

QUESTION AND ANSWER BUCKET

Q1. Why was the Qur'an revealed in Arabic?

Answer:

1. Every revelation was revealed in the language of the land it was revealed in

The Glorious Qur'an though it is meant for the whole of humankind, the reason it was revealed in Arabic was because the Glorious Qur'an was revealed in Arabia, and it had to be revealed in the language of that land. It can't be revealed in a foreign language.

Similarly, the previous revelations like Torah, Zaboor, Injeel, were revealed in Hebrew, in the language of that land. So, when a revelation is sent to a particular land it should be in the language of that land.

2. Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) mother tongue was Arabic

Since the Qur'an was revealed to the last and final messenger Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) but natural it had to be in his mother tongue. If the Qur'an was revealed in a language which was foreign to the messenger on whom it was revealed then surely those people who knew the language better and their mother tongue was the language of the Qur'an, surely they would approach the Prophet (pbuh) and say, "What will you explain to us about a book whose language is our mother tongue and it is not your mother tongue." That is precisely why the Qur'an had to be revealed in the language of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) which was Arabic.

3. Arabic is a living language

Besides, though Arabic is an ancient language, yet it is a living language. There are more than 300 million people today who yet speak Arabic. The other languages in which the other previous scriptures were revealed like Sanskrit, ancient Hebrew, Aramaic, all these are dead languages and only a handful of scholars know them. So, if anyone wants to change these scriptures it is very easy, and no will come to know about it. But today suppose somebody wants to change the Arabic Qur'an, it will be impossible because more than 300 million speak Arabic today and they can easily point out the changes made.

4. Arabic is a rich language

Arabic is a rich language. Sometimes you may require several words, or sentences to describe the meanings of a single word in Arabic and many a time more than one meaning implies. For example, the first verse of the Glorious Qur'an.

أَفْرَأُ بِأَسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ

“Proclaim (or read) in the name of thy Lord and Cherisher, who created. Created man out of a (mere) clot of congealed blood (a leech like substance).”

(Al Qur’an 96:1-2)

The Arabic ‘Iqra’ means to read, to recite and it also means to proclaim. The Arabic word ‘Rabb’ besides meaning the Lord, also means the Cherisher, the Sustainer and the Provider. The Arabic word ‘Khalafa’ has got several meanings, besides meaning something created from nothing, it could also mean something created from pre-existing material. Khalafa also means to plan, to programme. Khalafa also means to make smooth. The Arabic word, ‘Alaqa’ means congealed clot of blood, something which clings, a leech like substance.

If the above Aayah had to be translated correctly and fully then it would be:

“Read, recite, proclaim, in the name of your Lord, the Cherisher, the Sustainer, the Provider, Who created, planned, programmed, Who made smooth. Who created the human beings with something that clings, a congealed clot of blood, a leech like substance.”

It is clearly demonstrated with only one example that it will be very difficult. Arabic language is rich, therefore in a short way, as a telegraphic message, it can convey a lot of meanings.

5. Reading the Qur’an in Arabic is lively and enjoyable

There are various ways of reading the Qur’an, Tazakkurul Qur’an – reading the superficial meanings and Tadabburul Qur’an – reading with the deep meanings. When we read the Arabic portion of the Qur’an, even if we read it a thousand times, we won’t feel tired or bored of reading it. The more we read it the more we will enjoy it.

6. Arabic script requires less space to write

If you analyse, to write its script it requires less space. For example, if we write ‘Muhammad’ in Arabic, مُحَمَّد, 4 letters, م ح م د with Fathah (◌َ) and Dhammah (◌ُ) on the top, the vowels. If we have to repeat a letter in Arabic we just need to a Shaddah (◌ّ). If we have to write the same ‘Muhammad’ in English, it consists of 8 letters.

If you analyse, the time, the space the ink and the energy taken to write Arabic as compared to the English language and other languages, it is 1/3rd to 1/2.

7. Qur’an is meant for the whole of humankind although revealed in Arabic

Although the Qur’an is revealed in Arabic it is yet meant for the whole of humankind. Suppose a French doctor does research in French regarding the treatment of a certain disease that does not mean that treatment cannot be used in USA or India. If someone wants to analyse that treatment can either learn the French language or one can get it translated. Similarly, the Arabic Qur’an was revealed for the whole of

humankind, one can either learn the Arabic or can refer to the translation of the Qur'an to acquire its guidance.

