

**IQBAL REVIEW** (64: 1)  
(January – March 2023)  
ISSN: (P)0021-0773  
ISSN: (E)3006-9130

## THE LAST OF THE MESSAGES TO MANKIND

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### ABSTRACT

The Qur'an is the last message and system of guidance from Allah, the Most High. Angel Gabriel, who came down to all the Prophets with scriptures and books, came down to Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) with the Holy Qur'an. The Holy Qur'an is not only the last book of Allah, the Exalted, but also a book containing a comprehensive system of guidance that contains a clear guidance within itself. The Holy Qur'an is also a clear declaration that any claim made for prophethood after the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) will be false. The purpose of the revelation of the Holy Quran in Ramadan is that fasting is the act of worship that opens the way for us to be close to God. The Qur'an is explained by the Sunnah of the Prophet. The last message to mankind was revealed in Arabic language because Allah, the Exalted, gave the Arabic language universality. The Quran has more than one name which is mentioned in the Quran itself. The different names of this last book describe its semantic comprehensiveness. One of the distinctions of the Holy Qur'an is that Allah, the Most High, has taken responsibility for its protection. This is the miracle of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) which is still present among us in its original state in written form.

**I**t was in the month of Ramadan that Mohammad (peace be upon him) was raised to the position of the Prophet and Messenger of God. He was forty by now and used to spend the whole month of Ramadan for the last so many years in seclusion and prayers at Mt. Hira in the vicinity of Mecca. God blessed the month by His ordinance: “And whosoever of you is present – let him fast the month, and whosoever of you is sick or on a journey, (let him fast the same) number of other days (Q, 11:185)”. Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hisham and Tabari collected the story of his receiving the first revelation from different chains of authentic narrators.

### **Arch Angel**

The Prophet of God was asleep at Hira. Someone appeared to him with a scroll containing some writing in his hand. The visitant commanded him to read. He replied, “What should I read?”. The visitant pressed him very tightly with the scroll, freed him and said, “Read!”. The Prophet repeated his reply: “What should I read?” He was once again pressed very hard with the scroll and left free and then once again was commanded to read. The Prophet said again: “What should I read?” Thereupon he was pressed once more with the same command. After it, this time the visitant said, “Read in the name of thy Rabb (Sustaining Lord) who createth. Createth man from a clot. Read, and thy Rabb is the most Bounteous who teacheth by the pen. Teacheth man that which he knew not (Q, 96:1-5)”. The Prophet read it and the visitant departed.

When the Prophet got up from his sleep, he found those words impressed firmly on his heart. He did not have the slightest idea that the visitant was the Arch-Angel Gabriel. He thought that all of his experience was but a poetic frenzy or a stroke of trance. He was not prepared for a life of poet or that of an absorbent. Then he heard a voice: “Thou art Messenger of God and I am Gabriel”. The Prophet of God turned his head towards the sky and saw Gabriel in the figure of a man stretching to horizon. The Prophet stood looking at him. He forgot his purpose. Then after a while, he turned his face. Wherever he turned, he saw the same (living) figure. He stood rather stunted. Meanwhile men went in search of him and came back to his

wife Khadija to inform her that he was alright. After the departure of the Angel, the Prophet gathered himself and went to his wife.

His wife saw him in a very depressive state. He told her: “Woe to me if I am a poet or possessed”. She said: “Protection of God from all that O, Abul Qasim. God will not abandon you for He knows that you are truthful, greatly trustworthy, unshakable in character and immensely kind to others. Did you see something?” The Prophet of God narrated the whole story. She said: “Cheer up, O Ibn ‘Amm. Lo! In whose hand is Khadija’s soul. I believe that you are going to be the prophet (of God) sent to these people.”

Then she went to her cousin Warqa bin Naufal who led a pious life, was a Christian and also was one well-versed in the holy scriptures. She related the whole story of what had happened to her husband. ‘If what you say is true,’ said Waraqa, “then verily in whose hand is Waraqa’s soul, the Great Namus (Arch-Angel) who came to Musa in the past has now come to him. He is, as I see, the Prophet of these people. Ask him to collect his heart.” She went and gave the glad tidings to Mohammad, peace be upon him.

