

Qur'anic

Structure

Students' Notes

Describe what you know about the structure of the Qur'an.

The Holy Qur'an is the undisputed word of Allah. There is no doubt on that. All prophets who came were given their own guidance according to their time and circumstances. The revelations that were given to our last prophet (s.a.w) were over a period of 23 years at Macca and Madina.

Throughout these years the revelations were dictated by the prophet (s.a.w) to his scribes. Accordingly, these records were then crosschecked by the Prophet himself. Whenever and wherever there would be corrections and changes the prophet would give directives and he would instruct his scribes where revealed verses were to be placed. By the time the Prophet died at the age of 63, Muslims had many complete records of the Qur'an but not in the standard text and format as we have today. Later it was then compiled into a standard and complete copy during Abu Bakr's Caliphate. It was in the same order as authorised by the Prophet. It was thus checked by the companions and other Huffaz of that time. The Qur'an begins with al Faatiha [the Opening] also known as the Basmallah. It is generally followed by the longest surah till the shortest one and each surah is divided into verses [ayah or sign]. Sometimes at the beginning or at the end of the Qur'an there are the rules of Tajweed and at the end there is the Du'a of Khatam ul Qur'an and at the same time the table of content.

The Holy Qur'an was then divided into 30 parts [juz, sipara] and each part was further subdivided into four parts (quarters). It was arranged in 114 surah [chapters] of unequal length. Among them surah Baqara is the longest and surah Kawthar is the shortest. Each surah [except one that is surah Tawba] begins 'in the Name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful'. There are 7 Manzil, 540 Ruku' and 6236 verses. On the right top of the Qur'anic page is the Juz (sipara) number, on the left if the surah number, on the right of the surah before the Basmallah is the number of verses in the surah, on the left is the number of Ruku' in it and in the middle is the chronological order of which the surah was revealed. The heart of the Qur'an is Surah Yaaseen, its mother is surah al Faatiha, for protection are the surah Ikhlalas, Falaq and Naas, for Tawheed its surah Ikhlalas, for gratitude its surah ar Rahman and so many others. Each surah has its specificities. These surah were given names relating to dominant content e.g. surah Maryam and sometimes the reasons for the names allocated to different chapters are only known by Allah and His prophet (s.a.w). It must be noted that the arrangement of surah is not in chronological order in which they were revealed. Such surah was designated as that was revealed in Mecca or Medina.

Contents

Students' Notes

Describe what you know about the contents of the Qur'an.

The Holy Qur'an was sent as a book of guidance to guide Mankind on the right path. As it is said that there is no mistake in it and no one can bring another one similar to that of the Qur'an. It is unique also through its content and theme.

The Qur'an being the words of Allah, all the beliefs of Islam are found in it. There are many themes discussed in it. One example can be found in such as belief in the One Allah and His attributes especially of Him as the Compassionate [Ar-Rahman] and the Merciful [Ar-Rahim].

The whole concept of articles of faith is mentioned throughout the whole of the Qur'an. There is the mention of angels like Jibril, Mikail, Izrail, Izrafil, the witnessing angels (Sayyaahoun) among others. There is also the mention of the revealed books brought by messengers [rasool] of Allah such as Abraham [Ibrahim], Jesus [Isa], Moses [Musa] and David [Daoud]. We have the Suhuf, Tawraat, Zabour, Injeel and the Qur'an. There is also the mention of the stories of some (25) prophets [nabi] such as Adam, Noah [Nuh], Joseph [Yusuf] and Solomon [Sulaiman] to name a few. Above all of these prophets there is the mention of prophet Muhammad [3:144] who in various places has been blessed by Allah like in 'No doubt we have given you al Kawthar'.

However, we have other kinds of verses dealing with warnings about Satan [Shaitan, Iblis] as being the obvious and declared enemy of Mankind and tempting human beings all the way till their return to Allah.

There are also warnings about the hard accountability on the Day of Judgement where our records will be presented in front of us for judgement.

There are also the different aspects of the rights of Allah that have been made compulsory like the mention of prayer [salat] [2:43], that of zakat [purifying wealth by giving a fixed portion annually], that of fasting during the month of Ramadan [2:183-184] and that of Hajj [22:31].

There is also verses dealing with the family life like the marital relationships [most of Sura 4], the relationships between parents and children, duties of children, adoption and the laws of inheritance [4:11-13].

There are also verses related to the prohibitions of some foods and alcohol [2:172-173], the prohibitions of lending money for profit [riba], the prohibition of gambling.

Laws related to criminal law, murder and theft were also revealed added to the secrets of the scientific knowledge e.g. Sura Alaq [96:1-5].

