



SURAH AL IKHLAAS

A Short but extremely important Sura

Although this Sura is very short in length, comprising just 15 words and 47 letters,¹ the extent and significance of its meaning has led it to be declared as one third of the Quran.

Syeduna Abu Hurayra narrates ‘The Prophet ﷺ ordered the companions to gather around as he was about to recite a third of the Quran. The people gathered and the Prophet ﷺ came out of his house and recited Sura Ikhlāas and went back in. The people remained seated and then began to comment to one another that they were expecting the Prophet ﷺ to recite a third of the Quran, and he had only recited Sura Ikhlāas. The Prophet ﷺ then returned and explained ‘Know well that Sura Ikhlāas is equivalent to a third of the Quran’.²

In another narration of Abu Saeed Al Khudri the Prophet ﷺ asked the companions ‘Is any one of you so weak that he cannot recite a third of the Quran each night?’ The companions commented ‘Who could do such a thing?’ The Prophet ﷺ explained ‘Sura Ikhlāas is a third of the Quran.’³

It is also narrated by Abu Saeed Khudri ‘A man overheard his neighbour repeatedly reciting Sura Ikhlāas and complained to the Prophet ﷺ about it the next morning, assuming he was being lazy and doing something easy and minor, but the Prophet ﷺ said ‘By the One in whose Hand is my life, this Sura is equivalent to a third of the Quran’⁴

The Mufasirreen have explained the rationale for this, one possible reason is that the Quran promotes three key beliefs; Tawhēed, Risaala (prophethood) and Akhirah (the hereafter). As this Sura deals succinctly and eloquently with one of these (Tawhēed) three messages it is equivalent to a third of the Quran.⁵

Another interpretation is that the Quran has three types of messages; commandments; promises and warnings; and the names and attributes of Allah⁶ ﷻ and this Sura deals with the last of these three.

Its many names

We find many different names of this sura, bearing testimony to its comprehensiveness and multitude of virtues, such as:

Tawhēed (Oneness) – because it deals with Tawhēed in a comprehensive and heart endearing manner.

¹ Tafseer Dhiyaa ul Quran

² Tafseers Dhiyaa ul Quran, Qurtubi and Ibn Katheer

³ Tafseer Dhiyaa ul Quran

⁴ Tafseer Ibn Katheer; Tafseer Qurtubi from Sahih Bukhaari

⁵ Tafseer Dhiyaa ul Quran

⁶ Tafseer Qurtubi

Nijaa'(Salvation) – because through it people are saved from the beliefs of Kufr and Shirk and thus ultimately hell⁷.

Ikhlaas (Purity) – because it deals with pure Tawheed.

Maani'a (Preventer) – because it prevents its recitor from Hell.

Wilaaya (Friend) – its recitor becomes from the Awliyaa of Allah and also because whoever understands this surah becomes a friend of Allah⁸.

Nasba (Lineage)– because it was revealed in response to the question 'what is the lineage of your lord?' Imam Raazi states that it is a very beautiful name of this surah because the Arabs used to, as a rule, safeguard and preserve their lineage and this sura describes Allah's lineage, whose safeguarding is the more important than all!⁹

Ma'rifa (recognition) – through it a person attains the true recognition of Allah. Once the Prophet heard a man reciting Sura Ikhlaas in the prayer and commented 'Verily this servant has attained the marifa of his Lord.'¹⁰

Great virtues:

The books of Tafseer and ahadith are filled with the virtues of this Sura:

It is narrated from Umm ul Momineen Syeda Aisha that the Prophet ﷺ appointed a companion the Ameer of an army expedition. Whenever he led the prayer he would end each rakah with Sura Ikhlaas. On the army's return the people complained to the Prophet ﷺ about this. The Prophet ﷺ asked them to find out why he used to do such a thing. The companion explained '(I did so because) It describes Allah ﷻ and thus I love reciting it.' The Prophet ﷺ commented 'Tell him that Allah ﷻ also loves him.'¹¹

Abu Hurayra narrates that the Prophet ﷺ passed by a man who was supplicating to Allah ﷻ with Sura Ikhlaas and commented 'He has asked Allah ﷻ with His great Name, he will surely be given for whoever asks with this will be given.'¹²

