5

Study and Understanding

Importance and Need

You cannot gather the full and real blessings and treasures of the Qur'ān unless you devote yourself to understanding its meaning, unless you know what your Creator is saying to you.

This is not to deny, as we said earlier, that even those who cannot understand it may partake of its blessings. Obviously an overwhelming majority of Muslims do not know Arabic, and many do not possess any translation in their language. But, if they read the Qur'ān with sincere devotion, reverence and love, they should not fail to share in some of its riches. For, being in the company of the one you love, even if you do not know his language, certainly deepens your relationship with him. Yet immensely greater will be the blessings and stronger will be the relationship if you also understand what he is saying.

On the other hand, merely understanding the meaning may also be of no avail. Many listened to the Qur'ān from the lips of the Prophet, blessings and peace be on him, and understood every word of it; yet they went further astray. Millions of people for whom Arabic is their language understand the Qur'ān; yet it makes no impact upon their lives.

Scores of scholars, Muslims as well as non-Muslims, spend a lifetime studying and reading the Qur'ān, and their scholarship can hardly be faulted; yet they remain impervious to its touch.

Yet, despite this, the urgent need to devote yourself to understanding the Qur'ān remains. The Qur'ān has come as a guide, reminder, admonition and healing. It is not merely a source of reward (*thawāb*), a sacred ritual, a sacrament, a revered relic, or a holy magic. It has come to radically change you and lead you to a new life and existence. Understanding it is no sure guarantee of finding that new life, but without it the task of fulfilling the real purpose of the Qur'ān and inviting mankind to it must remain extremely difficult.

Personal Study

Why have we to devote ourselves to understanding the Qur'ān, on our own, and to thinking, pondering and reflecting upon its meaning? Is it not enough that we read or hear its exposition by the learned? It is most certainly not, even though that too is essential.

You must exert yourself to absorb and discover what the Qur'ān has to say, mainly for one very important, crucial reason. The Qur'ān is not merely a book of knowledge, or a collection of do's and don'ts. It does not merely inform about God and what He wants of you. It also wants to take hold of your person and bring you into a new living and pervasive relationship with Him. Hence, it should increase and strengthen your faith (*Īmān*), your will (*irādah*), your steadfastness (*ṣabr*). It should purify you, form your character, and mould your conduct. It should continually inspire you and elevate you to greater and greater heights.

All this can be accomplished only if you enter into a personal relationship of study, meditation, and understanding with the Qur'ān. Without pondering over its messages, your hearts, your thoughts and your conduct cannot respond to them. Without immersing yourself in thinking and reflect-

ing over them, you cannot absorb them, nor can they impinge upon your life. Just think: Why should reading the Qur'ān with *tartīl* have been enjoined upon you if not for you to ponder and understand? Why should you be required to pause while reading the Qur'ān, and how can you make appropriate inward, physical and verbal responses – which the Qur'ān so forcefully emphasizes – if you do not know what you are reading?

Argument Against Studying

But, is there not a danger that a person who is not guided by a learned teacher nor equipped with all the necessary tools of study, and who still embarks on the formidable venture of understanding, on his own, the Book of God, that he may go wrong, even astray? Yes, there is; especially when you do not know clearly your own limitations and goals. But the loss is greater, for yourself and for the Ummah, if you do not try to understand at all. While the risks involved in studying on your own can be averted by taking certain appropriate precautions, and ensuring that you never go beyond your limitations and goals, the loss incurred by forsaking such study cannot be made up.

Does not an attempt to understand the meaning of the Qur'ān on one's own, some argue, violate what the Prophet, blessings and peace be on him, has clearly laid down: 'Whoever interprets the Qur'ān by his own opinion shall take his place in Hell' (*Tirmidhī*)? But this Hadith, obviously, means only such studies as are undertaken to employ the Qur'ān to support and prove one's personal opinions and preconceived notions rather than abandoning oneself, with an open mind, to its guidance. Or to attempt to interpret something for which one does not possess the necessary knowledge. Otherwise, as al-Ghazālī forcefully argues, the Prophet would not have exhorted his Companions to exert themselves to understanding the Qur'ān, nor would they have done so (as they did), nor would they have given

meanings which they had not heard from him (as they gave), nor would there have been disagreements between their interpretations (as there are).

