



Ramadan Daily Quran Study, by Dr Zahid Aziz, 2023

Adapted and edited from *The Religion of Islam* by Maulana Muhammad Ali
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Fast 19: The attributes of God — goal is to attain them

In the Quran Muslims are told to say to others:

“(We take) Allah’s colour, and who is better than Allah at colouring, and we are His worshippers.”
— 2:138

صِبْغَةَ اللَّهِ وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ مِنَ اللَّهِ صِبْغَةً وَنَحْنُ لَهُ عِبَادُونَ



Fast 19

1



- **Divine attributes as the great ideal to be attained:** Just as belief in the Unity of God is a source of one’s uplift, making him conscious of the *dignity* of human nature, and inspiring him with the grand ideas of the *conquest of nature* and of the *equality of human beings*, so the numerous attributes of the Divine Being, as revealed in the Quran, are really meant for the perfection of human character. The Divine attributes really serve as an ideal to which one must strive to attain.
- In the verse quoted above (2:138), the word for “colour” is *sibghah*, which also means immersing in water. Therefore a Muslim must immerse himself in the attributes of Allah and acquire the same colour in his life, on the human scale.

Fast 19

2



- Christians baptise by immersing in water, but it is by immersing yourself in the attributes of God that a change for the good comes over a person. This verse also makes clear that the purpose of *worship* of Allah is to emulate His attributes.
- God is *Rabb al-‘ālamīn*, the Fosterer and Nourisher of the worlds; keeping that as an ideal before himself, a person must endeavour to make the service of humanity, even that of dumb creation, the object of his life.
- Referring to the opening verse of the Quran which describes Allah as *Rabb al-‘ālamīn* (Lord of the worlds), Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad writes:



- “Our God has not withheld His bounty from any people. The powers and faculties which He bestowed on the ancient peoples of India, have also been bestowed on the Arabs, the Persians, the Syrians, the Chinese, the Japanese, the Europeans and the Americans. For all of them, the earth of God serves as a floor, and for all of them His sun, moon, and stars give light, and also perform other functions. All of them derive benefit from the air, water, fire, earth and other things created by God, and all of them use the produce of the earth, its corn and its herbs, its flowers and its fruits. These liberal ways of God teach us that *we also should do good to all mankind, and should not be narrow-minded, nor limit our sympathy.*” (Lecture ‘A Message of Peace’)



- God is *Raḥmān*, meaning that He confers benefits on a human being and shows him love without his having done anything to deserve or earn it. So a person must do good even to those from whom he has not himself received, and does not expect to receive, any benefit.
- God is *Raḥīm*, meaning that He makes every good deed bear fruit. So a human must also do good for any good that he receives from another.
- God is *Mālik*, meaning that He penalises evil, not in a spirit of vengeance or even of rigid justice, but in a spirit of forgiveness. So must a person be forgiving in his dealings with others.



- So it is with all His other attributes. As to love and mercy, God is Affectionate, Oft-returning to mercy, Forbearing, Pardoner, Multiplier of rewards, Author of peace, Granter of security, Restorer of loss, Benign, Bestower of sustenance and so on. All of this, human beings must also try to be.
- Again let us take His attributes of knowledge. God is Knowing, Wise, Aware, Seeing, Knower of hidden things. Human beings must also try to perfect their knowledge of things and acquire wisdom. In fact, where man is spoken of as having been made a vicegerent (*khalifa*) of God, his chief characteristic, that which marks him out as the ruler of creation, is stated to be a knowledge of things. The Quran says:



وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا — “And He taught Adam all the names.” — 2:31

God teaching Adam all the names signifies the vast capability of human beings, bestowed upon them by God, to acquire knowledge of all things.

- Then there are God’s attributes of power and greatness and control of all things. People are told again and again that everything in the heavens and in the earth has been made subservient to them:

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ سَخَّرَ لَكُمْ مِمَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَالْفُلُكَ تَجْرِي فِي الْبَحْرِ بِأَمْرِهِ ط

“Do you not see that Allah has made subservient to you all that is in the earth, and the ships gliding in the sea by His command?” — 22:65



- “Do you not see that Allah has made subservient to you whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth, and granted to you His favours complete, outwardly and inwardly?” — 31:20

Therefore human beings too should exercise control over nature through acquiring knowledge of it, and use it for their worldly development. They must also act as nature’s guardian, because humanity has been made the *khalifa* of God.

- Finally, it is true that a person’s love, mercy, knowledge, wisdom, and control of things are all insignificant as compared to God’s. But however imperfectly one may achieve it, he has before him the goal of Divine morals, which one must try to imitate.