The Prophet ﷺ heard someone in dua saying 'Asaaluka (I ask you) Yaa Allaahu Yaa Ahad, Yaa Samad, Yaa Man Lam Yalid wa lam Yulad wa lam Yakun'lahu Kufuwan Ahad' and the Prophet ﷺ said to him thrice 'Gufiralak' (you are forgiven).¹³

It is also narrated that once Jibraeel was in attendance with the Prophet ﷺ and the companion Abu Zar Gaffaari arrived, Jibraeel commented 'This is Abu Zar.' The Prophet ﷺ asked how he knew of Abu Zar and Jibraeel explained 'We angels know him better than you.' The Prophet ﷺ asked 'Why?' Jibraeel explained 'because he thinks of himself as insignificant and because he recites Sura Ikhlaas plentifully.'¹⁴

It is in Tafseer Qurtubi that a man came to the Prophet ﷺ and complained of his poverty. The Prophet ﷺ advised him 'When you enter your house offer salaam to whoever is there, and if no one is there offer salaam upon me and then recite Sura

⁷ Tafseer Kabeer

⁸ Tafseer Kabeer

⁹ Tafseer Kabeer

¹⁰ Tafseer Kabeer

¹¹ Tafseer Dhiyaa ul Quran from Bukhaari and Muslim; Tafseer Ibn Katheer

¹² Tafseer Dhiya ul Quran

¹³ Tafseer Kabeer

¹⁴ Tafseer Kabeer

Ikhlaas once.’ The man did this and became so wealthy that he would distribute his wealth to others.¹⁵

A man of the Ansaar was the Imam of the Quba Masjid and would recite Sura Ikhlaas before each Sura in each rakah. The people asked him to only recite one Sura but he refused and told them to find another Imam if they didn’t like it. The people did not want to replace him as he was the best man amongst them. Once the Prophet ﷺ came to them and they told him about this. The Prophet ﷺ asked the Imam ‘Why do you not do as the people say?’ The man explained ‘I have great love for Sura Ikhlaas’; the Prophet ﷺ said ‘This love has taken you into Paradise’¹⁶

The Prophet ﷺ said ‘Whoever recites this Sura ten times Allah ﷻ will build for him a palace in paradise.’ Syeduna Umar commented ‘We will end up with lots of palaces!’ The Prophet ﷺ commented ‘Is there a better giver than Allahﷻ?!’¹⁷, meaning what deficiency or scarcity does He have!

In another narration it is that whoever recites it 10 times will have one palace; whoever recites it 20 times will have two palaces and whoever recites it 30 times will have three palaces.

The Prophet ﷺ said ‘Whoever recites Sura Ikhlaas 50 times 50 years of his sins will be forgiven.’¹⁸ In one narration it has additionally ‘Except his debts’¹⁹

The Prophet ﷺ said ‘Whoever goes to bed and lies on his right side and recites Sura Ikhlaas 100 times Allah will order him on the day of Qiyaamah ‘Enter Jannah from your right side’²⁰

Abu Ya’laa narrates that the Prophet said ﷺ ‘There are three acts which if done with sincerity will allow a person to enter paradise from whichever gate he wishes and to marry there whoever he wishes: ‘To forgive a murderer, to repay a hidden debt and to recite Surah Ikhlaas ten times after each fard prayer.’ Abu Bakr Siddiq asked ‘Yaa Rasoolallah, what if someone only undertakes one of these three acts?’ The Prophet ﷺ said ‘He will have the same rank.’

Anas bin Maalik narrates ‘We were with the Prophet ﷺ on the plains of Tubook when the sun became so bright and its rays so strong that we had never seen anything like it before. Jibrail then arrived and the Prophet ﷺ asked him why the sun was so bright and the rays so strong? Jibrail explained ‘Today in Madeenah Muaawiya bin Muawiya Laithi has died and Allah has sent 70,000 angels for his funeral!’ The Prophet ﷺ asked ‘What action of his caused this?’ Jibrail revealed ‘He would recite Sura Ikhlaas all day and all night, whilst walking and whilst sitting, in other words at all times’. Jibrail then asked ‘If you wish I can shrink the Earth so you too can pray his funeral.’ Jibril then put his wing upon the earth and all the trees were flattened and the funeral was right before the

¹⁵ Tafseer Dhiya ul Quran from Tafseer Qurtubi, a variant is also mentioned in Tafseer Kabeer

¹⁶ Tafseer Dhiya ul Quran; Tafseer Ibn Katheer from Tirmidhi and Ahmad

¹⁷ Tafseer Ibn Katheer

¹⁸ Tafseer Ibn Katheer

¹⁹ Tafseer Qurtubi

²⁰ Tafseer Ibn Kathher; Tafseer Qurtubi

Prophet's eyes. There were two rows of angels behind the Prophet ﷺ and each row had 70,000 angels.²¹

The Prophet ﷺ said 'Whoever recites Sura Ikhlaas in his illness and then dies in that illness will be spared the fitna of the grave and the angels on the day of judgement will lift him by his sleeves and take him across the Siraat into paradise.'

