

# THE GLORIOUS QUR'AN

From Revelation To Recitation & Beyond

## *THE SEVEN STYLES OF RECITATION*

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# THE SEVEN STYLES OF RECITATION

## MEANING OF QIRA'AT

In Qura'nic sciences, it refers to the various ways and manners of reciting the Qur'an. Each Qira'at has its own specialised rules of recitation and variations in words and letters.

## DIFFERENT QIRA'AT – WAY OF RECITATION

Although the Qur'an Shareef is a Divine book of guidance for the whole of mankind, and its true benefit can be drawn by understanding its message and following its directives, yet mere recitation of its verses is an act of worship in its own way. So much so that the recitation of one letter from the Qur'an Shareef carries the reward of ten virtuous acts. That is why the recitation of its verses has been mentioned by the Qur'an in a number of places, as an independent function of Rasulullah ﷺ, separate from its explanation and education. (*Surah Baqarah V.129 and V.151, Surah Aal Imran V.164 and Surah Jumua V.2*)

## RECITATION OF THE SEVEN STYLES

Since the Qur'an has to be preserved in its exact form for all times to come, its recitation and memorization – even without understanding its meaning – has been an important subject of learning in educational institutes throughout Muslim history. As mentioned earlier, Rasulullah ﷺ himself used to teach the Sahabah ؓ how to recite. As the Arabic language had many dialects prevalent in different tribes of Arabia, the Qur'an was recited in different dialects, so that every tribe might feel at ease when reciting and learning the Qur'an Shareef. These seven 'Ahruf' were taught to the Noble Prophet ﷺ by Jibreel ؑ. They therefore all form part of the divine revelation.

Rasulullah ﷺ said: *“Verily, this Qur'an has been revealed in seven 'Ahruf' (ways or styles) so read from it whatever is easy.”*

These different ways of reading it are termed as Qira'at. The script adopted by Hazrat Uthman bin Affan ؓ for the copies prepared by him accommodates all these Qira'at within the scope of its way of writing. The scholars of the Ummah have not only preserved the text of the Qur'an Shareef and its meanings, but also all Qira'at allowed by Rasulullah ﷺ. A special science of Qira'at is developed for that purpose.

*(Meanings of the Noble Qur'an – Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani)*

## THE QURRAH – RECITERS

It was during the time of the successors and the period immediately thereafter that there were illustrious individuals who became renowned as teachers of the Qur'an in the Islamic lands. So acclaimed were they that readings (Qirat) were even ascribed to them. This did not, in any way, mean that these readings were made up or invented by them. Rather, they were noted as people who dedicated all their efforts, abilities, and in fact, their lives to the learning and the teaching of the Qur'an. In reality all these readings were taught and passed on to them by the Prophet ﷺ. It should also be noted that they weren't the only people teaching or practicing these readings, but that there were many others. However, there were 10 that outshone the others. Their readings became better known as the Qirat al-Ashr or the Ten Readings.

## THE TRANSMITTERS (RUWAT)

Similarly, those who narrated these readings from these teachers, whether directly or indirectly, became known as the transmitters, simply because they transmitted the readings of these Qurra. From each one of these Qurra we have two transmitters. It does not mean that only these transmitters existed, but of the many, these were the most outstanding.

1. Nafi' ibn Abd Al-Rahman ibn Abi al-Nu'aym. He was born in 70 AH and died in 169 AH. He is originally from Asbahan. He had a dark complexion with handsome features, jovial, and had an outstanding character and personality. From amongst people, he had the purest disposition, was the most beautiful in recitation, and was an ascetic who prayed for 60 years in the Masjid of Rasulullah ﷺ. Imam Ahmad ibn Hambal was asked by his son: which reading is most beloved to you? He replied: "The reading of the people of Madinah, and if not, then the reading of Asim."

He had the benefit of learning from seventy successors to the companions (Tabiun) who were direct disciples of Sayyiduna Ubay ibn Ka'b, Abdullah bin Abbas and Abu Hurayrah ؓ. This Imam was a renowned master in the field of qirat and an ardent follower of the Sunnah. His reading became famous in Madinah and among those who transmitted his rendition, Abu Musa Qalun (died 220 AH) and Abu Sa'id Warsh (died 197 AH). His other students include: Imam Malin bin Anas and Isa ibn Wardan amongst others. He taught the people of Madinah for 70 years. He was extremely polite with his students and with anyone who sat to learn from him. None was given preference over another, regardless of stature, family ties, or influence amongst the people. All were allowed to read to him.

2. Isa ibn Mina al-Zuraqi. He was nicknamed Qalun by his teacher, Nafi, which meant good or excellent in the Roman language. He was named thus due to his excellent recitation. His forefathers hailed from Rome and came to Madinah as Roman captives during the Khilafa of Umar ﷺ.

He was born in 120 AH. It is said that he was raised in the very household of Nafi', who was married to the mother of Qalun. He continued reciting to Nafi until he became an expert of the Qur'an, eventually emerging into a skilled teacher of the Quran and a master in the Arabic language. Qalun read numerous khatms to Nafi'. Later, Nafi' seated him by a column and sent students to him. He spent 20 years studying under Nafi'. Qalun was deaf, and would look at the lips of the reciter to correct their errors. He died in 220 After Hijrah.

3. Abu Sa'id Uthman ibn Sa'id al-Qibti. He was born in Qafat, upper Egypt in 110 AH. His origin is from Qayrawan. He was fair in complexion with blue eyes, short, and had a solid build. His teacher, Nafi, nicknamed him Warsh due to his fair complexion. The word 'Warsh' indicates to something made from milk. Warsh himself liked the nickname and was proud of it, stating at times: "My ustadh, Nafi' named me this!" Some also suggest that he was nicknamed Warsh due to his excellent recitation. In 155 A.H he left Egypt and travelled to Madinah for the sole purpose of reciting to Nafi'. Upon reaching Madinah, he immediately went to the Masjid, intending to recite to Nafi'. However, due to many students desiring to recite to Nafi', he was not able to recite to him and sat at the back of the gathering.

Because of the many students, Nafi' only allowed each one to recite only 30 verses at a time so that all could have a chance to recite to him. He therefore asked one who was close to Nafi' to intercede on his behalf so that he may start reciting to Nafi'. He told Nafi' that he came all the way from Egypt to Madina for no other reason but to recite to him. Nafi' then told him to sleep in the masjid and the next day he may start reciting. After the Fajr Prayer, Nafi' immediately asked for Warsh because he had slept in the masjid and was therefore entitled to read first. Warsh's recitation was so meticulous and so beautiful that all were captivated by his excellent recitation. It is mentioned that whoever listened to him reciting would never tire of his recitation, nor want him to stop.

After he had rendered his 30 verses, someone from the gathering stood up and said: "He (Warsh) may recite 10 of my verses and I will recite only 20 verses." So Warsh read another 10 verses, after which someone else from the gathering stood up and offered Warsh 10 of his verses as well. In this manner it continued until everyone in the gathering had stood up and gave Warsh 10 of their verses to recite., It is said that it continued in this manner until Warsh completed the Quran by Nafi' in 50 days.

Eventually, Warsh completed a khatm to Nafi' every 7 days, thus reciting 4 khatms in a month to him. Warsh was an expert regarding the Qur'an and the Arabic language. He later returned to Egypt where he became renowned for his skill and knowledge of the Qur'an. He died in Egypt in 197 A.H at the age of 87.





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