

Surat Al-‘Imraan:

Preliminary Points (tathakur):

1. Imaan billah: All of us are aware of Allah but we may forget or lose consciousness of this fact. The signs of creation invite us to rekindle our belief in Allah.
 - a. Those who have remembrance of Allah (always thinking about Allah) recognize that everything in creation has a distinct purpose.
 - b. This realization is absolutely based on realization of human nature.
 - i. No scientific or logical proof is offered, merely the recognition of the signs in creation. The truth is embedded in us, and the signs trigger a recognition/remembrance of this truth.
 - ii. Humans have within us an instinct to know our Creator:
 1. Throughout all of history, man has been in search of God (philosophers, sages, ponder over this matter. Others retreat, to caves or other remote places, to find God.)
 2. Protinus (Philosopher of Alexandria) – ‘you would not have searched for me unless you had possessed me in the beginning’.
 3. Qur’an: “Am I not your Lord” and we all responded ‘Yes!’.
 - c. How to attain this real faith/conviction in Allah?
 - i. Problem: The existence of God – Creator who exists as a person – cannot be proved through any logical argument.
 1. Since the time of Aristotle, 3 arguments have been put forward to prove the existence of God:
 - a. Ontological
 - b. Theological
 - c. Xxx
 2. Kant, however, repudiated all of these arguments in his “Critique of Pure Reason” and proved that there is not logical argument for the existence of God.
 3. In his second book, “Critique of Practical Reason”, Kant proved that there can be no morality without belief in God. Therefore, argued that we believe in God out of necessity – regardless of the reality.
 - ii. Qur’anic approach:
 1. Knowledge and love of Allah is inherent in human soul because this soul comes from Allah.
 - a. But, man gets preoccupied with the world of matter (cause and effect) and forgets Allah and becomes unaware of Him. Man degenerates from the noble worshipper of Allah (highest of creation) to a creature that serves his lusts and desires.
 - b. Man only needs to be reminded of Allah – therefore, Allah invites mankind to observe the signs/ayaat so that they may be mindful of Him.
 - c. For example, an old friend of yours gives you something 20 years ago. While searching through some of your old stuff, you come across that gift and instantly – you remember your friend. You always knew him, but he was not present in you mind. Now the sign instantly draws that knowledge to your consciousness.
 2. Now after recognizing Allah and remembering Him, you think more. Must keep Allah in your mind. Dhikr and Fikr until you reach the

conclusion that nothing is created without purpose. Recognize that there must be a wisdom behind everything.

- a. Dhikr:
 - i. means of dhikr is reciting subhaan Allah.
 - ii. Real dhikr is that you keep Allah in your consciousness – not merely reciting something with your tongue while your mind ponders on something else.
 - iii. Should be mindful of Allah at all times – standing, sitting, laying down.
 - b. Fikr:
 - i. realize two realities and then make logical conclusion. For example, $A=B$, $B=C$ therefore $A=C$.
 - ii. With this consciousness of Allah, you constantly ponder about the creation, what is the purpose, etc.
 - c. Process: do dhikr and then do fikr. If you run into a dead-end, go back and do the dhikr to open your mind.
 - i. Dhikr and Fikr must go together.
 - ii. One of the reasons for the downfall of this umma is that we have been divided along these lines:
 1. those who do dhikr but are thoughtless
 2. those who do fikr but have little or no consciousness of Allah.
2. Imaan bil-Akheera: Then when we recognize the moral law within all humans, we understand that it must have been created in truth – with purpose. You have given us this consciousness of good and evil. If you have created this in us, then it is not without purpose. Therefore there must be some consequence to this moral consciousness. Note logical progression. (Imaan billah is a ‘leap of faith’, but Imaan bil-Akheera is a logical progression.
- a. However, we find that our sense of justice and truth appears to be violated by events in this world.
 - i. Those who pursue evil means (theft, deceit, exploitation, etc.) appear to be rewarded with worldly gain
 - ii. Those who pursue high morals often do not appear to be rewarded with worldly benefit.
 - b. Reconcile this contradiction by concluding that though this world is complete in the physical sense, regarding the ghaib (unseen) moral law, this physical existence is incomplete. Therefore, there must be a Hereafter where moral law is completed.
 - i. Hitler, Genghis Khan, etc.: must be punished for their evil proportionate to the evil they committed. In this life, bound by physical constraints, it is impossible to punish them in a manner consistent with the evil they committed.
 - ii. Alternatively, Muhammad sacrificed his whole life for the benefit of humanity. He must be rewarded for his tremendous sacrifice.
 - iii. Full accountability must take place on the Day of Judgment.
 - iv. Hadeeth: In one of the Prophet’s earliest sermons, he is reported to have said something to the effect of “Just as you sleep at night, you will all die, then be raised up, judged, and everything will be taken into account. Either enter Paradise for ever or Hellfire for ever.”
 - c. Seek Allah’s help from debasing ourselves and the resultant punishment. Note, You are not asking Allah to let you debase yourself and then seek protection from the Hellfire. Rather, you are really asking for Allah’s help to prevent you from degrading yourself and