Q2. Why do certain Surahs in the Qur'an begin with 'Alif Laam Meem', 'Haa Meem', 'Yaa Seen' and what is the significance of such terms or phrases?

Answer:

1. Abbreviated letters

Alif Laam Meem, Yaa Seen, Haa Meem, etc. are known as Al-Muqatt'aat i.e., the abbreviated letters. There are 29 letters in the Arabic Alphabet (if Hamza and Alif are considered as two letters) and there are 29 Surahs i.e., Chapters in the Glorious Qur'an that have the abbreviated letters prefixed to them. These abbreviated letters sometimes occur alone, sometimes in a combination of two letters and sometimes in a combination of three, four or five letters.

a. Three Surahs are prefixed with only one letter:

Surah Saad Chapter 38 with Saad
Surah Qaaf Chapter 50 with Qaaf
Surah Noon or Al Qalam Chapter 68 with Noon

b. The combination of two letters occurs in ten Surahs: Three of them occur only once each:

Surah Taa Haa Chapter 20 has Taa Haa
Surah Al Naml Chapter 27 has Taa Seen
Surah Yaa Seen Chapter 36 has Yaa Seen

Haa Meem occurs in seven consecutive Surahs from Surah 40 to Surah 46:

Surah Ghaafir or Al-Mu'min Chapter 40
Surah Fussilat or Haa Meem Chapter 41
Surah Al Shooraa Chapter 42
Surah Al Zukhruf Chapter 43
Surah Al Dukhaan Chapter 44
Surah Al Jaathiyah Chapter 45
Surah Al Ahqaaf Chapter 46

c. There are three combinations of three letters each occurring in 13 Surahs:

Alif Laam Meem occurs in six Surahs

Surah Al Baqarah Chapter 2
Surah Aali 'Imran Chapter 3
Surah Al 'Ankaboot Chapter 29
Surah Al Room Chapter 30
Surah Luqmaan Chapter 31
Surah Al Sajdah Chapter 32

Alif Laam Ra occurs in five Surahs from Surah 10 to Surah 15 except Surah 13:

Surah Yoonus Chapter 10
Surah Hood Chapter 11
Surah Yoosuf Chapter 12
Surah Ibraaheem Chapter 14
Surah Al Hijr Chapter 15

Taa Seen Meem occurs in two Surahs:

Surah Al Shu'araa Chapter 26
Surah Al Qasas Chapter 28

d. Combination of four letters occurs twice:

Surah Al A'raaf Chapter 7: Alif Laam Meem Saad
Surah Al Raa'd Chapter 13: Alif Laam Meem Raa

e. Combination of five letters occurs twice:

Surah Maryam Chapter 19 begins with Kaaf Haa Yaa 'Ayn Saad
Surah Al Shooraa Chapter 42 begins with Haa Meem 'Ayn Seen Qaaf

Surah Al Shooraa Chapter 42 has a double combination of abbreviated letters, one set of two letters followed by one set of three letters.

2. Meanings of these abbreviated letters

The meaning and purpose of these letters is uncertain. There have been a variety of explanations offered by Muslim scholars through the ages. A few among them are:

- a. These letters might be abbreviations for certain sentences and words for instance, Alif Laam Meem means 'Ana-Allahu-a'Lam' or Noon meaning Noor (light), etc.
- b. These letters are not abbreviations but symbols and names of Allah or something else.
- c. These letters were used for rhyming.
- d. These letters have some numerical significance as the semitic letters also have numerical values.
- e. These letters were used to attract the attention of the Prophet (and later his audience).

Several volumes have been written on the significance of these abbreviations.

3. Best explanation of abbreviated letters

Of all the explanations given by various scholars, the one which is authentic and also supported by Tafsir of Ibn Katheer, Zamakshari and Ibn Taiymiyyah (ra) is the following:

The human body, clay and dust are composed of the same fundamental elements. Yet it would be absurd to say that a human being is exactly the same as the dust.

We can all go to the market and purchase or have access to the elements that are found in the human body and add a few gallons of water. This is the constitution of the human body. We know the elements in the human body and yet we cannot understand the secret of life.

Similarly, the Qur'an addresses those people who reject its Divine authority. It tells them that this Qur'an, is in your own language, and composed of the same letter over which the Arabs took pride.

