



WHAT IS THE QURAN?

The Final Revelation from God

The Holy Quran (also written as *Koran*) is the eternal and literal word of God. Prophet Muhammad (an Arab and a descendant of Abraham) received these divine revelations (The Holy Quran) over a period of 23 years in the seventh century of the Common Era (C.E.). Each revelation was written down by the Prophet's scribes according to the Prophet's instructions. The current order and organization into the 114 chapters (surahs) of the entire revelations were therefore given to us by the Prophet himself. Additionally, the Prophet and many fellow Muslims (sahabah) had committed the entire Quran to memory. The practice of memorizing the whole Quran continued throughout the centuries. There are thousands of such Muslims, known as Huffaz, usually one for each Mosque in Muslim countries.

In order to gain a proper understanding of many verses in the Holy Quran, it is important to understand and know the historic context of the revelations. So many revelations in the Holy Quran came down to provide guidance to Prophet Muhammad and the fellow Muslims based on what they were confronting at that time.

"Alif, Lam, Meem. This is the Scripture whereof there is no doubt, a guidance unto those who ward off (evil). Who believe in the Unseen, and establish worship, and spend of that We have bestowed upon them; And who believe in that which is revealed unto thee (Muhammad) and that which was revealed before thee, and are certain of the Hereafter. These depend on guidance from their Lord. These are the successful. As for the Disbelievers, Whether thou warn them or thou warn them not it is all one for them; they believe not. Allah hath sealed their hearing and their hearts, and on their eyes there is a covering. Theirs will be an awful doom." (Surah Al-Baqarah, Chapter 2)

Calling the [Quran amazing](#) is not something done only by Muslims, who have an appreciation for the book and who are pleased with it; it has been labeled amazing by non-Muslims as well. In fact, even people who hate Islam very much have still called it amazing. One thing which surprises non-Muslims who are examining the book very closely is that the Qur'an does not appear to them to be what they expected.



The original text of the Quran, in Arabic, is widely available throughout the world. The Holy Quran is the only revealed text still extant today in its original language and form.

The Miracle of Miracles:

Say: If the whole of mankind and jinns were to gather together to produce the like of this Qur`an, they could not produce the like thereof, even if they backed up each other with help and support.

What is a miracle?

I think it is necessary that we have a clear picture of what we mean by a miracle. Here are some definitions:-

"An event that appears so inexplicable by the laws of nature, that it is held to be supernatural in origin or an act of God." "A person, thing or event that excites admiring awe." "An act beyond human power, an impossibility."

It is logical that greater the impossibility, greater the miracle. For example, should a person expire before our very eyes and is certified dead by a qualified medical man, yet later on a mystic or a saint commands the corpse to 'arise!', and to everybody's astonishment the person gets up and walks away, we would label that as a miracle. But if the resurrection of the dead took place after the corpse had been in the mortuary for three days, then we would acclaim this as a greater miracle. And if the dead was made to arise from the grave, decades or centuries after the body had decomposed and rotted away, then in that case we would label it the greatest miracle of them all!

A Common Trait:

It has been a common trait of mankind since time immemorial that whenever a guide from God appeared to redirect their steps into the will and plan of God; they demanded supernatural proofs from these men of God, instead of accepting message on its merit.

For example, when Jesus Christ (pbuh) began to preach to his people - "the children of Israel" - to mend their ways and to refrain from mere legalistic formalism and imbibe the true spirit of the laws and commandments of god, his 'people' demanded miracles from him to prove his bona fides (his authenticity , his genuineness), as recorded in the Christian scriptures:



Then certain of the scribes and the Pharisees answered, saying master, we would have a sign (miracle) from thee. But he answered and said unto them, "an evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign (miracle) and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas (Matthew 12:38-39 holy bible)

Though on the face of it, Jesus (pbuh) refuses to pamper the Jews here, in actual fact, he did perform many miracles as we learn from the gospel narratives.

The holy Bible is full of supernatural events accredited to the prophets from their Lord. In reality all those 'signs' and 'wonders' and 'miracles' were acts of God, but since those miracles were worked through his human agents, we describe them as the miracles of prophets (i.e. Moses or Jesus (pbuh) by those hands they were performed).

