
RESEARCH ARTICLE

Arabic Polysemous Words used in the Qur'ān; A Study of the Word *nafaqa*

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ABSTRACT

The Qur'ān is a marvellous book which contains various miraculous signs. Amongst its miracle is the use of polysemous words in the Book. An interpreter of the Qur'ān who does not acquaint himself with the proper use of Arabic words will mislead not only himself but others following such interpretation. The exegesis of the Book requires advanced knowledge of the Arabic Language and its branches to grasp the deep meanings of the Qur'ān. This article focuses on *nafaqa* mentioned in one hundred and seven (107) places in the Qur'ān as a case study of the polysemous nature of the Qur'ān and how it is being used in different ways as nouns, verbs or adjectives. As such, only expert exegetes can understand how these words are being used without misinterpreting the Qur'ān.

KEYWORDS

The Qur'ān, Arabic, Polysemous words, *Nafaqa*. *exegetes*

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1. Introduction

Understanding the interpretation of the Qur'ān without deep knowledge of the Arabic Language and its various branches is impossible. Sambo (2014) explained that many critics misinterpret verses of the Qur'ān out of ignorance or in a deliberate attempt to distort the real message being conveyed in the Qur'ān at the expense of listeners and readers as well as the general populace. It has also led some exegetes to interpret the Qur'ān based on their personal bias, without any reservation for whether what they are saying is correct or in line with the literal and technical meanings of the Book.

The Arabic Language is the language of the Qur'ān, and as such needs to be studied extensively so as to be able to grasp the true meanings of the Book. Usmani (2006) reported that the language is a very vast one, and its words can be used in several ways. A single sentence may be interpreted in several ways, either in the Qur'ān, Hadith or any other Arabic text. Among the conditions to be fulfilled by a Qur'ānic exegete is having sufficient knowledge of classical Arabic, its grammatical constructions and its figures of speech. Other branches of Arabic Language, such as syntax, morphology, derivation, rhetoric and so on, are equally important.

Furthermore, adequate knowledge of these branches is not enough; as stated by Philips (1997), a good interpreter should also be familiar with Islamic sciences that are connected to the Qur'ān such as Hadith and its sciences, fundamental principles of *Fiqh* (Jurisprudence) and so on. Adeyemi (2018) explained that many Arabic words in the Qur'ān are polysemous words as they often come from a single root and then expand to give different meanings.

Therefore, without this aforementioned knowledge, there is no way an exegete can be free from misinterpretations of the Qur'ān. Thus, this article focuses on the word *nafaqa* as an Arabic polysemous word used in the Qur'ān in different ways with differing meanings.

2. The Concept of Polysemy

Polysemy is a semantic state of a word in which it indicates two or more meanings. Abdussalam (2000) argues that a word is Polysemous when it looks the same as others and has more than one meaning. In other words, Falkum & Vicente say that Polysemy is usually characterized as the phenomenon whereby a single word form is associated with two or several *related* senses. The "Polysemy" is used in this study to exclusively refer to the word "nafaqa" and related words with a common etymology regardless of possible variety in forms. Moreover, Mono-focal type of Polysemy is employed. Mono-focal Polysemy is where the variation of meaning is about a central focus. For this work, the word "nafaqa" is our focus.

3. Analysis of the word *Nafaqa* in the Arabic language

The book "Science of Arabic Derivation" by Hasan Khan (1985) states that the science of derivation is a fundamental rule upon which the science of the Arabic language is built. Its subject traces Arabic words from its root up to its branches, thus forming a foundation for other branches of the language. *Nafaqa* under study is an infinitive word that many branches are formed from. Abdul-Ganiyy (2010) described infinitive in grammar as the root word from which many branches emanate. It is a word that contains its verbal letters in the pronunciation and points to a situation without reference to a specific period.

It is now clear that the word *nafaqa* as a root word has many words, including derivative nouns, derivative verbs and their branches, emanating from it. These can be used in different ways to bring out various meanings in the Arabic language, as it is being used in the Arabic text of the Qur'an, the Hadith and different books of the Arabic language.

4. Selected verses where *Nafaqa* is used in the Qur'an

Nafaqa is used in the Qur'an at One Hundred and Seven (107) places in different ways as follows:

1. Q 18:42

وَأَجِيطَ يَتَمَرَهُ فَأَصْبَحَ يُقَلِّبُ كَفَّيْهِ عَلَىٰ مَا أَنفَقَ فِيهَا وَهِيَ خَاوِيَةٌ عَلَىٰ عُرُوشِهَا وَيَقُولُ يَا لَيْتَنِي لَمْ أُشْرِكْ بِرَبِّيَ أَخَذًا

And his wealth was destroyed, so he began to wring his hands for what he had spent on it, while it lay, having fallen down upon its roofs, and he said: Ah me! Would that I had not associated anyone with my Lord.