Fearful of the consequences, many religious leaders forbid even reading a translation of the Qur'ān without the help of a learned teacher. Or, they lay down conditions for studying alone which only a handful of people, after long, laborious learning, can fulfil. Such counsels, despite their good intentions, in fact end up depriving you of the great riches that the Qur'ān has to offer every seeker. While their fears are genuine, their prohibitions have no logic or basis.

Just think: Can they also prohibit an Arab from understanding the literal meaning of the Qur'ān? Why, then, should a non-Arab not read a translation? Again, can they prevent any person from trying to find the meaning of whatever he reads and seeks to understand? Why, then, prohibit attempts to study the Qur'ān and find its meaning? And finally, what about the first addressees of the Qur'ān, Kafir as well as Muslim? They were illiterate merchants and bedouins, with no scholastic tools in their possession. Yet even some Kafirs were converted by only listening to the Qur'ān, without the help of any learned exegeses, and indeed at the first hearing.

Of course, they had the unique and supreme advantage of 'seeing' the Quranic meaning and message in the lives of the Prophet, blessings and peace be on him, and his Companions, who were living the Qur'ān by going through the crucible of Iman, Da'wah, and Jihad. We do not, and cannot, have that privilege. Yet even that should not discourage us. There is no reason why the Qur'ān should not open its doors to us once we fulfil the necessary conditions, and most importantly, as emphasized again and again, we, too, live a life of Iman, Da'wah and Jihad, as the Companions did.

The protection against going astray certainly does not lie in prohibiting every attempt to understand the Qur'ān except by sitting at the feet of a scholar; the cure lies in observing the right guidelines.

This is not to deny the essential need for possessing the necessary knowledge of the Arabic language and of various *'ulūm al-Qur'ān,* of reading *tafsīr,* of learning from qualified and reliable teachers, of being conversant with contemporary human knowledge. They are important, but only to the extent of what you desire to achieve from your study of the Qur'ān. You must possess tools appropriate to your aims, but you cannot dispense with *any* attempt to understand the Qur'ān because you do not possess *all* such tools, or because you are unable to go to a teacher.

Imagine that you are on an 'island'; you do not know Arabic, nor have you any opportunity to learn it; you do not have resources like a good teacher or a good commentary, nor can you acquire one. No doubt you should, under such circumstances, recognize the need of acquiring appropriate capabilities to understand the Qur'ān correctly, make every possible effort to do so. But, even so the Qur'ān remains the guidance for you from Allah.

Fortunately none of us lives on such an 'island'. Such 'islands' come to exist only in our perceptions, mainly due to our lethargy and laziness, inattention and inaction, or our lack of conviction that companionship with the Qur'ān for understanding it is as essential to the nourishment of heart and mind as food is for the body. What is important to remember is that whether or not one really lives on an 'island' with only a copy of the Qur'ān in one's hands, the literal meanings of which one can somehow understand, or whether or not one has mastered all the Quranic disciplines, the need and demand to devote oneself to personally pondering over the Qur'ān remains.

The Quranic Emphasis

The Qur'ān is a guidance for every person, his teacher and mentor. Understanding it is therefore vital; otherwise it will remain no more than a sacrament. The crucial centrality of endeavours, personal endeavours, to open hearts and minds to the messages of the Qur'ān is made abundantly

clear by the Qur'ān itself. We are confronted with the utter folly of keeping our hearts locked against our understanding of the Qur'ān:

> What, do they not ponder the Qur'ān? Or, is it that there are locks on their hearts (Muḥammad 47: 24).

Therefore the invitation to bring reason and understanding to the Qur'ān is spread on almost every page of it: Why you hear not? Why you see not? Why you think not? Why you reason not? Why you ponder not? Why you understand not? Why you take not to heart? To whom are these invitations addressed if not to every human being who possesses the faculties of hearing, seeing and thinking?

It is also emphatically declared that the Qur'ān has been sent down to be understood:

> A Book We have sent down, [it is] full of blessings, that men may ponder over its messages, and those who possess understanding may take them to heart (Ṣād 38: 29).

Likewise, the Qur'ān praises as the true 'servants of the Most-merciful' (*Ibādu 'r-Raḥmān*) those:

> Who, when they are reminded of the revelations of their Lord, fall not thereat deaf and blind (al-Furqān 25: 73).

Conversely, it castigates as worse than animals those who do not use their hearing, sight and hearts to listen, see and understand:

> They have hearts, but they understand not with them; they have eyes, but they see not with them; they have ears but they hear not with them. They are like cattle; nay they are further astray. It is they who are the heedless (al-A'rāf 7: 179).