The Angel appeared to him from time to time. His wife Khadija asked him to let her know if the Angel visited the next time. One day the Prophet told her that he was perceiving the Angel. She asked him to sit close to her. He did it. She said: “Do you see him?” The Prophet replied: ‘Yes’. Then she asked him to draw closer and closer. As he drew very close to her, the living figure departed. She said to him: “Rejoice, what you perceive is not an evil spirit. By God, it is an Angel”.

### **Objectivity**

This story and its detailed record throws light on the nature of the prophetic experience as distinguished from all other experiences. The experience is objective, and has its own tests of verification. The poetic and artistic experiences depict or manifest the moods and states of the poets or artists and as such are fundamentally subjective. Even when a poet or artist gives a message, it flows from his own soul. But the Prophet does not give anything from himself. He is face to face with a living person, an angel. And it is this angel who forms the external source of his message as his immediate spiritual environment. It may happen that at times, the prophet’s heart is filled with a message (a verse or Ayah) on the pattern of an artistic experience, but it is soon verified by the recitation of the

angel visiting him and thus the external source (of the origin) of the particular verse or Ayah is confirmed by him.

It is this kind of experience, which in its structure is unique and is only given to prophets of God. Its immediate aspects are described in the Sura Najm (Star) of the Holy Quran as follows:

By the star when it setteth, Your comrade erreth not, nor is deceived; Nor doth he speak of (his own) desire, It is not save an inspiration that is inspired, Which one of mighty powers hath taught him, One vigorous; and he grew clear to view; When he was on the uppermost horizon (Q, 53:1-6)”.God does not speak to his creation as we speak with one another. He keeps His ‘beyondness’ preserved. The Holy Quran explains the methods of Divine communication thus: ‘And it is not (vouchsafed) to any mortal that God should speak to him unless (it be) by revelation or from behind veil, or that he sendeth a messenger to reveal what He will by His leave. Lo! He is Exalted, Wise (Q, 42:51).

### **False Prophets**

Divine inspiration may come to pious men. Even angels may appear to them. But the mere fact of inspiration or some glad tidings or warnings from the angels does not constitute prophethood and messengership of God. The inspired pious man must have from God his clear and unmistakable commission of appointment as His messenger and prophet unto the people. There are false prophets who after some right inspiration in their heart thought that they were raised as prophets. Actually, they desired to be appointed as such. And so after some unusual vision/seeing they began to propagate that they were prophets. The position of a messenger and prophet of God cannot be a goal of anybody. It is a kind of self-indulgence. Ibrahim, Moses and Mohammad (peace be upon them) were prophets of God. None of them aspired to be prophet of God. But God selected them in His absolute selection. The ultimate position to which every noble soul wants to go is that of a servant of God, and not that of a prophet of God.

Many uncommon things were recorded in those days in which the Prophet of God saw the Arch Angel and received the first revelation. Heavy shooting of meteors was seen. Sooth-sayers and the spirits (or Jinn under their control or in their contact) were restless. A woman of Bani Sahm was visited by her spirit and was told of bloodshed in near future. An Arab slaughtered a calf as an offering at the altar of an image. A shriek came out of the calf: “The thing is done. A man

will say loudly, there is nothing beside God". A man who had a spirit during the days of ignorance said later on that in those days his spirit reported to him that there was utter confusion in the world of Jinn.

The Holy Quran relates the story of Jinn of those days. Their entire Umma was perplexed, till some of them heard the prophet reciting the Quran. They went back to their people and informed them about it, inviting them to accept God's Din (Q, 47:29 f). The response of their Umma is narrated in the Sura Jinn: "Say, it is revealed unto me that a company of the Jinn gave ear, and they said: Lo! it is a marvelous Quran ... And indeed (O, Mohammad) individuals of human kind used to invoke the protection of individuals of the jinn so that they increased them in revolt (against Allah)... And (the Jinn who had listened to the Quran said): we had sought the heaven but had found it filled with strong warders and meteors. And we used to sit on places (high) therein to listen. But he who listenth now findeth a flame in wait for him. "And we know not whether harm is boded unto all who are in the earth, or whether their Lord intendeth guidance for them... (Q, 72: 1-10 f)".

