

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ
 الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ وَكَفَى، وَسَلَامٌ عَلٰی عِبَادِهِ الَّذِیْنَ اصْطَفٰی

FOREWORD

by

Justice Maulanā Muḥammad Taqī Usmānī

Ma'āriful-Qur'ān is the name of a detailed Urdu commentary of the Holy Qur'ān written by my father Maulanā Mufti Muḥammad Shafī' (رحمة الله عليه). He was one of the eminent scholars who served as a professor and as a grand Mufti of Darul-Uloom Deoband, the well-known university of the Islamic Sciences in the sub-continent of India. In 1943, he resigned from Darul-Uloom, due to his active involvement in the Pakistan movement, and when Pakistan came into existence, he migrated to Karachi where he devoted his life for this new homeland of the Muslims and served the country in different capacities. He also established Darul-Uloom Karachi, an outstanding institute of Islamic Sciences on the pattern of Darul-Uloom Deoband, which is regarded today as the biggest private institute of higher Islamic education in Pakistan.

He was a prolific writer who left behind him about one hundred books on different Islamic and literary subjects. Ma'āriful-Qur'ān was the last great work he accomplished four years before his demise.

The origin of Ma'āriful-Qur'ān refers back to the third of Shawwal 1373 A.H. (corresponding to the 2nd of July 1954) when the author was invited to give weekly lectures on the Radio Pakistan to explain selected verses of the Holy Qur'ān to the general audience. This invitation was accepted by the author on the condition that he would not accept any remuneration for this service and that his lectures would be broadcast without any interference by the editing authorities. The permanent title of this weekly programme was

"Ma'ariful-Qur'an" (The Wisdom of the Holy Qur'an) and it was broadcast every Friday morning on the network of Radio Pakistan.

This series of lectures continued for ten years upto the month of June 1964 whereby the new authorities stopped the programme for reasons best known to them. This series of lectures contained a detailed commentary on selected verses from the beginning of the Holy Qur'an upto the Sūrah Ibrāhīm (Sūrah no. 14).

This weekly programme of Radio Pakistan was warmly welcomed by the Muslims throughout the globe and used to be listened to by thousands of Muslims, not only in Pakistan and India but also in Western and African countries.

After the programme was discontinued, there was a flood of requests from all over the world to transfer this series in a book-form and to complete the remaining part of the Holy Qur'an in the shape of a regular commentary.

These requests persuaded the esteemed author to revise these lectures and to add those verses which were not included in the original lectures. He started this project in 1383 A.H. (1964) and completed the commentary of Surah al-Fatihah in its revised form and started the revision of Surah al-Baqarah. However, due to his numerous involvements he had to discontinue this task, and it remained unattended during the next five years.

In Shawwal 1388 (1969) the esteemed author suffered from a number of diseases which made him restricted to his bed. It was during this ailment that he restarted this work while on bed and completed Sūrah al-Baqarah in the same condition. Since then he devoted himself to the "Ma'ariful-Qur'an". Despite a large number of obstacles in his way, not only from the political atmosphere of the country and the difficult responsibilities he had on his shoulders in different capacities, but also from his health and physical condition, he never surrendered to any of them and continued his work with a miraculous speed until he accomplished the work in eight volumes (comprising of about seven thousand pages) within five years only.

After appearing in a regular book-form, Ma'ariful-Qur'an was highly appreciated and widely admired by the Urdu-knowing Muslims throughout the world. Thousands of copies of the book are still circulated every year, and the demand for the book is so increasing

that it has always been a problem for its publisher to satisfy the demand to its optimum.

A Few Words about the present English Translation of Ma'āriful-Qur'ān

Let me say a few words about the present English translation of the Ma'āriful-Qur'ān.

Although a large number of English translations of the Holy Qur'ān is available in the market, yet no comprehensive commentary of the Holy Qur'ān has still appeared in the English language. Some brief footnotes found with some English translations cannot fulfil the need of a detailed commentary. Besides, they are generally written by the people who did not specialize themselves in the Qur'ānic sciences, and their explanatory notes do not often reflect the authentic interpretation of the Holy Qur'ān. Some such notes are based on an arbitrary interpretation having no foundation in the recognized principles of the exegesis of the Holy Qur'ān, and are thus misleading for a common reader.

On the other hand, during the last few decades, the Muslim population has increased among the English speaking countries in enormous numbers. These people and their new generations need a detailed commentary of the Holy Qur'ān which may explain to them the correct message of the last divine book with all the relevant material in an authentic manner which conforms to the recognized principles of *tafsir* (the exegesis of the Holy Qur'ān).

Since Ma'āriful-Qur'ān was the latest book written on these lines and was proved to be beneficial for a layman as well as for a scholar, it was advised by different circles that its English translation may fulfill the need.