You cannot gather the real blessings and treasures of the Qur'ān unless you know its meaning, unless you understand what Allah is saying to you, unless you exert yourself personally to find that out.

The Early Practice

The Hadith which discourages reading the Qur'ān in less than three days also makes the need for understanding clear: you will not, then, understand it. One who does not understand the meanings or who does not reflect over them is in no need of this directive. Al-Ghazālī, in his *Iḥyā'*, gives many examples of how the Companions and their followers devoted themselves to this task.

Anas Ibn Mālik once said: 'Often one recites the Qur'ān, but the Qur'ān curses him because he does not understand it.' The sign of faith, according to Abdullah Ibn 'Umar, is to understand the Qur'ān: 'We have lived long . . . a time has come when I see a man who is given the whole Qur'ān before he has acquired faith; he reads all the pages between al-Fātiḥah and its end, without knowing its commands, its threats, and the places in it where he should pause – he scatters it like the scattering of one fleeing in haste.' 'Ā'ishah once heard a man babbling over the Qur'ān and said: 'He has neither read the Qur'ān nor kept silent.' 'Alī said: 'There is no good in the Qur'ān reading which is not pondered over.' Abū Sulaymān al-Dārānī said: 'I recite a verse and remain with it for four or five nights and do not pass on to another verse unless I have ended my thinking on it.'

Obviously, if the Qur'ān is a book of guidance for every man, the 'man on the island' is as much entitled to receive its guidance as the man immersed in scholarship. If there are no teachers and no books, still you must know it clearly, still devote your time, individually and collectively, to its understanding, to pondering over it, to finding its meaning for your life and finding out what it says to you.

Risks of Personal Study

The risks inherent in such a venture, however, need to be clearly recognized and appropriate measures need to be taken to guard against them. Observing a few guidelines should ensure that you avoid these risks.

Firstly, remember that understanding the Qur'ān is a vast, multi-dimensional process, comprising many types, aspects, degrees and levels. You should know them all. Understanding to nourish the heart will be of a very different order from understanding to derive legal precepts.

Secondly, evaluate yourself and recognize very clearly your limitations and capabilities. For example, evaluate your understanding of the Quranic framework of guidance, your grasp of Arabic, your familiarity with Hadith and Sirah, and your access to sources.

Thirdly, understand your objectives precisely, and set specific goals for your study. Never attempt to do anything beyond what your limitations and capabilities allow.

For example, if you do not know the Arabic language, do not delve into grammatical and lexical issues. Confine yourself to direct, literal meanings. If you have no knowledge of things like *tanzīl* (revelation), *nāsikh-mansūkh* (abrogation), and the works of the earlier jurists, you should not begin to derive your own *fiqh* from the Qur'ān, or criticize and support any particular view.

Fourthly, never take as conclusive nor start propagating any of your findings which are different from or against the general consensus of the Ummah. This is not to bar you from holding your views nor to deny that the opinion of the learned may be wrong, but to controvert or go against them you must possess an equal learning, if not more. Nor does this absolve you from the responsibility to do what you find from the Qur'ān to be morally right and avoid what you find to be morally wrong.

Fifthly, whenever in doubt about your own conclusions, which you may often be in view of your limited knowledge, keep your views 'in suspension' unless you have made a full

comparative study or discussed them with a reliable, learned scholar of the Qur'ān.

Categories of Understanding

Broadly speaking, we may divide the study of the Qur'ān into two categories: *tadhakkur* and *tadabbur*, after the Quranic verse: 'That men may ponder over *(li yaddabbarū)* its revelations and . . . may take them to heart (*li yatadhakkara*)' (Ṣād 38: 29).

Tadhakkur

Tadhakkur, used extensively in the Qur'ān, has been translated variously as receiving admonition, deriving advice, remembering, taking heed, and taking to heart. It can therefore be taken to signify the process whereby you try to grasp the general messages and teachings being conveyed by the Qur'ān, to find out what they mean for you and what demands they make upon you, to take them to heart, to bring forth corresponding responses of heart and mind and attitudes, to have the will to act in accordance with whatever you find, and, finally, to determine what message you have to deliver to your fellow human beings.

Tadhakkur is a category of understanding which, in its essential nature, should not require any sophisticated tools of scholarship. You may not know the meaning of every word, you may not be competent enough to explore the full meaning of all the important and key words, and you may not understand every verse, but the general, overall message, especially the message for you – how to live – should come out clearly and radiantly.

