

The Holy Qur'an: The Rewards of Recitation, Reading and Understanding

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Abstract

The present paper focuses upon highlighting the importance of reciting and understanding the Holy Qur'an as well as the rewards and benefits associated with it. The Holy Qur'an has been revealed to instruct and guide the mankind; when read and followed with pure hearts; the Holy Book makes our lives easy and comfortable. The Book is not restricted to the particular community of Muslims but the entire humanity can well be benefitted. This research paper attempts to highlight the rewards of reciting the Holy Qur'an along with understanding its meaning as well as it compares it with simple recitation without understanding the Arabic language. There have been several reasons given by different religious scholars for understanding the Qur'an whereas some of them argued and favoured the recitation only without concentrating upon the interpretation of the ayahs and Surahs. Both the recitation and reading with understanding are interlinked in such a way that one cannot be preferred over the other. The paper reflects that each has its own importance and Qur'an always is rewarding and gratifying to us.

Keywords: Qur'an, Recitation, Translation, Reading, Enlightening.

Introduction

((أَفْرَأُ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ(1))

“Read in the name of your Lord, who has created (all that exists).”(Surah Al-Alaq: Ayah 1)

This Surah was revealed for our prophet to guide him to read and learn. The first word revealed to our Prophet Muhammad ﷺ (PBUH) from Allah (SWT) was “Iqra” which means to Read! To seek knowledge! Educate yourselves! Be Educated. As our Prophet (PBUH) said “Talab ul ilmu farizatun ala kulli muslim” i.e.: “Seeking knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim”. It is obligatory for each and every Muslim to acquire knowledge to educate him/her and to fulfil this purpose of education they are allowed to travel to the farther regions too. The importance of education, the learning of truth and righteousness has been accentuated repeatedly in the Qur’an, which is an ultimate source of guidance for Muslims. Verse 20:114 says, “My Lord! Increase me in knowledge.” The knowledge and understanding of human beings is limited thus we all need guidance and support of Allah at every step of our lives. Allah the Creator of this Universe has placed human beings on a higher pedestal; so humans are considered superior to other creatures in this world; therefore the humans should constantly be seeking more knowledge (Ilm). The Qur’an treats knowledge as a means to reaching Faith (Imaan) for all Muslims, males and females, and the Qur’an helps us to become true believers. As it is mentioned in the Holy Qur’an that “Allah grants wisdom to whom He pleases and to whom wisdom is granted indeed he receives an overflowing benefit.” (Verse 35:28).

1. Revelation of Holy Qur’an as a Guiding and Rewarding Force-

شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ وَبَيِّنَاتٍ مِّنَ الْهُدَىٰ وَالْفُرْقَانِ

“Ramadan is the month in which was revealed the Qur’an a guidance for mankind.”
(Baqarah: 185)

Islam is a complete religion and the Holy Qur’an is the book of Allah revealed to Prophet Muhammed ﷺ (PBUH); this Book was revealed to the prophet as a guiding force. Still the Book continues to 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. The Qur'an demands that Muslims read it and develop a conscious relationship with it but the reading never implies simple recitation of the Book, it involves to understand and ponder over the verses. Then follow the guiding light sincerely and fulfil the responsibilities of being a Muslim in this world. Despite knowing the real purpose of the Qur'an, some Muslims merely believe in reciting it only without bothering about its understanding. Recitation of the Holy Qur'an is always beneficial but an overall knowledge of the divine book, its comprehension and pursuing of the directed path is more essential. The mere satisfaction of recitation and reading sometimes don't create a stronger relationship between the Book and the believer. This relation can be strengthened by reading with understanding. The Holy Qur'an has been revealed as a guiding force for the entire humanity; since none of us want to be misguided, thus it is paramount to read or recite Qur'an with understanding and implementation too. The Holy Qur'an involves some proper etiquettes of recitation which should be observed while reading. A few of those etiquettes are:

- State of Purity
- Sincere intention to please Allah (SWT)
- Pondering on its Meaning
- Observance of the message with total consciousness.

Allah Taa'la (The All-Mighty) says;

وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْآنَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِنْ مُدَكِّرٍ (17)

“And We have indeed made the Qur'an easy to understand and remember, then is there any that will remember (or receive admonition)?“ (Qur'an, 54:17)

كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ (242)

“Allah thus makes clear to you His communications [verses] that you may understand.”

(Qur’an, 2:242)

This can well be said that Allah wants us to recite Qur’an whilst understanding its true sense and message. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ (PBUH) once said, “The best amongst you is the one who learns the Qur’an and teaches it.” (Al-Bukhari).