Quirk Continues:

Some six hundred years after the birth of Jesus (pbuh), Muhammad (pbuh) the messenger of God was born in Makkah in Arabia. When he proclaimed his mission at the age of forty, his fellow countrymen, the mushriks of Makkah made an identical request for miracles, as had the Jews, from their promised Messiah. Text book style, it was as if the Arabs had taken a leaf from the Christian records. History has a habit of repeating itself!

And they say: why are not signs sent down to him from his Lord? (Holy Quran 29:50)

SIGNS! WHAT SIGNS!!

"Miracles ? Cries he, what miracles would you have? Are not you yourselves there? God made you 'shaped you out of a little clay.' Ye were small once; a few years ago ye were not at all. Ye have beauty, strength, thoughts, 'ye have compassion on one another.' Old age comes-on you, and gray hairs; your strength fades into feebleness: ye sink down, and again are not. 'Ye have compassion on one another': This struck me much: Allah might have made you having no compassion on one another, how had it been then! this is a great direct though, a glance at first-hand into the very fact of things...." "(On heroes hero-worship and the heroic in history,") by Thomas Carlyle.

"This Struck Me Much"

This, that "ye have compassion on one another", impressed Thomas Carlyle most from his perusal of an English translation. I presume, there verse that motivated this sentiment is:



1. And among His signs is this, that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that ye may dwell in tranquility with them. and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts): verily in that are signs for those who reflect. (emphasis added)

Translation by A Yusuf Ali (Quran 30:21)

2. And one of His signs it is, that He hath created wives for you of your own species that ye may dwell with them, and hath put love and tenderness between you. herein truly are signs for those who reflect (emphasis added) Translation by Rev. J.M.

Rodwell (M.A.)

3. By another sign He gave you wives from among yourselves, that ye might live in joy with them, and planted love and kindness into your hearts. surely there are signs in this for thinking men(emphasis added) Translation by N.J. Dawood.

The first example is from the translation by Yusuf Ali, a Muslim. The second is by a Christian priest the rev. Rodwell and the last example is by an Iraqi Jew, N.J. Dawood.

Unfortunately Thomas Carlyle had no access to any one of these because none of them had seen the light of day in his time. The only one available to him in 1840 was as he said on page 85 of his book under reference - "We also can read the Koran; our translation of it, by sale, is known to be a very fair one."

Taint Is In The Motive:

Carlyle is very charitable to his fellow countryman. The motives of George sale, who pioneered an English translation of the Holy Quran, were suspect. He makes no secret of his antagonism to the holy book of Islam. In his preface to his translation in 1734 he made it known that it was his avowed intention to expose the man Mohammad and his forgery. He records: "who can apprehend any danger from so manifest a forgery?... The protestants alone are able to attack the Koran with success; and for them, I trust, providence has reserved the glory of its overthrow." George Sale, And he set to work with his prejudiced translation. You will be able to judge how 'fair' and scholarly George sale was from the very verse which 'struck' (Carlyle) 'much!'

Compare it with the three example already given by a Muslim, a Christian and a Jew: And of his signs another is, that he had created you , out of yourselves, wives that ye may cohabit with them, and hath put love and compassion between you .

I don't think that George sale was a 'a male chauvinist pig' of his day to describe our mates, wives or spouses as sexual objects. He was only keeping to his promise, which



Carlyle overlooked. The Arabic word which he (sale) perverted is 'li-tas-kunoo' which means to find peace, consolation, composure or tranquility; and not 'cohabit' meaning 'to live together in a sexual relationship when not legally married' (the reader's digest universal dictionary.)

Every word of the Quranic text is meticulously chosen, chiseled and placed by the All-Wise himself. They carry God's 'fingerprint', and are signs of God. And yet, the spiritually jaundiced....

Ask For A Sign:

What signs?? They mean some special kinds of signs or miracles such as their own foolish minds dictate. Everything is possible for God, but God is not going to humor the follies of men or listen to their false demands. He has sent his messenger to explain his signs clearly, and to warn them of the consequences of rejection. Is that not enough? The trend of their demand is generally as follows:

In specific terms they asked that he - Muhammad (pbuh) - 'Put a ladder up to heaven an bring down a book from God in their very sight' - "Then we would believe," they said. Or "ye see the mountain yonder, turn it into gold" - "then we would believe." or 'make streams to gush out in the desert' - "then we would believe."