Whoever comes to the mosque on the day of Jumuaah and prays four rakahs and recites Sura Ikhlaas fifty times with Sura Fatiha in each rakah, making a total of 200 recitations of Sura Ikhlaas, he will not die without seeing his house in paradise or it being shown to him'

Timing of revelation

There are some narrations that show this sura being revealed in Makka (prior to the migration) and there are others that show it being revealed in Madeena (after the migration).

Narrations that say it is Makki:

Abu'l Aalia narrates from Abu bin Kaab that the polytheists asked the Prophet ﷺ 'Yaa Muhammad, what is the lineage of your Lord?'. In response the Prophet ﷺ recited Sura Ikhlaas²²

Jaabir narrates 'A Bedouin came to the Prophet ﷺ and asked 'Describe to me the lineage of your lord, the Prophet replied by reciting Sura Ikhlaas.'²³

Ibn Masood narrates 'The Quraysh once asked the Prophet ﷺ to state the lineage of his lord and he recited Sura Ikhlaas.'²⁴

Narrations that say it is Madani:

Ibn Abbaas narrates 'A group of Jews came to the Prophet ﷺ and Kaab bin Ashraf was with them and they asked 'Yaa Muhammad, this Allah who created everything, who created Him?' The Prophet ﷺ became angry. Jibreel came and comforted the Prophet and this Sura was revealed.'²⁵

Ibn Abbaas narrates 'A delegation of Christians from Najraan came and asked the Prophet ﷺ 'Describe your lord to us, is he made from -- pearls, gold or silver?' The Prophet ﷺ replied 'My Lord is not made from these things, He is the One who made all these things.' Then this Sura was revealed'.²⁶

The Scholars have concluded that this Sura could have been revealed twice, in both cities, or on more than one occasion and is thus deemed to be Makki when it must have been first revealed.

²¹ Tafseer Ibn Katheer, Tafseer Kabeer

²² Tafseer Dhiyaa ul Quran

²³ Tafseer Dhiyaa ul Quran

²⁴ Tafseer Dhiyaa ul Quran

²⁵ Tafseer Dhiyaa ul Quran

²⁶ Tafseer Dhiyaa ul Quran

Brief Synopsis

This Sura is a comprehensive refutation of all the corrupt beliefs regarding God. Indeed some of the Mufasssireen, such as Imam Raazi in Tafseer Kabeer, state that this sura was revealed in direct responses to the questions about God from the people of the book and the polytheists. At the time of the revelation there were many types of disbelievers amongst the Arabs; atheists, polytheists, rejecters of divine powers and acceptors of His children etc.²⁷ This Sura answers and counters all such corrupt beliefs in a very brief and eloquent manner and draws a clear line between Islam and all these other beliefs.

Verse 1

Say, He is Allah, He is One

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ

قُلْ (Say): Why was the Prophet ﷺ ordered to announce this?

An interesting point to note is that although this Sura relates exclusively to the Tawheed and Praise of Allah ﷻ it begins with the term *Qul*, which in reality is the eulogy of the Prophet ﷺ. It symbolises a number of points:

- 1) It denotes that one can only be a true believer of Tawheed if it is as a result of the Prophet's ﷺ education. It will not be considered imaan if someone believes in Tawheed without reference to the Prophet ﷺ, "just like a banknote without an official seal is invalid so too is Tawheed if it does not have the seal of the Prophet ﷺ! Just look at Iblis, he never denied tawheed but is rejected because he turned his back on the Prophet ﷺ!"²⁸
- 2) If there was any entity amongst the creation that could have claimed divinity it was the Prophet ﷺ due to the rank, perfections and authorities bestowed upon him by Allah ﷻ. Thus it was deemed appropriate that he should be the one to proclaim Allah's ﷻ Oneness so that if someone of his ability acknowledges Allah to be Unique who else could dare claim to be God or similar to God?!