Comment: The word is used here as a masculine singular past perfect verb.

2. Q57:10

وَمَا لَكُمْ لَئِذَا تُنْفِقُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلِلَّهِ مِيرَاثُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَا يَسْتَوِي مِنْكُمْ مَّنْ أَنفَقَ مِن قَبْلِ الْفَتْحِ وَقَتْلٌ أُولَٰئِكَ أَعْظَمُ دَرَجَةً مِّنَ الَّذِينَ أَنفَقُوا مِن بَعْدُ وَقَتْلُوا وَكُلًّا وَعَدَّ اللَّهُ الْحَسَنَىٰ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ

And what reason have you that you should not spend in Allah's way? And Allah's is the inheritance of the heavens and the earth, not alike among you are those who spent before the victory and fought (and those who did not): they are more exalted in rank than those who spent and fought afterwards, and Allah has promised good to all, and Allah is Aware of what you do.

Comment: The word is used three times in this verse:

Firstly, as a masculine/feminine plural present verb,

Secondly, as a masculine/feminine plural past verb,

Thirdly, as a masculine/feminine plural past verb.

3. Q8:63

وَأَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِهِمْ لَوْ أَنفَقْتَ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا مَا أَلَّفْتَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِهِمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ أَلَّفَ بَيْنَهُمْ إِنَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ

And united their hearts; had you spent all that is in the earth, you could not have united their hearts, but Allah united them; surely He is Mighty, Wise.

Comment: The word is used as a masculine singular past perfect verb.

4. Q2:215

يَسْأَلُونَكَ حَادًّا تُنْفِقُونَ فُلْ مَا أَنفَقْتُمْ مِّنْ حَيْرٍ فَلِلْوَالِدَيْنِ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَأَنَّ السَّبِيلَ وَمَا تَفْعَلُوا مِنْ حَيْرٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ

They ask you as to what they should spend. Say: Whatever wealth you spend, it is for the parents and the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer, and whatever good you do, Allah surely knows it.

Comment: The word is mentioned here twice:

Firstly, as a masculine/feminine plural present verb,

Secondly, as an apodosis or answer.

5. Q2:270

وَمَا أَنْفَقْتُمْ مِّنْ نَّفَقَةٍ أَوْ نَذَرْتُمْ مِّنْ نَّذْرٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُهُ وَمَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ مِنْ أَنْصَارٍ

And whatever alms you give or (whatever) vow you vow, surely Allah knows it, and the unjust shall have no helpers.

Comment: The word is mentioned here twice:

Firstly, as a masculine/feminine plural present verb,

Secondly, as a noun.

6. Q34:39

قُلْ إِنَّ رَبِّي يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَن يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ وَيَقْدِرُ لَهُ وَمَا أَنْفَقْتُمْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ فَهُوَ يُخْلِفُهُ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الرَّازِقِينَ

Say: Surely my Lord amplifies the means of subsistence for whom He pleases of His servants and straitens (them) for whom (He pleases), and whatever thing you spend, He exceeds it in reward, and He is the best of Sustainers.

Comment: The word is used as a masculine/feminine plural present verb.

7. Q60:10

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِذَا جَاءَكُمْ الْمُؤْمِنَاتُ مُهَجِرَاتٍ فَامْتَحِنُوهُنَّ اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِإِيمَانِهِنَّ فَإِنْ عَلِمْتُمُوهُنَّ مُؤْمِنَاتٍ فَلَا تَرْجِعُوهُنَّ إِلَى الْكُفَّارِ لَا هُنَّ حِلٌّ لَّهُمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحِلُّونَ لَهُنَّ وَءَاثُوهُمْ مَا أَنْفَقُوا وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ أَنْ تَنْكِحُوهُنَّ إِذَا ءَاتَيْتُمُوهُنَّ أَجُورَهُنَّ وَلَا تُمْسِكُوا بِعِصَمِ الْكُوفَارِ وَسَلُّوا مَا أَنْفَقْتُمْ وَلَيْسَلُوا مَا أَنْفَقُوا ذَلِكُمْ حُكْمُ اللَّهِ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ

O you who believe! When believing women come to you flying, then examine them; Allah knows best their faith; then if you find them to be believing women, do not send them back to the unbelievers; neither are these (women) lawful for them, nor are those (men) lawful for them, and give them what they have spent; and no blame attaches to you in marrying them when you give them their dowries and hold not to the ties of marriage of unbelieving women, and ask for what you have spent, and then ask for what they have spent. That is Allah's judgment; He judges between you, and Allah is Knowing Wise.

