

The Holy Qur'ān

Arabic Text
with
English Translation and Commentary

by

Maulana Muhammad Ali
*Renowned author of
several classic works on Islam*



New 2002 edition
Redesigned, retypeset, with expanded Index

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Foreword

The *English Translation of the Holy Qur'ān with Commentary*, by Maulana Muhammad Ali (d. 1951), has been highly acclaimed all over the world, ever since the first edition appeared in 1917, and holds the position of a renowned classic of religious literature. It was the first English translation by a Muslim to be generally available and to be made accessible to the West, printed as it was in England. Its publication was all the more remarkable as it took place at a time when there was a grossly distorted, misconceived and dark image of Islam generally prevalent, making the atmosphere extremely hostile to this sublime faith and to prospects of its progress.

Besides being a pioneer work, there are several other important respects in which this Translation and Commentary holds an outstanding and unrivalled position. Two may be noted here. Firstly, it presents the faith of Islam in its pure and pristine form by treating the Qur'ān itself as the direct supreme authority, rather than approaching it through the medium of later interpretations. It thus corrects the deep-seated and widely-held misconceptions about Islamic teachings, and shows Islam to be an entirely peaceful and tolerant religion, a faith which seeks to convince and not to coerce, and one which is concerned not only with outward forms but with the inner spirit as well. Secondly, this work has had an incalculable influence in drawing non-Muslims towards Islam, as well as rescuing Muslims themselves from doubt and disillusionment, as evidenced by the wealth of glowing tributes which have been paid to it.

Maulana Muhammad Ali thoroughly revised the whole work in the last five years of his life, the revised edition being published in 1951 followed by several reprint editions over the years.

So immense has been the impact, success and popularity of this work that efforts were started many years ago to render it into other languages. Recently, the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam Lahore Inc. U.S.A. has renewed these endeavours with fresh vigour, and work is being energetically done to make this book available in more and more languages of the world.

This edition has been entirely re-typeset with improved design and layout. A new footnote numbering scheme has been introduced, which gives a neater appearance to the translation as well as being more convenient for locating footnotes. The new scheme is explained fully in the *Key to References and Authorities*. The Index has also been substantially expanded.

We thank Dr. Zahid Aziz of England for carrying out the improvements and revisions mentioned, and correcting misprints in the previous edition.

We conclude below with some extracts from the Foreword to the 1963 reprint edition of this work, contributed by Maulana Muhammad Yakub Khan, one-time Imam of the Woking Muslim Mission, England, outlining the very great service rendered to Islam by Maulana Muhammad Ali and his devotion to the cause of the Holy Qur'ān.

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Lahore, October 1990

From the Foreword to the 1963 Edition

by Maulana Muhammad Yakub Khan

Maulana Muhammad Ali's Translation marks a definite epoch in the understanding of Islam. Among the Muslim intelligentsia it positively arrested the creeping decay of faith as a result of the Western materialistic influences, and the sceptical trends of Western philosophic thought. Typical of this reaction of the Muslim mind was the fulsome acknowledgement by a well-known devout Muslim thinker and writer, referred to by the author in the Preface, who ascribes his own rescue from the wilderness of atheism to this Translation.

In the realm of Western scholarship, the impact of this Translation is noticeable in the changed outlook on Islam and the changed tone of literature about Islam that has since appeared. The very first indications of such wholesome change are met with in the writings of a man of no less scholarly stature than H. G. Wells. In 1920, when his work *The Outline of History*, appeared, it carried the whole of Section 16 of Chapter 3 as rendered in this Translation, describing it as an example of the Qur'ān's "majestic utterances from the recent orthodox translation by the Maulvi Muhammad Ali".

Interpreting the Word of God calls for great gifts of scholarship, no doubt, but it requires something much more, which no scholarship can confer — the gift of inner purity. Maulana Muhammad Ali wielded a scholar's pen with a saint's hands, and that is where lay the secret of this Translation becoming a real spiritual force and a beacon of light for seekers-after-truth. By the very cast of his mind, Maulana Muhammad Ali was deeply religious. Having obtained three university degrees, when the prospects of a bright worldly career lay at his feet, he dedicated his life to the service of

Islam. And what a dedication! He took up his pen in that cause in 1902 as a young man in his twenties, wielded it incessantly, untiringly and devotedly for half a century, and did not lay it down until it was actually snatched from him by the hand of death.