After all, the people who understood the Qur'ān most and benefited from it the greatest were its first hearers – they were city merchants, farmers, shepherds, camel riders and nomads. They did not have at their elbows lexicons, *tafsīr*

books, treatises on style, diction, cadence, rhetoric nor did they possess all the knowledge of philosophy, history, geography, archaeology, anthropology, or of the social and physical sciences. Yet they were the most successful in understanding the Qur'ān. For, they took the message of the Qur'ān to their heart and began to live it. Hence this category of understanding *ought* to be and *is* available to every person who fulfils the necessary condition for it in this respect. The degree and intensity of what he receives will depend on his effort and capacity. Of course, tools of scholarship may add new dimensions, lend added weight, give new insights, to this process; but they are not a must.

It is in the sense of *tadhakkur* that the Qur'ān categorically states that it is easy to understand, it is available to *every* sincere inquirer if he only comprehends what he is reading and ponders over it. It is to this *tadhakkur* that the Qur'ān invites everyone who can hear, see and think, to be guided by it. It is in this sense that it says:

> Indeed we have made this Qur'ān easy for understanding and remembering (*dhikr*). Is there any, then, that will take it to heart (*muddakir*) (al-Qamar 54: 17).
>
> Indeed we have made it [the Qur'ān] easy [to understand] by your tongue [O Prophet] so that men might take it to heart (*yatadhakkurūn*) (al-Dukhān 44: 58).
>
> Indeed We have made propounded unto men all kinds of parables in this Qur'ān, so that they might understand (*yatadhakkarūn*) (al-Zumar 39: 27).
>
> In this there is indeed a reminder (*dhikr*) for everyone who has a heart, or will give ear while he is a witness [present with his mind] (Qāf 50: 37).

Tadhakkur is not some lower category of understanding; it is the basic essential purpose of the Qur'ān. You will have to strive all your life in order to gain the light and guidance and healing through *tadhakkur* – and through this process you, personally,

must continue to gather an unlimited number of gems.

Tadabbur

Tadabbur is the other category of understanding. It signifies that you try to find the full meaning of every word, Ayah, and Surah, that you explore the fuller meaning behind those words, metaphors and parables, that you discover the textual cohesion and underlying unity, that you determine the central ideas, delve into lexical intricacies, *tanzīl,* and historical background, and that you undertake a comparative study of different *tafsīr*. Then, that you discover all the implications for the relationship between man and his God, his fellow human beings, his own self, and the world around him; that you derive laws and morals for individuals and society, rules for state and economy, principles for history and philosophy, and implications for the current level of human knowledge.

Such a study would require a greater and deeper knowledge of various *'ulūm al-Qur'ān* (the Quranic disciplines), depending on your goals and aims.

Tadabbur and *tadhakkur* are not entirely separate nor mutually exclusive categories of understanding, they overlap.

Your Aims

What should your aims be? Obviously aims will vary from person to person and, even for a person, from time to time. *Tadhakkur*, in my view, is obligatory for every Muslim who is or can become capable of understanding the Qur'ān.

Hence, as an average-educated Muslim, who is trying to fulfil his commitment to Allah in the light of his capabilities and limitations, *tadhakkur* should be your first aim, and the most important one. You will stay with it forever; you will never reach a stage where you may dispense with it.

In *tadhakkur*, remember, you essentially set out to nourish your heart and mind, to increase your faith, to discover the message that the Qur'ān is giving to you, to take it to heart,

to remember it. Through all your labours you should be able to hear God's voice: what He wants you to be and to do.

Levels and Forms of Understanding

Your understanding of the Qur'ān may have various levels and take different forms.

Firstly, that you comprehend its simple, literal meaning, as when you read a book in a language you know, or as an Arabic-knowing person would understand the Qur'ān.

Such comprehension must be the bare minimum requirement, the key to all other stages, but it is not enough.

Secondly, that you find out how the learned have understood it, either by hearing their expositions or reading their exegeses and other sources.

Thirdly, that you study and ponder, on your own, to discover and absorb its meaning, to attain *tadhakkur* and, if you have the capability and need, then *tadabbur* as well.

Fourthly, that you discover its meaning by obeying its messages and by fulfilling the duties and mission that it entrusts to you.

Basic Requirements

There are certain basic requirements which you should fulfil in order to make your endeavours fruitful.