Comment: The word is used thrice, all as a masculine/feminine plural past perfect verb.

8. Q2:262

الَّذِينَ تُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ لَا يُتَّبِعُونَ مَا أَنْفَقُوا مَتًّا وَلَا أَدَىٰ لَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

(As for) those who spend their property in the way of Allah, then do not follow up what they have spent with reproach or injury, they shall have their reward from their Lord, and they shall have no fear nor shall they grieve.

Comment: The word is used twice:

Firstly, as a masculine/feminine plural present verb,

Secondly, as a masculine/feminine plural past verb.

9. Q2:267

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا أَنْفِقُوا مِن طَيِّبَاتِ مَا كَسَبْتُمْ وَمِمَّا أَخْرَجْنَا لَكُمْ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ وَلَا تَيَمَّمُوا الْخَبِيثَ مِنْهُ تُنْفِقُونَ وَلَسْتُمْ بِآخِذِيهِ إِلَّا أَنْ تُغْمِضُوا فِيهِ وَءَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ غَنِيٌّ حَمِيدٌ

O you who believe! spend (benevolently) of the good things that you earn and or what We have brought forth for you out of the earth, and do not aim at what is bad that you may spend (in alms) of it, while you would not take it yourselves unless you have its price lowered, and know that Allah is Self-sufficient, Praiseworthy.

Comment: The word is used twice:

Firstly, as a masculine/feminine plural imperative verb,

Secondly, as a masculine/feminine plural present verb.

10. Q2:272

﴿لَيْسَ عَلَيْكَ هُدَاهُمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَلَأَنْفُسِكُمْ وَمَا تُنْفِقُونَ إِلَّا ابْتِغَاءَ وَجْهِ اللَّهِ وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ يُوَفَّ إِلَيْكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تُظْلَمُونَ﴾

To make them walk in the right way is not incumbent on you, but Allah guides aright whom He pleases; and whatever good thing you spend, it is to your own good; and you do not spend but to seek Allah's pleasure, and whatever good things you spend shall be paid back to you in full, and you shall not be wronged.

Comment: The word is used thrice here as masculine/feminine plural present verb.

11. Q4:34

الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ فَأَلْصَلَّتْ قُنُوتٌ حُفِظَتْ لِلْغَيْبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ اللَّهُ وَالَّتِي تَخَافُونَ نُشُوزَهُنَّ فَعِظُوهُنَّ وَأَهْجُرُوهُنَّ فِي الْمَضَاجِعِ وَأَضْرِبُوهُنَّ فَإِنْ أَطَعْتَكُمْ فَلَا تَبْغُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ سَبِيلًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا كَبِيرًا

Men are the maintainers of women because Allah has made some of them excel others and because they spend out of their property; the good women are therefore obedient, guarding the unseen as Allah has guarded; and (as to) those on whose part you fear desertion, admonish them, and leave them alone in the sleeping-places and beat them; then if they obey you, do not seek a way against them; surely Allah is High, Great.

Comment: The word is used as a masculine plural present verb.

12. Q4:39

وَمَاذَا عَلَيْهِمْ لَوْ ءَامَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَأَنْفَقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقَهُمُ اللَّهُ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِهِمْ عَلِيمًا

And what (harm) would it have done them if they had believed in Allah and the last day and spent (benevolently) of what Allah had given them? And Allah knows them.

Comment: The word is used as a masculine/feminine plural past verb.

13. Q25:67

وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا أَنْفَقُوا لَمْ يُسْرِفُوا وَلَمْ يَقْتُرُوا وَكَانَ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ قَوَامًا

And they who when they spend, are neither extravagant nor parsimonious, and (keep) between these the just mean.

Comment: The word is used as a masculine/feminine plural present verb.

14. Q35:29

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَتْلُونَ كِتَابَ اللَّهِ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَنْفَقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ سِرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً يَرْجُونَ تَجْرَةً لَنْ تَبُورَ

Surely they who recite the Book of Allah and keep up prayer and spend out of what We have given them secretly and openly, hope for a gain which will not perish.