The Sura thus explains the great commotion which was going on around the advent of the Prophethood of God. The communication lines between heavens and earth were put under heavy protection. No news of importance or prophetic revelation could leak out. Both good and bad spirits, Jinn and the like testified it.

Therefore, no sooth-sayer or occultist could even imitate the revelations of the Quran, which were pure, uninterfered with, and not only inspired in the heart of the Messenger of God but also were brought to him by Gabriel, the Great Namus, who had visited all the Prophets in the past.

### **Fasting and Message**

Spiritual states to a large extent result from the functions of physical states. Bodily discipline and control leads to spiritual regulation and poise.

This inviolable law of nature underlies the whole Shariah of the personal duties obligatory on every man in Islam. It is most pronounced in fasting as an indispensable part of the psycho-physical programme Islam prescribes for sowing self-control and inculcating noble habits in mankind.

In the Divine religions of the past, men who committed some sin used to fast with penitence to seek pardon from God the Most High.

Prophets and saints used to keep themselves on special fasting as part of special prayers to their Lord.

Not only Islam preserves this noble tradition but expands it into a regular obligation of one month in a year for all of its followers. The Muslim who fasts but whose fasting fails to lead him to soul-searching has not fasted at all. Two women were on fast. They talked and talked, and fainted in the long hours. After their recovery the incident was reported to the Prophet of God. He said, “let them vomit”. Clots of blood poured off their mouths, when they vomited. Referring to the clots, the Prophet said: “It is this, they were doing. Back-biting (neighbours, relations, etc.) They were not fasting but starving”. Like those women many people starve but are deluded to believe that they are fasting. By their fasts they must have ploughed in their frame what the Quran taught: “O ye who believe! Let not a folk deride a folk who may be better than they are. Nor let women (deride) women who may be better than they are. Neither defame one another, nor insult one another. Bad is the name of lewdness after faith. And who so turneth not in repentance, such are evil-doers. “O ye who believe shun much suspicion; for lo! some suspicion is a crime, And spy not, neither back-bite one another. Would one of you love to eat the flesh of his dead brother? Ye abhor that (so abhor the other). And keep your duty (to Allah). Lo! Allah is Relenting, Merciful.

O mankind! Lo! we have created you male and female and have made you nations and tribes that ye may know one another. Lo! the noblest of you in the sight of Allah, is the best in conduct. Lo! Allah is Knower, Aware (Q, 49: 11-13).

Ennobling oneself and attaining the best of conduct are sure aims of the course of fasting:

O ye who believe, fasting is prescribed for you, even as it was prescribed for those before you, that ye may ward off (evil) (Q, 2:183).

Men who do not improve their morals, cleanse their heart and unlearn leg-pulling, malevolence, etc.in their fasts, have simply wasted their most precious chance of becoming ‘whole’ men. Their souls are dwellings of evil spirits which madden them to cut-throat competition and hitting one another below the belt.

### **Moderation**

It is a common sight in various Muslim towns and communities that food consumption and demand for relishing dishes is on the

increase in the holy month of Ramadan. Apparently their fasts lead them to the desires of the flesh rather than to fear of God. Two or three persons known for their good appetite embraced Islam. People were amazed to notice marked changes in their dietary habits and preferences. Some of the Companions reported it to the Prophet. He told them that their Islam moderated their intake.

Those who are never oblivious of the presence of God can never kneel down to the low gratifications of their body. A true believer is one who is simple in living, simple in habits and simple in dealings. His life is thus of the dutiful custodian of the Sunnah of the Prophet and his Companions. He does not take a morsel of food, but the plight of others crosses his mind. How could he then pounce on delicacies and indulge in ostentation? Islam by definition is surrender to God and the fasts are exercises for it.

