

Surat an -Noor:

Preliminary Points (Tathakur):

I. Signs of Allah and how these signs lead us to and/or confirm us in Imaan – ‘Ayat an-Noor’ #35.

A. External creation: Allah invites the extrovert personality types (those who primarily interact with the external world) to observe the signs in the creation. To such people, Allah appeals to their logical intellect.

1. In ayaat 190-195 of Surat Ali-‘Imraan, Allah identifies the elements of Imaan through logical argument in linear stages.
 - a. Underlying premise: Innate knowledge of Allah is within every human. It is this knowledge which has to be raised to the human consciousness.
 - b. Recognize the signs of Allah in creation – leads to remembrance of Allah (dhikr)
 - c. Deep reflection on Allah and the creation – leads to recognition that Allah created everything with a purpose.
 - d. Look into you own self and discover that you have knowledge of good and bad. Conclude that this moral awareness is universal to humans and Allah must have created the moral law for a purpose.
 - e. When look at society, realize that moral law is not enforced in this world. Therefore, conclude that there must be a hereafter where we will be held accountable for our actions in this life. – Good begets good and evil begets evil.
 - f. When the Messenger of Allah comes confirming this reality, those with pure fitrah will believe instantly.
2. So many of the ayaat of the Qur’an invite us to look to the signs of creation.

B. Within Human Nature: Ayaat 35-40 in Surat an-Noor deal with this subject from the perspective of the introvert personality – For those who look into themselves, Allah invites them to observe the signs within their own human nature and appeals to the intuitive intellect.

1. In this selection, Allah explains Imaan as an intuitive argument understood by those who are in touch with their human nature. Rather than presenting a logical, step-by-step argument, Allah appeals to the intuitive sense invoking an instantaneous realization.
 - a. Again, the underlying premise is that man has an innate knowledge of Allah and all that is required is that this knowledge be made conscious.
 - b. Xx
 - c. xx
 - d. When the revelation touches their heart, those with pure fitrah accept immediately – noor ‘ala noor. This creates a burning Imaan.
2. Allah tells us in the Qur’an that within our own selves are signs:

- a. Surat al-Fussilaat
- b. Surat al-Haj

C. Revelation from Allah:

1. *Editor’s notes: Allah has breathed His spirit into us. Recall from Surat al-Luqmaan that Allah describes wisdom as the pure intellect guided by the pure fitrah. Imaan, however, begins only after those with pure fitrah are exposed and accept the divine revelation (Recall the rood of Imaan – ‘Imn’ connotes trust – i.e. belief in the message).*
2. *can includEditor’s notes: in Surat Ali-‘Imraan, the extrovert personality responds to the Messenger (intellectual response). In Surat an-Noor, by contrast, the introvert personality responds with his heart (intuitive response) to the divine revelation itself (Noor ‘ala Noor).*

D. Aside: Philosopher Kant argued that there are two proofs for the existence of God:

1. Starry heavens above
2. Moral Law within human personality

II. Characteristics of Believers: ayaat 36 & 37

A. In the lesson from Surat Ali-‘Imraan, we saw Imaan manifesting itself in character of the Islamic activist (extrovert personality)

1. Hijra
2. Jihad

- B. In the selected ayaat from Surat an-Noor, we will (ISA) see Imaan manifested in spiritual devotion to Allah (introvert personality)
 - C. Worship in Allah continuously
 - D. Constant praise and remembrance of Allah
 - E. Establish Salat
 - F. Pay Zakat
 - G. Intense Fear the day of Judgment
- III. Reward of the Believers: ayat #38
- A. Generous reward for the best of their deeds
 - B. Additional reward out of the bounty fo Allah.
- IV. Contrast Imaan with 2 parables representing 2 shades of Kufr: ayaat 39+40.
- A. Those reject the guidance of Allah and are misguided
 - B. Those whose hearts are so distorted that no light/truth can penetrate them.
- V. Why does Allah use parables?
- A. The use or parables is common to all revealed books.
 - B. Some of the metaphysical realities are so sublime and subtle that they cannot be expressed in the language of men. Allah uses parables to convey some understanding of the reality – though this understanding is clearly limited and hazy.