Now listen to the soft, sweet reasoning of Muhammad(pbuh) against the unreasonable and skeptical demands of the mushriks - "Do I say to you, verily I am an angel? Do I say to you, verily in my hands are the treasures of God? Only, what is revealed to me do I follow." Listen further to the most dignified reply he is commanded by his Lord to give the unbelievers.

Say (O Muhammad): 'The signs (miracles) are indeed with Allah: And most certainly I am only a clear warner.!''

In the following ayah the holy prophet is made to point to the holy Qur`an itself as an answer to their hypocritical demand for some special kind of 'sign' of 'miracle' for which their foolish pagan mentality craved. For indeed all miracles are 'signs'; and it is their disbelief, their skepticism, their lack of faith which motivates their request for a sign. They are asked to - 'look at the Qur`an' and again, 'look at the Qur`an!'

It is not enough for them that we have sent down to thee (O Muhammad) the book(al-Qur`an) which is rehearsed to them? Verily, in it (this perspicuous book) is a mercy and reminder to those who believe. (Qur`an 29:51).



Two Proofs:

As a proof of the divine authorship and the miraculous nature of the Qur`an, two arguments are advanced by the Almighty Himself:

1. 'that we' (God Almighty) have revealed to you (O Muhammad!) 'the book to you' who art absolutely an unlearned person. An 'ummi' prophet. One who cannot read or write. One who cannot sign his own name. Let Thomas Carlyle testify regarding the educational qualifications of Muhammad -

'one other circumstance we must not forget: that he had no school learning; of the thing we call school-learning none at all.'

Moreover the divine author(God Almighty) himself testifies to the veracity of Muhammed's(pbuh) claim that he could never have composed the contents of the holy Qur`an; he could not have been its author:

And thou (O Muhammad) was not (able) to recite a book before this (book came), nor art thou (able) to transcribe it with thy right hand:

In that case, indeed, would the talkers of vanities have doubted (Qur`an 29:48).

The author of the Qur`an is reasoning with us, that had Muhammad(pbuh) been a learned man, and had he been able to read or write, then in that case the babblers in the market places might have had some justification to doubt his claim that the holy Quran is God's word. In the event of Muhammed(pbuh) being a literate person, the accusation of his enemies that he had probably copied his book (Qur`an) from the writings of the Jews and Christians, or that perhaps he had been studying Aristotle and Plato, or that he must have browsed through the 'Torat,' the 'Zabur' and the 'Injeel' and had rehashed it all in a beautiful language, might have carried some weight. Then, 'the talkers of vanities' might have had a point. But even this flimsy pretence has been denied to the unbeliever and the cynic: a point hardly big enough to hang a fly upon!

2. 'The book'? Yes, the 'book' itself, carries its own evidence proving its divine authorship. Study the book from any angle. Scrutinize it. Why not take up the author's challenge if your doubts are genuine? Do they not consider the Quran (with care) had it been from other than Allah, they would surely have found therein much discrepancy.



Consistency:

It is inconceivable that any human author would remain consistent in his teachings and his preaching for a period of over two decades. From the age of forty, when Muhammad (pbuh) received his first call from heaven to the age sixty-three when he breathed his last, for twenty-three years the holy prophet practiced and preached Islam. In those twenty-three years, he passed through the most conflicting vicissitudes of life. Any man, during the course of such a mission, would be forced by circumstances to make 'honorable' compromises, and cannot help contradicting himself. No man can ever write the same always, as the message of the holy Quran is: consistent with itself, throughout! Or is it that the unbelievers' objections are merely argumentative, refractory, against their own better light and judgment.? Furthermore, the holy Quran contains or mentions many matters relating to the nature of the universe which were unknown to man before but which subsequently through evolution and discoveries of Science have fully confirmed - a field where an untutored mind would have most certainly lost in wild and contradictory speculations!