The prodigal sons of Islam defeat the purposes of Ramadan and come out of its drill with more greed of the world. Iblis enlarges their expectations by whispering into their souls that they have earned enough wages by their fasts, and seals their hearts. The Messenger of God said that Ramadan is (the month of) fortitude and is (that of) sympathy. The one who has not learnt fortitude nor sympathy, has not met Ramadan. This is the meaning of the Prophet's Hadith (saying). Fasting produces that psycho-physical environment which enables man to unburden himself of the pressures of the world and approach his God with the purity of his heart. Then he returns back from it armed with the strength of God to fight his way through the attractions of the world. Only men like him can sympathise with the creatures of God. They are the successful. Sorrow and grief touch them not. Their stand is their God:

Lo! those who say our Lord is Allah and afterwards are upright (or stand on it), the angels descend on them, saying: Fear not, nor grieve, but hear glad tidings of the paradise which ye are promised (Q, 41:30).

### **Prophet's Sunnah**

The Messenger of God and the Companions frequently observed fast round the year. The righteous leaders of the Umma follow their Sunnah. The ways of the Prophet and Messenger of God in observing fast are reported by his wife Aisha:

(Sometimes) the Messenger of God used to fast consecutively so much so that we began to guess that (by now) he would never be without it. Then, he would go without fast continuously until we restarted to think that he would not fast (in the month). I never saw God's Messenger to have fasted a complete month except in Ramadan. Moreover, I never saw him fasting in any month more than in Sha'ban.

The Prophet of God advised one of his Companions, Abd Allah bin Amar thus:

Fast and discontinue your fast, get up for prayer, and go to sleep for you have obligations to your body, to your eyes, to your wife and visitors....Fasting for three days a month is like a permanent fast....

Umm Salma, another wife of the Prophet said:

The Messenger of God used to ask me to fast three days a month and to begin my fast from Monday to Thursday in every month.

When someone asked the Prophet regarding a perpetual fasting, he said:

You have duty to your family. Fast during Ramadan and six days the next month and afterwards every Wednesday and Thursday.

The Prophet of God also said as per a narration from the Muslim:

Do not observe Thursday as a special night for prayer, and do not observe Friday as a special day for fasting, unless it comes during the fasts that you are observing (for some reason).

### **Permissions**

In his infinite bounty God has allowed postponement of the obligatory fasts of Ramadan if one is sick or on a long journey or is grown too weak to continue with. The Messenger of God and the Companions availed this permission with great caution. And it is the Sunnah. But, it does not mean that one should try to keep to fasting with unnecessary exertion.

Anas narrates an episode in this regard: "The Prophet and the Companions went on a journey. Some of the Companions broke the fast but others did not. It was a hot day. Those who fasted were broken with fatigue but those who did not fast set up the tents and watered the riding camels. The Messenger of God said:



Those who broke their fast have earned all the reward (to fast) this day (Bukhari).

Ibn Abbas narrates:

The Messenger of God left Medina for Mecca. he fasted (in the journey) till he reached 'Usfan'. he then asked for water. Raising (the jar) he drank so that all could see it. Thus he broke his fast and did not start it till he was in Mecca (Bukhari and Muslim).

This was the occasion of the conquest of Mecca. In a journey, some people put a man under a shade. The Prophet of god enquired the matter. He was told that the man was observing fast. The Prophet said:

Fasting in a journey is not an element of piety (Bukhari and Muslim).

If a man can do it easily, it is alright, if he cannot, overburdening himself displeases God.

Women who are pregnant or suckling the baby are in the category of those who must postpone their obligatory fasts of Ramadan as per Divine injunctions laid down in the verse 185 of the second chapter (Surah) of the Holy Quran.

In the early period, the Muslims used to fast from one evening meal to another evening meal the next day. Thus they observed a fast of a whole day and night. Then God ceased the burden by limiting it to days hours fasting as per verse 187 of the chapter.

