

# IS IT NOT NECESSARY TO READ QURAN WITH UNDERSTANDING?

#

Shams Pizada

Muslims believe that Quran is the Book of Allah revealed to Prophet Muhammed (Sallal Lahu Alaihi Wa Sallam) and that it will continue till the end of the world to admonish and guide the entire humanity, irrespective of nation, country, time and space. It is not only a source of remembrance and guidance for the believers but also a healing mercy. This belief demanded that Muslims should have developed a conscious relationship with it, understood it, pondered over its verses, derived the light of learning from it, followed it sincerely and should have fulfilled the responsibilities placed on them by this book. But the case of Muslims is strange. They do not even feel the necessity of reading this book with understanding. They are satisfied merely with believing in and reciting it. In consequence their relationship with Quran has actually been weakened. The central place of importance which should have been occupied by this book and the traditions (Sunnah) of the prophet (peace be upon him) for Muslims is taken up by other personalities and their books or that they have become independent to follow their own free will. This state of affairs is not such that we may just pass over it. Cursorily, but there is a need to analyse the cause and remove the mental blocks pertaining to this.

## EXCUSE OF NOT KNOWING ARABIC

Generally people think that since Quran is in Arabic and they do not know Arabic, it is not necessary for them to know the sense and meaning of the Quran. This excuse would have been acceptable if there were no resources available for understanding its meaning and message. But what does this excuse mean when every kind of resource to understand its meaning and message is available? In modern times education is common and the new methods of printing has provided immense resources for publication and dissemination of knowledge, and so far as Quran is concerned its translation is available in many, and commentary in quite few, languages of the world. Then what prevents us to receive benefits from them?

Today how much a person has to read to launch his career; a college student reads a lot of books studies them in depth and devotes a precious part of his life for acquiring knowledge. How difficult is his task! All these hardships are borne to achieve the

worldly gains, but to achieve the benefit of the Hereafter none attends to the study of Quran. Allah's Book is the only exception for him for learning which he does not have time. On the other hand the case should have been that when many languages are hand the cases should have been that when many languages are being learnt, some way should have been found to learn Arabic also, so that the ability to understand the Book of Allah directly would have been developed and when Quran is recited in the prayer (Salat), its meaning would have been understood and its sweetness would have further strengthened faith.

People read news papers as soon as they rise from bed. They read books and magazines of their choice. They have plenty of time to go through the worldly books, but they do not have time to read the Book of Allah with its translation. What a great tragedy it is! Is it not possible for them to devote half an hour after the Morning Prayer to recite the holy Quran, to study and ponder over it? What sort of preoccupation is this that they have time to understand everything of the world but no time to understand the divine book!

If a person receives a letter from his friend in a language not understood by him, he makes some one else read it in order to understand it. But he does not care to know the message sent by the Lord of the word for His slaves.

### IS THE UNDERSTANDING OF QURAN ONLY FOR THE SCHOLARS (Ulema)?

A section of Muslims feels that the understanding of Quran is meant only for the religious scholars. For the remaining masses it is sufficient to read the books written by the scholars or the saints. Such a thought is not only wrong and baseless but it also deprives the people of the light of Quran and has driven them to the wrong practice of saint worship.

Who does not know that the very revelation of the holy Quran begins with the word "Iqra" which means "Read" and reading here implies the reading of Quran only. It includes reading with understanding because Quran is a purposeful book and how can its benefits be derived without understanding it? The command for reading is given to every person through the Prophet (Sallal Lahu Alaihi Wa Sallam); whoever receives Quran, whether he is Muslim or non-Muslim, whether belonging to the classes or the masses, whether a scholar or an ordinary person, with no reservations at all.

Quran explains the purpose of its revelation as "So that you understand". Hence it is wrong to think that only the scholars (Ulema) can understand it. Quran itself explains its own simplicity and comprehensibility. "And we have made Quran easy for admonition. Is there then any seeker of admonition?" (Qamar:17)

Despite this clarification by Quran it is wrong to say that this book is meant for the understanding of scholars only. The fact is that who ever studies Quran with the

sincerity of purpose is bound to be benefited by its reading, no matter how less knowledgeable the person is and this is the foremost object of Quran.

