

THE MESSAGE OF QURAN AND SUNNAH

TERJUMAN-UL-QURAN

November 2000

PROF. KHURSHID AHMAD



THE MESSAGE OF QUR'AN AND SUNNAH

by Professor Khurshid Ahmad

Allah's blessings and favors on humankind are simply innumerable, yet the most premium of all is the guidance about how to live and how to die which He has provided to His people. This guidance makes the man 'superior to all Creation', is the reason for distinction between man and animal, and by it man can come out of the darkness into the light, understands the meaning of life and reality of the universe, and becomes able to perform its role in Allah's land so as to achieve success and delight in the life of hereafter.

In the universe, Allah Almighty has arranged for meeting every human need. The resources that are needed for keeping the relation of body and spirit intact have been endowed in the skies and the earth. Man is endowed with the ability to use them. Above all these, Allah has given the guidance for man's spiritual, moral, mental, civilizational and cultural development through His Books and His Messengers acting upon which he can touch the heights in this world and in the life hereafter.

Allah showed the way of success right at the start of Adam's descend on the earth, and told that one who would live by this guidance would emerge successful:

"And when there comes to you guidance from me, whosoever follows My guidance, on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve. But those who reject Faith and belie Our Signs, they shall be companions of the Fire, they shall abide therein."

(Al-Baqarah 2: 38-39)

This system of guidance is continuing since the Day of Genesis and would continue till the Day of Judgment. Allah's Messengers and Prophets provide this guidance, in their respective eras, in the shape of Allah's Book and own model in its light; and this guidance is available to humankind through the Holy Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) in its final and accomplished form till the Day of Resurrection. Qur'an and Sunnah are a source of light that would continue giving lights till the last moment of human life and by which man would achieve good life in this world and lasting success in the life hereafter.

"Whoever works righteousness, man or woman, and has Faith, verily, to him will we give a new Life, a life that is good and pure, and we will bestow on such their reward of their actions."

(Al-Nahl 16: 97)

This is Allah's greatest favor to the humankind which also shows His blessings. No doubt that only those deserve this favor that hold firmly to this guidance of the Book and the Prophets model (Sunnah) and enrich their lives with is enlivening message:

"God did confer a great favor on the Believers when He sent among them a Prophet from among themselves, rehearsing unto them the Signs of Allah, sanctifying them, and instructing them in Scripture and Wisdom, while, before that, they had been in manifest error."
(Al-e-Imran 3:164)

Qur'an is the guidance and it guides to the Straight Path:

"Verily, this Qur'an guides to that which is most right (or stable), and gives the glad tidings to the Believers who work deeds of righteousness, that they shall have a magnificent reward."
(Al-Asra 17: 9)

Qur'an is the light that illumines hearts and ensures human progress on the straight path by elucidating the whole highway of life. This is the way treading which one can become successful in this world as well as in the hereafter.

The followers of all the Revealed Religions have faith in Allah, His Prophets, and the Judgment Day, yet what distinguishes the Muslim Ummah is the belief in Qur'an and in the most truthful man on whom it was revealed, the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), who was a living model of Qur'an. Only that concept of the Oneness of God, Prophet hood and the life hereafter is credible that Qur'an and on whom it was revealed have presented. This is the touchstone (Furqan), what differentiates between the right and the wrong. The source of guidance is only one now: the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet on whom it was revealed. This is the 'Seal' and 'Confirmation' of the guidance that was sent in the past as well as the path-glowing light for the future. Qur'an is the everlasting message of Allah that He revealed on the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). This is the culmination of guidance from Allah. Pertaining to beliefs, prayers, individual and collective morality, and private and cultural life, it has such guidance that cannot be had except through the Revelation. It is not only the expression of knowledge and learning, but also an album of what is enjoining and what is to be refrained from, good tidings and admonition. It is the essence and sum of the books and scriptures revealed on the Prophets who came before Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). In it are explained principles and causes of rise and fall of nations so that lessons are learnt from the past and future is successfully built on the bases of truth and justice, good and integrity.