Fasting starts nearly one and a hour before the sunrise when night begins to change into day and the white thread (of day) becomes distinguishable from the black thread (of night). It lasts until the sunset. In northern and southern countries where days are very long in summer, men are allowed to break their fast earlier. Normal span of the fast may not be longer than nearly 15 hours or a little more, throughout the world.

The Ramadan verses contain in them verse 186:

And when My servants question thee concerning Me, then surely I am nigh. I answer the prayer of the suppliant when he crieth unto Me. So, let them hear My call, and let them trust in Me, in order that they may be led upright.

In this verse is posited the entire essence of the whole exercise of fasting in Ramadan. It further means to be directly in touch with the Divine Revelations.

### **The Quran for Everyone**

There are no words to replace the Words of God. Therefore, the sentences of the Glorious Quran are not symbols which can be substituted by other symbols of this or that language. They are indeed like coastlines which signify a vast land behind or like a sweet odour and a colourful sight which are signs of a beautiful flower. The words of God are the signs of those truths which He reveals to man. They are integrated with the truths which are contained by them. All the translations turn the signs into symbols and replace them by the symbols of a different language (or other symbols of the same language). Therefore, no translation can ever adequately portray and convey the Divine truths of which the Divine words are the integral parts. Consequently, reading of a translation can never be equal to the recitation of a Divine text.

### **Arabic Quran**

This basic truth is most important in respect of the Holy Quran. Its translation can never be designated as the Holy Quran. It is the Arabic Quran in its essence.

A Book, whereof the verses (signs) are explained in detail – A Quran in Arabic for people who understand. Giving good news and Admonition...(Q, 41:3-4).

Thus have We sent by inspiration to thee an Arabic Quran that thou mayest warn the Mother of Cities and all around her and warn (them) of the Day of Assembly of which there is no doubt, (when) some will be in the Garden, and some in the Blazing Fire (Q, 42:7).

By the Book that makes things clear, We have made it a Quran in Arabic that ye may be able to understand (and learn wisdom). And verily it is in the Mother of the Book (or mother-Book) in Our Presence, high in dignity, full of wisdom. (Q, 43:2-4).

With God is the mother-Book. All commandments and all scriptures arise in it and are revealed from it. The Arabic Quran is also in it. Therefore, the Quran is not possible in any other language and in Arabic language itself in no other words beside the revealed words.

### **Easy Quran**

That the 'Glorious' Quran is an Arabic Scripture does not make it a property of any nation or a monopoly of the learned few. It is for

everybody and belongs to the whole of mankind. It is endowed with a marvelous facility. It is easy to memorize, recall, follow and remember not withstanding one's race, land or vernacular.

And in truth, We have made the Quran easy to remember (Zikr), but is there anyone that remembereth? (Q, 54:17, 22, 32).

In a footnote to those verses (signs) M. M. Pickthall, one of its English translator writes:

It is a fact that the Quran is marvelously easy for believers to commit to memory. Thousands of people in the East know the whole Book by heart. The translator (Pickthall), who finds great difficulty in remembering well-known English quotations accurately, can remember page after page of the Quran in Arabic with perfect accuracy (Holy Quran: English Translation, P. 350).

Every people of the world can recite it and they are allowed to deliver its recitation in accordance with their own habits of speech. A Korean may recite it in his way and a Canadian in his. The vernacular differences are no bar to its reading and recitation from memory. As they will read and recite it frequently they will gain facility in it. The delivery and style of the Quraish (the tribe of the Prophet) is not wanted in their case.

When prayer-call (Azan) was introduced, the Prophet assigned this duty to Bilal, from black Africa, who could not pronounce the well-known Arabic words properly. Moreover, his voice was not sweet enough to charm the old and young of Medina. No Arab modulation. One day someone else rose to give the prayer-call. A ringing melodious voice running through all the delicacies of the words filled the entire atmosphere. The prayer was offered. soon after it, the Angel appeared to the Prophet and said why not the prayer-call was raised until then. The Prophet of God was astonished and explained to him that so and so had given the call. The Angel said: 'But it did not reach the heaven.'