Self-Evident Proof:

Again and again when miracles are demanded from the prophet of God by the cynical and frivolous few, he is made to point to the Quran - message from high - as 'the miracle.' The miracle or miracles! And men of wisdom, people with literary and spiritual insight, who were honest enough to themselves, recognized and accepted al-Quran as a genuine miracle.

Says the holy Qur'an: Nay here are signs self-evident in the hearts of those endowed with knowledge: And none but the unjust reject our signs. (The Holy Qur'an 29:49).

Preservation and Authenticity of the Holy Quran:

1. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) himself supervised and authenticated the written texts of the Qur'an

Whenever the Prophet received a revelation, he would first memorize it himself and later declare the revelation and instruct his Companions (R.A. – Radhi Allahu Taala Anhu) – May Allah be pleased with him who would also memorize it. The Prophet would immediately ask the scribes to write down the revelation he had received, and he would reconfirm and recheck it himself. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was an Umami who could not read and write. Therefore, after receiving each revelation, he would repeat it to his Companions. They would write down the revelation, and he would



recheck by asking them to read what they had written. If there was any mistake, the Prophet would immediately point it out and have it corrected and rechecked. Similarly he would even recheck and authenticate the portions of the Qur'an memorized by the Companions. In this way, the complete Qur'an was written down under the personal supervision of the prophet (pbuh).

2. Order and sequence of Qur'an divinely inspired

The complete Qur'an was revealed over a period of 22½ years portion by portion, as and when it was required. The Qur'an was not compiled by the Prophet in the chronological order of revelation. The order and sequence of the Qur'an too was Divinely inspired and was instructed to the Prophet by Allah (swt) through archangel Jibraeel. Whenever a revelation was conveyed to his companions, the Prophet would also mention in which surah (chapter) and after which ayat (verse) this new revelation should fit.

Every Ramadhaan all the portions of the Qur'an that had been revealed, including the order of the verses, were revised and reconfirmed by the Prophet with archangel Jibraeel. During the last Ramadhaan, before the demise of the Prophet, the Qur'an was rechecked and reconfirmed twice.

It is therefore clearly evident that the Qur'an was compiled and authenticated by the Prophet himself during his lifetime, both in the written form as well as in the memory of several of his Companions.

3. Qur'an copied on one common material

The complete Qur'an, along with the correct sequence of the verses, was present during the time of the Prophet (pbuh). The verses however, were written on separate pieces, scrapes of leather, thin flat stones, leaflets, palm branches, shoulder blades, etc. After the demise of the prophet, Abu Bakr (r.a.), the first caliph of Islam ordered that the Qur'an be copied from the various different materials on to a common material and place, which was in the shape of sheets. These were tied with strings so that nothing of the compilation was lost.

4. Usman (r.a.) made copies of the Qur'an from the original manuscript

Many Companions of the Prophet used to write down the revelation of the Qur'an on their own whenever they heard it from the lips of the Prophet. However what they



wrote was not personally verified by the Prophet and thus could contain mistakes. All the verses revealed to the Prophet may not have been heard personally by all the Companions. There were high possibilities of different portions of the Qur'an being missed by different Companions. This gave rise to disputes among Muslims regarding the different contents of the Qur'an during the period of the third Caliph Usman (r.a.).

Usman (r.a.) borrowed the original manuscript of the Qur'an, which was authorized by the beloved Prophet (pbuh), from Hafsha (may Allah be pleased with her), the Prophet's wife. Usman (r.a.) ordered four Companions who were among the scribes who wrote the Qur'an when the Prophet dictated it, led by Zaid bin Thabit (r.a.) to rewrite the script in several perfect copies. These were sent by Usman (r.a.) to the main centres of Muslims.

There were other personal collections of the portions of the Qur'an that people had with them. These might have been incomplete and with mistakes. Usman (r.a.) only appealed to the people to destroy all these copies which did not match the original manuscript of the Qur'an in order to preserve the original text of the Qur'an. Two such copies of the copied text of the original Qur'an authenticated by the Prophet are present to this day, one at the museum in Tashkent in erstwhile Soviet Union and the other at the Topkapi Museum in Istanbul, Turkey.