The names and characteristics of the Qur'an that it has itself taught us total 50 (or 99 according to some other scholars) which encompass the aspects of Qur'an and its message. To understand the message of Qur'an and to establish a contact with it on sound foundations, it is necessary to see that how Qur'an presents itself and, in this light, what is the role of this great Book in human life.

Five names are mentioned repeatedly in the Qur'an: Al-Qur'an (the Scripture that is recited), Al-Kitab (the Compilation of the statutes of law), Al-Furqan (that distinguishes between the right and the wrong and is the Touchstone), Al-Zikr (that gives advice and reminds, and represents guidance and instructions for people from Allah), and Al-Huda (that leads and guides).

The central theme of the Qur'an is guidance for humanity that is why it is called Al-Huda.

"This is the Book; in it is guidance sure, without doubt, to those who fear Allah."

(Al-Baqarah 2: 2)

"(Gabriel) brings down the (revelation) to your heart by Allah's will, a confirmation of what went before, and guidance and glad tidings for those who believe."

(Al-Baqarah 2: 97)

"Ramadan is the month in which was sent down the Qur'an, as a guide to mankind, also clear (Sign) for guidance and judgment (between right and wrong)."

(Al-Baqarah 2: 185)

Qur'an is the Book of Guidance and sums up the qualities and feature necessary for being Al-Huda:

1. The first need for guidance was that it were from the Creator of the Universe, not the product of the imagination of some individual or individuals. Qur'an is the Word of Allah and the Collection of His Revelation, in which nothing, howsoever minor, could be added or subtracted.

"The revelation of this Book is from Allah, exalted in Power, full of Knowledge."

(Al-Ghafir 40: 2)

"(This is) the revelation of the Book in which there is no doubt – from the Lord of the Worlds."

(Al-Sajdah 32:2)

"We have, without doubt, sent down the Message; and we will assuredly guard it."

(Al-Hajr 15: 9)

2. It was needed for guidance to be based on knowledge and truth, that it should be such an apotheosis which is everlasting and which shapes the time rather than being affected by the vicissitudes of time.

"For we had certainly sent unto them a book, based on knowledge, which we explained in detail – a guide and a mercy to all who believe."

(Al-A'raf 7:52)

"Thus have we revealed it to be a judgment of authority in Arabic. Were you to follow their (vain) desires after the knowledge which has reached you; then you would find neither protector nor defender against Allah."

(Al-Ra'ad 13: 37)

"It is Allah who has sent down the Book in truth and the Balance (by which to weigh conduct)."

(Al-Shura 42:17)

"Allah sent down the Book in truth."

(Al-Baqarah 2: 176)

3. It is necessary for guidance to be not merely above doubt and suspicion but lucidly clear, that it should have clear Signs, its guidance is lucid, and is like the open-book for everyone who seeks the truth.

"And we have sent down to you the Book explaining all things, a Guide, a Mercy, and Glad Tidings to Muslims."

(Al-Nahl 16: 89)

"A Book, whereof the verses are explained in detail – a Qur'an in Arabic, for people who understand. Giving Good News and Admonition."

(Fussilat 41: 3-4)

"There has come to you from Allah a (new) light and a perspicuous Book – wherewith Allah guides all who seek His good pleasure to ways of peace and safety, and leads them out of darkness, by His Will, unto the light – guides them to a Path that is Straight."

(Al-Maidah 5: 17-18)

4. Guidance is the touchstone that sifts right from wrong and truth from falsehood. It is the Balance, i.e. Allah's Law (Shariah) that weighs and distinguishes between right and wrong, true and false, justice and transgression, and straight and crooked. It gives the law and code of life acting upon which man can emerge successful both in this world and the world hereafter.

"And sent down with (the Prophets) the Book and the Balance (of Right and Wrong), that men may stand forth in justice."

(Al-Hadid 57: 25)

"Blessed is He Who sent down the Criterion to His Servant, that is may be an admonition to all creatures."

(Al-Furqan 25: 1)

5. This guidance is the real source and origin of light.

"He is the One Who sends to His Servant manifest Signs, that He may lead you from the depths of Darkness into the Lights."