Comment: The word is used as a masculine/feminine plural present verb.

15. Q57:7

ءَامِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَأَنْفِقُوا مِمَّا جَعَلَكُمْ مُسْتَخْلِفِينَ فِيهِ قَالِذِينَ ءَامَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَأَنْفَقُوا لَهُمْ أَجْرٌ كَبِيرٌ

Believe in Allah and His Messenger, and spend out of what He has made you to be successors of; for those of you who believe and spent shall have a great reward.

Comment: The word is used twice:

Firstly, as a masculine/feminine plural imperative verb,

Secondly, as a masculine/feminine plural past verb.

16. Q60:11

وَإِنْ قَاتَكُمْ شَيْءٌ مِّنْ أَزْوَاجِكُمْ إِلَى الْكُفَّارِ فَعاقِبْتُمْ فَاتُوا الَّذِينَ ذَهَبَتْ أَزْوَاجُهُمْ مِّثْلَ مَا أَنْفَقُوا وَأَنْفُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي أَنْتُمْ بِهِ مُؤْمِنُونَ

And if anything (out of the dowries) of your wives has passed away from you to the unbelievers, then your turn comes, give to those whose wives have gone away the like of what they have spent, and be careful of (your duty to) Allah in Whom you believe.

Comment: The word is used as a masculine plural perfect participle.

17. Q2:273

لِلْفُقَرَاءِ الَّذِينَ أُحْصِرُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ ضَرْبًا فِي الْأَرْضِ يَحْسَبُهُمُ الْجَاهِلُ أَغْنِيَاءَ مِنَ التَّعَفُّفِ تَعْرِفُهُمْ بِسِيمَاهُمْ لَا يَسْأَلُونَ النَّاسَ إِخْافًا وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ

(Alms are) for the poor who are confined in the way of Allah-- they cannot go about in the land; the ignorant man thinks them to be rich on account of (their) abstaining (from begging); you can recognise them by their mark; they do not beg from men importunately; and whatever good thing you spend, surely Allah knows it.

Comment: The word is used as a masculine/feminine plural present verb.

18. Q3:92

لَنْ تَتَّالُوا الْبِرَّ حَتَّى تُنْفِقُوا مِمَّا تُحِبُّونَ وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ

By no means shall you attain to righteousness until you spend (benevolently) out of what you love; and whatever thing you spend, Allah surely knows it.

Comment: The word is used as a masculine/feminine plural present verb.

19. Q8:60

وَأَعِدُّوا لَهُمْ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِنْ قُوَّةٍ وَمِنْ رِبَاطِ الْخَيْلِ تُرْهِبُونَ بِهِ عَدُوَّ اللَّهِ وَعَدُوَّكُمْ وَعَآخِرِينَ مِنْ دُونِهِمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَهُمُ اللَّهُ يَعْلَمُهُمْ وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ شَيْءٍ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ يُوَفَّ إِلَيْكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تُظْلَمُونَ

And prepare against them what force you can and horses tied at the frontier, to frighten thereby the enemy of Allah and your enemy and others besides them, whom you do not know (but) Allah knows them; and whatever thing you will spend in Allah's way, it will be paid back to you fully and you shall not be dealt with unjustly.

Comment: The word is used as a masculine/feminine plural present verb.

20. Q47:38

هَآأَنْتُمْ هَآؤِلَآءِ تُدْعَوْنَ لِتُنْفِقُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَمِنْكُمْ مَنْ يَبْخُلُ وَمَنْ يَبْخُلْ فَإِنَّمَا يَبْخُلْ عَن نَّفْسِيهِ وَاللَّهُ الْغَنِيُّ وَأَنْتُمُ الْفُقَرَاءُ وَإِنْ تَتَوَلَّوْا يَسْتَبْدِلْ قَوْمًا غَيْرَكُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَكُونُوا أَمْثَلَكُمْ

Behold! you are those who are called upon to spend in Allah's way, but among you are those who are niggardly, and whoever is niggardly is niggardly against his own soul; and Allah is Self-sufficient and you have need (of Him), and if you turn back He will bring in your place another people, then they will not be like you.

Comment: The word is used as a masculine/feminine plural present verb.

21. Q63:7

هُمُ الَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ لَا تُنْفِقُوا عَلَيَّ مِنْ عِنْدِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ حَتَّى يَنْفَضُوا وَيَلَّهِ خَزَائِنُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلَكِنَّ الْمُنٰفِقِينَ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ

They it is who say: Do not spend upon those who are with the Messenger of Allah until they break up. And Allah's are the treasures of the heavens and the earth, but the hypocrites do not understand.