5. Diacritical marks were added for non-Arabs

The original manuscript of the Qur'an does not have the signs indicating the vowels in Arabic script. These vowels are known as tashkil, zabar, zair, paish in Urdu and as fatah, damma and qasra in Arabic. The Arabs did not require the vowel signs and diacritical marks for correct pronunciation of the Qur'an since it was their mother tongue. For Muslims of non-Arab origin, however, it was difficult to recite the Qur'an correctly without the vowels. These marks were introduced into the Quranic script during the time of the fifth 'Umayyad' Caliph, Malik-ar-Marwan (66-86 Hijri/685-705 C.E.) and during the governorship of Al-Hajaj in Iraq.

Some people argue that the present copy of the Qur'an that we have along with the vowels and the diacritical marks is not the same original Qur'an that was present at the Prophet's time. But they fail to realize that the word 'Qur'an' means a recitation. Therefore, the preservation of the recitation of the Qur'an is important, irrespective of whether the script is different or whether it contains vowels. If the pronunciation and the Arabic is the same, naturally, the meaning remains the same too.



6. Allah Himself has promised to guard the Qur'an

Allah has promised in the Qur'an :

"We have, without doubt, sent down the Message; and We will assuredly Guard it (from corruption). [Al-Qur'an 15:9]

Quran As Living Constitution:

Can the Quran again, be living, relevant force, as powerful for us now 1400 years away, as it was then? This is the most crucial question that we must answer if we wish to shape our destiny afresh under the guidance of the Quran.

There appear, however, to be some difficulties. Not least of which has to do with the fact that Quran was revealed at a certain point in time. Since then we have traveled a long way, made gigantic leaps in technological know-how, and seen considerable social changes take place in human society. Moreover, most of the followers of the Quran today do not know Arabic, and many who do have little idea of the 'living' language of the Quran.

They cannot be expected to absorb its idioms and metaphor, so essential to exploring and absorbing the depths of the Quranic meaning. Yet its guidance, by its own claim, has an eternal relevance for all people, being the word of the Eternal God. For the truth of its claim, it seems to me, it must be possible for us to receive, experience, and understand the Quran as its first recipients did, at least in some measure and to some degree. We seem to almost have a right to this possibility of receiving God's guidance in its fullness and with all its riches and joys. In other words despite historical incidence of the revelation in a particular language at that particular time and place, we should be capable of receiving the Quran now (because its message is eternal), capable of making its message as much a real part of our lives as it was for the first believers and with the same urgent and profound relevance for all our present concerns and experiences.

But how do we do this? To put it very forthrightly, only by entering the world of the Quran as if Allah were speaking to us through it now and today, and by fulfilling the necessary conditions for such an encounter. Firstly, then, we must realize what Quran as the word of God is and means to us, and bring all the reverence, love, longing and will to act that this realization demands. Secondly, we must read it as it asks to be read, as Allah's Messenger instructed us, as his Companions read it. Thirdly, we must



bring each word of the Quran to bear upon our own realities and concerns by transcending the barriers of time, culture and change.

For the first addressees, the Quran was a contemporary event. Its language and style, its eloquence and a rationale, its idiom and metaphor, its symbols and parables, its moments and events were all rooted in their own setting. These people were both witnesses to and in a sense, participants in the whole act of revelation as it unfolded over a period of their own time. We do not have the same privilege; yet, in some measures, the same ought to be true for us. By understanding and obeying the Quran in our own setting, we will find it, as far as possible, as much a contemporary event for ourselves as it was then. For the essence of man has not changed; it is immutable. Only man's externalities- the forms, the modes, the technologies - have changed. The pagans of Makka may be no more, nor the Jews of Yathrib, nor the Christians of Najran, nor even the 'faithful' and the 'unfaithful' of the community of Madina; but the same characters exist all around us. We are humans being exactly as the first recipients were, even though may find it extremely difficult to grapple with the deep implications of this very simple truth. Once you realize the truths and follow them, once you come to the Quran as first believers did, it may reveal to you as it did to them, make partners of you as it did of them. And only then, instead of being a mere revered book, a sacred fossil, or a source of magic-like blessing, it will change into a mighty force, impinging, stirring, moving and guiding us deeper and higher achievements, just as it did before.

Source: Islam101.com