"And expound His revelations to mankind that they may be reminded". (Baqarah:221)

"And we have put forth for man in this Quran every kind of parable in order that they may receive admonition" (zumar:27)

"Nay, verily this is an admonition so whoever will may heed it" (Muddatthir:54-55)

What to talk of scholars, Quran is not restricted to even Muslims; It is a book of guidance for the entire mankind, and it demands that people study it and think over it. "Ramadan is the month in which was revealed the Quran a guidance for mankind." (Baqarah:185)

"This is a book We have sent down to you blest so that the people may ponder over the verses thereof and the wise may be admonished (Sad :29).  
"Those who conceal the clear signs We have sent down, and guidance, after we have made clear for the people in the book, on them shall be Allah's curse and the curse of the cursers. (Baqarah :159)

"Do they not ponder over Quran or their hearts are locked thereof." (Mohammed:24)

Quran commands that its verses be read to the infidels:  
"Say: Come I will tell you what things your Lord has prohibited" (An'am :151)  
"And I am commanded to recite the Quran. Whosoever accepts the guidance would be doing so for his own advantage." (An-Nami : 92)

Even if in the battle field any non-believer seeks refuge in order to hear the Book of Allah, then it is commanded to give him shelter to enable him to hear the Book of Allah:

"If any of the polytheists seeks asylum with you, then give him protection till he may hear the word of Allah. They convey him to the place of safety. That is because they are the people who know not." (Taubah : 6)

However it is strange to see that a section of Muslims wishes to shut the door of understanding of Quran for Muslims. It says that the people would fall a prey to mischief if they read the translation of Quran, as if there is no danger of Muslims falling a prey to mischief if they read Quran without understanding it. They feel that Muslims would fall a prey to mischief if they read Quran with translation. This is a wrong logic that they are presenting. If their apprehension is correct, then the question arises as to why the scholars have taken all the trouble of translating Quran. Are the translations done only for the benefit of scholars? Shah Abdul Qadir Saheb, Moulana Mehmudul Hasan Saheb, Moulana Ashraf Ali Saheb Thanavi, Moulana Fateh Muhammad Saheb Jalandhari, Mufti Muhammad Shafi Saheb and other distinguished

scholars have made valuable contribution to the translation and commentary of Quran. For whose benefits did they make such serious efforts? Were they meant for Arabic knowing persons or for the urdu knowing? Had there been any danger of mischief in translation, these Ulema would not have undertaken this work. There may be slight differences in different translations, but if the correctness of the translation is assured, then minor differences, due to different understanding of the translators, need not be given undue importance, to the extent that the people are advised not to read the translation at all. There are lots of Muslims today who are deriving benefit from new and old translations. What mischief is caused by their reading Quran with translation? What are not the people who fear mischief from the translation of Quran apprehensive of any mischief in reading and making others listen to the books of their Ulema when these writings contain many controversial things, and there are books containing weak and fabricated Hadith, exaggerated encomium of the Saints, baseless stories and wishful dreams which have damaged the very fabric of the religion. Hence there is a need to stress on the importance of the holy Quran compared to the books of the Ulema of the respective schools of thought. The work for reformation would be easier if the relationship of the people is strengthened with the holy Quran. When they would read Quran with understanding, they would achieve the light of learning and they would not place their confidence in the books written by men.

#### RELIGIOUS GATHERINGS SANS QURANIC LESSON.

It is odd that the books of Ulema are read at the religious gatherings organized in the mosques with due attention but lessons from Quran are not arranged there. Any satisfactory translation or the commentary can be read if no competent person is available to impart lesson from the Quran, in order that the word of Allah can be presented to the people with its meaning and comprehension. And this can be more effective and beneficial compared to other things. But those who pay lip service to the virtues of the holy Quran do not see this virtue of the Quran. They do not take interest if the teaching of Quran is imparted any where. However they take a lot of interest when a book of their own school of thought is read out. It is worth consideration what position we have given to Quran and what position it deserved.