Tafseer:

I. Imaan: ayat #35.

- A. “Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth. The similitude of His light is as a niche wherein is a lamp”. If you believe in Allah, then you will know the true reality. Allah will guide you and give you insight into/knowledge of the true reality. Physical reality is perceived through sensory perception, insight into the metaphysical realities is gained through Imman. In this ayat, Allah likens the perception of metaphysical realities (Imaan) to the visual perception.

1. Two types of Vision:

- a. Basaara: *Physical*/External Vision: sensory perception of the external world where light enables visual perception to operate. This perception is relevant for ‘alim ul-khalq – world of creation and the means through which visual perception operates is physical:
 - i. *Physical* organ that processes the sensory information. The eye must be functional.
 - ii. The eye must have a means to discriminate between different objects. Light is the *physical* matter that enables the eye to distinguish between different object.
- b. Baseera: *Spiritual*/Internal Insight: insight into reality is perceived by the heart. This insight is relevant for ‘alim ul-Amr – world of command/spirit world which is the final destination of man and the true reality. The means through which internal insight operates is spiritual:
 - i. Heart is the *spiritual* organ that perceives the reality of the unseen – that which is not perceptible to the material world. The heart must be functional in the spiritual sense – i.e. a pure heart, pure fitrah.
 - 1. Allah tells us in the Qur’an that He blew His spirit into the heart of man. It is the dwelling place of the ruh and the source of internal experience.
 - 2. Surat al-Haj: Allah tells us the hearts of the disbelievers are blind to the hidden realities.
 - ii. Light of Imaan - Revelation from Allah or inner light within (conscious) is guidance by which the believers achieve internal realization of hidden realities. This internal realization activates moral consciousness.
 - 1. if you don’t see Allah in everything, then the hidden reality is not a part of your reality/experience. Only reality is that which is material to you – limited to the physical reality.
 - 2. The heart of Abu Lahab has been described as blind.

2. Note: Big mistake to think that the metaphor described in this ayat is a similitude for the person of Allah.

- a. Regarding Allah, ‘leisa kamithlihi’ – there is nothing like Him. Therefore it is completely impossible to imagine the person of Allah or compare it with something that is imaginable.
- b. Ibn ‘Abbas states that the metaphor for the light of Allah refers to the light in the heart of the believers.

c. The ayat itself says that the example of His light (Noorihi) – the possessive article ‘His’ further negates the possibility that this metaphor could refer to Allah.

C. Lamp similitude – analysis of the imagery used in this similitude:

1. Niche – represents the chest/heart of humans which is the dwelling place of the ruh.

2. Glass containing the lamp.

a. Glass is so pure and clean that it is itself ‘as if it were a shining star’. Like the heart of humans which is constantly being rusted. To remove the rust, the Prophet (SAWS) told us to have remembrance of Allah and read the Qur’an. This must be clean for the light to pass through the glass – similarly, the human heart must be pure so that it can perceive reality and discern right from wrong.

b. Glass casts a uniform distribution of light.

c. Glass protects the fire from the wind – not subject to blowing winds. Similarly, the human heart should not be manipulated by the thought and opinions of those around.

3. Pure oil from a blessed olive tree – neither from the east or west.

a. Best olive comes from the trees planted at the top of the hill – blessed tree.

i. Best place to plant a tree is on the top of the hill where is evenly exposed to the sun. Doesn’t get too much sun in the morning and too little at night, or vice versa.

ii. Similarly, we should not restrict ourselves to the limitations of man-made thought arising in the east or west.

iii. *Editor’s notes: The source of our strength is Allah. Our focus and goal is Allah. We should not be motivated by temporal desires as represented by the east and west. We are motivated by the realization that to Allah is our final destination.*

b. From this tree comes the best, purest oil to fuel the lamp.

c. The oil itself is so pure that it is as if it glows even when no fire touches it – like the pure fitrah. Those with pure fitrah have light from within which provides insight into the true reality. In this moral consciousness is the seed of Imaan. Knowledge of Allah is already present in all humans, but it must be actualized.

