



# "THE HOLY QURAN"

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**Question: Please tell us a little more about the Holy Quran which you have mentioned and quoted throughout this booklet while explaining the teachings of Islam?**

The Holy Quran is the scripture of the Muslims. It is the word of God as communicated to the Holy Prophet Muhammad on a number of different occasions from the time God made him a Prophet, when he was 40 years of age, till his death (during the years 609-632 C.E.). All these revelations, received at various times over this period of 23 years, were arranged in a set order by the Holy Prophet, and they make up the Holy Quran.

**How did God communicate His messages and words to the Holy Prophet?**

God's messages are not conveyed by sound which can be heard by the human ear, but can only be received by the inner, 'spiritual' senses possessed by all human beings. In Prophets of God these senses are extremely sharp and very highly developed, and therefore they can receive clear communications from God.

In the physical world, we find that messages have to be carried by various media, such as the air which carries sound, or radio waves which carry radio and television signals. Similarly the word of God is brought to the Prophet through the spiritual beings called angels. (See the earlier section dealing with Angels.)

The revelations in the Holy Quran were brought to the Holy Prophet Muhammad by the angel Gabriel in the form of clear words of the Arabic language. (According to Muslim belief, God spoke to all the other Prophets, such as Moses and Jesus, in the same manner in their languages.)

**How did the Holy Quran come down to us?**

It was by the following stages:

During the Holy Prophet's life, whenever a revelation came to him, he would proclaim it to people, then many of his followers would learn it by heart, and it would also be put into writing at the same time. As the Holy Quran was recited aloud in public prayers, and also read frequently at other times, every Muslim was quite familiar with its contents, and many knew it completely by heart.

About six months after the Holy Prophet's death, which took place in 632 C.E., work was undertaken to collect a complete copy of the Quran consisting of all the writings made in the Holy Prophet's presence. This was done on the instructions of the first ruler of the Muslims, Abu Bakr, and with the help of the scribes and the Companions of the Holy Prophet. In this way, a master copy of the Quran was collected.

Some 15 years later, when Muslim rule had spread far and wide, the third ruler of the Muslims after the Holy Prophet, called Uthman, ordered further copies to be transcribed from this master copy. These copies were sent to the big cities of the then Muslim world to be kept as standard copies. Muslims also kept up the practice of memorizing parts of the Holy Book, many learning the whole of it by heart. In this way, the Holy Quran was passed down the ages, in both written and oral form, remaining intact in its original form. Because the Quran was recited aloud everyday in public prayers and gatherings, everyone recognized the same Quran.

### **Do all Muslims have the same Quran, then?**

Yes. Because of the reasons given above, the text of the Muslim Scripture has been preserved in its original purity. In fact, God had given a promise in the Quran itself that He would Himself guard this Holy Book:

"Surely We have revealed the Reminder (the Quran), and surely We are its Guardian." (15:9)

All Muslims, whatever their sect, country or language, have always had exactly the same Arabic Quran, just as it was in the Holy Prophet Muhammad's time. No two copies of the Holy Quran anywhere in the world differ in any way.

### **Please mention some features of the Holy Quran which give it a unique place among the scriptures of the world.**

As regards just the text of the Holy Quran, it has the following distinctions not found in the case of any other scripture:

As mentioned above, the Holy Quran has not undergone any loss or alteration since it first came into the world so many centuries ago, and all the followers of Islam have the same Quran.

The Holy Quran is still available to us today in the original language in which it was revealed.

Arabic, the language of the Holy Quran, is still a living language spoken and written by over 100 million people, and has changed very little over the centuries. Therefore, any person today can learn it like any other modern language, and read and understand the Holy Quran directly.

The history of the revelation and the collection of the Holy Quran is known fully and clearly, not being shrouded in mystery or uncertainty.

We should add briefly, without being disrespectful, that other scriptures have suffered much loss and alteration in the course of history. Their original languages have died out, so that only a few specialist scholars have the knowledge to study the text directly, and even they are unsure of the meanings of many words in the translations they have produced. The origin and history of these scriptures is largely unknown, and no reliable information is available about their authors or persons to whom they were revealed.

### **Is there any other notable distinction of the Holy Quran?**

One that may be mentioned is that the Holy Quran tells us all about itself. From various places in it we learn that it is a Book called the Quran, a revelation from God, communicated to the Holy Prophet Muhammad, coming through the angel Gabriel, in the Arabic language. The Quran also tells us that it has been revealed in portions, not all at once, and that the first revelation came to the Holy Prophet in the month of Ramadaan.

The Holy Quran refers to itself by several names which show its qualities and the work it came to do. For instance, al-furqan: which distinguishes between right and wrong, al-Hakim: full of wisdom, al-nur: the Light, al-huda: the guidance, etc.

The unique features mentioned here and in the answer to the last question concern just the text of the Holy Book. There are many distinctive points about the Holy Quran as regards its teachings, and these will be found throughout this booklet.