#### IS IT NOT PROPER TO OFFER TRANSLATED QURAN TO NON-MUSLIMS?

With a view to propagation when the holy Quran is presented to non-Muslims with the translation and commentary some people raise objections saying that it is essential to be clean while handling Quran. The etiquettes which are prescribed for handling Quran for Muslims are not prescribed for non-Muslims. A Muslim is forbidden to enter the mosque in the state of uncleanness unless he takes a bath. But this condition is not applicable to non-Muslims. Accordingly the Prophet (Sallalahu Alaihi Wasallam) had ordered Thamama Bin Athal, an infidel, to be tied to the pillar of the Masjid-I-Nabavi when he was brought as a captive. Similarly the letters sent by the Prophet to the Caesar and Khasrau (Persian Emperor) contained Quranic verses. Thus it is clear that a portion or the whole Quran can be presented to non-Muslims for Dawah purposes. It is their responsibility if they disrespect the same. However it should be avoided when it is known that instead of taking benefit from it they would be disrespecting it. The rapid progress of printing in the contemporary world has made

accessible the translated version of the Quran quite easily. Non-Muslims can obtain the copies of the holy Book from various book stalls. Should the book sellers and the publishers then be prohibited from selling it to non-Muslims? The fact is that Quran is printed in the press it to non-Muslims? The fact is that Quran is printed in the press belonging to non-Muslims, and non-Muslim publishing houses publish the same. All this is tolerated. But some persons object to the translated version of Quran being offered to non-Muslims to acquaint them with the message of Quran. This objection of theirs becomes an obstacle in the progress of Dawah efforts.

### **DOES NOT RECITATION OF QURAN EARN (DIVINE) REWARDS?**

What is stated above is not meant to convey the idea that the recitation of Quran is not worth while. It would be wrong to say such things in view of the virtues and importance given to recitation and memorization of Quran in Quran and the Hadith. We should avoid excesses in religious matters and adopt moderation. We have written a note on the "Recite this book which has been revealed to you" (Ankaboot:45) in the commentary of Dawatul Quran explaining this ayah, as under: "The command for the recitation of the Quran and establishing prayers, in the above referred to struggle of truth and falsehood, to the Prophet and through him to his followers hints at the direction: let these non-believers do so if they want to waste their lives. It is for you to cultivate a quality in your self which would adorn your lives and make you successful in the Hereafter, and that quality is your strong relationship with Allah. And strong relationship with Allah is established through recitation of the Quran and establishing the prayers."

Full benefit from the recitation of Quran can only be achieved if the recitation is done in a manner which is its due implies: to believe in, to understand it, deliberate over it, take lesson from it and accepting its guidance to shape his life in accordance with its teaching. But it does not mean that the non-Arabic knowing Muslims should always read Quran with the translation. This is not possible because in the prayer (Salat) only recitation is done. The question of reading the translation does not arise. The main point is that Quran being the word of Allah, its recitation itself is worship and the means of nearness to Allah, because when a person having faith in this book recites it sincerely, he remembers Allah, and it develops humility and fear in him and this is a great spiritual wealth. Therefore he reading of each and every letter of Quran is rewarded and hence the importance of the recitation (Tilawat) of the holy Quran cannot be minimized. It would be as much rewarding as it would be read. The inducement for reading it is given in the Quran as well as in Hadith. People who recite Quran often but never make an effort to understand it are like the people who offer prayers (Salat) but do not make an effort to know what do they read in this, so much so that they are not even aware of the meaning of the surah Al-Fatiha or what they read in ruku' and sajdah, nor do they know what do they affirm and deny in the prayer (Salat). Though such prayer is said to be duly performed but it remains defective from the viewpoint of its effects, blessing and rewards. Similarly the recitation of Quran does give the benefit of the worship but the negligence towards its meaning and sense not only reduces the reward of the worship but such person is

not fully benefited from Quran and he fails to establish a relationship with Quran for attaining purity and guidance and this a big loss. Do such people think that the Almighty Allah will not ask them as to why they did not try to understand the Book of Allah when it was with them? Was the book revealed only for recitation or was it revealed so that people may receive light from it? (Tafseer Dawatul Quran)