Arabic

One: Try to learn at least as much Arabic as will enable you to understand the meaning of the Qur'ān without the help of a translation. This is the first step, the most essential prerequisite.

It may seem an arduous task, but I have known semi-illiterate persons accomplish this within a few months, once they took to it seriously and devotedly. With the help of a teacher,

or even a suitable book, you should not require more than 120 hours of study to learn enough Arabic to comprehend what the Qur'ān is saying.

But do not postpone your endeavours to study the Qur'ān till such time as you learn Arabic. Take a good translation, or the best available, and start your pursuit. This is still better than reading the Qur'ān without any comprehension.

Reading the Whole Qur'ān

Two: Read, first, the whole Qur'ān, from beginning to end, comprehending the direct, literal meaning. If you do not know Arabic then use a translation.

Indeed you should make a special project of completing the first reading of the Qur'ān in *one month*. This should not take more than two hours a day. After that you can settle down to a slower pace as may be convenient for you. But you must continue with such overview reading throughout your life, at whatever pace suits you, as you have already come to know under the rules of reading.

An initial reading of the whole Qur'ān is very important before you embark on a deeper study. This will give you the general overall message of the Qur'ān, some idea of its style and diction, argument and rhetoric, and a view of its teachings and injunctions. Reading it regularly, you become familiar with the Qur'ān; you feel its cohesive unity and begin to look at it as a unified whole; you are in less danger of interpreting something outside the general framework of the Qur'ān. Those who go to the Qur'ān through concordances, instead of their own familiarity with its contents and contexts, are quite liable to fall into error in their interpretation.

Keeping company with the text of the Qur'ān regularly is an essential key to understanding it as a whole; it will be of immense help, too, in understanding even single words and Ayahs. By prolonged and sustained company you will find that many a time you will come across a text which will

suddenly seem to speak to you and answer your questions.

Indeed, at any one time, you may be making your way through the Qur'ān in a variety of ways to achieve different aims. You may be engrossed in a rapid reading, to finish it in a definite period of time. Or, you may be spending hours to locate the meaning of one single word or one single verse. You may be reading one passage, again and again, sometimes rapidly, sometimes slowly, to ponder over its meaning. Or, you may be flipping through the pages – once you have become familiar with the whole ground – to find guidance on a particular issue or theme. You may be thinking on your own, which may take less time; or you may be making a comparative study of short and long *tafsīr* works, which may make you stay with a small portion for a long time.

Reading Tafsīr Works

Three: Once you have completed one reading of the whole Qur'ān with comprehension, and you are keeping up with regular reading at the slower pace that you find feasible, take a short and reliable *tafsīr* or notes, and read it through. Quite a few good short commentaries are available in Arabic, Urdu and other major Muslim languages, though presently English and European languages are very deficient in this respect. However whatever is available can be profitably used, if read cautiously.

Reading a short commentary or notes will give you a more detailed view of the Qur'ān than what you have acquired on your own. It will introduce you to important areas like language, style, argument, historical background, detailed meanings, something which you cannot discover by your own thinking and reflection. It may also correct some of your errors.

Try to confine yourself to short commentaries whenever you need help in your personal detailed study of the Qur'ān, and do not delve, at least initially, into long, elaborate exegetical works. Often their long discourses become a

barrier to your direct, living relationship with the word of God. Read partial commentaries, if no full commentary is available. Also, while reading literature on Islam, make a special note of whatever you find centred on the Qur'ān in the discourses and conclusions you read. Even though widely scattered, you may find very useful aids to understanding in such works.

Remember that nourishment for Iman and the essential message on how to live is available to you without detailed exegeses. Only to remove some doubt, to investigate a fine point, to untie a knot will you require the help of a *tafsīr*.

Study of Selected Portions

Four: Ideally you should start a study of the Qur'ān from the very beginning and carry it through to the end. One day, *inshā'llāh*, some of you will undertake such a venture, but for most of us that day may be too far away, or may never come. You should, however, start your own study as soon as you can.

For this purpose, then, take up short selections, passages, Surahs or even an Ayah, and study them in greater detail. Sometimes, your involvement in self-improvement and Da'wah will oblige you to study particular portions. Sometimes, your regular reading may throw up certain passages you would like to take up. But you may also follow a systematically formulated thematic syllabus. The important thing is to start and know how to study, not what to start with. Some suggested passages are listed at the back of this book.