Comment: The word is used twice:

Firstly, as a masculine/feminine plural prohibitive verb,

Secondly, as a masculine/feminine plural noun.

22. Q2:267

يَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا أَنفِقُوا مِن طَيِّبَاتِ مَا كَسَبْتُمْ وَمِمَّا أَخْرَجْنَا لَكُمْ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ وَلَا تَيَمَّمُوا الْخَبِيثَ مِنْهُ تُنْفِقُونَ وَلَسْتُمْ بِأَجْذِيهِ إِلَّا أَن تُغْمِضُوا فِيهِ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ غَنِيٌّ حَمِيدٌ

O you who believe! spend (benevolently) of the good things that you earn and or what We have brought forth for you out of the earth, and do not aim at what is bad that you may spend (in alms) of it, while you would not take it yourselves unless you have its price lowered, and know that Allah is Self-sufficient, Praiseworthy.

Comment: The word is used twice:

Firstly, as a masculine/feminine plural imperative verb,

Secondly, as a masculine/feminine plural present verb

23. Q2:264

يَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تُبْطِلُوا صَدَقَاتِكُمْ بِالْمَنِّ وَالْأَذَى كَالَّذِي يُنْفِقُ مَالَهُ رِثَاءَ النَّاسِ وَلَا يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَمَثَلُهُ كَمَثَلِ صَفْوَانٍ عَلَيْهِ تُرَابٌ فَأَصَابَهُ وَابِلٌ فَتَرَكَهُ صَلْدًا لَا يَقْدِرُونَ عَلَى شَيْءٍ مِّمَّا كَسَبُوا وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ

O you who believe! do not make your charity worthless by reproach and injury, like him who spends his property to be seen of men and does not believe in Allah and the last day; so his parable is as the parable of a smooth rock with earth upon it, then a heavy rain falls upon it, so it leaves it bare; they shall not be able to gain anything of what they have earned; and Allah does not guide the unbelieving people.

Comment: The word is used as a masculine singular present verb.

24. Q5:64

وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ يُدُّ اللَّهُ مَغْلُولُهُ غُلَّتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَلُعِنُوا بِمَا قَالُوا بَلْ يَدَاهُ مَبْسُوطَتَانِ يُنْفِقُ كَيْفَ يَشَاءُ وَلَيَزِيدَنَّ كَثِيرًا مِّنْهُمْ مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِن رَّبِّكَ طُغْيَانًا وَكُفْرًا وَالْفَيْتَنَاتُ بَيْنَهُمُ الْعَدَاوَةَ وَالْبَغْضَاءَ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ كُلَّمَا أَوْقَدُوا نَارًا لِلْحَرْبِ أَطْفَأَهَا اللَّهُ وَيَسْعَوْنَ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَسَادًا وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُفْسِدِينَ

And the Jews say: The hand of Allah is tied up! Their hands shall be shackled, and they shall be cursed for what they say. Nay, both His hands are spread out, He expends as He pleases, and what has been revealed to you from your Lord will certainly make many of them increase in inordinacy and unbelief; and We have put enmity and hatred among them till the day of resurrection; whenever they kindle a fire for war Allah puts it out, and they strive to make mischief in the land; and Allah does not love the mischief-makers.

Comment: The word is used as a masculine singular present verb.

25. Q9:98

وَمِنَ الْأَعْرَابِ مَن يَتَّخِذُ مَا يُنْفِقُ مَغْرَمًا وَيَتَرَبَّصُّ بِكُمْ الدَّوَابُّ عَلَيْهِمْ ذَاتُرَّةَ السَّوْءِ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

And of the dwellers of the desert are those who take what they spend to be a fine, and they wait (the befalling of) calamities to you; on them (will be) the evil calamity; and Allah is Hearing, Knowing.

Comment: The word is used as a masculine/feminine plural present verb.

26. Q9:99

وَمِنَ الْأَعْرَابِ مَن يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَيَتَّخِذُ مَا يُنْفِقُ قُرْبَاتٍ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَصَلَوَاتِ الرَّسُولِ أَلَا إِنَّهَا قُرْبَةٌ لَهُمْ سَيُدْخِلُهُمُ اللَّهُ فِي رَحْمَتِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ

And of the dwellers of the desert are those who believe in Allah and the latter day and take what they spend to be (means of) the nearness of Allah and the Messenger's prayers; surely it shall be means of nearness for them; Allah will make them enter into His mercy; surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

Comment: The word is used as a masculine/feminine plural present verb.