(Al-Hadid 57: 9)

"A Book which We have revealed unto you, in order that you may lead mankind out of the depths of darkness into light – by the leave of their Lord – to the Way of (Him) the Exalted in Power, Worthy of all Praise."
(Ibrahim 14: 1)

6. This guidance is the cure to all spiritual and moral ailments, and a prescription of health.

"We send down (stage by stage) in the Qur'an that which is a healing and a mercy to those who believe."
(Al-Asra 17: 82)

7. Guidance can take to success through only one contact: that of Faith, acceptance and obedience. Its necessary demand is that it is acted upon and conveyed to others. This is the natural demand of Truth, Light, Balance and Health Prescription.

"And this is a Book which we have revealed as a blessing: so follow it and be righteous, that you may receive mercy."
(Al-Ana'am 6: 155)

"O You People of the Book! Believe in what we have revealed."
(Al-Nisa 4: 47)

"Verily it is we who have revealed the Book to you in Truth; so serve Allah, offering Him sincere devotion."
(Al-Zumar 39: 2)

"As to those who hold fast by the Book and establish regular Prayer – never shall we suffer the reward of the righteous to perish."
(Al-A'raf 7: 170)

"We have sent down to you the Book in truth, that you might test judge between men, as guided by Allah."
(Al-Nisa 4:105)

"This Qur'an has been revealed to me by inspiration, that I may warn you and all whom it reaches."
(Al-Ana'am 6: 19)

"So admonish with the Qur'an every such person who fears my warning."
(Qaf 50: 45)

"And we have indeed made the Qur'an easy to understand and remember; then is there any that will receive admonition?"
(Al-Qamar 54: 17)

It is not possible to review all aspects of guidance, yet some of these aspects have been highlighted with respect to Qur'an's being Al-Huda. This would help in understanding the reality of the Blessing Book, in comprehending the basis for establishing contact with it, and accessing the message and mission of this Great Book. The fact is that Qur'an is the book of guidance and the harbinger of the call and movement for bringing revolution in human life and history. The basic teaching of the Qur'an is that man should live as Allah's servant (bondman), not take partners with Him, obey

none but Him alone, make his prayers and obedience exclusively for Allah, does not aim at worldly gains but at success in the life hereafter, as this would reward him both here and hereafter, does not avoid the struggle of life, champion the cause of truth and strive against falsehood in the battle between the Truth and the False, arrange for giving to his fellow-being what are their due (Huquq al-ibad), besides the rights of God (Huquq Allah) – biggest of whom is the right to sharing the guidance, so he should try to remove the darkness in life by lightening with the Light of Allah. This is the struggle waging which he can correctly understand the message of Qur'an and would find it his guide and companion at every step and turn. Qur'an calls for continuous and sustained struggle, and this is the natural and logical demand for its being the Guidance.

This model of Qur'an is exemplified in the life and teachings (Seerah and Sunnah) of the Holy Prophet. The guidance which Allah had started giving in the Cave of Hira with "Read in the name of your Lord and Cherisher, who created" (Iqra 96: 1), and then with the command "Arise and deliver your warning! And proclaim the greatness of your Lord" (al-Muddaththir 74: 2-3) had started the movement for awakening the rebels of Allah and the unmindful of their own Creator, for calling the entire humanity to the path of Allah's obedience and rising against transgression; is the Way of Allah and His Prophet. Qur'an provides guidance and road map for this struggle of life. Without understanding this reality of the Qur'an, it is impossible to benefit from it or to understand its spelled-out model.

The message of Qur'an is very concise, very clear, and very revolutionary. This message can be summed up in just one sentence, in the words of the Holy Prophet, "O People! Be obedient to Allah".

"O you people! Adore your Guardian-Lord, Who created you and those who came before you, that you may have the chance to learn righteousness."

(Al-Baqarah 2: 21)

By addressing the People of the Book, Allah calls through His Prophet the entire humanity to the main theme of the Call:

"Come to common terms as between us and you: that we worship none but Allah; that we associate no partners with Him; that we erect not, from among ourselves, lords and patrons, other than Allah. If then they turn back, Say: "Bear witness that we (at least) are Muslims (bowing to Allah's Will)."