The narration means that Bilal's un-Arabic coarse style and imperfect pronunciation was more dear to God than the perfection of Arabic style and delivery. According to Hadith, he who reads the Quran with ease has his wages, but one who finds it a rough sailing and still exerts in it, has double the wages.

### **Difference in Reading**

All kinds of recitations which reflect how different types of people (communities and nations) speak their own dialectics is acceptable to God. Ubayy bin Kab reports the following story:

Once, the Messenger of God told Gabriel: ‘O Gabriel, I am sent to a people who are Ummiyin (untaught). Among them are old women and old men, boys and girls and men. They never read a book.’ Gabriel said: ‘O Mohammad (peace be on him) verily, the Quran is revealed in seven dialectics (Tirmidhi).

Jabir narrates as follows:

The Prophet of God came to us. Among us were Arabs as well as aliens and we were reading Al Quran. He said: ‘Go on reading (as you read) for every reading is good. (After you) there will come men who will read the Quran with a straight reading (without imperfections) on the likeness of a straight (and sharp) arrow, but they will hurry to rewards in this world heedless to seeking their wages in the next world’.

The Quran itself was revealed in seven dialectics. It was revealed to the Prophet of God in the dialectic of the Quraish in the first instance. Then it was revealed in six more dialectics. Ibn Abbas narrates – The Prophet of God said:

Gabriel taught me to read the Quran according to anHarf only. I told him many a time to read it for me in accordance with other Huruf also. And I did not cease to repeat my request until he read it in seven Huruf: (Bukhari).

IbnShahab, one of the great Followers (persons who were taught by the Companions) remarks:

It has come to my knowledge that the seven Huruf are in a matter which is the same and they give rise to no difference as regards the Halal (permissible) and Haram (impermissible).

These Huruf are the basis of seven different manners of reading of the Quran. In ordinary language, the Huruf represent the dialectics and local variations.

There are men who can read the Quran as per all the seven Huruf. If they go on reading the Book with devotion, they experience differences of light with the difference of Harf in accordance with which they read the Quran. This is the opinion of some great spiritualists and scholars. Every Harf has its own light. And every light opens seven worlds of meanings. Therefore, he who reads the Quran regularly and spiritually participates in its reading, every time finds that he is travelling in a fresh air of meanings and

revelation. Therefore, all monopoly of the meanings and interpretation of the Quran are abolished.

But to start with the first thing is to gain familiarity with its words and verses (sentences or Ayat). Recitation as such, repeated recitation grows this familiarity. Sound effects of its Ayat carry the reader to an inscrutable experience. But if these effects are sought as the end in itself, they lead him to nowhere. He has to overcome this state as early as possible by an internal urge for meaning. The Glorious Quran is wonderfully easy in this matter also. Its revelations are a master stroke of the economy of words.

The Quran does not use more than fourteen hundred verbs and their variations. The actual number is even less than that. Then there is a small number of adjectives, names of men and places. A reader may get to all of this quite handsomely. He can acquire direct meanings of these words in a short period, and must be delighted to know that he is reciting the Book with understanding in a course of six to eight months.

After a short while, he will discover during his recitation that he is traveling in a super abundant world of meanings, thousands and thousands of portents of God are passing through his eyes as history, as cosmos, as man and as society. Translations are also helpful. Whenever one needs them, one must consult them. Precious notes are also available in standard commentaries. All of them are needed in scholarly understanding. A layman may also be benefitted by them so far as particular problems are concerned.

In continuation of the Sunnah of the Prophet and Companions, honest Muslims not only fast, but also complete at least one recitation of the glorious Quran in the month of Ramadan. The Quran is not a divinely inspired composition of the Prophet but is comprised of the very words of God Himself to 'bring forth mankind from darkness into light, by the permission of their Rabb (Sustaining Lord) unto the path of the Mighty, the Praise-worthy (Quran, 14:1)'. The glorious Quran is self-revelatory about its origin and composition: 'And verily, it is a revelation of the Lord of the worlds, which the True Spirit has brought down upon the (Muhammad's) heart that thou mayest be of the warners (Q, 26: 192-94)'.