The Arabs were very proud of their language and Arabic was at its peak when the Qur'an was revealed. With the letters Alif Laam Meem, Yaa Seen, Haa Meem, etc., (in English we would say A, B, C, D) the Qur'an challenges mankind to produce a Surah at least somewhat similar to the Qur'an in beauty and eloquence, if they doubt its authenticity.

Initially, the Qur'an challenges all the men and jinn to produce a recital like the Qur'an and adds that they would not be able to do it even if they back each other. This challenge is mentioned in Surah Al Israa' Chapter 17 Verse 88 and in Surah Al Toor Chapter 52 Verse 34.

Later the Qur'an repeats the challenge in Surah Hood Chapter 11 Verse 13 by saying produce ten Surahs like it and later in Surah Yunus Chapter 10 Verse 38 produce one Surah like it and finally the easiest challenge is given in Surah Al Baqarah Chapter 2 Verses 23 and 24.

وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِّمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلَىٰ عَبْدِنَا فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِّثْلِهِ ۚ وَادْعُوا شُهَدَاءَكُمْ مِمَّن دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

فَإِنْ لَّمْ تَفْعَلُوا وَلَنْ تَفْعَلُوا فَاتَّقُوا النَّارَ الَّتِي وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ ۗ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْكَافِرِينَ

“And if ye are in doubt as to what We have revealed from time to time to Our servant, then produce a Surah like thereunto; and call your witnesses or helpers (if there are any) besides Allah if your doubts are true.

But if ye cannot - and of a surety ye cannot - then fear the fire whose fuel is men and stones - which is prepared for those who reject faith.”

[Al Qur'an 2:23-24]

To compare the skill of two artisans, they must be given samples of the same raw material and their performance is evaluated in performing the same task. If they are tailors, they must be provided with the same fabrics. The raw materials of the Arabic language are these letters Alif Laam Meem, Yaa Seen (in English it is A, B, C, D, etc.) The miraculous nature of the language of the Qur'an does not lie only in the fact

that it is the Word of Allah, but also in the fact that although made up of the same letters in which the pagan Arabs took pride, it has not been rivalled.

The Arabs are noted for their rhetoric ability, eloquence, and meaningful expression. Just as the constituents of the human body are known to us and can be obtained by us, the letters comprising the Qur'an, such as Alif Laam Meem are known to us, and used frequently to formulate words. Life cannot be created by us, even if we possess knowledge of the constituents of the human body. Similarly, we cannot produce the same eloquence and beauty of expression that we find in the Qur'an, despite knowing the letters that constitute the Qur'an. The Qur'an thus proves its Divine origin.

4. Miraculous quality of the Qur'an mentioned immediately after these broken letters

Therefore, immediately after these broken letters are mentioned in the Qur'an, the following Verses speak about the miracle of the Qur'an, and its authority, e.g. in Surah Al Baqarah Chapter 2 Verses 1-2:

أَلَمْ ذَلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ

“Alif Laam Meem. This is the Book; in it is guidance sure, without doubt, to those who fear Allah.”

[Al-Qur'an 2:1-2]

Q3. Does Islam believe in several Gods because the Qur'an uses the word 'We' when God speaks in the Qur'an?

Answer:

Islam is a strictly monotheistic religion. It believes in and adheres to uncompromising monotheism. It believes that God is one, and unique in His attributes. In the Qur'an, God often refers to Himself using the word 'We'. But this does not mean that Islam believes in the existence of more than one God.

1. Two types of plurals

In several languages, there are two types of plurals, one is a plural of numbers to refer to something that is more than one. The other plural is a plural of respect.

In the English language, the Queen of England refers to herself as 'We' instead of 'I'. This is known as the 'royal plural'.

Rajiv Gandhi, the former Prime Minister of India used to say in Hindi 'Hum dekhna chahte hain'. 'Hum' means 'We' which is again a royal plural in Hindi.

Similarly in Arabic, when Allah refers to Himself in the Qur'an, many a time He uses 'Nahnu' meaning 'We'. It does not indicate plural of numbers but plural of respect.

2. Tawheed or monotheism is a pillar of Islam

'Tawheed' or monotheism is one of the pillars of Islam. The existence and uniqueness of one and only one God is mentioned several times in the Qur'an. For instance in Surah Al Ikhlaas, it says:

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ

"Say He is Allah the one and only."
[Al-Qur'an 112:1]

Q4. Why is Allah referred as 'He' in the Qur'an?