27. Q16:75

﴿ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا عَبْدًا مَمْلُوكًا لَا يَقْدِرُ عَلَىٰ شَيْءٍ وَمَن رَزَقْنَاهُ مِنَّا رِزْقًا حَسَنًا فَهُوَ يُنْفِقُ مِنْهُ سِرًّا وَجَهْرًا هَلْ يَسْتَوُونَ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ﴾

Allah sets forth a parable: (consider) a slave, the property of another, (who) has no power over anything, and one whom We have granted from Ourselves a goodly sustenance so he spends from it secretly and openly; are the two alike? (All) praise is due to Allah! Nay, most of them do not know.

Comment: The word is used as a masculine singular present verb.

28. Q65:7

﴿لِيُنْفِقْ ذُو سَعَةٍ مِّن سَعَتِهِ وَمَن قُدِرَ عَلَيْهِ رِزْقُهُ فَلْيُنْفِقْ مِمَّا آتَاهُ اللَّهُ لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ تَفْسًا إِلَّا مَا آتَاهَا سَيَجْعَلُ اللَّهُ بَعْدَ عُسْرٍ يُسْرًا﴾

Let him who has abundance spend out of his abundance and whoever has his means of subsistence straitened to him, let him spend out of that which Allah has given him; Allah does not lay on any soul a burden except to the extent to which He has granted it; Allah brings about ease after difficulty.

Comment: The word is used twice as a singular masculine imperative verb.

29. Q14:31

﴿قُلْ لِّعِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا يُقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَيُنْفِقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ سِرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً مِّن قَبْلِ أَن يَأْتِيَ يَوْمٌ لَا بَيْعَ فِيهِ وَلَا خُلَّةٌ﴾

Say to My servants who believe that they should keep up prayer and spend out of what We have given them secretly and openly before the coming of the day in which there shall be no bartering nor mutual befriending.

Comment: The word is used as a masculine/feminine plural present verb.

30. Q2:3

﴿الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ﴾

Those who believe in the unseen and keep up prayer and spend out of what We have given them.

Comment: The word is used as a masculine/feminine plural present verb.

31. Q2:219

﴿يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْخَمْرِ وَالْمَيْمِرِ قُلْ فِيهِمَا إِثْمٌ كَبِيرٌ وَمَنْفِعٌ لِلنَّاسِ وَإِثْمُهُمَا أَكْبَرُ مِن نَّفْعِهِمَا وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ مَاذَا يُنْفِقُونَ قُلِ الْغَفْوُ كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَفَكَّرُونَ﴾

They ask you about intoxicants and games of chance. Say: In both of them there is a great sin and means of profit for men, and their sin is greater than their profit. And they ask you as to what they should spend. Say: What you can spare. Thus does Allah make clear to you the communications, that you may ponder.

32. Q2:261

﴿مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ حَبَّةٍ أَتَتْ سَبْعَ سَنَابِلَ فِي كُلِّ سُنبُلَةٍ مِائَةٌ حَبَّةٌ وَاللَّهُ يُضْعِفُ لِمَن يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ﴾

The parable of those who spend their property in the way of Allah is as the parable of a grain growing seven ears (with) a hundred grains in every ear; and Allah multiplies for whom He pleases; and Allah is Ample-giving, Knowing.

Comment: The word is used as a masculine/feminine plural present verb.

33. Q2:265

﴿وَمَثَلُ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ ابْتِغَاءَ مَرْضَاتِ اللَّهِ وَتَثْبِيْتًا مِّنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ كَمَثَلِ جَنَّةٍ بِرَبْوَةٍ أَصَابَهَا وَابِلٌ فَآتَتْ أُكُلَهَا ضِعْفَيْنِ فَإِن لَّمْ يُصِبْهَا وَابِلٌ فَطَلٌّ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ﴾

And the parable of those who spend their property to seek the pleasure of Allah and for the certainty of their souls is as the parable of a garden on an elevated ground, upon which heavy rain falls so it brings forth its fruit twofold but if heavy rain does not fall upon it, then light rain (is sufficient); and Allah sees what you do.

Comment: The word is used as a masculine/feminine plural present verb.

34. Q2:274

الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ بِاللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ سِرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

(As for) those who spend their property by night and by day, secretly and openly, they shall have their reward from their Lord and they shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve.