### **Various Names**

There are various names of the Quran (the Reader or the Reading), all derived from the revelations of God and each signifying

a particular property that it possesses. It is Al Kitab, the Book (Q, 2:2). It is Al Furqan, the Criterion or the Discernment (Q, 25:1) whereby men distinguish between the right and the wrong. It is Al Zikr (Al Tazkirah), the Reminder (Q, 15:1) which reminds mankind of its duties and future. It is Al Shifa, the Healing (Q, 10:58). There are other names of equal importance: Al Mua'ida, the Admonition (Q, 10:58), Al Muhaimin, the Protector or the Verifier of past truths and Scriptures (Q, 5:48); Al Haq, the Truth (17:81); Al Huda, the guidance (Q, 2:2); Al Burhan, the Argument (Q, 4:175); Al Tanzil, the Revelation (Q, 26:192); Al Bayan, the statement (3:103); and Al Hablullah, the Rope or Cable of God (Q, 3:103).

The Quran is neither a prose nor a poetry. It is a literature of its own class: 'But nay! I swear by all that ye see. And all that ye see not. that it is indeed the speech of an illustrious messenger. It is not a poet's speech – little is it that ye believe! Nor diviner's speech – little is it that ye remember (70: 38-41)'.

When the Prophet of God recited what was revealed to him, the town-people thought that it was a poetic work. Some of them said that it was a speech like that of the sooth-sayers and diviners. The above verses (Ayat, signs) were revealed in that context to point out that it was a recitation of a messenger of God.

After some time, the public around felt its tremendous sway and grip, and came to the opinion that it was all magic. This declaration of its magical character was itself a recognition on their part of its tremendous power. Then they said to one another: 'Heed not this Quran and drown the hearing of it (by your noise); haply ye may conquer (it) (Q,41;26)'. But their imposition of censorship on their folks proved of no avail. The message of God spread, although gradually; and thus stood all tests of time. Neither its style, nor its approach, could be imitated by anybody. It throws challenges to all mankind and Jinn to collect together and produce a Reader like it (Q, 17:88).

### **Divine Protection**

Since Quran is the word of God, it is absolutely protected by His Own arrangement: 'We reveal the Reminder and We verily are its Guardian (Q, 15:9)'. 'Lo! those who disbelieve in the Reminder when it cometh unto them (are guilty), for lo! it is an unassailable Scripture. Falsehood cannot come at it or behind it. (It is) a revelation of the Wise, the Owner of praise (Q, 41: 41-42)'.

The apparent way of its protection is that Muslims have been reciting from it in their five-time daily prayers since the time of the Prophet. They also have been reciting it in their congregational voluntary prayers of Tarawieh) during the month of Ramadan after the obligatory night prayers since the time of the second *Khalifa* Umar bin Khattab. Before that, they used to offer these prayers separately. Some congregations of the Tarawieh complete a recitation in a month, some three recitations and there are others that go to complete four or five recitations. And this practice will go on forever.

### Written Form

The very reference to ‘pen’ in the first revelation to the Prophet of God – Read, And thy Lord is most Bounteous, Who teacheth by pen’ (96: 3-4) – meant that all the transmission of the Divine words would be committed to pen. Moreover, the Quran time and again refers to itself as Al Kitab (the Book) and Al Sahifah or Suhuf (Scripture). All of it was obligatorily intended to be immediately written.

Even the Muslims who were then few in number and in an oppressed state in Mecca, possessed the revelations in written form. It is on record that Umar’s sister was reading the Sura Ta Ha (chapter 20) of early revelations when the former went to see her during the period of his ignorance. When he embraced Islam he was the 40<sup>th</sup> or 41<sup>st</sup> man in the new religion. There are many stories in the Ahadith collections, like Bukhari, Muslim, Abi Dawood, Tirmizi, etc. pointing out the companions who served as scribes of the Prophet immediately to record a revelation as it was received. Zaid, Uthman, Zubair, Ali, Khalid b. Said, and many others served as his scribes. The number goes to forty or even more. From their records were produced other copies duly verified by regular recitation before the Prophet and companions.