It made me look for a person who might undertake the task, not only with his professional competence, but also with his commitment to serve the Holy Qur'ān.

Fortunately, I succeeded in persuading Prof. Muḥammad Hasan Askarī, the well-known scholar of English literature and criticism, to undertake the translation. In the beginning he was reluctant due to his strong sense of responsibility in the religious matters, but when I assured him of my humble assistance throughout his endeavor, he not

only agreed to the proposal, but started the work with remarkable devotion. Despite my repeated requests, he did never accept any honorarium or a remuneration for his service. He was a chain-smoker. But he never smoked during his work on Ma'ariful-Qur'an, which sometimes lasted for hours.

In this manner he completed the translation of about 400 pages of the original Urdu book and 156 verses of the Sūrah al-Baqarah, but unfortunately, his sudden demise discontinued this noble effort. Strangely enough, the last portion he translated was the commentary of the famous verse:

ولنبلونكم بشيء من الخوف والجوع ونقص من الاموال والا نفس والثمرات

وبشر الصابرين ۝ الذين اذا اصابتهم مصيبة قالوا انا لله وانا اليه راجعون ۝

And surely, We will test you with a bit of fear and hunger and loss in wealth and lives and fruits. And give good tidings to the patient who, when they suffer a calamity, say, 'We certainly belong to Allah and to Him we are bound to return'.

Prof. Askari passed away in 1977, and due to my overwhelming occupations during the next 12 years, I could not find out a suitable person to substitute him. It was in 1989, that Prof. Muhammad Shamim offered his services to resume the translation from where Prof. Askari had left it. I found in him the same sincerity, commitment and devotion I had experienced in the late Professor. Moreover, he had decided to devote the rest of his life to the service of the Holy Qur'an without any financial benefit. Here again I tried my best to persuade him to accept some kind of honorarium, but it was in vain. He started his work from the Verse 158 of Surah al-Baqarah and has now completed the translation of the first two volumes of the original Ma'ariful-Qur'an and is working on the third volume.

Both Prof. Muhammad Hasan Askari and Prof. Muhammad Shamim have insisted that their translations must be revised by me from the religious point of view. For this purpose, I have gone through the typescript of the translations of both of them and suggested some amendments where it was necessary.

The translation of Prof. Askari had been started at a time when the esteemed author of Ma'ariful-Qur'an was still alive. We were fortunate to receive some guide-lines from the author himself. He had

advised the translators not to be too literal in translation to sacrifice the natural flow of the text. Moreover, he had emphasized that while rendering his book into English, the requirements of English readership must be kept in mind. Some discussions may be dispensed with. Similarly, many paragraphs may be condensed in the English version in order to avoid repetition.

The esteemed author had authorised me for suitable decisions in these matters. Both the learned translators, despite their earnest effort to reflect the original text as accurately as possible, have followed, in consultation with me, the said advices of the author himself. However they have never tried to sacrifice the original concept of the text for the beauty of language alone. Particularly, in the juristic discussions of the book, they have been very strict in the translation, lest some change in the style should creep in and distort the accurate connotation of the Islamic injunctions. In such places, the reader may feel some difficulty. However, a more concentrate reading can easily remove it.

Translation of the Holy Qur'an

The original Urdu Ma'ariful-Qur'an had not given a new translation of the Holy Qur'an itself. Rather, the esteemed author had adopted the Urdu translations of Maulana Mahmoodul-Hasan (Shaikhul-Hind) and Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanavi on which he based his commentary. While rendering the book into English, we had three options about the translation of the Holy Qur'an:

- (a) To adopt any one of the already available English translations of the Holy Qur'an, like those of Arberry, Pickthall or Abdullah Yousuf Ali.
- (b) To translate the Urdu translations used in the Ma'ariful-Qur'an into English.
- (c) To provide a new translation of our own.

After a great deal of consideration and consultation, we elected to work on the third option, i.e. to prepare a new translation of the Holy Qur'an. The reasons behind this decision were manifold which need not be detailed here. In short, we wanted to prepare a translation which may be closer to the Qur'anic text and easier to understand. For this purpose, we formed a committee with the following members:

1. Prof. Muḥammad Shameem.
2. Mr. Muḥammad Wali Raazi.
3. This humble writer.

This committee has accomplished the translation of the Holy Qur'ān upto the Sūrah Yūsuf and is still going on with this project.

The committee has all the famous available translations of the Holy text before it, and after a deep study of the relevant material found in the classical Arabic commentaries, lays down the new translation in as simple expressions as possible. While doing so, we have tried our best that the different possible interpretations of the Qur'anic text remain undisturbed, and the new translation accommodates as many of them as practicable. We have tried not to impose on our reader a particular interpretation where several interpretations were equally possible. However, where the translation could not accommodate more than one connotation, we have followed the one adopted by the majority of the classic commentators including Maulanā Ashraf Ali Thānavī on whose translation the Ma'ariful-Qur'ān is based.