(Al-e-Imran 3: 64)

The real message and Call of Qur'an and Sunnah is about adopting the way of Allah's obedience, which necessitates declaring dissociation from every source that is rebellious against God. The rejection of false gods is as necessary as the affirmation of one God, and this is explained repeatedly in the Qur'an:

"Whoever rejects Evil and believes in Allah has grasped the most trustworthy handhold that never breaks; And Allah hears and knows all things." **(Al-Baqarah 2: 256)**

"We assuredly sent amongst every People a Prophet (with the Command), "Serve Allah and eschew Evil." Of the people were some whom Allah guided, and some on whom Error became inevitably established." **(Al-Nahl 16: 36)**

"That who eschews Evil – and fall not into its worship – and turn to Allah (in repentance) for them is Good News. So announce the Good News to My Servants – those who listen to the Word, and follow the best (meaning) in it, those are the ones whom Allah has guided, and those are the ones endued with understanding." **(Al-Zumar 39: 17-18)**

The real target of the Call of Qur'an is to call people to the obedience of Allah and to do away with all other orders of compliance and submission human beings have been victims of, whether it is the submission before the Self and own desires or obedience of and submission before other human beings, sources of power, and other-than-Allah entities.

"And they have been commanded no more than this: To worship Allah, offering Him sincere devotion, being true (in faith); to establish regular Prayer; and to practice regular Charity (Zakat); and that is the Religion Right and Straight." **(Al-Bayyinah 98: 5)**

Say:"Verily, I am commanded to serve Allah with sincere devotion; and I am commanded to be the first of those who bow to Allah in Islam." **(Al-Zumar 39: 11-12)**

"The Command is for none but Allah: He has commanded that you worship none but Him: that is the right religion, but most people understand not..." **(Yusuf 12: 40)**

The message of Qur'an is quite candid and clear. Order, obedience and submission are only for Allah. None else, in any degree, has any claim to these. The claim of obedience to Allah and submission before other-than-Allah and adoption of the ways, laws, and traditions of Allah's rebels are antithetical to each other. This is a contradiction and defect a Muslim's life should not be smeared with. Freeing man from all other Centers, Qur'an teaches him to prostrate only before Allah and to color the whole life in the color of Allah.

Qur'an and Sunnah aim to see the followers pure from hypocrisy and self-seeking guise. The Qur'an asks:

"O you who believe! Enter into Islam whole-heartedly; and follow not the footsteps of the Evil One, for he is to you an avowed enemy." **(Al- Baqarah 2: 208)**

"Do you believe in only a part of the Book, and reject the rest? But what is the reward for those among you who behave like this but disgrace in this life? – And on the Day of Judgment they shall be consigned to the most grievous penalty. For Allah is not unmindful of what you do." **(Al-Baqarah 2: 85)**

Verbal affirmation but its negation in action is not compatible with the tenets of obedience and submission. Qur'an clearly says:

"O you who believe! Why do you say that which you do not do? Grievously odious is it in the sight of Allah that you should say that which you do not do." **(Al-Saff 61: 2-3)**

Faith and good deed are two sides of the same coin, or two views of the same picture. Contradiction in word and deed and choosing from the commands of Allah are forms of Kufr (disbelief) and hypocrisy, not the way of the Faithful. The essence of the message of Qur'an is that man should become obedient to Allah and make submission to Him his habit and way of life, and thus color the life with the color of Allah in such a way that the observer could not help exclaim that "these are the Obedient (ibad-ur- Rahman)".

Those whose contact with Qur'an and Sunnah is of Faith, sincerity and loyalty, and the pattern of life they adopt, Allah affectionately calls them as "Allah's Men (Rabbaniyoon)". This reflects the deep and close contact between man and Allah. These are the people who reject all Centers and Sources and seek the help only from Allah, their real Sustainer, they seek His pleasure, observe his Commandments, and they race for doing what pleases Him and refrain from what displeases Him. They remember Allah and seek His pleasure in all matters of life. Their picture that Qur'an draws is magnificent and exquisitely beautiful. Allah's Prophet urges them to be obedient to Allah:

"Be worshippers of Him who is truly the Cherisher of all: for you have taught the Book and you have studied it earnestly." **(Al-e-Imran 3: 79)**

They are:

"Strong against Unbelievers, (but) compassionate amongst each other. You will see them bow and prostrate themselves (in Prayer), seeking Grace from Allah and (His) Good Pleasure. On their faces are marks, (being) the traces of their prostration." **(Al-Fatah 48: 29)**

In whatever they do they seek the pleasure of their Creator and Sustainer:

"Only the desire to seek for the Countenance of their Lord Most high, and soon will they attain (complete) satisfaction."
(Al- Layl 92: 20-21)

The center and axis of the love of the Believers is their Lord:

"Those of Faith are overflowing in their love for Allah."
(Al- Baqarah 2: 165)

They pray and strive to achieve:

"O my Lord! So order me that I may be grateful for your favors, which you has bestowed on me and on my parents, and that I may work the righteousness that will please you; and admit me, by Your Grace, to the ranks of Your Righteous Servants."
(Al-Naml 27: 19)

They race among themselves to be ahead of one another in good deeds as they find their target and pattern in the following verse:

"And obey Allah and the Prophet; that you may obtain mercy. Be quick in the race for forgiveness from your Lord, and for a Garden whose width is that (of the whole) of the heavens and of the earth, prepared for the righteous – those who spend (freely), whether in prosperity, or in adversity; who restrain anger, and pardon (all) people – for Allah loves those who do good. And those who, having done a base deed or wronged their own souls, earnestly remember Allah and ask for forgiveness for their sins – And who can forgive sins except Allah? – and are never obstinate in persisting knowingly in (the wrong) they have done."
(Al-e-Imran 3: 133-135)

This is the condition of the hearts of Allah's Men and their way of doing things. This is the way to which Qur'an and Sunnah call. Allah's love, seeking His pleasure, His Paradise, seeking shelter from His punishment, serving His people, feeling guilt and seeking penance for wrong-doing.

The picture of Allah's Men as is seen in Qur'an and Sunnah has nothing to do with asceticism and giving up the world. Allah's Men live among Allah's people. They meet the worldly needs of their own selves and of their dependants and continuously strive to save them from the Fire of Hell:

"O you who believe! Save yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is Men and Stones?"
(Al-Tahrim 66: 6)

Kindness and affection for people is their feature. Explaining what is good (ma'roof), Imam Razi says, in the words of the Prophet, "deference to the Commands of Allah, and Kindness towards His Creation". Allah's Men neither find refuge in escaping from the difficulties of life nor submit to or compromise with the falsehood and transgression. They enjoin what is good and forbid what is

bad, and the struggle (Jihad) against cruelty, transgression, injustice to them is as necessary for the achievement of Allah's pleasure as prayers and His Remembrance for the purity of hearts. This is because Qur'an declares:

"Say: If it be that your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your mates, or your kindred, or the wealth that you have gained, or the commerce in which you fear a decline, or the dwellings in which you delight – are dearer to you than Allah, or His Prophet, or the striving in His Cause, then wait until Allah brings about His Decision; and Allah guides not the wicked."
(Al-Taubah 9: 24)

Cooperation in good deeds and non-cooperation in bad ones is a clear Quranic teaching:

"Help one another in righteousness and piety, and help not one another in sin and rancor."
(Al-Maidah 5: 2)

Qur'an stops from obeying those who transgress the limits set by Allah and create chaos on earth:

"And follow not the bidding of those who are extravagant, who make mischief in the land and mend not (their ways)."
(Al-Shu'ara 26: 151-152)

Similarly, even Allah's Prophet has himself been stopped from accepting the demands of the transgressors:

"Be patient with constancy to the Command of your Lord, and hearken no to the sinner or the ingrate among them."
(Al-Dahar 76: 24)

The way of life the Qur'an calls to be of the life of truthfulness and uprightness. And this the feature that makes the Prophet's model (Uswah) and his Sunnah distinguished from traditional religion. The message that was sent down to the Prophet in the Sanctuary of the Cave of Hira was about changing the world according to Allah's guidance and building anew the human life and world civilization, it was not about asceticism and giving up the world. Allah gave His Prophet a healing prescription in the form of Qur'an who cured human ailments with it and heralded a struggle for making man recognize his Lord, establishing modesty-upholding family institution, and a society and state based on justice.