Those who are accustomed to read Quran without understanding should also ponder over this Hadith:

“Whoever completed the reading of Quran in less than three days did not understand anything” (Tirmizi-Abwabul Qirat)

Obviously the person who completes the reading of Quran in less than three days would be reading it without paying due attention to its meaning. The hadith referred to above disapproves of such a recitation by an Arabic-knowing person. By this it becomes evident that the reading of Quran not only requires the uttering of words from the tongue but it also requires understanding and comprehension of the same. Then it is not only sufficient to understand Quran but it is also equally essential to follow it and translate it into action. Quran clarifies repeatedly that the success in the Hereafter is for those who do good deeds having accepted faith. Therefore it is unwise to rest content with formal recitation of Quran and not try to understand it and act upon it. The Jews who were given the book of Allah were not its worthy bearers in the true sense of the term. They were described as donkeys laden with the books.

“The likeness of those who were entrusted with the Torah and they bore it is not is as the likeness of a donkey laden with books.” What a pity that the majority of Muslims is satisfied with the recitation of Quran without understanding despite the presence of all the resources to understand Quran and seek knowledge from it. Quran is revealed so that man should surrender his rein to it and prepare himself in its light for his salvation in the Hereafter. But Muslims have made it a medium to get the sins of their dead relatives forgiven and for this purpose gatherings are arranged for the recitation of Quran. Does not this warning of the hadith become applicable to them that they do the work which they were not commanded to do?

## THE BENEFITS OF THE STUDY OF QURAN

The benefits flowing from the study of Quran do not need any description. Nevertheless it is necessary to point out certain things in view of the prevalent negligence in this connection.

The very first thing is that the Quran is a book of guidance and in this age, when misguidance and straying concerning beliefs have become common, returning to the original source of guidance and to derive benefit from it is absolutely essential. On the one hand the materialistic theories have created doubts about God and the here after which has adversely influenced the educated section of our society. And on the

other hand, despite the presence of eminent Ulema guiding to the right path, there is no death of the Ulema who are set to create distortions in the belief. Those who have elevated the saints to the status of "Ghauth" (listener of grievances) and 'Mushkil kusha' (Reliever in troubles) are these Ulema only. The 'shirk' which is non-excusable very scholars by their interpretation. Their argument is that they do not say that the saints relieve one's miseries but Allah has given them certain powers to help the sufferers. But the person who reads Quran with an open mind is bound to find that it is a blatant lie and clear falsehood attributed to Allah because Quran has not said anything of this kind anywhere regarding the saints. On the contrary Quran clearly asserts that it is polytheism to invoke any one other than Allah for the help and relief and in the very first surah (Surah Fatiha) the prayer is taught in this way. "You alone we worship and, You alone we ask for help". This invocation does not contain any medium or means which are hotly discussed by these very scholars. Hence the new Shariah in the shape of 'Nazro Niyaz' (offering), 'Dargah' (mausoleum), 'Urs', 'sandal' and the 'bidaat' of 'Gyarhveen' and the 'khichda' of Muharram which have been introduced is in sharp contrasts with the shariah laid down in Quran and the Sunnah. Therefore if any one reads Quran, with the help of its translation, with the sincerity of purpose, would find pure and strict Tawheed in a refined way and would save himself from polytheism which is the primary condition of salvation in the world of the Hereafter. Secondly the study of Quran enables a man to obtain real and solid knowledge, his ignorance is removed and the light of knowledge is attained by him. He understands the very purpose of life and realizes what are his responsibilities. He achieves recognition of Allah and His fear is created in him. He achieves the knowledge of the realities hidden from our eyes and a sense of accountability in the Here after is also developed in him. He becomes aware of the commandments of and the laws prescribed by Allah and he is prompted to follow them and enforce them.

The third thing is that in the matter of religion it is not sufficient for man to be knowledgeable only because there is a danger of his falling a prey to his passions and committing sins. In order to make him desist from sins and keep him doing good deeds, frequent reminding and exhortations are necessary. By study of Quran admonition and reminding come frequently before him and he over comes his desires and passions.