Despite all these sincere efforts, one cannot avoid the admission that the exact translation of the Holy Qur'ān is impossible. One cannot convey the glory and the beauty of the divine expression in any other language, let alone the English language which, despite its vast vocabulary, seems to be miserable when it comes to the expression of spiritual concepts. Therefore, even after observing all the precautions at our command, we feel that we were trying to translate a text which is - as Arberry has rightly put it - totally untranslatable.

However, this is another humble effort to convey the basic message of the Holy Qur'ān to a common reader in a simple manner. How far we have succeeded in this effort? Allah knows best.

The Scheme of the Translation

Now, here are some points to be kept in mind while consulting the translation.

1. Although the translators have tried their best to preserve not only the literal sense of the Holy text, but also the order of words and sentences, yet, while translating the idiomatic expressions, it is

sometimes felt that the literal translation may distort the actual sense or reduce the emphasis embodied in the Arabic text. At such places effort has been made to render the Quranic sense into a closer English expression.

2. Both in the translation of the Holy Qur'ān and in the commentary, a uniform scheme of transliteration has been adopted. The scheme is summarized in the beginning pages of the book.

3. The names of the prophets have been transliterated according to their Arabic pronunciation, and not according to their biblical form. For example, the biblical Moses has been transliterated as Mūsā عليه السلام, which is the correct Arabic pronunciation. Similarly, instead of biblical Abraham, the Qur'ānic Ibrāhīm عليه السلام and instead of Joseph, the Qur'ānic Yūsuf عليه السلام has been preferred.

However, in the names other than those of prophets, like Pharaoh, their English form has been retained.

4. A permanent feature of the original Urdu Ma'ariful-Qur'an is its "*Khulasa-e-Tafseer*" (Summary). Under every group of verses, the esteemed author has given a brief summary of the meaning of the verses to help understand them in one glimpse. This summary was taken from Bayān-ul-Qur'ān, the famous commentary of Maulanā Ashraf Ali Thānavī رحمه الله عليه. He has set up this summary by adding some explanatory words or sentences within brackets to his Urdu translation. The esteemed author of Ma'ariful-Qur'an has reproduced this summary (after simplification in some places) with the heading of-Khulasa-e-Tafsir خلاصہ تفسیر before his own commentary to the relevant group of verses.

While translating Ma'ariful-Qur'an into English, it was very difficult, rather almost impossible, to give that summary in the same fashion. Therefore, the translators have restricted themselves to the commentary of Ma'ariful-Qur'an and have not translated the Khulasa-e-Tafsir خلاصہ تفسیر. However, where they found some additional points in the summary which are not expressly mentioned in the commentary, they have merged those points into the main commentary, so that the English reader may not be deprived of them.

It is only by the grace of Allah Almighty that in this way we could be able to present this first volume of this huge work. The second

volume is already under composing, and we hope that Allah سبحانه و تعالی will give us *tawfiq* to bring the next volumes as soon as possible.

Acknowledgments are due to all those who contributed their efforts, advices and financial support to this work. Those deserving special reference are Prof. Abdul-Wahid Siddiqi, Dr. Zafar Ishaq Ansari, Mr. Abubakr Varachia and Mr. Shu'aib 'Umar (both of South Africa) Dr. Muhammad Ismail (of U.S.A), and Mr. Altaf Barkhurdaria.

My elder brother Mr. Muḥammad Wali Raazi has been associated with the work right from its beginning, and has always been a great source of guidance, support and encouragement. He is a member of the committee set up for the translation of the Holy Qur'an and his remarkable contribution, not only to the translation of the Holy Qur'an, but also to the translation of the commentary is unforgettable. He, too, has been contributing his valuable time and effort to this project for years just for the sake of Allah. May Allah approve his contributions with His pleasure and bless him with the best of rewards both here and hereinafter.

As for Prof. Muhammad Shameem, the original translator of Ma'ariful-Qur'an after the demise of Prof. Muḥammad Hasan 'Askari, all the formal words of acknowledgment seem to be miserably deficient for the valuable service he has rendered to this project. He has not only translated the book with precaution and love, but also devoted his whole life to the Holy Qur'an and spared no effort to bring this volume into light. Out of his commitment to the cause, he did not restrict himself to the work of a translator, but also undertook the function of an editor and a proof reader and supervised all other minute details of the publishing process. His devotion, sincerity and hardwork is beyond any amount of admiration. May Allah grant him the best reward of His absolute approval for his noble work. *Amin.*

With these few words I am honoured to present this first volume to the readers. May Allah approve this effort and make it beneficial to the *Ummah.* 'Amin.

Muḥammad Taqī Usmāni

Darul-Uloom, Karachi-14

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