### **How is the Holy Quran divided?**

So far as the subject matter is concerned, it is divided into 114 chapters. Each chapter, called a Sura in Arabic, consists of a number of verses, each verse being called an Ayat. Some chapters were wholly or largely revealed to the Holy Prophet during the first 13 years of his mission when he lived in Makka, and the rest after his emigration to the city of Madina. Chapters generally revealed at Makka are called Makki, and those revealed at Madina are called Madani. While the chapters are of varying lengths, the Holy Quran is also divided into 30 almost equal parts, each part being known as a juz (or separa in Urdu and Persian). This division is simply to enable a reader to complete a reading of the Holy Book in one month.

### **Is the Holy Quran arranged in order of the sequence in which its various passages were revealed to the Holy Prophet?**

No. In fact the very first revelation which came to the Holy Prophet is actually to be found in chapter 96, not far from the end of the Holy Quran. The order in which various passages or chapters were revealed is not of any importance, especially to people after the Holy Prophet's time, because the Quran is a complete, consistent book. A verse is just as important and significant no matter when it was revealed.

### **It is said that the Holy Quran is not arranged in an orderly form, but deals with various subjects in a disorganized manner. Please comment on this.**

This is not correct. It is true that the Quran does not cover topic after topic in a set sequence, but this does not mean that it has no arrangement. The Holy Quran is not really a book of laws or commandments on various subjects, but a book meant to guide man and convince him of the truth. Its basic theme is the greatness of God, that man's aim in life should be to acquire nearness to Him, and

that his actions, good or bad, will always bear fruit according to what they are. All the topics the Quran deals with are built around this basic message which is the real point being stressed all the time.

### **Is there an arrangement of topics in the Quran?**

Yes, there is, and for full details the English translation of the Holy Quran with commentary by the late Maulana Muhammad Ali should be consulted. Here we may briefly point out that the Holy Book begins with the famous short chapter, the Fatiha, which is a sort of preface summarizing the entire Quran and its teachings in seven verses. This is followed by a long chapter which begins by stating the fundamental teachings of Islam, and goes on to show why a new religion was necessary at this time, and how the followers of previous religions had gone astray. This and the next few chapters then deal in detail with Islamic teachings. Very often in the Quran, chapters revealed at Makka, containing prophecies about the success of Islam, are followed by chapters revealed at Madina showing how those prophecies were being fulfilled. There is, thus, a clear arrangement of the subject-matter in the Holy Quran.

### **What sort of subjects does the Holy Quran deal with?**

An enormous range of topics. It tells us about God, His attributes, man's position in the universe, his aim in life and how to attain that aim, how we stand in relation to God and to our fellow-beings. It gives details of what one should believe and how it should be put into practice. The next life is described in it in full. Histories of previous nations and their prophets, as well as many events from the life of the Holy Prophet himself, are also given in the Quran. It gives arguments to disprove false beliefs of all kinds, and answers all sorts of questions and objections raised about its teachings and about the Holy Prophet. Guidance, laws and regulations on everyday subjects such as family life, business dealings, the law, war and peace, women's rights, hygiene, government and democracy, etc., is also to be found in the Holy Book. When dealing with any topic, the Holy Quran gives reasons, arguments and evidence to support its teachings, and it challenges those who disagree with it to produce proof of their views.

### **Does the Holy Quran give any evidence to back up its claim that it is the word of God, and not the thoughts of a man?**

Yes indeed. The Quran does not want a person to accept anything without reason and proof. The evidence it provides on this point is as follows:

The Holy Quran contains such grand principles and deep points of knowledge as could not have been known to any person in the seventh century, when it was revealed. They certainly could not have been known to, or discovered by, a man like Muhammad (peace be upon him) who could not read or write, and lived in a country which was very backward and cut off from the civilization of the time. The Holy Quran's moral teaching brought about a complete and astonishing change for the good in the people of a whole country, a reform which appeared impossible to do through human teachings.

Prophecies in the Holy Quran that the Holy Prophet Muhammad shall be triumphant over his opponents, made at a time when he hardly had any followers or friends, all came true in a short period of time. And many prophecies in the Quran about the distant future have come true in modern times.

The language and literary style of the Holy Quran was so excellent that the Holy Prophet's opponents, who included great poets and masters of the Arabic language, could not match it even though they had been challenged to do it.

For all these reasons, the Quran has thrown a challenge, standing open for all time, to those who think it is not the word of God, to produce a writing like it even one chapter long.

### **What position does the Holy Quran hold for Muslims?**

The Holy Quran is the final and highest authority for Muslims on all matters. It is the fundamental source of the teachings of Islam. When determining whether a certain belief or practice is a part of Islam or not, the verdict of the Quran has the highest priority and must be accepted even if it goes against common practice or one's own wishes. If a Muslim differs with us regarding the meaning of a verse of the Quran, we must still respect his views if he gives arguments from the Holy Book in his support.