Answer:

1. No Neuter gender in Arabic

In most of the languages we have three genders - Masculine, Feminine and Neuter genders. But in Arabic we have only 2 genders - Masculine and Feminine. There is no Neuter gender.

- a. 'Huwa' in Arabic means 'He' or 'It'
- b. 'Hiya' in Arabic means 'She' or 'It'
- c. There is no specific Neuter gender in Arabic

2. Why 'Huwa' used instead of 'Hiya' when both mean 'It'

There are certain rules for using feminine gender in Arabic:

- a. Specific word for female, for example 'Ummun' for 'mother'.
- b. If the Arabic word ends with 't' for example 'Mirwahatun' which means fan (Allah does not end with a 't').
- c. Anything which is dual in pairs for example 'ainun' for eyes, 'yadun' for hands (Allah is singular).

Q5. For every letter of Qur'an, we recite we get Sawab or the blessings, does that mean reciting, "Iblis...Iblis...Iblis" which is also mentioned in the Qur'an, will that person also get the Sawab?

Answer:

It is true that it is mentioned in a Sahih Hadith,

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said:

"Whosoever reads one letter of the Book of Allah is credited with one Sawab (blessing) and one blessing is equal to tenfold the like thereof its reward. I do not say that الم is one letter. But ا is one letter, ل is one letter and م is one letter."

(Sunan At Tirmidhi – Hadith 2910)

The question asked is if one recites, "Iblis...Iblis...Iblis" which is a word mentioned in the Qur'an, will one also get the Sawab for reciting it?

If one recites "Iblis...Iblis...Iblis" as though one has made it as a Tasbeeh, glorifying Iblis, then definitely you won't get the Sawab. But if you recite Iblis with understanding and realising that Iblis is the Satan, the devil, the evil one, he is an enemy to you, then In Sha Allah you will get the Sawab.

Q6. Is Qur'anic Arabic different from the colloquial Arabic spoken in Arab countries today? If one learns Arabic as a language, would it help to understand the Qur'an better?

Answer:

The colloquial Arabic that is spoken today in the Arab countries is different from the Qur'anic Arabic. There are similarities but there are differences too because the Arabic of the Qur'an is 'Lughah Fusaha', pure and original.

There are certain words of the Glorious Qur'an, the Lughah Fusaha, which are still used in certain parts of Arab countries, but they are a minority.

A layman Arab today, who only knows colloquial Arabic may not be able to understand everything of the Qur'an. He may be able to understand a large portion of the Qur'an barring a few words.

It is observed that many people go to Saudi Arabia or other Middle Eastern countries for a job and within a short span of time learn Arabic. What they learn is the colloquial Arabic and few words or sentences like, 'Kayfa Haaluka', how are you? 'Ismuki', what is your name? Mirwahatun, fan, but there is no mention of Mirwahatun in the Qur'an!

If one learns the normal colloquial Arabic, it will help you to understand the Qur'an a little bit more but my advice to the Muslims is to learn the Lughah Fusaha.

Q7. Is it compulsory for person to accept Islam before reading the Qur'an? Can one read the Qur'an without accepting Islam?

Answer:

Qur'an was revealed as a guidance for the whole of humanity, it's not necessary that you must be a Muslim to read the Qur'an. But In Sha Allah if you read the Qur'an with an open mind, an unbiased mind, and an open heart, In Sha Allah you will accept Islam.

Yusuf Islam, a famous British pop singer who was known as Cat Stevens earlier, in an interview said that it is good that he read the Qur'an before meeting the Muslims. He read the Qur'an and accepted Islam, if he had met the Muslims before reading the Qur'an maybe he wouldn't have accepted Islam.

Qur'an is a guidance for the whole of humanity and one can very-well read the translation of the Qur'an in the language one understands the best.

Q8. There are certain verses in the Hindu scriptures which speak about monotheism whereas there are some which speak the opposite. Why don't you quote those verses from Hindu scriptures which are contradictory to monotheism?

Answer:

1. Vedas and Upanishads are a higher authority and ought to be followed

The highest in authority amongst all the Hindu scriptures are the Vedas and the Upanishads, which are together referred to as the Shrutis. They basically speak about monotheism.

i. "Ekam Evaditiam"

"God is only one without a second."

