

What is the Quran?

Description: An intriguing article about the Quran that compels one to explore its teachings.

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There have been many incredible works of literature, such as Shakespeare's plays and fantasy epics like Lord of the Rings. What ties these works together is that they are the product of great human minds. As amazing as these works are, can you imagine how much more amazing a book would be if God Himself authored it, surely it would be the greatest book ever produced. Moreover, imagine that



God answers all the important questions that human beings have about life, such as why we are here and what happens to us after we die. Finally, imagine if God authored this book with you in mind, a book that addresses you as an individual. Wouldn't you want to read such a book? The Qur'an is exactly that book.

The word "Qur'an" is Arabic for "recitation". Indeed one of the many things that make the Qur'an unique is that it claims to be the literal speech of God. Muslims believe that the Qur'an was dictated to Prophet Muhammad, may God's peace be upon him (or pbuh for short), by God Almighty through the angel Gabriel over 1,400 years ago. The Qur'an was not revealed all at once but rather gradually over a period of 23 years during the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). It may surprise readers to learn that the Qur'an contains the same core message as other divinely revealed Scriptures, such as the Torah of Moses and Gospel of Jesus (peace be upon them) and Muslims believe that in their original form, these previous Scriptures were also sent from God. The Qur'an informs us that Muhammad (pbuh) is the final Messenger in a long line of Messengers that God sent before him, such as Abraham, Moses and Jesus. This is another of the unique aspects of the Qur'an; it acknowledges all of the Abrahamic faiths and all of the Prophets sent by God.

The Qur'an is also unique in history in terms of the revolutionary impact it had on society. Pre-Islamic Arabia was not a very pleasant place to live in. Given the tribal structure of Arab society, any disputes often led to blood feuds between tribes that would consume whole generations. Slavery was an economic institution of the Arabs. Male and female slaves were sold and bought like animals, and they formed the most depressed class of the Arabian society. Arabia was a male-dominated society to say the least. A man

could marry any number of women and when a man died, his son "inherited" all his wives except his own mother. Women, as a general rule, had virtually no legal status: fathers sold their daughters into marriage for a price and women had little or no property or succession rights. The most powerful class of the Arabs was made up by the capitalists and money-lenders who took 100 per cent interest on loans. Infanticide, particularly the burying alive of female infants, was a norm. Finally, illiteracy was common among the Arabs, as were alcoholism and adultery. I think you can appreciate why this period of Arab history before the dawn of Islam is known as the period of ignorance!

Can you imagine being tasked with reforming such a society? Have a think about how long it would take one person to cure all these social ills. One generation? Perhaps several generations? You may even view it as an impossible task. Just to give you an idea of the scale of the challenge, let's look at an attempt in recent Western history to eradicate just one of these social ills, alcoholism. In 1920 the United States government passed a nationwide law to ban the sale, production, importation, and transportation of alcoholic beverages for moral and health reasons. This is commonly known as Prohibition and although consumption of alcohol fell at the beginning of Prohibition, it subsequently increased and led to other problems such as corruption and organised crime. The law was repealed in 1933. The failure of one of the most powerful governments in the world to tackle just a single social ill should make us reflect on the Qur'an. The Qur'an managed to completely reform not only alcoholism but all the social ills of Arabian society in a single generation, just 23 years! This was a revolution the likes of which the world has never witnessed.

The impact of the Qur'an on the world is not just historical. What must be noted is that although the Qur'an was revealed in 7th century Arabia, its message is meant for the whole of mankind. In fact there are over 1.5 billion Muslims in the world today because of the Qur'an. Just to give you a practical demonstration of just how many Muslims there are in the world, at any given moment on any day someone, somewhere, is praising God by reciting the Qur'an in their prayers. You must be wondering to yourself, what is it about the Qur'an that has made such an imprint on the hearts of over a billion Muslims?

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