

Foreword

In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

The Book in hand is the compilation of the series of lectures that were delivered to a select group of young men over a long period of time by Professor Mohsin Qara'ati. It is the substance of his speeches that he made from time to time. The novel style together with his insight and vast knowledge of the teachings of Islam has brought fame to Prof. Qara'ati.

It was about fifteen years ago that when Prof. Qara'ati rose as a scholar from the religious centre of learning and teaching in Qum, he selected for himself a different mode of imparting religious knowledge to the younger people of his hometown.

One day while Prof. Qara'ati was on a visit to his hometown, Kashan, a novel idea suddenly struck him. He saw some young men at the corner of the street; approaching them he said: "O my dear young men! Can I have the favor of winning your friendship so that we could give to one another a good company in a *masjid* and have small discussions on religious matters and arrive at a solution of problems confronting us".

Thus he started a program of giving lectures in a small *masjid* in Kashan during the Holy month of Ramazan. At the end of the month, Prof. Qara'ati suggested to his students to continue this program on weekly basis. He used to come to Kashan every Friday and deliver lectures. This routine continued for four years and the number of his people gradually increased as they were greatly attracted by Prof. Qara'ati's talks.

When his fellow-students in Qum learnt about his activity in Kashan, they became curious about it and wanted to have a close view of the small gathering there. They liked the idea of imparting education on religion in an exceptionally unique style of delivering brief talks with audio-visual aids. Prof.

Qara'ati used a black-board for the purpose of demonstrations. Gradually, they expanded the area of their activity on a countrywide basis and an annual gathering was held in Qum. This program continued for six years. This was the time when the last of the monarchs of the Pahlavi dynasty ruled over the people of Iran in the most abominably despotic manner.

He got very much scared of the activities of these devoted followers of Islam and ultimately by the order of the Shah such meetings and seminars on religious teachings were banned. Despite this Prof.

Mohsin Qara'ati stood as a sentinel, and his guidance and training of his dedicated students which swelled in large numbers proved very successful, as after the Islamic Revolution in Iran these classes were given official recognition, so much so that his lectures are broadcast by radio and telecast on television.

Now a few words about the book in itself. One thing is certain that whatever you happen to read in this book it is the same which was taught to his pupils by Prof. Qara'ati in his talks in the classroom through audio-visual system.

But it is not necessary to explain here as to how these talks were reproduced in the form of written lessons. It is just like an art of chiseling statues out of stones. Just as chiseling itself cannot be produced in writing so also the delivery of speech cannot be reproduced in black and white.

Therefore, lecturing is like an art where words are chiseled out in order to give a correct form and shape in the mind like mental pictures. Here, the lecturing or delivering sermons is an art which the pupils learn by watching and listening to an experienced teacher, who is the master of his craft and who applies his own experience and vision. That kind of acquiring knowledge is not as simple as studying books.

The series of lectures contained in this book have been based on Qur'anic verses and the sayings of the Holy Prophet and his Chosen descendants (peace be on them) with logical conclusions and connotations of the subject-matter being dealt with therein.

Unfamiliar terms and unnecessary details have been avoided. Another noteworthy point worth-mentioning is that these lessons were primarily addressed to and meant for the pupils who were about 18 years of age.

Besides, the problems that have been discussed in these lessons were solved by citing examples and quoting proverbs. Hence, the problems appear to be interesting and the solution obtained by logic and reasoning are easily understood.

It was a novel method that Prof. Qara'ati used on the pattern of Qur'anic teachings. If one cares to scrutinize these lessons carefully it will soon become evident that the Holy Qur'an too has used parables and cited metaphors and similes.

In a nutshell one should take into consideration the following points;

(i) After completing the preliminary education one should decide to teach the ideology and the principles of faith to the people or one should hand over this responsibility to the one who is expert in this field.

(ii) One should try to find out the dire necessity of the society and one's inclinations to discover the Right

Path so as to lead oneself to that path.

(iii) Religious scholars, teachers and speakers should specialize in more than one branch of knowledge e.g. Islamic history, Islamic ideology, fundamentals of faith, exegeses and the art of teaching children and young people.

(iv) The lecture classes in *masjid* should include the imparting of religious knowledge to young girls, housewives, workers and laborers and even educated male persons.

(v) The system of imparting knowledge should be adapted to the present day conditions and demands, and the *masjids* should be treated as the citadel of Islam as well as the seat of learning.

(vi) According to Imam Ja'far Sadiq, (peace is on him) a teacher besides imparting lessons of fundamental knowledge, should also enlighten his pupils on the subject in whom they are interested

(vii) Special care should be taken in teaching children and younger people and this should be done by one who is expert in child psychology.

The large number of books which have been written for children and young people in simple and easy-to-understand style are not sufficient enough and, therefore, it is necessary that this work should be expanded on the country-wide basis.

In conclusion, this book deals with all the vital problems that confront our younger generation. We hope that this comprehensive book will also help those who are engaged in teaching and learning the principles of Islam. We pray to Almighty Allah to grant us enough strength to acquaint the people in large numbers with the teachings of Islam.

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