

Writing the Qur'aan in Gujarati

Q: Ilm-25: Is there any harm in writing (transliterating) the entire Qur'aan in Gujarati script in such a way that the pronunciation still remains Arabic? This allows people who are unable to recite Arabic to earn the rewards of reciting the Qur'aan, will any rewards be attained in writing the Qur'aan in this manner? Please explain with proof.

Answer: By writing the Qur'aan in the Gujarati script. the important discipline of "Rasmul Khat" (the special method of writing the Qur'aan) will be forsaken and it will be tantamount to altering the script of the Qur'aan. It is therefore necessary to refrain from this. For example, when writing Bismillah hir Rahmanir Rahim in Gujarati, the AL. at the beginning of the words Arrahmaan. And Arrahim, will not be included, which means that all that will be written is Bismillaah hirrahman Nirrahim. If we therefore have a shortage of six letters just in the Bismillaah one can well imagine how many letters will be lost in the entire Qur'aan. It must be remembered that just as the meaning of the Qur'aan is important, so too are the letters and words.

On the other hand, it will also happen that certain words will receive extra letters when transliterated. For example, when the three letters (Alif Laam Meem) are transliterated, they expand into nine letters. One can well see how many differences will arise between the original and the transliteration. Another point to bear in mind is that the script of the Qur'aan is not based on man's opinion, but is from Allaah and corresponds with the way on which it is written on the Lowhul Mahfoodh. It has come from Allaah and has been passed down to us without a break in the chain from Rasulullaah SAW. It encapsulates all the seven modes of recitation and every type of recitation is possible from it. Because this accomplishment is impossible in the script of the Gujarati (or any other) language, it is Waajib (compulsory) to adopt the script of the Qur'aan and altering it will be impermissible and Haraam.

Whenever a verse of the Qur'aan was revealed, Rasulullaah SAW. would call one of the scribes, dictate the verse to him and show him how to write it. This Rasulullaah SAW. learnt from Hadhrat Jibra'eel ALY. When the Qur'aan was compiled into a single volume during the Khilaafah of Hadhrat Abu Bakr RADI. all manuscripts of Qur'aanic verses that were with the Sahabah RADI. were collected and Hadhrat Zaid bin Thaabit RADI. meticulously wrote them down just as Rasulullaah SAW. had shown. When Hadhrat Uthmaan RADI. had several copies made. he also gave this monumental task to Hadhrat Zaid bin Thaabit RADI. to complete. This was during a time when there were still fifty thousand Sahabah RADI. living.

All four Imaams of Fiqh regard this script as necessary and declare that it is not permissible to write the Qur'aan contrary to this script as it appears in the Mas'haf Uthmaani. When Allaah promises "We have revealed this Rentinder (the Qur'aan) and We shall safeguard it", the promise is not confined only to the spoken words but extends to the written words and their script as well. Together with devoting themselves to preserving the meaning of the Qur'aan. Qur'raa (plural of Qaari) have always busied themselves with preserving the script of the Qur'aan as well.

The following are some other discrepancies that will be inevitable with a transliteration:

1. Whereas there is a difference in the pronunciation of the (small haa') and the (also big haa') in Arabic, no such difference exists in Gujarati (and in English as well).
2. Likewise there is also a difference in the pronunciation of the 6 (qaaf') and the (also 'kaaf') in Arabic, no such difference exists in Gujarati.
3. Similarly, there exists a difference in the pronunciation of the (hamza) ('a') and the (ain) (also 'a') in Arabic, no such difference exists in Gujarati (and in English as well)
4. There is also a difference in the pronunciation of the (taa). ('taa') and the (toy) (also 'taa') in Arabic, no such difference exists in Gujarati (and in English as well).
5. There is a difference in the pronunciation of the (sin).('sa') and the (sod) (also 'so') and ('tha') in Arabic, no such difference exists in Gujarati.
6. There is also a marked difference in the pronunciation of the (jhal) ('tha') and the (dowd) (also 'dha') and zaa ('za') and (zoy) ('tha') in Arabic, no such difference exists in Gujarati.

Even if all these differences in pronunciation were marked in some way, The deficiency will still exist, resulting in an alteration to not only the script but the pronunciation as well. The differences in the pronunciation will then inevitably lead to a difference in the meanings of the words, because of which people will be guilty of sinning, let alone earning rewards. They will therefore become the target of a famous Hadith that states, "Many are those who recite the Qur'aan but are actually cursed by the Qur'aan."

Imaam Ibn Jowzi RAH. said that just as it is a form of Ibaadah for the Ummah to understand the Qur'aan and practise it, so too is it an act of Ibaadah for them to recite it properly. Recitation of the Qur'aan must be learnt from a capable teacher and learning to recite without the proper Arabic script is extremely difficult.

It is therefore best for a person to recite what he knows from memory rather than reciting from a Gujarati transliteration because it is Haraam to recite the Qur'aan incorrectly.

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