4. Fire: revelation/wahi from Allah. When the wahi descends on the heart of those with pure fitrah, Imaan is actualized.

a. When ‘noor al-fitrah’ meets the noor of the Qur’an (revelation) Imaan is actualized.

b. This actualization results in an explosive/burning Imaan which guides the believers and permeates their entire personalities.

c. Surat al-Baqara, ayat #15+: Allah likens the light of wahi to a fire.

i. Sight requires eyes and light

ii. Begin in darkness – no external light to guide them. Then Allah sends an external light – the fire, but then Allah takes away their eyesight. They are blind and cannot see.

iii. Similitude for the revelation which is sent through Muhammad (SAWS). But, those who reject lose their eyesight – the revelation is still there, but they cannot process the light because their eyes are now blind.

5. Two possible translations:

a. Allah guides to His light whomsoever He pleases.

b. Allah guides to His light those who desire to be guided.

VI. Spiritual Manifestations of Imaan: ayaat 36+37.

A. Reference Surat al-Ahzab, ayat #35 – further describes the characteristics of true believers.

B. ‘Ibadaat to Allah:

1. Spend their time in ‘houses built for remembrance of Allah’ – i.e. masjids.

2. What do they do in the masjids? – glorify Allah – yusabihu lahu – in the morning and evening.

3. Rijallun: courageous people, real men.

4. No trade can divert them from the remembrance of Allah, from salat and zakat – no worldly distraction.

5. Intense fear (khauf) of the accountability of the Day of Judgment.

VII. Reward of the Believers: ayat #38.

A. Jizaa:

1. Level in jenna will be determined according to the best of your deeds

2. Reward is proportionate to your deeds.

3. i.e. bill for services rendered.

B. Fadl:

1. from the favor, bounty, grace of Allah. Allah is free to give whatever He pleases without measure.

2. i.e. tip out of the pleasure of Allah.

VIII. 2 Similitudes of Kufr for two shades of shirk:

A. Kufr type I: suppressing/covering the truth of human nature.

1. Even very immoral people have their own sense of morality and need to do something to satisfy their biting conscience.

2. Just as the sustenance of one's physical life requires food, water, shelter, rest, etc.; so does the internal/spiritual existence require some moral satisfaction and psychological well-being. Therefore, people are compelled to do some good deeds to satisfy their consciences.

3. What is the result of their good deeds? In ayat #39, Allah explains that the results of their good deeds is like a mirage.

a. Want to satisfy one's need, but instead finds death.

b. Hadeeth: 'Whosoever is dead, his day of judgment has arrived'.

c. With death, there is no more time to do any good deeds or atone for the bad.

d. If Imaan billah is not the real motive, then the weight of your deeds on the Day of Judgment will be worth nothing.

e. Hadeeth: 3 people will be judged harshly on the Day of Judgment:

i. Shaheed, Scholar, Philanthropist

ii. Allah says to these people, that you did this so that others think highly of you. What you intended, you already got in the world. There is nothing for you here. They are then dragged away in humiliation.

f. Surat Ibraheem, ayat #13 – Allah describes the similitude of the deeds from those who don't believe as the dust/ash on which the wind blows, and it is scattered and blown away.

g. Surat al-Furqaan, ayat #23 – xxxx

h. Also, recall ayat al-Birr

i. motive must be exclusively for the pleasure of Allah, and seeking the reward of the Hereafter.

ii. If you are seeking some worldly benefit, then this is business, not sadaqat.

iii. Reward for sadaqat is only in the Hereafter.

B. Kufr Type II: Total rejection of truth – destroys all traces of the human fitrah.

1. Darkness over darkness: Darkness from within, and darkness from without.

a. Fitrah is totally destroyed:

i. People who are so diseased in their hearts, that they don't even do good deeds.

ii. There is no light, whatsoever, left in them.

b. So lost, that the light of revelation cannot even penetrate their souls

i. No light, not even a single ray from the sun, pierces through the depths of the ocean. They are in total darkness.

2. Note: imagery of Tawheed

a. Noor is always used in the singular form in the Qur'an – only one truth, light.

b. Dhulumaat – darknesses is used in the plural because there are many shades of darkness/shirk.

C. Prophet (SAWS) used to make du'a, asking Allah (SWT) for true light.