which Allah frees more of His slaves from Fire than the Day of Arafat, and He verily draws near, then boasts of them before the angles, saying: 'What do they seek?'" (Sahih Muslim).

"Verily Allah boasts of the people of Arafat before the people of Heaven (angels) saying: 'Look to my servants who have come to Me disheveled and dusty.'"

Allah SWT calls himself Ar-Rahman in the Qur'an and with this He is announcing his mercy and promising His slaves His kindness. In a *Hadeeth Qudsi*, Allah SWT says:

"O son of Adam, as long as you call upon Me and put your hope in Me, I have forgiven you for what you have done and I do not mind. O son of Adam, if your sins were to reach the clouds of the sky and then you would seek My forgiveness, I would forgive you. O son of Adam, if you were to come to Me with sins that are close to filling the earth and then you would meet Me without ascribing any partners with Me, I would certainly bring to you forgiveness close to filling it." (At-Tirmidhi)

Allah SWT goes on to say:

❖ قُلْ يٰۤاَعْبَادِيَ الَّذِيْنَ اَسْرَفُوْا عَلٰۤى اَنْفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوْا مِنْ رَّحْمَةِ اللّٰهِ
اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوْبَ جَمِيْعًا اِنَّهٗ هُوَ الْغَفُوْرُ الرَّحِيْمُ ﴿٥٣﴾

Say, "O My servants who have transgressed against themselves [by sinning], do not despair of the mercy of Allah. Indeed, Allah forgives all sins. Indeed, it is He who is the Forgiving, the Merciful." (39:53)

How can we suffer from depression, anxiety, and emotional or mental disorders if we are truly living the essence of the Qur'an—which is full of promises of Allah's mercy, kindness, and hope?

How can we be lost and aimless in our lives if Qur'an has clearly charted out the purpose of our lives for us?

How can we not be grateful when Allah SWT has chosen for us to be among those blessed ones who have heard His message and responded to the call when majority of humanity is living in illusion and loss?

How can we not love Allah SWT after all the opportunities of gaining forgiveness and listening to our prayers that He has provided us?

وَلِلَّهِ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ فَادْعُوهُ بِهَا

And to Allah belong the best names, so invoke Him by them. (7:180)

And when My servants ask you, [O Muhammad], concerning Me - indeed I am near. I respond to the invocation of the supplicant when he calls upon Me. So let them respond to Me [by obedience] and believe in Me that they may be [rightly] guided. (2:186)

This life is a constant struggle; struggle for hereafter against duniya, struggle to spend in the way of Allah versus collecting wealth, struggle to spend your life for the sake of Allah versus your own desires and *nafs*. And we will never win this struggle unless the essence of the Qur'an becomes the essence of our souls and we learn to extract messages for our life's circumstances and situations from the words of Allah SWT.

Quran enables us to reflect internally and externally; it allows us to comprehend the larger world affairs, and enables us to act or react guided by the meanings and wisdom of the Quran. The more we know and manifest this knowledge in ourselves, the more it enables us to pursue the promises of Allah—the happiness and dignity of this life and the hereafter.

Qur'an is a mirror which will allow us to see ourselves and the outside world with a clear accurate vision. If we really want to know who we are, where we are, what to do and what not to do, and where to head in our lives—we need to read Qur'an as it ought to be read!