- following the baser motives in opposition to ibadah to Allah. By protecting you from this disgrace, Allah is shielding you from the Hellfire. (faqeena athaba naar – the root of qeena connotes shielding/protecting).
- d. Whoever You place in the Hellfire is truly disgraced, and we know that there is no one to help the condemned (surat al-fatiha – malik youmi Deen – total control over our fate, final accountability).
3. Imaan bir-Risalah: When the Message comes to such people, they immediately accept and respond.
 - a. Messengers:
 - i. Messenger of Allah
 - ii. Messenger of the Messenger of Allah
 1. After taking the bai'yah from the men accompanying the Prophet (SAWS), Omar was sent by the Prophet (SAWS) to Medina to take bai'yah from the women on behalf of the Prophet (SAWS). Omar announced this by saying "I am the messenger of the Messenger of Allah"
 2. Prophet (SAWS) also used this expression when he sent Mus'ab ibn Jabal as the governor of Yemen. Before sending Mus'ab, the Prophet (SAWS) inquired how he would settle disputes. Mus'ab replied that he would judge according to the Book of Allah, and if he didn't find the answer there, he would judge according to the precedents set by the Prophet (SAWS), and if he didn't find an answer there, he would judge according to his best judgment. Muhammad (SAWS) then replied 'Alhamdulillah that He has given the messenger of the Messenger of Allah the correct understanding'.
 3. Mus'ab ibn Umayr was sent to preach to the people of Medina before Hijra.
 4. Now every Muslim in the Prophet's umma is a messenger of the Messenger of Allah.
 - a. The Prophet (SAWS) conveyed the message to us, it is now our duty to convey the message.
 - b. Again, seek help from Allah to avoid the disgrace of Hellfire and to achieve the reward for those who are successful.
 - i. Seek forgiveness for shortcomings, sins, faults of the past and erase these bad deeds from our record. Give us the company of righteous people – those who accept the message (believe), do good deeds, and enjoin each other to truth and patience.
 - ii. Reward is promised to us through the Messenger.
 1. if we accept the message
 2. and follow the messenger
 - iii. The reward is binding on Allah – but we have doubt about our ability to fulfill this covenant. Seek Allah's mercy, that He erases our evil deeds and enters us into Paradise.
 4. Characteristics and Rewards of Believers: Believers are the crème of the human race. They uphold the banner of truth and justice and risk all of their belongings and lives to make the truth supreme.
 - a. Specifically, believers do the following - We should at least seek to emulate these characteristics and events in our own lives, and then hope that Allah provides us with the environment (being with the righteous people) that enables us to mature this character –

we need to have a pure, supportive environment to foster the development of our characters to fit the model outlined in this ayat:

- i. Hijra – Leave everything that your Lord dislikes – get rid of anything in your life that is haram and wash it away as if you were washing filthy clothes. This is universal and is the supreme hijra.
 - ii. Emigration – forced to leave their homes. Sacrifice belongings, family ties, etc.
 - iii. Suffer punishment, torture, ridicule, etc. because of your Imaan.
 - iv. Armed conflict - Slay and be slain in the cause of Allah.
 1. Note: similar ayat in surat at-Taubat – ‘Allah has already purchased the lives of the believers ... they slay and are slain’.
- b. Allah promises to surely/definitely erase the faults and surely/definitely make them enter paradise.
- c. Allah promises them a reward – thawab – that is fully equal, proportional, parallel, corresponding to the good they did.
- i. Thawab – clothing which is made to fit one’s body. Clothing specifically tailored to fit one’s proportions.
 - ii. Min ‘andi Allah – reward comes from Allah, in His presence, emanating out of His grace.
 - iii. Only Allah has the best of rewards
 1. Everybody has some goal and invests to please someone.
 - a. Invest our time and resources to please our own nafs.
 - b. Invest our time and resources to please our family (wife and children).
 - c. Invest our time and resources to please friends, co-workers, boss, etc.
 - d. Invest our time and resource to please Allah.
 2. If we serve something other than Allah, we will never be able to get the full reward for our actions.
 - a. For example, will your family ever be able to reward you in a way that fully compensates you for all of your sacrifice?
 - b. In a story, an advisor to the king gets sent to prison in his old age. He then laments that “Had I served God the way I served the King, He would not have disgraced me in my old age.”
 3. Only Allah can satisfy us and reward us fully for everything we do. Therefore, should exert our full energy into pleasing Allah. Do not settle for less!
5. Background and Significance of these ayaat: In most of the surahs, the beginning and ending ayaat are very profound. For example, in Surat al-Baqara, the final 2 ayaat were given to the Prophet in Mi’raj as a gift to the umma. The last ayat is actually the longest du’a in the Qur’an.
- a. Hadeeth: sahaba (Abdullah ibn Omar & Ubaid xxx) went to Aisha after the death of the Prophet (SAWS). There was a curtain intervening between us.
 - i. Aisha said – ya Ubaid, why don’t you visit more often.
 - ii. Ubaid replied – if you have long time between meetings, then more intense love – so he doesn’t come all the time.
 - iii. Abdullah said – please tell us the most beautiful event with the Prophet (SAWS).
 - iv. Aisha replied – All the matters with the Prophet (SAWS) were beautiful. Once he came to me at night, in bed, and asked me if he could pray/worship Allah during the night. She said, I love very much that you are with me, but I also love that you pray to Allah. Then the Prophet used very little water to make wudu’, and

then he prayed and wept. He wept so much that his beard became wet with tears, and he continued until the ground became wet with tears. He kept doing this until fajr time when Bilal came to get him. Bilal asked, what makes you cry – Allah has already forgiven you (past, present, and future). Prophet replied – woe to you, oh Bilal. Why should I not weep when Allah has sent down to me these ayaat – (the ayaat being studied in this lesson).

- b. The Prophet (SAWS) showed his profound shukr to Allah for revealing these powerful ayaat.
- c. It became a habit of Muhammad (SAWS) that as he got up for tahajjud, he would recite these ayat – 1st words before even making wudu’.

Tafseer:

1. Ayat #190: In the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the day and night are signs, ayaat for those who use their intellect.
 - a. Everything in creation is sign of Allah.
 - i. Possible translations of ‘ikhtelaafi layli wa nahar’:
 1. Alternation of day and night
 2. Difference of day and night
 3. Succession of day and night
 - ii. Observe the beauty and balance in the creation of Allah – clouds and rain, etc. Notice that everything is created with a purpose.
 - iii. Surat al-Baqara, ayat #164: ‘ayat al ayaat’ – this is the biggest ayat regarding natural phenomenon. It identifies 8 natural phenomenon as signs of Allah.
 1. The next ayat, #165, describes the characteristics of those who recognize these ayaat – they love Allah.
 2. Note: it is very common for the Meccan surahs to contain references to the natural signs – appealing to people to take heed of the existence around them and see true reality.
 - b. Oolil al-baab: those who use their intellect.
 - i. Loob: essences. The essence of humans is the intellect.
 - Aside: one of Rasfahani’s books (al-Mufridaat) is an excellent source on the Arabic language and the roots of the words found in the Qur’an.
 - ii. Those who use their pure intellect will recognize the signs. Pure intellect is not corrupted by wishful thinking or clouded by emotion.
 - iii. Loob is ‘aql (intellect) but not all ‘aql is loob. Loob is that intellect which has been purified (taskeeat ul-aql).
 - iv. 1st ayaat of the 20th section of surat Ali-‘Imraan parallels the 1st ayat of the 20th section of surat al-Baqara. In this ayat of surat al-Baqara, Allah further explains who the oolil al-baab are. (the best tafseer of the Qur’an is the Qur’an).
 - c. Two reasons for not recognizing the signs:
 - i. Heart is too rusted – don’t recognize reality (intellect is corrupted by human emotion or false intentions). See surat an-Noor – reference to dirty glass.
 - ii. People know the truth, but are not willing to accept – out of arrogance.
 1. For example, the Qur’an tells us that the Jews: recognize the Qur’an just as they recognize their own sons, but they will never believe.