هُوَ اللَّهُ Huwa Allah

He is Allah, He is the Ahad (One, Unique).

Tafseer Mazhari, renowned tafseer especially from a grammatical point, comments that the true translation of this first verse is that the Huwa is Ism whilst Allah and Ahad are its two Khabrs. Alternatively the latter two could both be the badl of each other.

By saying He is Allah we learn that the name Allah has some meaning for it is being used to define or identify the God. Consequently all jurists are agreed that no other being is allowed to have the name Allah. Others may take on any of His attributes such as Maalik, Ghafoor, Raheem (although for etiquette with the suffix Abd) but no one is allowed the term Allah.

أَحَدٌ Ahad – He is One, single and unique in every way. This means that He is one single being, without any parts²⁹, He is not a compound or mixture of two or more beings³⁰,

²⁷ Tafseer Nur ul Irfaan

²⁸ Tafseer Nur ul Irfaan

²⁹ Tafseer Nur ul Irfaan

He is Unique for He has no peer³¹, there is nothing like him and no one can give an example of Him³².

The first part of the verse is a rejection of the atheists, for it confirms that there is a God. The second part, He is Unique and One is a refutation of the polytheists³³ who believed in more gods or believed God was made up of many parts.

The three words 'huwa' 'Allah' and 'ahad' signify in descending order the three levels of marifa (recognition) of Allah that people may have.

The first word Huwa (He) signifies the rank of the 'Muqarribeen'. These people do not see or think of anything but Allah ﷻ, at all times He is on their mind and tongue and their first point of reference for anything is Allah ﷻ thus when the term 'Huwa' is said they immediately think of Allah ﷻ because for them there is nothing else but Him. For them even a general term has a specific meaning.. 'They only see one entity with the eyes of their mind'³⁴

The second word 'Allah' refers to the station of the 'People of the Right side'. These people are aware of Allah ﷻ but at the same time are also aware of and reflect upon the rest of the creation. For them the term Huwa is not sufficient for them as it could refer to Allah ﷻ or anyone from the other creation³⁵

The third term 'Ahad' relates to the rank of the 'People of the Left side'. Imam Raazi states that this is the most debased level. These people believe in more than one God and thus are in need of the term 'Ahad' to know that there is only one God³⁶.

Verse 2

اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ

Allah is The Samad

The Mufasireen have mentioned numerous interpretations of the term Samad:

Ibn Abbas and Hasan Basri : refers to the one who has no fear³⁷.

Ibn Abbas: The one greatest in his rule, honour, worship and wisdom³⁸.

Akrama: He who does not eat anything³⁹

Shobi : He who does not eat or drink⁴⁰

Abu'l Waail Shaqeeq bin Salama: That king or ruler who is at the peak of his rule⁴¹

Saeed bin Habeer: He who is complete in his attributes and actions⁴²

Qataada: He who will remain after everything has finished⁴³.

³⁰ Tafseer Mazhari

³¹ Tafseer Nur ul Irfan

³² Tafseer Mazhari

³³ Tafseer Nur ul Irfaan

³⁴ Tafseer Kabeer

³⁵ Tafseer Kabeer

³⁶ Tafseer Kabeer

³⁷ Tafseer Mazhari

³⁸ Tafseer Ibn Katheer

³⁹ Tafseer Ibn Katheer

⁴⁰ Tafseer Mazhari

⁴¹ Tafseer Mazhari

⁴² Tafseer Mazhari

Abdullah bin Burayda: That nur which is bright and shining⁴⁴

Others have stated it is He who is called out in every need or the king who can give anything He is asked or the one who has no faults or suffers no problem⁴⁵

The one who will remain after everything has finished⁴⁶.

He is independent of everything, he has no need whatsoever in any matter such as eating or drinking.⁴⁷

The one who knows everything. For only He who knows can fulfil everyone's needs.⁴⁸

After referring to the many different interpretations of the term Samad Tafseer Mazhari concludes 'I believe samad means the ultimate *maqsood* or end, aim and purpose because in every action He is the ultimate aim for everything comes through Him. All the above interpretations are necessary attributes of the ultimate maqsood for the ultimate maqsood cannot have any weakness, or be dependent and require food and drink etc.'⁴⁹

Furthermore the Alif Laam article before Samad tells us He is at the peak of His *Samadiyyah*.⁵⁰

The term Samad, that he is independent and all needs return to him, can only be true if He is unique and one. This verse about Samad tells that there cannot be a god but the One⁵¹.