To start studying selected passages will benefit you in many ways. *Firstly*, you will begin making progress on one of the most important parts of your journey through the Qur'ān by establishing the very essential relationship of *tadhakkur* with it, rather than waiting indefinitely. *Secondly*, you will acquire important clues, keys and methodologies which will help you to understand even those parts of the Qur'ān which you may

not be in a position to study immediately in detail; for it repeats its messages in manifold forms (al-Zumar 39: 23). *Thirdly*, you will develop a fuller perception of the total Quranic framework, so essential for keeping your understanding on the right course. *Fourthly*, you will become better equipped to communicate the message of the Qur'ān to fellow human beings.

A detailed study of selected passages, however, can never be a substitute for general reading, the benefits of which are of a different nature and importance. Do not, therefore, give up your regular reading of the Qur'ān or longer sections, as emphasized earlier. Attending to detail and ignoring the whole may distort your vision and understanding.

Reading Again and Again

Five: Whatever part you have chosen to study you will have to read again and again. Take this as a maxim you should always follow. Stay with it as long as you can, live with it, dwell in it and let it dwell in your heart and mind. Such prolonged companionship is an essential key to understanding meaning. As the Quranic words become engraved on your heart, as they are frequently on your lips, you will find it easier and more rewarding to contemplate and meditate upon them. Then, not only during the time you have set aside for study, but even during your everyday life the Qur'ān will disclose its meaning to you as the words and Ayahs keep coming back to your mind.

Inquiring Mind

Six: Develop an inquiring mind, a searching soul, a heart hungry for meaning. The Qur'ān, as you already know, does not require a blind faith, nor does it ask you to read it with ears closed, eyes shut, and minds locked. Invitation to think is one of its most persistent and pervasive themes.

To question, remember, is the key to understanding and

knowledge. So, always raise as many questions as you need to. For example: What does this word or verse literally mean? What other meanings can be construed? What is the historical background, occasion of revelation, if known? What is the context of each word, phrase, and sentence? How does each link with what precedes and succeeds it? What internal order and thematic unity can be discerned? What is said? Why is it said? What are the general and specific implications? What are the major themes? What is the central theme? What is the message for me, us, now? Make a note of your questions and try to find their answers as you continue your study and reading.

Do not be frightened of raising questions. You may not find their answers immediately or ever on your own, or even with proper help. That does not matter. Whatever you can find an answer for will be a gain. You stand to lose nothing only if you observe certain rules. *Firstly*, do not ask questions the answers to which may be beyond human competence, which belong to *mutāshābihāt* (Āl 'Imrān 3:7): such as, what is the *'Arsh* like? *Secondly,* do not indulge in hair-splitting nor ask questions which have no relevance to the implications of the passage for your life. *Thirdly*, do not try to give answers that are not based on appropriate and necessary knowledge or sound reasoning. *Fourthly*, there will be questions which you cannot find answers for, which you cannot understand, despite your best efforts. Leave them for a while and pass on to other things in the Qur'ān. A time will come when you will find a teacher or book to help you. Or, you may find the answers even on your own.

There is enough evidence within the Qur'ān about how its first believers used to ask questions. Equally significant and instructive are numerous instances where the Prophet, blessings and peace be on him, and his Companions used to encourage inquiry, questioning and thinking.

Aids for Study

Seven: There are certain aids which you will require to help you in your study. Try to acquire as many of them as you can.

(1) Have a copy of the Qur'ān with a translation in your language. This is the minimum that you will require. This you should use for both general reading and study. The same can be used for memorization, if it is handy.

But, take care that throughout life you stick with the same copy for memorization, otherwise revision will be difficult.

Remember, too, that no translation can be perfect or accurate. Each translation contains an element of interpretation by the translator. There is not, and cannot be, an 'authorized' translation of the Qur'ān.

(2) The same copy may contain a short commentary, or you may have to acquire one separately. But you must have one. A translation and a reliable commentary should be enough for your initial, main objectives.

(3) You may find it useful, though it is not necessary, to have more than one translation and commentary to investigate various meanings of words and text as understood by different scholars.

(4) For more advanced study, you should have at least one more detailed *tafsīr*. You may not find one in English; but, then, try to acquire whatever part-*tafsīr* works are available.

(5) Have a good Arabic dictionary, preferably a Quranic dictionary, to enable you to look deeper into the meanings of words.

(6) Have a concordance.

A few such suggested aids for study are listed at the back of this book.