

Fast 11: The Quran as a guide

- We continue with the passage from the Quran:

“This **Book**, in which there is no doubt, ذٰلِكَ الْكِتٰبُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيْهِ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿٢﴾
is a guide to those who keep their
duty...” — ch. 2, v. 2

The Quran is described here, right at its beginning, as a “guide”. Just before, in chapter 1, the *Fatihah*, the prayer is: “Guide us on the right path”. This verse in ch. 2 tells us that that guidance which we seek is provided by the Quran.

- This shows that the first and primary function of the Quran is to act as our guide. So we must use the Quran to learn from it, to understand its meanings, to absorb them, and to act upon them.
- Regrettably, the Quran is not used by most Muslims as a guide but as an object of reverence to be brought out for ceremonial purposes on certain occasions. Its position has become like that of a figure-head monarch such as the Queen of England. That Queen has no actual power over anyone, but on paper she has absolute power over everyone in the country. Oaths of allegiance are taken in her name but no one believes that he will have to follow her commands. She comes out only to perform ceremonial duties, such as opening ceremonies. This, unfortunately, is the position of the Quran in the practical lives of most Muslims. It doesn't affect the conduct of their lives in any way, and its role is to bless various ceremonial occasions by its recitation or even just its presence. Yet in theory and on paper it is their highest authority.
- Yet the Quran is a guide in all aspects of human life:
 - It is a spiritual guide in that it tells us about God and how our souls can attain nearness to Him.
 - A moral guide, showing us how to act in our personal lives and how to treat others, and a guide in matters such as marriage and divorce.
 - A social guide, showing how to build and organise a society.
 - A guide for the economic aspects of life, on earning a livelihood lawfully, spending, giving charity, paying tax to the state, etc.
 - A guide on government, who should rule a country and what should their powers be, what are the rights of the ordinary people and their duties, what are the principles of law and justice to be applied in the land.
 - A guide on relations between different nations, and war and peace.

- The guidance of the Quran is primarily about the existence of God and how a human being can come to feel His existence as a reality, and to love and admire God, and live life as God requires Him to live, purely out of the desire to acquire closeness to God.
- The Quran calls itself as “a guide to those who keep their duty”. The word for “those who keep their duty” is *muttaqeen* (singular: *muttaqi*). It is considered equivalent to God fearing, pious, or righteous. It is commonly thought that a *muttaqi* is someone who is very strictly observant of Islam, and extremely careful to follow it meticulously in all its details. This raises the following question.
 - Is the Quran only a guide for those who are already good? If a person already has to be a *muttaqi* before the Quran can guide him, then why does he need the Quran? And if a person is not a *muttaqi*, and requires guidance, does it mean that the Quran cannot help him?
- The answer is that however good a person may be, the Quran will still be a guide for him in taking him further along this road of righteousness. The Quran is not like a school or college textbook meant to be taught to students in a particular year of their course, so that once they have mastered the textbook, they need never to return to it and it cannot benefit them any further.
- There are spiritual leaders of various sections of Muslims whose followers believe them to have reached the highest levels of piety and godliness. Their followers should ponder over the fact that the Quran calls itself “a guide to the *muttaqeen*”, and then try to determine to what extent their religious leader or *pir* takes the Quran to be his guide in his pronouncements and behaviour. They should also note whether he urges them to make the Quran their guide. If their spiritual mentor places little emphasis on the Quran and the need to follow it, then they have to question whether he is one of the *muttaqeen* as defined by the Quran.
- We raised the question above, as to what the Quran has to offer someone who is not a *muttaqi*, since it calls itself a guide for those who are *muttaqi*? After all, the vast majority of Muslims would not describe themselves as *muttaqi*. First we have to remember that it is a misconception to think that being a *muttaqi* is a fixed stage and that it is reached by a few while others are not *muttaqi*. Being a *muttaqi* is a line of development, and at each stage, low or high, the Quran is a guide. It is a constant desire and aspiration, however far (or not) a person may be along this line.
- This is confirmed in the Quran when it says that Allah “guides to Himself **those who turn to Him**” يَهْدِي إِلَىٰ آلِهِ مَنۢ أَنَابَ (ch. 13, v. 27; and see also ch. 42, v. 13).

It means that Allah, through His word in the Quran, guides **anyone who makes an effort**, but making an effort is the condition.