Summary of Juz 19

Surat al-Furqan continued

The disbelievers are warned of the dreadful consequences of rejecting faith: "Can you can be a guardian for someone who makes a god of his whims?" (43). Turning to the natural world it points out the amazing creative power of Allah: the shadow, the nightfall, the rain, seawater, blood and marriage relatives, the constellations, the sun and the moon: "These are signs for him who wishes to be reminded of the reality" (62). A two-pronged approach is adopted to answering the disbelievers' criticism. Firstly, an argumentative approach which warns the disbelievers by telling them stories of past communities. Secondly, the use of reason and science. They are told to observe the signs in nature because they point to their creator. So, won't you believe?

On Judgement Day people will regret making the wrong types of friends. What use is regretting now! The Quran laments, had they read, believed and followed Islam they wouldn't be regretting.

Past generations who denied Allah were wiped out. They made their whims, their gods and did not listen to their Prophets. Their attention is drawn to nature, take the shadow. "Don't you see how Your Lord makes it get longer and longer, if He wanted, He could have fixed its size. We made the sun a pointer to His existence, then we gradually shorten the shadow". (45-6) That life on earth, depends wholly on water is highlighted in the next passage. This is followed by a beautiful description of the constellations in the sky, the stars, the sun and the moon. And finally, "He made the night and day to follow each other, a sign for anyone who wants to be reminded of Allah's power or wants to be thankful" (48-62).

The final passage catalogues the qualities of the pious. They are humble, peace-loving, prayerful, moderate, and repentant. They don't squander wealth, murder, worship idols, commit adultery, give false testimony, engage in useless activities nor follow blindly. The surah concludes with the prayer of the pious: ''Our Lord, give us happiness in our spouses and children and make us leaders of the pious people" (74). Effectively, recapping the opening statement that Allah is in control of the universe and His servant submits and prays for divine intervention.

Surat al-Shuara - The Poets

Juz 19 continues with Surat al-Shuara where the beloved Messenger ﷺ was teaching Islam day and night, but only a handful of souls followed him in Makkah. The opposition was growing. But, he still continued praying his heartfelt prayers for the people, during long night vigils and continued crying to Allah for their guidance. He was ever hopeful that they would accept Islam.

The stories of seven prophets are retold, how they were rejected by their people. The history of human disobedience is repeated once more. Perhaps, this is a reflection of how humans are prone to self-deception. Since they love power and wealth, can be mindless and blindly follow fashion trends and thoughts. The Surah exposes both human weaknesses and strengths.

Next, there is the dramatic story: "Then Musa threw his stick down, so it swallowed their trickery at once" (46). There was no debate, the miracle was compelling, and the magicians intuitively knew Musa was a prophet. But the Pharaoh refused to believe. The story of each prophet is separated with the catchphrase: "In this is a lesson, though most of them will not believe, it is your Lord Who is the Almighty, the Caring".

Another compelling warning to reform, before meeting the same fate as the rebellious communities of the past, is given. The stories make the point that all the prophets had the same mission. This is perfectly summarised in "When their brother Nuh said to them, 'Will you not believe?" (106–110).

Ibrahim expresses Allah's generosity: "But My Lord is Lord of the worlds, who created and guided me, the one who feeds and gives me to drink, and when I am ill heals me" (78–80). Prophet Nuh highlights the discrimination of the wealthy against the poor, "Why should we believe in you since only the poorest people are following you?" (111).

The people of Thamud are criticised for their vanity: "You build a monument on every hilltop, what a useless activity! And you build castles expecting to live forever; when you attack others, you do so brutally" (128–130).

The story of Lut describes the sexual perversion of his people, "Among all nations, why do you lustfully approach men? And you leave your wives that your Lord has created for you. You are transgressors" (165–166). Prophet Shu'ayb exposed the deceiving nature of his people.

The Makkan's accusation that the Prophet ﷺ is a poet is rejected: "The poets are followed only by the ignorant, don't you see them wandering aimlessly in valleys?" (224). The Prophet ﷺ is reassured that these are unreasonable accusations. How can the beauty, eloquence and life-changing message of the Quran be compared to the works of the poets?

Surat Al-Naml - The ant

Juz 19 continues with this Surah, which was revealed in the middle-Makkan period, the fifth or sixth year of the mission. It charts part of the history of human spirituality by reference to five prophets: Musa, Sulayman, Dawud, Salih, and Lut. The opening verses describe the nature of divine revelation as being guidance and good news. The proof of this proposition is the story of Musa and how he received divine revelation on Mount Sinai.

The story of Sulayman is told. He is both a prophet and a king. A man of worldly wealth and spiritual devotion. This sets the scene for understanding divine mysteries. Allah gave him gifts, including the ability to communicate with various creatures – jinn, birds and even insects like the ant. The stories of King Sulayman and the Queen of Sheba are full of symbolism, and finely weave together the realities of worldly life and spiritual realities. In some ways, it represents the story of the human soul's spiritual awakening and eventual realisation of moral and spiritual truths. The story of the hoopoe, the speech of the ant, and the transportation of the mighty throne of Queen of Sheba thousand miles in the twinkling of an eye express great truths. There is a certain spiritual truth underlying each one of them, sometimes presented openly others allegorically. When the hoopoe told Sulayman about the Queen of Sheba, he dispatched a letter inviting her to become a believer and give up her idolatry. The queen decided to play it safe and sent precious gifts to him. Sulayman refused to accept her gifts. She wisely decided to meet him in person, travelled from Saba to Jerusalem. In the story of the hoopoe, the Quran teaches the lesson that a bird can sometimes have knowledge of things that even experts may lack, so don't be arrogant.

Next is the story of Prophet Salih and Prophet Lut who faced serious opposition from their people. It contrasts with the story of the Queen of Sheba, who eagerly accepted faith and realised the foolishness of idolatry. The severe opposition and the hostility faced by these two prophets is a commentary on the human condition. People are warned against thoughtless addiction to materialism and idolatry. Instead, become like the Queen of Sheba.