Compilation

Students' Notes

Describe the way the Qur'an was compiled under the early Caliphs

The Holy Qur'an as we have today has been through different stages before its completion. Its compilation was made as from the time of the prophet (s.a.w) till the time of early caliphs like Abu Bakr and Uthman.

Among the Ashab, there had been many scribes like Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and Ali who dedicated their lives in the service of Islam. They were some of the notable scribes who would jot down whatever the prophet (s.a.w) was saying. In that way the Ashab were able to keep the Qur'an intact and in addition to that the prophet would encourage the Ashab to memorize the verses by heart.

However, during Abu Bakr's Caliphate many of those who had memorised the Qur'an that is the huffaz died in the Battle of Yamama. According to some it was a number of 70 and according to others it was 700. Whatever the number Hazrat Umar feared the Qur'an may be lost and as such suggested to Abu Bakr to compile it into a book format. When Umar approached Abu Bakr the latter was reluctant to undertake the work as it had not been done in Prophet's lifetime. Nevertheless, he agreed at last as it will benefit the whole Ummah. Abu Bakr then persuaded Zaid bin Habit who was also a scribe to do the work. His work consisted of collecting the words written on pieces of bones, leathers, papyrus and palm leaves. He also collected from those who 'preserved in the hearts of men' the verses of the Qur'an. After the work had been done, copies of the Qur'an had been made and spread throughout the Islamic World. When Abu Bakr passed

away Umar had possession of these and passed it to the daughter of Umar Hafsa who was at the same time the wife of the Prophet (s.a.w) and it was known as Mushaf Hafsa.

During the Caliphate of Uthman it was noted that Qur'an was being read/recited in different dialects. As such there was fighting among the Syrians and the Yemenites. In order to calm the situation and avoid further problem though the Muslim empire was being expanded Uthman had copies of Qur'an collected. Zaid bin Thabit was again assisted by three other Ashab to look over the text of the circulating Qur'an and to be compared to Mushaf Hafsa for accuracy. Hazrat Uthman decided to burn the circulating copies of the Qur'an. The idea behind that was to bring uniformity among the readings of the Muslims and to standardise the text of Allah. Hazrat Uthman used the dialect of the Quraish which is found in the Qur'an compiled by Hazrat Abu Bakr and left to Hazrat Hafsa (ra). Hazrat 'Uthman ordered copies to be made and they were sent to various cities of the Islamic empire. To make sure that the work is done, other versions were burnt.

Another step in the completeness of the Qur'an due to the increasing converts to Islam and the difficulties to read the Qur'an by the non-Arab and Arab children, Mu'awiyah bin Sufyan during the Umayyad dynasty introduced the syntactical marks like fatha, kasra, dwamma, soukoun, tanween, madd among others.

Then there came the final step due to the problem of differentiating between the alphabets of the Arabic language, Abdul Malik bin Marwan, another Umayyad Caliph introduced dots above and below the Arabic alphabets. As such the Qur'an came to us as it was left completed since that period.

What role did Zayd bin Thabit play in the collection of the Qur'an?

During the khilafat of Hazrat Abu Bakr Siddiq (ra) the latter employed Hazrat Zayd bin Thabit as the main responsible for the collection of the Qur'an in one book form. Zayd bin Thabit was a hafiz and the well-known scribe of the Prophet (s.a.w) in Medina.

Moreover, it is said that he was a witness to the Prophet's recitation in the presence of Hazrat Jibril (as) during the Prophet's last Ramadan. As such he was aware of the order of what the surah should be in the Qur'an.

Furthermore, Zayd bin Thabit was asked by Abu Bakr to compile the revealed verses of the Qur'an though he was hesitant. Abu Bakr knew that Zayd bin Thabit was the right man for that job.

Added to the above, Zayd bin Thabit said that 'By Allah, if he [Abu Bakr] had ordered me to shift one of the mountains from its place, it would not have been harder for me than what he had ordered me concerning the collection of the Qur'an'. That shows how much reliable he was.

Then he eventually reconciled to the wisdom of the undertaking and agreed to head the Committee though Hazrat Umar and other companions were part of this committee. It was accepted out of respect for Abu Bakr and the greatness of the mission.

Added to the above, Zayd and Umar sat at the entrance of the Prophet's mosque in Medina collecting all written verses which were attested by two witnesses [known as the Law of Witness methodology which gave it reliability and authoritativeness]. No verse was accepted at first instance. All of them needed verification.

More to the point, the panel of Swahaba led by Zayd began locating written Qur'anic verses from parchments made of animal skins, scapula that is shoulder bone, leafstalks of date palms and from the memories of men. It was a painstaking task and it required great insight from great men in Islam.