As the Quran spread far and wide in Arabia and beyond, men from different tribes with their local dialectic came to copy down the Quran. Copies from the copies were prepared. All were not equally expert. Moreover, some copies were made from oral recitation and it required very expert and accurate scribe. In addition to it, the companions noticed that if a tribe pronounced a simple word like Hatta (till or until) as Atta, its men jotted it down like that. The third *Khalifa* of Islam, Uthman bin Affan commissioned Zaid, a scribe of the Prophet to produce a standard of writing the Quran from the

writings done in the presence of the Prophet of God. The standard writing was thus prepared. Copies of it were produced and sent to different parts of the Dominions of Islam with the order that all writings of the Quran which deviated from the standard one should be destroyed. People did it gladly; either they corrected their writings or destroyed them to copy down from one of the standard copies. This act of standardization of the written form of the Quran in accordance with the writings of the scribes of the Prophet was the greatest service done by the third *Khalifa* of Islam, Uthman bin Affan. Since that time, only this writing has been in force in the collective body of Islam.

Receiving the Divine revelations never had been an easy matter with any prophet and messenger of God. It never could be a mechanical recording. Consequently, when the Prophet of God was in the process of receiving the revelations, it involved great pressure on himself, on his mind and heart. In ordinary human beings nearly 30 to 40 percent or at the most 70 percent brain cells are in activity, otherwise, there is no difference in the sizes of the brains between an ordinary man and a genius. It is just probable that the prophets and messengers of God have 80 to 100 percent active brain cells at the moment of revelations.

In addition to it, physical weight and pressure on the body also increases. Others who saw the receiving of revelation by the Prophet of God, witnessed it. Once the Prophet of God was riding on a she-camel, he began to receive a revelation. The camel became quite restless, rather it was about to kneel down under the increased weight. Once, the Prophet's head was on the thigh of one of his companions. He was taking rest. Revelation started. The pressure increased so much that it became unbearable for the companion. He thought that his thigh was about to break. In view of all these factors which accompany revelations, composed of concrete words and not just an inspiration from above, it was quite natural that the Prophet of God should have received them, not all at once but from time to time. Those reasonable expectations were quite rightfully fulfilled in the case of the Revelations forming part of the Glorious Quran: And the Quran We have revealed in pieces that thou mayest recite it unto mankind at intervals and We have revealed it by (successive) revelation (Q, 17: 106)?

The total revelations of the Book came down to the Prophet in a period of twenty years, five months and fourteen days starting from



the first Divine communication at the Mt. Hira. More than 86,400 words of God (Kalimat Allah) comprising more than 6,500 signs of God (Ayat Allah, verses) came down to the Prophet during this period. The Ayat of the Quran are grouped in 114 Surahs. A Surah means a rampart which protects a town. A Surah of the Quran is that fence which protects a group of verses which are like living populace in it. There are thus 114 Surahs, which are usually called by the translators as chapters. The names of the Surahs were also fixed by revelation.

Whenever a revelation came down to the Prophet of God, he got it jot down by his scribes at the proper place in the Surah for which it was divinely intended. In this way, the Glorious Quran was completed. Every verse is at its right place and position in the Surah to which it belongs. For the purpose of recitation, the Ulema have divided the Quran into 30 parts for those who want to complete its recitation in 30 days or a month. Again, the Quran has been divided into seven Manazil (stages) for those who intend to finish it in a week. Then the Surahs are divided into small bits, each known as a Ruku for the purpose of recitation in a Salat (prayer). All these divisions are external to the Quran and are mentioned on the margin of the text.

O ye who believe! Observe your duty to Allah. And let every soul look to that which it sendeth on before for the morrow. And observe your duty to Allah. Lo! Allah is informed of what ye do (Q, 59:18).