Work on the first edition of the English translation of the Qur'ān took him seven long years (1909–1916). The amount of original research that went into tracing the meanings of the words and verses, finding the underlying sense of Sections and Chapters, and linking it up with the preceding and succeeding text, so that the whole of the Qur'ān was shown to have the thread of a continuous theme running through it — it is simply staggering to think of all this stupendous and most taxing labour put in single handed, day after day, for seven long years. But that is exactly what made Maulana Muhammad Ali's translation the boon of the world of scholarship in the West as well as the East when it appeared in print in 1917. It was a pioneer venture breaking altogether new ground, and the pattern set was followed by all subsequent translations of the Qur'ān by Muslims. It meets every criticism that has been levelled against the Qur'ān. The Introduction is a whole mine of research, which throws light on all the salient features of a truly Divine religion. There is no attempt at pedantry or literary flourishes. Nor is there any pandering to preconceived popular notions or a bid for cheap popularity. It is a loyal service to the Word of God aiming at scrupulously honest, faithful rendering.

About the closing years of his life, when the Translation had already run into three editions, and the Maulana was stepping into his seventies, he felt he owed it to the world to give it the fruit of his deeper insight into the Quranic truths, which more extensive study in the meantime, and advancing years, had brought him. Once more he plunged himself into another long spell of the most taxing labour to bring out a revised edition. This took him another five years (1946-1951). He forgot that he was no longer a young man. The strain proved too much for him, so that he had to do the proof reading in his sick-bed, which finally proved his death-bed.

“On arrival of the proofs from England,” write his biographers, “the Maulana would get his head raised in his bed, and with hands quivering would correct the proofs and give the final touches.” The final proofs were corrected on October 8, 1951, and five days later he breathed his last. He died in harness in the service of the Qur'ān.

The Qur'ān describes the battle for the minds of men as the highest *jihād*. Maulana Muhammad Ali was undoubtedly the greatest *mujāhid* of his day in the cause of the Qur'ān.

Publisher's Note

This edition of Maulana Muhammad Ali's English Translation and Commentary of the Holy Qur'ān is the first to be produced from new typesetting since the publication of his revised edition in 1951. It was essential to renew the typesetting in order to maintain and improve print quality.

We have taken advantage of this opportunity to correct previous misprints, improve layout and design, use a better footnote numbering scheme, check cross-references, and substantially expand the Index of subjects.

The proposals for this redesign and misprint correction were made some years ago by Dr. Zahid Aziz and submitted to the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Lahore, Pakistan. These were studied in detail by the then Head and President, Dr. Saeed Ahmad Khan, the Vice-President, Mr. Naseer Ahmad Faruqi, and other senior members of the Anjuman, and approval was given after due consultations and discussions. At the same time, a Foreword was approved for the new edition which is reproduced preceding this Note.

In the previous edition, there were many cases in which quotations from the Holy Qur'ān as given within the footnotes and the Introduction were somewhat differently worded from the same passages as given in the translation itself. To prevent confusion, these have now been made consistent with the translation, but wherever the different wording was being used to illustrate a particular point we have retained it, either in parentheses after the standard translation or by insertion of the standard translation in parentheses. There were also some instances in the footnotes where an Arabic term or expression had been mentioned without indicating the specific word or words that it corresponded to in the translation of the verse above. In such cases, whenever necessary for clarity, we have inserted the English words within parentheses after the Arabic term.

We wish to stress that we have only corrected printing errors as well as certain inconsistencies which, in our judgment, Maulana Muhammad Ali himself would have rectified. No other kinds of additions, omissions or changes have been made in the translation or footnotes. At certain points we also consulted the Maulana's first edition of 1917 to help in identifying some errors and unintended omissions which occurred during the production of the revised 1951 edition.

Readers of the previous editions should note the slight change in verse numbering in chapter 3, most of chapter 6, and the end of chapter 4, made for reasons of standardisation, which is explained on page I-21.

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