

How Qu'ran is understood (Mainstream Tafsir)

1) Qu'ran is understood by the Qu'ran

The meaning is portrayed in the context of different verses. For example in Surah Yunus verse 62, we find the word "**Auliya**" mentioned. In the next verse (63) the word "**Auliya**" is explained.

Surah Yunus, 62: *No doubt! Verily, the **Auliya** of Allah [i.e. those who believe in the Oneness of Allah and fear Allah much (abstain from all kinds of sins and evil deeds which he has forbidden), and love Allah much (perform all kinds of good deeds which He has ordained)], no fear shall come upon them nor shall they grieve.*

Surah Yunus, 62: *Those who believed (in the Oneness of Allah - Islamic Monotheism), and used to fear Allah much (by abstaining from evil deeds and sins and by doing righteous deeds).*

2) Sunnah (Prophetic narrations)

*[And they are] those who, if We give them authority in the land, establish prayer and give **Zakah** and enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong. And to Allah belongs the outcome of [all] matters. [Surah Al-Hajj, 41]*

The Qu'ran does not specify how much **Zakah** we need to give, this is explained in the Sunnah, for example: *narrated from Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) that Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) wrote to him this document when he sent him to Bahrain: "This is the obligatory charity that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) enjoined upon the Muslims and that Allah enjoined upon His Messenger... for silver, one quarter of one tenth."* [Al-Bukhaari, 1454].

The Sunnah also makes mention of the reason some verses were revealed, this helps understanding the context of these verses.

3) Companions' Consensus (Ijma)

The speech of the companions, especially those who were known for their knowledge and understanding of Tafsir.

*"O you who have believed, do not approach prayer while you are intoxicated until you know what you are saying or in a state of janabah, except those passing through [a place of prayer], until you have washed [your whole body]. And if you are ill or on a journey or one of you comes from the place of relieving himself or you have **contacted women** and find no water, then seek clean earth and wipe over your faces and your hands [with it]. Indeed, Allah is ever Pardoning and Forgiving"* [Surah An Nisa, 43]

What is meant by "**contacted women**" is explained by the sahaba's. Ibn Abbas - *"having relations with one's spouse and not just merely touching women"*. Similar meanings are reported by Ali Ibn Abi Talib & Ubay b. Ka'b.

4) Successors deductions in accordance previous

The Qu'ran was read by the Companions of the Prophet & the successors. Ibn Taymiyyah states, if they did not find the explanation of in the Qu'ran, or the Sunnah or from the Companions of the Prophet, then many of the scholars turned to the statements of the successors. The Qu'ran was read by the Companions & the Successors, they are the most knowledgeable of the truth which the Messenger (Peace be Upon Him) was sent with.

The most famous successors who had commentaries on the Qu'ran were the followers of Ibn Abbas in Makkah such as; Mujahid, Ikrima & Ata b. Rabah, as for Madinah the followers of Ubay b. Ka'b such as; Zayd b. Aslam, Abu Alyyah, Ka'b Al-Quradi. For those in Iraq (Kufah) those were the followers of Ibn Mas'ud such as; Qatadah, Alqama & Sha'bi. The successors mentioned here died between 90-130 years after

5) The Arabic Language

There is a broad spectrum of areas in Arabic language such as style, grammar eloquence and the knowledge of the cultural context which can help the show the context to the meaning of the Qu'ran. However the language cannot be independent of the previous principles mentioned.

Mainstream Sunni Tafsir

Tafsir of Imam Al-Tabari (Died AH310)

Compiled by Imam Muhammad b. Jarir al-Tabari.

One of the most well known Tafsir books & makes mention of many narrations and statements of the Salaf

One criticism mentioned by Ibn Taymiyyah is around lack of clarification if narrations are authentic or not

Tafsir al-Baghawi (Died AH516)

Compiled by Imam Abu Muhammad al-Husayn b. Mas'ud al-Fara al-Baghawi.

It was a summarised version of Tha'labi's tafsir but the fabricated narrations were removed

Does not always clarify mainstream Sunni belief when there are differences. Some issues with explanation of attributes of Allah

Tafsir al-Qurtabi (Died AH671)

Compiled by Abu Abdullah Muhammad b. Ahmad al-Qurtabi.

Has generally used authentic narrations but has mistakenly mentioned some weak narrations

Did not use mainstream Sunni beliefs when coming to Names & Attributes of Allah (He was closer to Ashari beliefs)

Tafsir Imam Ibn Kathir (Died AH774)

Compiled by Imad al-Din b. Kathir.

Followed Imam Tabari's method

Free from error regarding name & attributes of Allah & Innovations

Tafsir of al-Sa'di (Died AH1376)

Compiled by Abdul-Rahman b. Nasr al-Sa'di

It is a summary of the above previous Tafseer's mentioned, it aims to explain the verses in the shortest way possible. Good for beginners

Correct belief is taken regarding the names & attributes of Allah

Tafsir al-Shanqiti (Died AH1393)

Compiled by Muhammad Amin I-Shanqiti. Died AH1393

One of the clearest in clarifying the mainstream Sunni beliefs

He was a teacher at the Islamic University of Madinah & Masjid Nabawi (Madinah).

Tafsir Ibn Uthaymin (Died AH1421)

Compiled by Muhammad bin Salih Al-Uthaymin.

Studied under Imam Al-Sa'di & al-Shanqiti (Tafsir authors)

Non - Mainstream Sunni Tafsir

Tafsir of Al-Zamakhshari (Tafsir al-Kashaf) (Died AH538)

Full of innovations, follows the way of Mu'tazilites in rejecting the attributes of Allah & rejecting that the believers will see Allah in there Hereafter

Imam Al-Dhahabi & Ibn Hajar warned against reading this Tafsir

Tafsir al-Kabir by Fakhr al-din Muhammad al-Razi (Died AH606)

Not aware of narrations or statements of Sahaba

Doubted many fundamental matters of the religion

Contains Ash'arite creed

Tafsir al-Baydawi (Died AH685)

Written by Qadi Nasrul-Din Abdullah b. Umar al-Baydawi from Persia

Does not insert the apparent meaning of Allah's name and attributes and uses opinions to explain them like Ash'arites

Tafsir Muhammad Abduh (Died AH1323)

Would sometimes use intellect to explain verses, was influenced by Mu'tazilites

Mentions magic is not "real", doubts some miracles, mentioned in Qu'ran

Fi Zilal al-Qu'ran by Sayyid Qutb (Died AH1386)

Swayed away from mainstream Sunni beliefs regarding names & attributes of Allah and usage of narrations to explain the verses

Tafsir by Brelvi (Died AH1339)

Written by Ahmad Raza Khan. Distorted verses of Qu'ran to push false belief of Prophet (Peace be upon him) knowing the unseen

Does not insert the apparent meaning of Allah's attributes and uses opinions to explain them like Ash'arites

Tafsir Al Sayuti (Died AH911)

Does not insert the apparent meaning of Allah's attributes, explain them like Ash'arites

There are two Tafsirs, one of them is al-Julalayn, which is from his teacher Jalal al-Din al-Mahalli