Comment: The word is used as a masculine/feminine plural present verb.

35. Q3:117

مَثَلُ مَا يُنْفِقُونَ فِي هَذِهِ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا كَمَثَلِ رِيحٍ فِيهَا صِرٌّ أَصَابَتْ حَرْثَ قَوْمٍ ظَلَمُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ فَأَهْلَكَتْهُ وَمَا ظَلَمَهُمُ اللَّهُ وَلَكِنْ أَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ

The likeness of what they spend in the life of this world is as the likeness of wind in which is intense cold (that) smites the seed produce of a people who have done injustice to their souls and destroys it; and Allah is not unjust to them, but they are unjust to themselves.

Comment: The word is used as a masculine/feminine plural present verb.

36. Q3:134

الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ فِي السَّرَّاءِ وَالصَّرَّاءِ وَالْكُظُمِينَ الْعَظِيمِ وَالْعَافِينَ عَنِ النَّاسِ وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

Those who spend (benevolently) in ease as well as in hardship, and those who restrain (their) anger and pardon men; and Allah loves the doers of good (to others).

Comment: The word is used as a masculine/feminine plural present verb.

37. Q4:38

وَالَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ رِئَاءَ النَّاسِ وَلَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَلَا بِالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَمَنْ يَكُنِ الشَّيْطَانُ لَهُ قَرِينًا فَسَاءَ قَرِينًا

And those who spend their property (in alms) to be seen of the people and do not believe in Allah nor in the last day; and as for him whose associate is the Shaitan, an evil associate is he!

Comment: The word is used as a masculine/feminine plural present verb.

38. Q8:3

الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ

Those who keep up prayer and spend (benevolently) out of what We have given them.

Comment: The word is used as a masculine/feminine plural present verb.

39. Q8:36

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ لِيَصْنَعُوا عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَسَتُنْفِقُوهُنَّ ثُمَّ تَكُونُ عَلَيْهِمْ حَسْرَةً ثُمَّ يُغْلَبُونَ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِلَىٰ جَهَنَّمَ يُحْشَرُونَ

Surely those who disbelieve spend their wealth to hinder (people) from the way of Allah; so they shall spend it, then it shall be to them an intense regret, then they shall be overcome; and those who disbelieve shall be driven together to hell.

Comment: The word is used twice

Firstly, as a masculine/feminine plural present verb,

Secondly, as a masculine/feminine plural future verb.

40. Q9:53

مَلْ أَنْفِقُوا طَوْعًا أَوْ كَرْهًا لَنْ يُتَقَبَلَ مِنْكُمْ إِنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ قَوْمًا فَاسِقِينَ

Say: Spend willingly or unwillingly, it shall not be accepted from you; surely you are a transgressing people.

Comment: The word is used as a masculine/feminine plural imperative verb.

41. Q9:54

وَمَا مَنَعَهُمْ أَنْ تُقْبَلَ مِنْهُمْ نَفَقَتُهُمْ إِلَّا أَنَّهُمْ كَفَرُوا بِاللَّهِ وَيُرْسُولِهِ ۚ وَلَا يَأْتُونَ الصَّلَاةَ إِلَّا وَهُمْ كُسَالَىٰ ۖ وَلَا يُنْفِقُونَ ۚ إِلَّا وَهُمْ كُرْهُونَ

And nothing hinders their spending being accepted from them, except that they disbelieve in Allah and in His Messenger and they do not come to prayer but while they are sluggish, and they do not spend but while they are unwilling.

Comment: The word is used twice:

Firstly, as a noun,

Secondly, as a masculine/feminine plural present verb.

5. Analysis of how *Nafaqa* is used in the Qur'ān

The usage of *Nafaqa* in the Qur'ān can be grouped into three according to its meanings.

- First Category: *Nafaqa* to mean spend/spent/spending/who spent.
Nafaqa is used in this category in 70 places in the Qur'ān, as shown in the quotations above. It is used as present, past, imperative and prohibitive verbs; as singular or plural verbs; and as masculine and or feminine verbs.
- Second Category: *Nafaqa* to mean hypocrisy/hypocrite.
Nafaqa is used in this category in 36 places in the Qur'ān. It is used as singular or plural nouns; and masculine and or feminine nouns.
- Third Category: *Nafaqa*, to mean a tunnel.
Nafaqa is used in this category in one place in the Qur'ān.