Fourthly Quran is a remedy for the diseases of the heart. "And it is healing for the diseases which are in the hearts." (Yunus:57). Therefore Quran is the best means to purify the heart from evil thoughts, doubts, arrogance, hypocrisy, inclination towards sins, jealousy, rancour and other evils and it creates good qualities and promotes them. For purification of self it is not necessary to have a saintly person of "Tariqat" as a "Peer", but to study Quran and sunnah and to adhere to them would suffice.

The fifth thing is that benefit of companionship is a very important and effective factor in man's reformation and right training. It is a speciality of Quran that it presents the chronicles of the prophets repeatedly, as if the reader is taken in the company of the prophets, so that he may derive benefit from it. The company of the prophets, so that he may derive benefit from it. The various aspects of the excellence

of the character of the pious persons with the ideal virtues and their greatness comes before the reader of Quran. He is indeed impressed.

But a section of Muslims instead of stressing on the study of Quran and getting benefits from the references and chronicles of the prophets, emphasizes the benefits of the company of saints cannot be a substitute for the benefits of the company of prophets which is available in Quran. Secondly we would hardly find any saintly person in the present times who may be sincere, having correct beliefs, a custodian of Quranic thoughts, really pious and God fearing, scrupulous follower of the sunnah and who may fulfill at the individual and collective responsibilities and refrain from Bidaat and excesses. Now just think over to which saint cores of people are to be sent whose company would give them maximum benefit and is it practicable?

Then what is the purposes of minimizing the importance of a practicable thing and stressing on things which are not practicable? The intention behind our assertions is not that the company of the saints, scholars and righteous persons should be considered as useless. But our object is to emphasize that the company of the prophets should be sought whose chronicles are found in Quran in a way as if the listener of the reader is observing the same. And the pious life of the Prophet (Sallal Lahu Alaihi Wasallam) preserved in Quran and Hadith is quite sufficient to provide benefits to the seeker of his pious company

Sixthly Quran is the book to bestow elevation as stated in hadith: "Allah will raise many nations by this book and will lower many". (Muslim) Would this elevation be achieved by simply reciting Quran or is it necessary to become the follower and the standard bearer of Quran? If it is necessary to become the follower and the standard bearer of Quran, then it can only be achieved by understanding Quran, by observing its knowledge, and by practicing what it teaches.

If Muslims wake up and establish a conscious relationship with Quran, they can then glorify themselves and can offer everlasting life to others. They can be successful in this world and also in the next world. May Allah bless Muslims to understand this.

**RISE WITH THE MESSAGE OF QURAN AND AWAKEN THE PEOPLE OUT OF SLUMBER QURAN IS THE WORD OF ALLAH AND ITS DEMANDS ARE:**

Arrange to read Quran with understanding. This can be arranged by allotting at least half an hour, if not more, for Quran after the Salat-I-fajar (morning prayers). First of all recite a few verses then read their translation and deliberate over them. In this connection help can be sought from a reliable commentary.

Encourage your children and family members to read Quran with understanding, for which necessary arrangement should be made. Every house should have a Quran with translation.

Teachers are content with teaching merely to recite Quran, though they make students memorize poems in praise of Prophet, and other poetic compositions. If small children are made to memorize small Surahs like Surah Fatiha, Surah Ikhlas and Surah Asr with translation then it will create an impression in the children that the Quran is a book to be read with understanding. And the translation of Surah Fatiha must be memorized by every child, for it is recited in every 'rakat' of the prayer.

Circles for teaching of Quran be organized at different places. Every mosque should have Darse Quran (teaching of Quran) and it should be given top priority over all other books in religious gatherings, so that Allah's Book is presented to the people with its meaning and sense.

Translation of Quran preferably with simple translation should be propagated among Muslims as well as non-Muslims so that the message of Quran reaches every house and negligent people come to their sense and Allah's message is conveyed to the disbelievers convincingly, which is the very object of the existence of the Muslim Ummah.