Eighthly, these were compared with oral recitation from well-known Qur'an reciters [qurra] for correctness and consistency. This extraordinary effort resulted in all surah and verses duly arranged in the conventions of script and spellings current in Medina. Hazrat Zayd bin Thabit thus became one of the foremost authorities on the Qur'an.

Ninthly, these suhuf were given to Abu Bakr for safe keeping, then to Umar and later in the custody of Hafsa bint Umar Farooq, the wife of the prophet. Hazrat Umar once addressed the Muslims and said 'O people, whoever wants to ask about the Qur'an, let him go to Zayd bin Thabit'.

Last but not least, during Uthman's caliphate the need was felt to make correct copies of the Qur'an. Zayd bin Thabit was called upon once again to head a committee with other companions to prepare copies of the Qur'an from the suhuf kept by Hazrat Hafsa (ra). This was the greatest role played by Zayd bin Thabit (ra).

Importance

Students' Notes

Why do you think it was important to make this collection?

The collection of the Qur'an during the time and after the demise of the prophet (s.a.w) was a great importance. **First of all**, the Prophet (and many huffaz) had died and therefore there were few remaining who were left to consult about Allah's message. As such if the revelations were not compiled there may have been conflicting versions which would not be good for Islam. In this way there would have been the possibility of falsification and innovation.

Secondly, the Qur'an is a miracle for the Muslims. It tells us about things we cannot know of otherwise such as topics on Allah, His signs and attributes, the past (stories of earlier prophets) the present and the future (the Day of Judgement, Paradise and Hell). Therefore, it was vital that the revelations had to be recorded. This was meant for future generations.

Moreover, the Qur'an gives infallible guidance to Muslims on how to conduct their lives. It is the foundation of Islam as it guides us about Hajj, Ramadwan, Zakaat and worship among others. However, if it was not compiled it would be irreplaceable and it would not have been the divine book.

Furthermore, the early Muslims were men of vision. They knew the message of the Qur'an was for all people in the world not just the Arabs. The Muslim empire was expanding, more people becoming Muslim. It was therefore vital to compile revelations so that the message could be preserved and conveyed till the last day.

Added to the above, Allah tells us the Qur'an is for 'those who think'. Therefore, early Muslims realised that a written version was imperative so that individual Muslims could read it and take Allah's message to heart. The Qur'an was thus not meant only to read but to study and to ponder upon.

Why is the Qur'an important to Muslims?

The Qur'an is important in so many different ways. **At the outset**, it is the words of Allah and as such it is from a source of Divine knowledge. Whatever if from Allah is considered as sacred. So by the mere fact that it is from Allah, it is important for the Muslims as the Qur'an directs Muslims to 'Obey Allah and His Messenger' [3:32].

Moreover, the Qur'an was revealed to announce to us about things we cannot know of otherwise. This world and the next are so full of secrets that some of them are unveiled through the Qur'an and serves as a criterion [furqaan] by which to discern truth from falsehood [25:1].

Furthermore, there are topics such as Allah, His signs and attributes, the past (stories of earlier prophets), the present and the future (the Day of Judgement, Paradise and Hell) which are mentioned in the Qur'an. Without their mentioning we would not have been able to know about what is expected from Allah.

Another aspect is that the Qur'an guides us about the Hajj, Ramadan, Zakat, and worship leading us to the knowledge of the foundation of Islam. It is the guidance well awaited by the Muslims.

Fifthly, it addresses the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w), Muslims, as well as everyone in the world. It is a book needed by each and everyone and no one is deprived from its guidance. It is meant for both Muslims and non Muslims.

Added to the above, it is a complete code of life for Muslims. The Qur'an is meant to be followed and as such it provides the best code of conduct for the Muslims. It is an invitation to guidance on all aspects of life.

Furthermore, it is also important as therein are verses used in worship. Without the verses there is no swalaat. The Qur'an is the source where verses of Allah can be derived from. It indicates also the completion of the cycle of revelation.

Eighthly, the Qur'an forms the foundation of a just society. Abiding by the rules and regulations of the Qur'an will render a Muslim society a Spiritual society. It acts as a means to build up the society on the foundation of morality.

Moreover, the Qur'an is used as a base for legal thinking that is the Islamic Law - the Shari'ah. All basic rules and regulations are found primarily in the Qur'an and these authorities can't be falsified. The Qur'an is a book of Law meant for all generations.

Last but not least, Allah through the Qur'an expects us to think and reflect on His verses [12:108] and to use our reason [40:67]. The first revelation was the command to 'Read' implying the whole concept of education and as such Allah Himself says he will protect the Qur'an with its teachings and it will remain unchanged for eternity [15:9].