2. Benefits of Reading Qur’an with Understanding (Exegesis/ Translation)

The language of Holy Qur’an is Arabic, which is not intelligible to all the Muslims. As Islam is a world religion and the followers are originated in every nook and corner of this world thus the believers have different languages in an obvious way. The first and foremost effort is to learn how to read the language; basically every Muslim child starts reading Qur’an by the age of four or five. A non Arabic speaking child has to put efforts in learning Arabic; he/she learns how to read Arabic but most of them restrict their knowledge of Arabic till the reading of the Holy Book only. They don’t bother about understanding what they are reading. They simply learn to identify the alphabets and recognize the verses and then they read. Undoubtedly reading of the Holy Qur’an benefits everyone, but it is always better and preferable to read while understanding its meaning. As it is known fact that most of the Muslims don’t speak Arabic, that’s why the Book of Allah has been translated into a lot of local languages. In order to show proper respect to the revered speech of Allah every Muslims have to understand it, and it is only possible when it is translated in one’s own language.

Here are some great benefits of reading the Holy Quran with translation:

a) ***Rewards for a Non-Arabic Person-*** A person who is not familiar with the Arabic language, obviously puts more efforts in reading the Qur’an; as he has to learn an entirely new language. In Islam every effort of human being is rewarded by Allah and great efforts

come with great benefits. A non-Arabic person spends more time and works harder while reading Qur'an. This person does it all to please Allah only; in return Allah Ta'ala shows tremendous blessings upon that person. Our beloved Prophet ﷺ (PBUH) had said; "Those who attempt to read it with difficulty (because of their lack of familiarity with the language) will merit double rewards." (Tirmidhi and Abu Dawood)

b) ***The more we understand the more we are benefitted-*** The Prophet ﷺ (PBUH) has said, "That person who, due to excessive recitation of the Quran is not able to make Allah Ta'ala's Dhikr and Du'a, Allah Ta'ala will bestow such a person with more blessings and gifts than even those who make Dhikr and Du'a." (Tirmidhi). It is all known that practice makes a man perfect; similar to other fields of studies an in-depth observation of Qur'an results in a smooth functioning of human life. This deep understanding and analysis can be obtained only through reading the Holy Book along with its meaning. An original and correct translation of the Book clears out all the existing doubts about this world and the world hereafter and also removes any misunderstanding in the important issues of Islam caused by complexity of Arabic. Thus reading the holy words of Allah in the Arabic and understanding them in one's native language brings more rewards.

c) ***A guiding light of Daily Life-***

وَلَقَدْ ضَرَبْنَا لِلنَّاسِ فِي هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ مِنْ كُلِّ مَثَلٍ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ (39:27)

"And We have certainly presented for the people in this Quran from every (kind of) example – that they might remember."(Quran, 39:27). The Book of Allah contains useful advises and instructions concerning the daily routine. So as to lead a happy and peaceful life it is very important to follow this guidance every day. Qur'an is the only way to achieve success; it is another reason that we should read the Holy Book along with its meaning. Every Muslim has to know the essential precepts and requirements of Allah.

d) ***Fulfilment of Islamic Duty-***

كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ مُبَارَكٌ لِيَدَّبَّرُوا آيَاتِهِ وَلِيَتَذَكَّرَ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ (38:29)

“(This is) a blessed Book which We have revealed to you, (O Muhammad), that they might reflect upon its verses and that those of understanding would be reminded.” (Quran, 38:29)

The quoted verse from the Holy Qur’an tells that each Muslim has to clearly understand all aspects of the Quran teaching. It is the only way to righteousness and morality and all Muslims duty is to find this way. So understanding the Book of Allah is better than mere recitation and it is possible when it is interpreted into some local or an easily explicable language.

3. Some Baseless Reasons for Ignoring the Recitation with Meaning

i. *No Knowledge of Arabic*

Muslims read Qur’an as a form of supplication. Since the Holy Book has been revealed in the Arabic language, most of the Muslims think that it is not obligatory for them to know the real sense and meaning of Qur’an. This baseless excuse would have been accepted if there are no translations available. During present era all sorts of resources are available to gain knowledge; similarly for gaining the real knowledge of Qur’an translations are available in almost all leading languages. If still any Muslim constraints himself /herself from understanding Qur’an and from getting innumerable benefits than it’s their trance.

ii. *Understanding of Qur’an is mandatory for the Scholars (Ulema) only*

There is another baseless excuse; many Muslims consider that the understanding of Qur’an is compulsory for the religious scholars only and for others the simple reading of the Holy Book is sufficient. This sort of thoughts prevents people from learning and reading Qur’an with understanding and as little knowledge is always dangerous so as no knowledge is lethal. The purpose of the revelation of the Qur’an was to make people understand and then lead a life

accordingly. Qur'an itself explains its own simplicity and comprehensibility; thus it is quite wrong to think that only the religious scholars should understand it.

(وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْآنَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِنْ مُدَكِّرٍ)

“And we have made Quran easy for admonition. Is there then any seeker of admonition?”(Qamar :17).

Regardless of this clarification and declaration by Qur'an if we still believe that the Holy Book is revealed for the sheer understanding of the Scholars then it surely is our ignorance.

iii. *Illogical and Misrepresentation of the Facts*

A small section of Muslims believe that if Muslims read the translation of the Qur'an, they may fall victim to the wrong understanding and may become a prey to mischief. This baseless assumption clearly reflects the unawareness and illiteracy. If the translations are done by the incompetent persons then it may vary from the real source however we have several learned religious scholars who have provided us with the real meaning and correct information about the Qur'an; these translation always prove beneficial for the people.

Whatever may be the reason for not reading the Qur'an along with its meaning, the Holy Book yet remains a guiding light for mankind.

4. Reciting Qur'an without Understanding the Meaning

Now after discussing the benefits of reading the Holy Qur'an with its meaning, I would like to further discuss the issue of reciting Holy Qur'an without reading its translation or meaning. As several people argue that reading Qur'an with knowing the true meaning of the words is not so much beneficial; there are many examples which show that the recitation of blessed noble Qur'an is quite beneficial in the same way.

The holy Qur'an is revealed for the guidance of mankind, this guidance is not limited or restricted to the Muslims only; any community, clan or clique can gain the profits just by following the simple, easy and safe instructions of the Holy Book. Abu Sa'eed Khudri, Radi-

Allahu Anhu (May Allah be pleased with him) narrates that the messenger of Allah ﷺ said, 'That person who due to excessive recitation of the Qur'an is not able to make Allah Ta'ala's Dhikr and Du'a (Mentioning and praying Allah), Allah Ta'ala will bestow such a person with more blessings and gifts than even those who make Dhikr and Du'a.' (Tirmidhi). What better virtue can there be, when Allah Ta'ala takes it upon Himself to bless such people who recite the Qur'an excessively?

A person who recites Qur'an regularly will surely attain his virtues and will undoubtedly obtain the benefits. As Abdullah ibn Ma'sood, Radi-Allahu anhu narrates that our Prophet ﷺ said, "That person who recites one letter from the Kitabullah (The Quran), he will get one reward, and one is multiplied by ten.' He further went on to say, 'I do not say that Alif, Laam, Meem is one letter, but instead alif is one letter, laam is one letter and meem is one letter.'" (Tirmidhi). If we contemplate over this Hadith, we will find that there is no such clause or condition that the person will only get reward if he recites the Qur'an with understanding of translation. The Holy Qur'an encloses numerous Ayahs, that meaning are not known to us, just as the "Huroof Muqattaat" which appear at the beginning of some Surahs, for example- Alif-Laam-Meem (e.g. at the beginning of sura AlBaqara (The Cow)). The meaning of these words is not known to us yet we recite them. If the argument supports the view that reciting the Qur'an without understanding cannot bring any rewards; then the only answer is the Ayahs whose meaning is not clearly deciphered by the translators even. If reading Qur'an without understanding cannot bring reward or can lessen the reward then the same should imply to these Ayahs too. Our beloved prophet chose the words Alif-Laam-Meem, He knew well that he had not explained them to the Ummah (Muslims), yet he mentioned these and commanded to recite those and thus ascribed the virtues for reciting such three words even.

The above discussion clarifies that even though a person recites the Qur'an without understanding, he/she will surely attain the virtues and benefits of reciting it. However, if after learning how to recite the Qur'an, a person goes on to learn the meaning of the Qur'an so that he understands the orders and commands of Allah Ta'ala, the reward for such a person is certainly more.

Conclusion- The above discussion simplifies the significance and magnitude of the Holy Qur'an. It is clearly evident that the Holy Qur'an is an amazingly magnificent gift of Allah (SWT) to his slaves. Allah, the most merciful and benevolent has instructed the entire humanity to lead a peaceful and happy life.

The recitation as well as reading of the Holy Qur'an with its translation both is rewarding and the value and reward of any can never be lessened than the other. A person who recites the Holy Qur'an is always rewarded in one or the other way. The difference between the recitation and the reading with understanding is that of the translation only; if a person recites Qur'an then also he is rewarded but reading Qur'an with understanding the meaning can well be believed to be more beneficial in the sense that along with recitation the person becomes aware of the meaning also thus he can follow the shown path more firmly.

As we learn any worldly trade or language or any other useful knowledge, we always try to understand fully so as to apt at that work. Similarly; the reading of Qur'an while understanding the correct meaning can always help in pertinence of human beings. Therefore, the discussion can well be summed up that recitation and reading with understanding both are rewarding but there are always more benefits in understanding the Holy Book and leading our lives as per the shown path.

And Allah Ta'aala Knows Best.

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