This is the new model and pattern for man and society that Qur'an and the Prophet's Sunnah presented to the humankind. A tourist of Rome, after having witnessed the Muslims of earlier periods, had very realistically summed this up in just one sentence that Muslims are "saints during the night and warriors during the day".

The most prominent aspect of the message of Qur'an and Sunnah is that they made the moral and spiritual progress of the individual and the collectivity a means to the spread of goodness, enjoining the good and eliminating the evil. They raised a collectivity and a nation on the basis of Faith, and subordinated the whole gamut of life to the will and law of Allah. Shariah's guidance is not restricted to beliefs, rituals, and private ethics, but covers all spheres of human activity: trade, civilization, politics, finance, social issues, and global perspective. While Qur'an and Sunnah play the role of correcting and defining beliefs and rituals, they also give shape to each and every aspect of human life and culture and civilization. Thus, all walks of individual and collective life get illuminated with the light of guidance.

Qur'an is the only book in human history that not only prepared a model for man but also established a nation, a society, a state, and a civilization on the basis of Belief which changed the course of human history. The basic reason is that Qur'an is not only a book but also a message and mission, and the Holy Prophet raised an Ummah on the bases of this book which shall continue striving for the mission, which is its raison d'être, till the Day of Judgment.

"Thus we have made you an Ummah, justly balanced, that you might be witnesses over the people and the Prophet a witness over yourselves." **(Al-Baqarah 2: 143)**

"You are the best of Peoples, evolved for mankind, enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong, and believing in Allah." **(Al-e-Imran 3: 110)**

This is the mission of this Ummah, the objective for every Muslim. The real message of Qur'an and Sunnah is about making man 'really obedient' to Allah, infusing in him a spirit for spreading Allah's Deen to humanity at large, and making him a model to emulate in demeanor, individual life, character, and collective system. Calling all to the path of Allah's obedience, striving to rid them from the excesses and subjugation of the transgressors and the depraved is but a struggle in the Way of Allah (Jihad in the Cause of Allah), devoting to it whatever a Muslim could present is his 'reaching climax' and his path to success.

"O you who believe! Shall I lead you to a bargain that will save you from a grievous Penalty? – That you believe in Allah and His Prophet, and that you strive (your utmost) in the Cause of Allah, with your property and your persons. That will be best for you if you knew! He will forgive you your sins, and admit you to Gardens beneath which rivers flow, and to beautiful mansions in Gardens of Eternity. That is indeed the supreme Achievement. And another (favor will He bestow), which you do love – help from Allah and a speedy victory. So give the Glad Tidings to the Believers."

(Al-Saff 61: 10-13)

The message of Qur'an is a call and Jihad for the obedience of God, for His pleasure, for the dominance of Deen, and for ridding His people from the yoke of tyranny and rebellion. Qur'an and

Sunnah are calling us toward this mission and we are asked "O you who believe! Be helpers of Allah". The only answer to this call is "We are Allah's helpers".

The Islamic movement all over the world have responded to this call, and have devoted their resources – human and material – to fulfill the promise made with their Creator. They are trying to act upon the advice of the Holy Prophet (pbuh):

"By God! You shall enjoin what is good and forbid what is bad, do check the oppressor and turn him toward the truth."

The founder president (Ameer) of the Jamaat-e-Islami Syed Abul Ala Maududi has summed this mission in the following words, and this is our and the whole Muslim Ummah's mission and objective even today:

1. That we call all people in general and those who already are Muslims in particular to the obedience of Allah.
2. That whoever claims to have embraced Islam and accepted it, we call upon him to remove hypocrisy and double-standard from his life; and that as he is a Muslim, or has become a Muslim, he should be a sincere Muslim and color him with the color of Islam ie identify himself with Islam.
3. That the system of life that is being run by those who are misled in Falsehood, transgressors and the morally depraved and the rein of world dealings is in the hands of those who are the rebels of God, we call for changing this and the guidance and leadership be shifted to pious Muslims both in theory and practice.

(Dawat-e-Islami aur uskai Mutalibaat, pp. 13-14)

The salvation of not only Pakistan and Muslim Ummah but of the entire humanity depends on the success of this call of obedience to God.
