

Fast 24: The doctrine of “abrogation” — 3

- As time passed after early Islam, commentators of the Quran increased the number of verses that they considered abrogated by other verses. Maulana Muhammad Ali, in his detailed analysis and refutation of the doctrine of abrogation, published in 1907 in the monthly *Review of Religions*, writes that commentators of the Quran:

“made the theory of abrogation a device for getting out of a difficulty, and some of them declared hundreds of verses to have been abrogated. Wrong interpretations of verses were adopted and then because they clashed with other verses of the Holy Quran, they were declared to be abrogated. For some time the commentators seem to have vied with one another in declaring the Quranic verses to be abrogated.”

- The large number of verses believed to be abrogated were analysed by Jalal-ud-Din Suyuti, a great Islamic scholar, author, and commentator of the Quran who was writing in the 1400s C.E. This examination of the verses is given in his book *Al-Itqān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, which has been translated into English as *The Perfect Guide to the Sciences of the Quran*. He dismissed the idea of abrogation in most of the allegedly-abrogated verses, but considered that it did apply **to 21 verses**.
- Some three hundred years later, Shah Waliullah of Delhi, India, the famous scholar, translator of the Quran into Persian, and author of numerous books on Islam, writing in the 1700s C.E., considered these 21 verses in his book *Fauz al-Kabīr*. He concluded that 16 of these were not abrogated, but abrogation was proved **in five of them**.
- Coming to the late 1800s C.E., Hazrat Maulana Nur-ud-Din, who later became the first member of the Ahmadiyya Movement and its first Head after the death of the Founder Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, has related an interesting episode from the time of his youth when he was staying and studying in Madinah.

Someone gave him a book to read which mentioned **600 verses as being abrogated**. The Maulana was unhappy to see this, but said he would memorise those verses. Then he was given the book *Itqān* of Jalal-ud-Din Suyuti to read. He was pleased to see that it greatly reduced the number of abrogated verses **to about 20**, and he thought of memorising those. He had Shah Waliullah's book *Fauz al-Kabīr* in his possession, so he consulted that. In there he read that **only five verses** were abrogated. He said later:

“I was extremely pleased to read this. When I pondered over these five verses, God made me understand that the whole concept of abrogation must be baseless because one says 600 verses are abrogated, another says about 20 verses, and yet another makes it five verses. This shows that it is only a matter of human judgment.”

Then the Maulana relates that during the next few years, after returning to India, he read a commentary from which he realized that three of these five were not abrogated. Then he found a book in which the fourth was described as not abrogated, and finally he came across another book which clarified the fifth and last verse. (See biography of Hazrat Maulana Nur-ud-Din, *Mirqāt-ul-Yaqīn*, 1979 third edition, p. 78–79.)

So the position was that regarding **each and every verse** which was declared abrogated in Islamic literature over the centuries, you could find an Islamic book expressing the opinion that that same verse was **not** abrogated.

- Many years later, when Hazrat Maulana Nur-ud-Din had been in the Ahmadiyya Movement for about fifteen years, he wrote a book entitled *Nur-ud-Din* in response to a book *Tark-i Islam* ('Leaving Islam') by a former Muslim who joined the Hindu Arya Samaj and had explained in *Tark-i Islam* the reasons why he had left Islam. In answering one of his objections against Islam, Maulana Nur-ud-Din wrote:

“I know of no verse in the Quran containing a command which permits something, or which makes something compulsory, and then it is stated about the same command that what it permitted or ordered is now forbidden. No, no, certainly not. Our Quran has nowhere said to us that a certain command in a certain verse is now absolutely abrogated. Our guide, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, may peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him, has never said: Such and such a command of the Quran is now abrogated. His holy successors were Abu Bakr and Umar, about whom God said: “Allah is well-pleased with them and they are well-pleased with Him” (the Quran, 9:100), and God declared obedience to them to be a way of earning His pleasure. They also never said that such and such a command of the Quran is abrogated, and it is not at all right to act upon it.

If *naskh* means to make a command void, i.e., a command is to be found in the Quran and it was abrogated, I know of no such command. If anyone claims to the contrary, he should provide evidence.” (Book *Nur-ud-Din*, published 1904, p. 231–232)

- Five years later, as Head of the Ahmadiyya Movement in 1909, he stated while teaching the Quran:

“As to the question whether there is abrogation in the Quran or not, as far as my understanding goes I will say that I have never, till today, seen any verse which is abrogated while it is found in the Quran. There is no statement reported from the Holy Prophet Muhammad or Hazrat Abu Bakr or Umar showing that such verses are to be found in the Quran.” (*Haqā'iq-ul-Furqan*, p. 216)