This verse is a refutation of those who question how one god can control and nourish the whole world. Such people began believing Allah had helpers and then started worshipping them.⁵²

In Islam we do believe that the angels and even people carry out duties on behalf of Allah in the administration of this and the next realm⁵³ but this is not because of Allah's ﷻ weakness (Na'ozubillah) but for Allah to show the worth and honour of such entities.⁵⁴

Verse 3:

لَمْ يَلِدْ

He does not give birth.

There are several reasons the Divine does not need or can have offspring:

The reason humans have offspring is implicitly a sign of weakness, it acknowledges the fact that they are finite and perishable and will one day become weak and come to an end

⁴³ Tafseer Mazhari

⁴⁴ Tafseer Ibn Katheer

⁴⁵ Tafseer Mazhari

⁴⁶ Tafseer Ibn Katheer

⁴⁷ Tafseer Nur ul Irfaan

⁴⁸ Tafseer Kabeer

⁴⁹ Tafseer Mazhari

⁵⁰ Tafseer Mazhari

⁵¹ Tafseer Kabeer

⁵² Tafseer Nur ul Irfaan

⁵³ E.g the angels of death, the angels who question the human in the grave etc, Prophet's giving His message

⁵⁴ Tafseer Nur ul Irfaan

and thereby need offspring to support and continue their work. Divinity has no fear of weakness or ending so it has no such need for offspring.⁵⁵

The offspring has to be similar to the parents, as it will have at least some shared characteristics, but as mentioned in the first verse there is nothing similar to God and He is unique thus having offspring is incompatible with the concept of divinity.⁵⁶ If the offspring does not share any traits or characteristics with the father could it really be recognised as the father's offspring?!

Thus Allah ﷻ neither needs offspring or has anything similar to Him why should He have children? This verse is a refutation of the polytheists who claimed the angels were Allah's ﷻ daughters; of the Jews who deemed Uzayr (as) was the son of Allah ﷻ and the Christians who thought Isa was the son of God.⁵⁷

Verse 4:

وَلَمْ يُولَدْ

He was not born

Being born is also incompatible with divinity because anything that is born must have parents who as mentioned must be similar to it and upon whom the child is dependant. Allah is the Samad (as described in verse 2) and is independent of all and similar to None. In addition everything born must implicitly have a start point and there must have been a time when there was no God, a concept which again is wholly inconceivable, and anything that has a start must have a finish for it cannot be eternal. Allah ﷻ has no beginning and no end and there was never a time before God, indeed God existed before time and will continue to do so after time!

In a hadith of Bukhaari it is narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said 'No one is more patient than Allah ﷻ for He hears things which hurt him – they say that he Has Children – and yet He gives them rizq (livelihood).⁵⁸

In another narration the Prophet ﷺ states that Allah ﷻ proclaims 'The son of Adam rejects Me and swears at Me. He rejects Me, by questioning how he will be recreated, even though it is not easier than the first and swears at me by saying I have children, even though I am One and the Samad.'⁵⁹

Another reasoning for clarifying that he was not born is that He 'did not inherit his dominion or powers from anyone.'⁶⁰

Verse 5

وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ

There is none like Him

⁵⁵ Tafseer Nur ul Irfaan

⁵⁶ Tafseer Nur ul Irfaan

⁵⁷ Tafseer Nur ul Irfaan

⁵⁸ Tafseer Ibn Katheer

⁵⁹ Tafseer Ibn Katheer

⁶⁰ Tafseer Ibn Abbaas

Tafseer Sura Ikhlaas (Tawheed)

There is none like him both in personality and in attributes; he is necessary and the Creator whilst everything else is possible and creation. His attributes are personal and eternal, all the attributes of the creation are bestowed, limited and perishable.⁶¹

This Sura is elegantly logical; it first establishes that there is a God, and that He is One and unique. It then proves He is the One and Only by first confirming that He is independent and All powerful and thus needs no one and then negates the potential causes of similarity, such as Offspring or having parents.



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⁶¹ Tafseer Nur ul Irfaan