(Chandogya Upanishad, 6:2:1)

ii. "Na Casya Kascij Janita Na Cadhipah"

"Of that God, He has got no superior, He has got no parents."

(Svetasvatara Upanishad, 6:9)

iii. "Na Tasya Pratima Asti"

"Of that God there is no Pratima."

(Svetasvatara Upanishad, 4:19)

Similar message is given in the Vedas,

iv. "Natasya Pratima Asti"

Of that God there is no image.

(Yajurveda, 32:3)

Pratima in Sanskrit means image, photograph, picture, painting, sculpture, idol. According to this verse God has no image, no picture, no painting, no portrait, no sculpture, no statue, no idol.

There are other scriptures which are lower down in authority which do speak about pantheism and polytheism. Logically if there is a contradiction, we follow the higher authority.

2. "Come to common terms"

We are instructed by God Almighty to talk about the similarities first.

قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا إِلَى كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ أَلَّا نَعْبُدَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَلَا نُشْرِكَ بِهِ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضًا أَرْبَابًا مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ ۚ فَإِن تَوَلَّوْا فَقُولُوا اشْهَدُوا بِأَنَّا مُسْلِمُونَ

"Say: "O People of the Book! come to common terms as between us and you: That we worship none but Allah; that we associate no partners with him; that we erect not, from among ourselves, Lords and patrons other than Allah." If then they turn back, say ye: "Bear witness that we (at least) are Muslims (bowing to Allah's Will)."

(Al Qur'an 3:64)

This is a formula shown in the Qur'an of how to speak with different types of people, that is come to common terms, differences we can discuss later. I can give a longer speech talking about the differences in Islam and Hinduism, but my job is not to bring out the differences. We come to common terms and agree to follow what is common. Thus, I am picking up those verses which are matching with the Qur'an.

Even if there is a verse of polytheism in the Vedas or Upanishads, but since there is no verse of polytheism in the Qur'an, so that goes off the table.

3. Word of God cannot contradict

Moreover, logically how can Almighty God contradict. How can Almighty God say in one place, there is one God and other places there are many gods that means there is a contradiction, and if there is a contradiction, it cannot be the word of God.

If there are contradictions in any scripture, you must reject that scripture. I personally don't consider it to be the word of God. But because the Hindus consider certain scriptures to be the word of God, I am quoting from their scriptures.

4. Qur'an has no contradictions

أَفَلَا يَتَذَكَّرُونَ الْفُرْعَانَ ۚ وَلَوْ كَانِ مِنْ عِنْدِ غَيْرِ اللَّهِ لَوَجَدُوا فِيهِ اخْتِلَافًا كَثِيرًا

"Do they not consider the Qur'an (with care)? Had it been from other Than Allah, they would surely have found therein Much discrepancy (contradiction)."

(Al Qur'an 4:82)

Q9. The laws that govern the universe has not changed from the time the universe was created. Does God have any choice in changing the laws of the universe since time immemorial? Why hasn't God changed the laws which governs the universe? If God has no choice in changing the laws of the universe, then why call him God?

Answer:

I agree with you that the laws of the universe have been the same since the time they have been formed. Now, it is God's choice that He does not want to change them, that's the reason He hasn't changed them. He will not be following your choice! It is God's will that He does not want to change but now you are forcing Him to change. The question is, why should He follow you?

If God wants to change, He can easily change them. But Allah also informs us in the Qur'an:

فَطَرَتِ اللَّهُ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِخَلْقِ اللَّهِ

"...Allah's handiwork according to the pattern on which He has made mankind: no change (let there be) in the work (wrought) by Allah."

(Al Qur'an 30:30)

This is God's law, if He wants He can change. But He does not want to change it. That's His choice.

If Allah wants to make the sun rise from the east and set in the west, that is His choice. The challenge is for you that can you make the sun rise in the west and set it in the east? The answer is, No. But one of the signs of Qiyamah is that the sun will rise from the west. To show that if God wants, He can do it. Before the Day of Judgment, before Qiyamah that will happen. How will it happen? Allahu A'lam (Allah knows the best).

إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

"Allah has power over all things."

(Al Qur'an 35:1)

He has power over all things, but Allah does things which He wants, and He only does Godly things.