6. Effect of the polysemous nature of *nafaqa* on Qur'ānic Exegesis and other Arabic texts

Arabic language being the language of the Qur'ān, plays a major role in the Book, as evident in the usage of *nafaqa*, which brought about different interpretations. Usmani (2006) states the various stages of Qur'ānic exegesis as: The Qur'ān itself, The Hadith of the Prophet, Sayings of the Companions of the Prophet, Sayings of the Successors to the Companions of the Prophet, Translations based on the Arabic language, and Translations based on common sense.

The polysemous nature of words like *nafaqa* is understood through translations based on the Arabic language, which can only be achieved if the exegete is well grounded in the knowledge of the Arabic language and its branches. Adeyemi (2016) recognised the Arabic language as a tool for understanding both the Qur'ān and the Religion of Islam. The Arabic language is also expected to be learnt by a Muslim after the mother tongue through the study of the Qur'ān.

Therefore, Adeyemi (2018) asserts:

..... translated Qur'ān from Arabic language to English or any other language cannot always be accepted as the same Qur'ān revealed to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The fact is no language can be translated accurately into another..... There are some words that have different meanings in different contexts.....

Usmani (2006) is of the opinion that inferences drawn from the elimination of the role of the Arabic language in Qur'ānic exegesis are wrong because the Qur'ān is full of idiomatic expressions of the Arabic language.

Aside from the three main categories of *nafaqa* usage in the Qur'ān, there are other uses in other Arabic texts. In the dictionary *Lisānul 'Arab*, it is stated that *nafaqa* can also mean: he died; hope or to expect; reduce, decrease or to become less; etc.

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1 Conclusion

There is no gainsaying the fact that Arabic is a unique language whose mastery is a necessity for the proper understanding of Islam – the Quran and the Hadith of the Prophet of Islam. This work has set out to explain the many faces of Arabic semantics as could be found in the term 'Polysemy'. Thus, the article succeeded in demonstrating the significance of mastery of the rudiments of Arabic, especially for the Quranic exegesis. The work found that the significance of this understanding of the secrets of the Arabic language lies in the fact that an exegete can misinterpret the Quran if he doesn't understand the rudiments from scratch. Besides, among the key findings of the work is the fact that the knowledge of the semantics of Arabic lexical items is highly necessary, as could be found in this work. For example, the word chosen to illustrate the importance of the knowledge of Arabic semantics, 'Nafaqah; which has not less than a hundred different meanings, is a good illustration here. The fact that a word can mean different interpretations is a pointer to the indispensability of knowledge as it has a lot of socio-linguistic implications. For

example, a slight misuse of any Arabic word, especially in the exegesis, may lead to social unrest. It is capable of misleading a lot of people.

The many illustrations of the lexical item used as an example here have shown that the translation of the word also added to the various interpretation of the word. This has equally demonstrated the effects of the polysemy nature of the word in particular. It indicates that the word 'Nafaqah', as used here in different meanings, emphasizes the usefulness of the study of Arabic semantics with particular reference to polysemy.

In its unique nature, this work demonstrated the various meanings of the word 'Nafaqah', as could be found in a good number of Quranic verses for different contexts. It is mentioned therein that these various interpretations based on contextual usages are not limited to the Quran but also could be found in any other Arabic usage. All this is encapsulated in this article.

It is pertinent to mention here that this work which examined the polysemy of the word Nafaqah as used in various places in the Quran, is limited to this word alone. Further studies could be carried out on some other related words and lexical items that may require study for a thorough understanding not only of the Quranic exegesis but also of other Arabic literary enterprises.

7.2 Recommendations

The discussions above revealed the role of the Arabic language in discerning the meanings of polysemous words like nafaqa used in the Qur'ān. It is unparalleled to other languages with respect to Qur'ānic exegesis, as the Qur'ān was revealed in it. Hence, these modest recommendations: Teaching the rudiments of the Arabic language from scratch, especially to children from the pre-primary school level, is thus imperative, as this will lay the proper foundation for a better understanding of the language in them. This can also pave the way for new paths aside from religious obligation, as the Arabic language is one of the most recognized languages in the world.

Further research on the polysemy of some other related lexical items in Arabic could be pursued. This will further espouse the numerous Arabic words of polysemy not only for Quranic exegesis but also for other Arabic literary enterprises.

In a nutshell, Adeyemi (2018) opines that the Arabic language is the language of the Qur'ān, facilitates its meanings and interpretations, as such, should not be overlooked by exegetes. In the same way, Arabic literati should explore other areas of Arabic language which are relevant to the study of socio-linguistics and semantics.

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